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*as something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face. (p. 61)*

This definition supports the perception by most Western cultures that *face* is something almost mystical, the loss of which results in ostracism. In much simpler terms, *face* refers to an individual's dignity, pride, image, and status within the social structure.

Based on the instructors understanding of the concepts of harmony and face, they expected that students would seek to maintain harmony in groups (item 3), and, as individuals recognizing the vulnerability of *face*, be hesitant to stand out (item 4), and concerned about how they are perceived (item 10).

This notion that Chinese students value harmony was indeed borne out by the strong agreement to item 3 (score = 4.63); however, the team's observations, once again, tell a different story.

In order to better assess the final project for the term, the instructors required the students to complete a peer evaluation and turn it in along with the project. The instructors' preconceived notions regarding harmony and conflict avoidance led them to anticipate the evaluations would have no value. In the interest of harmony, the instructors were certain the students would all report that each member contributed equally. This is not what transpired. Roughly half of the groups reported an equal distribution of work, while the other half were not at all hesitant in identifying the slackers. Several students even came to see the instructors during office hours to discuss the inequity of the work distribution.

Regarding *face*, the researchers had anticipated strong agreement with items 4 and 10, confirming the preconceived notions that Chinese students are reluctant to stand out and extremely concerned with correctness; however, the result was near neutral (average score = 3.53). Instructor observations confirm this result. While some students responded extremely shyly when called on for a response, the majority were willing to attempt to answer when prompted. Contrary to instructor expectations, there did not appear to be any overwhelming social stigma to answering a question incorrectly. Researchers observed much seemingly good natured laughter and chiding, with only a few isolated instances of embarrassment.

The researchers did corroborate another unexpected behavior related to the concept of *face*. Scarlatelli (2012) observes, *keeping face* often leads to outright lying.

*If a Chinese person doesn't know the answer to something, a lot of times they will simply make something up on the spot. Similarly, if they have not performed a task they were given when asked about it they will simply stare and not say anything. This, according to my Chinese friends, is a way to 'save face' by not admitting you've done something wrong. (para. 6)*

The instructors experience in the classroom corresponds with this commentary. This was an important revelation regarding culture. Compounding the issue is that Chinese students stand



when called on for a response. This can create an uncomfortable situation for both student and teacher. Keeping in mind that the content-area courses are still expected to support the ESL program, it is important for students to speak on a regular basis, not just read and write.

Over the course of the semester, the instructors discovered two successful methods of diffusing this situation, allowing both student and instructor to *save face*. One method involved the game show technique of calling a “lifeline.” If a student appeared to be struggling, they could call on another student to help them. This was often times very entertaining. Another method was to design participation exercises using round robin techniques. Participation increased when students were called on in a particular order, rather than randomly. Knowing when it would be their turn seemed to increase the student’s comfort level, as did the option to “pass” if they did not know the answer when their turn came. In addition, if designed to be fast-paced, round robin exercises also kept students in their seats.

The Chinese perspective: In addition to the Confucian influence, the government and the media (controlled by the government) promote harmony in order to build a secure society. Unlike in Western cultures, Chinese news is dominated by positive stories of national achievement. Negative reporting is minimal.

Chinese students do value harmony as an important factor in interacting with others. However, as a result of the long-standing One Child Policy, some do not know how to work with others within a team. Conflict will happen when the interactions do not meet their expectations.

Most Chinese students do not want to “stand out” not only because “face” issue, but also influenced by another central tenet of Confucianism called moderation. In most cases, students, especially girls, while knowing the correct answer, will still hesitate to speak out until prompted by the instructor.

### **PCN 3 - Power & Authority: Chinese Students View Teachers as Powerful Authority Figures.**

German sociologist Max Weber defined the social phenomenon of power as “the capacity of an individual or group to realize desired ends in spite of resistance offered by others” (Johnson & Kruse, 2009, p. 77). According to Weber, this power is derived from three sources: The *traditional authority* rooted in established institutions, customs, and beliefs of the collective; the *legal authority* of enacted rules and laws; and, the *charismatic authority*, which Weber (1946) refers to as the “*gift of grace*, the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation, heroism, or other qualities of individual leadership” (p. 79).

The dominant leadership style observed by the team is the Confucian Asia team- and humane-oriented leadership. This profile is described by Northouse (2013) as “a leader who works and cares about others but who uses status and position to make independent decisions without the input of others” (p. 398). This style is reminiscent of the traditional view of leadership described by Machiavelli (1532) in his masterpiece, *The Prince*, who acknowledges that ideally, the leader should be both feared and loved. The power element dominates; however, concern for people is also high.

Hofstede describes this dynamic as the *power-distance* dimension of national culture. China, with a rank of 80, is described as “a society that believes that inequalities amongst people

are acceptable” and where “the subordinate-superior relationship tends to be polarized” (The Hofstede Center, n.d.b, para. 3).

Based on the researchers’ understanding of power, leadership, and the power-distance dimension of Chinese culture, the instructors did not anticipate any classroom management problems. Item 5 relates to student perceptions of teacher authority. The research team expected strong agreement with this statement and were surprised by the result (score = 3.70), indicating near neutrality.

While there were not significant issues in classroom management, and no blatant disrespect, the level of deference anticipated based solely on the position of authority was absent. Researcher observations suggest that respect for authority among this generation may be influenced by age and gender more than simply position.

The Chinese perspective: The word “teacher” in Chinese means someone who was born earlier and therefore is expected to have more knowledge. In the past, students did see the teacher as more of an authority figure because they respected this knowledge. Knowledge and hard work was the key to a better life.

The current generation of students have grown up in a very different China. Their parents were not well educated, but because of the industrial revolution in China, they have been able to succeed economically and amass unprecedented wealth. This generation of students therefore do not believe they have to work hard academically in order to succeed. They believe that they have more knowledge and can do better than their parents. What they fail to recognize is that even though their parents had less education, they worked much harder. Many Chinese believe the Chinese work ethic is gone forever.

#### **PCN4 - Motivation and Dedication: Chinese Students Are Highly Motivated And Hard-Working.**

Pedagogy, from the Greek words for “child-lead,” is defined as the art and science of teaching, and also refers to the function or work of the teacher. It is often (wrongly) used synonymously with teaching. Pedagogy describes the traditional classroom of our youth. Because young children have not yet collected enough experiences to effectively transform new information into learning, instruction is developed in such a way that children are taught not only what to learn, but *how* to learn. Leadership in the pedagogical environment is generally of the transactional variety: Carrot and stick, task-oriented, and often autocratic.

Andragogy, on the other hand, is the art and science of teaching adults. While Knowles did not coin the term, it has become synonymous with his name as he advanced the first theory of teaching adults. According to Knowles (as cited in Smith, 2002), andragogy is premised on the following five differences that exist between child and adult learners.

1. Self-concept: As a person matures his self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
2. Experience: As a person matures he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.

3. Readiness to learn. As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.
4. Orientation to learning. As a person matures his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness.
5. Motivation to learn: As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal. (para. 32)

Leadership in the andragogical environment is often democratic/participative and can be charismatic and (ideally) transformational.

The students in the study group are all between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, qualifying them, by virtue of age, as adult learners. As such, they should share the understanding assumed by andragogy that learning is a mutual relationship between teacher and student, and the instructors should have achieved success utilizing andragogical approaches in the classroom.

Survey items 6 and 7 were directed at understanding the students' view regarding the respective roles of learner and teacher. The research team expected the results to reveal at least moderate disagreement with items 6 and 7, indicating the students felt responsible for their own learning, not reliant on the teacher to deliver both knowledge and evaluation. The results failed to meet expectations (average score = 2.93) indicating a nearly neutral response.

Items 8 and 9 were created to evaluate the students' perceptions related to motivation. Support of instructors' preconceived notions would be indicated by strong agreement with these two items signifying a high degree of self-motivation. The results (average score = 4.30) does indeed support this notion of motivated learners.

Classroom observations do not support these results. In the first few weeks of instruction it became immediately apparent that many of the students in the program were not yet prepared to take responsibility for their own learning. Hurd and Xiao (2006), in discussing the challenges faced in the distance learning environment, comment that in China, "pupils are used to being 'spoon-fed' at school" (p. 207). The instructors' observations confirm this. Students had to be told to take notes, though often they had arrived with neither paper nor writing implement; textbooks were left in desks, not taken home to study; every task had to have a grade or evaluation attached, or it would not be completed; classroom rules had to be established and posted. This required significant adaptation of the instructors' materials and instructional and leadership approaches.

The Chinese perspective: The culture in China is extremely family-oriented. Families tend to be much closer both geographically and emotionally. Parents feel a responsibility to take care of their children throughout their lives; adult students are generally still being treated as children by their parents during their college years. Parents are willing to sacrifice their own needs in order to provide for their children, even into adulthood. The One Child Policy has exacerbated this situation as, in some cases, a single child is the sole focus of two parents and four grandparents. In addition, as previously discussed, the parents of this generation of student are more financially secure, if not wealthy. As a result, children know they have a safety net if they fail. There is therefore little motivation for them to work hard.

## PC5 - “Little Emperors”: Chinese Students Are All Only Children.

The term *Little Emperor* has been used in China to describe the role played by the single child in the Chinese family as a result of China’s One Child Policy. The preconceived notion associated with *Little Emperors* is one of a spoiled child. This child can be the center of attention for not only the parents, but also for four grandparents. This places a great deal of pressure on the child to succeed while also leading to over indulgence of every whim.

The instructors expected the students to all be only children, and, as a group, to be self-absorbed and self-centered, with a sense of entitlement. Experience on the ground partially supports this preconception as a number of students displayed these tendencies; however, our base assumption regarding the One Child Policy was incorrect.

While it is indeed true that China does have this policy, exceptions abound and it is estimated that only 36 percent of Chinese citizens are subject to this law (Xiaofeng, 2007). Rural families may have a second child if the first born is female; members of cultural/ethnic minorities are exempt from the policy; and, beginning in November 2011, spouses that are both single children may have two themselves. In addition to the legal exceptions is the wealth exception: Families that can afford the hefty tax on multiple children can have multiple children.

In the classroom, the students displaying the least motivation, the least willingness to complete assignments, and the least effective in group work were almost exclusively male, and nearly every male student fit this description. The sample, however, was extremely small as the overwhelming majority of students in the SAAP are female. As shown in Table 1, 77 percent of the survey respondents were female, 23 percent male. This approximates the proportion in the SAAP population.

The researchers suspect the majority of the male students are indeed *Little Emperors* while the majority of the female students have siblings. It is significant to note that 60 percent of the survey respondents do have siblings. This high percentage is surely related to the gender bias of the SAAP population. A first born girl is more likely to have siblings, where a first born boy will often be an only child. The researchers’ notions were therefore partially supported. The Little Emperor syndrome does appear to exist; however, not all Chinese students are only children.

The Chinese perspective: In China, rural families usually have more than one child; urban families run the risk of losing their jobs or paying a penalty, often do not have more than one child. As the rural and urban populations are roughly identical, anecdotal evidence suggests that one child families are only about 40 percent. This ratio is impossible to find from official sources. Beginning in 2013, as a result of the Third Plenary Session’s decision, the percentage of one-child families will decrease even further. It has been observed among the Chinese population that students with no siblings tend to be self-centered and less willing to work productively in groups.

## LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

This research is limited primarily by the absence of comparisons with samples from other cultures, both Asian and Western. Even other groups within China might present differently as all of the students in this study were from the same, largely rural, province. The fact that the sample students were from a tertiary college, rather than a tiered university may also have impacted the

researchers' observations as the entrance standards are lower. This was also a contributing factor to the language proficiency issue which may also have impacted the results. Lastly, the previously discussed skewedness of the sample related to gender and family composition (only child/siblings) prevented the researchers from conducting any correlational analysis based on these characteristics.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear from the survey results that the traditional values the researchers expected to find in China do indeed persist. Students have learned the lessons of their cultural heritage and believe about themselves many of the same things Western culture holds to be true about Chinese culture. However, their behavior, in many cases, does not reflect these values. They appear to know the words, but have not internalized the meaning. This inconsistency is likely the result of many factors, the age and maturity level of the sample chief among them.

Research by Law (2012), explored the cultural difficulties in collaboration between Chinese and American educational leaders. The study showed that increased exposure to Western educational models is changing the culture of Chinese higher education; however, the cultural dichotomies are still causing confusion and an abundance of preconceived notions that must be worked through.

If exposure to Western educational models is changing the culture of Chinese higher education, what effect must the influence of Western media be having on the students? The students observed in this study love American TV series and movies. American TV is not broadcast in China, but pirated versions proliferate on the Internet and are widely viewed by this generation. American movies are featured in Chinese theaters and are also available both for purchase and on many pirated sites. One cannot imagine that this does not have an impact on values and behaviors.

Regardless of the limitations, if a broad generalization or stereotype is true for any population, one would also expect it to hold true in even a small sample such as this study. The obvious message is that an individual, especially one in a leadership position such as a teacher, should carefully examine one's own preconceived notions about a culture, and the notions that others are likely to have regarding their home culture. Remember, geography is about much more than terrain and a set of GPS coordinates.

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# COMPARING BUSINESS LAW IN ONLINE AND FACE TO FACE FORMATS: A DIFFERENCE IN STUDENT LEARNING PERCEPTION

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper extends the body of research investigating potential differences in face to face and online delivery of a business law course. Using a unique survey, it investigates student perceptions of their learning and understanding of key course concepts, as well as student satisfaction with the course and course instruction. Further, the paper explores the specific characteristics of online versus face to face students that may impact their satisfaction.*

## INTRODUCTION

Institutions of post-secondary education are increasing their distance learning opportunities in response to societal demand for more convenient and flexible methods of college instruction, and as Falk and Blaylock (2010) suggest, making distance learning a “central focus”. Parker et al. (2011) report that 89% of four year public universities are offering online courses and that 50% of college presidents surveyed predict that by 2021 most undergraduates will take online courses. Pethokoukis (2002) reports that in the United States, online course enrollment is increasing by 33% per year. These opportunities can include hybrid courses, taught partially face to face and partially online, or courses taught fully online. As the addition of distance learning opportunities can be a budgetary concern for an institution, it is important to discover the best practices in creating online education that is as effective and satisfactory as the traditional face to face format (Bernard et al., 2004).

Throughout academic literature, two questions remain: (a) is it possible for fully online instruction to be as effective as traditional face to face instruction?; and (b) does fully online instruction satisfy student demands the same as face to face instruction? (Bernard et al., 2004). This paper addresses the fully online course, specifically of the business law discipline, which most business schools include in their required undergraduate curriculum to satisfy accreditation eligibility through the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB’s 2013 Business Standards). Although researchers have compared face to face and online sections of the same course in other business disciplines and in the humanities (Lyke and Frank, 2013; Driscoll et al., 2012; McFarland and Hamilton, 2005; Summers et al., 2005; Bernard et al., 2004; Finlay et al., 2004; and Rivera and Rice, 2002), there is little research on this comparison in business law (Shelley et al., 2007). Because introductory business law courses are distinctive in aspects such as students’ likely initial exposure to complex legal concepts, the subjective and interpretive nature of the discipline, and the less quantitative focus than several other business core curriculum



courses, it is important to examine the impact of course delivery model on both student learning and student satisfaction.

This paper contributes to the discussion of business law's use of online learning. We chose to investigate the business law discipline not only due to the lack of research comparing business law online and face to face courses, but because business law is materially different from other common core business courses, including accounting, finance, economics, and information systems. Where these common core courses are largely quantitative and objective, business law is a qualitative and subjective discipline. Business law is not often offered as a major in business schools so students may not give a core business law course the same focus and attention as one that was their business major of choice. Additionally, business law is in most instances the first time students have had legal studies, making the course more foreign than mathematically based courses such as the common core listed above. We investigate whether students taught using an identical course delivery plan by the same instructor, in online and face to face sections of an introductory business law course, perceive their learning and course satisfaction equally. We further explore specific student characteristics that may contribute to differences in satisfaction levels between the two delivery formats, such as student age, the number of hours that students work outside of school, and the number of credit hours in which students are enrolled.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Much research investigating the impact of online versus face to face course delivery exists. Two research streams within this literature are student learning and student satisfaction. Although prior research has suggested ways to eliminate differences in student learning and student satisfaction between the online and face to face delivery models, the results are inconsistent.

In the area of business school course delivery models, researchers have found conflicting results when comparing instructional delivery models. Wang and Newln (2000) find that business students in a face to face course environment outperform online business students on their final exams. Arbaugh and Duray (2001) find that online MBA students had higher learning than students in the face to face course. Using business students to analyze differences in course delivery method, several researchers do not find a difference in student learning (DiRienzo and Lilly, 2014; Ruth and Connors, 2012; and Vogt et al., 2005).

Student learning in online and face to face courses has been linked to the use of technology. Sun et al., (2012) find that the use of an electronic textbook encourages student engagement in the learning process, which may in turn impact student success. Cole et al., (2009) find that quick responses to email, introductory discussions of the students, and weekly video announcements can improve teaching effectiveness. To improve student success, Balkin et al. (2005) suggest that presentation slides and video lecture should be incorporated into the online course.

In the current study, electronic textbooks, email, introductory discussions of students, video announcements, slide presentations, and video lectures were utilized during the course instruction in both the face to face and online sections under comparison. Their inclusion could potentially improve the student's learning in either class format. Thus, the first research question investigates students' perceptions of their success in two of the course learning objectives.

*RQ1a: Do students perceive their understanding of business law concepts differently in business law courses delivered online versus face to face?*

*RQ1b: Do students perceive their ability to think critically about the law differently in business law courses delivered online versus face to face?*

Similar to the literature on student learning in online versus face to face courses, prior research varies on the impact that course delivery method has on student satisfaction. Russell (1999) does not find a difference in student satisfaction among students in online versus face to face courses. Johnson et al., (2000) and Shelly et al., (2008) find that face to face students are more satisfied with the course instructor than students taking the course online. Shelly et al., (2008) also find that course satisfaction varies significantly by gender, but not by age or nationality. Arbaugh and Duray (2002) find the opposite; students in online courses are more satisfied than students in face to face courses. Similarly, Finlay et al., (2009) find that students in online English composition courses are more satisfied than students in a face to face course setting. Further, several studies have shown that if the course experience is virtually the same between the two courses, differences in student satisfaction with a course can be overcome (Driscala et al., 2012; McFarland et al., 2005).

The courses used in this study were almost identical in course design and delivery. The only differences in the two course syllabi included minor assignment due dates and technology instructions in the online course syllabus. According to prior research, the similarity between the online and face to face class sections could lead to student satisfaction with the course by students in the differing delivery formats (Driscala et al., 2012; McFarland et al., 2005). The second research question investigates students' satisfaction with the course and the instructor and whether it is impacted by course delivery model.

*RQ2a: Does student satisfaction with the course differ between course sections delivered online and course sections delivered face to face?*

*RQ2b: Does student satisfaction with the course instruction differ between course sections delivered online and course sections delivered face to face?*

## **METHODOLOGY**

One instructor taught both sections of the online format and the face to face format of the Legal Environment of Business during the same fifteen week semester, Spring 2013. One online section had 40 students and the other online section had 37 students. The face to face section had 86 students. The face to face section was taught during the daytime (11:00 am), while the online sections had no formal meeting time. Similarities between all three sections were that they used the same textbooks, assignments, tests, special projects, and grading scale. Every effort was made by the instructor to treat all students in all sections equally. The syllabi were identical with the exception that information regarding the use of technology was presented in the online sections. The assignment schedules for the face to face classes differed from the online sections only in the day of the week assignments or tests were due and the way that assignments and tests were administered (in person in face to face sections vs. online in online sections).

The survey data was collected through an online survey administered to students at the end of the Spring 2013 semester. Student responses were anonymous and could not be given without first completing a consent agreement. Students obtained credit by emailing the instructor a copy of the “Thank You for Participating” page of the online survey, which appeared after completing the survey. This page contained no identifying data on the survey answers that a particular student gave.

The survey questions analyzed in this paper utilized a five point Likert scale with one representing “Strongly Agree” and five representing “Strongly Disagree.” It included questions on student satisfaction with critical thinking skills, business law concepts learned in the course, and demographic characteristics. The survey was pilot tested using a group of students who were business law minors and who had taken the Legal Environment of Business course in a prior year; this resulted in minor wording changes to improve comprehension of the survey questions.

## RESULTS

The data consisted of 64 completed surveys from students in the face to face course and 50 completed surveys in the online course. The respondent characteristics, summarized in Table 1, revealed several differences in the student populations of the two delivery methods. The face to face course had significantly more males than the online course. Almost 60% of the students in the face to face course were male, while 62% of students in the online course were female. Students attending the face to face course were significantly younger than students in the online course. Over 98% of the students in the face to face course were between the age of 18 and 34, while only 76% of the online class fell in this age range. The majority of students in the online course worked over twenty hours a week while the majority of students in the face to face course worked twenty hours or less. Notably, 30% of the online students were working greater than 40 hours per week, while only 7.8% of face to face students worked in excess of 40 hours per week. Fifty-six percent of the online students were enrolled in a full-time course load (greater than or equal to twelve credit hours), while 79.6% of face to face students were enrolled in a full time course load. The hours spent working on the course do not significantly differ between the two delivery methods with 87.5% of the face to face course and 88% of the online course reporting that they spent between either 0-9 or 10-19 hours weekly working on the course. Running a two way ANOVA on each of these characteristics and the course delivery method indicated no significant main effects or interactions on the participant’s course satisfaction. However, when we interpret credit hours based on our university’s definition of enrollment status (full time is greater than or equal to twelve credit hours), then as shown in Table 2 we do find significance. In our experiment, students with part time enrollment status are more likely to be satisfied with the course regardless of the delivery method.

The first research question investigated students’ perception of their learning. Specifically, it investigated their learning of business law concepts and critical thinking. The survey included six statements designed to capture their perception of their understanding of business law concepts. Table 3 summarizes these six statements and the responses to them. T-test analysis was conducted on each of the six statements’ means to determine if the online and face to face students felt

differently. For two of the six statements, students responded significantly differently depending on the course delivery they received.

Students participating in the face to face course agreed significantly more with the statement “Class discussion in this course positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts in this course” ( $t=-2.019$ ,  $p=0.046$ ). Although discussion boards, chats, and instructor email messaging were used in the online course, it does seem reasonable that students in a face to face setting would feel that class discussions were more beneficial in their learning of business law concepts.

Conversely, students in the online course agreed significantly more with the statement “Interaction with my classmates during the semester positively impacted my ability to learn business laws concepts in this course” ( $t=1.989$ ,  $p=0.049$ ). The students in the online course potentially relied more on each other for feedback and discussion of classroom material, with the absence of an instructor being physically present at a regular meeting time. In the first statement, “class discussion” in a face to face setting could have been interpreted as discussion with the instructor, not with other students, while “interaction with my classmates” is more clearly regarding discussion and involvement with fellow students instead of with the instructor. The instructor noticed more material questions being directed toward her instead of toward other students in the face to face course format, whereas the instructor noticed that material questions were being directed toward fellow classmates in the online course format, as well as toward the instructor.

The research question also investigated students’ perception of their ability to think critically (RQ1b). The survey included six statements designed to capture student perception of critical thinking development. Table 4 summarizes the six statements and their responses. T-tests were conducted on each of the six statements’ means to determine if the online and face to face students felt differently. As was the case with their understanding of business law concepts, students responded significantly differently depending on the course delivery that they received on two of the six statements.

Students participating in the face to face course agreed significantly more with the statement “Class discussion in this course positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking in this course” ( $t=-2.429$ ,  $p=0.017$ ). Although discussion boards, chats, and instructor email messaging were used in the online course, it does seem reasonable that students in a face to face setting would feel that class discussions were more beneficial in their development of critical thinking skills.

Similar to the findings regarding business law concepts, students in the online course agreed significantly more with the statement “Interaction with my classmates during the semester positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking in this course” ( $t=1.824$ ,  $p=0.071$ ). Since online learning does not have the consistent physical presence of an instructor, students in an online course may be more inclined to interact with their classmates to discuss course material than to wait for an asynchronous reply from their instructor.

The second research question investigates student satisfaction with the course and the course instruction. The survey included two statements to measure satisfaction. Table 5 summarizes the results of these two statements. Despite the fact that several studies have found

online students to be less satisfied in their course and course instruction (Johnson et al., 2000; Shelly et al., 2008), this is not the result that we find. We do not find a significant difference in satisfaction with the course or course instruction between the online and face to face delivery methods. Over 98% of the students in the face to face course agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with this course.” One hundred percent of the students in the online course agreed or strongly agreed. Ninety-eight percent of the students in both the face to face and online courses agreed with the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with the instruction I’ve received in this course.” This supports the findings of prior research that specific efforts to align important course characteristics can eliminate differences in overall satisfaction between online and face to face courses.

### **LIMITATIONS**

The students surveyed were taught by only one instructor during one semester at the same four year university. Therefore, it may be difficult to generalize results to all instructors at all institutions of higher education. Additionally, the number of students surveyed was small. A larger survey data group would show a better representation of all Legal Environment of Business students.

Students who work full time or live far from campus may not have the option to take face to face courses. Since these students cannot take classes face to face, they turn to a more flexible education option, and then choose whatever online format options are available in a given semester. Certainly, then, those students who need to take online classes may have a different perception of course satisfaction if they have never taken a face to face course, have not taken a face to face course in a period of time, or cannot take face to face courses due to time constraints. These students would only know education in an online format, and could only compare their own satisfaction of a course with other online courses, not face to face courses. (However, in analyzing the course rosters for our online students, 67.5% of those enrolled in our online courses were also enrolled in at least one face to face course during the same semester).

### **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study contribute to the body of research comparing face to face and online sections of the same course. There has been little research done comparing gender, age, working hours, and student total enrollment hours characteristics with regard to student satisfaction of online versus face to face sections of the same course (Shelley et.al., 2008). The data in our study suggests that the majority of the students in the online course sections work full time. The students in the online course are also older. This supports the idea that online students tend to be older, part or full time workers, and returning to school after being in the working world for a period of time. Also shown in our data, these students often take fewer course hours, which is likely due to their lack of time. The students in our survey who took the face to face section of the course tended to be the more traditional college student: younger, often directly out of high school, working fewer hours outside of school, and taking more course hours. These students may have more opportunity to choose a face to face or online section of a course based on their own

preferences versus needing to take only online sections based on limited time availability as an employed full time student.

Despite the differences between the online and face to face course sections in gender, age, working hours, and course hours, we do not find that these characteristics have a significant impact on student satisfaction regardless of the course delivery method. However, students in the face to face course significantly agreed more than those online with the use of classroom discussion as a factor in helping them learn. On the other hand, online students significantly agreed more than face to face students that classmate interaction helped them to learn business law concepts.

While this data adds to and further confirms that there is no significant difference in student satisfaction of the same course in either online or face to face formats, future research in the comparison of online and face to face courses should focus on student perceptions of learning and how to synchronize the effectiveness of such perceptions in both course formats. Additionally, further clarification of the difference in “classroom discussion” and “classmate interaction” should be researched to determine whether clarification of these terms will change the significant difference in student learning perception.

Higher education will likely continue to offer more online courses to meet student demands, but additional research in the identified areas of significant difference, such as student learning perception, may help institutions discover the most effective and satisfactory methods of equating online and face to face instruction. Also, an important area of research should be to examine the reasons why students choose online courses over face to face courses. As the data in this study suggests, students choosing online courses tend to be older working students, and therefore, the decision to choose an online course may be driven by their time constraints versus personal preference. Additionally, future research that examines course delivery outcomes in specific disciplines will increase knowledge of discipline-specific factors that may impact student learning.

**Table 1**  
**Respondent Characteristics by Delivery Method**

	<b>Face to Face</b>	<b>Online</b>
<i>Gender</i>		
<b>Male</b>	<b>57.8%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>42.2%</b>	<b>62%</b>
<i>Age range</i>		
<b>18-24</b>	<b>82.8%</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>25-34</b>	<b>15.6%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>35-54</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Over 54</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<i>Weekly hours of employment</i>		
<b>0-10</b>	<b>46.9%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>11-20</b>	<b>20.3%</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>21-40</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>41-60</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Over 60</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<i>Number of courses this semester</i>		
<b>1 or 2</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>15.6%</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>42.2%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>34.3%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Over 5</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<i>Self reported GPAs</i>		
<b>0-1.9</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>2.0-2.4</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>2.5-2.9</b>	<b>31.3%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>3.0-3.4</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>3.5-4.0</b>	<b>40.6%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<i>Weekly hours spent on the course</i>		
<b>0-9</b>	<b>62.5%</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>10-19</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>20-39</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>40-59</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Over 60</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>

**Table 2**  
**Source Table for 2 (Enrollment Classification) x 2 (Course Delivery) Completely Between Subjects ANOVA**

*Dependent Variable: Overall, I am satisfied with this course.*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
Corrected Model	1.367 <sup>a</sup>	3	.456	1.627	.187	4.880	.417
Intercept	177.405	1	177.405	633.239	.000	633.239	1.000
Enrollment Classification	.891	1	.891	3.180	.077	3.180	.424
Course Delivery Method	.753	1	.753	2.688	.104	2.688	.369
Enrollment Classification*Course Delivery Method	.312	1	.312	1.115	.293	1.115	.182
Error	30.817	110	.280				
Total	271.000	114					
Corrected Total	32.184	113					

R Squared = .042 (Adjusted R Squared = .016)

**Table 3**  
**Statements of Business Law Concepts**

	n	Mean
<i>Face to Face Course Delivery</i>		
I am satisfied with the amount of business law concepts I have learned in this course.	64	1.58 (0.612)
I believe the course format (online or face to face) positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts.	64	1.59 (0.495)
The number of students in this section positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts in this course.	64	2.22 (0.745)
The class meeting time positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts in the course.	64	2.08 (0.803)
Class discussion in this course positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts in this course.	64	1.67 (0.619)
Interaction with my classmates during the semester positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts in this course.	64	2.45 (0.815)
<i>Online Course Delivery</i>		
I am satisfied with the amount of business law concepts I have learned in this course.	50	1.50 (0.647)
I believe the course format (online or face to face) positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts.	50	1.50 (0.505)
The number of students in this section positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts in this course.	50	2.30 (0.839)
The class meeting time positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts in the course.	50	2.00 (0.881)
Class discussion in this course positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts in this course.	50	1.96 (0.903)
Interaction with my classmates during the semester positively impacted my ability to learn business law concepts in this course.	50	2.14 (0.857)

The standard deviations are in parentheses below the means.



**Table 4**  
**Statements of Critical Thinking**

	n	Mean
<i>Face to Face Course Delivery</i>		
I am satisfied with the amount of critical thinking skills I have learned in this course.	64	1.47 (0.503)
I believe the course format (online or face to face) positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking skills.	64	1.39 (0.492)
The number of students in this section positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking in this course.	64	2.23 (0.868)
The class meeting time positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking in the course.	64	2.06 (0.852)
Class discussion in this course positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking in this course.	64	1.72 (0.629)
Interaction with my classmates during the semester positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking in this course.	64	2.52 (0.873)
<i>Online Course Delivery</i>		
I am satisfied with the amount of critical thinking skills I have learned in this course.	50	1.48 (0.580)
I believe the course format (online or face to face) positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking skills.	50	1.54 (0.503)
The number of students in this section positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking in this course.	50	2.26 (0.876)
The class meeting time positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking in the course.	50	1.98 (0.869)
Class discussion in this course positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking in this course.	50	2.10 (1.035)
Interaction with my classmates during the semester positively impacted my ability to learn critical thinking in this course.	50	2.22 (0.840)

The standard deviations are in parentheses below the means.

**Table 5**  
**Student Satisfaction Statements**

<i>Face to Face Course Delivery</i>	n	Mean	Percent Strongly Agree	Percent Agree	Percent Neutral	Percent Disagree	Percent Strongly Disagree
Overall, I am satisfied with this course.	64	1.41 (0.526)	60.9	37.5	1.6	0.0	0.0
Overall, I am satisfied with the instruction I've received in this course	50	1.50 (0.544)	52.0	46.0	2.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Online Course Delivery</i>	n	Mean	Percent Strongly Agree	Percent Agree	Percent Neutral	Percent Disagree	Percent Strongly Disagree
Overall, I am satisfied with this course.	64	1.31 (0.467)	68.8	31.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Overall, I am satisfied with the instruction I've received in this course	50	1.34 (0.593)	70.0	28.0	2.0	0.0	0.0

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differences in age are found among the treatment groups ( $F = 3.02$ ,  $p = 0.087$ ). The means range between 20 and 22 years of age. Also, no significant differences among groups exist based on the number of courses taken prior to the experiment that deal with productivity software, programming languages, databases design, and databases software. The most experience that accounting participants received prior to the experiment is in the number of courses with productivity software as the main topic (one or two courses).

**Table 1**  
**Participant Demographic Statistics**

Accounting		ER/SQL	ER/QBE	Rel/SQL	Rel/QBE	Test statistic	p-value
Number of participants		22	16	19	21	0.84 <sup>†</sup>	0.358
Gender:	Male	10	6	7	11	1.28 <sup>†</sup>	0.733
	[Female]	[12]	[10]	[12]	[10]		
Age:	Mean	20.5	20.87*	21.7	20.5	3.02 <sup>‡</sup>	0.087
	(StDev)	(1.79)	(1.13)	(3.04)	(1.25)		
	[Median]	[20]	[21]	[21]	[20]		
Course #1 <sup>a</sup> :	Mean	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.6	0.24 <sup>‡</sup>	0.624
	(StDev)	(0.66)	(0.97)	(0.83)	(1.03)		
	[Median]	[1]	[1.5]	[2]	[2]		
Course #2 <sup>b</sup> :	Mean	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.16 <sup>‡</sup>	0.693
	(StDev)	(0.86)	(0.73)	(0.42)	(0.56)		
	[Median]	[0]	[0]	[0]	[0]		
Course #3 <sup>c</sup> :	Mean	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.02 <sup>‡</sup>	0.894
	(StDev)	(0.55)	(0.72)	(0.58)	(0.59)		
	[Median]	[0]	[0]	[0]	[0]		
Course #4 <sup>d</sup> :	Mean	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	2.05 <sup>‡</sup>	0.156
	(StDev)	(0.00)	(0.408)	(0.00)	(0.22)		
	[Median]	[0]	[0]	[0]	[0]		
WA CS <sup>e</sup> :	Wholist	4	4	4	6	3.92 <sup>†</sup>	0.688
	Intermediate	7	2	7	7		
	Analytic	11	10	8	8		
VI CS <sup>f</sup> :	Verbalizer	7	5	3	9	10.03 <sup>†</sup>	0.123
	Bimodal	5	9	7	5		
	Imager	10	2	9	7		

<sup>a</sup> Number of courses - main topic: productivity software

<sup>b</sup> Number of courses - main topic: programming languages

<sup>c</sup> Number of courses - main topic: databases design

<sup>d</sup> Number of courses - main topic: databases software

<sup>e</sup> Wholist-Analytic Cognitive Style

<sup>f</sup> Verbalizer-Imager Cognitive Style

<sup>†</sup>  $\chi^2$ -statistic

<sup>‡</sup> F-statistic

\* One observation with a value of 47 for age was deleted from the sample because of large effect on the sample. Including this data will change the mean (standard deviation) to 22.5 (6.62) and change F (p-value) to 3.96 (0.05)

Table 1 (cont.) Participant Demographic Statistics							
MIS		ER/SQL	ER/QBE	Rel/SQL	Rel/QBE	Test statistic	p-value
Number of participants		12	7	14	11	0.23 <sup>†</sup>	0.632
Gender:	Male	8	5	12	7	1.88 <sup>†</sup>	0.598
	[Female]	[4]	[2]	[2]	[4]		
Age:	Mean	20.3	20.7	22.0	21.2	0.43 <sup>‡</sup>	0.518
	(StDev)	(1.56)	(1.50)	(4.49)	(2.14)		
	[Median]	[20]	[20]	[20]	[20]		
Course #1 <sup>a</sup> :	Mean	1.1	1.0	1.3	0.9	0.31 <sup>‡</sup>	0.582
	(StDev)	(0.79)	(0.82)	(0.73)	(1.04)		
	[Median]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]		
Course #2 <sup>b</sup> :	Mean	2.9	2.3	2.6	3	2.91 <sup>‡</sup>	0.096
	(StDev)	(0.90)	(0.76)	(1.22)	(0.89)		
	[Median]	[3]	[2]	[3]	[3]		
Course #3 <sup>c</sup> :	Mean	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.00 <sup>‡</sup>	0.950
	(StDev)	(0.29)	(0.49)	(0.36)	(0.67)		
	[Median]	[0]	[0]	[0]	[0]		
Course #4 <sup>d</sup> :	Mean	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.12 <sup>‡</sup>	0.296
	(StDev)	(0.00)	(0.38)	(0.36)	(0.30)		
	[Median]	[0]	[0]	[0]	[0]		
WA CS <sup>e</sup> :	Wholist	1	2	2	3	9.11 <sup>†</sup>	0.168
	Intermediate	8	1	3	4		
	Analytic	3	4	9	4		
VI CS <sup>f</sup> :	Verbalizer	3	2	1	2	4.36 <sup>†</sup>	0.628
	Bimodal	4	2	7	2		
	Imager	5	3	6	7		

<sup>a</sup> Number of courses - main topic: productivity software

<sup>b</sup> Number of courses - main topic: programming languages

<sup>c</sup> Number of courses - main topic: databases design

<sup>d</sup> Number of courses - main topic: databases software

<sup>e</sup> Wholist-Analytic Cognitive Style

<sup>f</sup> Verbalizer-Imager Cognitive Style

<sup>†</sup>  $\chi^2$ -statistic

<sup>‡</sup> F-statistic

Table 1 also presents the demographic data for the four MIS groups. Nonparametric tests, to evaluate the equal sample sizes among the four groups, resulted in no significant differences in terms of number of participants ( $\chi^2 = 0.23$ ,  $p = 0.632$ ). No significant differences were found among the four groups based on gender, age, and prior educational experiences.

In contrast to the accounting participants, more MIS participants are males. Compared to the accounting students, MIS students have more programming background ( $\text{median}_{\text{course}\#2, \text{MIS}} = 3$ ,  $\text{median}_{\text{course}\#2, \text{Acc}} = 0$ ). This finding should impact participant performance in completing the query task. MIS groups who used SQL as a query tool may be more comfortable typing the SQL code than using the mouse. These differences in educational experience and gender between the accounting and MIS participants are the reason for separating the two groups when investigating the results.

Finally, table 1 reports the cognitive styles of the accounting and MIS participants. The data are reported for the WA cognitive style dimension and the VI cognitive style dimension.

Accounting and MIS participants are not different in terms of their WA cognitive styles ( $\chi^2 = 0.756$ ,  $p = 0.685$ ). Overall, 47 percent of the accounting participants are analytics, compared to 23 percent that are wholists. Similar results are found for the MIS participants (46 percent analytics and 18 percent wholists). No differences between accounting and MIS participants exist based on their VI cognitive style ( $\chi^2 = 2.684$ ,  $p = 0.261$ ). In term of their VI cognitive styles, the accounting groups are equally divided. More MIS students are imagers (48 percent) than verbalizers (18 percent).

### CSA Construct Validity and Reliability

In considering psychological assessments, the most important features of a test are its construct validity and its reliability. With research into the CSA, the primary emphasis has been to demonstrate its validity. Considerable evidence is now available to support the validity of the CSA. This was previously reviewed by Riding and Rayner (1998). The CSA is also culture-free in nature, and it has been used in a number of countries (Riding and Rayner, 1998).

An indication of reliability is built into the CSA. The CSA output shows both a speed index and the percentage correct for each of the dimensions of style. These indices are an indication of how carefully individuals completed the CSA, and whether they were able to complete it. Table 2 reports on the means (standard deviation) of these indices for each manipulation group, combining accounting and MIS participants together. The speed indices for the WA cognitive style and VI cognitive style across all manipulation groups are less than 10. This finding suggests that the participants took the test seriously. The percentage correct is also above 70 percent. This indicates that the CSA is reliable

Variable	Group	Mean	Median	StDev	Minimum	Maximum
WA Speed Index	ER/SQL	5.48	5.14	1.67	2.81	8.89
	ER/QBE	5.47	5.06	1.72	3.06	8.27
	Rel/SQL	5.65	5.16	2.19	2.33	12.13
	Rel/QBE	5.74	5.20	1.95	1.96	9.23
VI Speed Index	ER/SQL	3.25	3.09	0.79	1.66	5.39
	ER/QBE	3.02	2.94	0.80	1.50	4.99
	Rel/SQL	3.23	2.93	0.95	2.16	6.07
	Rel/QBE	3.17	2.88	0.88	1.55	4.92

Table 2 (cont.) CSA Construct Reliability						
Variable	Group	Mean	Median	StDev	Minimum	Maximum
WA Percentage Correct	ER/SQL	97	98	4	85	100
	ER/QBE	97	98	4	88	100
	Rel/SQL	98	98	2	93	100
	Rel/QBE	97	98	5	80	100
VI Percentage Correct	ER/SQL	93	94	5	79	100
	ER/QBE	91	92	5	79	98
	Rel/SQL	93	94	6	79	100
	Rel/QBE	91	93	7	60	98

## ANOVA Results

The research question was analyzed using a repeated measures general linear model. The factors data model and query language are crossed factors while complexity is a repeated measures factor. User characteristics defined by age, gender, experience, and cognitive styles are included in the model as covariates. Experience is the total number of courses with productivity software, programming languages, database design and software as topics. Query accuracy, task completion time, user confidence, and perceived ease-of-use were each analyzed separately.

Statistical analysis was computed first by including both accounting and MIS participants as part of the sample. Major was one of the covariates and was significant for query accuracy, user confidence, and perceived ease-of-use ( $p = 0.003$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , respectively). General linear model was computed to see the existence of a three-way interaction among data model, query language, and major. Only the three-way interaction is significant for perceived ease-of-use ( $F = 5.88$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ). The following paragraphs present the results for each type of participant treated separately.

Table 3, panel A presents ANOVA results with query accuracy as the dependent variable for the accounting participants and the MIS participants. For the accounting participants, no interaction or main effects for data model and query language were found ( $F = 0.14$ ,  $p = 0.706$ ). Gender and experience have a marginally significant impact on the complex query accuracy performance ( $F = 3.03$ ,  $p = 0.086$ ;  $F = 2.92$ ,  $p = 0.092$ , respectively). For the MIS participants, the data model and query language interaction effect was significant ( $F = 5.63$ ,  $p = 0.023$  for simple queries; and  $F = 3.90$ ,  $p = 0.057$  for complex queries). Only gender was significant at the 0.055 level when MIS participants completed complex queries. No cognitive styles had a significant impact on query accuracy performance.

**Table 3**  
**Analysis of Variance**

Panel A – Query Accuracy as Dependent Variable									
Source	d.f	Task Complexity							
		Simple Queries				Complex Queries			
		F-Statistic		p-value		F-Statistic		p-value	
Independent Variables:									
Data Model	1	Acc	MIS	Acc	MIS	Acc	MIS	Acc	MIS
Query Language	1	0.04	1.69	0.839	0.202	1.95	1.54	0.167	0.224
Data Model x Query Language	1	1.91	3.62	0.172	0.066*	1.74	5.05	0.192	0.031*
		0.14	5.63	0.706	0.023*	1.17	3.90	0.283	0.057*
Covariates:									
Age	1	1.04	0.83	0.312	0.368	0.81	0.61	0.371	0.438
Gender	1	2.57	1.38	0.113	0.248	3.03	3.95	0.086*	0.055*
Experience	1	0.47	0.18	0.494	0.676	2.92	1.25	0.092*	0.271
WA Cognitive Style	1	1.34	0.02	0.252	0.880	0.14	0.61	0.709	0.440
VI Cognitive Style	1	0.65	0.37	0.421	0.547	1.85	1.07	0.178	0.309
Panel B – Time Completion as Dependent Variable									
Source	d.f	Task Complexity							
		Simple Queries				Complex Queries			
		F-Statistic		p-value		F-Statistic		p-value	
Independent Variables:									
Data Model	1	Acc	MIS	Acc	MIS	Acc	MIS	Acc	MIS
Query Language	1	0.42	0.71	0.521	0.407	0.34	0.90	0.565	0.349
Data Model x Query Language	1	17.12	29.21	0.000*	0.000*	5.30	11.46	0.024*	0.002*
		0.07	8.79	0.794	0.006*	1.31	0.19	0.256	0.663
Covariates:									
Age	1	0.56	2.53	0.457	0.121	0.52	0.47	0.475	0.497
Gender	1	0.89	0.33	0.348	0.568	0.42	0.55	0.521	0.464
Experience	1	0.42	2.57	0.519	0.118	0.68	0.05	0.411	0.817
WA Cognitive Style	1	8.03	5.06	0.006*	0.031*	4.33	5.50	0.041*	0.025*
VI Cognitive Style	1	0.12	0.35	0.734	0.558	3.10	0.01	0.083*	0.920
Panel C – User Confidence as Dependent Variable									
Source	d.f	Task Complexity							
		Simple Queries				Complex Queries			
		F-Statistic		p-value		F-Statistic		p-value	
Independent Variables:									
Data Model	1	Acc	MIS	Acc	MIS	Acc	MIS	Acc	MIS
Query Language	1	1.90	0.00	0.173	0.957	0.54	0.90	0.465	0.349
Data Model x Query Language	1	0.65	0.06	0.422	0.803	2.47	11.46	0.121	0.002*
		0.04	8.91	0.846	0.005*	0.88	0.19	0.351	0.664
Covariates:									
Age	1	1.04	2.08	0.312	0.159	0.17	0.47	0.685	0.497
Gender	1	1.03	0.23	0.314	0.635	0.47	0.55	0.494	0.464
Experience	1	2.96	0.43	0.090*	0.515	0.75	0.06	0.388	0.817
WA Cognitive Style	1	0.62	0.00	0.433	0.996	1.47	5.51	0.230	0.025*
VI Cognitive Style	1	0.09	0.38	0.761	0.543	0.89	0.01	0.349	0.919

\* Significant at 0.10 level.

\*\* Significant at 0.05 level.

Panel D – Perceived Ease-of-Use as Dependent Variable					
Source	d.f.	F-Statistic		p-value	
		Acc	MIS	Acc	MIS
<b>Independent Variables:</b>					
Data Model	1	0.03	1.16	0.870	0.289
Query Language	1	0.64	0.05	0.427	0.833
Data Model x Query Language	1	1.87	13.19	0.176	0.001**
<b>Covariates:</b>					
Age	1	0.01	0.00	0.924	0.957
Gender	1	6.92	0.15	0.011**	0.697
Experience	1	5.10	1.02	0.027**	0.320
WA Cognitive Style	1	10.83	0.90	0.002**	0.348
VI Cognitive Style	1	0.38	0.14	0.541	0.709

\* Significant at 0.10 level.

\*\* Significant at 0.05 level.

Query task completion time ANOVA is reported in table 3, panel B for accounting participants and MIS participants. For the accounting participants, no interaction effect was found. A main effect of query language was observed for both levels of query complexity ( $F = 17.12$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; and  $F = 5.30$ ,  $p = 0.024$ , respectively). The WA cognitive style is significant at the 0.05 level for both type of queries. The VI cognitive style is marginally significant for complex queries ( $F = 3.10$ ,  $p = 0.083$ ). For the MIS participants, an interaction effect was found for simple queries ( $F = 8.79$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ) and a main effect of query language for complex queries ( $F = 11.46$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). Similar to the accounting participants, the WA cognitive style was significant at the 0.05 level for both levels of complexity.

Table 3, panel C reports the ANOVA with user confidence as the dependent variable for both types of participants. For the accounting participants, the results do not show any interaction and main effects for both level of complexity. Only experience is marginally significant at the 0.1 level. For the MIS participants, the data model and query language interaction effect was found to be significant for simple queries ( $F = 8.91$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). None of the user characteristics was found to have an effect on the user confidence for writing simple queries. For complex queries, a main effect of query language was observed ( $F = 11.46$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). The WA cognitive style played a role in the user confidence ( $F = 5.51$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ).

ANOVA with perceived ease-of-use as the dependent variable is reported in table 3, panel D for accounting and MIS participants. No interaction effect or any main effect was observed for the perceived ease-of-use for the accounting participants. Gender, experience, and WA cognitive style were found to have a significant effect on the perceived ease-of-use ( $F = 6.92$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ;  $F = 5.10$ ,  $p = 0.027$ ;  $F = 10.83$ ,  $p = 0.002$ , respectively). Table 3, panel D shows an interaction effect of data model and query language for the MIS participants ( $F = 13.19$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). None of the MIS user characteristics covariates were found to be significant.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

User characteristics were found to play a significant role in the experiment's participants regardless of their professional field. In particular, the WA cognitive style dimension was significant for the query task completion time. Table 4 shows the mean (standard deviation) time for each accounting manipulation group and for each WA cognitive style. Table 5 shows the same type of information for the MIS participants. Regardless of the level of complexity, the

wholist cognitive style groups completed the query task consistently faster than the analytic cognitive style groups.

Panel A: Complexity Level – Simple Queries			
	WA Cognitive Style Dimension		
Groups	Wholist	Intermediate	Analytic
ER/SQL	05:42 (00:51)	07:08 (02:31)	09:04 (01:46)
ER/QBE	04:45 (01:11)	04:46 (02:24)	06:07 (05:05)
Rel/SQL	07:24 (02:08)	07:28 (03:23)	09:50 (02:46)
Rel/QBE	03:59 (01:41)	05:47 (01:17)	05:49 (02:16)
Overall	05:18 (01:56)	06:37 (02:32)	07:44 (03:36)
Panel B: Complexity Level – Complex Queries			
	WA Cognitive Style Dimension		
Groups	Wholist	Intermediate	Analytic
ER/SQL	09:14 (03:52)	11:41 (04:37)	12:32 (03:13)
ER/QBE	09:47 (03:10)	12:11 (03:55)	09:50 (04:49)
Rel/SQL	13:40 (06:09)	12:17 (06:19)	14:20 (03:17)
Rel/QBE	05:55 (02:38)	09:44 (03:54)	11:24 (06:13)
Overall	09:14 (04:40)	11:19 (04:46)	11:57 (04:35)

Panel A: Complexity Level – Simple Queries			
	WA Cognitive Style Dimension		
Groups	Wholist	Intermediate	Analytic
ER/SQL	07:15 (00:00)	06:12 (01:27)	06:22 (00:54)
ER/QBE	04:17 (00:44)	03:45 (00:00)	06:00 (03:01)
Rel/SQL	07:20 (00:46)	06:55 (01:44)	08:59 (02:25)
Rel/QBE	03:25 (00:03)	03:24 (01:10)	04:20 (00:59)
Overall	05:06 (01:55)	05:29 (01:56)	07:04 (02:47)
Panel B: Complexity Level – Complex Queries			
	WA Cognitive Style Dimension		
Groups	Wholist	Intermediate	Analytic
ER/SQL	10:16 (00:00)	12:15 (02:52)	13:01 (01:55)
ER/QBE	05:20 (02:42)	05:05 (00:00)	11:53 (05:00)
Rel/SQL	14:37 (04:01)	12:01 (02:01)	14:53 (05:04)
Rel/QBE	09:25 (01:30)	07:05 (04:35)	10:59 (03:04)
Overall	09:48 (04:03)	10:28 (03:58)	13:13 (04:24)

The VI cognitive style is marginally significant for the accounting end-users, only for complex queries. Running the general linear model with data model, query language, and VI cognitive style as independent variables, produces an interaction between the data model and VI



cognitive style ( $F = 4.22, p = 0.019$ ) and the main effect for the query language is still significant ( $F = 6.99, p = 0.010$ ). The accounting verbalizer end-users using the relational model completed the complex tasks faster than the accounting imager end-users using the relational model ( $\text{mean}_{\text{relational,verbalizer}} = 8:15$  and  $\text{mean}_{\text{relational,imager}} = 14:16$ ). The accounting imagers using the ER model completed the task faster than the accounting verbalizer using the ER model ( $\text{mean}_{\text{ER,imager}} = 10:46$  and  $\text{mean}_{\text{ER,verbalizer}} = 11:49$ ). Verbalizers prefer information presented as words (relational model) whereas imagers represent information better with pictures (ER model). This finding indicates that matching individual end-users' preferred VI cognitive styles to the preferred database structure representation improves the task efficiency in term of completion time. Accounting DBMS should be documented so that users can reference the database structure representation that best fits their preferred cognitive style.

The WA cognitive style also affects the MIS end-user's confidence level. Overconfidence may explain the current findings, but additional research needs to be done to investigate this issue. The WA style dimension is defined as whether an individual tends to organize information into wholes or parts. Wholist groups, regardless of their educational background, consistently completed the query writing task faster than the analytic groups. This finding is not surprising because the wholist personalities can approach the problem as a whole, see the big picture, and quickly find the location of the information needed for the database query. The analytic personalities spend too much time looking at individual parts of the problem. The separation of the whole database structure representation into its individual tables means that one subset of the whole problem gets the user's attention at the expense of the other problem elements. Hence its overall importance is exaggerated.

This finding has implications for learning and training. Learning can be made more effective both by matching cognitive style to materials and presentation mode and structure, and through strategy development to maximize style effectiveness (Riding and Sadler-Smith, 1997; Riding and Rayner, 1998, chapter 4). Training can be more effective and will result in cost savings for organizations by implementing separate trainings for each cognitive style represented in the training group. Cognitive style also can be used in personal and career development since it is related to job suitability and occupational stress. The wholist cognitive style seems to be better suited to query writing tasks than the other cognitive styles. To help the trainee to form an appropriate structure of the database, a graphical representation may be provided as an aid. Riding and Sadler-Smith (1992) investigated the effect on learning performance of overviews and organizers in a computer-based learning package. The authors suggest that analytics may benefit from a global web-type organizer showing the interrelationships and horizontal linkages. Thus, the ER model could be more useful to analytic cognitive style end-users.

The study also reveals that the tendency to think visually or verbally does not impact on the user performance. VI cognitive style is not significant across dependent variables. Riding and Sadler-Smith (1992) suggest a model for the interaction of cognitive style, learning performance and the mode of presentation (images versus text). Imagery are expected to benefit more than verbalizers from the presentation of information in a diagrammatic form (e.g., ER model and QBE language). Verbalizers are expected to benefit more than imagers from a textual presentation (e.g., relational model and SQL language). When the trainee receives and uses information that is not congruent with its cognitive style, then learning performance is likely to be impaired. The current study does not support this theory for the mode of presentation.

This study contributes to both the academic arena and the professional world. This research extends the literature by expanding the research model used. As prior research has

recommended, user characteristics, such as cognitive style and professional skills, are explicitly included in the research model, where these had been ignored before. Different combinations of database structure representation and query language are best suited depending on the measure of performance used and on the user characteristics. There are implications of these results in the professional world. When organizations better understand the need to match the method of training to fit the cognitive style of the trainees, they will be able to reduce costs and increase results, which in turn increase the return on the investment made in the training. Also, professionals who struggle with database technology can improve their query performance by understanding their own cognitive style and focusing their efforts on methods that are compatible.

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# TRAITS POSSESSED BY PRINCIPALS WHO TRANSFORM SCHOOL CULTURE IN NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to identify common personal and professional strategies present in successful principals who lead National Blue Ribbon Schools in a southern state. This study attempted to reveal concrete strategies and traits that can be implemented and emulated by current and aspiring school administrators offering them insight into what strategies are conducive to effective school leadership. The study also sought to determine whether a correlation existed between the leadership practices of these national blue ribbon school administrators and the overall culture of the school as measured by the level of teacher morale present in these schools. The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) was administered in order to identify those leadership traits and qualities as reported by the leaders' subordinates as compared to how the leader rated him or herself on these qualities. Approximately 500 teachers/counselors and 20 principals/assistant principals participated in the study. A non-random sampling of seven National Blue Ribbon Schools from the elementary, middle, and high school level in this southern state participated in the study.*

*Administrators rated their primary leadership traits by using the Leadership Practices Inventory (self). Each administrator rated their primary leadership traits using a Likert scale employed by the Leadership Practices Inventory. Data obtained from the study suggested that principals rated themselves slightly higher than did their staff members according to the five sub-scales (model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encouraging the heart) of the LPI. The Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire (PTO) was also administered to rate teacher morale in these National Blue Ribbon Schools. The abbreviated version of the inventory was used consisting of three sub-scales; teacher rapport with the principal, rapport among teachers, and instructional issues. The PTO is based on a four point Likert type scale; 1 = disagree, 2 = probably disagree, 3 = probably agree, and 4 = agree.*

*Respondents who completed the PTO rated teacher rapport with principal 3.36, rapport among teachers 3.46, and instructional issues 3.48. These results on the PTO indicate that teacher morale was reported to be very high on each of the selected indicators. A multiple regression was then run to determine whether a correlation existed between teacher morale and principal leadership traits. The results of this test indicated that there was a correlation between teacher morale and a principal modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart.*

## INTRODUCTION

The ability of a principal to lead the students of the new millennia is based on his or her ability to set goals of excellence for teachers, students, staff and themselves. The principal must be the catalyst for enhancing and transforming the culture of the school in a positive and progressive manner thereby improving student learning. The purpose of this study was to identify common personal and professional qualities as well as strategies of a successful principals who lead National Blue Ribbon Schools in a Southern State. Data from this study may be used to inform administrators and aspiring administrators of common qualities and characteristics present in highly effective principals. The principal sets the tone and creates the culture for which teaching and learning takes place. If the principal is thoroughly analyzing, implementing, and evaluating the academic and social culture of his or her school they become better positioned to positively impact student achievement.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### **Transformational Leadership**

Burns (2003) contends that leaders in conjunction with the individuals that follow them create a symbiotic relationship that produces positive and significant heights of institutional morale and motivation. Burns believed that true transformational leaders lead by example and have the ability to articulate the goals of the organization which promotes a sense of excitement and moral obligation from the followers (Burns, 2003).

Burns (2003) further asserted that through this positive cultural change the leader will motivate his or her followers to produce greater results as a result of the cultural environment being conducive for collaborative networking, mutual respect, and mentoring. Principals who possess these traits and many others are usually successful transformational leaders who produce improved student outcomes. Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as one that elevates, mobilizes, inspires, and uplifts followers. He stated that by satisfying subordinates' needs and wants, leaders exert influence on their followers. Bass (1985) described transformational leaders as important agents of change. This leadership style has been defined based on its effects, transforming the values and priorities of followers and motivating them to perform beyond their expectations (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007; Yukl, 1998). Northouse (1998) described it as a process that changes and transforms individuals.

Howell and Avolio (1993) noted that transformational leaders have a vision for the organization and they project that vision onto the members of the organization. "The overriding element of successful leadership is to involve people in the process of leading" (Horan, 1999, p. 21). Transformational leadership is about getting everyone involved in the decision-making. A defining factor of transformational leadership is that importance is placed on taking risks and creatively solving problems through the solicitation of group members (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 1989). Transformational leaders are not constrained by the boundaries or rules of an organization, but rather change or align the organization to accommodate their vision (Howell & Avolio, 1993).

Transformational Leadership theories contain the following five common leader characteristics: creative, interactive, visionary, empowering, and passionate (Hackman & Johnson, 2000). Kouzes and Posner (2002) listed five practices of exemplary leaders: model the way (interactive), inspire a shared vision (visionary), challenge the process (creative), enable others to act (empowering), and encourage the heart (passionate) (Rowland, 2008). Other researchers have paralleled those thoughts with the described characteristics of transformational leaders: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1993; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002).

### **Best Practices**

The diagnosis of a school's strengths and deficiencies are imperative for the academic reversal of a low performing school as cited by Portin, Schneider, Dearmond and Gundlack (2003). Duke et al., posed the question of, "Are some principals unsuccessful because of what they do to address perceived problems, or are they unsuccessful because they misperceive the problems in the first place?" Leithwood et al., (2010) cited that there are four categories that contribute to progressive and successful principals; developing people, re-culturing the school, clear and concise school mission and consistent analysis of classroom instruction. Leithwood et al. (2010) states that the dominate leadership strategy which was implemented successfully by principals were often overseen when analyzing classroom instruction. Leithwood's et al. (2010) study indicates that the children who show the most to gain academically are scholars from minority and low income families.

Epstein et al. (2011) explained that the data from their study suggested a correlation between the principal and support received from the school district is paramount for improved student outcomes. Epstein et al. (2011) suggest that a school's basic programs must be in place to reach out to the families of scholars which will prepare the student for more intense challenges in their future. The study of Epstein et al. (2011) indicates that analyzing student outcomes and making adjustments to teacher instruction is imperative to creating a culture of excellence.

Epstein et al. (2011) conclude with the results of their study which suggest that shared school endeavors, evaluation of student outcome data and shared collaborative leadership in a school will promote an academic and social equity for improved school culture. Epstein et al. (2011) confirm that the collaborative support for the families of scholars an also the involvement of community members is the cornerstone of school partnership programs.

Rammer (2007) poses the question; do superintendents use the twenty one responsibilities of successful principals as cited by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) to hire principals? The use of these twenty one responsibilities to hire principals is a template for acquiring high achieving administrators. The premise is that high performing schools have effective principals (Hallinger, 2011; Lezotte, 2011). The principal that is an effective leader is the heartbeat of that school's high performance (Lindahl, 2007). Rammer (2007) suggested that there are specific skills, traits, behaviors and responsibilities that effective principals must possess. Early research conducted by Lezotte (2011) suggested that there is a direct correlation between instructional leadership and effective schools. Peterson (1999) contends that a principal without a good leadership skill set will be unsuccessful. Principals who are good leaders can cultivate the ideology

in which learning is inclusive for all children. This ideology should successfully become the mission statement of the school and then be communicated through the vision of a principal and disseminated to his or her subordinates (Lezotte, 2011).

### **Strategies for Improved School Culture**

The ability of a principal to monitor student progress closely is a strong indicator of a school that is high performing (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011). Principals who are effective attend teacher team level meetings consistently, visit classrooms daily and are well versed on what it takes to improve student achievement in his or her schools (Elmore, 2000). Deal and Peterson (2009) assert that through personal interactions with teachers, a principal can have a profound impact on instruction and learning. This research suggests that this is one way for principals to produce a school culture that is conducive for academic and social growth. It is suggested as best practice that principals consistently evaluate student performance to map instructional decisions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) principals and other school leaders who believe that the end result of education should be to improve student learning and outcomes, they represent the primary reason that the teaching profession exists and will continue to flourish as effective and progressive school cultural reformist.

An important factor in building school culture is the principal assuming responsibility for instructional leadership and focusing on key instructional areas for the school (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). It is suggested that effective principals facilitate the collaborative instructional efforts of teachers (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). The instructional emphasis is placed on monitoring and mapping instruction, communicating precise goals of the school to stakeholders and building a culture of improved teaching and learning (Peterson & Deal, 2009).

Hoy and Miskel (2005) assert that school climate is, “the set of internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influence the behaviors of each schools members.” Kottkamp (2010) further explains that a progressive social culture encompasses positive social activities, shared progressive values, and a common purpose. “School climate is the relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects his or her behavior, and is based on their collective perception of behavior in schools” (Hoy & Tarter, 2006).

A positive and progressive school culture propagates morale, staff performance and student enrichment. School culture is regarded as one of the important variables that lead to progressive school reform (Rhodes et al., 2009). Children that do not experience a supportive school culture may never achieve proficiency or academic excellence (Rhodes et al., 2009).

Progressive culture is infectious; it will continue to propagate into a culture of excellence, becoming the norm and not the exception. Researchers have deduced that the relationship between administrators and teachers have a direct correlation with a positive student culture (Rhodes et al., 2009). Kelley, Thornton and Daugherty (2005) explain that if teachers perceive their principal’s leadership style as inconsistent, teacher morale will suffer. Teachers and staff members yearn for a working environment that is challenging as well as supportive. They further assert that teachers thrive in cultural environments that are conducive to positive academic growth.

Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) suggested that a principal who communicates high expectations for his or her school will foster progressive student achievement. Principals that



monitor classroom instruction and ensure that the standard of excellence is not sacrificed provide a consistent ideology that is adhered to (Teddie & Reynolds, 2000). Teddie and Reynolds (2000) also explain that high performing principals must expect teachers and staff to analyze school circumstances before implementing a teaching strategy and demand that staff members participate in professional development. The principal must also insist that staff members prioritize, manage and commit to improved academic instruction. Lezotte & Snyder (2011) contend that there is a direct correlation to professional development and high performing teachers, this effective professional development is provided by high performing principals.

Principals who are successful take this a step further by attending the professional development programs and placing an emphasis on acquiring future professional development to stimulate a progressive school culture (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Nettles and Herrington (2007) contend that research also has been conducted to link a principal's behavior and student achievement, but no specific principal professional or personal traits and behaviors have been identified. On the contrary, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) lead a meta-analysis of seventy leadership studies and identified twenty one behaviors of principals that contribute to student achievement (a) Culture; (b) Discipline; (c) Order; (d) Resources; (e) Curriculum knowledge; (f) Assessment; (g) Instruction; (h) Curriculum involvement; (i) Vision; (j) Focus; (k) Contingency rewards; (l) Outreach; (m) Communication; (n) Affirmation; (o) Input; (p) Positive staff relationships; (q) Role optimizer; (r) Change agent; (s) Morals and beliefs; (t) Monitoring and evaluating; (u) Flexibility; (v) Situational awareness; (w) Intellectual enhancer.

These traits when combined with specific intangibles of each school provide a framework from which principals can develop strategies to enhance the culture of the school. These traits also act as a guide for developing improved teaching and learning skills that will benefit student outcomes. The goal of these specific traits is to provide academic enhancement. Waters et al. (2003) suggests that the primary goal of a principal is to possess these traits and strategies for school improvement and secondly know how and when to implement these skills effectively.

Day (2005) contends that high performing principals have an innate ability to reform and cultivate teaching and learning practices that promote a trusting school culture and community involvement leading to increased student achievement. The importance of a principal facilitating social capital in a school is central to the ideology of schools becoming community-centered organizations (Gurr, Drydale & Mulford, 2005). Ms. Martinez, a principal in the study, conveyed and modeled behaviors of high expectation and excellence in the classroom which became infectious for her students and staff (Ramalho, Garza & Merchant, 2010). Ms. Martinez places an emphasis on her open door policy. Her staff explain that whenever teachers need to discuss personal or professional situations she is always available and assessable (Ramalho et al., 2010).

Ms. Martinez believed that mentoring programs implemented at her school serve as an incentive for recruiting teachers and retaining them (Ramalho et al., 2010). Ms. Martinez explains that she does not allow her staff to use the low socioeconomic status of his or her students as a disclaimer for failure. She professes that all children can learn and become successful positive citizens of America (Ramalho et al., 2010). Principal Martinez suggests that an avenue to facilitate trust among students, staff, parents and the community is to open the school for events such as festivals and dances (Ramalho et al., 2010). One of the principals in the study also expects the

seasoned teachers to help mentor novice teachers and model the ideology of teaching excellence (Ramalho et al., 2010). The principals in this study are meeting state and federal annual yearly progress (AYP) with an uncompromising commitment to building school cultures that are progressive, while one half of the student population is considered “at risk” (Ramalho et al., 2010). Also, the teachers in the study were motivated to provide instruction that placed students in a position to excel academically (Ramalho et al., 2010).

The principals in this study stressed that the expectation for all students is to score better than proficient (Ramalho et al., 2010). The role of the principal is motivator of all things academic and cultural. A principal must have the ability to convey and model high expectations for student achievement and cultural goals. Ms. Martinez’s leadership style was considered, “hands on”, and personal with the students, staff and parents. This hands on approach led to trust and exuberance in her school. The study concluded by inferring that the principals who participated sincerely care about his or her students and staff.

### **Leadership Styles and Teacher Morale**

In many schools in America the authoritarian model for leadership is used to govern learning institutions (Nystrand, 2001). The Authoritarian model is centered on specific boundaries in regards to communication, job duties, and leadership (Nystrand, 2001). Research has shown that the authoritarian model of leadership is not conducive to the academic or social growth of a school. In contrast the Democratic model emphasizes shared decision making, collaborative teamwork, and supportive administrators (Nystrand, 2001).

Nystrand (2001) suggests the Authoritarian leadership models single concern is the completion of the task at hand and is contrary to positive change. Nystrand (2001) contrarily states that democratic principal leadership places an emphasis on balance between accomplishing the task and the morale of staff members based on decisions made by a principal. Nystrand (2001) also contends that through the democratic leadership style students and community must have a role in decision making for the school. According to Nystrand (2001) an effective principal not only sets goals and expectations high for his or her schools, they also show genuine concern and compassion for his or her students and staff.

It is suggested that for a principal to become high performing the balance between task and human relations must equal each other in importance (Nystrand, 2001). He further explains that the obstacles to this happening are that all principals do not possess the skill set to effectively facilitate expectations and human relations through differing behaviors depending on the academic situation. Nystrand (2001) cites that many staff members do not want to be included in all the decisions that may affect them. It is suggested that high performing principals in successful schools have the autonomy to hire and fire, provide clear and concise school structure and build healthy relationships between staff members that are trusting and professional (Nystrand, 2001). Maulding, Ownsend, Leonard, Sparkman, Styron, and Styron(2010) suggest that although the empirical data of their study indicated no statistical correlation between emotional intelligence and school performance levels the authors contend that emotional intelligence is imperative to positive leadership strategies. The progressive strategies in conjunction with the appropriate emotional

intelligence serve as a catalyst for change that stakeholders of a school community embrace the vision of the principal (Maulding et al., 2010).

Fiedler (2006) states that principals must objectively know what his or her leadership strengths and deficiencies are. Therefore, principals must choose schools that fit his or her leadership traits from a professional and personal standpoint to cultivate a progressive school culture. Vroom, Jago, and Arthur (2007) contend that the contingency theory of leadership is applicable to the circumstances and conditions of a school. The contingency theory suggests that decision making can be shared by the principal and his or her staff (Nystrand, 2001). Delegation of duties and responsibilities are also a strategies that are suggested in contingency leadership plans in which the principal shares the day to day operations of a school (Nystrand, 2001).

Vroom et al. (2007) suggests that the contingency leadership strategy is the most effective style due to the principal adjusting and adapting decision making based on the circumstances surrounding the opportunity. There are six strategies principals must use to implement and execute the maximum goals and student achievement in accordance with the Contingency Leadership Strategies: rewarding staff members for goals attained, facilitating and fostering student achievement, active involvement in instructional supervision, clear expectations for staff members, reduction of academic obstacles and performance based incentives for teachers meeting and exceeding academic goals (Vroom et al., 2007).

By using these behaviors a principal can maintain credibility as a motivator for teachers who have reached identified goals within the school. The principal can also give high performing teachers his or her choice of classrooms or planning periods. An effective principal must also provide support and direction to a teacher who is struggling with a difficult situation. The effective principal is always willing to clarify school goals and objectives for staff members which effectively facilitates improved student learning (Nystrand, 2001). High performing principals reduce academic obstacles, acquire transportation for field trips, mediate unrealistic parent requests, and support teacher proposals by attaining central office approval for teacher requested proposals that will positively impact the school (Nystrand, 2001).

Research suggests that staff members of a school require social acceptance and institutional affiliations that provide occupational gratification. Teachers also seek positive reinforcement from his or her endeavors as seen through their instruction and student outcomes. Teachers and staff members have a desire for rewards that validate their accomplishments in and outside of the classroom. Each staff member in a school must have a belief that as an individual they have the ability to fulfill goals that are set by the principal (Nystrand, 2001). The educational environment is extremely important to teachers and staff members and the pertinent variables that must be present are a hierarchy of authority, clear academic expectations, and designated curriculum related teacher focus groups (Nystrand, 2001). Nystrand (2001) reminds us that principals must become cognizant of his or her own personal and professional traits as well as behaviors as they relate to their leadership styles that will shape and mold the culture of the school in a positive and progressive manner.

Principals must also become mindful of what his or her teachers and staff members perceive of the direction that the school culture is moving in. Self-assessment is paramount to the success of any principal. This self-assessment must happen frequently and consistently to ensure

appropriate quality leadership strategies and good decisions are made to improve student learning (Nystrand, 2001). Research suggests that effective principal leadership enhances a progressive school culture which subsequently produces high performing schools (Kelley, Thorenton, & Daugherty, 2005).

Kelley et al. (2005) suggests that the leadership of a principal is the most important factor in student achievement. They further assert that principals have to process information, implement school procedures, and format this information to fit his or her school growth. It is suggested that high performing principals have the skill set to prepare for the future as well as have plans in place to empower teachers and staff to bring the school's vision to fruition (Kelley et al., 2005). Styron (2009) cited that universities must develop innovative strategies to train our current and aspiring principals in the art of academically and socially reaching all student scholars. He further asserts that many principals are not well rounded leaders who have the ability to improve student achievement for student scholars of all demographics.

Schools that are micromanaged begin to lose his or her sense of purpose as well as their progressive culture. On the contrary charismatic principals with inadequate managerial skill sets will raise academic standards momentarily but will eventually crash and burn (Bolman & Deal, 2008). It is suggested that principals cannot be one hit wonders nor have moments of brilliance. School improvement must be consistent and continual (Kelley et al., 2005). Kelley et al. (2005) suggest that the components which are essential to student achievement consist of; communication, educational hierarchy, a culture of high expectations, and effective principals. Employee frustration can be minimized by a high performing principal who can facilitate change appropriately (Blake & Mouton, 1985). It is suggested that to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning the principal's leadership style can facilitate this improvement or hinder the performance of teachers and students (Hoy et al., 2006). Variables that compliment a principal's leadership are; maturity of followers, appropriate leadership style, staff expectations, and school goals (Hersey & Blanchard, 2007).

## METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This study identified professional and personal strategies and attributes of principals who led National Blue Ribbon schools. It is intended that those personal and professional strategies identified in the study as being present among national blue ribbon principals would serve as a blueprint for new administrators to use as a tool for developing their own leadership strategies. The research methodology used in this study was non-experimental, quantitative research utilizing a survey design to identify the professional and personal strategies and attributes principals at National Blue Ribbon schools possess that lead to a progressive school culture.

### Research Design

The sample for this study consisted of teachers and administrators from National Blue Ribbon Schools in a southern state. Approximately five hundred teachers/counselors and twenty

principals/assistant principals participated in the study. A non-random sampling of Mississippi Gulf Coast Blue Ribbon Schools participated in the study. These blue ribbon schools represented a broad socioeconomic demographic. The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) self/observer thirty item questionnaire was created by James M. Kouzes and Bary Z. Posner. The LPI was administered to teachers and administrators of the eleven blue ribbon schools. Additionally, the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire was administered to the teachers of these designated blue ribbon schools. Each of the questionnaires asked participants for demographic information as well as teachers' and principals' perceptions of the school culture as well as the personal and professional strategies of the principals.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

The researcher sought to determine whether a correlation existed between the independent variables teacher rapport with the principal, rapport among teachers, instructional issues and the dependent variables a principal modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. The purpose of the study was to identify the specific professional and personal strategies exhibited by successful principals who lead schools that have been identified as National Blue Ribbon Schools. Using the Leadership Practices Inventor (LPI) and the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire (PTO) the study sought to examine whether a correlation exists between a principal's behavioral leadership and teacher morale.

A multiple regression was run to predict the identifying qualities of the selected variables. The alpha level was set at .05 for the purposes of this study.

### **Research Questions**

1. Do principals at national blue ribbon schools employ specific personal and professional leadership strategies that lead to an improved school culture?
2. Are principals at national blue ribbon schools supportive of their teachers and staff?
3. Is teacher and staff morale high in national blue ribbon schools?
4. Is the academic culture at national blue ribbon schools progressive?

## **HYPOTHESES**

*H1 There is a correlation between teacher rapport with the principal and a principal modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act and encouraging the heart.*

*H2 There is a correlation between rapport among teachers and a principal modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act and encouraging the heart.*

*H3 There is a correlation between instructional issues and a principal modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act and encouraging the heart.*

## Description of Study Participants

Respondents were as follows; elementary, middle and high school teachers, counselors and staff members of select national blue ribbon schools in a southern state. Eight of the eleven principals presiding over the National Blue Ribbon certified schools were asked to participate in the study. The assistant principals who were present during the year of blue ribbon certification were also surveyed. Teachers, counselors, and staff members of the schools identified were also asked to participate in the study. Of the eight principals, seven, 87.50%, agreed to participate in the study by returning their questionnaires. Of the seven assistant principals, five, 71.40%, agreed to participate by returning their questionnaires. Two hundred and sixty-three teachers, counselors and staff members agreed to participate in the study by returning their questionnaires. For the purpose of this study, teachers, counselors, and staff members who were employed during the time that blue ribbon status was awarded were invited to participate in the study.

The blue ribbon principal respondents were comprised of 57.20% females and 42.80% males. The blue ribbon assistant principal respondents were comprised of 60.00% males and 40.00% females. Of those surveyed, 66.7% of the administrators had 15 years or more in the teaching profession. Thirty-three percent of the administrators who participated in the study had five to ten years of experience. The percentage of administrators who responded to the survey over the age of 50 were 58.3%, 33.3% were between 41-50 years of age, and 8.3% were between 31-40 years of age. The racial breakdown of the administrators who responded were 91.7% white and 8.3% black.

## Tests of Hypotheses

To test the results of hypotheses one, two, and three a Pearson Correlation was used to determine whether a relationship existed between the variables. A multiple regression was also used to test hypothesis one, two, and three to determine whether predictive qualities existed for the selected variables. The results of the study met the  $p=.05$  level of significance to qualify the statistical results.

## Teacher Morale and Principal Leadership Traits

A correlation existed between teacher rapport with the principal and a principal modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. Hypothesis one was measured by a Pearson correlation illustrating a strong linear positive relationship between the subscale (teacher rapport with principal) of the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire and the five subscales of the Leadership Practices Inventory (Observer) principal traits (see Table 1). A Pearson correlation was also used to measure Hypothesis two which revealed a moderate positive association between the subscale (rapport among teachers) of the PTO and the five subscales of the LPI (Observer) (see Table 1).

Hypothesis three as tested by a Pearson correlation yielded a moderate positive association between the subscale (instructional issues) of the PTO and the five subscales of the LPI (Observer) (see Table 1). The two subscales of the LPI that were most significant as revealed by the multiple

regression were; enable others to act, and encouraging the heart. The multiple regression was significant at  $F(5,257)=237.164, p<.001$ . An analysis of the data led to a failure to reject the null hypothesis (see table 2). The respondent's strongly agree that the principal behaviors which were the best predictors are; enable others to act, and encouraging the heart.

Enabling others to act and encouraging the heart, as reported by the respondents, have a significant correlation with teacher rapport with the principal.

	Teacher Rapport with Principal	Rapport Among Teachers	Instructional Issues
Model the Way	.832	.389	.522
Inspire a Shared Vision	.795	.365	.472
Challenge the Process	.784	.368	.498
Enable Others to Act	.898	.375	.521
Encouraging the Heart	.864	.392	.485

*All correlations are  $p<.001$*

It was also determined that a correlation existed between rapport among teachers and a principal modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act and encouraging the heart. A multiple regression was used to measure Hypothesis two; which determined that there was a significant statistical relationship between rapport among teachers as measured by the PTO and the five subscales of the LPI (Observer) that measured principal behaviors. The combination of the five subscales in conjunction of the LPI was significant as revealed by multiple regression. The multiple regression was significant at  $F(5,257)=10.102, p<.001$ . An analysis of the data led to a failure to reject the null hypothesis (see table 3). Based upon the responses of the participants a combination of the behaviors model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encouraging the heart revealed a significant correlation with rapport among teachers. Simply put, principals who displayed these behaviors were more likely to have a strong rapport among their teachers.

	B	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	.688		6.250	.001
Model the Way	.044	.100	.979	.329
Inspire a Shared Vision	-.031	-.079	-.941	.347
Challenge the Process	-.011	-.029	-.356	.722
Enable Others to Act	.219	.633	8.271	.001
Encouraging the Heart	.095	.297	4.599	.001

**Table 3**  
*Rapport Among Teachers (Multiple Regression)*

	B	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	2.563		16.158	.001
Model the Way	.077	.264	1.200	.281
Inspire a Shared Vision	-.022	-.085	-.467	.641
Challenge the Process	.006	.023	.129	.898
Enable Others to Act	-.008	-.036	-.216	.829
Encouraging the Heart	.053	.249	1.781	.076

A correlation also existed between instructional issues and a principal modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act and encouraging the heart. A multiple regression was used to measure Hypothesis three; which determined that there was a significant statistical relationship between instructional issues as measured by the PTO and the five sub-scales of the LPI (Observer) that measured principal behaviors. The combination of the five sub-scales in conjunction of the LPI was significant as revealed by the multiple regression. The multiple regression was significant at  $F(5,257)=21.169, p<.001$ . An analysis of the data led to a failure to reject the null hypothesis (see Table 4). Participants agreed that a combination of the principal behaviors; model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encouraging the heart were present in schools where there was an emphasis placed on instructional issues.

**Table 4**  
*Instructional Issues*

	B	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	1.887		9.838	.000
Model the Way	.136	.356	1.754	.081
Inspire a Shared Vision	-.090	-.262	-1.556	.121
Challenge the Process	.049	.144	.887	.376
Enable Others to Act	.080	.267	1.746	.082
Encouraging the Heart	.011	.039	.303	.762

## CONCLUSIONS

Data were collected from respondents after administering the questionnaires. These data were analyzed and the results reflected how teachers perceive their principal's leadership traits and behaviors as well as how these behaviors impact teacher morale. The results of the study were consistent with the current literature in terms of principal leadership, teacher morale, and school culture. The morale of teachers impacts the level of instruction delivered to students.



However, the absence of a high level of instruction results in adverse student outcomes. In this study, it became evident that the academic and social connection between principal and teacher played a huge role in the success of these national blue ribbon schools. In addition to the principal holding high expectations for teachers, these national blue ribbon principals tended to possess characteristics such as; tact, approachability, caring, sensitive to the needs of others, personal and professional knowledge of teachers and staff members, respect for subordinates, the ability to listen, the ability to learn from others and a willingness to seek out new and innovative teaching and learning techniques. Although the list of behaviors and traits can be very extensive, principals must find ways to motivate teachers in a positive manner thereby positively impacting student achievement. Research supports the notion that the classroom teacher is the most important factor in the success of students. This is followed very closely by the impact of the school leader.

## DISCUSSION

A successful principal understands that teachers who are responsible for the end result as well as the tasks associated with it are more likely to experience success. Conversely, if teachers are not enthusiastic about his or her teaching assignment and their morale is low they are less likely to yield positive results (Martin & Jenkins, 2008). According to Fiedler (2006) the leadership style of a principal is dictated by three circumstances; the relationship shared between the principal and his or her teachers, academic goals of the school, and the autonomy of the principal to praise or replace staff members. The principal must be the catalyst for cultural change through his or her actions, directly or indirectly (Leech, 2008). It is imperative that a principal have a staff that believes in his or her vision thereby creating a culture of positive and progressive learning (Lezotte, 2011).

The study points to the development of a strong positive rapport between the principal and the his or her faculty and staff as being significant to improving student learning. The data also suggest that principals should seek to build a better rapport with teachers and staff members by developing and implementing the behaviors and traits that have been identified as being present among successful principals. These behaviors and traits include, but are not limited to; developing cooperative relationships among teachers, actively listening to teachers, treating teachers and staff members with respect and dignity, supporting progressive decisions made by teachers, and growing staff members through professional development. Additionally, current or aspiring administrators who are seeking an enhanced teacher / principal rapport may consider developing the following administrative behaviors and traits as indicated by the study; praising teachers and staff members for a job well done, showing confidence in the ability of teachers and staff, rewarding teachers for creative contributions, publicly recognizing teachers who personify commitment, celebrating school accomplishments, and showing support and appreciation for teachers and staff.

The results of the study also suggests that principals should invest time facilitating the growth of rapport among teachers. It is imperative that teachers work in a school culture that embraces collaborative teamwork as indicated by the respondents of the study. A principal who seeks to strengthen rapport among teachers as indicated by the respondents of the study should; reinforce common academic and social goals within teacher teams, have experienced teachers

mentor new and younger teachers, promote workplace cooperation, and initiate the sharing of teacher “best practices” among colleagues. This is critical to the development of a culture of academic growth and continuous student improvement.

Participants of the study also indicate that the principal behaviors are also correlated with instructional issues. The curriculum represents the foundation for the delivery of instruction. It has a significant impact on the academic success of a school. The results of the study suggest that how curriculum is determined and implemented in national blue ribbon schools had a significant impact on teacher morale and student outcomes. The results also indicate that principals who seek to raise their standards and expectations of their schools curriculum implementation should; ensure a well-balanced curriculum, ensure differentiated instruction, ensure alignment between school goals and curriculum, and demand that the school’s curriculum is preparing students to become enlightened global citizens.

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# STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE ACCOUNTING INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines students' perception of the accounting internship course activities and experience, offered at the University of Guam. The accounting internship course is a three-credit course offered to students who are majoring in Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting (BBAA). Based on the results of this study, the majority of students indicated that the employer evaluations were found to be "very effective". The reflection journals, the discussion forum, and the progress and final reports were "effective" activities that prepared the interns for their careers. The internship experience helped the students enhance their knowledge of auditing, accounting and reporting, management accounting, government accounting, preparing financial statements, and interpreting and evaluating financial statements. However, it is noted that the students' perception of the internship enhancing their knowledge in tax accounting is that they "neither agree nor disagree".*

## BACKGROUND

Students enrolled in the accounting internship course must complete 150 hours of work for their employers. This is in addition to the course activities, consisting of employers' evaluations, reflection journals, discussion forums, and progress and final reports. Students were surveyed after the completion of this course.

The accounting internship course is a three-credit course that gives students 150 hours of work experience. The course prepares students who are entering the accounting profession by providing the students with practical experience at an accounting firm, company, or organization; at the same time, the course provides the interns with an opportunity to secure future employment. This course is typically offered to students who are majoring in accounting during their last semester of the accounting major program. In addition, employers will pay the interns between \$500 and \$600 for a contract with 150 hours. In a few instances, the intern will work more than 150 hours, upon which the employer and the intern will negotiate the continuing agreement. It is also noted that there were a few instances in which the intern agreed to work for free.

## Course Objectives

The following are the objectives for this course:

- To learn to work with professional accountants in a professional environment

- To apply previous accounting coursework to the day-to-day business needs and problems of the firm
- To expand students' contacts within the local accounting community
- To acquire valuable exposure and experience in an area that will enhance the students' future career potential
- To complete assignments that encourage in-depth reflection of the internship experience
- To communicate effectively in writing to a variety of audiences during the internship experience

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Discussion Forums.** The discussion forum is a place in which interns will share their internship experience with their peers online. Interns are required to provide information about their assigned duties and responsibilities, training, and supervision, as well as discuss the experiences they gained for each week. The purpose of this activity is for the interns to gain knowledge from their peers, especially if the interns are working at a different organization from those of their peers. An online discussion forum is a tool that students can use to interact with each other (Mason, 1998; Thomas, 2001; Riley, 2006; Ting, 2013). In addition, a forum promotes critical thinking (Gokhale, 1995) and social skills (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993).

**Reflection Journals.** Students write two reflection journals; the first is completed at their midpoint (75 hours), and the second is completed after the student works for 150 hours. The reflection journals are tools for interns to reflect on their experiences and for them to provide suggestions to improve their performances in the workplace, as well as make suggestions for improvements in the accounting program. Reflection journals assess students' achievements of learning (Jarvis, 2001; Wong, Kember, Chung, & Yan, 1995).

**Employer Evaluations.** The employer evaluation form is given to the intern's supervisor, after the intern works for 75 hours (midpoint) and 150 hours. The form will evaluate the intern's comprehension and communication, attitude/work habits, and overall performance. The evaluation form also includes questions for the supervisor to identify the intern's strengths and to offer a recommendation for improvements that the intern can make in the future.

**Written Reports.** Each intern prepares a progress report after completing 75 hours and a final report after completing 150 hours. A rubric is provided with a set of criteria, used to evaluate the report. The contents of these reports include the background of the company, agency, or organization, as well as the leadership activities, growth in employability, and a summary of the students' internship experience. The final report includes all of the activities that the student performed during the course, which is also used as his or her final internship portfolio.

Prior to the implementation of the course activities that were previously mentioned, the students were required to perform 150 hours of service at their place of employment; after

completing these hours, they submitted an employer evaluation form and final report. The instructor for this course found it difficult to monitor their progress during the program. The interns were unable to learn how they were performing, until after they completed the internship hours. In addition, the instructor was not aware of the tasks the interns were performing, even though it is assumed that they were performing the duties of an accountant position. Therefore, the instructor implemented these activities to ensure that the students were performing duties applicable to the program. Doing so enabled the interns to receive feedback from their employers and instructor at the midpoint and after completing the program. By implementing these course activities, there were improvements in the communication between the interns and instructor; the interns and the employers; and the instructor and the employers.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study examines the interns' perception of the course activities and internship experience. The students' opinions of their internship experiences, as illustrated in Table 2, originated from a study conducted by Muhamad (2009). In preparation for this study, the author submitted a request to the corresponding author for permission to reuse the instrument and was granted approval. The University of Guam's Committee on Human Research Subjects approved this study (Nabobo-Baba, 2013).

The survey instrument was posted by using online survey software to gather the data. The link to the survey instrument was emailed to the interns and remained available for 10 days. The population for this study is 53. The total response received was 38. However, 2 responses were eliminated, due to partial responses. Therefore, the number of responses used in this study was 36 (68%) of the population. According to the Instructional Assessment Resources (2011), seven to ten days is a sufficient amount of time to allow a survey to remain available, and the acceptable response rate is an average of 30% for online surveys.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

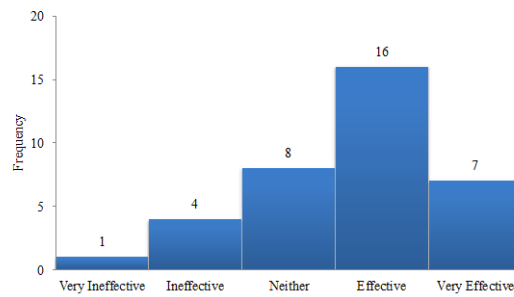
The participants from this study were students who took the internship course between the fall intersession 2012 and fall 2013 semesters, which includes a summer semester, for a total of seven (7) semesters. It is noted that students who took this course prior to the fall intersession 2012, did not participate in the discussion forums, reflection journals, and progress report activities. The instructor for this course began these activities in the fall 2012 intersession semester.

### **Students' Perception on the Course Activities**

The mode statistics were used to analyze the data (See Figures 1 through 5). Based on the results, the students found the employer evaluations to be "very effective" because they felt that the evaluations helped prepare them for their careers. The other activities, discussion forums, reflection journals, and progress and final reports were found to be "effective".

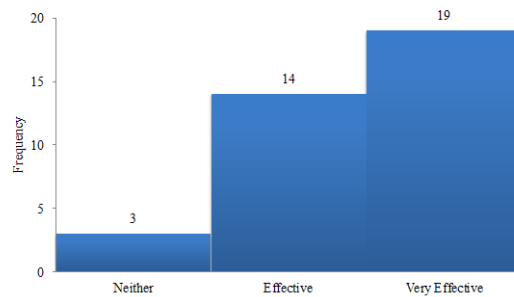
No.	Question	Min Value	Max Value	Mean	Median	Mode	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses
1	Discussion forums	1	5	3.67	4	4	1.03	1.01	36
2	Employer evaluations	3	5	4.44	5	5	0.43	0.65	36
3	Reflection journals	1	5	3.78	4	4	1.15	1.07	36
4	Progress report	2	5	4.14	4	4	0.58	0.76	36
5	Final report	1	5	4.06	4	4	0.85	0.92	36

**Figure 1**  
**Discussion Forums**



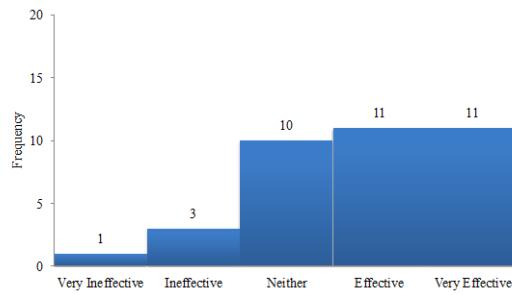
The frequency from this activity showed that discussion forums were “effective” in the internship course.

**Figure 2**  
**Employer Evaluations**



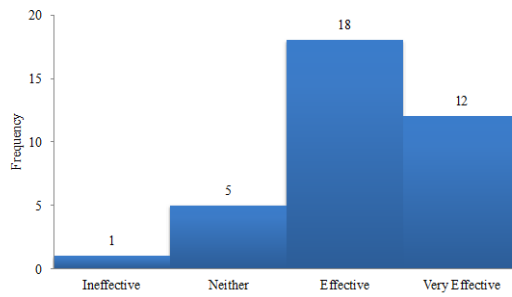
The frequency from this activity showed that employer evaluations were “very effective” in the internship course.

**Figure 3**  
Reflection Journals



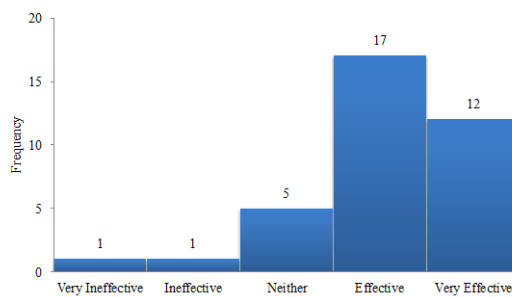
The frequency from this activity showed that reflection journals were “effective” in the internship course.

**Figure 4**  
Progress Report



The frequency from this activity showed that the progress report was “effective” in the internship course.

**Figure 5**  
Final Report



The frequency from this activity showed that the final report was “effective” in the internship course.



## Students' Perception on their Internship Experience

The mode statistics were used to analyze the data. Based on the mode (frequency) from Table 2, the internship experience helped the students by preparing them to be better employees in the future; the internship provided them with relevant knowledge and practical experience that helped them to relate the theories about the work environment that the students learned in the classroom.

Students enhanced their knowledge of auditing, accounting and reporting, management accounting, government accounting, preparing financial statements, and interpreting and evaluating financial statements. However, it is noted in terms of the survey question about whether or not the internship experience enhanced the students' knowledge of tax accounting, the students neither "agreed nor disagreed".

In addition, the internship experience helped the students develop their soft skills, specifically problem-solving skills, communication skills, and interpersonal skills. The internship experience helped improve the students' personal confidence and self-esteem; gave the students exposure to the latest technology; created the opportunity for the students to network with people in the industry and business arena; improved the students' chances of getting jobs after graduation; and provided the students with the necessary information and experience to choose the right career paths after graduation.

The total responses may not equal the total population because some of the criteria listed in the survey instrument were not applicable to the intern.

No.	The internship...	Min Value	Max Value	Mean	Median	Mode	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses
1	prepared me to be a better employee in the future.	3	5	4.03	4	4	0.37	0.61	36
2	provided me with the relevant knowledge and practical experience to assist me in adapting myself to my working environment.	3	5	4.08	4	4	0.31	0.55	36
3	helped me to relate the theories learned in the classroom to the work environment.	3	5	4.03	4	4	0.26	0.51	36
4	helped me to enhance knowledge in auditing.	2	5	3.91	4	4	0.71	0.84	33
5	helped me to enhance knowledge in financial accounting and reporting.	2	5	3.91	4	4	0.37	0.61	35
6	helped me to enhance knowledge in management accounting.	2	5	3.64	4	4	0.55	0.74	33
7	helped me to enhance knowledge in public sector (government) accounting.	2	5	3.79	4	4	0.77	0.88	34
8	helped me to enhance knowledge in tax accounting.	1	5	3.41	3	3	0.96	0.98	32
9	helped me to enhance my ability to prepare financial statements.	2	5	3.63	4	4	0.56	0.75	32
10	helped me to have better understanding in interpreting and evaluating financial statements.	3	5	3.76	4	4	0.38	0.61	33
11	helped me to develop my problem solving skill.	3	5	4.11	4	4	0.27	0.52	36

No.	The internship...	Min Value	Max Value	Mean	Median	Mode	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses
12	helped me to develop my communication skill.	3	5	4.25	4	4	0.31	0.55	36
13	helped me to develop my interpersonal skill.	3	5	4.11	4	4	0.39	0.62	36
14	helped me to improve my personal confidence and self-esteem.	3	5	4	4	4	0.4	0.63	36
15	had given me the exposure to the latest technology adopted in the work place.	1	5	4.03	4	4	0.66	0.81	36
16	had given me the opportunity to build up rapport and networking with people in the industry and business arena.	2	5	4.11	4	4	0.44	0.67	36
17	had provided me with the necessary job experience that can improve my chances to get a good job upon graduation.	2	5	4	4	4	0.63	0.79	36
18	had provided me with the necessary information and experiences to choose the right career path upon graduation.	3	5	4.14	4	4	0.41	0.64	36

## CONCLUSION

This study examined students' perception of the course activities and internship experiences at the University of Guam. The results of this study showed that the students perceived an employer's evaluation to be very effective, while the students believed the reflection journals, discussion forums, and written reports were effective.

Reflection journals assess the students' achievements of learning. Jarvis (2001) argued that reflective journals could be time-consuming. However, this can lead to personal and professional enrichment and employment, in which she recommended the use of reflective journals in higher and continuing education.

A discussion forum is a place in which students interact with each other, and a forum promotes critical thinking and social skills. In a study conducted by Akhras (2012), the discussion forum improved participation between students and faculty, and it improved student performance. Furthermore, written reports help improve writing skills and critical thinking.

The internship experience helped the students enhance their knowledge in the subject areas of financial and managerial accounting, auditing, government accounting, and interpreting and evaluating financial statements. The students neither "agreed nor disagreed" that the internship helped them increase their knowledge in tax accounting. The internship experience helped to develop the students' soft skills in the areas of their problem-solving skills, communication skills and interpersonal skills. Soft skills are important in one's career and will set an individual apart from those who lacked these skills (Karan, 2012; Dixon, Belnap and Lee, 2010).

The internship experience helped improve the students' personal confidence and self-esteem; provided the students with exposure to the latest technology; gave the students the opportunity to network with people in the industry and business arena; improved the students'

chances of getting a good job after graduation; and give the students the necessary information and experience to choose the right career path after graduation.

### FUTURE RESEARCH

This research focused on the students' perception of the internship program, based on the course activities and the internship experience. Additional research for consideration is the investigation of the employers' perception—focusing on soft skills or nontechnical skills that the employers seek from accounting majors. Is there a relationship between technical and nontechnical skills? Another topic for further research is related to determining the successes and challenges of accounting graduates, in terms of their current careers, and/or to ask, “Where are they now?”

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# THE EFFECT OF MACHIAVELLIANISM ON BUSINESS STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF CHEATING

**Rafik Z. Elias, California State University, Los Angeles**

## ABSTRACT

*College cheating has been increasing in the last decades and has received considerable attention in education research. The current study investigates if a negative personality characteristic such as Machiavellianism was related to business students' perception of cheating. A Total of 474 business students in two universities were surveyed to examine this relationship. Results showed that high Machiavellian business students viewed various questionable cheating actions as less unethical compared to other students. These results point to the disturbing result that more negative personality characteristics can have an impact on cheating perception, and possibly cheating behavior. Instructors can benefit from these results when supervising exams and grading other assignments.*

## INTRODUCTION

Academic dishonesty has received considerable attention in the education literature. Research investigated frequency of cheating, as well as situational, demographic and psychological determinants of cheating. Research in cheating has become multidisciplinary because there are some several psychological aspects to cheating. Business students have received additional attention since research showed that classroom cheating was strongly related to workplace cheating (Sims, 1993).

The current study examines demographic and psychological determinants of business students' cheating perception. Specifically, Machiavellianism, a personality disorder characterized by manipulation of others for personal gain, is examined. Demographic factors such as age, gender, class grade and major are also investigated.

The paper is organized as follows: A review of the literature regarding business students and cheating as well as determinants of cheating is presented. This is followed by the study's hypotheses and methodology. Finally, results and conclusions are presented followed by suggestions for future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### College Students and Cheating

College cheating has received attention in the education and psychology literature. This attention is motivated by the prevalence of such behavior. Generally, research found that cheating in College is less common than cheating in high schools (Lau et al. 2011). However, these findings are not comforting considering that Whitley (1998) found that about 70% of college students in all disciplines admitted to cheating at least once during their college years. More recently, Yardley et al. (2009) surveyed alumni of several universities and found that 82% of respondents cheated at least once during their undergraduate years. Over the years, cheating has evolved from simply

copying someone's homework or buying a term paper to more sophisticated schemes involving texting and creative plagiarism (Liebler 2012).

College cheating has many negative consequences. McCabe et al. (2006) noted that not only the cheater suffers negative consequences such as punishment and loss of reputation but noncheaters can also suffer as a result of the cheater's behavior. For example, pervasive cheating in a university can result in stricter standards and less flexibility offered to all students as well as greater faculty distrust of all students. In addition, the overall reputation of the university can also suffer (McCabe et al. 2006). More serious consequences can occur if college cheating was a predictor of workplace or personal cheating. Although many undergraduate students disagree with this theory and argue that college cheating is only temporary (Reall et al. 1998), research shows some truth to this relationship. Students who cheated in college were more likely to shoplift (Beck and Ajzen, 1991), cheat on their income taxes (Fass, 1990) and engage in unethical workplace behavior (Nonis and Swift 2001).

### **Determinants of College Cheating**

Three types of determinants of college cheating have been advocated: Situational, demographical and psychological. In general, increased class sizes, decreased surveillance, and close seating arrangements have been important factors in the frequency of student cheating (Whitley, 1998).

Demographic factors have also emerged as predictors of cheating. For example, younger students have been found to cheat more often compared to older students (Schuhmann et al. 2013). Hunt and Vitell (1986) attributed this relationship to older students' development of moral reasoning abilities. Several studies found that female students cheated less often than males (McCabe and Trevino 1997). Tibbetts (1999) reasoned that male students exhibited less self-control than female students regarding cheating, while female students tended to feel more shame if caught cheating. Several studies also found that students with lower GPA tended to cheat more often than higher performing students (Schuhmann et al. 2013). Research showed that business students tended to have the highest tolerance for cheating compared to English and Psychology students (Lau and Haug, 2011). These results were confirmed by Simha et al. (2012). These results should be a cause for concern to business instructors especially if college cheating was a predictor of workplace cheating (Nonis and Swift 2001). Little research has investigated whether students majoring in different disciplines within Colleges of Business had different perception of cheating. Based on previous research, the current study tests the following null hypothesis:

*H1: Business students' cheating perception is not affected by gender, age, class grade and major.*

Psychological factors have been advocated as determinants of college students' cheating. Students who reported a belief that cheating was never acceptable appeared less likely to cheat in any circumstance (Schumann et al. 2013). Davis and Ludvigson (1995) attributed cheating behavior to external stress, fear of failure, and peer or family pressure. Iyer and Eastman (2006) argued that students with lower self-esteem were more likely to commit dishonest acts. Rettinger and Jordan (2005) found that more religious students tended to cheat less often compared to other students. Bloodgood et al. (2010) found that taking a business ethics course reduced the likelihood of cheating, especially for nonreligious students. Tang et al. (2008) found that the love of money was an important determinant of college cheating whereas students with higher love of money tended to cheat more often. The current study introduces the psychological variables of

Machiavellianism and Opportunism as potential determinants of college students' cheating perception.

## **Machiavellianism**

Christie and Geis (1970) developed the Machiavellianism personality trait based on studying political and religious figures who manipulated their subordinates for their own self-interest. The authors identified the willingness to use manipulative techniques and an endorsement of a cynical view of human nature as characteristics of Machiavellians. Such persons are inclined to be disagreeable (Elfenbein et al. 2008), uncooperative (Paal and Bereczkei 2007), emotionally manipulative (Austin et al. 2007) and exploitive in relationships (Mullins and Kopelman 1988).

Research has consistently found that Machiavellians exhibited lower ethical values. Al-Khatib et al. (2005) found that consumers in the Persian Gulf countries who scored high on Machiavellianism were more likely to view unethical practices as ethical. Tang et al. (2008) found that business students exhibiting higher love of money scored highest on Machiavellianism and were more likely to perceive unethical scenarios as ethical. Murphy (2012) discovered that Machiavellian accountants were more likely to misreport the financial statements compared to lower Machiavellians. Recently, Dalton and Radtke (2013) found that high Machiavellians were less likely to blow the whistle on ethical practices in their organizations. However, the authors found that a high ethical environment increased high Machiavellians' intention to blow the whistle. In a college environment, some research attempted to examine the relationship between Machiavellianism and cheating. However, the results were generally weak (Cizek 1999 and Williams et al. 2010). Bloodgood et al. (2010) found that Machiavellianism was positively related to perceiving that only two forms of cheating were acceptable. Quah et al. (2012) examined business students in Malaysia and found that Machiavellians had a positive attitude toward plagiarism. Based on these weak findings, the current study examines the following hypothesis:

*H2: Business students who score high on Machiavellianism were more likely to perceive questionable cheating actions as ethical compared to low Machiavellianism scorers.*

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample Selection**

The sample for this study consisted of undergraduate business students in two universities on the West Coast (one large public AACSB-accredited and one medium-sized private university). Graduate students were not surveyed due to their small sample size. A survey containing the study measures was developed and given to the students during class time. The students were enrolled in a variety of undergraduate business classes. The anonymous survey took about 10-15 minutes to complete. Students were asked to record their first impression of a question and were allowed to withdraw at any time. The final useable sample consisted of 333 students in the large university and 141 in the medium-sized university for a total sample size of 474 students. Both samples were compared on each study measure. No statistically significant differences were found between both student samples.

## Study Measures

Students' cheating perceptions were measured using the cases developed by Rawwas et al. (2007). In that study, they classified academic dishonesty actions into clearly unethical actions and questionable actions. The current study uses only the questionable actions (7 items). Examples include "receiving extra credit because the instructor likes you" and "brown-nosing your professors". This allows for differences in student opinions and is a common technique used in ethics studies. If students clearly perceived an action as unethical, they might be subject to social desirability bias and they might be quick to reject it as unethical. However, questionable practices allow for a variety of perceptions and are better suited to measure the interested relationships. Each student recorded his/her perception of each statement on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly ethical) to 7 (strongly unethical). Rawwas et al. (2007) found the reliability of this section of the survey to be .65. In the current study, it was measured at .71.

In order to measure Machiavellianism, the scale developed by Dahling et al. (2009) was used. It had excellent reliability of .84 and consisted of 16 statements. In the current study, reliability was measured at .81. The respondent recorded his/her agreement with each statement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicated higher Machiavellianism. The scale yielded four factors: Amorality (the lack of ethics vision in different situations), Desire for control (the desire to manipulate others for a person's self-interest), Desire for status (the desire to show wealth and power), and Distrust of others (the constant suspicion of others' intent).

## STUDY RESULTS

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the student sample. There were slightly more males than females, and more nontraditional (older) students compared to younger students. Most of the students were accounting majors, followed by general business majors and management majors.

**TABLE 1**  
**DEMOGRAPHICS AND SUMMARY INFORMATION (N=474)**

<b>Panel A: Demographic Information</b>			
<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>		
Male	250	<u>Major</u>	<u>N</u>
Female	224	Accounting	138
		Management	77
		Marketing	42
<u>Age</u>	<u>N</u>	Economics	18
25	years or <	CIS	36
➤	25 years old	Finance	35
		339	97
		135	31
<u>Class Grade</u>	<u>N</u>	General Business	
Sophomore	108	Nonbusiness major	
Junior	217		
Senior	149		

<b>Panel B: Academic dishonesty+</b>		
	<u>Mean (SD)</u>	
Academic dishonesty	5.37 (1.38)	
<b>Panel C: Machiavellianism*</b>		
<u>Dimension</u>	<u>Mean(SD)</u>	<u>Factor Loading</u>
Amorality	2.43 (1.36)	.75
Desire for Control	4.15 (1.53)	.68
Desire for Status	5.07 (1.41)	.82
Distrust of Others	3.93 (1.28)	.80
Total Machiavellianism	3.79 (1.02)	.78
+ 1 (strongly ethical) 7 (strongly unethical)		
<b>Higher scores indicate higher unethical perception of the action</b>		
*1 (strongly disagree) 7(strongly agree)		
<b>Higher scores indicate higher Machiavellianism</b>		

Overall, students had a mean academic dishonesty score of 5.37/7.00 indicating they felt the questionable actions were slightly to moderately unethical.

In order to test H1, ANOVA was performed using each demographic factor as the independent variable and perception of cheating as the dependent variable. No significant differences emerged regarding major and age. The significant demographic results are reported in Table 2.

<b>TABLE 2</b>	
<b>DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF CHEATING PERCEPTION</b>	
<u>Gender</u>	<u>MEAN (SD)</u>
Male	5.19 (1.43)***
Female	5.57 (1.25)***
<u>Class Grade</u>	<u>MEAN (SD)</u>
Sophomore	5.23 (1.51)*
Junior	5.30 (1.42)*
Senior	5.60 (1.21)*
*** p<.01 * p<.10	
1 (strongly ethical) 7 (strongly unethical)	
Higher scores indicate higher unethical perception of the action	

Generally, female students viewed the questionable actions as significantly more unethical (mean 5.57) compared to males (5.19)(p<.01). In addition, senior students viewed them as most unethical (mean 5.60) followed by juniors (mean 5.30) and sophomores (mean 5.23)(p<.09). H1 was therefore partially rejected. Regarding Machiavellianism, students were neutral on their Machiavellian attitudes. They generally scored higher on desire for status and slightly high on desire for control of others. However, their amorality scores were low and their scores were average regarding distrust of others.

In order to test the relationship between cheating and Machiavellianism, correlation analysis was used and the results are reported in Table 3.



**TABLE 3**  
**CORRELATION BETWEEN CHEATING AND MACHIAVELLIANISM**  
 Cheating Amoralty Control Status Distrust Machiav.

Cheating	-.24***	-.08**	-.07**	-.07**	-.14***
Amorality		.35***	.28***	.41***	.70***
Control			.44***	.26***	.66***
Status				.25***	.60***
Distrust					.71***

\*\*\*p<.01

\*\*p<.05

The results indicate that cheating perception is significantly related to Machiavellianism. Students scoring high on Machiavellianism were more likely to view questionable actions as ethical. This was true for every dimension of Machiavellianism. Therefore H2 was supported.

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study found that students perceived questionable academic actions as unethical. However, variations regarding gender and class grade remain and should be given closer attention by business instructors. Although it is comforting to find that senior students viewed questionable actions as unethical, especially after ethics education throughout the curriculum at both universities, the gap between senior students and freshmen regarding ethical perception should be closed sooner rather than later. The gap between male and female students is more alarming and should be urgently addressed.

The current study also found a significant relationship between Machiavellianism and perception of academic dishonesty. Machiavellians were much more likely to tolerate questionable academic dishonesty actions compared to other students. These results show the importance of focusing on students' opportunistic behavior when teaching business ethics. The last decade has witnessed many business ethics scandals and ethics education has been offered as a tool to prevent such scandals in the future. However, instructors should take students' personality factors into consideration when designing a business ethics course in order to sensitize Machiavellians to ethical issues. Dalton and Radtke (2013) found that an ethics course helped Machiavellians blow the whistle on unethical behavior. Future classroom research should investigate whether an ethics course can achieve similar results regarding cheating.

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## APPENDIX

### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Please record your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements according to the following scale. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any question and record your first impression. (adapted from Dahling et al. (2009))

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Moderately Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Slightly Agree</i>	<i>Moderately Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that lying is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage over others
- \_\_\_\_\_ The only good reason to talk to others is to get information that I can use to my benefit
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to be unethical if I believe it will help me succeed
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to sabotage the efforts of other people if they threaten my own goals
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would cheat if there was a low chance of getting caught
- \_\_\_\_\_ I like to give orders in interpersonal situations
- \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy having control over other people
- \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy being able to control the situation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Status is a good sign of success in life
- \_\_\_\_\_ Accumulating wealth is an important goal for me
- \_\_\_\_\_ I want to be rich and powerful someday
- \_\_\_\_\_ People are only motivated by personal gain
- \_\_\_\_\_ I dislike committing to groups because I don't trust others
- \_\_\_\_\_ Team members backstab each other all the time to get ahead
- \_\_\_\_\_ If I show any weakness at work, other people will take advantage of it
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other people are always planning ways to take advantage of the situation at my expense

**Regardless of the previous statements, please indicate your ethical perception of each of the following actions performed by a student in your class** (adapted from Rawwas et al. (2007))

<i>Strongly Ethical</i>	<i>Moderately Ethical</i>	<i>Slightly Ethical</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Slightly Unethical</i>	<i>Moderately Unethical</i>	<i>Strongly Unethical</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- \_\_\_\_\_ Receiving extra credit because the instructor likes you
- \_\_\_\_\_ Receiving favoritism as a result of being a student athlete or member of a campus organization
- \_\_\_\_\_ Receiving a higher grade through the influence of a family or personal connection

\_\_\_\_\_ Being allowed to perform extra work, which is not assigned to all class members, to improve your grade

\_\_\_\_\_ Brown-nosing your professors

\_\_\_\_\_ Contributing little to group work and projects, yet still receiving the same credit and grade as the other members

\_\_\_\_\_ Having access to old exams in a particular course to which other students do not have access

**Finally, please answer the following important demographic questions. Your anonymity is guaranteed.**

**GENDER:** \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female

**AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_ 25 years old or less \_\_\_\_\_ Older than 25 years

**CLASS GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_ Sophomore

\_\_\_\_\_ Junior

\_\_\_\_\_ Senior

**MAJOR:** \_\_\_\_\_ Accounting

\_\_\_\_\_ Management

\_\_\_\_\_ Marketing

\_\_\_\_\_ Economics

\_\_\_\_\_ Computer Information Systems

\_\_\_\_\_ Finance

\_\_\_\_\_ General Business

\_\_\_\_\_ Nonbusiness major

# DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING WITHIN A MASTER OF SCIENCE IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

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## ABSTRACT

*Critical thinking involves an important set of competencies, skills, and behaviors that can be systematically developed and cultivated. Critical thinking is fostered within the Master of Science in Leadership Program to help students achieve higher levels of thinking through the program and also to help them improve their leadership acumen. The paper describes critical thinking, provides background on the Paulian view of critical thinking used within the program, and presents the approach used to infuse critical thinking into the curriculum. The Master of Science in Leadership Program introduces critical thinking in the first required course and weaves critical thinking concepts and exercises throughout the entire program. Program administrators and course developers incorporated desired learning points into the curriculum through conceptual frameworks, active learning activities, targeted instructional techniques, and intellectual moves. Each of those components is part of a schema that ensures students engage concepts at the highest analytical levels within their individual contexts as leaders.*

*Topic Area: Leadership Education*

*Keywords: Critical thinking, leadership, online learning, distance education, instructional strategies*

## INTRODUCTION

Leaders reason through emergent situations. In environments of rapid change, application of old solutions do not always work with new problems. Complex, adaptive environments require leaders who think. The Master of Science in Leadership (MSL) program incorporates critical thinking at its core. Critical thinking is considered a foundational set of competencies, skills, and behaviors that can be systematically developed and cultivated.

While critical thinking is widely recognized as important and institutions are developing instructional tools to enhance critical thinking development, academics are still puzzled on how to teach critical thinking. Many students are not aware of their thought processes and do not approach reasoning in a disciplined or systematic way (Scott, 2014). To address the gaps in our students' thought processes, the MSL provides explicit critical thinking instruction throughout the program and uses a critical thinking assessment to assess understanding of basic critical thinking skills. From a programmatic perspective, administrators are interested in ensuring that students improve their critical thinking skills and that improvements persist over the duration of the program.

The importance of having students thinking at the highest levels served as the impetus to infuse critical thinking in the Leadership program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University-Worldwide (ERAU-WW). The MSL is a comprehensive leadership development program.

Critical thinking is introduced in the first required course and systematically developed through each subsequent course. In the MSL program, the readings, learning activities, assignments, discussions and tests that permeate each week's activities throughout the courses and program have critical thinking components. The students begin by learning critical thinking concepts and carry those concepts through each activity outlined in the program. To expose how we have done this, we define and discuss critical thinking, provide relevant background on our MSL program, describe our approach to critical thinking in our program and explain the activities we use to teach both leadership and critical thinking concepts.

## CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking, with origins dating back to ancient Greece, emerged as a focal point of modern education. The modern movement of critical thinking in education gained momentum with the implementation of California Executive Order 338 in 1980 and the release of the U.S. Government report, *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. California Executive Order 338 mandated critical thinking instruction in the California State University system and *A Nation at Risk* recommended critical thinking be at the forefront of all educational levels. *A Nation at Risk* reported that most 17 year old students failed at complex, logical tasks and yet those skills were needed in the workplace. The report recommended that students needed to develop advanced cognitive skills and should continue improving those skills throughout their careers (Notgarnie, 2011). The California Executive Order 338 and the *Nation at Risk* catalyzed the interdisciplinary focus of critical thinking in education. In 1990, the American Philosophical Association (APA) commissioned a Delphi study composed of a panel of educators, philosophers and scientists.

This study produced a definition of critical thinking and listed attributes of critical thinkers (Falcione and Falcione, 1996). The APA report stressed three key points, including: (a) critical thinking is a holistic phenomenon that is not domain specific, (b) critical thinking should not be conflated with other models of thinking, and that (c) developing and applying critical thinking involves interaction with the context provided by domain knowledge (Sadler, 2010). As such, the work of critical thinking in an educational context became vitally important and research of critical thinking increased significantly.

Research has served as the foundation for critical thinking, particularly since the 1980s, as writers sought to clarify the definition of critical thinking. Raternick (2005) expressed that several critical thinking meanings exist within the discipline. Paul, Elder and Bartell (1997) argued that it is unwise to rely on one definition of critical thinking because of the wide application and the 2500 years of tradition. Glasser (1941) suggested critical thinking involved considering problems from one's experience, knowledge of the methods of inquiry and the skill to apply those methods. Robert Ennis (1987) defined critical thinking as "reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. xviii). Lipman (1991) described critical thinking as "skillful, responsible thinking that is conducive to good judgment because it is sensitive to context, relies on criteria and is self-correcting" (p. 116). Hare (1998) referred to critical thinking as a deliberate assessment of claims through defined standards of proof. Finally, Paul (1993) called it "thinking about your thinking, while you're thinking, in order to make your thinking better" (p. 91).

The Paulian approach to critical thinking, named after Richard Paul, serves as a foundational element of the MSL program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University-Worldwide. Paul is known for his impact on critical thinking in education. The Paulian approach deconstructs thinking into eight constituent parts (elements; see Figure 1), which can be assessed using criteria (standards) and held up against universal ideals (virtues). The approach can be used to reason through any idea within any context.

## The Elements of Thought

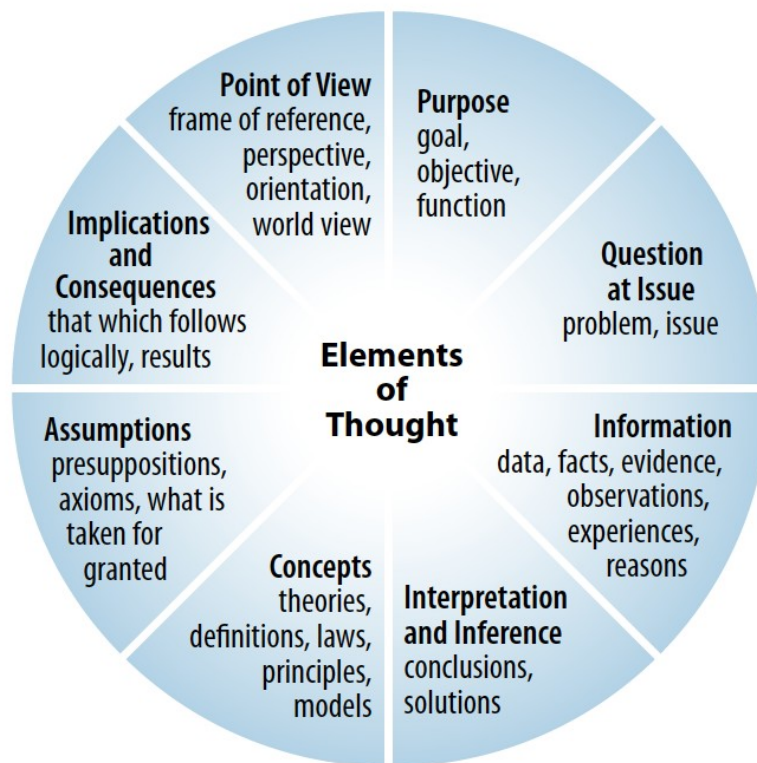


Figure 1. *Elements of Thought*. Reprinted with permission from *The Thinker's Guide to Analytic Thinking: How to Take Thinking Apart and What to Look for When You Do* (p. 5) by L. Elder and R. Paul, 2012, Tomales, CA: Critical Thinking Foundation Press. Copyright 2012

Paul's elements of thought are based on eight components that allow one to define thinking among a set of interrelated intellectual processes (Elder & Paul, 2012). It is not important to reason through each element in a certain order; however, because all thinking contains all of the elements, it is important to cover each element individually to serve as a framework to think about complex issues (Broadbear et al, 2000). A second concept of Paul's approach to critical thinking is

intellectual standards. These standards are used as a self-assessment tool to make thinking clear, accurate, broad, and fair (Elder & Paul, 2012). In other words, intellectual standards help keep thinking on track. These intellectual standards apply to academic thinking and have implications for everyday life. (Broadbear & Keyser, 2000; Elder & Paul, 2012).

Finally, the Paulian approach to critical thinking focuses on intellectual traits necessary for right action and thinking. According to the Foundation for Critical Thinking (1996) several valuable intellectual traits (virtues) are important to the critical thinker. As one practices critical thought, these traits become inherent in the critical thinker (Broadbear & Keyser, 2000). It is with the previous frame of reference that a discussion of the background of the MSL program is important.

### **MASTER OF SCIENCE IN LEADERSHIP - BACKGROUND**

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's mission is to teach the science, practice and business of aviation and aerospace (University, 2013). Founded in 1925, just 22 years after the Wright brothers' first flight, the non-profit, private university has grown to offer academic programs in two traditional campuses located in Daytona Beach, Florida and Prescott, Arizona. The university also provides instruction around the world through over 150 satellite campuses and online. Though recognized as a leader in aviation and aerospace education, ERAU offers a wide array of academic programs in several disciplines. In Embry-Riddle's Worldwide campus, three colleges (Aeronautics, Arts & Sciences and Business) offer several courses of study.

Embry-Riddle launched the MSL degree program in 2012 with the vision of developing capable and confident leaders who will be prepared for organizational leadership in a hyper turbulent, global environment. The program was designed around six program outcomes that focus on developing a whole leader. The MSL program employed a backward design approach in curriculum development where the course learning activities were used to achieve course outcomes that are derived from the program outcomes. The intention was to create a coherent degree program focused on achieving the program objectives. The MSL is a 36 credit-hour degree program encompassing 10 core courses and two elective courses. MSL program developers believed that strong critical thinking is a foundational competency for exceptional leaders. Consequently, critical thinking was infused into the course development process.

### **APPROACH TO CRITICAL THINKING IN THE MSL PROGRAM**

The MSL program uses a structured approach to incorporating desired learning points into the curriculum. Table 1 defines key terms used to describe the MSL program approach. The most important elements of the schema are *frameworks*, *techniques*, *activities* and *moves*.

*Frameworks* define and explain key concepts within the program. *Activities* are common assignments used to teach and assess the concepts. *Techniques* refine and develop the frameworks in a way that makes the concepts accessible to the students. Finally, *moves* to underscore key learning points and create shifts in mindset.



**Table 1**  
**Definition of critical thinking concepts with the MSL Program**

Term	Definition
Activity	A unit of instruction designed to teach one or more concepts
CARS	An acronym for Credibility, Accuracy, Reliability, and Support used to evaluate a claim
Concept Map	A diagram used to develop and illustrate interrelated aspects of a concept
Elements of Thought	Eight essential components of thought (i.e., purpose, question-at-issue, information, interpretations and inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications and conclusions, point of view)
Frameworks	The concepts, theories, and models that form the basis for the content and modes of instruction
Going around the Circle	A technique to consider each of the eight elements of thought, so named because the elements are typically arranged in a circle
Intellectual Virtues	Universal principles guided by morality or justice (e.g., intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual perseverance)
Intellectual Moves	Questions or practices intended to create an intellectual shift that causes students to understand concepts at a deeper level
Paulian Critical Thinking	A critical thinking framework based on the work of Richard Paul
SEE-I	An acronym for State, Elaborate, Exemplify, and Illustrate used to clarify a thought
Standards of thought	Criterion to assess reasoning (i.e., clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness)
Technique	A method of instruction that is designed to elicit certain learning behaviors while developing the concepts in a framework
QEDS	An acronym for Question, Elements, Discipline, and Standards used to remind students to consider the question-at-issue using the elements of thought, within the context of the discipline, against the intellectual standards

## Frameworks

Frameworks are analytical models used to conceptualize program learning outcomes. These frameworks act as schema for students to approach and understand learning objectives. The program employs a variety of frameworks as part of the program curriculum. For instance, servant leadership is a leadership framework and transactional analysis is a communications framework taught in the program. This paper focuses on the critical thinking framework.

The MSL program primarily teaches the Paulian approach to critical thinking. Students study elements of thought, standards of reasoning, intellectual virtues, and barriers to critical thought. The Paulian approach is taught explicitly in the first three weeks of the first nine-week course. The first course is prerequisite to the eight other core courses and the capstone course. After the first three weeks of explicit instruction, the critical thinking framework is integrated into learning activities and instructional techniques so that critical thinking is infused throughout the entire curriculum. In this way, critical thinking concepts remain at a conscious level.

## Activities

Learners are exposed to Paulian Methods through multiple activities that extend through the MSL program. The course designers developed common instructional activity types as the main tools for teaching and assessing students. The activity types are used for all instruction, not just critical thinking instruction. Readings are used to explore scholarly points of view on course concepts. Discussion questions provide an informal opportunity for students to interact with students and professors. Reflection blogs enable students to journal about how concepts relate to their lives. Case studies develop insight into how others have operated. Annotated bibliographies, literature reviews and papers are used to formally research and develop concepts. Presentations provide students opportunities to share their work in creative ways. Team activities offer students the opportunity to work more deeply with their peers. Concept mapping is used to explore the systems nature of concepts. The way these activities relate to critical thinking instruction is explained below.

In order to develop a baseline of critical thinking understanding, we provide direct instruction in basic critical thinking concepts and definitions for the first three weeks of the introductory course. During those first three weeks, students read *Learning to Think Things Through: A Guide to Critical Thinking across the Curriculum* (Nosich, 2012). The book is used as a textbook and helps establish the student's preliminary understanding of critical thinking.

Initially, students are asked to consider prominent definitions of critical thinking (Ennis, Lipman and Paul mentioned above) and to derive their own definitions based upon their own experiences, class discussions, and course readings. Students develop their thoughts about how these definitions differ, what might be missing or how the specific words are used in the various definitions. At this point in their study, the students have not been exposed to how to explicitly review a definition using critical thinking elements and standards. Consequently, most students develop a critical thinking definition derived from the presented definitions and that does not contain original concepts. Once learners have reviewed the definitions of critical thinking and started to read through the Nosich (2012) text, they are introduced to the instructional activities:

Discussion questions allow students an opportunity to examine aspects of course concepts. The students respond to a prompt that relates to one of the course activities and then engage with their classmates in an interactive discussion of the material. Other students can then provide supporting or counter-examples from their own experiences. Some discussion questions relate directly to critical thinking concepts and terminology, while other questions invoke critical thinking techniques in the discussion.

While discussion questions are public, reflection blogs are more private. Students are asked to journal about various concepts using reflection blogs. The blogs challenge the students to extend their thinking by applying concepts to their personal and professional experiences. The activity allows for reflection, deepening connections and applications for the leader's thinking.

Case studies are developed around short readings on leadership or organizational design challenges. The students use a systematic approach to analyze, evaluate, diagnose, and provide solutions to case challenges. Cases have ambiguous situations requiring learners to resolve

complexities and apply course learning material in novel ways. Students are challenged to think through cases thoroughly so that they do not dismiss potential solutions.

Students prepare annotated bibliographies using the elements of thought as the framework for the annotations. The elements of thought provide a suitable map for ensuring that the student annotates a source systematically and fully. Students describe a leadership article using the technique. They look at the author's point of view and purpose for writing the article. They consider the question at issue within the context of the leadership discipline. They review the facts and information available; evaluate the author's assumptions, and consider the implications and consequences of the author's reasoning. They look for overarching concepts within the literature review section. Finally, they evaluate the conclusions and interpretations. Instructors use the standards of reasoning to evaluate how well the student developed each element.

Literature reviews develop the student's ability to identify, review, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly sources. Learners choose leadership articles relevant to their particular interests and projects. Critical thinking is required to synthesize multiple sources effectively into a comprehensive review of the literature. Learners also must place their sources into a matrix form, which helps them learn to synthesize using a visual format.

The MSL Program requires papers formatted based on the style manual of the American Psychological Association. Assignment length is dependent upon the particular learning objectives for the activity; many papers fall within the range of 1000 to 1500 word count.

Students are encouraged to use the elements of thought as a general framework for their papers to ensure that they have adequately covered the material. Writing is one of the most effective ways for students to develop their thoughts into coherent, well-reasoned positions.

Learners develop and deliver presentations that present their findings, propose new strategies, or showcase specified information. Presentations encourage students to be creative, clearly articulate their ideas, and present concepts concisely and persuasively. Students learn to use new technologies and to avoid text-rich, bullet-heavy, presentations.

Some MSL Program activities are completed in teams. The activities are essentially the same as the individual activities except that the learners must develop a team charter in which they outline their roles, responsibilities, and commitments. The team activities are designed to create learning communities and cause the learners to navigate through the complexities introduced in a team environment. Learners are encouraged to confront biases, fallacies, and key intellectual standards as part of the team formation process and throughout the group activity. Learners develop important communication, leadership, and team building skills.

Concept maps are used throughout the program in a variety of activities. Maps are used to outline assignments; clarify and construct concepts; categorize, group and relate ideas as systems; connect and scaffold prior knowledge with course concepts; and explore possible connections. Additionally, concept maps are used to manage projects, tasks, and file structures.

The MSL Program activities are often ambiguous enough to allow students to develop and select the techniques they will use to accomplish the activity objectives. The ambiguity is intentional and, at times, causes dissonance with the students. Students often desire to be told exactly how to accomplish their objectives. The intention of the ambiguity is to persuade learners that life and leadership do not lend themselves to tidy answers or provide explicit instructions on

how exactly to achieve an A grade. Learners struggle with the concept and are often unable to grasp that meaningful learning may be more important than the grade they obtain in the course.

All of the activities are graded using customized rubrics that contain critical thinking components. For example, discussion questions and papers are graded to ensure that students adhered to standards of thought and that students gave appropriate coverage to each element of thought.

Learners take the Critical Thinking Basic Skills Assessment (Thinking, n.d.) four times during the MSL program. The assessment is not graded as part of the coursework and is used to provide an external benchmark for the learner's knowledge. We have not been able to collect reliable data to perform descriptive statistics on student performance. We intend to use the information to improve the integration of the critical thinking concepts into the curriculum.

To summarize, frameworks are concepts that we want to teach and activities are common instructional methods used across the program. We now turn our attention to techniques.

## Techniques

Techniques are used to further explicate and develop the frameworks and to accomplish the work of the activities. Techniques are usually specific to an educational objective. As an example, a SWOT analysis is a common business technique for evaluating the strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) of a project. A SWOT analysis would be appropriate to evaluate the feasibility of a marketing campaign but would not be effective to conduct a breakeven analysis for a new product.

We develop the critical thinking framework using the specific techniques of going around the circle to capture each of the elements, assessing the thinking using the standards of reasoning, using the SEE-I technique to improve clarity, reading critically to ensure understanding, writing critically to aid expression and develop coherence of thought, mapping concepts to develop a systems approach, using QEDS to develop thinking within the discipline, and using CARS to evaluate Internet resources.

1. *Go around the circle to capture each of the elements: Going around the circle is a method used to ensure that each of the eight elements of thought are considered for the question at issue. It is not important to consider each element in a certain order; however, because all thinking contains all of the elements, it is important to cover each element individually.*
2. *Assess the thinking using the standards of reasoning: Critical thinking is assessed against nine key standards of reasoning: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness. MSL Program thinkers assess their thinking by examining their thinking against each standard.*
3. *Use the SEE-I technique to improve clarity: SEE-I is used to clarify a thought by developing the thought beyond the initial statement. Elaboration provides additional context to the initial statement that might be started with the statement "In other words...." Generally, students are instructed to elaborate in four sentences or more. The example helps to increase understanding with a concrete exemplar that limits misinterpretation. The concept is illustrated with a simile, metaphor, model, or some illustration that is representative of the idea.*
4. *Read critically to ensure understanding: Critical reading entails carefully reading material using the critical thinking framework to analyze and assess the material. The reading is reviewed for*

- coverage of the elements, assessed using the standards, and evaluated against intellectual virtues and barriers to thought.*
5. *Write critically to aid expression: Critical thinking skills are developed through writing exercises. Students go around the circle and ensure that they have discussed each element of thought. They hold their writing up against the standards and consider whether their writing exhibits barriers to thought.*
  6. *Concept mapping to develop a systems approach: The MSL Program uses a concept mapping software program that allows ideas to be connected to multiple other ideas using parent, child, and cross-link relationships. The concept map is used to show that leadership concepts are interrelated and exist within a system. The software program automatically recognizes when a word has been used and provides a prompt to the user to create a cross-link to the previous concepts. It is useful to map the elements of thought for a particular idea.*
  7. *QEDS to develop thinking within the discipline: The QEDS approach is used to examine a question, thinking through each element of thought within the leadership discipline while applying the intellectual standards to their thought processes. This approach is used to emphasize the need to think through ideas within the leadership discipline or within a leadership context. This is useful to help the thinker consider context and point-of-view carefully as well as consider a slightly different question at issue if necessary.*
  8. *CARS to evaluate Internet resources: CARS is a simple approach for evaluating Internet sources. The source is examined for evidence that the author has made a credible claim that appears to be trustworthy and to determine if the information presented appears to be accurate, relevant, and complete. The source is examined for reasonableness to determine if the claim was presented evenly, in a fair and unbiased manner. Finally, the source is examined to determine if the claim can be corroborated using other sources or the documentation supplied. The CARS approach is not rigorous, but can be used to quickly evaluate an Internet source.*

The techniques are effective in assisting students develop a better understanding of how concepts are constructed. A challenge for professors is to ensure that students connect the purpose of the techniques with the desired learning outcomes. That connection helps the student see the bigger picture and also prevents students from developing the perception that they are wasting their time on useless assignments. The program does have some built-in assurances that students will understand the connections through the use of intellectual moves.

## **Moves**

An intellectual move is used to help students understand concepts. The idea behind the moves is that they challenge the learner to engage the material at a different level. Instead of intellectualizing a concept, the learner is asked to play with the concept in a way that makes it more real and more accessible. A move is typically a question that invites the learner to confront a potential bias or block. Moves are essentially a form of Socratic questioning that creates a rich possibility for deep interaction between students and professors. Table 2 provides a sample of intellectual moves and describes the purpose and intended result of the moves.

**Table 2**  
**Representative Intellectual Moves**

Move	Purpose	Result
Would you be happy to learn your surgeon had the same study habits that you have?	Challenges the learner to think about whether study habits are suitable.	This can be a trigger that study habits need to be improved
Do you have the intellectual perseverance to complete this program at a high level?	Causes the learner to consider intellectual perseverance as prerequisite to success.	The learner is challenged to commit to the intellectual perseverance required to excel in the program.
Is the value of your degree program diminished if social loafers successfully complete the program?	This question causes the learner to feel indignation towards people who do not provide sufficient effort.	Increases commitment, intellectual perseverance, and recognition of value of degree.
Describe what you will have learned in the program by the time you complete.	This question puts learners into a forward thinking mode.	Learners starts to design their own learning objectives; they start to challenge or adopt given learning outcomes.
How can you immediately put this knowledge that you have learned in this activity (course or program) to use in your work or your life?	Reinforces immediate, positive, and actionable result from the activity that can be applied to the learner's situation.	Learner incorporates active learning into environment.
What were the three most important things you learned in this activity (course or program)?	This question causes the learner to reflect on the value of the learning experience.	Reinforces positive learning outcomes and engages reflective behavior.
How did your previous knowledge or experience benefit your classmates?	Reminds students that their knowledge, experiences, and stories are a primary means by which their classmates are learning.	Puts pressure on learners to ensure they are engaging in mutually beneficial interaction with their peers.
What concepts were unclear to you? How will you improve your understanding in these areas?	These questions help the students think through whether there were portions of the material that they did not understand.	Puts onus on students to improve learning strategy or reinforces their mastery of the material.
How is what you are learning about leadership in this activity (course or program) that is different from what you have experienced in your career?	This question helps the students use contrasting to bring in experiences from their lives.	In many instances, they will find that the experiences are similar to their own. Otherwise, they have a rich source of material from which to engage their classmates.
Ultimately, who is responsible for your learning (you, your instructor, your university, others)?	This question reminds the student that he is responsible for ensuring that he is getting the most out of the program.	Engages an internal locus of control and helps prevent them from placing blame on the instructor or the institution.
Ultimately, who suffers if you do not focus on what is important to your learning, your life, and your experience?	The question helps the student keep their priorities at the forefront.	Engages an internal locus of control.
How do your personal characteristics compare with the leadership concepts being studied (both strengths and weaknesses)?	Engages self-discovery awareness .	Leads to heightened self-awareness of how the learner is operating as a leader.

## CONCLUSION

In Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University-Worldwide's MSL program, critical thinking is considered a foundational set of competencies, skills, and behaviors for leaders. Critical thinking can be systematically developed and cultivated. The MSL, incorporating many ideas from the Paulian view of critical thinking, introduces critical thinking in the first required course and then instills the critical thinking concepts through the entire program. The MSL program provides direct critical thinking instruction throughout the program and uses a critical thinking assessment to assess understanding of basic critical thinking skills. In addition, the MSL takes a structured approach to incorporating desired learning points into the curriculum through frameworks, activities, techniques, and moves aimed to improve student thinking of leadership concepts by engaging them in all of the material.

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# **FACTORS INFLUENCING GRADUATES RECRUITMENT DECISIONS: THE CASE OF TANZANIA CORPORATE RECRUITERS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Recruitment process is one of the core functions of organizations as the quality of recruited employees affects the performance and the survival of an organization. Following mass enrolment in Higher Education Institutions, the quality of graduates brings with it a debate on how corporate recruiters recruit graduates. The study examines recent recruitment processes and recruiters search behaviour using case study approach. Interviews were conducted with human resources managers in different sectors to find out how corporate recruiters recruit graduates. Study findings reveal that graduate recruiters use more formal recruitment channels than informal channels when searching for new graduates. Both formal and informal methods are used to select potential applicants. There is a growing trend towards using assessment tests than academic qualifications during screening process. The study established communication skills, attitude, curriculum vitae presentation and behavioural qualities as important aspects that influence recruitment decisions of graduates by corporate recruiters. Study recommendations and implications for graduates and Higher Education Institutions' stakeholders are provided.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Recruitment is among the core functions of organizations and effective deployment of human capital has clearly been recognized as a key contributor to organizational effectiveness (Ahmed, 2009). According to Richardson (1989) recruitment impact most critically the performance of an organization and acquiring and retaining high-quality talent is critical to an organization success. Following changes in the labour market, factors such as mass enrolment in Higher Education Institutions (Tan & French-Arnold, 2012) and advancement in technology (Hager, Holland & Veckett, 2002; Datta, 2001) have changed the way organizations recruit graduates (Steiner & Gilliland, 1996; Anderson & Witvliet, 2008). Indeed, technological change and globalization continue to increase the demand for skilled workers that can operate successfully in the global environment (Karoly, 2010). In this context, organizations are becoming more flexible and responsive and accordingly are changing their preferred recruitment channels in response to changing labour market conditions (Russo & Gorter, 2000; Russo, Gorter & Schettkat, 2001).

Studies on recruitment have focused on applicant attraction to organizations (Larsen & Phillips, 2002; David, 2005; Celani & Singh, 2011), recruitment sources (Rynes, 1989) and employers' recruitment behaviour (Behrenz, 2001; Gorter & Rietveld, 1996; DeVaro, 2005) with the later studies; addressing little on how corporate recruiters recruit new graduates. Gorter & Rietveld (1996) argues that recruiters prefer advertisements as the first recruitment channel when applicants are required to have work experience. Additionally, employers search for personal qualities and characteristics such as professional knowledge, personal engagement and social competence (Behrenz, 2001) characteristics less reflected to new graduates. Few studies have



conceptualized and empirically address the processes and mechanisms explaining how personal characteristics and in particular skills attributes may influence corporate recruiters' decision during recruitment of new graduates (Stewart & Knowles, 2000; Mora & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2009). Recruitment of new graduates by corporate recruiters brings with it different decision making strategies making the subject of interest to explore.

This study addresses this gap by creating empirically grounded propositions on how corporate recruiters make recruitment decisions during recruitment of new graduates in the Tanzanian context. The study responds to the questions; what recruitment strategies do corporate recruiters use to obtain employable and qualified new graduates? What skills attributes do corporate recruiters consider important when making decisions within the recruitment and selection process? What tools and criteria do corporate recruiters use to assess the possession of the skills attributes among new graduates during recruitment process? Abel, Deitz & Su (2014) define a recent graduate as a graduate who is twenty-two to twenty-seven years old and has graduated within the first five years. In this study, a new or a recent graduate falls within the age range, but should have graduated a bachelor's degree within the first three years.

Literature review was conducted to establish the state of art on recruitment channels, potential screening tools and selection criteria used by corporate recruiters. Interviews were conducted with 22 corporate recruiters in Tanzania, firms that operate at local, national and multinational levels. Study findings show that recruiters use formal recruitment channels to attract new graduates. Recruitment from all disciplines is common in auditing and banking financial institutions. In relation to screening of the applicants, there is a growing trend towards using tests particularly aptitude tests to screen applicants views also shared by Branine, 2008. Besides assessing graduates soft skills; employers also demand basic technical and general knowledge from the applicants the attributes that are assessed during interview process. Study findings echo Branine (2008) study on graduate recruitment and selection in the UK, where employers regardless of organization size and activity type tend to use more sophisticated methods of recruitment and selection than before. Study findings can further be tested to a large sample of recruiters to allow for generalization of the study findings.

The study contributes in terms of knowledge first; to recruitment theory where indirectly observable qualities such as self expression are emphasized during recruitment process. Second, the study highlights search channels where new graduates need to focus on if they want to be recruited in corporate firms. Third, the study provides a range of selection tools and criteria besides academic qualifications that recruiters focus on during recruitment process. HEIs' can enhance graduates' understanding on the selection tools and criteria to enable for their smooth transition to the labour market.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the Tanzanian context. Section 3 reviews literature on recruitment process, Section 4 describes study methodology. Section 5 discusses study findings and the last sections provide policy implication, study limitation and conclusion.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES AND THE TANZANIAN LABOUR MARKET**

The growing trend towards unemployment among graduates has been experienced worldwide as many countries suffer the consequences of the global economic recession and worse projections have been made in many countries (ILO, 2013). In Tanzania similar trends have been experienced and the challenge is not only in addressing graduates unemployment

rather it is about absorbing the new entrants to the labour market following mass enrolment in HEI's (TCU, 2009; 2012). According to TCU (2012) facts and figures, enrolment in HEI's has increased by 87 percent from 2001 to 2011 and this came about in response to the government decision to liberalize the establishment, ownership and management of HEIs'. At the graduation rate of 25 percent, almost 75 thousand graduates were released in the labour market in 2011 and it is expected that there will be a 100 thousand plus graduates entering the labour market in 2014 compared to 28 thousand plus graduates that graduated in 2004.

Finding jobs was not a big problem for university and college graduates when the demand for employing university graduates was high, and when university education was elite education (Karadisi, 2012). The government was the main employer of graduates since independence (1961); the practice that changed in 1992 following a new regulation aimed at reducing government expenditure (URT, 2011). This era was characterized by retrenchment of workers and lack of employment among graduates, which was a tragedy for a poor country to have unemployed graduates (Nyerere, 2001). Though the contribution of private and the industry sector to job creation is remarkable (Olomi, 2012), limited information is available on the number of graduates absorbed by the private sectors and available job opportunities in corporate firms and in other sectors.

Karadisi (2012) in assessing the effectiveness of Tanzania universities and colleges in imparting skills demanded by the labour market indicates that; the skills imparted to graduates are not effective to meet labour market demands. While graduates with high level of employability skills are finding it easy to secure employment in any firm, graduates lacking those skills find it difficult to find graduate employment given the competitive nature of the labour market. This necessitated introduction of entrepreneurship courses in HEIs' to enhance such skills, initiatives that are not available for all students in the Tanzanian context (Sabokwigina, 2008; Kilasi, 2011).

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING GRADUATES RECRUITMENT PROCESS DECISIONS**

Recruitment is described as a set of activities and processes used to legally obtain a sufficient number of qualified people at the right place and time so that people and the organization can select each other in their own best short and long term interests (Schuler, 1987). According to Rynes (1989), research on recruitment primarily focuses on three sets of variables namely recruiters (applicant impression and decisions to join recruiters of various characteristics), recruitment sources (recruiters' preferences for various recruitment sources) and administrative policies and procedures (recruitment follow-ups and application processes after job acceptance) with more research conducted on applicant attraction to the recruiter (Keenan & Scott, 1985; Larsen & Phillips, 2002; David, 2005; Gomes & Neves, 2011). Research on recruitment has also focused on personal characteristics and individual factors that affect recruiters' decision during screening and selection process. Such factors include education (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961), relevant experience and learning abilities (Spence, 1974), attitude (McClelland Koetzer & Weinberger, 1989) and indirectly perceivable qualities such as emotional stress and innate abilities (Albrecht, 1981). Research also provides confirming evidence for a link between employability skills (a synergic combination of personal qualities, skills of various kinds and subject understanding) (Knight & Yorke, 2003) and recruitment. The skills are also categorized into core or hard skills (technical knowledge) and soft skills (process skills and personal qualities) (Lorraine & Sewell, 2007; Knight & Yorke, 2004). A perfect blend of

employability skills contribute to enhancing recruitment decision process (Harvey, 2001) and in particular recruitment of new graduates in the current trend following labour market changes.

Recruitment process is categorized into different stages ranging from job advertisement, application process, screening of the job applicants and selection of the right applicants (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003; Devins & Hogarth, 2005). In relation to successful recruitment process are the strategies organizations employ in order to identify and select best candidates for its developing pool of human resources (Dessler, 2000; Richardson, 1989). The strategies are diverse and largely depend on employers' sector, nature of service, nature of applicants and involve exploration of search channels, screening tools and selection criteria. In other instances, an overlap exists between screening and selection processes making it complex to differentiate the tools and / or criteria used under each process.

To attract potential job applicants, recruiters use formal (newspapers, recruitment centres, career talks, graduate programs) and informal search methods (internal recruitment, word of mouth and informal networks). The key factors driving employers' choice of recruitment channel include; the channels' ability to bring qualified candidate (Gorter & Rietveld, 1996), labour market conditions (Russo & Gorter, 1996), nature of the job (Bunt, McAndrew & Kuechel, 2005) and related costs (Behrenz, 2001). Rees & Shultz (1970) argues that informal methods generate more intensive information and are more preferable for short recruitment duration.

Recruiters use different tools and criteria to screen potential job applicants. There exist formal (such as curriculum vitae (CV), tests, interviews, assessment centres, work experience, probation periods) and informal recruitment techniques (such as referrals). While work experience is likely to be assessed during application process, personal traits are most commonly assessed by subjective judgment in the interview process (Devins & Hogarth, 2005). Assessment centres are used to observe applicants' team-working and soft skills (Arthur & Edens, 2003). Nebraska (2011) suggests for multiple recruiting channels such as career talks and graduate recruitment programs to provide information about job when recruiting graduates.

The quality and nature of the position also affect whether an employer uses formal or more informal method to select and screen job applicants. While the use of recruitment agencies and national newspaper advertisements are most effective in recruiting to senior managerial and professional occupations (CIPD, 2005), local newspapers and recruitment agencies are most effective channels for graduates and the unemployed people (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003; CIPD, 2005). In relation to the screening and selection of the potential applicants, Jenkins & Wolf (2005) identify the extent to which employers use tests over qualifications in the recruitment process instead of relying on historical evidence presented in a CV or application forms. According to Newton & Akroyd (2005), psychological tests ranging from aptitude, personality and intelligence are commonly used to measure skills attributes and in particular they assess applicants' soft skills competencies. A CIPD (2005) survey of UK employers for example shows that the most common selection methods used to short list and screen job applicants include interviews, CV or application form (68 percent), tests for specific skills (50 percent), literacy & numeracy tests (39 percent) and telephone interviews (30 percent) commonly in call centres given their relevance to the job. While one-to-one interviews was common in private sector, academic references was commonly used by the public sector and structured interviews with a selection panel was frequently used for senior and managerial roles.

Other factors that affect recruitment process include; gender, social economic status and ethnicity (Blasko & Shah, 2002), study institution in terms of reputation and image (Deephouse

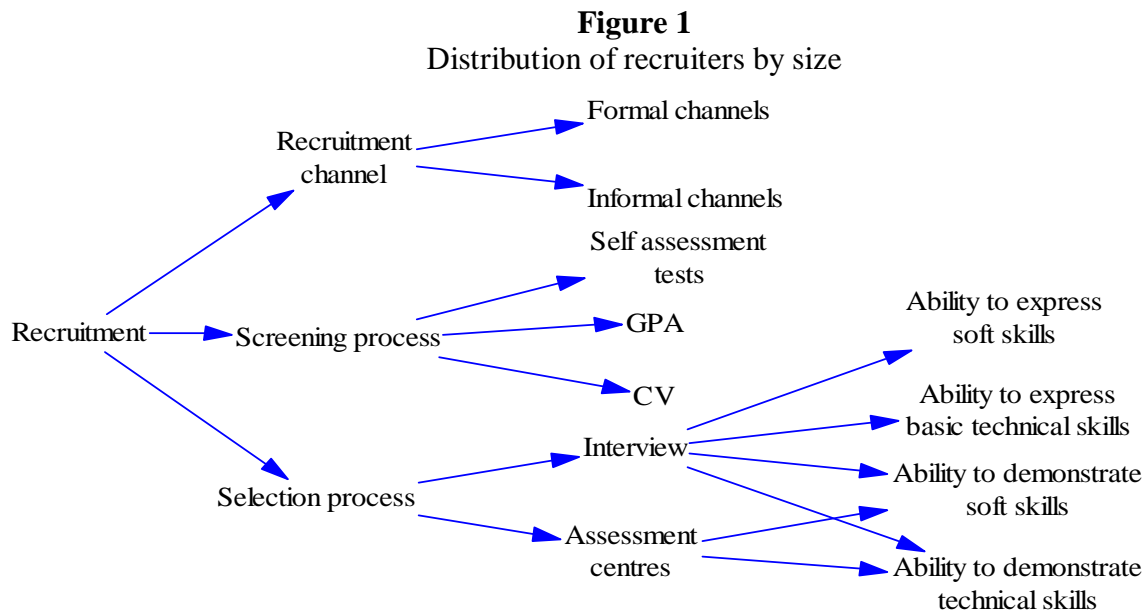
& Carter, 2005; Pampaloni, 2010) together with age of the applicant and experience (Behrenz, 2001). For example, an exploratory study of Swedish employers by Behrenz (2001) on who gets the job and why found out that, about 60 percent of employers regard lack of education and experience as the major reasons to eliminate applicants as not appropriate for the vacancy. Age of the applicants is also used to screen applicants where applicants above 45 years of age are eliminated.

While recruitment decision factors cut across different industries and job types, studies on recruitment of new graduates referred to as entry level jobs indicates that employers expects younger people to be less likely to have work experience. According Johnson & Burden (2003) new graduates recruiters tend to focus upon soft skills and behavioural attitudes during recruitment process, with a less prominent role played by qualifications which traditionally has been used as major selection criteria. While some employers screen job applications on the basis of degree classification, others often require applicants to undertake a series of skills activities and tests to produce a personality profile (Arthur & Edens, 2003). Such practices widen access to more diverse group of potential job applicants who may otherwise be missed because they have not attained good academic qualifications (Morley & Aynsley, 2007). In addition, the honours degree classification system may not be reliable (Yorke & Knight, 2007) and there have been concerns about grade inflation (Germaine & Scandura, 2005.) following different regulations and practices pertaining to degree outcomes in different universities (Yorke & Knight, 2007). In contexts where advanced general skills are scarce, recruiters acquire and develop such skills through accumulating mechanisms, which include effective selection and continually enhancing those skills internally through both training and work (Ghoshal, Moran & Bartlett, 2001).

Other employers hire graduates from a range of disciplines and select the ones that are flexible, adaptive and capable of learning on the job. Such firms are committed to lifelong learning and have identified values which are used to determine cultural fit of its employees (Hager et al. 2002). Studies by Ratcliff & Associates (1995) found out that other employers recruit from a limited range of institutions with a view that there will be as much diversity within universities as between them.

Based on the literature outlined, no studies have critically assessed how corporate firms recruit new graduates following mass enrolment in HEIs' and particularly in the Tanzanian context. Additionally, though the skills attributes are assessed by recruiters during recruitment process, few studies have assessed when such attributes are assessed during recruitment process. Recruitment being the function of application through the right channel(s), screening and selection processes, establishing what is assessed under each process will add value to the current literature and to different stakeholders of HEIs including graduates.

Figure 1 presents the study conceptual framework. To summarize the figure, applications are accompanied by academic credentials and CV or application forms (Jenkins & Wolf, 2005). Once screening is done, applicants are further subjected to interview process where they demonstrate the skills attribute (Newton & Akroyd, 2005). Applicants can further be assessed through assessment centres depending on the nature of organization (Arthur & Edens, 2003). Graduates who pass the selection process are more likely to be recruited by prospective employers and develop their career thereon.



## METHOD

To understand the dynamics of graduates' recruitment process, qualitative methodology was considered well suited to achieve the study objectives (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003; Maurer & Ebers, 2006). Qualitative data have strong advantage over quantitative data in drawing insights that could not be gained with hard data (Mintzberg, 1979; Smirchich, 1983; Orum, Feagin & Sjoberg, 1991). According to Jones (2001) focusing on more narrowly defined groups of recruiters, generates rich data and that qualitative data are rich and holistic, with strong potential for revealing complexity.

Interviews were conducted with 22 corporate recruiters in Tanzania to gain an understanding on; recruitment procedures; (search channels and application process), decision factors and policies influencing the process; (screening tools and/ techniques), what employers consider during selection process (selection criteria) and factors employers think influence new graduates' recruitment decisions. The sample is representative in the Tanzanian context and provides a good source of data for the study as it addresses the research questions. According to (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003) research based on qualitative studies should include between 4 and 10 cases to reach theoretical saturation and through the sample, theoretical saturation was realized. Selection of case studies was purposive and reflected a range of employer types, sizes and sectors. The criteria for sample selection were whether the recruiter had recruited new graduates over the past three years and that they attract new graduates from different disciplines a growing trend among corporate recruiters (Kostoglou, Vasilakopoulos & Zafeiropoulos 2007).

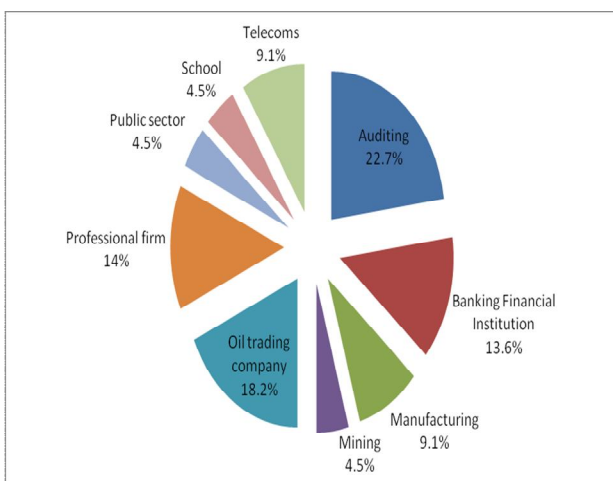
Study participants were first contacted via telephone to establish their willingness to participate in the study. This was followed by email conversation exploring issues pertinent to the research objectives. On average the interviews sessions lasted for forty to sixty minutes. Interviews were transcribed in a non-linear fashion; whereby participants responses not related to the question asked but relevant to another section were included in the respective section

accordingly. Information obtained was exhaustive since most of the interviewees rephrased the statements in different words. The transcripts were imported into MAXQDA 11, qualitative research software to facilitate the analysis. Both classical and free codings were used during the coding process and a total of 15 codes with related sub-codes were created. Free coding was used to ensure no information is missed in the coding process. To verify the coding, data was processed more than twice with two researchers going through the interviews. In terms of measures, the variables assessed were recruitment channels, screening tools, selection criteria and recruiters' expectations as reflected in figure 1.

The distribution of respondents based on the nature of business and sample size is reflected in Figure 2 and 3 respectively.

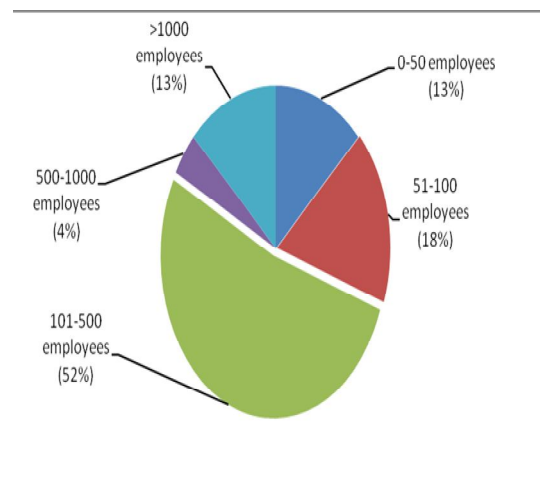
**Figure 2**

Distribution of respondents by nature of business



**Figure 3**

Distribution of recruiters by size



## RESULTS

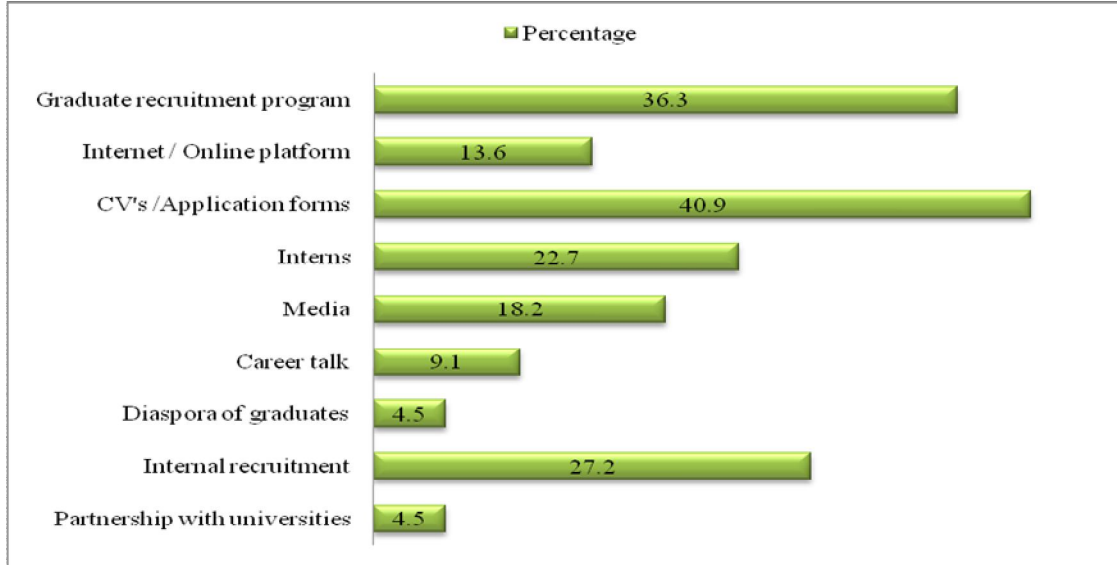
In terms of characteristics, 72.7 percent of the respondents are privately owned, 18.2 percent have public - private partnership and 9.1 percent are owned by the government. This indicates that a good number of corporate firms are privately owned. All firms had a personnel and recruitment department, characteristic common in large firms. 16 firms (72.7 percent) offer 0-20 open posts per year and 5 firms (22.7 percent) receive 1000 plus applicants per year common in the public sector, auditing firms, recruitment agencies and the mining sector. There exists diversity on the nature of graduates demanded by recruiters. While 22.5 percent of study respondents recruit from specific disciplines, 66.63 percent recruit from all disciplines and 10.67 percent recruit from specific institutions. On average auditing firms receive more graduate applications and over half of firms (59.1 percent) receive 0 - 200 applicants. Table 1 summarizes number of job applicants per nature of service and the recruiters open posts per year.

Attribute	Categorization	Sector										
		Oil Trading Companies	Auditing	Education Institution	Banking FIs'	Recruitment agencies	Civil sector	Industry/Manufacturing	Telecoms	Mining	Total	Percent
Job applicants per year	0-200	4	2	1	1	2	-	2	1	-	13	59.1
	201-400	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	9.1
	401-600	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	4.5
	601-800	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	4.5
	601-1000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1001 and above	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	5	22.7
Open posts per year	0-20	4	4	1	2	1	-	2	2	-	16	72.7
	21-40	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	9.1
	41 and above	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	1	4	18.2
Total percentage ( percent)		18.2	22.7	4.5	13.6	13.6	4.5	9.1	9.1	4.5	100	

### Recruitment channels

As reflected in Figure 4; 40.9 percent of the recruiters receive drop-in CV's. This is a useful means of attracting a wider pool of applicants by recruiters' and is cost effective. Auditing firms are the ones leading in receiving drop in CV's (44.4 percent), followed by recruitment agencies (22.2 percent) and schools (education sector) and telecoms and banking each with (11.1 percent). The most used recruitment channels are graduate recruitment program (36.3 percent), internal recruitment through informal networks such as word of mouth (27.2 percent), database of interns (22.7 percent), advertisements through media such as newspapers (18.2 percent) and online platforms (13.6 percent). Other channels are career talks (9.1 percent) and diaspora of graduates and partnership with universities both with (4.5 percent). Graduate recruitment program is used by telecom companies (37.5 percent), Oil trading companies (25 percent), Mining (12.5 percent), Recruitment agencies (12.5 percent) and Auditing firms (12.5 percent). Internal recruitment is commonly used by recruitment agencies (60 percent), oil trading companies (20 percent), telecoms (10 percent) and schools (10 percent).

**Figure 4**  
Recruitment channels



### Nature of job applicants sought for by recruiters

The study analyzed the nature of job applicants demanded by corporate recruiters. Almost 60 percent of all recruiters recruit applicants depending on the nature of their business or service. Recruitment from all educational backgrounds which was represented by 40.9 percent is common in auditing firms, banking & financial institutions and telecom companies. Among the reasons for recruiting graduates from different fields include; solving business problem demanding expertise from other fields. Substantiating this with an illustrative quote, one staff partner commented that;

*We need inquisitive minds from other disciplines to solve auditing problems. We recruit people from education, law and medicine and even other disciplines... they pass very well in our aptitude tests and even in our profession qualification exams. We don't have scientific explanations but it is through challenges we came to work on this aspect and it gives us a broad ability to work with people from different disciplines (7\_Auditing firm).*

In the same line, study participants were also of the view that some graduates are not oriented to their right careers in the course of their study not only at the university but even from the lower levels. In due course when such graduates are oriented to the right career during job orientation and job rotation, they become best candidates in other fields different from their study disciplines. The new placement after orientation may definitely determine ones future career. As another staff partner said;

*This is an accountant firm but we do not attract only accountants. We go to universities...; we attract good candidates from all disciplines to apply whether from Education, from Science... If they meet our requirements we take them and we make them become very good accountants. We have got very good examples... (5\_Auditing firm).*

Another interviewee commented that;



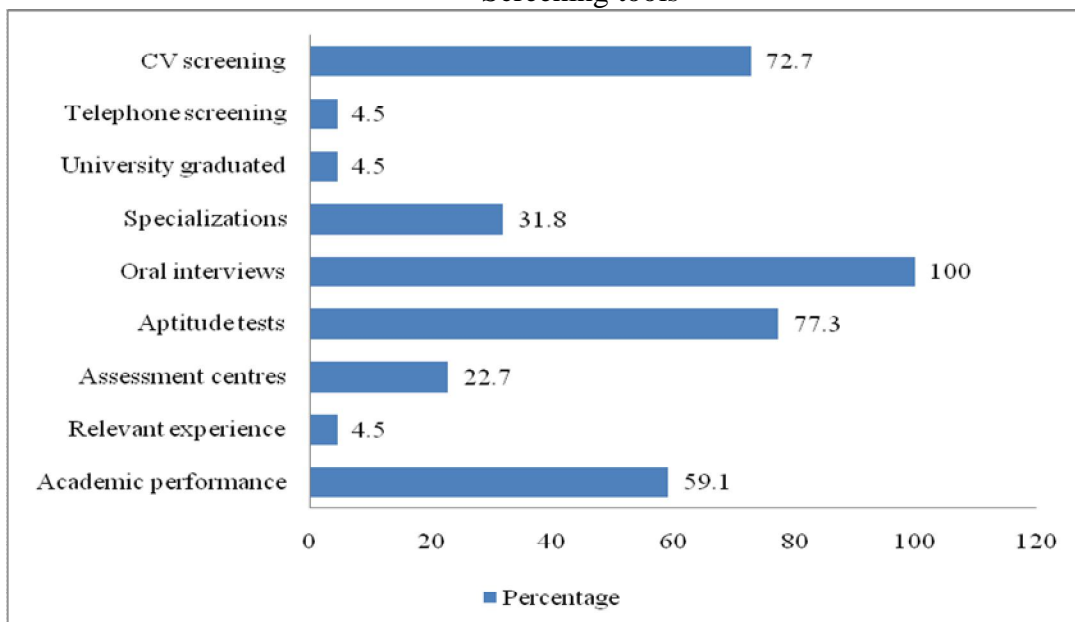
*We use graduate program as recruitment channel and this involves recruiting graduates directly from school and put them under coaching and training. This takes 2-3 yrs before we expose them to managerial positions. We get accountants, engineers but later they become very good marketers. For example I had a friend of mine who is a medical doctor but he is among the best HR in the country... (9\_Telecoms).*

### Screening tools and selection criteria

Study respondents were to respond on the tools used to screen best applicants. As reflected in Figure 5, all recruiters use interviews during selection process. Interviews are best suited as they assess oral communication, self expression, language command and how sociable are the applicants when faced with an interview panel (Devins & Hogarth, 2005). Other highly ranked screening tools are aptitude tests (77.3 percent), CV screening (72.7 percent) and academic performance (59.1 percent). Aptitude tests are best suited for recruiters who receive a large number of applicants and those needing more skilled employees. On the academic performance, other firms extend the pass marks to include subject performance from lower levels particularly in Mathematics and English commonly in auditing firms. As one of the staff partner narrated;

*...We did a test and found that people who did well in Maths and Science have good analytical mindset and we decided to go to lower level to look for the graduates who did not study Math at the university (7\_Auditing firm).*

**Figure 5**  
Screening tools



It was also noted that the tools / criteria are used at different stages of recruitment process. While some firms use interviews as first criteria others use interviews as last criteria before recruiting the applicant. Other recruiters in addition to the aptitude tests subject applicants to personality test to assess areas that demand clarifications during interviews. As reflected in

Table 2; academic performance and relevance of the technical specialization are the first screening tools each with 40.9 percent. These are the factors that are considered when employers go through a CV. It can as well be noted that 27.2 percent of the firms do not use CV as a screening tool rather they use assessments tests particularly aptitude test which ranked second high (36.4 percent). Though academic qualification and technical expertise ranked first as screening tools; 22.7 percent of the recruiters reported academic qualification in terms of grand average point (GPA) as not applicable as selection criteria. Additionally 27.3 percent of the recruiters commented applicant's technical expertise is not applicable as screening criteria. With an illustrative quotes;

*We do not focus on GPAs. I have realized not only people with A's perform well; people with C's; (the average people) are the ones that perform wonderful. I do not look for GPA, I look for the output. (23\_Manufacturing firm)*

*Previously we considered GPAs but now we have got many problems as there are many universities and we do not know how they compute their universities qualifications. Graduates from some universities have lower GPAs but perform well. Applicants with equivalent qualifications might have very good GPAs but are not good (11\_Civil sector).*

<b>Screening tools</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>4th</b>	<b>5th</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Trial / Probation period	9.1	9.1	9.1	18.2	27.3	27.3
Use university pass marks (GPA)	40.9	27.3	4.5	-	4.5	22.7
Aptitude and Personality Test	9.1	36.4	31.8	22.7	-	-
Relevance to the vacant post in terms of technical expertise	40.9	18.2	9.1	4.5	-	27.3
Assessment Centre	-	-	13.6	9.1	-	77.3
Oral interview	9.1	18.2	22.7	45.5	4.5	-
University where one has graduated	9.1	-	-	-	-	90.1
Telephone screening	-	4.5	-	-	-	95.5
CV screening	36.4	36.4	-	-	-	27.2

N/A – Not Applicable

Figure 6 further presents summary of the screening tools as per the recruiters' nature of business or service. The findings show that, aptitude test, oral interview and CV screening are almost used by all recruiters during recruitment process followed by academic qualifications. Second, work experience, study institutions and telephone screening to be the least methods used by the study participants during recruitment process.

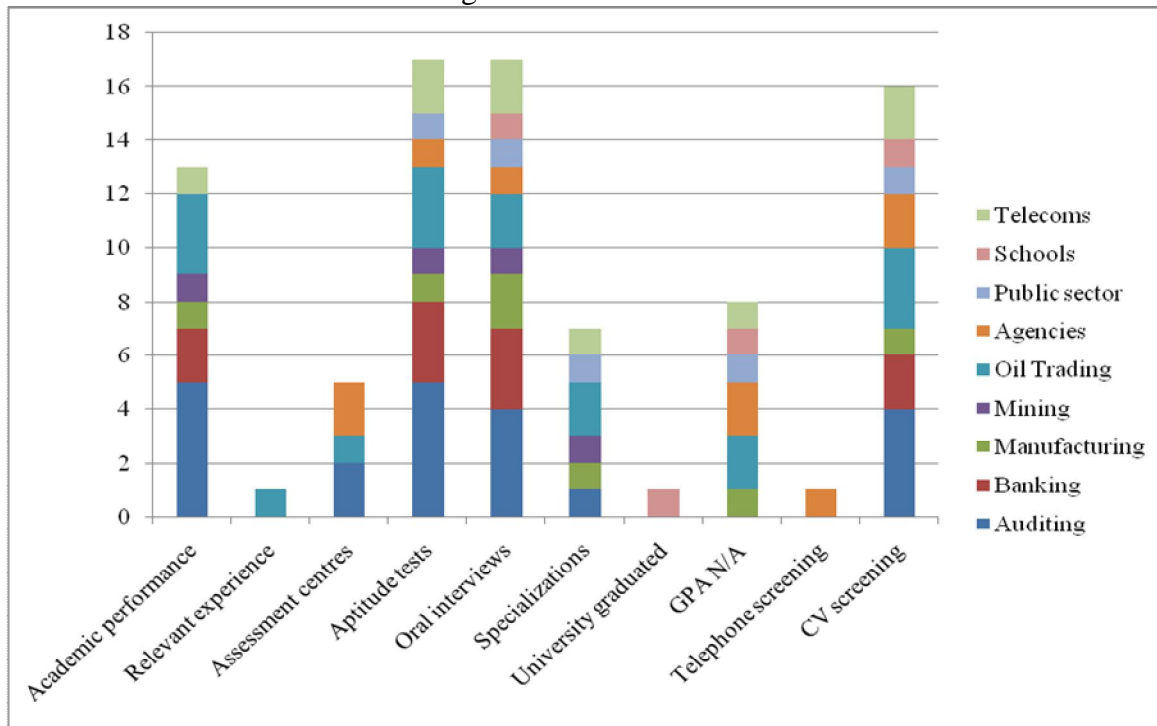
## **Interview process**

### **Nature of interview questions**

Prior to the interview process, an interview panel is selected. Study participants interview panel consist of; a team of Human Resources Manager, respective department member and a member from another department (81.8 percent); professionals in the field of recruitment (4.5 percent) and consultants from different specializations (4.5 percent). During interview, though interviewers expect graduates to have lack of formal relevant experience, experience obtained

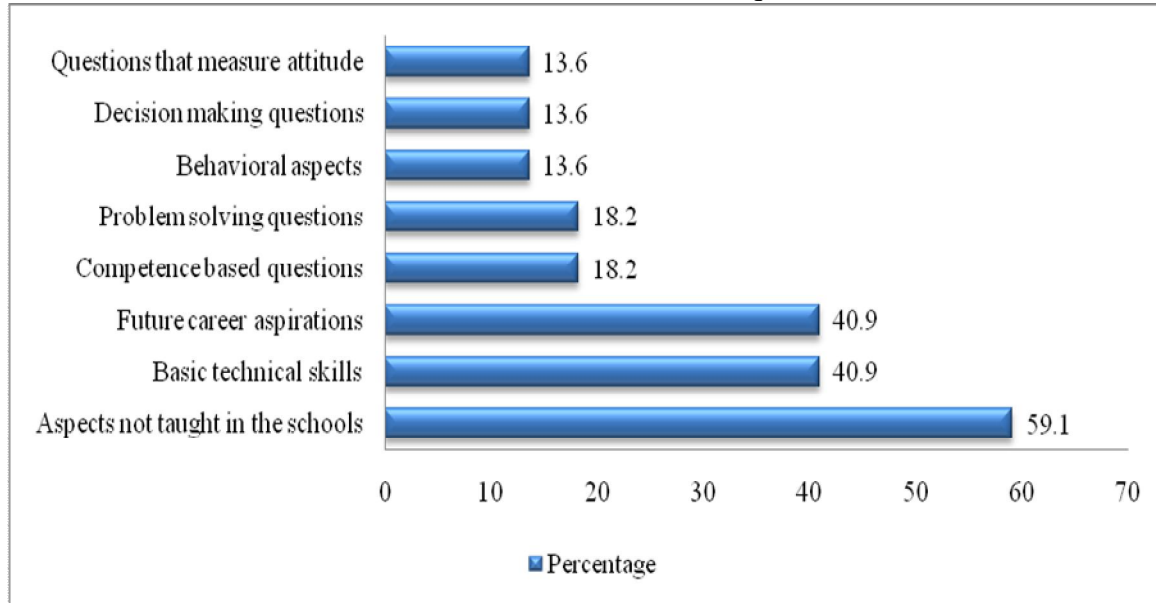
from their engagements in formal and informal activities is important. As reflected in Figure 7; 59.1 percent of the study participants ask questions that focus on aspects not taught in school. Of these respondents; (31 percent) are auditing firms, oil trading companies (15 percent), recruitment agencies (46 percent) and schools (8 percent). The objective is to measure individual soft skills and ability to apply and transfer the knowledge learnt in the world of work.

**Figure 6**  
Screening tools in relation to the nature of business



The interviewers also ask questions demanding individual understanding of the basic technical skills (40.9 percent); such as meaning of accounting in the banking industry and types of maintenance for engineers. In terms of representation, almost all recruiters ask questions demanding graduates understanding on basic technical skills with auditing and recruitment agencies each (20 percent) and 10 percent each for banking financial institutions, manufacturing / industry, schools, public sector, telecoms, and oil trading companies.

**Figure 7**  
Nature of interview questions



40.9 percent of employers are also interested to know future career and aspirations of job applicants and in particular where graduates see themselves 5 to 10 years ahead. The study found out that of this representation, 50 percent were the auditing firms, oil trading companies and manufacturing each 15 percent and 10 percent each for recruitment agencies and school services. As one partner narrated;

*The nature of our business is more of professional and the roles are pyramid shaped. (14\_Auditing Firm).*

*We want people who demonstrate the ability to grow from one level to another. These apply more or less in all firms (21\_Auditing Firm).*

The study also established that 18.2 percent of the firms ask competence based and problem solving questions. Competence based questions demand candidates to give specific real life examples as the basis of their response giving reasons for their decisions, whether their action brought a positive or negative outcome(s), and what they learned from that experience. Competence based questions are commonly asked by recruitment agencies (50 percent), oil trading companies and public sector each with 25 percent. For the problem solving nature of questions; 50 percent are asked by auditing firms and 25 percent by both mining and recruitment agencies.

The study further found out that recruiters asks questions that measure attitude (13.6 percent), behavioural aspects (13.6 percent) and decision making questions (13.6 percent). In terms of firms representation, 67 percent of the decision making questions are asked by auditing and oil trading companies (33 percent); 25 percent of the behavioural aspects are asked by both mining firms, oil trading companies, the public sector and schools; and for the attitudinal questions half are asked by oil trading firms, auditing firms (33 percent) and schools (17 percent).

### **Employers' expectations during interview process**

The study further established what employers would like graduates to express and demonstrate during interview process. The top ranked attributes included communication skills (90.9 percent), flexibility and adaptability (40.9 percent), knowledge about the company (36.4 percent) and how they will add value to the company (36.4 percent). Graduates need also to demonstrate good mastery of interviewing skills, presentations skills and a good command of English language. With an illustrative quote one HR commented that;

*...Some students have higher GPA's and therefore hardworking is recognized if you pass well and this guarantee a good job but graduates need to demonstrate this and convince the employer of such high pass marks. Individuals' competencies and the ability to convince employer that the academics belongs to him / her and has achieved them is important (66\_Manufacturing).*

Indeed,

*...one is not bound to job descriptions but rather seeing beyond what is expected... one need to advice on the areas that are critical. We need people who can challenge the status quo and contribute, add value to the institution. For personal expression, one needs to express self and represent the institution outside (9\_School).*

Behavioural aspects during interview and in particular body language and dress code are also given consideration. Additionally, applicants need to make an impact in the course of their conversations as well as expressing their ability to learn. As one Human Resource Manager explained;

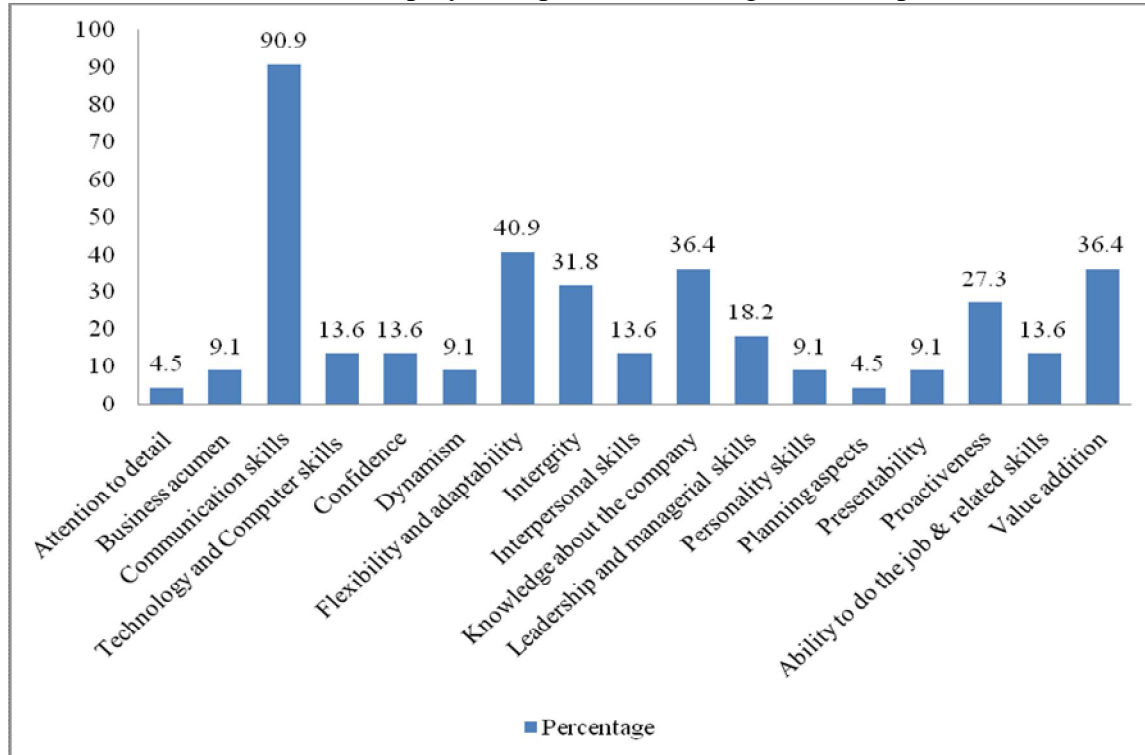
*When you work as a human resource, you learn a lot of psychology. When an interviewee comes in, just by a look or by asking a question you understand the person. The problem with recent graduates, they do not know what an interview is, and how to conduct themselves before and during interview (13\_Manufacturing firm).*

Business acumen (the ability to understand clients business in relation to the industry) need also to be demonstrated during interview process. As one staff partner narrated;

*We need graduates with right attitude, with easiness to learn, eager to grow, with the right business acumen, better in terms of knowledge than our clients.... Auditors have to understand the business/ entity/ industry in which the firm they are auditing operates.... but at times we do not get what we want. New graduates do not meet the required competencies. I am ready to get more, but there are few with the right attitude and acumen (16-17\_Auditing firm).*

Other important aspects are as reflected in Figure 8 with most of them falling into broader aspects of employability skills as advocated by Yorke & Knight, 2004.

**Figure 8**  
Employers expectations during interview process



### Factors that influence recruitment process

The study explored employer's views on the factors that influence recruitment process as reflected in Figure 9. In order of preference the factors include communication skills (90.9 percent), attitude (77.3 percent), CV presentation (31.8 percent) and behavioural aspects (27.3 percent) with most of these factors assessed during interview process. Communication skills involve one's ability to market about self fluently and confidently. As one of the human resource manager narrated;

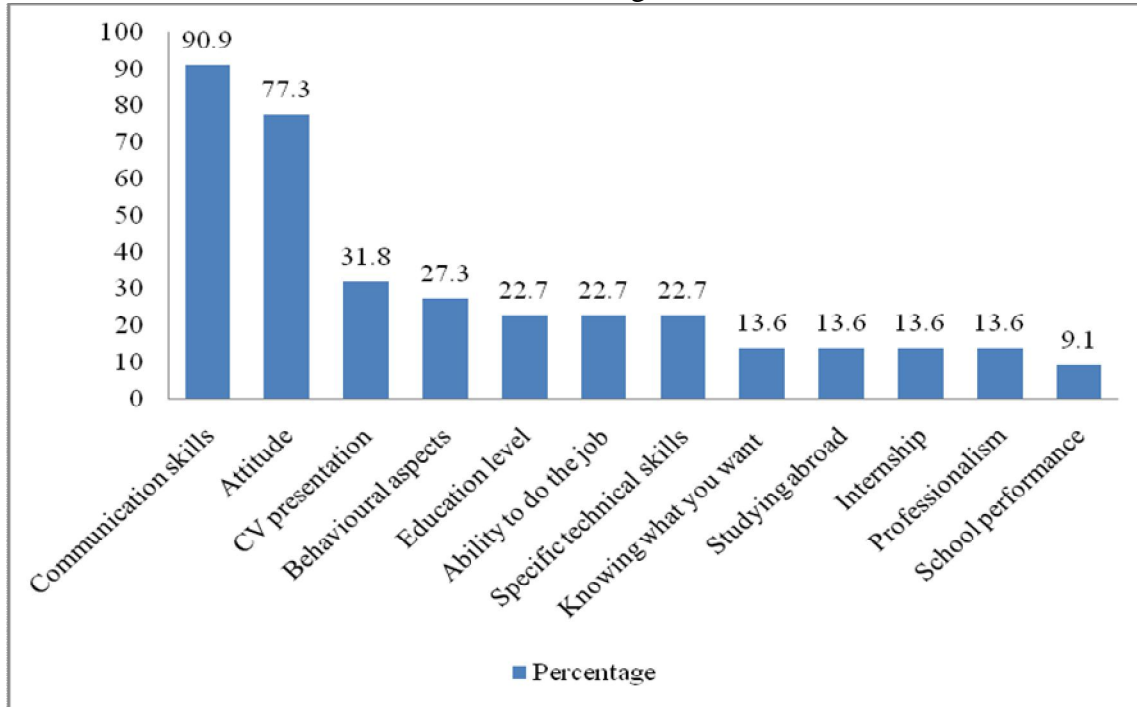
*... People have got very good certificates. We do not employ the certificates. We look for the capability of a person to translate the learned or certificates to actionable. Certificates are there to back up..., beauty and books have to go together.... (25\_Telecoms).*

*... We need people with the ability to sell themselves. Interviews are a turning point. If you cannot sell yourself it is useless. (39\_Recruitment agency).*

Attitude has to do with the ability to be ready to learn and as an entry job applicant the willingness to start at any level and / or any cadre. Other attributes that fall under attitude are the ability for someone to take things at one time and the belief that it takes time for one to develop a career and in the process one has to learn and adapt to the world of work. Other aspects include level of education (6.2 percent), whether one has attained a university degree or other equivalent qualifications and that they possess professional qualifications; ability to do the job (6.2 percent) and the basic technical knowledge (6.2 percent). School performance was found to be the least

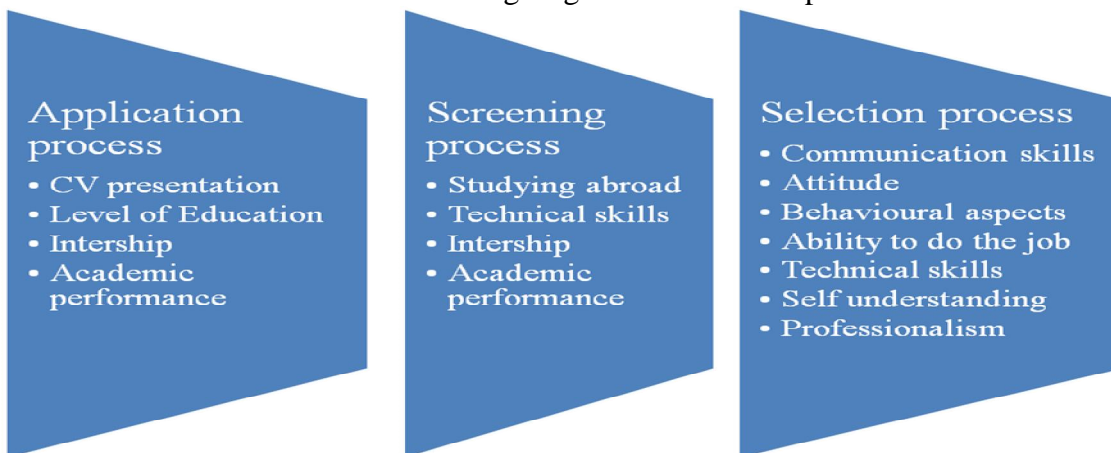
important factor during recruitment process (2.5 percent) and as Canny (2004) commented, employers overlook a lack of qualifications if young adults demonstrate positive attributes.

**Figure 9**  
Factors influencing recruitment decisions



The factors were further categorized into the three recruitment processes as reflected in figure 10. Though an overlap exists on the factors within the recruitment process stages, both factor attributes play a role under each recruitment process.

**Figure 10**  
Factors affecting stages of recruitment process decision



## DISCUSSION

The study addressed a research question about how corporate recruiters make recruitment decisions when recruiting new graduates in this era. Specifically, the study addressed the following questions; what recruitment strategies recruiters use to obtain qualified and employable new graduates and the related selection tools and criteria. Study results shows that almost all recruiters receive drop-in CV's and that they use more than one recruitment channel. The most recruitment channels used are graduate recruitment programs, internal recruitment, database of interns and media particularly news papers. According to Keenan, (1995) and Ryan (1996) graduate recruitment program and university career talk were used traditionally to search for potential graduate employees. Indeed, Branine (2008) found out that less than 45 percent of UK graduate employers use graduate recruitment programs compared to 54 percent reported by Keenan (1995). Furthermore, the most popular recruitment channel is internet which in recent study is the third least recruitment channel. Studies to indicate the trend in graduates' recruitment channels in Tanzania are limited and the study suggest this as an area for further research.

Results also show that formal channels are used more than informal channels when recruiting new graduates and these are the recommended to be more appropriate recruitment channels for graduates (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003). Lindeboom, Van Ours & Renes (1994) found that informal contacts and advertisements are successful search channels to bring about matching between those who wanted to change their jobs and vacancies as well as recruitment at higher wages (Mortensen & Vishwanath, 1994). Devins & Hogarth (2005) however argues that when informal methods are used those without contacts in the workplace, unemployed and some inactive groups are unlikely to hear about job opportunities and therefore are disadvantaged. Furthermore, informal strategies limit the diversity of the workforce (Canny, 2004) the advantages that are overcome for when formal channels are used. Though formal recruitment channels leads to a pool of applicants, such channels lead to a perfect match between firms and job applicants (Russo & Gorter, 1996) and this diversify firms' workforce (Canny, 2004).

Study results also indicate that the nature of service determines recruitment channel. While internal recruitment particularly word of mouth is common in recruitment agencies, career talk is common in auditing firms and graduate recruitment program is common in telecoms companies, oil trading companies and mining sector. Advertisement in media is common in government posts and internship common in banks and manufacturing industries. Most banks also have partnerships with some universities. This confirms studies by CIPD (2005) about the nature of business service in relation to the selection of recruitment channel.

Most of the recruiters use more than one screening and selection tool with interview used by all. The commonly used tools in order of application preference are academic performance, subject speciality, interviews and assessment centres. Though limited literature is available on the order of preference of the screening and selection tools, studies by (Stewart & Knowles, 2000; Branine, 2008) show that a range of methods are used during the recruitment and selection process of first entry jobs with interviews predominating. Taylor (2005) recommends for the need of using a variety of selection methods to give the best result and allow individuals to shine in different areas where they may have personal preferences.

Employers during interview process pose questions that address aspects not taught in school both discipline related and unrelated. New graduates are assumed to have no prior work experience and their engagement in employability skills development activities assess their ability to demonstrate their experience. Employers value attributes such as flexibility,



adaptability to work, cultural fit, ability to demonstrate leadership skills and confidence. As Sackett & Lievens (2008) comment, employers look for applicants' qualifications and qualities that enable them to cope with the demands of competitive business environment.

The study therefore established first, communication skills, attitude, CV presentation and behavioural aspects as the top attributes that influence recruiters' recruitment decision during new graduates' recruitment process. Other attributes include technical skills and ability to do the job.

Second, the study grouped the factors into three stages of recruitment process; application, screening and selection processes. Once applicants submit their applications, CV is the major tool used to short list applicants where both soft and hard skills are assessed. Though both skills are further assessed during interview process, soft skills form the basis for selecting best candidates. Lastly, and based on the study findings the following propositions are proposed;

- Proposition 1      There is a growing trend towards corporate recruiters attracting applicants from any field of study; new graduates fulfilling selection criteria irrespective of the study discipline are more likely to be recruited by any recruiter.
- Proposition 2      Depending on the nature of service, different screening and selection tools are used at different stages of recruitment process. New graduates armed with multiple tools are more likely to be recruited by corporate recruiters compared to graduates armed with fewer tools.
- Proposition 3      Interviews assess questions demanding basic technical knowledge, process skills (problem solving skills) and personal qualities (attitude and behavioral aspects). New graduates who can use their informal experience to demonstrate possession of such skills are more likely to be recruited by corporate recruiters.
- Proposition 4      Recruitment is the function of application, screening and selection processes. Selection criteria and in particular skills attributes that employers assess during interview process are the major factors that influence recruitment process among recruiters.

Indeed, literature supports that soft skills are of greater importance than technical skills during recruitment process (Evans & Kersh, 2004; Fan, Xiangdong & Junsen, 2005; Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001; Sumner, Bock & Giamartino, 2006).

## CONCLUSION

The study adds to the current understanding of recruitment methods, tools and selection criteria recruiters use to recruit new graduates in the Tanzanian context. The methods vary among different sectors and businesses. Most firms use formal recruitment channels to attract new graduates' applicants. Several screening tools and criteria are used before graduates become recruited by specific recruiter. Study findings provide information to graduates on what is expected of them during recruitment process and in particular; recruitment channels available for them, firms where they can secure employment; the nature of skills demanded by each firm; and at what stage of recruitment process a certain criteria and/selection tool need to be adapted. With higher number of graduates released in the labour market, the process of recruitment has become more sophisticated and there is a growing trend towards using aptitude tests to measure personal qualities which was less common a decade ago.

Though recruiters receive large number of job applicants getting the right candidates is challenging and this demands recruiters to use several criteria to get the right candidates. Recruiters' value attributes such as communication skills, attitude, and behavioural aspects the skills that are accumulated both within the core curriculum and in aspects and activities not taught in the core curriculum, which the study categorized as employability skills development program (ESDP) activities. This calls for a need to engage university students on a variety of ESDP activities. These not only develop their work experience, but also enhance the development of soft skills more demanded in the world of work.

The study addressed corporate recruiters in Tanzania most of which use formal recruitment strategies limiting generalization of its findings in other contexts. Additionally, since selection of the sample selection was purposive, some sectors due to the nature of their structure could not allow selection of more than one respondent. The same study can therefore further be conducted to a large sample of employers using quantitative research to allow for the generalization of the study findings. The study however provides the basis for further discussion and a link to further research work on recruitment of new graduates in this era.

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# INCORPORATING BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE INTO MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT-RELATED COURSEWORK

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## ABSTRACT

*Marketing research and decision analysis courses often tend towards the statistical and predictive end of the business intelligence (BI) spectrum. On the other end of the BI spectrum, data querying and reporting – exemplified by online analytical processing (OLAP) tools – are more closely aligned with database management techniques that are not typically taught within marketing or management courses. However, OLAP-focused coursework can be a value-added component of business curricula, especially marketing curricula; and as defined and discussed here, it can be realized via readily available tools – specifically Microsoft Access “Group By” queries and Microsoft Excel “Pivot Tables.” Although readily available, such tools generally receive limited attention in the business school classroom.*

*Experience teaching an OLAP-focused course to hundreds of marketing (as well as logistics and management) majors over several years can offer in-depth insight into its successful implementation, particularly in taking the concepts beyond mere technical tools and into content-relevant techniques and objectives. Perhaps the most telling indication of its importance and success has been the number of students who subsequently have commented on their use of OLAP analysis – primarily Excel Pivot Table analysis – in their jobs. Such comments help to build a case for the use and usefulness of utilizing Microsoft Access and Excel to incorporate OLAP-related techniques into marketing and management-related courses.*

## INTRODUCTION

Sales and marketing strategies are some of the more significant targets in the push to harness the massive amounts of data being generated and collected in the digital age. As McKinsey & Company put it, “Big Data is the biggest game-changing opportunity for marketing and sales since the Internet went mainstream almost 20 years ago” (McKinsey & Company, 2013, preface). Broadly defined, big data “represents a source for ongoing discovery and analysis” (Arthur, 2013); and a recent survey showed business decision makers favoring big data technologies such as analytical databases, business intelligence tools, and relational databases (McCafferty, 2014). At the intersection of these technologies, an opportunity exists to introduce students to the relevance and power of using relational databases and analytical techniques as they apply to business intelligence, especially with respect to marketing decision making.

Business intelligence (BI) is an umbrella term that encompasses various levels of analysis and decision support, ranging from predictive analytics tools to standard reporting tools (Davenport and Harris, 2007). On one end of the BI spectrum, analytics tools are used primarily to predict what will happen and thus are geared towards statistical modeling and forecasting. On

the other end of the spectrum, reporting tools are used to summarize what has happened and thus are geared towards querying and summarization best exemplified by online analytical processing (OLAP), a “slicing and dicing” technique of grouping and summarizing data.

While many marketing courses (as well as various other business courses) have emphasized the use of statistical tools and techniques, the same cannot be said about OLAP-style querying and summarization. However, not only are OLAP tools very relevant to marketing professionals and to business professionals in general, they also can be explored via readily available software such as Microsoft Access and Excel. This paper defines and discusses an OLAP-focused course and relevant projects that have been employed as a value-added part of a marketing curriculum, with potential extensions to other business majors.

### **MOVING BEYOND STATISTICS**

Many BI-related courses have been and continue to be a part of marketing programs as well as broader business curricula. In particular, courses related to data mining, marketing research, and database marketing are not uncommon. However, these types of BI-related marketing courses often tend towards the statistical and predictive end of the BI spectrum of techniques, as is fitting with statistically-focused data mining coursework. However, the more broadly-defined area of marketing research is concerned with both data collection and data interpretation; yet marketing research courses also tend to emphasize the use of statistical tools and analyses (Stern and Tsang 2002).

Database marketing – a topic that deals with the segmentation and targeting of customers – is perhaps the most relevant to OLAP-style data analysis. But here again, even database marketing courses tend to ignore OLAP in favor of statistical analysis. To that point, one study (Teer, Teer, and Kruck 2007) of database marketing courses showed that nearly all of the surveyed courses included statistical topics (to varying degrees); and at least half of them required statistics and/or marketing research as a prerequisite. Moreover, while all of the surveyed courses covered database creation, only half of them employed a hands-on database project, and none of them included OLAP topics.

### **OLAP-STYLE DATA SUMMARIZATION**

Although OLAP usually refers to specific types of software and/or database tools, it often is generally associated with a “slicing and dicing” style of analysis. OLAP tools address questions pertaining to “how much”, “how often”, etc. whereby data are grouped and summarized along different dimensions (i.e., variables) of interest. For example, OLAP tools could easily group (e.g., by country) thousands or even millions of individual sales records to quickly summarize (e.g., sum) the total dollar revenue generated per country. In this case, “country” is the selected dimension (variable) of interest, and “sum of revenue” is the selected summary operation and summary measure of interest. While summing the revenue per country may sound simplistic, it is the ease with which summarizations can be generated, as well as the power to do so even when dealing with large amounts of data. Such analyses also can be easily filtered by specific values (e.g., by date, by product, etc.).

In the general sense of slicing and dicing, data can be summarized via various methods and with various levels of complexity, ranging from system-generated standard reports in which the business analyst (or student) need not understand the underlying mechanics; to a user-controlled manual manipulation of the data whereby the analyst must understand the structures of the data as well as the workings of the tools used to retrieve it. This range of summarization methods is exemplified by dashboards on one end and relational databases on the other.

### **Simple: Dashboards and Pre-defined Reports**

OLAP-style data summarization can be simplified when enabled by a dashboard. For example, customer relationship management systems (such as Salesforce.com) allow users to easily summarize sales and marketing-related activity (e.g., sum the revenue generated per sales lead source). Such systems utilize dashboards with predefined queries whereby data summaries and reports are generated simply by selecting variables and values of interest. In general, dashboards allow for the structure of the database and the mechanics of the queries to be treated as a “black box” that fully manages (and thus hides) the summarization process. In exchange for simplicity, dashboards may have some limitations in terms of the customizability and/or range of possible analyses and reports.

### **Complex: Databases and User-Defined, Multi-Table Queries**

Conversely, using queries to generate OLAP-style summarizations can be a less limiting but more complex task, often requiring a greater level of knowledge and skills. Relational database queries, for example, often rely on some understanding of multi-table database concepts. While this knowledge and skill set may be somewhat difficult to achieve for a non-technical business analyst, database mastery can help to produce valuable summary information. With respect to Microsoft Access, for example, the complexity of “Group By” queries may discourage their use; but they are quite value-added as they allow for an OLAP-style summarization of the data. By aggregating and summarizing groups of records, such queries can readily and flexibly provide summaries (e.g., total revenue or number of orders) that reveal performance along some variable of interest (e.g., customers, products, brands, stores, time periods, etc.).

### **Powerfully Simple: Flat File Spreadsheets and OLAP-Style Pivoting**

With a level of complexity between dashboards and relational databases, single-table “flat” files also can utilize OLAP tools. For example, similar to “Group By” queries but reflecting many of the graphical interface features of leading OLAP tools, Microsoft Excel’s Pivot Tables allow for true-to-form OLAP-style summarization. However, unlike relational database queries, Pivot Table analyses usually are conducted on data in a single spreadsheet (rather than in multiple tables); and as such, Pivot Table analyses do not require an in-depth understanding of multi-table querying techniques. Despite the seemingly simplistic structure of the data, the latest versions of Excel can handle more than a million rows; and Pivot Table



analyses can easily and powerfully group thousands of records to produce summarizations (as well as charts and “drill-downs”) along multiple dimensions of the data.

## IMPLEMENTING AN OLAP-FOCUSED MARKETING COURSE AND/OR PROJECTS

An OLAP-focused course and/or OLAP projects can be positioned as a valuable addition to marketing curricula, even in those that already include data mining, marketing research, or database marketing courses. OLAP-focused coursework can employ specific tools such as Powerplay and MicroStrategy Web (Hart et al., 2007) and can even utilize web portals (such as the Teradata University Network) designed for data warehousing and analysis projects (Jukic and Gray, 2008). However, educators can take advantage of readily available data and more familiar tools in the forms of Microsoft Access (with a focus on “Group By” queries) and Microsoft Excel (with a focus on Pivot Tables) as a basis for exploring marketing questions and analyses at different levels of BI complexity. The use and usefulness of these tools are discussed alongside relevant projects and learning points.

### Relational Databases and “Group By” Queries

Prior to proceeding into OLAP concepts, coursework should begin with a review of relational databases and querying. Sample databases such as Northwind (included with Microsoft Access) or Adventure Works (associated with Microsoft SQL Server) provide rich and relevant data sets that can be used as the foundation for an extensive review as well as for an in depth project. The Northwind database mimics customer order data and includes the types of tables shown in Figure 1 (note that a “Detail” record represents a single line item of an order).

**Figure 1**  
**Northwind Database – Selected Tables and Fields**

Table	Partial Listing of Fields
Customer	Customer ID, Name, Address, City, State, Zip Code
Order	Order#, Date, Freight Charge
Detail	Order#, Product ID, Quantity Ordered, Price Paid
Product	Product ID, Name, Category, List Price, Quantity in Stock

The database introduction should proceed to coverage of “Group By” queries, which provide a mechanism for analyzing and summarizing sales data beyond simple query techniques. While “Group By” queries do not receive regular attention in the classroom, they are a powerful feature of Microsoft Access (and other relational databases). Figure 2 outlines an example of a “Group By” query based on common values in the Category field. Each product belongs to just one category; so for each line item (i.e., Detail record), the revenues (price x quantity) for the products are grouped and tallied into the related categories. For example, if the Product table shows that Product ID 1 (Chai Tea) belongs to the Beverage category, then when Product ID 1 appears on a line item, its price x quantity is added to the Beverage group. Using analyses similar to this, a project can include various OLAP-style groupings and summarizations (see Figure 3).

**Figure 2**  
**“Group By” Query: Sum of Revenue per Category**

	QUERY		RESULT	
Field:	<sup>1</sup> Category	<sup>2</sup> Revenue: [Price] * [Quantity]	Category	Revenue
Table:	<sup>1</sup> Product	<sup>2</sup> Detail	Beverages	286,526
Total:	<sup>1</sup> Group By	<sup>2</sup> Sum	Dairy Products	251,330
Sort:		<sup>2</sup> Descending	Meat/Poultry	178,188
			Confections	177,099
			Produce	105,268

<sup>1</sup>Grouping By the Category field from the Product table,

<sup>2</sup>Sum the Price\*Quantity fields from the Detail table, and sort Descending by the sum

As outlined in Figure 3, a project based on the Northwind database and an OLAP-style analysis of sales data can be broken into three areas: an analysis of the products (not product sales) using only the Product table; an analysis of the customers (not their sales) using only the Customer table; and an analysis of the sales using various tables. Sales analyses can be broken into overall sales (using only the Order table); product sales (using the Product and Detail tables); and customer sales (primarily using the Customer and Order tables).

**Figure 3**  
**Sample “Group By” Project of Northwind Products, Customers, and Sales**

Describe the Products

Using the Product table, list the Count (i.e., number) of products carried per category. Other Summary measures can include: Average (as well as Max and Min) list prices; Average and Sum of Quantities in Stock.

Describe the Customers

Using the Customer table, list the Count of (i.e., number of) customers by their characteristics (e.g., number of customers by country, by region, etc.).

Describe the Sales

- Using the Order and Detail tables, list the total revenue (Price x Quantity) over time; and using just the Order table (and a Count of the records in the Order table), list the number of orders over time. The Year, Month, and Day of Week can be identified and used as grouping variables.

- Using the Product and Detail tables, list the total revenue and Quantity Sold by product, category, and other product characteristics (e.g., price). Sort the results (as appropriate) so as to show best-sellers and worst-sellers.

- Using Customer+Order+Detail and Customer+Order respectively, show the total revenue and number of orders by customer and customer characteristics (e.g., country, region, etc.). Sort for best and worst customers, countries, etc.

Drill Down into the Sales

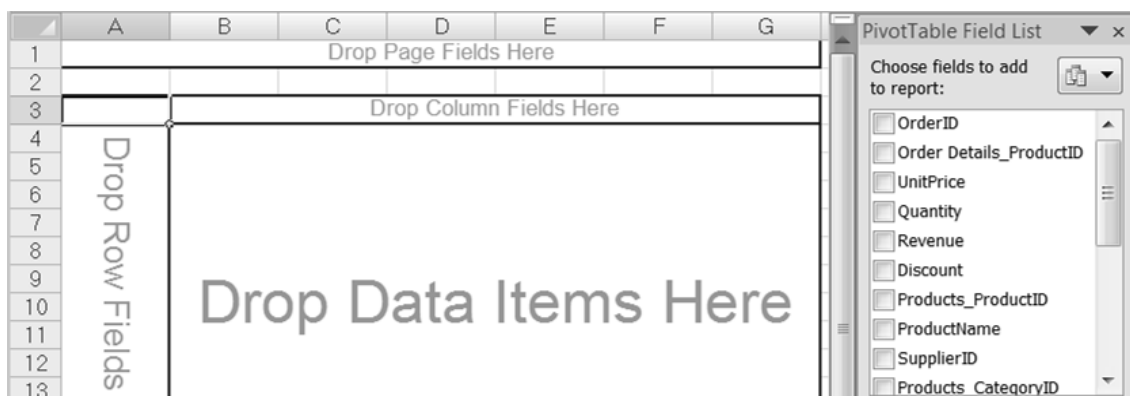
- Using the Best Customers query (from above) within a query of the other Northwind tables, list the revenue and quantity of the products purchased by the best customers. Use criteria of the top 10% of customers. Sort the results to show the best and worst sellers; and compare this list to the overall best and worst sellers. Do the same for the products purchased by the worst customers.

- Using the Best Products query (from above) within a query of the Product and Detail tables, list the revenue and quantity of the products purchased along with the best selling products. Use criteria of the top 10% of products. Sort the results to show the best and worst.

### Spreadsheet “Pivot Table” Analyses

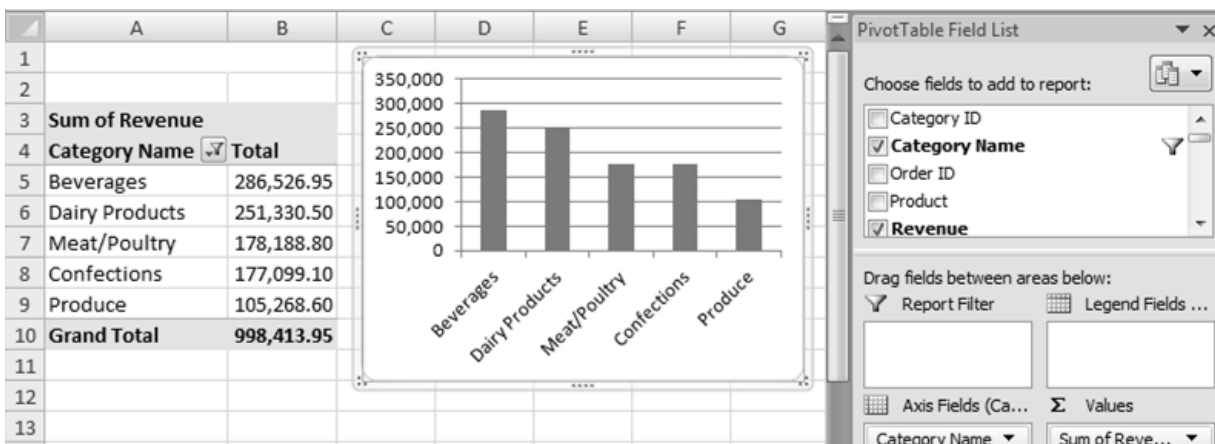
OLAP-style analyses also can be achieved via Excel Pivot Tables, the interface of which (see Figure 4) does not require the same level of detailed construction as “Group By” queries. After data are exported into Excel, it is a simple matter of inserting a Pivot Table upon the data, with the column headings becoming a drag and drop field list (as shown on the right of the figure). Note that a field for Revenue appears in the list, due to a new column (with the heading “Revenue”) being inserted into the spreadsheet data sheet in order to calculate Price x Quantity.

**Figure 4**  
**Pivot Table Mechanics**



Pivot Tables can produce the same results as “Group By” queries, and thus could be used to conduct the same analyses as outlined in the Northwind “Group By” project. For example, Figure 5 shows how the Revenue per Category query can be duplicated in a Pivot Table simply by clicking on the Category and Revenue fields in the field list, thus transferring them to the Row and Data areas respectively. In addition, a Pivot Chart can be generated with another click.

**Figure 5**  
**Pivot Table: Sum of Revenue per Category**



While they share the same underlying technique, Pivot Tables do hold some advantages over “Group By” queries that go beyond simplicity of interface. In addition to being well equipped to create charts, Pivot tables also have an ready grouping feature for analyzing performance by price (or by any numeric variable). With this feature, prices can be easily grouped into ranges (e.g., 0-10, 11-20, etc.), making it more practical to analyze them as a variable of interest. Such ranges can be important when the variable could take on a multitude of values and/or inconsistent increments. In the case of a smaller number of values, the ranges may not be needed. For example, Figure 6 shows the total revenue by price range for all dairy products (which can have a multitude of different prices), as well as the total revenue per exact price for queso, a particular dairy product (that has just a few changes in price).

**Figure 6**  
**Price Analyses of All Dairy Products and of Queso**

Dairy Revenue per Price Range		Queso Revenue per Price	
Sum of Revenue		Sum of Revenue	
Unit Price	Total	Unit Price	Total
0-10	1,714	14.00	168
10-20	27,097	16.80	3,360
20-30	53,275	21.00	10,374
30-40	92,950		
40-50	23,936		
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>251,331</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13,902</b>

The ability to analyze the effects of pricing makes for a value-added focus of a project. While a pricing analysis project could use the Northwind data after being exported into Excel, a data set of weekly sales results with fixed weekly pricing can provide an interesting basis for the project. As such, a grocery store data set was used in the example project outlined in Figure 7.

**Figure 7**  
**Sample “Pivot” Project of Weekly Pricing and Product Sales**

Describe the Products

Describe the products carried along various dimensions (consider all fields as potential “group by’s” to put in the Row area, including retail price). Note that you must first “remove duplicates” so that you have only 1 record per each product carried.

Describe the Sales

Describe the products sold along various “group by” dimensions (consider all fields as potential “group by’s” to put in the row area, including selling price). Start with sales over time,

Price Analyze the Best Selling Product

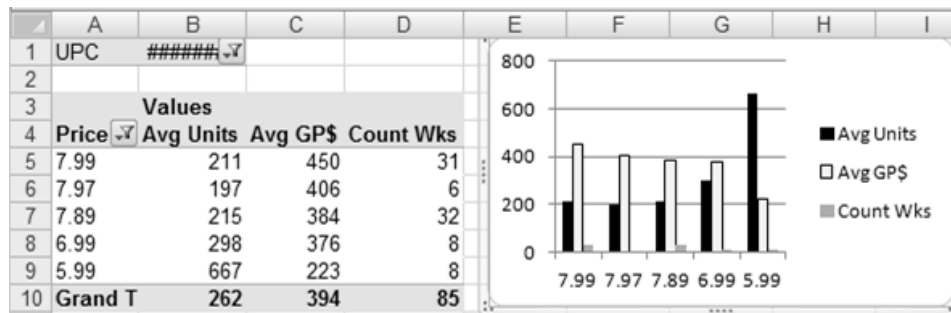
Start with a general pricing analysis, showing units and profits generated per price range for products in the same categories as the best seller; and then describe the units and profits per the prices of the best seller. When analyzing each specific price, filter by the # weeks a price was used and only include prices that were used more than 3 times). Also consider the difference between average and sum based on the fact that some prices are used more than others.

## DISCUSSION

Price analysis has significant relevance to various business majors, ranging from management, marketing and logistics to accounting, economics, and finance; and the ability to explore the effects of price changes can help students to understand the implications of pricing. For example, management and logistics students have found pricing analysis and concepts to be of particular relevance to purchasing-related internships and tasks. There are various learning points related to pricing that can be reinforced via data analysis (see Figure 8):

1. Pricing can affect units sold as well as profits, sometimes in an opposing manner. Sometimes the goal is to move units and/or create a loss leader rather than maximize profits.
2. The effect of different prices on performance is influenced by how many times and when specific prices were used. As such, performance often needs to be measured with averages (as totals are obviously higher when certain prices are used more than others). In addition, prices used just once or twice are greatly influenced by when they are used (e.g., during holidays, etc.) and thus should be excluded and/or considered with less significance.
3. Price range charts should not always be sorted on performance as the price ranges can (and will likely) become “out of sequence,” thus potentially hiding any pricing trends, particularly when a large number of ranges are considered. The same is true for sorting when dates are used so as not to resequence chronological data and thus potentially mask seasonal and/or long term trends.

**Figure 8**  
**Units Sold vs. Gross Profit per Specific Prices of a Specific Product**  
**(Excluding Prices Used Less Than 4 Weeks)**



Additional important learning points are outlined below.

1. “Sales” can refer to various measures, including: number of orders, dollar amount of orders, quantity sold, and product revenue (i.e., price paid x quantity sold). The difference between number of orders and dollar amount of orders provides a reference for teaching students about recency, frequency, and monetary value (RFM). Here, frequency is determined by counting the number of orders per customer (via a count of records in the Order table); whereas monetary value is determined by summing order totals per customer.
2. When dealing with product-specific revenue (i.e., sales per product or product-related dimensions), the Detail records (i.e., line items) are relevant (in order to look at quantity sold and/or price x quantity). The same is not always true when dealing with customer-specific revenue (i.e., sales per customer or customer-related dimensions). For example, if the Order records include total dollar amount figures, the Detail records are not needed (and in fact the inclusion of the Detail table in this instance could create incorrect results – see next point).

3. When dealing with product-specific revenue (i.e., sales per product or product-related dimensions), the Detail records (i.e., line items) are relevant (in order to look at quantity sold and/or price x quantity). The same is not always true when dealing with customer-specific revenue (i.e., sales per customer or customer-related dimensions). For example, if the Order records include total dollar amount figures, the Detail records are not needed (and in fact the inclusion of the Detail table in this instance could create incorrect results – see next point).
4. Aside from counting records, summary functions (e.g., average, sum, etc.) can be performed on any numeric variable. In addition, all summarizations can be categorized or grouped by any and all remaining fields, including numeric fields (especially with the use of ranges). In the case of numeric or date fields, additional grouping fields can be created via functions. For example, date functions such as Year, Month, or Day of Week can be used as grouping fields to look for short term and long term trends. Ultimately, the consideration and use of all summary functions and all grouping variables can be emphasized via the use of a rubric (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9**  
**Sample Project Rubric/Assessment Objectives**

- How many variables/dimensions were used to describe the products; and was this done correctly?
- How many variables/dimensions were used to describe the customers; and did you do so correctly?
- How many variables/dimensions were used to describe the overall sales; and did you do so correctly?
- How many variables/dimensions were used to describe the product sales; and did you do so correctly?
- How many variables/dimensions were used to describe the customer sales; and did you do so correctly?
- How many measures were used to describe sales performance (e.g, # orders vs. \$ revenue vs. # units, etc).?
- How many variables were analyzed with respect to the best customers (e.g., what are they purchasing, etc.)?
- How many variables were analyzed with respect to the best selling products (e.g., who is purchasing them, etc.)?

**CONCLUSION**

With accessible tools and data (in the form of Microsoft Access and Excel), an OLAP-focused course and/or projects can be readily available to any business educator. After several years of experience with such a course taken by hundreds of marketing (as well as management and logistics) students, perhaps the most telling indication of its importance and success has been the number of students who have commented on their subsequent use of OLAP analysis – particularly Pivot Table analysis – in their jobs. Moreover, students also have commented on how their managers were extremely impressed with their ability to analyze sales and marketing data with such insight, going so far as to bring one intern to see the president of the company to show him the analysis he had done. Such comments argue for the consideration of the use and usefulness of Microsoft Access and Excel as educational OLAP tools, and the fit and role of such tools in marketing curricula and even in the broader business curriculum.

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# THE EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP AND HIGH-STAKES TESTING ON TEACHER RETENTION

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to examine whether principal leadership behaviors and the demands of high-stakes testing had an impact on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. Perceptions of teachers concerning the contributing factors that led to their intent to remain in the teaching profession were also examined. Factors included in this study were examined in an effort to gain insight into factors that lead to teacher job satisfaction.*

*Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed in an effort to gather data. The survey instrument was distributed to K-12 public school teachers in a southern state. Participants in the study taught at elementary, middle, and high school levels. The analysis of the data for the qualitative component was consistent with data collected through the quantitative portion of the study. Both the quantitative and qualitative data supported the relevance of principal leadership on a teachers' intent to remain in the profession. However, when teachers responded to open-ended questions relative to principal leadership some responses varied compared to those provided in the quantitative measure with respect to principal support. Additionally, qualitative data indicated three things that most influenced teachers' decision to remain in the profession: student success, subject matter taught, and the art of teaching. When asked which factors contributed most to teachers leaving the profession, teachers reported; lack of administrative support, teacher workload, and student discipline. Additional self-reported factors that were identified as being problematic for teachers were excessive paperwork and pressures of state-testing.*

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine whether principal leadership behaviors and the demands of high-stakes testing had an impact on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. Teacher perceptions of what contributed to their intent to remain in the teaching profession, were also examined. First, the researchers examined whether principal leadership styles and behaviors affected teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. Second, the researchers examined the levels of teacher job satisfaction between state-measured subject area teachers such as those who teach reading, math, and English and those teachers in non-state-measured subject areas such as science, history, technology, and elective classes (e.g., band, choir, art). Third, the researchers examined whether a relationship existed between teacher job satisfaction and teacher mentoring with regard to teachers' intent to remain in the teaching



profession. Also examined were the leading self-reported factors that contributed to teachers' intent to remain in or leave the teaching profession.

Research suggests that at a time when teachers must carefully examine and master the roles and responsibilities of their profession to meet the needs of students as well as the demands of administrators and policy makers, strains experienced by teachers are resulting in teacher turnover (Valli & Buese, 2007). For some educators, these strains may be a result of high-stakes testing and stressors that are associated with test preparation, procedures, and accountability (Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008). Such accountability has led to standardization and high-stakes assessment in schools, which is primarily due to the widespread movement of government-regulated mandates in the United States (Rubin, 2011). This movement, which resulted in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, requires teachers of English/Language Arts (ELA) to administer high-stakes assessments in both reading and writing. According to Rubin (2011) teachers of ELA have become victimized due to the increased expectations and regulations placed on them above those placed on teachers in other subject areas. As a result, "for teachers today, both in ELA and across the curriculum, NCLB is harming teachers, their practice and their long-term commitment to the teaching profession" (Rubin, 2011, p. 407)

While many teachers claim that responsibilities and workload have increased due to standardized testing (Valli & Buese, 2007), other educators state they merely cannot keep up with the demands of the profession, disrespect from students, an abundance of paperwork, and the lack of support received from administrators both at the school and district levels (Haberman, 2005). Leithwood and McAdie (2007) suggest that when teachers perceive their workload to be imbalanced compared to that of their peers, teacher stress is increased, teacher morale is weakened, and teacher commitment to schools becomes a concern.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Theoretical Foundation**

With accountability of NCLB at an all-time high, critics believe that school leaders face tremendous barriers in their efforts to reduce achievement gaps and retain highly-qualified teachers (Smith & Kovacs, 2011). With the emergence of education reform, teachers are held to higher standards and accountability, and student achievement remains at the forefront of educational priorities (Spradlin & Prendergast, 2006).

Because of the focus on higher accountability, administrators are taking desperate measures to insure that their schools are meeting growth and expectations in the eyes of stakeholders and policy makers (Farber, 2010).

Farber (2010) believes that although a majority of schools are meeting or exceeding expectations of accountability, these expectations come at the expense of teachers' time, health, and commitment to the profession. With the continuous pressure to increase student achievement particularly for tested-subject area teachers along with the lack of administrative support, teachers may feel greater stress in carrying out their responsibilities. According to the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher (2013), as a result of this, teachers are citing lower levels of teacher satisfaction, thus contributing to attrition in schools. Findings from the MetLife Survey of the

American Teacher (2013) show a 15% decrease in teacher satisfaction since 2009 and a 12% increase in teachers who say they are likely to leave the profession.

## **Two-Factor Theory**

In 1959, Frederick Herzberg developed a theory of motivation known as the Two-Factor Theory, also referred to as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory. This theory was derived from a study of events pertaining to the lives of engineers and accountants (Herzberg, 1987) where participants were asked to report their most satisfying and most dissatisfying work experiences in an effort to determine what leads to job satisfaction (Johnston, 1990). Since the conception of this theory, claimed Herzberg (1987), many studies have been conducted based on the Two-Factor Theory. These studies focused on an extensive range of populations, thus making the Two-Factor Theory one of the most duplicated studies in the field of job attitudes (Herzberg, 1987). According to Dartey- Baah (2011), there are many theories associated with motivation that influence the way establishments manage employees in an effort to motivate them. Because motivating people can be complex, organizations find it difficult to motivate employees for effective performance (Dartey-Baah, 2011).

In examining theories pertaining to motivation of employees, Herzberg's research presented factors involved in producing job satisfaction or motivation for workers. The Two-Factor Theory of Motivation provides an explanation of job factors that are either satisfying or dissatisfying for employees (Dartey-Baah, 2011). Contrary to satisfaction factors were the factors that created dissatisfaction. Since there were two factors involved, Herzberg clarified his concept by stating that job satisfaction is not opposite of job dissatisfaction. According to Herzberg (1987), the opposite of job satisfaction is no job satisfaction, and the opposite of job dissatisfaction is no job satisfaction (Dartey- Baah, 2011). Herzberg believed that significant work leads to job satisfaction, and the factors that lead to job satisfaction are completely different from those factors that lead to job dissatisfaction.

The motivational-hygiene model states that when employees are provided with challenging yet enjoyable work that allows the employee to achieve great success, then employee motivation is accomplished (Dartey-Baah, 2011). Similar to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg believed that humans were involved with two types of needs. In assessing the needs of people, one set of needs stems from basic biological drives. These needs come from "humankind's animal nature-the built-in drive to avoid pain from the environment" plus the drives that become accustomed to the basic biological needs (Herzberg, 1987, p. 113). Herzberg compared this to a basic need such as hunger. He believed that hunger motivates a person to earn money; therefore, money is a specific drive for that person. When a person fulfills these basic needs and considers work to be significant, according to Herzberg, this can lead to job satisfaction.

The second set of needs, according to Herzberg (1987), "relates to that unique human characteristic, the ability to achieve," (p. 113) and when people experience achievement, they experience psychological growth. Herzberg indicated that the stimuli for the growth needs are tasks that promote growth. For example, in the industrial setting motivation for growth was job contentment (Herzberg, 1987). According to Herzberg et al. (1959), there are several job-attitude factors that are considered motivator factors, and these factors are considered to be intrinsic to the

job. Such factors include recognition, achievement, possibility of growth, advancement, responsibility, and work itself. Dartey- Baah (2011) asserted that these factors include the physiological need for growth and recognition, and they contribute to motivation in workers that produces job performance (Herzberg, 1987). Because of the level of motivation that comes with these factors, they are referred to as satisfiers (Dartey-Baah, 2011).

According to Herzberg et al. (1959), of the aforementioned intrinsic factors, the contributing factor leading to job satisfaction is the achievement factor. Herzberg et al. (1959) found that when workers achieve success, their behavior or performance contributes to satisfaction in the workplace and positive attitudes among other workers. This theory is guided by concepts in the teaching profession which relate to teacher satisfaction. Leithwood and McAdie (2007) avowed that to increase teacher satisfaction and contribute to internal satisfaction, teachers should be provided time to work in teams, prepare for classroom instruction, collaborate with colleagues, participate in team decision making, and have access to ongoing professional development.

### **Teacher Mentoring**

One solution to retaining teachers according to Ingersoll and Smith (2003) is to provide teachers with mentors, especially those teachers who are new to the profession. Upon entering the teaching profession, many teachers walk into a classroom with little or no support from colleagues and/or administration, and the key to novice teacher support begins with the building principal (Flynt & Morton, 2009). What most administrators may fail to realize is that many teachers are sinking. Kopkowski (2008) cited several reasons for teachers leaving the profession. These reasons include little support from administration and parents, testing and accountability as mandated by federal legislation such as NCLB (2001), lack of respect, inadequate pay, and high numbers of student discipline and infractions.

In their research on mentoring, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) identified mentoring programs in various schools that consisted of numerous ways to assist new teachers.

Methods included assigning veteran teachers to novice teachers at the beginning of the school year and organizing highly structured programs that include frequent meetings between mentors and mentees that span over two years' time. Additionally, it was noted that some schools required mentor programs to all newly hired teachers regardless of teaching experience as a strategy to acquaint teachers with the practices in that particular school. In their research, Ingersoll and Strong concluded that, for the most part, schools focused solely on novice teachers in the area of mentoring with little or no support provided to those teachers with experience in the field.

Having support and effective mentoring from veteran teachers is critical to novice teachers' success and their intent to remain in the teaching profession (Scherer, 2012). In their study on veteran teachers as mentors, Hanson and Moir (2008) identified four areas in which mentoring made a substantial impact on the continuing professional practice of veteran teachers as well as school districts in which mentoring was utilized effectively.

These areas include the practice of mentoring to broaden teachers' perspectives of the profession and themselves, mentoring to have a profound impact on pedagogy and student learning, mentoring to develop growth for veteran teachers and promote leadership among teachers, and the mentoring process to support good, quality teaching practices among mentors

and mentees; moreover, mentors feel recharged and learn new practices from their mentees that can be used in their own classrooms (Hanson & Moir, 2008).

### **Teacher Retention and Attrition**

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2007), because teacher attrition is a primary cause of the U. S. teacher shortage, communities, stakeholders, and administrators should begin recognizing teachers for their talent and effort in the classroom (Kaback, 2006). Since educational reform became more influential in the world of education, teacher expectations have been on the rise (Farber, 2010). This comes at a time when schools in the U. S. are faced with teacher shortages because many teachers feel as though they cannot keep up with the demands of the job. With the growing needs of teachers and the ongoing drive for test results in the classroom, now is the time for school leaders to understand the causes of teacher attrition (Feng, 2005). Furthermore, it is imperative that school leaders address attrition in public schools if they want to meet the guidelines established by NCLB legislation (McKinney et al., 2007).

In their study of high-poverty schools, McKinney, Berry, Dickerson, & Campbell-Whately (2007) found that schools with greater needs usually have a higher turnover rate than other schools. This is partly due to the fact that teachers feel unprepared to accommodate the academic and behavioral needs of students in high-poverty areas (McKinney et al., 2007). In Ingersoll's (2004) report on teacher turnover in high-poverty schools and data from the Teacher Follow-up survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, the following factors contributed to teacher turnover. Retirement accounted for 14% to 25%, family and personal reasons accounted for 36%-44%, school staffing issues such as lay-offs, terminations, involuntary reassignments, and school closings accounted for 40%, and nearly 40% of teachers left schools due to job dissatisfaction. Those teachers who left because of job dissatisfaction left for better opportunities according to Ingersoll.

In Ingersoll's analysis of teacher surveys, several factors were identified that schools could use in an effort to retain teachers. Among those factors, better compensation was the most often cited incentive with measures for better school discipline, smaller class sizes, parental involvement, and more authority distributed among teachers. Contrary to most research on induction and mentoring as a method for retaining teachers, Ingersoll (2004) found that only 16.1% of teachers who left rural areas of high poverty and only 8.8% of teachers who left urban areas of high poverty claimed that induction and mentoring was beneficial to teacher retention.

### **Teacher Job Satisfaction**

If "education is the backbone of a nation" (Fatima, 2012, p. 260) and teachers are the chief contributors to the structure of the educational system, then job satisfaction is an important factor in the retention of teachers. Job satisfaction for teachers is important if policy makers and leaders want students to demonstrate progress in meeting the expectations of school reform (Knox & Anfara, 2013). According to a recent MetLife survey of teachers, only 39% of teachers are very satisfied with their jobs, down from 62% in 2008 (MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 2013).

This statistic clearly indicates that teachers are experiencing increased difficulties in their profession such as the demands to improve student outcomes on state-mandated tests, therefore, contributing to more dissatisfaction in the teaching profession (Moore, 2012).

Fatima (2012) further declared that in order for teachers to become effective in the classroom, they must first be satisfied with their job. If teachers are satisfied with their jobs, stated Fatima, the school as a whole will benefit from their effectiveness.

Colleagues will gain from collaborative working experiences with satisfied teachers, and students will likely produce academic gains through the exposure of positive teachers explained Fatima in his research involving satisfaction of secondary school teachers.

According to research conducted through the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher (2013), effective teachers account for 33% of student achievement gains. Therefore, it is conceivable for leaders and policy makers to address key factors that may contribute to teacher satisfaction in an effort to retain teachers in U. S. schools.

In Knox and Anpara's (2013) research on understanding job satisfaction, they reported that job satisfaction is the most frequently studied variable in organizational behavior. The primary reason for it being examined and studied so closely is that behavior among employees is a contributing factor to whether a business or organization is successful or not. Without satisfied employees, businesses and organizations cannot produce necessary gains, and in the world of education, it is crucial that teachers and leaders produce those gains in order to satisfy requirements of NCLB (2001).

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Questions

The following research questions were used to to guide this research:

1. Is there a relationship between principal leadership styles and behaviors and teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession?
2. Is there a difference in the levels of teacher job satisfaction between teachers of state-measured subject areas and teachers of non-state-measured subject areas?
3. Is there a relationship between teacher job satisfaction, teacher morale, and teacher mentoring programs and teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession?
4. Is there a difference between self-reported factors that contribute to teachers' intent to remain or leave the teaching profession?

## HYPOTHESES

*H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher morale, teacher satisfaction, and teachers' intent to remain or leave the teaching profession.*

*H2: There is a statistically significant difference between state-measured subject area teachers' and non-state-measured subject area teachers' intent to remain in the profession.*

## Research Design

Quantitative methodology with a qualitative component was utilized to gather data for this study. The qualitative component consisted of five self-reported qualitative factors. Demographical information was also collected and analyzed in order to compare gender, age, years of teaching experience, type of school setting, teacher certifications, and teaching position.

## Participants and Procedures

For the purpose of this study a convenience sample was taken. Eight superintendents of school districts located in the coastal region of a southern state were contacted for permission to conduct the study in their districts. Of the eight districts invited, five superintendents granted permission to conduct the study within their districts. Upon obtaining permission, principals from each individual school were contacted in order to seek permission to conduct the study within their respective schools. Principals were provided with a cover letter explaining the purpose and details of the study. Upon receiving permission from principals, survey instruments were delivered to the schools.

The survey was distributed to 501 teachers of state-measured subject areas and teachers of non-state-measured subject areas in K-12 public schools in five school districts located in the coastal region of a southern state. Of the 501 surveys distributed, 212 teachers completed and returned the survey, yielding a return rate of 42.3%. The sample included teachers from the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Approximately 23% of the respondents in the study were male teachers, and 77% were female teachers. The largest group surveyed in the study were between the ages of 30-39, and the largest number of respondents were high school teachers at 58.3%. Fifty-seven percent of the teachers surveyed in the study reported having between 6-20 years of teaching experience. See Table 1.

## Instrumentation

The Teacher Retention Survey Instrument was divided into seven sections. The first section was identified as Teacher Characteristics. This section consisted of demographic questions regarding age, gender, years in the teaching experience, school setting, level of education, certifications, teaching position, and a question addressing choice of profession. The second section of the survey, which encompassed five areas related to working environment factors included the following sections: principal leadership behaviors, teacher intention, teacher job satisfaction, teacher mentoring, and intrinsic motivators. These sections of the survey instrument used five-point Likert-type questions ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The principal leadership behaviors section was used to gather data on teachers' perceptions of the administration at their schools. The purpose of this section was to determine whether teachers felt supported by their administration and whether the level of administrative support impacted teacher attrition. Additionally, this section of the instrument aligned closely with the first

research question regarding the relationship between principal leadership styles and behaviors and a teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession.

The third section focused on teachers' intention to remain in the profession or leave the profession. This section also examined teachers' decision to remain in the profession, but to pursue a career in school administration. Data were gathered to determine whether teachers may be transitioning into school administration for the purpose of earning a higher salary or to escape the frustration of being a classroom teacher. Data from this section were used to test the hypotheses identified in the study.

Section four of the survey instrument examined teacher job satisfaction. This area of the survey encompassed teacher perceptions and their feelings about parents, students, fellow colleagues, and administrators. Other survey items addressed included job recognition, salary, burnout, subject-area contentment, hours in a work-week, high-stakes testing, decision making, freedom of expression, and morale among teachers. These questions were used to examine teacher frustrations and what factors lead to dissatisfaction in the teaching profession.

The fifth section was entitled Teacher Mentoring. This section examined whether teachers felt supported in their daily efforts. Mentoring or the lack thereof could impact teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. This was especially important for those teachers who were new to the profession or new to a particular school. Research shows that novice teachers generally leave within the first five years due to lack of support by colleagues and administrators; therefore, schools must provide support to new teachers in order to encourage their growth and success as teachers (Ingersoll, 2012).

The final section of the Likert-type portion of the survey entitled Intrinsic Motivators explored potential motivators for teachers. Data gathered from this section provided insight into factors that could potentially lead to increased motivation among teachers. Motivators included salary, the rewards of teaching children, performance challenges, and rewards and accolades provided by administrators.

The final section of the instrument, entitled Self-Reported Factors, included five open-ended questions developed in an effort to gain critical information on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. Questions included which factors contributed to teachers' decisions to remain or leave the teaching profession, whether teachers had ever left the teaching profession, reasons for becoming a teacher, and the three contributing factors that bothered teachers most about the teaching profession. From this qualitative section, data were compiled and reoccurring themes were examined. This section of the instrument was aligned to research question number four, and assisted in determining how teachers feel about the teaching profession.

## **RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher morale, teacher satisfaction, and teachers' intent to remain or leave the teaching profession as well as whether state-measured subject area teachers or non-state-measured subject area teachers were more likely to remain in the profession.. Perceptions of teachers concerning the contributing factors that led to their intent to remain in the teaching profession were also examined. A Pearson Correlation was used to examine Research Question 1 based on a .05 level of

significance. A t-test was used to examine Research Question 2 where means were compared and a  $p$ -value of .05 was used to indicate the significance level. A Simple Regression was used to examine Research Question 3 based on a  $p$ -value of .05.

### Descriptive Statistics

Two hundred and twelve K-12 public school teachers in a southern state participated in this study. Demographic data are presented in Table 1. The gender distribution consisted of 22.6% male ( $n=48$ ) and 77.4% female ( $n=164$ ). The ages among the surveyed teachers were quite similar in three of the categories, with the highest number of respondents (34%) being between the ages of 30-39. The category with the lowest number of respondents was those ages 20-29 (15.6%). Of the 212 teachers surveyed, the largest percentage of teachers reported between 11-20 years of experience (36.3%). The smallest group consisted of those teachers with 30+ years in the teaching profession (4.7%).

**Table 1**

*Teacher Demographics (N=212)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	48	22.6
Female	164	77.4
<b>Age</b>		
20-29	33	15.6
30-39	72	34.0
40-49	56	26.4
50+	51	24.1
<b>Teaching Experience</b>		
1-5	57	26.9
6-10	45	21.2
11-20	77	36.3
21-30	23	10.8
30+	10	4.7



Table 2 illustrates the type of school setting teachers worked in (elementary school, middle school, or high school), education, and types of certification. Of the teachers surveyed 50.5% reported holding a bachelor's degree (n=107) compared 46.7% who reported holding a master's degree (n=99). Nine percent of the respondents reported holding a doctoral degree (n=2).

Upon examining whether teachers were highly qualified or not to teach the subject they were currently teaching, 93.4% (n=198) reported that they were highly qualified while 6.6% (n=14) reported that they were not highly qualified to teach the subject for which they were currently teaching. When asked if they were a National Board Certified teacher, the majority of the teachers reported that they were not National Board Certified 94.3% (n=200), while a small percentage of teachers reported being National Board Certified 5.7% (n=12). See Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Teacher Demographics (N=212)*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>School Setting</b>		
Elementary School	59	27.8
Middle School	39	18.4
High School	114	53.8
<b>Education Level</b>		
Bachelor's Degree	107	50.5
Master's Degree	99	46.7
Specialist's Degree	3	1.4
Doctoral Degree	2	.9
<b>Highly Qualified</b>		
Yes	198	93.4
No	14	6.6
<b>National Board Certified</b>		
Yes	12	5.7
No	200	94.3

The last two demographic survey questions were based on whether teachers would choose to pursue a career in teaching or a different profession if they had the opportunity to return to college. The final question in the demographic section asked teachers to state their current teaching position. Of the teachers surveyed, 60.8% (n=129) said they would choose to become a teacher if given the opportunity again, while 36.8% (n=78) said they would choose a different profession. See Table 3.

Of the 212 teachers surveyed 37.3% (n=79) reported being a state-tested subject area teachers, while 10.4% (n=22) reported being special education teachers. It was noted that upon combining the remaining three categories of those not identified as state- tested subject area teachers, 62.3% (n=132) were identified to be non-state-tested subject area teachers. See table 3.

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**Table 3**

*Teacher Characteristics (N=212)*

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Variable	Frequency	Percent
Choice of Profession		
To become a teacher	129	60.8
A different profession	78	36.8
Teaching Position		
State-tested	79	37.3
Non-state-tested	75	35.4
Special education	22	10.4
Elective Teacher	35	16.5

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The Likert-type questions in this section of the instrument was designed to address Research Question 1, thereby providing insight into teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership behaviors. Participants were asked if administrators valued their decisions and if teachers felt supported, respected, and appreciated by their principals.

Additionally, this section explored whether principals took an active role in the learning process, provided teachers with time to collaborate during the school day, and whether principals placed more pressure on state-measured subject area teachers than non state- measured subject area teachers.

Table 4 illustrates the principal leadership behaviors. Although responses varied, results indicated that administrators take an active role in the learning process and assist teachers in ways to improve instruction. This question yielded the highest mean ( $M = 3.75$ ). In response to whether teachers felt they had time to collaborate with department members during the school day, this question yielded the lowest results ( $M = 3.44$ ), indicating that teachers feel that they need more time to plan during the school day.

When asked if administrators placed more pressure on state-tested subject area teachers the results yielded a mean of 3.65. See table 4.

**Table 4**

*Principal Leadership Behaviors (N=212)*

Leadership Behaviors	Mean	SD
Administrators take active role.	3.75	.94
Teachers feel supported.	3.68	1.08
Administrators value teacher input.	3.67	1.02
*More pressure on state-tested subject area teachers	3.65	1.16
Administrators treat teachers fairly.	3.55	1.12
Teachers collaborate.	3.44	1.26

Note: Likert-scale 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree

\* indicates reversed question.

The next section on the survey focused on teachers' intention to remain in the profession. This section did not work as a scale; therefore, only one question from this section was used to measure teacher intention in response to Research Questions 1 and 3. Specifically, Question 16 asked teachers whether they planned to remain in the teaching profession next year. Teachers reported overwhelmingly that their intent was to remain in the teaching profession the following

year ( $M = 4.32$ ). When asked whether they planned on moving into administration within the next year or so, participants responses yielded a mean of 1.70 indicating that most either strongly disagreed or disagreed. See Table 5.

**Table 5**  
*Teacher Intention (N=212)*

Teacher Intention	Mean	SD
Plan to remain in teaching	4.32	.89
Would stay if not state-tested	2.85	1.23
Plan to teach different grade	2.00	1.14
Will move to different school	1.87	1.07
Will move into administration	1.70	1.04

Note: Likert-scale 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree

Teacher job satisfaction, Section 3 of the survey instrument, provided insight regarding Research Questions 2 and 3. Teachers believed that the pressure of high-stakes testing lends itself to burnout in this profession ( $M = 4.27$ ). In contrast, teachers did not agree with this reversed question in polarity, indicating teachers do not suffer from low morale ( $m=2.37$ ). Upon examining whether teachers felt appreciated by students and parents a mean of 2.73 reported indicating that teachers do feel appreciated. Teachers also indicated that they were not pleased with their current salary ( $m=3.84$ ). Responses were fairly neutral when examining satisfaction with work hours and whether they were experiencing burnout. See Table 6.

**Table 6*****Teacher Job Satisfaction (N=212)***

Teacher Job Satisfaction	Mean	SD
High-stakes lends to burnout	4.27	.89
Satisfied with subject area	4.13	.81
Appreciated by colleagues	4.03	.85
*Not pleased with salary	3.84	1.14
Active role in decisions	3.56	.99
Recognized for job well done	3.29	1.08
Can express my concerns	3.23	1.12
*Unsatisfied with work hours	3.18	1.16
*Experiencing burnout	3.15	1.28
Teachers have high morale.	3.14	1.02
Rewarded throughout the year	3.13	1.05
*Unappreciated by students	2.73	1.16
*I have low morale.	2.37	1.12

Note: Likert-scale 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree

\*indicates reversed question.

Teacher mentoring and its effect on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession is illustrated in Table 7. Teachers were asked to rate mentoring and induction programs at their schools and whether principals were supportive of new teachers.

Teachers rated these questions in response to Research Question 3. The results of this section indicated that teachers felt that principals were generally supportive of new teachers (M = 3.93).

**Table 7*****Teacher Mentoring (N=212)***

Teacher Mentoring	Mean	SD
Principals are not supportive of new teachers.	3.93	.86
District has induction program for new teachers.	3.45	1.10
New teachers are mentored.	3.15	1.10
*New teachers not provided with supplies.	2.77	1.20

Note: Likert-scale 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree

\* indicates reversed question.

Table 8 illustrates teachers' intrinsic motivators. These motivators include challenges, rewards, and monetary incentives that may or may not motivate a teacher. Descriptive statistics on this last section of quantitative data indicated that teachers felt rewarded from within for teaching their students ( $M = 4.23$ ). The question that yielded the lowest mean was a reversed question in polarity ( $M = 3.05$ ) indicating that teachers felt fairly neutral in terms of being rewarded monetarily for becoming a better teacher.

**Table 8*****Intrinsic Motivators (N=212)***

Intrinsic Motivators	Mean	SD
Teaching children at this age level is rewarding.	4.23	.77
I enjoy challenges.	4.19	.63
Rewards make me work harder.	3.52	1.05
*Monetary incentives do not motivate me.	3.05	1.27

Note: Likert-scale 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree

\* indicates reversed question.

Through examining sections 2 through 6 of the survey results, including principal leadership behaviors, teacher intention, teacher job satisfaction, teacher mentoring, and intrinsic motivators, teacher responses indicated that principal leadership had the greatest impact on whether teachers would remain in the teaching profession (M= 3.62). Teacher mentoring, however, had the least effect on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession (M = 3.44). See Table 9.

**Table 9*****Descriptive Statistics of Mean Sub-scores (N=212)***

Area	Mean	SD
Principal Leadership	3.62	.89
Teacher Job Satisfaction	3.28	.55
Teacher Mentoring	3.44	.75

Note: Likert-scale 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree

## Hypotheses Results

Research Question 1 stated: Is there a relationship between principal leadership styles and behaviors and teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession? In order to determine whether there was a correlation between teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession and principal leadership, a Pearson Correlation coefficient was calculated. The result of the test yielded a positive correlation  $r(210) = .183, p = .008$ , indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Therefore, these results indicated that principal leadership styles and behaviors had an impact on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. This resulted in a failure to reject Hypothesis 1 which stated: There is a statistically significant relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher morale, teacher satisfaction, and teachers' intent to remain or leave the teaching profession.

Research Question 2 stated: Is there a difference in the levels of teacher job satisfaction between teachers of state-measured subject areas and teachers of non-state-measured subject areas? An independent  $t$ -test was calculated comparing the mean scores of teacher job satisfaction for state-measured subject area teachers and non-state-measured subject area teachers. Based upon the results displayed in Table 10, there is not a significant difference between the two groups of teachers in terms of job satisfaction  $t$

$(210) = 1.433, p = .153$ . The mean of non-state-measured subject area teachers ( $M = 3.32, SD = .57$ ) was not significantly higher than the mean for state-measured subject area teachers ( $M = 3.21, SD = .52$ ). This resulted in the rejection of Hypothesis 2 which stated: There is a statistically significant difference between state-measured subject area teachers' and non-state-measured subject area teachers' intent to remain in the profession.

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**Table 10**

*State-measured and Non-state-measured Teacher Job Satisfaction*

Factor	Teacher Group	N	Mean	SD
Teacher Job Satisfaction	Non-state-measured	133	3.32	.57
	State-measured	79	3.21	.52

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Research Question 3 stated: Is there a relationship between teacher job satisfaction, teacher morale, and teacher mentoring programs and teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession? Hypothesis 1 states: There is a statistically significant relationship between principal leadership styles and behaviors and teacher morale, teacher satisfaction, and teachers' intent to remain or leave the teaching profession. A simple linear regression was calculated predicting teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession based on their perceptions of teacher mentoring and teacher job satisfaction. The model summary reported the variability explained by the model as 77%. A significant regression equation was found as indicated in the regression table,

$F(2, 209) = 8.697, p < .001, R^2$  of .077, indicating a relationship between teacher mentoring and teacher job satisfaction in relation to teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. The findings support the hypothesis. The results indicate that the intent to remain in the field is predicted by teacher mentoring and teacher job satisfaction. As reflected in Table 11, teacher job satisfaction had the strongest influence, and teacher mentoring had the least influence on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. Teacher job satisfaction was a positive predictor, and teacher mentoring was a negative predictor.

**Table 11**

***Regression Coefficients for Predicting Intent to Remain***

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.88	.37		7.74	.001
Teacher Job					
Satisfaction	.461	.12	.29	3.72	.001
Teacher					
Mentoring	-.022	.09	-.02	-.24	.81

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine whether principal leadership styles and behaviors and the demands of high-stakes tests had an impact on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. Perceptions of teachers concerning the contributing factors that led to their intent to remain in the teaching profession were also examined.

The study also examined whether there was a difference in teacher job satisfaction levels for state-measured subject area teachers and non-state-measured subject area teachers and whether there was a relationship between teacher job satisfaction, teacher morale, and teacher mentoring programs and teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession.

Self-reported factors were analyzed based upon results obtained from the qualitative portion of the survey instrument. Teachers who participated in this study were employed in public schools in a southern state serving students in grades K-12.

### Major Findings

Based on the analysis of descriptive statistics, teacher perceptions indicated that administrators place more pressure on state-measured subject area teachers than non state-measured subject area teachers. Although the response to this question was not overwhelming, over half of teacher responses indicated that they felt administrators placed more pressure on teachers of state-measured subject areas. This finding was particularly interesting since the majority of teachers who participated in the study were non-state-measured subject area teachers. This indicated that all teachers who participated in the study were aware of the demands placed on those teachers who are responsible for teaching subjects where standardized tests are attached. Upon examining teacher intention, most teachers indicated that they plan to remain in the teaching profession for the coming school year. Again, this could be due to the fact that the majority of those surveyed were non-state-measured subject area teachers. Another interesting finding was that when looking at teacher job satisfaction, most teachers agreed that the pressure of high-stakes testing lends itself to burnout in this profession. Kohn (2000) noted that many teachers are leaving the teaching profession because of test pressures and accountability placed on teachers.

Upon analyzing teacher mentoring factors, it was determined that principals were generally supportive of new teachers. This was an interesting finding because previous research contended that novice teachers often cited lack of administrative support as their primary reason for leaving the teaching profession (Robertson, Hancock, & Allen, 2006). In determining which factors teachers felt strongly about when responding to intrinsic motivators, teachers specified that teaching at their current grade level was rewarding to them. Ryan and Deci (2000) indicated that in order for a person to be intrinsically motivated, that person must be motivated by challenges or the excitement of doing something, not simply based on external rewards. According to the data obtained in this study, teachers appeared to be more motivated by the desire to accomplish goals than they were to receive rewards.

Research Question 1 asked whether there was a relationship between principal leadership styles and behaviors and teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. The Pearson Correlation used to test Hypothesis 1 indicated that there was a significant difference in the

principal leadership styles and behaviors based on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. This finding indicated that principal leadership plays a critical role in the retention of teachers, and it suggests that administrators should be aware of how their leadership style and behaviors impact the teachers that they lead.

T-test data were used to test Hypothesis 2 with regard to Research Question 2, which asked if there was a difference in the levels of teacher job satisfaction between teachers of state-measured subject areas and teachers of non-state-measured subject areas. Upon examining the Independent Samples Test, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between state-measured and non-state-measured teachers when examining teacher job satisfaction. This finding indicated that both non- state-measured teachers and state-measured subject area teachers expressed similar perceptions with regard to teacher job satisfaction and their intent to remain in the profession.

Research Question 3 asked whether there was a relationship between teacher job satisfaction, teacher morale, and teacher mentoring programs and teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. A simple linear regression was used to determine whether teacher job satisfaction and teacher mentoring had an impact on teachers' intent to remain in the profession. Results indicated that a significant relationship existed.

Consistent with previous literature on teacher retention, when the combination of factors such as mentoring and induction programs were employed in schools, teachers became more satisfied with the profession, and retention improved (Ingersoll, 2012).

The qualitative component of the survey instrument provided additional insight into teacher perceptions. This section of the survey was titled Self-reported Factors. The five open-ended questions asked teachers which factors contributed greatest to teacher retention and attrition, had they ever left the teaching profession, their primary reason for becoming a teacher, and which factors bothered them most during a typical school day.

With almost all participants responding to these questions, responses indicated that teachers were passionate about answering this section of the survey. These questions and answers were in response to Research Question 4: Is there a difference between self- reported factors that contribute to teachers' intent to remain or leave the teaching profession?

The first open-ended question asked: Which factor contributes greatest to a teacher's desire to remain in the teaching profession? Most teachers stated they remained in education because of student success, enjoyment of their subject area, and the art of teaching. This finding is confirmed in Ryan and Deci's (2000) study which suggested that "to be motivated means to be moved to do something" (p.54). Teachers in this study indicated that they remained in this profession because they were motivated to teach children.

When asked "Which factor contributes greatest to a teacher's decision to leave the teaching profession," teachers reported lack of administrative support, teacher workload, and student discipline as the three strongest reasons teachers leave the profession.

Teacher responses confirmed information found in previous studies such as Ingersoll's (2004) study, which found that job dissatisfaction accounted for nearly 40% of teachers departing high poverty schools, with lack of administrative support being a contributing factor to teacher job

dissatisfaction. This finding suggested that teachers rely heavily on administrative support in providing an environment where teachers experience high levels of job satisfaction.

When asked whether they had ever left the teaching profession, 21% of teachers surveyed reported that they had left and returned to the teaching profession. Most of the teachers reported leaving for personal reasons and lack of job satisfaction. Upon examining job satisfaction, they stated that teachers were required to perform many extra duties in addition to their primary role of teaching students. Responses revealed a strong indication that teachers felt overwhelmed in fulfilling their daily responsibilities to the extent that they were willing to leave the teaching profession altogether. As stated in previous research, the emphasis on better classroom practices may be a current focus in education, but this will only be beneficial to schools if they are able to recruit and retain strong teachers (Cochran-Smith, Cannady, McFachern, Piazza, Power, & Ryan, 2011).

When teachers were asked about the primary reason for becoming a teacher, most indicated that they were in this profession for the love of students and teaching, strongly confirming previous research in this area. Curtis (2012) found that 71% of teachers entered the profession for the enjoyment of teaching, 70% enjoyed the subject, and 66% enjoyed working with children. Several of the respondents commented on their love for teaching, enjoyment of their particular subject area, and working with students. When teachers feel connected to their teaching responsibilities and passionate about what they are doing, they may form a channel that improves retention rates among educators, especially those who teach math (Curtis, 2012).

When asked what bothered them most about the teaching profession, teachers reported: student discipline, paperwork, and pressures of state-testing as the three most significant factors. Teachers felt that student discipline limited the effectiveness of their teaching due to the many behavioral issues that they often encountered. Teachers also believed that if they could just focus on teaching and less on paperwork, they would be more effective. The pressure of state-testing was frequently noted as a factor that bothered teachers. Teachers felt that policy makers made decisions that affected educators, and it bothered teachers that so many mandates had been placed on them. Furthermore, teachers felt pressure to fulfill obligations that sometimes felt unattainable for many of them due to these mandates.

Through examining all statistical findings in this study with regard to significance, it was indicated that principal leadership styles and behaviors had an impact on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession, state-measured and non-state-measured subject area teachers' perceptions did not have a significant impact on teacher job satisfaction, and there was a significant relationship between teacher job satisfaction and teacher mentoring on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession.

Descriptive statistics suggested that principal leadership had the strongest bearing on whether teachers would remain in the teaching profession, whereas teacher mentoring and teacher job satisfaction had the least impact on teachers' intent to remain in the profession. Although teachers expressed their frustrations and dissatisfactions with regard to the teaching profession, only two state-measured and seven non-state-measured subject area teachers of the 212 teachers surveyed in this study reported that they would not return to the teaching profession the following

year. Of the 57 novice teachers in this study, 18 were state-measured subject area teachers. Only two of those teachers stated that they would not return to the teaching profession next year.

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# **BUSINESS COMMUNICATION COURSE REDESIGNED: ALL WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATION ASSIGNMENTS BASED ON BUILDING CAREER SKILLS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this article is to provide a method of teaching a business communication course that can bring superior value to the student by merging basic written/oral principles with career-building assignments into one seamless course of study.*

*The more than 30 years of teaching business communication or managerial communication courses has convinced the researchers of this article that business communication instructors can help students significantly by immersing them in a full course of career-building assignments. The outcome can be securing highly sought internships and fulfilling jobs upon graduation as well as satisfying, productive careers. The business writing and speaking skills applied to these assignments include clarity, conciseness, coherence, emphasis, and foundation skills. Written communication documents include letters, emails, and reports. An oral powerpoint presentation is required near the end of the semester. Over the many years of teaching, researching and measuring the course, along with the feedback from business leaders, career service advisors, faculty and students it became clear that a some components of the course were becoming dated and other components needed to be added and emphasized.*

*In this article, we will explain briefly each component of the improved course, including the requested document or communication activity:*

- ❖ *Self-SWOT*
- ❖ *Networking*
- ❖ *Informational interview(s)*
- ❖ *Job Announcement*
- ❖ *Resume*
- ❖ *Cover Letter*
- ❖ *Career Portfolio*
- ❖ *Mock Interview*
- ❖ *Oral Presentation – Job Interview PP*
- ❖ *Comprehensive Report – Lessons Learned*

*From start to finish, the improved course focuses on sharpening written and communication skills. On the first day of class, the concept is explained so that students understand that they will be totally immersed in building themselves into promising candidates*

*for significant positions sought throughout their lives. Likewise, traditional writing and speaking training will be reinforced throughout the course.*

## METHOD

To measure whether the proposed changes and additions to the business communications course added significant value, thirty -- former business communications students (all of them graduates and employed; many serving as directors, managers and executives of companies) were emailed a survey letter asking them to compare the original course to the new course. Tables with the original course content and the new course content were included along with a side-by-side comparison table for clarifying additions and changes. In summary, the letter asked the former students to: *Note the differences between Table 1 and Table 2. In Table 2, section B is significantly different. SWOT, informational interviews, and networking assignments have been added. Do you believe the additions, in Table 2, add value to the course? Why or why not? Please write your comments regarding the additions found in Table 2 (Part B) in an email reply.*

Three of the emails were returned as undeliverable. Twenty-three of the twenty-seven, emailed business students responded to the survey. Twenty-two of the twenty-three respondents indicated that the new course added significant value. In addition to the overall positive responses, SWOT., mock interviews and networking were specific components of the new course that received the greater part of the positive feedback. And, while the bulk of the comments, regarding the components of the new course were positive, a few respondents noted that, in their opinion, some of the new course components could be modified; and that some components may be less important than others. Some respondents offered constructive suggestions for improving the course. Collectively, there were twenty-two pages of comments. Some of the more consistent and more salient comments are included below. In a few cases, respondents had very different views (please see, for example, 2. and .8)

*1. I enjoy the changes that you are making in the program and think that they will benefit many students to come. Memos have become irrelevant, so I am glad that section is changing. I love the SWOT analysis. While many people talk about this analysis, few show how it can change a company. With the SWOT analysis, I think it would be vital to have students write a business plan using their own analysis.*

*2. I have to say that I would prefer the Table 1 version. As a student, I would have hated doing the interviews, searches for job announcements, mock interviews and community service. All those elements are important, but possibly for a class focused on career placement, not this class.*

*3. After reviewing the letter, Table 1, Table 2 and the comparison document, I feel the updated course curriculum would better prepare a business student for a future career. The updated curriculum seems less hypothetical and more focused on helping the student understand who they are. Businesses are taking a more informal approach to writing. ... When I ask professional copywriters their thoughts on rules regarding grammar, their answer is always, "Grammar rules are very vague and ever changing. As long as you maintain consistency and avoid spelling errors, you will be safe." ...A good portion of these students may already have careers. To help the working student, have them write something for their company.*



4. *I like how you have replaced the "contrived" with real experiences, real reflections, real self-awareness, real aspirations and real steps to obtain the desired outcome. Too many students graduate and fall into jobs that they don't want, that don't fit their natural abilities and ultimately don't bring fulfillment. Also, I would encourage the instructor to consistently remind students that nearly all business leaders have an open door policy when it comes to helping students. Nothing is more American than helping a student. In contrast, once a student graduates almost no insiders will talk to them. Think about it. The door really closes after graduation. If students take your new assignments seriously, they will almost certainly get the guidance they need (free of charge), build the network they need and integrate themselves into the culture of their chosen career path well before graduation.*

5. *In my experience, communications skills are a great way to separate equivalently qualified job candidates. So, applying managerial communications skills directly to a job search will empower students to better position themselves for future job searches.*

6. *I really like the idea of networking, this is very important in our day and age. A student or recent graduate will not succeed without knowing multiple people in their field of study. I like the idea of offering service also, nothing but good can come from this. I would also add that your students create a profile on [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) so potential employers, recruiters, and HR personnel can view their credentials. This website has been a source of great help to me in finding qualified individuals to fill positions in my company. E-networking is vital, but face-to-face networking will always be more valuable. I would also encourage them to apply to 3-5 jobs of interest throughout the year and let what you teach them improve their interviewing/job preparedness abilities.*

7. *Comment – Any activity that can bring student and practitioner together is well worth the effort. Students must learn that success in life and business is both about connecting and capability. If there is no connection there can be no application of capability. A few goals for students in this activity should be to answer some of the following questions?*

- *Determine what sets the senior manager apart? Why are they in a senior management position instead of someone else in the company?*
- *What are a few key events that have shaped the senior managers career and allowed them to be successful?*
- *What sets the average employee apart from the top performer?*

8. *Respondent A: Career portfolios are not something I have ever experienced in interviewing people for employment, nor have I ever used one in an interview. I know that some arts majors, and I assume others, have portfolios that show their work but I've never seen this in business.*

*Respondent B: Career Portfolio - I carry a hard copy of my portfolio where ever I go. After finishing Dr. Addams course, I converted my portfolio electronically. The letters of recommendation have definitely been some of my most valuable assets.*

9. *Teach your students to rewrite a bad letter. During my 11 years at the bank, I had to learn to take poorly written messages and rewrite it for the president or senior VP. I think the hard copy portfolio is dead. If a student had an online portfolio for me to check out in addition to the LinkedIn, it would give them a leg up in an interview. LinkedIn needs to be emphasized in the class. This has become as important, if not more important, than the resume.*

10. *The proposed changes to the course will make a notable difference in the ability of the students to be more competitively prepared for the job market. To reference a popular saying, "This kills two birds with one stone" melding together the current teaching of key managerial communications principles with the*

*added benefit of helping students think much more deeply about their careers and being markedly more prepared for securing positions.*

*11. This should be a mandatory course for any higher ed. student to help them achieve. One of the key reasons students obtain a degree is to get a great job! I see this as necessary curriculum. If taught effectively, it would soon gain popularity and become known as the "must" course for getting the right job during and after graduation. Isn't this the reason why universities exist?*

The majority of the respondents indicate that students would be well-served by utilizing the writing and speaking assignments delineated below. Nearly all of the respondents believe that business written and oral skills can be taught concomitantly with job search/career-building assignments. Overall, they felt quite strongly that students can gain increased value through the proposed course redesign. To more fully understand the proposed changes, we have summarized the job search/career-building assignments below (Nos. 1-10).

### **SELF-SWOT**

The purpose of this assignment is to enable students to continuously progress in their careers through the use of a personal assessment tool adapted from business use. We have titled this personal assessment tool "self-SWOT analysis." SWOT is a business acronym typically used to identify an organization's strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T). This technique is used to evaluate a company's internal strengths and weaknesses and its external opportunities and threats. The underlying assumption of a SWOT analysis is that managers can better formulate a successful strategy after they have carefully reviewed the organization's strengths and weaknesses in light of current threats and opportunities the environment presents.

Starting the job search process with a self-SWOT assignment can guide students in personally assessing their strengths, weaknesses, and the work environment. After reviewing the literature regarding company internal assessments, Chermack and Kasshanna (2007) found that company executives have used SWOT frequently for several years. They noted the use of SWOT by organizational decision-makers who seek ways to manage uncertainty and direct their organizations through difficult, challenging times. Earlier, Panagiotou (2003) acknowledged the value of SWOT for decision-makers in assessing an organization's environment in a rapidly changing, highly diversified, competitive world.

To obtain internships and career opportunities, students need to construct an effective cover letter, resume, and career portfolio. Before embarking on these necessary career preparation activities, instructors should teach their students how to self-analyze their career paths by conducting a self-SWOT analysis to recognize their strengths, understand their weaknesses, uncover underlying marketplace threats, and identify appropriate opportunities.

Helping students to self-analyze and plan for the future career choices is not limited to business communication courses. Wagner (2010) offered advice to finance instructors on career planning. Through an honest self-assessment, students created a self-development plan. She wisely advised students to review documentation, such as their performance reviews, that highlighted skills or success in the workplace. McCorkle, et.al. (2003) advised marketing

instructors to teach students to apply what they have learned in their marketing courses, such as self-marketing tools.

Students are coached to use bullet phrases to self-assess personal strengths under the “S” section, followed by recognizing gaps (“W” section) in any of the items shown in the above section. Likewise, after researching and analyzing the job marketplace items under the “O” section, students must determine the gaps or problems in these areas and notes them under the “T” section. Finally, student opportunities and threats are noted as the external marketplace environment is objectively assessed.

### Exhibit 1. Self-SWOT Assignment

Directions: Type your **Self-SWOT**. Objectively identify—using bullet phrases—your strengths and weaknesses for the **S** and **W**. Consider items below in parentheses. Conduct some research on real (not made up) opportunities (**O**) within the marketplace and your fields of interest that could accelerate your career. Now, contrast those opportunities by identifying realistic threats (**T**) associated within those marketplaces.

**Strengths** (skills, education, experience, networking, character traits, other)

\_\_\_\_\_?

**Weaknesses** (gaps in skills, education, experience, networking, character traits, other)

\_\_\_\_\_?

**Opportunities** (technology, legislation, social values, economy, demographics of population, geographical considerations, positively affected economic trends within sectors, other)

\_\_\_\_\_?

**Threats** (gaps in technology, legislation, social values, economy, demographics of population, geographical considerations, negatively affected economic trends within sectors, other)

\_\_\_\_\_?

Through an effective self-SWOT, a student can see the weakness of not having related work experience, for example, and move forward to secure a related internship as a junior and/or senior college student. By a thorough, honest self-inspection, a student can see the value of being an active member in a student club or college committee that will improve an identified weakness in leadership or communication skills.

Self-SWOT assignments can greatly impact student preparation for internships and career positions upon graduation. Students who objectively craft a self-SWOT will better understand their strengths and weaknesses and realize the importance of finding opportunities to improve.

Graduates will be able to utilize a self-SWOT as needed when future career changes or enhancements may be contemplated.

*Assignment: email to professor with self-SWOT attachment.*

## NETWORKING

Perhaps there is no better course in academia than a business communication course to teach positive networking. Positive networking has practical application regarding the job search skills taught in communication courses. Beginning this course on the job search process, we teach the importance of networking to assist students in building their networking skills quickly. Through personal networks, students can find informational interview possibilities and job announcements. Throughout the course, students will be expanding their networks through course activities (see below).

We teach our students to look at networking in a positive, life-enhancing way. We promote the concept that networking means building friendships that endure. In business, in education, in communities, and in life situations, true friends help friends with no hidden agenda—no “what’s in it for me” attitude. Networking needs to be a two-way street. Expecting a reward for helping someone is counter to the spirit of networking. Sincerely helping others will foster a life full of choice relationships.

Similarly, Hochberg, Ljungqvist, and Lu (2007) emphasize partnerships based on mutual benefit. Haggerty (1999) and Dulek (2006) believe networking should be more about giving than about expecting benefits in return.

Any lecture on networking should not only include the value of positive networking but also helpful tips on ways to successfully grow and maintain a network of trusted friends.

For example, assume your university is hosting a career fair on campus in the next few weeks. Role-play with students how to make contacts with potential employers. Role-play how to ask for a business card from a company representative. Teach students to keep in touch with company representatives by sending thank-you letters immediately and making appropriate phone calls that show thoughtfulness and sincerity.

Further, stress the importance of keeping in touch with a friend who has made a contact for you regarding a job opening with a company. A relationship will flounder by not communicating directly with the new “friend” regarding the outcome of the referral. Nourish the relationship by finding a way to show your appreciation. For example, contact this friend to help him or her as situations arise when your “job” situation is *not* the issue. For example, you could take this person to lunch, send flowers when learning of a happy or sad life event, or drop a note to show you are thinking about him or her, etc.

Students can build relationships by extending themselves to other students, to faculty members, to staff on campus, etc. Students can join fraternities or sororities, clubs, or student association committees on campus where they can enhance communication and leadership skills and often give service to others in the process. Many student organizations connect often with

employers by arranging tours of company plants and inviting company representatives to speak in classes.

Outside the university setting, students can further enhance their network through:

- *becoming involved in community groups, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, homeless shelters, Special Olympics, senior citizen rest homes, etc.*
- *participating in hobbies that involve others, such as antique auto shows, photo exhibits, running clubs, etc.*
- *coaching young people in a sport*
- *volunteering to help a scout group*
- *tutoring at a local school*
- *attending plays, concerts, or sports events with others*

Developing the positive mindset of helping others builds an individual's character and widens the sphere of friendships. Helping others who have needed assistance on projects, information on topics, advice, new ideas, etc. builds trust. Positive networking is built on trust and on honest communication.

Students will ask for specific methods to develop and nurture a network in their everyday lives. Here is a helpful "to do" list:

- *maintain a list of your friends and associates. Keep in touch periodically.*
- *exchange names, email addresses, and phone numbers with new contacts. Record anything you observe about the person--likes and dislikes, situation, circumstances, etc. Add them to your list.*
- *work every day to expand your network. Make no mistake; this does take work.*
- *help others when you see a need arise.*
- *get to know a new person in another department at your present job every month.*
- *acquire a mentor, both at work and in your academic major.*
- *be a mentor to someone.*

Ten networking assignments to give students are listed below. For each assignment, require the student to submit evidence of completion. Examples of evidence may include a memo with copies of business cards attached, a letter verifying participation, etc.

1. *Send a thank-you letter to someone who has helped you in some way during the past two months. An alternative to the thank-you letter is a congratulatory letter to someone who has achieved something significant over the past month. This assignment works best by restricting the letter to someone outside the family.*

2. *Prepare a list of individuals in your present network. The list should include name, position, organization, phone number, email address, areas of expertise or traits admired, and notes about the relationship. Next, identify 10 people you would like to add to your network this semester. Your list should include each individual's area of expertise or some specific traits admired. This would be an appropriate assignment at the start of the semester.*

3. *Work with your university's alumni association in contacting past graduates. For instance, Weber State University has a very successful "Meet Your Mentor" program. In this program, the university contacts past WSU graduates to take a student to lunch. The WSU supporter is typically a successful*

*businessperson. The WSU Alumni Association matches the graduate's business area to the student's major. The purpose of the program is to give students opportunities to meet professionals and learn more about the area of interest. Other universities have similar programs.*

*4. Join a professional association or a student organization on campus. Be active in their events. Seek a leadership role.*

*5. Attend a career fair on campus. Identify specific companies of interest. Take tailored resumes to the company representatives. Require the student to prepare a database, including: the name and title of the company representative, the name of the company, the product or service, and the position available. Write a thank-you letter to each of the recruiters you met.*

*6. Attend a campus lecture or an off-campus professional conference. Introduce yourself to the speaker, ask the speaker to meet with you to further discuss the area of interest, and subsequently meet with the speaker.*

*7. Volunteer your time and/or skills to a community organization, such as a homeless shelter, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Red Cross, city government office, etc.*

*8. Assist a candidate running for a legislative office.*

*9. Meet with the career counselor in your university's career center. Discuss at least two available internships and contact their company representatives.*

*10. Participate in a service-learning or service project. These projects are often available on campus or through campus contacts. Participating with others who are committed to strengthening the community can be a valuable experience.*

Our job search lectures and assignments focus on students learning to grow and nurture their network throughout their lives. This concept puts networking in a life-long context—not simply in the context of completing an assignment for class.

Understanding the positive side of networking can assist students in making valuable changes in their lives. This positive mindset can lead students to widen their acquaintances and to nurture meaningful relationships.

*Assignment: letter of appreciation or a congratulatory letter to someone in your network who has helped you recently or who has achieved a milestone in life.*

### **INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW(S)**

Once a self-SWOT has been written, a student should objectively consider the type of professional position that builds on his/her strengths and offers opportunities for success. Accordingly, the student should ponder possible individuals in a senior position in the particular industry. The networking assignment above should produce valuable possibilities regarding potential people to interview or contacts who may be able to lead the student to a prime expert in the field.

Most students are initially nervous about interviewing a top manager. However, our students have appreciated being required to meet and converse—in person-- with a knowledgeable, successful businessperson in their field of interest.

Decarie (2010) emphasized that informational interviews with business professionals helped student improve their writing, editing, and interviewing skills. She noted that such interviews are a valuable means to allow students to converse with those who might have an impact on students' careers. Likewise, Mulvaney (2003) found that an information interview to be a great success with her students. She stresses the importance of preparation, including dressing appropriately for the interview and taking careful notes during the interview. Following the interview, she requires a copy of the students' thank you letters, an important part of the writing element in this activity.

Below, we have shown a list of required questions for students to ask during the informational interview. They focus on realities and challenges of the specific job.

Questions:

1. *What does your company do? What differentiates your company?*
2. *Who are your competitors? Who are your customers?*
3. *What attracted you to this industry?*
4. *What does it take to succeed in this industry? Why?*
5. *Who fails? Why?*
6. *What are your job responsibilities?*
7. *What do you like about your job –especially?*
8. *What do you dislike?*
9. *How are you motivated?*
10. *Could you give me some idea of the compensation as a professional in this industry?*
11. *What books should I be reading? Should I be joining an industry association?*
12. *What else should I be doing to prepare myself? Other classes?*
13. *Could you help me assess how likely I am to be an attractive candidate in the future?*
14. *How do you feel about involvement in college organizations, clubs, and committees?*
15. *Is there someone else I would benefit from talking with?*
16. *What question should I be asking that I have not asked?*
17. *Is there anything I can do for you?*

Once the interview is over, students are taught to immediately debrief. Notes should be clarified, impressions written down, and organized for the upcoming written report assignment (see below).

*Assignment: written report to professor; incorporate answers to questions Nos. 1-17 above stressing new insights and direction for your career.*

## **JOB ANNOUNCEMENT**

Having completed some of the networking assignments above, the student should have some contacts to utilize in finding a job announcement that meets his/her interest. Informational interviews may also yield some possible opportunities to investigate. Various methods can be

used to give the students some direction in finding a real job position in an actual company that would be appropriate for the particular major. The students should be encouraged to find a position that they would desire upon graduation. One substitution could be made that is also very practical: finding an internship announcement—in the student’s major. Many students actually carry the assignment all the way to accepting the position.

One method used to help the student find a real position available is to invite the career counselor at your institution to speak for part of a class period on the benefits of utilizing the career center services and on the job announcements currently available for internships and career positions upon graduation. Typically, the career counselor has access to a number of opportunities. The side benefit of bringing in the career counselor is providing the students with the chance of connecting with the career counselor for future assistance.

Another method used to assist in locating potential company career positions is to invite two-three human resource managers from local firms to take a few minutes of class time to promote the need for excellent communication skills in resumes, cover letters, career portfolios, and job interviews. This speaker could also share job announcements for current internships available and for career positions in accounting, finance, marketing, management, economics, information technology, etc. Most human resource managers have written job announcements to share. Accordingly, a proposed assignment follows:

*Assignment: submit a typed copy of an actual announcement (internship or career position) which you will utilize for the resume, cover letter, career portfolio, mock interview, and reports.*

Student must choose a viable position. Some students mistakenly choose a position (like Vice President of Marketing in a large firm) that will take several years to acquire the needed experience for this more senior position. At times, an internship announcement will not specifically identify the type of business major needed (“internship at Boeing”). If this occurs, have the student contact the organization and document the type of major needed. The student should tailor the resume, cover letter, career portfolio, and interview content to the skills and knowledge required for the major. Consequently, the value of ascertaining a realistic situation cannot be overstated.

## RESUME

When writing a resume, the student should tailor the resume to the position found in the job announcement (assignment above). With the position evident to the student, he/she should jot down the critical skills and knowledge needed for this particular internship or career position. At times, the job announcement may list the critical skills, related experience, and knowledge the company desires for this particular job. Having completed a self-SWOT, the student can utilize strengths and abilities in crafting an effective resume that captivates the recruiter.

Two ingredients are needed to write a resume that **sells**: (1) emphasis on accomplishments/skills developed and (2) positive appeal.



Under a student's job experience section, he/she needs to describe unique, specific contributions to a past or present organization. Numbers sell because they foster credibility and definable success. For example, perhaps the student increased sales by 10 percent over pre-set company goals for the last three months. Or, perhaps the student sharpened human resource management skills by developing a new performance appraisal instrument, resulting in both management and communicating more effectively with the new performance review process. Accordingly, the student should stress accomplishments and contributions in past jobs rather than a long list of job responsibilities.

Students must state accomplishments and attributes gained in specific jobs which focus on the skills needed in the job announcement (discussed in the earlier assignment). Thus, in the work experience section, the student should bullet two-three contributions or skills developed at a particular company. Credibility is built on facts, not general expressions such as "I am a great communicator." This bullet sells: "increased personal sales by 20 percent over a three-month period." Also, by indicating a skill developed on a particular job, the student shows he or she is teachable. Further, students must understand that they need to specifically indicate how they have added value to companies and that they have the skills required for this open position.

The second ingredient in crafting a resume that sells is positive appeal. By accentuating the positive, the student increases value when the interviewer or potential manager glances briefly over the resume. The most important items should be strategically positioned *first* in any bullet list and in the resume overall.

Another way to show positive appeal is to address the needed skill set for the open position by crafting an effective "Key Qualifications" section immediately following "Job Objective." Two or three one-line bullet phrases should capture (1) the status of the student's education and (2) a summary of work experience, preferably related work experience.

*Assignment: submit a typed resume for an internship or career position which she/he will utilize for further assignments in the course, such as the career portfolio, mock interview, and oral presentation; a copy of The job announcement should be attached.*

## COVER LETTER

The cover letter should be used to personally connect with the reader. The recruiter, human resource manager, or hiring manager who reads the student's cover letter should be able to grasp quickly that this job seeker meets the chief qualifications for the job. Hence, the cover letter must **sell** his or her strong points that align with the company's needs.

The first paragraph should immediately reaffirm the position desired. The middle paragraphs should **sell** qualifications by writing a sentence or two, followed by a bullet list of three or four of his/her key qualifications that meet the job announcement requirements. Finally, the closing paragraph should reaffirm enthusiasm for the possible position and request an interview.

*Assignment: submit a typed cover letter—along with the resume—for an internship or career position which you will utilize for other job search activities; a copy of the job announcement should be attached.*

## CAREER PORTFOLIO

Next, the student prepares for the upcoming interview, given the cover letter and resume captured a recruiter's interest. An often overlooked strategy is creating a career portfolio.

Business educators can help students self-market by teaching them the value of a career portfolio for a successful job search and for future performance appraisals in their careers. Educators in all business majors can help students market themselves by teaching their students how to build a career portfolio—sometimes with documents produced in their classes. For example, a finance instructor could require portfolio inserts, such as a survivor portfolio, investment portfolio, and a ratio analysis.

In the business curricula, students are taught to communicate and to market goods and services. The job search research team of McCorkle, Alexander, Reardon & Kling (2003) stressed that marketing educators have the responsibility to teach students self-marketing/job search skill development; otherwise, good students accept bad jobs, which reflects not only on the students but also on colleges and universities providing business education. Campbell (2002 and 2006), McPherson (1998), and Powell & Jankovich (1998) also suggest that students need to be more engaged in marketing their own skills, knowledge, and abilities.

Powell and Jankovich pointed out that the portfolio enhances the student's ability to pass the initial interview screening process. Moody, Stewart, and Bolt-Lee (2002) found that the portfolio demonstrates students' written communication skills, technological ability, and creativity. In a survey to representative employers (provided by the National Association of Colleges and Employers), these researchers found that 71 percent of respondents agreed that portfolios were moderately-to-extremely helpful in showcasing students' abilities. Recruiters were interested in seeing portfolios that provided concrete examples of student achievements.

The career portfolio is a collection of documents that represent events in the student's life—evidence of potential through documented accomplishments. These documents build credibility. In an article on portfolio development, Heath (2005) describes the professional portfolio as an organized collection of self-selected artifacts, developed for a specific purpose and audience, which demonstrate the writer's professional knowledge, skills, dispositions, and growth over time.

Creating a career portfolio generates both a *process* and a *product*. Accomplishments and skills are documented—on paper. Focus can be placed on values, interests, goals, and strategies, which will help in constructing a marketing package.

Compiling a portfolio is an excellent way to prepare for an interview. Documents build credibility. During the job interview, the student can show, not just tell, about an accomplishment or skill developed.

Two uses for a career portfolio are (1) internship and career position interviews and (2) job performance appraisals.

Internships provide additional expertise, outside of the classroom, in a specific area.

Your career portfolio may make you more attractive as an applicant for an internship. Presenting your work to enhance your credibility makes good business sense. Your well-designed and documented career portfolio may be the edge you need to secure that prized internship.

Once a student has landed an internship and/or career position upon graduation, he/she should continue to update the career portfolio. Examples of effectiveness, success, congratulations, and awards contribute to a documented path of skill-building which can be utilized in performance reviews with management in a professional's career. This evidence may justify increased a promotion, additional compensation, or new responsibility.

The career portfolio should showcase acquired relevant skills and abilities for a particular internship or career position. Below, we have listed documents for business majors:

- *Title Page ("Career Portfolio" and "Your Name")*
- *Contents Page (items/documents listed in order of appearance)*
- *Cover Letter (tailored to the job opening)*
- *Resume (tailored to the job opening)*
- *Academic Plan of Study (relevant courses titles—not course numbers)*
- *Professional Goals (short term and long term)*
- *Personal mission statement*
- *Written and Visual Documents (e.g., a memo, case response, research report, PowerPoint presentation slides, brochure, client proposal, new product description, etc.)*
- *Evidence of Skills & Knowledge Acquired from Academic Preparation and Work Experience \*\**  
*[e.g. A marketing plan for a marketing major]*
- *Leadership Experiences*
- *Community Involvement*
- *Performance Appraisals*
- *Awards/Certificates/Honors/Letters of Commendation*
- *Other Evidence of Professionalism*
- *Solicited Letters of Recommendation*

Letters of recommendation are particularly valuable. These letters provide an objective assessment of skills, knowledge, and work ethic by an objective source—such as a past or present manager at work or a college professor.

Our students are required to purchase a professional, leather-look binder to use as their portfolio. All documents are placed strategically in sheet protectors. Depending on the interview, documents can be temporarily removed and/or additional documents added. Carrying a portfolio into an interview adds to the student's confidence.

Electronic portfolios are becoming a popular tool in helping select candidates for interviews and for positions. According to Heath (2005), electronic portfolios are much easier to reproduce, distribute, and access. A secondary benefit of building an electronic portfolio is the evidence itself of your technology skills, which may be quite useful to the interviewer's organization. Most importantly, though, the electronic portfolio, like the physical portfolio, helps you to market yourself.

According to Montgomery and Wiley (2008), electronic documents can be linked to each other and across standards as the writer feels appropriate. The portfolio serves as proof of the accomplishments achieved during careers.

Some of the documents that were used in the physical version of your portfolio could be

included in the electronic version, including items associated with your education, work, volunteer history, awards, project samples, and reference letters. In addition, the electronic version may include screenshots, multi-media images, and audio and video clips. Once you have created your portfolio, you may wish to store them in a cd and/or produce a web site.

Heath (2005) stresses the importance of each page being logically organized and readable holding to the proper use of color, type size and fonts, and contrast. All multimedia, including photos, graphics, video, and audio are used as artifacts to show evidence of specific skills. Writing principles cannot be overemphasized. Missing graphics, broken hyperlinks, or errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar communicate a poor candidate.

Throughout the interview, the interviewee should look for the appropriate time when the interviewer wants to see a document mentioned. The hard-copy version of the portfolio has no substitute in a one-on-one interview. A copy of the portfolio on disk can be left with the interviewer. Once the interviewer holds the portfolio, the likelihood is great that he /she will continue to study other pages in a well-designed and documented career portfolio.

*Assignment: develop a career portfolio, focusing on the job announcement above. Include the cover letter and resume already written in response to the job announcement.*

### **MOCK INTERVIEW**

Learning to express yourself while emphasizing related skills in the context of the job being sought is critical to successfully being selected by organization recruiters. Students often lack confidence in this critical skill. By gaining practice in speaking to another person—even in a contrived mock situation, a student can learn quickly the strengths and weaknesses possessed.

Relevant literature supports the importance of teaching student how to interview (Maurer, et. al. 2001; Moynihan, et.al. 2003). Since mock interview with fellow classmates at least 20 minutes a person, the mock interview assignment can be an out-of-class assignment. Marks and O'Connor (2006) agree, stressing that it is almost prohibitive to provide the time necessary to conduct mock interviews in the classroom.

Having students review their performance is very useful to the learning experience. Students are quick to relate that they gained a better perspective on their strengths and weaknesses—both regarding content of answers and nonverbal nuances.

Students appreciate the opportunity to conduct the interview outside of class, citing the flexibility of being able to pick the time and place of the interview with an assigned classmate as the interviewer. Each student is not only interviewed (the primary goal of the assignment) but also acts in the interviewer role.

*Assignment: use emails to communicate with your assigned mock interview partner. Conduct a 20-minute interview, acting as the interviewer. Then, be interviewed by your partner, using your career portfolio.*

## ORAL PRESENTATION – JOB INTERVIEW PP

Often open professional positions require an interview with several senior management officials. This critical interview is typically the deciding factor between finalists. With this scenario in mind, we have four to five fellow students act as the senior-manager audience. A powerpoint presentation is required, which should stress the student's major selling points in acquiring the specific job. Again, in this course methodology, the student utilizes the job announcement he/she used to write a resume, cover letter, and career portfolio.

Overall, the instructor would evaluate a student's ability to sell himself/herself. The oral presentation criteria would typically include content (opening, agenda, body, and closing), delivery (eye contact, gestures, no distractions), voice (speaking rate, projection, articulation, vocabulary, no slang), and powerpoint visuals (clarity, delivery, conciseness, appropriateness for audience).

*Assignment: make a powerpoint presentation to an assigned panel (fellow students acting as senior management in organization that has selected you as one of three finalists for the position you previously selected).*

## COMPREHENSIVE REPORT –LESSONS LEARNED

Near the close of the semester, a comprehensive report will help solidify lessons learned in the two purposes of the class established at the first of the course: (1) written and oral communication skills gained and (2) job search skills for immediate use and for lifetime situations.

The written report to the instructor should naturally center on traditional text coverage on report writing, including conciseness, clarity, audience analysis, emphasis, coherence, parallelism, grammar, and writing mechanics.

The content of the report should center on insights gained by the student regarding the self-SWOT and informational interview(s) in particular, appreciation for positive networking activities, cover letter and resume writing, career portfolio development, mock interview practice, and oral presentation skills. The instructor could choose one or two of these assignments (e.g. self-SWOT and informational interview) or could require personal insights into all of the above activities.

*Assignment: Write a report to your professor on the career-building activities above, centering your attention on written and oral communication skills you have gained. Also, articulate any insights you have found through your information interview.*

In conclusion, this article has attempted to package an entire course focused on helping students communicate better in writing and speaking while utilizing job search assignments to add value to the students' life-long learning. An additional benefit to this approach is the high level of students' interest as they see quickly the investment in themselves.

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# **RATEMYPROFESSORS.COM EVALUATIONS AND EXTERNAL BENCHMARKS OF ACCOUNTING PROGRAM QUALITY**

**Tom Wilson, University of Louisiana at Lafayette**

## **ABSTRACT**

*With over 14 million ratings of instructors, RateMyProfessors.com (RMP) is the most widely used web-based tool for student evaluation of teaching. Because RMP is used to evaluate the teaching quality of individual instructors, it is not surprising that most prior research has focused on the validity of RMP scores and whether they correspond to more traditional methods of student evaluations.*

*This study is the first to aggregate the RMP scores of individual instructors within an accounting program to derive a measure of quality for the accounting program as a whole. This quality measure is then compared to numerous other external benchmarks of accounting program quality. Results show significant and positive correlations across a variety of quality metrics. AACSB accounting accredited programs have higher RMP scores than do programs lacking such accreditation. Programs ranked in Public Accounting Report's Annual Professors Survey have higher RMP scores than do unranked programs. The results extend to areas not obviously related to classroom performance, as accounting programs considered among the top research institutions have higher RMP scores than do less research oriented programs. Finally, higher RMP scores are associated with higher CPA Exam pass rates.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

RateMyProfessors.com has become a widely used tool for college and university students to provide feedback about their instructors. As their website (<http://www.ratemyp Professors.com/About.jsp>) notes, "RateMyProfessors.com is the largest online destination for professor ratings. Users have added more than 14 million ratings, 1.3 million professors and 7,000 schools to RateMyProfessors.com." Use of the site has become so widespread and accepted that Forbes Magazine assigns a 15% weight to RateMyProfessors.com scores in its annual ranking of America's top colleges (Howard, 2013).

Since RateMyProfessors.com (hereafter RMP) is a tool for evaluating the teaching quality of individual instructors, it is not surprising that most prior research has focused on the validity of RMP scores and their correlation with more traditional measures of instructor quality, such as student evaluations of teaching. This study is one of the first to aggregate the RMP scores of individual instructors within a program to derive a program-wide measure of quality.

Specifically, this study aggregates the RMP scores of individual accounting instructors to construct a measure of overall accounting program quality. To determine the usefulness of the resulting metric, it is then compared to various other external benchmarks of program quality, such as accreditation status, program ranking, and CPA Exam pass rate.

The remainder of this paper is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the RMP rating system and reviews selected research into the validity of RMP scores. The data collection and aggregation methods are discussed in the second section. The third section discusses the external benchmarks of accounting program quality and analyzes their correlation with RMP scores. The paper closes with a summary and discussion of the findings.

## RMP BACKGROUND

The RMP website ([www.ratemyprofessors.com/categories.jsp](http://www.ratemyprofessors.com/categories.jsp)) provides a description of the factors on which an instructor is evaluated. For each instructor, students are asked to assess his or her “Helpfulness” and “Clarity.” These assessments are then averaged to produce an “Overall Quality” measure. A 5 point scale is used, with an average score of 3.5 - 5.0 being considered “Good Quality.” Instructors scoring between 2.5 and 3.4 are classified as “Average Quality,” while scores below 2.5 are viewed as “Poor Quality.”

Students may also evaluate instructors on their perceived “Easiness.” As the RMP website explains:

*Some students want to know how easy or difficult a class is before they register. Is this class an easy A? How much work needs to be done in order to get a good grade? This category is not included in the Overall Quality rating.*

- 5 = Easy
- 1 = Hard

Another factor assessed by students is their instructor’s “Hotness.” Although not part of the overall quality average, instructors considered “Hot” have a red chili pepper displayed in their ratings.

The usefulness of RMP ratings has been the subject of much debate. Felton, Koper, Mitchell, and Stinson (2008) question whether the RMP Quality measure actually captures teaching effectiveness, noting the strong positive correlations between the Quality, Easiness, and Hotness scores. Davison and Price (2009) forcefully present the argument against the validity of RMP averages. They point out the lack of control over student postings, noting that:

*A huge problem with the site is the lack of external validity. There is no way to control who posts a message (whether they actually took an entire course with the instructor) or when a message is posted (we found students posting on the first day of course or as a 10-year alumnus) (p.61).*

Davison and Price (2009) also take issue with RMP’s methodology in computing instructor quality:



*Moreover, the overall score that RMP computes for each instructor is a combination of two highly correlated variables (helpfulness and clarity), and is void of any measure concerning the learning process or knowledge attained. Nevertheless, RMP prominently displays a smiling or frowning face symbol, accordingly, next to each instructor name. The lack of comprehensive measures of teaching effectiveness calls into question the internal validity of the information provided by the website (p. 61).*

Other studies have found that, for all their methodological issues, RMP ratings are positively correlated with traditional student evaluation of teaching (SET) measures. Brown, Baillie, and Fraser (2009) observed these correlations and also noted that in a regression analysis, RMP ratings are significant predictors of traditional student evaluations. Similar correlations between RMP Quality and traditional SET scores are noted by Coladarci and Kornfield (2007), Timmerman (2008), and Felton et al. (2008). The latter conclude that, given the validity concerns of RMP scores, their correlation with traditional SETs “casts considerable doubt on the usefulness of in-class student opinion surveys for purposes of examining quality and effectiveness of teaching” (p. 58).

Previous research has focused on the usefulness and validity of RMP ratings of individual instructors. This study seeks to determine whether, by aggregating individual instructor ratings, a useful measure of overall program quality might be constructed. The method used to collect and aggregate RMP data is discussed in the following section.

## **DATA SELECTION AND AGGREGATION**

There are student ratings for over 23,500 accounting instructors on RMP. Because RMP includes ratings for both current faculty and faculty who have retired or moved to another school, a method was needed to identify an accounting program’s current roster of instructors. Accordingly, the online version of the Hasselback Accounting Faculty Directory was used to obtain a more current listing of each school’s accounting faculty. This had the effect of limiting the analysis to accounting programs at four year colleges and universities. To reduce data collection to a manageable level, only programs with eight or more faculty members listed as of January 2014 were included in the study. A total of 278 accounting programs met this criterion.

The RMP website was then accessed throughout the Spring of 2014 to collect summary quality and easiness ratings for each faculty member of the sample programs. To prevent the analysis being skewed by instructors with very few ratings, data were collected only for individuals with at least five student ratings. Data were available for 2,420 individual accounting instructors. It should be noted that new ratings on RMP are added frequently and that instructor scores may have changed since the data were first collected.

Individual instructor data were then aggregated to provide average measures of quality for accounting programs. For several programs, sufficient data were available for only one or two individual instructors. To avoid assessments of institutional quality being skewed by such programs, only accounting programs with sufficient data available for five or more instructors were included in the analyses. A total of 223 accounting programs met this criterion. The 223 programs include RMP data for 2,297 individual accounting instructors. Following Felton et al.

(2008), the RMP Quality scores were also adjusted for the perceived easiness of the instructor. Hereafter “Adjusted Quality” is defined as Quality – Easiness. Summary information about the quality and adjusted quality of accounting programs in the sample is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**ACCOUNTING PROGRAM SUMMARY INFORMATION**  
**(n=223)**

	Number of <u>Faculty Rated</u>	Total Number <u>of Ratings</u>	<u>Quality</u>	<u>Adjusted Quality</u>
Mean	10.30	297.12	3.54	0.90
Maximum	35.00	2,169.00	4.40	2.29
Minimum	5.00	48.00	2.59	-0.10

The average accounting program had 10.30 instructors with enough RMP ratings to be included in the analyses. On average, nearly 300 separate student ratings combined to create the program wide measure. RMP defines “Good Quality” as an average quality rating of 3.50-5.00. As Table 1 indicates, accounting programs are just above the lower threshold with an average quality score of 3.54. When Easiness scores were deducted, the average accounting program had an adjusted quality rating of 0.90.

**Table 2**  
**ACCOUNTING PROGRAM RANKINGS**

*Panel A: Top 5 Programs - Average Quality Rating*

Rank	School Name	Average Quality
1	LaSalle University	4.400
2	University of New Mexico	4.300
3	Southern Methodist University	4.285
4	Northeastern University	4.213
5	University of Washington – Seattle	4.185

*Panel B: Top 5 Programs - Adjusted Average Quality Rating (Q-E)*

Rank	School Name	Avg. Quality	Avg. Easiness	Adj. Quality
1	University of Georgia	4.062	1.775	2.287
2	University of New Mexico	4.300	2.500	1.800
3	University of Missouri - Kansas City	3.960	2.180	1.780
4	University of Washington – Seattle	4.185	2.471	1.714
5	Brigham Young University	4.069	2.507	1.562

Table 2 presents the top ranked accounting programs in the country using the metrics of average quality and adjusted quality. The top programs in terms of average quality all have ratings above 4.10. Two programs ranked among the top 5 in both unadjusted and adjusted quality – the University of New Mexico and the University of Washington – Seattle.

## **EXTERNAL BENCHMARKS OF ACCOUNTING PROGRAM QUALITY**

This study seeks to determine whether the RMP quality and adjusted quality program scores discussed above are correlated with other external markers of accounting program quality. Although RMP is intended to serve as a measure of classroom performance, many external measures capture differing and/or more comprehensive aspects of quality. Each selected benchmark is briefly discussed below, along with an analysis of its correlation with the RMP scores.

### **AACSB Accreditation**

Among the many ways external observers can judge the quality of an accounting program is whether or not the program is accredited. For business and accounting programs, the premier accreditation is generally considered to be that offered by AACSB International. Trapnell and Williams (2012) note that “(t)he value of AACSB accreditation is that it is an internationally recognized designation of quality supported by continuous improvement” (pp. 1072-1073).

As the AACSB’s website (<http://accredited.aacsb.edu/>) states:

*95% of surveyed schools reported that AACSB Accreditation is an indicator that their quality is higher than that of non-AACSB-Accredited schools.*

*AACSB-accredited schools have the highest quality faculty, relevant and challenging curriculum, and provide educational and career opportunities that are not found at other business schools.*

*AACSB Accreditation represents the highest standard of achievement for business schools worldwide. Less than 5% of the world’s 13,000 business programs have earned AACSB Accreditation.*

*AACSB-accredited schools produce graduates that are highly skilled and more desirable to employers than other non-accredited schools.*

Separate AACSB accreditation of accounting programs is even rarer than business school accreditation. A review of the AACSB website reveals that fewer than 200 programs have both business and accounting accreditation. In their assessment of the benefits and costs of separate accounting accreditation, Gaharan, Chiasson, Foust, and Mauldin (2007) conclude: “Accounting accreditation signals excellence to program stakeholders” (p. 19).

Table 3 examines the correlation between student-based RMP measures of program quality and the external validation of AACSB accreditation. Of the 223 schools in the sample, 210 had received accreditation of their business programs from the AACSB. The sample was more

balanced between programs with separate AACSB accounting accreditation (121) and programs without such accreditation (102).

Table 3  
AACSB ACCREDITATION AND ACCOUNTING PROGRAM QUALITY

	Unadjusted Average Quality Rating	Adjusted Average Quality Rating (Quality – Easiness)
<b><u>AACSB – Business Accreditation</u></b>		
Accredited (n=210)	3.533	0.908
Not Accredited (n=13)	3.644	0.810
Difference	-0.111	0.098
t statistic ( <i>p-value (2 tailed)</i> )	-1.233 (0.219)	1.027 (0.306)
<b><u>AACSB – Accounting Accreditation</u></b>		
Accredited (n=121)	3.542	0.951
Not Accredited (n=102)	3.536	0.845
Difference	0.006	0.106
t statistic ( <i>p-value (2 tailed)</i> )	0.140 (0.889)	2.397 (0.017)

As Table 3 indicates, RMP quality differences between schools with and without AACSB business accreditation were not statistically significant, a result perhaps driven by the small number of schools lacking accreditation. When AACSB accounting accreditation was used as an external indicator of program quality, the unadjusted RMP quality averages were virtually identical for both accredited and unaccredited programs. However, programs with separate AACSB accounting accreditation had significantly higher RMP adjusted quality scores than did unaccredited programs.

### Program Rankings

Another external measure of accounting program quality is the evaluation and ranking of a program by knowledgeable observers or by some objective criteria. One example of the former approach is the annual ranking of undergraduate accounting programs conducted by the industry publication *Public Accounting Report*. Their 32nd Annual Professors Survey (*Public Accounting Report*, 2013) surveyed accounting professors nationwide to develop a list of the top accounting programs in the country.

The 2013 report provides a ranking of the top 50 undergraduate accounting programs. Of the programs listed, 34 met the criteria for inclusion in the sample for this study. Table 4 presents a comparison between ranked and unranked sample programs. As the Table indicates, ranked schools had a higher unadjusted quality rating than did schools not included in the rankings. The difference was not statistically significant, however. Results were much stronger using the

adjusted quality metric. Accounting programs included in the *Public Accounting Report* rankings had, on average, significantly higher adjusted quality ratings than did unranked programs.

The *Public Accounting Report* survey uses accounting faculty perceptions to identify high quality accounting programs. Other program rankings follow different approaches. For example, Glover, Prawitt, Summers, and Wood (2012) analyze accounting faculty promotion patterns using a list, originally developed by Trieschmann, Dennis, Northcraft, and Niemi (2000), of the top 75 accounting research institutions. Thirty six of the programs on that list also met the criteria for inclusion in the sample for this study.

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**Table 4**  
**PROGRAM RANKINGS AND ACCOUNTING PROGRAM QUALITY**

	Unadjusted Average Quality Rating	Adjusted Average Quality Rating (Quality – Easiness)
<b><u>Public Accounting Report Rankings</u></b>		
Ranked (n=34)	3.624	1.098
Not Ranked (n=189)	3.524	0.867
Difference	0.100	0.231
t statistic ( <i>p-value</i> (2 tailed))	1.705 (0.090)	3.804 ( <b>0.000</b> )
<b><u>“Top 75” Ranked Program</u></b>		
Ranked (n=36)	3.619	0.865
Not Ranked (n=187)	3.524	0.743
Difference	0.095	0.122
t statistic ( <i>p-value</i> (2 tailed))	1.650 (0.200)	2.675 ( <b>0.008</b> )

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To determine whether RMP assessments of program teaching effectiveness are correlated with research productivity, sample programs included in the “Top 75” were compared to those not on the list. The results are presented in Table 4.

The results mirror those observed for the *Public Accounting Report* rankings. Although the average unadjusted RMP quality rating for Top 75 programs was higher than for unranked programs, the difference was not statistically significant. When the adjusted RMP quality metric was used, however, Top 75 research programs were found to be of significantly ( $p=.000$ ) higher quality than their unranked counterparts. Although the link between teaching effectiveness and research productivity is a matter of debate, the results of this study provide evidence that high research accounting programs are also perceived by their students as being of higher quality in the classroom.

### CPA Exam Pass Rates

Another commonly used benchmark of accounting program quality is the ability of a program’s graduates to successfully sit for the CPA Exam. Programs whose graduates do well

will go to great lengths to promote that fact (e.g., “Canisius College Accounting Graduates Rank 1st Overall in New York State on CPA Exam”). Poor CPA Exam performance can lead to program changes. In one well-known case, in 2004 UCLA abruptly increased the requirements for admission to and completion of its accounting minor. In justifying the change, an accounting spokesman was quoted as saying “We haven’t been fulfilling our mission, which is to produce CPAs.” (Kersten, 2014).

**Table 5**  
**CPA EXAM PASS RATES AND ACCOUNTING PROGRAM QUALITY**

**Panel A: Correlations**

		Unadjusted Average Quality Rating	Adjusted Average Quality Rating (Quality – Easiness)
CPA Exam Pass Rate*	Pearson Correlation	.152	.348
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.023</b>	<b>.000</b>

**Panel B: Quintile Analysis – ANOVA**

*Unadjusted Average Quality Rating:*

	Mean CPA Exam Pass Rate*	Minimum	Maximum
Quintile 1	47.86%	30%	69%
Quintile 2	51.96%	31%	71%
Quintile 3	51.35%	29%	66%
Quintile 4	50.60%	32%	72%
Quintile 5	53.74%	7%	81%
Total	51.11%	7%	81%
F statistic	2.046		
<i>p-value</i>	<b>.089</b>		

*Adjusted Average Quality Rating (Quality – Easiness):*

	Mean CPA Exam Pass Rate*	Minimum	Maximum
Quintile 1	46.39%	30%	65%
Quintile 2	49.93%	31%	67%
Quintile 3	51.09%	32%	71%
Quintile 4	50.40%	7%	70%
Quintile 5	57.74%	44%	81%
Total	51.11%	7%	81%
F statistic	8.378		
<i>p-value</i>	<b>.000</b>		

\*Summary Performance by Institution Attended – All Testing Events

Data regarding CPA exam pass rates were obtained from the *2013 Uniform CPA Examination Candidate Performance* book published by the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA, 2013). The percentage of CPA Exam sections passed by a

program's graduates was used as the measure of success (Appendix A: Summary Performance by Institution Attended – All Testing Events). NASBA (2013) reports an average pass rate for all jurisdictions of 49.4%. The average pass rate for the sample was slightly higher at 51.1%.

Table 5 presents the correlations between both RMP average quality measures and CPA Exam pass rates. As Panel A of the Table makes clear, the correlation between the variables is positive and statistically significant. The correlation between CPA Exam pass rates and the unadjusted RMP average quality measure is significant at the  $p=.023$  level. Consistent with the other variables examined, results for the adjusted RMP average quality measure were more pronounced, with a correlation significant at the  $p=.000$  level.

Although Panel A of Table 5 provides evidence of a positive correlation between RMP quality measures and CPA Exam pass rates, it provides little insight into the nature of the relation. To further investigate this issue, the sample was divided into quintiles based on RMP quality scores and a one-way analysis of variance was conducted, using CPA Exam pass rates as the factor. Quintile 1 contains the sample's lowest RMP average quality scores while Quintile 5 contains the highest. Sample quintiles were computed separately for both unadjusted and adjusted RMP average quality measures. The results of this analysis are presented in Panel B of Table 5.

As Panel B of Table 5 indicates, the average CPA Exam pass rate of the lowest sample quintile based on unadjusted RMP quality scores was 47.86%. The average for the highest quintile was somewhat higher at 53.74%. However differences among the middle three quintiles were slight, leading to an overall F statistic that did not meet traditional levels of statistical significance ( $F = 2.046$ ,  $p = .089$ ).

Panel B also reports the results when the quintiles were recalculated using adjusted RMP quality scores. Following the pattern of earlier analyses, results were much stronger. Although the middle three quintiles were again closely grouped, the difference in CPA Exam pass rates between the lowest quintile (46.39%) and the highest (57.74%) was striking. The results of the ANOVA were statistically significant ( $F = 8.378$ ,  $p = .000$ ). At a minimum, Table 5 provides evidence that graduates from accounting programs with the highest RMP adjusted quality scores have higher CPA Exam pass rates than those graduating from the lowest RMP ranked programs.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study provides evidence that student evaluations of accounting instructor quality on RateMyProfessors.com are, when aggregated, correlated with several external benchmarks of accounting program quality. Although the components of RMP scores for individual instructors have been analyzed by prior research, this is the first study to combine those scores to create a program-wide measure of quality.

Two measures of quality were employed. The first was the unadjusted RMP "Overall Quality" average. The second, following Felton et al. (2008), was an adjusted quality metric, subtracting the perceived easiness of the instructor from his or her assessed quality. This adjusted quality measure was consistently more strongly associated with external measures of program quality.

The external benchmarks addressed accounting program quality from several perspectives. Accounting programs with AACSB accounting accreditation had higher average adjusted quality scores than did programs lacking such accreditation. Programs ranked in *Public Accounting Report's* Annual Professors Survey had higher average adjusted quality scores than did unranked programs. The positive correlation extended to quality metrics not obviously related to classroom performance, as accounting programs considered among the top 75 research institutions had higher average adjusted quality scores than did less research oriented programs. And finally, RMP adjusted quality scores were associated with higher CPA Exam pass rates. It may be that a program's overall commitment to quality manifests itself in several ways.

Several limitations to this study may potentially confound the results observed. Limiting the sample to institutions with eight or more faculty listed in the Hasselback Accounting Faculty Directory and to faculty with five or more RMP ratings may have biased the results. RMP averages can reflect many years of student ratings, while some of the external quality measures, such as CPA Exam pass rates, were taken from a single year.

Despite these potential limitations, the breadth of external benchmarks associated with adjusted RMP quality averages is striking. Prior research (e.g., Coladarci and Kornfield 2007) has linked individual instructor RMP scores to other individual measures such as in-class student evaluations of instruction. The results of this study demonstrate that aggregating individual accounting instructor RMP scores can provide a useful measure of the overall quality of an accounting program.

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