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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 **About the Journal**
- 4 **Editorial Team**
- 5 **From the Editor**
- 7 **Student, Alumni, and Employer Perspectives: Learning Outcomes for Business Majors**
Maureen Andrade, Ronald Mellado Miller, & Morgan Ogden
- 26 **Are Universities Promoting Networking Opportunities in Online MBA Programs, and Should They Be?**
Timothy Veach
- 42 **Constructivist Learning and Reciprocal Teaching: Fostering Non-Law Students' Reading Comprehension of Complex Text in Online Courses**
Jennifer Schneider
- 57 **The Evolution of Human Resource Development: Strategic HRD to Transform Organizations Into High-Performance Organizations**
Katherine N. Yamamoto & Salvador G. Villegas
- 71 **Game On! Using Technology Tools to Increase Student Engagement and Motivation**
Cathy Robb & Jervaise McDaniel

ABOUT:

The Journal for Advancing Business Education is a practitioner and scholarly journal that publishes the best work in the field of business education to enhance teaching, achieve student learning outcomes, and meet program goals. The Journal follows the general IACBE theme of "Moving. Forward. Together." All submissions are subject to a double-blind peer review process. The Journal is an online journal and accessible on the IACBE Web page. The Journal for Advancing Business Education is a biannual publication.

MISSION:

The mission of the Journal for Advancing Business Education is to publish best practices and scholarship in business and business-related fields to improve business education and society.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

We are delighted to present the second volume issue two of the Journal for Advancing Business Education. In this editorial we thought it might be important to reflect on the recent disruption that happened to business education and, therefore, the opportunity to reinvent the business education landscape.

Today we are facing surreal circumstances. Our world looks very different than a couple of months ago, or even a couple of weeks ago. Last year, at this time, we were still going to our offices and university students were still attending lectures. But, in a matter of days almost everything was shut down and we had to go online. The pandemic has done the more or less impossible: it has changed the way we teach and learn overnight.

How will business education look like in the near future? How will teaching look like in the near future? How will research look like in the near future? Business education was disrupted, and we now have an unprecedented opportunity to reinvent business education.

With these questions we want to spark a wider conversation about business education and education, in general. It will be interesting to see how institutions and educators make the education system more resilient. It will be also interesting to explore how learners adapt and take more ownership over their own learning. Up to this point our educational system was an efficient machine; a machine that was too efficient. In addition, we are too much used to the way things are so that we have a difficult time reimagine them. However, the good news is that we know what we have to do, because the pandemic has shown us that we can change, and so can the educational system.

In order to reinvent education, we have to explore what educational model would work best; is it an online model, an experiential model, a liberal arts model, or an institutional partnership model; or is it a combination thereof? As long as the model that will be developed is clear about the expectations, engages the learners, and holds the stakeholders accountable, I think we will be in pretty good shape. And, as long as the model of higher education encourages learners to be creative, think critically, be collaborative, and communicate effectively, I think business education will thrive in a post-pandemic world.

Thank you!

Christian Gilde
Managing Editor

Journal for Advancing Business Education

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2

JABE 6

**STUDENT, ALUMNI, AND EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES:
LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR BUSINESS MAJORS**

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ABSTRACT

Employers expect recent college graduates to possess a broad range of skills such as communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and ethical decision-making in addition to job-specific skills. They also feel that graduates are unprepared in these areas. The objective of this study was to determine the extent to which graduating business majors, business major alumni, and alumni employers felt that these outcomes were achieved and to compare their perspectives. Findings indicated that participants were positive in their views of outcomes having been achieved and that there were few differences for business and non-business majors, indicating that major may have little relevancy to employment success.

Today's college graduates are expected to possess a broad range of cross-cutting skills (traditionally called soft skills; also, referred to as boundary-crossing skills or essential learning outcomes/ELOs) in addition to discipline-specific expertise. Skills such as oral and written communication, problem-solving, teamwork, decision-making abilities, and analytical reasoning are highly valued by employers (Association of American Colleges & Schools [AAC&U], 2011, 2015; Hart Research Associates, 2015; Schneider, 2015), and viewed as enabling graduates to enjoy "long-term success" (Hart Research Associates, 2015, p. 2). Employers and college students agree on the importance of these skills with 60% and 63% respectively indicating the importance of both discipline-specific knowledge and cross-cutting skills; however, employers also indicate that the latter are more important to success in a company than the former (Hart Research Associates, 2015).

Typically, cross-cutting skills are introduced in general education courses and reinforced in major courses, which specifically emphasize technical skills and knowledge. Although the extent to which this occurs is difficult to quantify, most regional accrediting bodies in the United States require accountability for these skills. For example, the Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities indicates the following:

Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy (NWCCU, 2020, p. 13).

Additionally, the LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) States Initiative, sponsored by AAC&U, is a collaboration across 14 higher education state systems, all of which are committed to "advancing essential learning outcomes, high-impact practices, and assessment for general and liberal education" (AAC&U, n.d., para. 1). Additionally, 82% of provosts representing 811 U.S. institutions reported having such learning outcomes at their institutions (Jankowski et al., 2018).

Universities seek accreditation to demonstrate their commitment to quality and continual improvement as well as to show public accountability. Learning outcomes assessment and ensuing improvements play a significant role in accreditation processes. National, regional and professional accrediting bodies require institutions to not only identify what students *should* learn and what they *have* learned but provide evidence of enhancements in teaching and learning as the result of learning outcomes assessment. AACSB International—The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business refers to this process as assurance of learning.

AACSB-accredited schools of business are decreasing their use of indirect measures of learning (e.g., surveys of graduating students, alumni, and employers) (Kelley et al., 2010; Martel & Calderon, 2005; Pringle & Michel, 2007; Wheeling et al., 2015). In 2005, 81% of business school deans indicated surveying graduating students (Martel & Calderon, 2005). In 2007, only 46% of deans reported that they surveyed graduating students (Pringle & Michel, 2007) while in 2010 and 2015, only 39% and 40% respectively reported this method of assessment (Kelley et al., 2010; Wheeling et al., 2015). Similar trends were found for the use of alumni and employer surveys. The study did not examine themes resulting from surveys specifically, but rather noted

that the most frequent outcome of assessment activities was curricular changes to address gaps, which involved increasing coverage of topics, changing prerequisites, or adding courses.

One explanation for a decrease in the use of indirect measures, or those asking for reflections on learning or opinions about academic experiences or level of preparation, is that direct measures of learning, in which actual skills and knowledge are assessed, are preferred (Wheeling et al., 2015). This trend has been attributed to public criticism related to costs of higher education and return on investment, accreditation standards, and competition among higher education institutions (Wheeling et al., 2015). While direct measures are important, schools of business also need to know how their graduates are faring in the world of work. Without the perspectives of graduating students, alumni, and employers, schools of business are limited in measuring their effectiveness in preparing students for their future professions and identifying needed improvements. Additionally, with significant attention focusing on cross-cutting skills, particularly their importance to employers, data on the degree to which these are achieved is critical. This study examines stakeholder views of learning outcomes achievement through three different lenses—those of graduating students, alumni, and supervisors of alumni, and compares business and non-business majors. The research questions are as follows:

1. How do graduating business and non-business majors compare in their views of growth in cross-cutting skills?
2. How do business and non-business major alumni compare in their views of the value and impact of cross-cutting skills?
3. How do supervisors of alumni view the preparation of business and non-business graduates in terms of needed knowledge, skills, and abilities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning outcomes assessment is an expectation in higher education although it may not yet be fully engrained in institutional cultures. A survey of provosts found that 82% had established common learning outcomes for all undergraduate students and majors with about 50% indicating that these were aligned with department learning outcomes (Jankowski et al., 2018). The majority indicated that regional accreditation followed by program accreditation and then institutional commitment to improve were the drivers for assessment. They also reported increasing use of rubrics, classroom-based assessments and alumni feedback and decreasing use of general measures of knowledge. The biggest need identified—by 51% of provosts responding to the survey—was greater use of results by faculty, suggesting that assessment practice must continue to improve in order to fulfill its intended purpose.

Learning outcomes assessment typically involves the integration of learning across courses and programs and may include co-curricular experiences (Garfolo & L’Huillier, 2015; Parscale et al., 2015; Prøitz, 2010). The general process can be described as follows:

- “Develop specific, actionable learning outcomes statements.
- Connect goals with actual student assignments and work.
- Collaborate with the relevant stakeholders, beginning with faculty.

- Design assessment approaches that generate actionable evidence about student learning that key stakeholders can understand and use to improve student and institutional performance.
- Focus on *improvement*, and *compliance* will take care of itself” (National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment [NILOA], 2016, pp. 3-6).

The literature is replete with studies regarding how to apply these principles, specifically what to assess, how to assess, and how to make assessment meaningful. Assessment practices are largely governed by accreditation standards (Garfalo & L’Huillier, 2015), may involve benchmarking and comparisons (Douglass et al., 2012), and above all, depend on faculty involvement (Nasrallah, 2014). A brief listing of key issues and trends follows with an emphasis on schools of business.

- Meeting AACSB standards – the importance of faculty-led management of assessment processes (Attaway et al., 2011); the use of checklists focused on AACSB requirements (Kundu & Bairi, 2016); ensuring mission fulfillment (Attaway et al., 2011)
- Determining what and how to assess – emphasis on cross-cutting skills such as critical thinking, global awareness, and ethics (Balotsky et al., 2016; NILOA, 2016); the use of direct measures such as course-embedded or rubric-scored written and oral assignments (Gibson, 2011; Kelley et al., 2010; Wheeling et al., 2015); preference for embedded assignments over external, standardized exams (AACSB, 2020; Kelley et al., 2010; Pringle & Michel 2007; Wheeling et al., 2015); the use of multiple measures (NILOA, 2016); the need for external validation of business program curricula from external stakeholders (Gundersen et al., 2011).
- Implementing innovations in teaching and learning – the use of signature assignments involving long-term, high-interest projects (Garfalo et al., 2016; Schneider, 2015); real-world management projects (Weldy & Turnipseed, 2010); experiential learning (Kosnik et al., 2013); team-taught capstone courses (Balotsky et al., 2016); internships (Grose, 2017), service learning (Rutti et al., 2016).
- Developing a culture of assessment – faculty ownership of course competencies, learning goals, and assessment measures (Gibson et al., 2013); faculty collaboration on results and action plans (Attaway et al., 2011; Kelley et al., 2010; Pringle & Michel, 2007); valuing improvement over compliance (Bennett, Smart, & Kumar, 2016; Wheeling et al., 2015); the use of change models to address resistance, change processes, and realign structures (Bennett et al., 2017).
- Identifying impact – common outcomes from assessment (clarify reference) such as curricular modifications, course objective revisions, changes in pedagogy and teaching style, improved coordination across sections (Kelley et al., 2010; Pringle & Michel, 2007); curricular alignment (Hutchings, 2016); new courses or

prerequisite changes (Wheeling et al., 2015); greater emphasis on topics such as diversity, globalization, and ethics (Wheeling et al., 2015).

Certainly, higher education institutions are making strides forward in their assessment practices as evidenced by the research in this area and the encouraging statistics cited at the beginning of this section. In addition to the majority of institutions reporting a common set of learning outcomes across majors, other aspects of assessment practice are also demonstrating improvement. One of the biggest concerns has been faculty involvement. In 2009, 66% of provosts responding to a national survey indicated this was a need, in 2013, the percentage decreased to 38%, and in 2017 to 23% (Jankowski et al., 2018). However, multiple perspectives are needed to determine the true impact of outcomes learning assessment. We turn to these next.

STAKEHOLDERS

Key stakeholders in assessment practice include students, alumni, and employers. Based on the findings of the literature review, limited research has focused on the views and experiences of these populations pertaining to learning outcomes, and as established earlier, the use of stakeholder surveys are decreasing (Kelley et al., 2010; Martel & Calderon, 2005; Pringle & Michel, 2007; Wheeling et al., 2015). While the student experience has been studied generally in terms of factors impacting learning, the overall student experience, gender-based perceptions, quality improvement, and satisfaction, these studies have emphasized aspects of higher education such as academic processes, support services, teaching approaches, and opportunities for involvement (Tan, 2016).

Employer views and corresponding student perspectives on learning outcomes have been examined at the national level with employers being less confident that students are graduating with needed cross-cutting skills than are students themselves (AAC&U, 2018; Hart Research Associates, 2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2010, 2015, 2018). The majority of business schools no longer collect such information from students, alumni, and employers, and when they do, findings are likely shared only internally (Andrade, 2017; Andrade et al., 2014, 2015, 2016, 2020; Kelley et al., 2010; Martel & Calderon, 2005; Pringle & Michel, 2007; Wheeling et al., 2015). As such, this is a topic needing further investigation.

METHODS

The institution which is the context for this study has learning outcomes reflective of the broad skills valued by employers (AAC&U, 2011; Hart Research Associates, 2015). Departments have curriculum maps that link institutional learning outcomes to program learning outcomes which indicate where outcomes are introduced, reinforced, and measured. This practice is particularly salient for the school of business, which is accredited by AACSB and must meet assurance of learning standards. Based on assessment results, the faculty determines how to address gaps in students' knowledge and skills.

In addition to direct measures of learning at the program level, indirect measures, including surveys of graduating students, alumni, and supervisors of alumni, are collected at the institutional

level. The graduating student survey is sent to all graduating students as part of their application for graduation. The alumni and supervisor surveys are conducted by phone by the institutional research office. Using these surveys, this study examined the perspectives of the three stakeholder groups.

While the questions across the instruments are not an exact match due to being focused on different audiences to whom questions were tailored each has questions related to cross-cutting skills. Only questions that were similar across two or more surveys were included in the study. These focused on the following: disciplinary knowledge, mathematical skills leadership and team management, oral and written communication, interpersonal skills, understanding diversity (people and cultures), global perspective, community involvement, and lifelong learning. See Table 1. A word of explanation may be needed for the last item in the table. Desire for lifelong learning is appropriate to graduating students while growth in intellectual abilities is appropriate to alumni. The latter responded to the question, "Have you used the knowledge and skills gained at the university in any of the following areas?" In other words, they are indicating the degree to which their education contributed to growth in intellectual abilities after they left the university. This shows evidence of learning post-graduation or lifelong learning.

The graduating student survey asked participants to rate how much their education contributed to growth in each of the areas using a scale of 1-4 from great contribution to no contribution. The alumni phone survey involved respondents indicating with a yes or no if they had used the knowledge and skills indicated since their graduation. Supervisors rated the knowledge and skills of the university's alumni in their employ on each area using a scale from 1-5 with 1 being inadequate and 5 being ideal. Table 1 indicates the number of respondents and response rates for each survey for the questions that were the focus of this study as well as the number of business and non-business majors who responded to these questions. Note that respondents did not answer every question on the survey.

Table 1*Respondents and Response Rates*

Instrument	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
Graduating Student Survey	4,782 - 4,797 out of 4,918 responded to questions for this study.	97.2-97.5%
	Business major responses ranged from 682 - 686 out of a total of 700.	97.4%-98.0%
	Non-business major responses ranged from 4,097- 4,111 out of a total of 4,218	97.1%-97.5%
Alumni Survey	13,336-13,401 out of 17,335 responded to questions for this study.	77.3-76.9%%
	Business major responses ranged from 2,027- 2,035 out of a total of 2,631.	77%-77.3%
	Non-business major responses ranged from 309-11,366 out of a total of 14,704.	2%-77.2%
Supervisor Survey	482 out of 586 responded.	82.3%
	42-192 responded to questions for this study. Of these, 47 were supervisors of business majors (24.4%) and 146 supervised non-business-majors (75.6%)	
	Business major supervisor responses ranged from 9-47.	19%-100%
	Non-business major supervisor responses ranged from 33-145.	22.6%-99.3%

ANALYSIS

The results of the learning outcomes questions for business and non-business majors were compared across the surveys. The number of responses to individual questions varied; those that were left blank were not included. Surveys were analyzed using statistical software IBM SPSS version 25 with an alpha of 0.05. For the graduating student and supervisor surveys, a Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to compare the mean ratings between business majors and other majors for each of the selected questions. For the alumni survey, a Chi-Squared test of Independence was used to examine the relationship between being a business major and the use of learning outcomes. The results of this analysis are explained in the next section.

RESULTS

For the majority of areas, no significant difference was found between business majors and non-business majors. For the supervisor survey, no significant difference between the two

groups was found for any of the items examined. On the graduating student survey, three areas were significantly different. Business majors reported significantly more growth in mathematical skills, $F(1, 4782) = 53.77, p < .001$, as well as leadership, $F(1, 4788) = 25.90, p < .001$. Non-business majors grew significantly more in community involvement $F(1, 4784) = 11.02, p = .001$. For the alumni survey, a significant relationship occurred in two areas: understanding other people and cultures (diversity), $\chi^2 = 14.49, p < .001$, and community involvement, $\chi^2 = 37.76, p < .001$. Table 2 shows the descriptive results for the selected questions for each survey. The blue-colored cells demonstrate results that favored non-business majors; those in green had results favoring business majors while the white cells indicate inconsistent results.

Table 2

Results Comparison

Item	Graduating students – means (out of 4)	Alumni – proportion that indicated use.	Supervisors – means (out of 5)
Disciplinary knowledge	Business 3.60	N/A	Business 3.81
	Non-business 3.58		Non-business 4.21
Job skills	N/A	N/A	Business 3.88*
			Non-business 3.96
Mathematical skills	Business 3.17	N/A	Business 4.0*
	Non-business 2.90		Non-business 3.76
Communication	Business 3.40	Business 90%	Business 4.26
	Non-business 3.35	Non-business 89%	Non-business 4.25
Leadership & team management	Business 3.30	N/A	Business 4.0*
	Non-business 3.13		Non-business 3.86
Interpersonal skills	Business 3.27	N/A	Business 4.36
	Non-business 3.21		Non-business 4.26
Diversity – people & cultures	Business 3.05	Business 79%	Business 3.63
	Non-business 3.14	Non-business 83%	Non-business 4.01
Global perspective	Business 2.96	N/A	Business 3.57*
	Non-business 3.00		Non-business 3.64
Community involvement	Business 2.70	Business 42%	N/A
	Non-business 2.82	Non-business 50%	
Lifelong learning	Business 3.32	Business 93%	N/A
	Non-business 3.36	Non-business 94%	

Note. Values different on a statistically significant level are in **bold**.

* $n < 20$

As can be seen, while many areas do not differ on a statistically significant level, there does appear to be a pattern across the surveys. Business majors appear to perform better in the more managerial-focused skills (math, communication, interpersonal skills, leadership), while non-business majors seem to perform better in areas outside of the office environment (cultural and global knowledge, community involvement). Non-business majors also held higher ratings for lifelong learning and job skills, though the latter was only evaluated in the supervisor survey.

Even these consistent areas, however, can be called into question due to the small margin separating business majors and non-business majors for most of the cells. For example, ratings for global perspective on the graduate survey are as follows: business majors, 2.96 (out of 4), and non-business majors, 3.00. While non-business majors did fare better, the degree of the actual advantage is small.

This is the case with the majority of the areas. In fact, the largest difference between the two group averages was only six-tenths of a scale point (.6). The same can be said for the alumni survey. The proportions of skill utilization between business majors and non-business majors were similar, even for the areas that were different on a statistically significant level. Thus, the case can be made that there is no meaningful difference between the two groups rating-wise.

Effect sizes further affirmed the small level of the differences. Cohen's *d* values made for the supervisor and graduate surveys overall ranged from being very small to moderate (.02 to .51). The majority (67%) of the values fell below .2. Odd's ratios compiled for the alumni survey remained close to 1. All areas were skewed negatively, signifying an overall positive response from all students and supervisors. A full list of all descriptive statistics for each survey can be found in the appendix.

It should be noted that, for some of the ELO areas, the research had a low sample size of business major supervisors in the supervisor survey. For example, we only had nine business major supervisors evaluate mathematical skills, $n = 9$. While this does lower statistical validity when evaluating the supervisor survey, we found that the results of these low n areas are similar in nature to other areas in the supervisor survey that did have a higher sample size, in that the ratings were skewed negatively, and there was little difference in means between business and non-business majors. Results also followed the trends set by the alumni and graduating student surveys. Therefore, we still took these low n results into consideration. We next discuss the meaning of these results.

DISCUSSION

Both non-business and business majors, along with their supervisors, rated the outcomes of their education positively overall. The discrepancy between the two groups appears non-significant at first glance. However, patterns that would be expected between the two emerged. Business majors showed more results in management kinds of areas, while non-business majors gravitated towards humanities and cultural areas. In the future, more sensitive scales should be employed to further explore and identify differences between these two groups.

Overall, there is no convincing evidence of differences between business majors and non-business majors regarding the growth and use of cross-cutting learning outcomes. However, this finding is critically important as it not only supports the views of employers that graduates must possess both cross-cutting skills and technical skills for their field of work, but also that a graduate's specific major may have little relevancy to success (AAC&U, 2011, 2015; Hart Research Associates, 2015). In fact, research consistently indicates that "employers place the greatest value on demonstrated proficiency in skills and knowledge that cut across all majors," and also "that these cross-cutting skills are more important to an individual's success at their company than his or her undergraduate major" (Hart Research Associates, 2015, p. 1; Hart Research Associates, 2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2018).

Certainly, technical skills are required for some positions, but the fact that previous research indicates the importance of cross-cutting skills over major, and the findings of this study demonstrate that major does not play a significant role in the development of these skills, presents some interesting issues. Foremost of these is to consider the value of a business major in preparing students for the world of work. What should the curriculum consist of? To what degree are cross-cutting skills emphasized? What takes priority in the minds of faculty? How can disciplinary content be integrated with the development of cross-cutting skills? What training is needed in order for faculty to adopt relevant pedagogical approaches?

While there were no real differences in outcomes across majors and responses were positive in terms of both business majors and non-business majors attaining these skills from their own perspective and those of employers, additional research is critically needed in this area. Further research could compare direct and indirect measures of learning to explore the degree to which how actual learning differs from perceptions of learning. This study had limitations in that the questions examining cross-cutting skills were inconsistent across instruments and not all questions were asked of all groups. Additional questions and more detailed questions might be added to gain greater insights. Furthermore, the use of a broader measurement scale is recommended as the low variability within groups found in this study may be partly due to the survey scales (e.g., a scale of 1-4 rather than a scale of 1-10).

While findings did not differ to any extent for business and non-business majors, those that favored one group over another bear some consideration. For instance, graduating business majors rated themselves higher on math skills but lower on leadership and teamwork compared to non-business majors. Inconsistently, however, supervisors rated business majors higher than non-business majors on leadership. Interpersonal skills, community involvement, and lifelong learning also did not show consistency from survey to survey. As many business courses require teamwork, teach teamwork skills, and provide structure for effective teamwork, it is surprising that this would not be rated higher for business majors across the three surveys. The same is true of leadership and community involvement. The former is taught as part of most business programs and community-based projects or service learning, similar to teamwork, are often required components of a business degree.

Inconsistencies in findings need further explanation in order to expand understanding of the development and role of cross-cutting skills in both educational and work settings. With rigorous standards for teaching and learning in place at AACSB-accredited business schools, it is somewhat concerning that these schools are decreasing their use of stakeholder assessments to understand the degree to which they are preparing students for their futures (Kelley et al., 2010; Martel & Calderon, 2005; Pringle & Michel, 2007; Wheeling et al., 2015). The current study indicates a significant need for the collection and analysis of such data. Only then will we have an in-depth understanding of what business schools really offer to students and their future employers.

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APPENDIX

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics – Graduating Student Survey

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Disciplinary knowledge	Business Majors	686	3.60	.57	.02	4796	.84	.359
	Other Majors	4111	3.58	.65	-.02			
Communication skills	Business Majors	686	3.40	.69	.05	4782	2.03	.155
	Other Majors	4097	3.35	.73	-.05			
Mathematical skills	Business Majors	684	3.17	.79	.23	4781	53.77	< .001*
	Other Majors	4098	2.90	.92	-.23			
Interpersonal skills	Business Majors	686	3.27	.73	.06	4782	3.96	.047
	Other Majors	4097	3.21	.78	-.06			
Leadership and team management	Business Majors	684	3.30	.75	.14	4787	25.90	< .001*
	Other Majors	4104	3.13	.86	-.14			
Community and civic involvement	Business Majors	682	2.70	.90	-.11	4783	11.02	.001*
	Other Majors	4102	2.82	.95	.11			
Global perspective	Business Majors	684	2.96	.87	-.03	4783	1.37	.242
	Other Majors	4100	3.00	.90	.03			

(Continued)

Table 3 (Continued)

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cohen's d	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Understanding diversity of other people and cultures	Business Majors	685	3.05	.88	-.09	4787	5.89	.015
	Other Majors	4103	3.14	.89	.09			
Desire for lifelong learning	Business Majors	683	3.32	.79	-.04	4785	1.69	.194
	Other Majors	4103	3.36	.80	.04			

*Statistical significance is determined at the $p < .003$ level (Bonferroni adjusted).

Table 4*Chi-Square Tests – Alumni Survey*

	<i>n</i>	...Have you used the knowledge or skills that you gained at the University in any of the following areas? Yes/No		χ^2	<i>OR</i> ^a	<i>p</i>
		Business Majors	Other Majors			
Communicating or relating to other people	13,397	1830/204	10117/1246	1.57	1.105	.211
Intellectual growth	13,336	1890/137	10590/719	.46	.937	.498
Community service	13,400	860/1175	5643/5723	37.76	.742	< .001*
Understanding other people and cultures	13,396	1608/424	9392/1972	14.49	.796	< .001*

*Statistical significance is determined at the $p < .004$ level (Bonferroni adjusted).

^aOdds ratios in this table are the ratios of business major's application over non-business major application. For example, the first listed OR of 1.105 indicates that business majors are 1.105 times as likely to use university developed skills in communicating or relating to other people than non-business majors.

Table 5*Descriptive Statistics – Supervisor Survey*

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Written Communication*	Business Majors	47	4.17	.87	-.03	187	.04	.848
	Other Majors	141	4.20	.88	.03			
Oral communication*	Business Majors	47	4.34	.84	.06	191	.12	.725
	Other Majors	145	4.29	.87	-.06			
Mathematical skills	Business Majors	9	4.00	.00	.51	41	1.18	.283
	Other Majors	33	3.76	.66	-.51			
Leadership	Business Majors	15	4.00	.00	.38	56	1.11	.296
	Other Majors	42	3.86	.52	-.38			
Essential substantive knowledge for the position	Business Majors	47	3.81	1.04	-.41	189	6.49	.012
	Other Majors	143	4.21	.90	.41			
Interpersonal skills	Business Majors	47	4.36	.76	.13	191	.55	.458
	Other Majors	145	4.26	.81	-.13			
Understanding of Global Issues	Business Majors	14	3.57	.85	-.09	52	.08	.780
	Other Majors	39	3.64	.78	.09			
Awareness of cultural differences	Business Majors	46	3.63	1.18	.36	186	5.23	.023
	Other Majors	141	4.01	.92	-.36			

(Continued)

Table 5 (Continued)

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Overall job knowledge and skills	Business Majors	17	3.88	.49	-.20	64	.59	.444
	Other Majors	48	3.96	.29	.20			

Note. The values for “communication” on Table 1 are derived from taking the mean values of a combined sum of Table 4’s “written communication” and “oral communication.”
Statistical significance is determined at the $p < .003$ level (Bonferroni adjusted).

**ARE UNIVERSITIES PROMOTING NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES
IN ONLINE MBA PROGRAMS, AND SHOULD THEY BE?**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores promotion of peer/professional networking opportunities in online MBA programs as compared with on-campus MBA programs through content analysis of the landing pages of 152 accredited MBA programs. Results of statistical analysis suggest that online MBA program marketers are not promoting peer/professional networking and relying heavily on promotion of program flexibility and value. This prompts a discussion of whether online MBA program marketers should promote networking more aggressively, whether the meaning of networking as applied to today's business world needs to be revisited, or both.

INTRODUCTION

With advancements in integration of online platforms in higher education have come the emergence and growth of MBA programs delivered in online-only and blended (online + on-campus) formats (Gee, 2019; Rapert et al., 2004). The online delivery format for MBAs has become a popular higher education program of study. This creates a venue for increased competition among universities offering MBAs, leading to varying degrees of flexibility, innovative program delivery, and program quality (Gee, 2019; Kim et al., 2005; Rapert et al., 2004; Ponzurick et al., 2000).

Students often elect to enter into MBA programs with the expectation of not only gaining credentials and skills that will lead to higher remuneration in the marketplace, but also of networking with peers who are or will become influential professionals (Blackburn, 2011; Kim et al., 2005; Rapert et al., 2004). Batista (2014) posits that the success of MBA graduates can be tied to a university's integration of networking opportunities into the MBA program, hinting at the need for extensive promotion of networking opportunities by MBA program marketers in pursuit of student enrollment. Yet, in a digital education format, interpersonal engagement necessary for peer and professional networking can be limited by challenges associated with communities of practice (Wenger, 1998; Gherardi, 2009), connectivity (Siemans, 2008), and communication among geographically dispersed interrelations (Means et al., 2010).

In light of the efforts of institutions of higher education to increase MBA program enrollment in response to market demand (Kim et al., 2005), the question arises as to whether these institutions are promoting peer and professional networking opportunities for MBA programs delivered exclusively online. Moreover, a more pertinent question of whether institutions *should be* promoting networking for online MBA programs is worthy of deliberation.

This study aims to address these questions by exploring the marketing messages of MBA programs to identify evidence and to draw conclusions about the promotion of networking and other attributes of online MBA programs. This study first presents literature on online MBA delivery format, student expectations, and networking in MBA programs. The study's research methodology is then introduced, incorporating a discussion of the role of the online landing page in student perceptions and institutional positioning, as well as iterative categorization of the data retrieved from content analysis of the landing pages of 152 MBA programs. Results of quantitative analysis are then presented, followed by conclusions with implications for research and practice in the marketing of online MBA programs, with a specific consideration of information that may be applied in pursuit of a grounded antithesis to traditional perspectives on the role of networking in online MBAs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Higher Education and Online MBAs

Online education has emerged as the current basis for distance education (Ponzurick et al., 2000). This phenomenon at the higher education level is often associated with pressures to tackle questions of scale to achieve lower per-student cost (House-Peters, Del Casino, & Brooks, 2019; Scruton, 2018; Heyman, 2010; Guri-Rosenblit, 2006; Kim et al., 2005). This is further represented in the importance of online MBA programs as sources of university revenue, emulating a

customer-centric model where students' (as consumers) perceptions direct marketing messages relating to program quality factors such as delivery format (Rapert et al., 2004). US News & World Report (Usnews.com, n.d.) lists 301 U.S. institutions offering accredited MBA programs online in 2019. Thus, the prevalence of online-only or blended (online/on-campus) MBA programs is worthy of further exploration, specifically in relation to factors relating to student expectations.

Student Expectations

The importance of student expectations to the development, positioning and promotion of MBA programs is affirmed throughout the literature, with Rapert et al. (2004) suggesting that students “are the only direct, daily observers” of MBA program quality and, thus, the best source of judgment. Moreover, there are parallels between perceptions of a program and program satisfaction, such as skill orientation and participatory environment (Rapert et al., 2004). Indeed, students are the consumers of the programs, and, as such, student perceptions of program elements are central to MBA program positioning and promotion.

Primary expectations of students embarking on MBA education cited in the research generally center around employment, career advancement, and higher pay, along with additional expectations relating to social impact and self-actualization (Ramlall & Ramlall, 2016). Prospective students have noted the expectation that an MBA will lead to a career where one can make an impact or make a difference (GMAC, 2016). Scruton (2018) finds that employers, program directors, and students often perceive MBA programs as primarily focusing on fostering leadership and management skills (Scruton, 2018). Additionally, networking opportunities that may support professional effectiveness have been presented as relevant to the decision of many individuals to pursue MBA education (Blackburn, 2011), even to the effect that students selecting top MBA programs of study value “who you meet” more than “what you learn” in program selection (Gee, 2019). This is consistent with Rapert, et al.’s (2014) identified parallel between participatory environment and student satisfaction. Further exploration of networking as a salient attribute in a student’s selection of MBA program is relevant to a comparative discussion of online and on-campus MBA programs.

The Importance of Networking

Networking in the context of MBA studies can be defined as “socializing in business school” and “membership in a learning community” (Batista, 2014); as “fostering social capital” (Tan & Ko, 2019); as forging “meaningful working relationships” and establishing “collaborative and long-lasting connections” (Niemi, 2016); and simply as “who you meet” in an exclusive program (Gee, 2019).

Batista (2014) suggests, after reviewing the MBA programs of universities that produce the most impactful graduates, that “the special advantage of an MBA program is the opportunity to develop leadership and interpersonal skills with a group of peers in a sequence of experiential courses informed by current research,” as well as “membership in a learning community and a network of alumni;” further suggesting that the best MBA programs are those that prioritize the fostering of interpersonal skills. While the platform upon which this cohort of peers is not expressly described here, the obvious advantage of learning interpersonal skills alongside those peers in physical proximity appears to be implied.

Professional networking is especially relevant to today’s competitive business environment with regards to “advancing a career, building relationships and getting knowledgeable about a

range of subjects” (Ibarra 2018). Niemi (2016) summarizes a myriad of sources, describing the benefits of professional networking as leading to “more job and business opportunities, broader and deeper knowledge, improved capacity to innovate, faster advancement, and greater status and authority,” as well as the benefit of improved quality of work and job satisfaction. Networking may also impact perceptions of connectedness and community (Ritter et al., 2010) and assessment of relatedness of similar or dissimilar business situations (Green & Smith, 2017).

Geographic limitations and psychological distance may be primary hindrances to the traditional approach to positioning, promoting (among institutions), and selecting (among students) online-only MBA programs with regard to the perceived opportunity to network with peers and professionals. House-Peter, Del Casino, and Brooks (2019) ask whether the purpose of distance education as a means of providing geographically and otherwise marginalized populations access to formal education is lost in the current online education model due to excessive focus on a cost-revenue model across universities. Furthermore, Scruton (2018) suggests that online MBAs are developed to mainly serve busy professionals who demand schedule flexibility, while Gee (2019) points to the growing affinity toward more flexible graduate business programs across the country, supporting the premise that geography constitutes a limitation to graduate business studies. Psychological distance may also stunt belief in the ability of online programs to provide a venue for membership in a learning community (Batista, 2014), successful communication (Means et al., 2010), meaningful collaboration (Niemi, 2016), or a participatory environment (Rapert et al., 2004). Psychological distance exists when a concept becomes abstract in an individual’s mind due to perceived social, temporal, or spatial distance (Han & Gershoff, 2018). Thus, while the online delivery format allows participants to bridge spatial gaps (geographic limitations), without a concrete cognitive perception of proximity, an individual may perceive others in the online environment as non-participatory, distant, and, therefore, non-inclusive in the individual’s network, creating, perhaps, the assumption that online MBA programs bestow students with a networking challenge.

Based on the literature, the question of whether students who choose online education demonstrate the assumed expectation of networking opportunities embedded in an MBA program is perhaps less relevant, therefore, than the question of whether institutions can and should rely on this expectation in positioning and promotion of MBA programs to attract students. A 2018 Statista survey finds scholarships/grants, year-round study option, self-paced courses, and faster course completion time to be the most relevant selection criteria for student enrollment in online academic programs, whereas academic engagement with other students is one of the least salient attributes (Clement, 2018). Peer/professional networking, however, is not included as a selection criterium in this survey, yet the results suggest that financial access/value, speed, and flexibility are primary benefits of the online delivery format. Niemi (2016) suggests that while most MBAs are cognizant of the value of networking, they find it “taxing and often distasteful.” Further, Rubin and Dierdorff (2011) point to the “devaluing of management education” in MBA programs in favor of catering to student expectations (including networking opportunities).

In this vein, the current study explores an array of attributes, including flexibility/convenience and program value, in comparison to networking, to identify their relative importance in the positioning and promotion of online and on-campus MBA programs of US institutions. The following section introduces the methodology for this study.

METHODS

The primary research question involved in this study surrounds universities' response to assumed student expectations of networking opportunities in online-only, as compared to on-campus, MBA programs, as presented in messages identifying program promotion. Furthermore, this study questions the validity of the university response to student interest in peer and professional networking in online MBA programs through content analysis of promotional cues, framed based on Schreier's (2012) approach to concept-driven (defining concepts in advance, based on the literature) coding of content. Thus, institutions' reliance on the promise of networking in MBA program promotion constitutes the basis for this study's research question of whether there is a significant difference in promotional cues relating to networking among online and on-campus MBA programs and what implications are indicated thereof.

While there does not appear to exist a robust repository of primary data representing current MBA students' *perceptions* of the actual status of program benefits (such as networking), a robust exploration of the messages universities employ to recruit for MBA programs can be conducted vis-à-vis a comprehensive survey of MBA program websites. According to Ashburn (2007), universities employ their websites as tools for realistically and truthfully articulating MBA program content and status, as well as to attract prospective students. Institutional websites are intended to represent and communicate the identity and position of the university and academic programs to an unlimited number of individuals across an international landscape (Hoggatt, 2008), while prospective students take the information on the institution's website as the first, if not only, impression of the university/program and associated tangible qualities and content (Adelman, 2006; Schneider & Bruton, 2004). Institutional marketers, then, promote benefits on the program website to attract prospective students while program administrators attempt to deliver program content consistent with those promoted benefits. Consequently, with the objective of understanding potential differences in the promotion of peer and professional networking opportunities between online and on-campus MBA programs, this study analyzes the content expressed within the institutional websites of evaluated programs with a fair amount of confidence.

Therefore, this research aims to answer the following alternative hypothesis:

H₁: There is a statistically significant difference in the prevalence of messages related to networking between online and on-campus MBA programs as presented on program websites.

This study engages data such that the evidence either satisfies the null condition where there does not exist a statistically significant difference, or fails to satisfy the null condition where a significant difference exists, therefore qualifying the use of networking messages in promotion of online MBA programs. In anticipation of the presence of common cues relating to attributes other than networking on program websites of online as compared with on-campus MBA programs, the following secondary alternative hypothesis is also explored:

H₂: There is a statistically significant difference in the prevalence of messages related to other (non-networking related) attributes between online and on-campus MBA programs as presented on program websites.

Consistent access to messages (cues) relating to MBA program content is readily available on the online landing page for each university's MBA program, where networking and other program benefits are presented through broadly varying conceptualizations in text, images, video, and voice. This constitutes the need for qualitative exploration of these conceptualizations prior to coding cues relevant to networking (and other program benefits) for quantitative analysis. A mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches is optimal for studies exploring a latent construct like networking (Low-Choy et al., 2017). Specifically, this study applies the iterative categorization approach to support content analysis for greater consistency in coding for quantitative analysis (Neale, 2016).

Thus, the process engaged to identify data relating to this study's hypotheses is as follows: 1) Observe online landing page of MBA programs; 2) Employ iterative categorization to identify cues relating to peer and professional networking, as well as other potential program benefits; 3) Code the cues by online and on-campus MBA program for quantitative analysis; and 4) Engage quantitative analysis to identify statistical significance.

General statistics relating to graduate business programs were first gathered. MBA program legitimacy is best achieved through accreditation by one of the broadly recognized accrediting bodies for business education (Hunt, 2015). For this reason, only universities currently accredited by one of the three broadly accepted accrediting bodies (AACSB, ACBSP, and IACBE) for business schools and programs are included in this study. The current study includes accredited business programs in US universities only, constituting a potential limitation to the results. A review of the three accrediting bodies at the time of this study shows that in the United States, there are 529 universities with AACSB business schools (57% of total), 714 ACBSP programs representing 259 universities (28%), and 140 IACBE business departments/schools (15%), for a total of 928 U.S. universities with accredited business programs (AACSB.edu; ACBSPsearch.org; IACBE.org). Moreover, universities with accredited business programs are spread throughout the South (37%), Northeast (24%), Midwest (24%), and West (15%) regions of the United States (US Census Bureau Map, n.d.).

A robust sample was obtained by sorting the universities by accrediting body, region, and name, numbering the institutions, and then applying a random number generator algorithm without replacement to get a random sample of 152 institutions representing each accrediting body roughly consistent with proportion of institutions by accreditation. Universities that do not offer an MBA were excluded from the sample and replaced. The sample, therefore, includes 87 AACSB institutions (57%), 41 ACBSP institutions (27%), and 24 IACBE institutions (16%); representing 52 (34%) South, 39 (26%) Midwest, 34 (22%) Northeast, and 27 (18%) West region institutions.

The 152 institutions' online landing pages were scanned for cues in text, images, video, and audio. Furthermore, to maintain consistency while observing MBA landing pages, the landing pages were accessed from a single device, using a single web browser, by inputting: "XYZ University MBA" into the search field, and following the first listed hyperlink representing the university's captive (.edu) MBA landing page. Only text, images, video, and audio presented on the landing page of each university were evaluated in the iterative categorization process of this study. Framing of networking cues in this study follows Table 1 below.

Table 1: Framing of Concepts

<u>Search</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Iteration</u>	<u>Basis</u>
Researcher	Website text; Graphic-integrated text; Website audio; Website audio/video	“network(s)”; “networking”; “membership [+] community”; “relationship(s); “meet”; “connection(s)”	Batista (2014); Niemi (2016); Gee (2019); inferred intention of iteration through researcher’s subjective evaluation of content [Although minimized to avoid misinterpretation of intention, subjective evaluation in this study represents a potential limitation]

Due to the randomness of the methodology’s sample selection, the delivery format of the MBA program in each university in the sample was unknown prior to qualitative examination of the university’s landing page. Delivery format of MBA programs is qualified as exclusively online (delineated in this study as “online MBA”) or not exclusively online (delineated in this study as “on-campus MBA”). The on-campus MBA program delineation includes those programs delivered fully on campus or with a required on-campus residency component. Of 152 programs observed in the study, 94 are on-campus MBA programs (not exclusively online), and 58 represent online MBA programs (exclusively online). The relative imbalance between on-campus MBAs and online MBAs included in this study’s sample is a potential limitation to the results.

RESULTS

In this section, analysis and results of networking cues among universities in the sample, along with other explorations, are presented. To identify potential differences in networking messages (cues) among online MBA programs and on-campus MBA programs, iterative categorization was engaged by reviewing the online landing pages of 152 universities representing different U.S. regions and business program accrediting bodies. The following Table 2 is an overview of descriptive statistics from the data, presented by variable.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	Online Networking	Online Flexibility	Online Value	Online Global	On-Campus Networking	On-Campus Flexibility	On-Campus Value	On-Campus Global
N	58	58	58	58	94	94	94	94
Sum	80	178	75	78	238	160	52	178
Mean	1.38	3.07	1.29	1.34	2.53	1.7	0.553	1.89
St. Dev.	1.73	2.25	1.89	1.99	3.11	1.94	1.14	2.99
Max	7	9	8	8	11	8	6	17

Among on-campus MBA programs, 238 cues relating to peer or professional networking were observed, with a mean of 2.53 (st. dev. 3.11) cues, where a maximum of 11 cues was observed on a single institution's landing page. Among online MBA programs, 80 networking cues were observed, with a mean of 1.38 (st. dev. 1.73) cues (max 7 cues).

A Student's t test to compare sample means of online MBAs (n=58) and on-campus MBAs (n=94) yields a statistically significant difference in mean scores of networking cues between online MBAs (\bar{x} =1.38, s=1.73) and on-campus MBAs (\bar{x} =2.53, s=3.11), where the T stat (2.935) is well within the range of rejection in the t distribution when observing a two-tail critical t (1.976) at 99% confidence (p<.01). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a statistically significant difference between the means – the instance of networking messages is significantly higher for on-campus MBA program landing pages than for online MBA program landing pages (see Table 3).

The results of initial statistical analysis confirming the alternative hypothesis provide significant evidence that on-campus MBAs promote networking to a greater extent than online MBAs. Furthermore, if the program web page is the primary source of prospective students' perceptions of a program's benefits (Adelman, 2006; Schneider & Bruton, 2004), then it is safe to say that these results provide sufficient evidence to suggest that on-campus MBA program marketers expect to attract prospective students with the promise of networking as compared with online MBA program marketers.

To further understand the results, consideration was given to the variance in networking cues based on a cross-study of accreditation and geography – factors potentially impacting the variance in means across online and on-campus MBAs. Tests of ANOVA to identify these differences reveal a significant difference in variation around the mean in networking cues across accrediting standards (F=5.43, critical F=3.06, 151df) at 99% confidence (p<.01) in the model. This result likely arises from the relatively higher prominence of networking cues in MBA program landing pages of AACSB schools (\bar{x} =2.69, s=3.11, n=87) as compared with ACBSP schools (\bar{x} =1.43, s=2.06, n=41) and IACBE schools (\bar{x} =1, s=1.32, n=24). This is further evidenced by the fact that 46% of ACBSP and 46% of IACBE institutions observed offer online MBA programs, whereas only 32% of AACSB institutions observed offer online MBA programs. The broad variance (9.66) and standard deviation in networking cues included on AACSB institutions' landing pages, however, skews the results enough to suggest that accreditation *alone* is not a primary factor of differentiation surrounding the prominence of networking cues. Tests of

ANOVA by geography show no significant variance by region ($F=1.43$, critical $F=2.67$, $p=0.238$), suggesting that the mean of networking cues does not vary significantly based on the geographic location of the institution within which the MBA program is offered. Thus, the results indicate that the statistical significance in the prominence of networking cues in online and on-campus MBA programs is not impacted by geography but is moderately impacted by accrediting standard, driven primarily by the dominance of on-campus programs offered at AACSB institutions.

Evidence of the continuing growth of online-only higher education, specifically at the graduate level (NCES, 2019), contradicts to some extent the degree of relevance of networking as a salient attribute in students' selection of MBA program. Furthermore, this study's initial results suggest this to be similarly true with online MBA programs. As such, further qualitative exploration was conducted to include non-networking related cues in iterative categorization, in accordance with the second hypothesis (H_2) of this study. This exploration yielded common cues on institutions' landing pages, including cues relating to "global", "flexible (convenient)", and "good value", and their respective various iterations. Here, another limitation should be noted, in that the author assigned iterative categories to those cues which, in qualitative evaluation, are both used commonly across multiple institutions' landing pages and presented as appeals within landing page contents.

To identify differences in cues relating to global, flexible, and value in online and on-campus MBA programs, t-tests of differences in means were conducted with the quantitative data retrieved through the iterative categorization process.

Statistics summarizing t-tests for the four iterative categories identified in this study, including Networking, Global, Flexible, and Value, with means, T-stats, critical values of t, and two-tailed p-values presented in Table 3.

Table 3: T-Test Output

Iterative Category	On-Campus mean	Online mean	T-Stat	Critical T	p
Networking	2.53	1.38	2.94	1.98	$p<.01^{**}$
Flexibility	1.70	3.07	-3.84	1.98	$p<.001^{***}$
Value	0.55	1.29	-2.69	1.99	$p<.01^{**}$
Global Themes	1.89	1.34	1.36	1.98	$p=0.177$

Results of two-sample t-tests for means reveal a statistically significant difference in the means of cues relating to "flexible" ($p<.001$) and cues relating to "value" ($p<.01$), but no significant difference in cues relating to "global" across online and on-campus MBAs. The negative test statistics for the significant factors "flexible" and "value" (-3.835, -2.691, respectively) reflect on-campus MBA mean cues relating to flexible ($\bar{x}=1.702$, $s=1.939$) and value ($\bar{x}=0.553$, $s=1.142$) as compared to online MBA mean cues relating to flexible ($\bar{x}=3.069$, $s=2.467$) and value ($\bar{x}=1.293$, $s=1.892$).

In this vein, it can be said that program flexibility and value are salient attributes online MBA program marketers rely on to attract prospective students, whereas they are less important than networking in attracting students to on-campus MBA programs. In fact, iterations of flexibility appear more prominently (with a higher mean in online MBAs than networking cues in

on-campus MBAs) and more consistently (51 of 58 online MBA programs observed included flexibility cues) than all other factors considered. This is not a surprise, as an evident appeal to online MBA programs is the convenience and flexibility offered in an online-only delivery format.

Further, ANOVA was conducted on the significant variables Networking, Flexibility and Value within groups for online and on-campus MBA programs, yielding a significant difference in the means ($p < .001$) for both. This result provides further evidence of the heavy use of Networking cues over other cues on the landing pages of on-campus MBA programs, and the heavy use of Flexibility and Value cues over Networking cues on the landing pages of online MBA programs.

DISCUSSION

This study compares the relevance and prominence of peer/professional networking in the promotion of online and on-campus MBA programs through analysis of the landing pages of 152 accredited US MBA programs. Results provide sufficient evidence to suggest that there is a significantly greater use of networking cues in promotion of on-campus versus online MBA programs. Furthermore, statistical analysis identifies a significant difference in prominence of cues relating to flexibility and program value, indicating higher anticipated consumer use of these factors as appeals in online MBA program selection as compared to on-campus MBA program selection. Statistical analysis finds no significant difference in the mean use of cues relating to global themes, suggesting randomness of this variable across institutions within the sample.

The fact that results of statistical analysis indicate a significantly higher use of networking messages to promote on-campus MBA programs while simultaneously indicating a significantly higher use of messages relating to flexibility and value to promote online MBA programs leads to two conclusions.

First, it may be concluded that institutions offering online-only MBA programs face untapped potential in attracting students seeking peer and professional networking opportunities. It should be noted that the statistical significance relating to networking is impacted somewhat by the prominence of networking cues on the MBA program landing pages of AACSB accredited universities offering on-campus programs, which may be seen as an indicator of the confidence in the resources available to these universities allowing them to promote networking opportunities freely. According to (Hunt, 2015), both the ACBSP and IACBE accreditation standards were developed to qualify the educational standards of universities without the abundance of resources enjoyed by many AACSB institutions.

This conclusion is worthy of further exploration, as networking is considered an expected benefit of MBA programs (Tan & Ko, 2019; Gee, 2019; Niemi, 2016; Blackburn, 2011) and related to activities that foster the development of marketplace skills such as standing out, leadership, and the ability to respond to change (Joyner & Mann, 2011). Results of the current study provide some amount of evidence to support the need for business schools representing all accreditation standards to consider improving in the presentation of messages and, thus, program content relating to peer/professional networking opportunities of their online MBAs in order to compete with on-campus MBAs. Discourse on overcoming this challenge can be approached by exploring alternative methods of offering quality networking opportunities to a virtual community. These are presented below.

Virtual Teams – Collaboration through virtual teams that include peers within the program (Ergulec, 2019), MBA students in sister institutions abroad (Neiva de Figueiredo & Mauri, 2013), or industry executives and professionals (Kim, Liu, & Bonk, 2005) does not require geographic proximity and creates opportunities for students to expand peer and professional networks regionally and internationally. Universities should take care to make sure that working in virtual teams is perceived by students as promotional – relating to growth, advancement, and accomplishment, rather than simply obligatory (Niemi, 2016).

Face-to-Face Elements – Including face-to-face elements in online MBA programs may serve to create practical networking opportunities. Some institutions in this study incorporate varying modes of in-person networking with peers, such as through a pre-program or pre-graduation weekend on campus; and with professionals, such as through on-campus forums or invited guest speakers (which can be simultaneously web-cast). Some studies have found that a combination of online and face-to-face experiences leads to better learning outcomes among students without a perceived difference in learning quality (Means et al., 2010; Ritter et al., 2010).

Virtual Networking Training – Online MBA programs may benefit students by incorporating support for student training in the use of virtual networking tools. Camplejohn (2019) identifies a heavy majority of buyers, executives, and salespeople who depend fully on their savvy with the development of strong virtual networks to succeed – indeed, to survive – in the marketplace.

This could extend beyond the concept of networking and span other attributes identified as relevant to the success of current MBA graduates, such as strategic communication skills (Rennie et al., 2018), mindfulness (Kuechler & Stedham, 2018), or global competence. Within the 152 landing pages observed in this study's sample, an average of 1.78 cues relating to global themes is observed; and some institutions have more than 10 cues relating to global themes, with one institution including 17 messages promoting global themes in their MBA program. McCormick and Stephen (2016) suggests that graduate business students should be exposed to global and cross-cultural issues through immersion, diversity of students and faculty, and program content, finding that graduate business students feel that they have necessary skills to succeed in a global business environment “after taking an internationally themed graduate course, or after participating in a study abroad program”. While the factors online MBA programs depend on to attract students are heavily dependent on external advancements in technology (impacting flexibility) and the marketplace's price elasticity of demand (impacting value), global themes can be incorporated into MBA program content and promoted with adjustable impacts on program cost.

The second conclusion points to the question of whether the definition and associated value of networking needs to be re-visited, as the traditional concept of networking may have potentially less importance to prospective students of online MBA programs, assuming university marketers present messages on MBA landing pages reflecting consumer response. Students in online MBA programs may rely on their existing virtual networks to the extent that the valence of a network associated with an MBA program is less intense. Indeed, many universities are recognizing the

value of recruiting students that already have extensive virtual networks, asking students to include recommendations via social media platforms in their business program applications (Peruta & Shields, 2017; C.S-W, 2015). Further research may be needed to determine the extent to which students who choose online programs have established virtual networks and/or value the connections made with an MBA cohort.

Additionally, exploration of the core definition of networking in the messages on MBA landing pages is warranted. On-campus programs may be promoting “old networking”, defined more in the context of a more traditional approach; whereas, online MBA programs may not need to promote networking through messages referencing “old networking”, but, rather, create the assumption of participation in “new networking” simply by way of the word “online”.

Considering social capital in the modern context, in which bridges with those outside of a nuclear relationship group and links with people outside of one’s current professional and social strata (Keeley, 2007) are augmented via social media-based networking. The emergence of Gen Z students as primary participants in MBA programs creates a new forum for catering to students who give ultimate weight to the prominence of social media in their perceptions of business program value (Giunta, 2015). Furthermore, the current generation uses social media in pursuit of more effective relational points of connection (Iheanyi-Igwe & Veach, 2018). While geographic proximity to social capital may continue to have high relevance in executive MBA programs (Han & Liang, 2015), a definition of networking in the context of activities relating to the development of social capital among non-executive MBA students by no means requires physical proximity of the actors (Tan & Ko, 2019). In this vein, online MBA program marketers should not promote networking in the traditional sense to attract prospective students.

Promotion of peer/professional networking as a benefit of MBA programs may simply continue as a distinguishing factor between on-campus MBA programs and online MBA programs, providing program marketers with a clear targeting strategy for prospective students. Thus, as to the question of whether networking *should* be promoted, and in response to trends in virtual networking and social capital, online MBA program marketers should incorporate evolving expressions of networking, rather than traditional definitions, in program marketing. The conclusion that evidence supports these two implications points to the need for further study in this area.

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**CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING AND RECIPROCAL TEACHING:
FOSTERING NON-LAW STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION
OF COMPLEX TEXT IN ONLINE COURSES**

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ABSTRACT

Online business students are often required to take legal environment and other law related courses. Many students struggle with the readings in these courses. A variety of instructional strategies help support student reading comprehension in higher education classrooms. Reciprocal teaching, derived from a constructivist theory on learning, is one such instructional strategy. However, constructivist reciprocal teaching has not been studied extensively in online learning environments. This paper describes constructivist reciprocal teaching and examines three case examples that apply reciprocal teaching in online learning environments. The analysis concludes with recommendations for incorporating reciprocal teaching in online higher education business classrooms.

“The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom: for in all the states of created beings capable of laws, where there is no law, there is no freedom”
(Locke, 1690)

Given the law’s importance in most all facets of personal and professional life, legal studies are embedded throughout higher education curriculum in many disciplines. Students of varying majors often find themselves in courses that require extensive law-based reading and involve significant work with case law and other legal documents. For example, in many business programs, a legal environment course is required of all students (May, 2014; Miller & Crain, 2011; O’Brien, Powers, & Wesner, 2018). The law and associated legal documents (including the statutes and court decisions that are required reading in many non-law students’ course work) are also extremely complex and written using unfamiliar terminology (Schwartz, 2017a; Understanding Legal Terminology, n.d.). As Schwartz (2017a) notes, “when it comes to drafting legal documents, the rule seems to be “legalese, please!” (p. 55). Legalese is a term commonly used to describe writing that relies not on plain language but on a plethora of redundancies, archaic language, complicated sentence structures, and legal jargon (Kimble & Prokop, 2014; Schwartz, 2017b).

The combination of complex, confusing writing and students’ limited background with legal documents poses a variety of reading comprehension challenges for students in courses like the legal environment of business, business law, and employment law, for example. Many students struggle to comprehend their legal readings in their legal environment and similar courses (May, 2014). Most of these students have little background in the law and lack prior training on how to read complex legal documents. Students of all backgrounds, including those for whom English is their first language, struggle (Dove & Bryant, 2016). These challenges are not limited to legal courses. In fact, college students in all programs often struggle to apply reading comprehension and literacy skills that are required in order to succeed in higher education programs (Bettinger & Long, 2009; Gruenbaum, 2012; Huang & Yang, 2015; Snyder, Tan, & Hoffman, 2004).

Many of these students increasingly study in online environments (Koksal, 2020; Moules, 2020; Online Education Statistics, 2020). Over the past decade, online learning environments have become an increasingly popular and common learning modality for an increasingly diverse and global student population (Seaman et al., 2018). One recent study found that the number of students studying via online courses is over 6 million nationally (Online Learning Consortium, 2017). Online non-law students, including international students, enrolled in business law, legal environment of business, and other law-related courses face a variety of unique challenges comprehending the legal documents that are a critical part of their curriculum (Dove & Bryant, 2016). The combination of increasingly online learning environments and the prevalence of legal readings in non-law programs prompts a need for creative ways to support student learning and reading comprehension.

The challenge of increasingly global and online learning combined with difficulties students face reading complex text as part of required coursework also presents opportunities for instructors to enhance the reading and learning experience of all students (Dove & Bryant, 2016). For example, online learning environments and their inherent ability to simultaneously support both collaboration and interaction prompt intriguing opportunities for innovative teaching strategies, including with respect to reading comprehension (Chang & Lan, 2019). Research has found that “college students and professionals need a method to help them become proficient in reading in order to help them learn more effectively” (Lei et al., 2010, p. 36). Reciprocal teaching

(RT) is a strategy that has the potential to support reading comprehension in a variety of contexts, including online classrooms. This paper explores the potential application of RT in online learning environments, with a goal of applying the strategy to support online students (in legal and other courses) in their reading and understanding of complex writing and texts (legal or otherwise). The paper begins with an overview of RT as an instructional strategy grounded in a constructivist view of learning. Next, the paper explores cases in which RT was applied in online learning environments. Challenges encountered in these studies are evaluated and suggestions and recommendations for overcoming these challenges are shared. The paper concludes by sharing a variety of resources that readers interested in applying RT as a constructivist learning strategy to support reading comprehension in their own online courses might find beneficial.

CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING THEORY AND RECIPROCAL TEACHING

The act of reading and reading comprehension is a complex, multi-faceted process (Huang & Yang, 2015; Jenkins, 2006; Sanchez et al., 2006; Tseng & Yeh, 2017). A variety of strategies need to be applied to support student reading and comprehension (Englert & Thomas, 1987; Roberts & Roberts, 2008; Winograd, 1984). RT, sometimes referred to as Reciprocal Learning, is a strategy that was originally developed by Palincsar and Brown (1984) and which originates in a constructivist theory of learning. RT is grounded in a number of instructional strategies, including guided learning, modeling, scaffolding, and cooperative learning (Huang & Yang, 2015). The following sections explore RT and its associated foundational learning theories (including constructivism, scaffolding, and Vygotsky's social constructivism, in particular) and then examine the four cognitive strategies which comprise RT applications in practice.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivism is a broad teaching and learning theory that emphasizes the active and important role of individual learners in exploring, constructing knowledge, and socializing within unique learning environments (Bohlin et al., 2012; May, 2014; Mergel, 1998). Constructivists suggest that learners actively construct and create understanding by building upon existing knowledge bases (Bruner, 1966; Snowman & McCown, 2015). In learning environments built upon social constructivist principles, students and teachers work collaboratively in ways that support active dialogue, discovery, and movement from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction (Bruner, 1966; Huang & Yang, 2015; Mergel, 1998). In constructivism, emphasis is placed on engaging a learner (or group of learners) in the use of tools, strategies, resources, and applications that are a critical component of real-world personal and professional interactions, context, simulations, and situations (Mergel, 1998).

Constructivism is beneficial to learners in a variety of contexts. For example, research has demonstrated that Vygotsky's social constructivist theory can be applied to adult learning, with significant success (Livingston, n.d.). Further, the realization that knowledge is actively constructed through experiences and social interactions is also increasingly recognized and appreciated in online learning environments (Bonk & King, 1998; Panko, 2002). Arguably, "[t]asks demanding high levels of processing" (such a reading comprehension associated with

complex texts and including in online learning) are often “best learned” through constructivist strategies (Ertmer & Newby, 1993, p. 22). RT embodies these principles in an effective manner with a goal of supporting student reading comprehension. The following sections explore how RT does so, through scaffolding, social interaction and dialogue, and specific cognitive strategies.

SCAFFOLDING, VYGOTSKY, AND ZONES OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT

Scaffolding is a fundamental component of the active process of inquiry and knowledge building that defines constructivist theory (Foster & Rotoloni, 2005; Lee & Hannafin, 2016). Scaffolding is embedded in RT discussion techniques and strategies and refers to activities that intentionally build upon prior student knowledge with the goal of helping students actively internalize and comprehend new information (May, 2014; Oczkus, n.d.). Scaffolding and RT as teaching methods and tools both originate out of Lev Vygotsky’s theory on learning and his zone of proximal development (May, 2014; Vygotsky; 1978). Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development is a guided practice pursuant to which a teacher or expert first models reading strategies and then gradually transfers more responsibilities, through guided scaffolding, to students (Huang & Yang, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978).

RECIPROCAL TEACHING COMPONENTS

RT, developed by Palincsar and Brown (1984) in order to help support improved reading comprehension in students, is a cooperative learning strategy which incorporates scaffolding, supported discussion, and intentional cognitive strategies. RT has origins in Vygotsky’s social constructivist perspective on learning whereby teachers and students collaboratively construct and create knowledge and meaning through interactions with content (Allen, 2003; Huang & Yang, 2015; May, 2014; Oczkus, n.d.). RT utilizes small groups where students develop reading skills through dialogue, shared thinking patterns, and collaborative construction of meaning (Allen, 2003; Foster & Rotoloni, 2005). RT has been shown to improve students’ reading comprehension skills in both its original (reciprocal teaching alone) and modified (for example, explicit teaching before reciprocal teaching) forms (Huang & Yang, 2015; Palincsar et al., 1987).

Applying RT typically involves four unique components, each a specific cognitive strategy that is scaffolded and intentionally designed to improve students’ reading comprehension experiences: (a) predicting events; (b) generating questions; (c) clarifying unclear portions; and (d) summarizing (Huang & Yang, 2015; May, 2014; Oczkus, n.d.; Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Each strategy (predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing) is taught to students in a collaborative classroom environment that is both rich in dialogue (in the vein of Vygotsky’s social construction of knowledge) and that requires students to demonstrate strong reading comprehension skills (Huang & Yang, 2015; May, 2014).

Application of RT involves students supporting each other in the collective reading and understanding process (Foster & Rotoloni, 2005; Gilbert, 2018). RT begins with instructors first demonstrating and modeling RT reading strategies for the benefit of students (Gilbert, 2018 Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Next, students are encouraged to practice the demonstrated strategies (predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing) through a process of intentional (expert)

scaffolding and guided discovery (Vygotsky, 1978). As student competency and confidence develop and increase, students initiate and adopt various expert roles as they work to demonstrate proper use of the shared strategies. In this way, students actively experience the process of knowledge sharing and construction along with their peers (Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

RECIPROCAL TEACHING AND ONLINE CLASSROOMS

Although the existing research is limited, RT has been applied in online higher education classrooms with promising degrees of success and potential applications across disciplines. The following section explores several illustrative and related case studies in online environments. A review of these cases can yield valuable insights into future applications of RT in online, higher education law courses that are heavily enrolled by non-law students and which require students interact with complex legal readings.

CASES OF RECIPROCAL TEACHING IN ONLINE, HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

The three case studies presented in this section highlight how RT can be applied in online higher education classrooms. These cases were selected because of their potential to shed light on the potential utility and application of RT in online, higher education learning environments as well as the possible use of RT in online legal courses for non-law students. The three cases include participants that are English language learners. This population shares many common characteristics with non-law students in legal courses where, for many, introduction to the law is like “learning a new language” (May, 2014, p. 234).

ONLINE RECIPROCAL TEACHING TO SUPPORT COLLEGE REMEDIAL READING INSTRUCTION

In the first case, Huang and Yang (2015) examine the impact of two online remedial intervention programs introduced to support 36 low-achieving students. The first intervention adopted an explicit teaching (ET) before RT model. The second intervention provided direct instruction (DI). A 10-unit online remedial English reading program for a technical university was designed based on Palincsar et al.’s ET-RT model (2015). Huang and Yang (2015) believed that struggling readers could “improve their performance through interactive (dialogue) strategies and idea reconstruction” (p. 383). However, there is little available research on the efficacy of RT at the university level (2015). There is also limited research addressing the use of RT groups in higher education classrooms. (2015). This study sought to expand upon the existing scholarship in this context.

Participants included two classes of technical university students in southern Taiwan (Huang & Yang, 2015). Thirty-six students who scored low on English language proficiency exams were invited to participate in the study. The participants were randomly distributed into experimental and control groups. Six students at a time received online remedial instruction. The

10-week study adopted a pre- and post-test group design. For each 90-minute, weekly teaching period, the experimental and control groups received ET-RT and traditional DI instruction, respectively (Huang & Yang, 2015).

ET-RT provides a student-centered combination of explicit teaching, overt instruction, and modeling, as well as feedback through metacognitive self-monitoring and evaluation strategies (Huang & Yang, 2015). In this study, the instructor provided the RT group with 30 minutes of RT strategy instruction prior to the 10-week RT study intervention. The DI groups experienced a traditional, teacher-centered mode of instruction where the instructor provided instruction of reading skills along with questions for student response (2015). Data collection instruments included the Survey of Reading Strategies (SQRS), the Perceived Self-efficacy Scale on English Reading Strategies (SES-ERS), the Motivational Belief Scale (MBS), a reading comprehension test (RCT), and a student learning survey. All survey responses were recorded on a 5-point scale (ranked from strongly disagree to strongly agree).

Findings revealed significant improvements in reading comprehension associated with the ET-RT model as compared with DI. Specifically, quantitative data analysis showed that the experimental ET-RT group “significantly outperformed the control DI group on three SQRS subscales” (Huang & Yang, 2015, p. 390). The ET-RT group also “significantly outperformed the control DI group on all five SES-ERS subscales” (p. 390). For the MBS, the ET-RT group significantly outperformed the DI group on the self-efficacy subscale. For reading comprehension, the RT “markedly outperformed the DI group” (p. 390). Qualitative data analysis showed moderate satisfaction on the part of both groups regarding the study intervention. ET-RT participants highlighted perceived benefits of the explicit reading strategy instruction (2015).

Study successes included promising data regarding the utility of both ET-RT and DI instruction. In totality, findings show that implementation of ET-RT “significantly improved students’ reading comprehension, reading strategies, and self-efficacy compared with DI” (Huang & Yang, 2015, p. 390). The researchers concluded that in light of findings where ET-RT outperformed DI, additional thought on the design and implementation of interactive remedial English instruction is warranted.

It is important to also note that there were challenges, including (for example), the multitude of factors (language, emotional development, and personal experience) that impact the acquisition and adoption of reading skills and comprehension. The researchers noted that future studies should more expressly consider these factors (p. 404). Additionally, the development and implementation of ET-RT reading skills is challenging, as are best practices for maximizing longer-term impacts of ET-RT on reading comprehension (p. 404). Similar strategies, as well as similar cautions, might be applied in law-courses with non-law students, as well. The two populations share many characteristics in connection with a need for reading comprehension and reading strategies.

UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES WITH MOODLE-BASED RECIPROCAL TEACHING

In a second case, Chang and Lan (2019) examined the use of Moodle (a free and open source learning management system) as an online learning platform for incorporating online RT

in a college freshman English Reading course. While research has acknowledged RT's potential to support university students' reading comprehension (Gruenbaum, 2012), limited research has explored its use in online learning environments. In this study, Chang and Lan (2019) designed a 10-week, Moodle-based instructional module that embedded RT's four reading strategies. Participating students were English majors enrolled in a refresher English reading course at a national university of science and technology in southern Taiwan (2019). This population shares similar characteristics with non-law students in legal coursework and associated needs for reading comprehension strategies.

The researchers collected survey data on 53 students' perceptions and experiences associated with the online RT module (Chang & Lan, 2019). Researchers also measured reading comprehension using a pre- and post-test that consisted of multiple-choice questions and a summary-writing task. Students' instruction-related Moodle posts were also collected for analysis. Findings showed that nearly 60% of participants agreed that all four of the RT strategies were useful in terms of improved reading comprehension (Chang & Lan, 2019). Further, more than 90% of participants who found a given RT strategy helpful rated it as somewhat or very helpful (Chang & Lan, 2019). Participants also performed stronger on reading comprehension multiple choice questions in Week 10 as compared with Week 1. In sum, the researchers found that participants perceived the web-based RT application positively and also that participants scored higher on the post-test multiple choice comprehension assessment (Chang & Lan, 2019). In terms of successes, these findings suggest that reading comprehension can be enhanced through the use of Moodle-based (or other online) RT interventions.

However, while the study offers promising insights, it is important to note that the study also evaluated student pre- and post-writing summaries and found no improvement in post-test writing summaries. In particular, the propositional density (PD) of the post-test summary texts was similar to that of the pre-test summary texts (Chang & Lan, 2019). Student difficulties using written English to express text understanding did not significantly improve (Chang & Lan, 2019). The researchers were unsure whether this challenge (the lack of significant change in student summary-writing PDs) might be associated with limitations of the Moodle instructional unit (for example, length or content). Another challenge involved potential drawbacks in the way the online RT interventions were designed (distinct from the potential of the strategy itself to prove useful in online environments).

INTEGRATING RECIPROCAL TEACHING AND ANNOTATION FEATURES IN ONLINE CLASSROOMS TO SUPPORT READING COMPREHENSION

In a third case, Tseng and Yeh (2018) examined how implementing RT instructional strategies coupled with an annotation tool might improve student comprehension in an online classroom. Despite the increasing popularity of online learning and the potential for annotation tools to support both cooperative and collaborative online dialogue, little research has been done regarding the use of RT combined with annotation tools in online learning environments. However, annotation tools (and highlighting and commenting features, for example) offer unique opportunities to implement RT strategies in interactive ways in online learning environments (Tseng & Yeh, 2018). Online annotation tools also enable students to respond to each of the RT cognitive strategies in a visual and collaborative manner.

In this study, 22 low-achieving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at a Taiwan university participated in a pre- and post- reading comprehension test study design. The researchers designed a 12-week course to implement RT and relied upon Google Docs as their annotation tool. After introducing the annotation tool, the instructor modeled RT strategies for students within Google Docs. The 22 students were divided into six groups of three and one group of four students. Each group was assigned an English article (with a total of three assigned readings, each consisting of 400-460 words) and instructed to apply RT strategies (Tseng & Yeh, 2018). Data included pre and post Test of English for International Communication (“TOEIC”) reading scores, reflective essays (in which students ranked the four RT strategies and described their related experiences), and participation records (Tseng & Yeh, 2018). Pre- and post-TOEIC reading test scores were analyzed based on paired-sample-t-test results. Essays were coded and analyzed using an inductive approach that included reading through data, coding, generating themes, and ultimately interpretation (2018).

Data showed that students’ English reading comprehension significantly improved after the introduction of RT strategies in conjunction with associated annotation tools. Students ranked questioning and predicting strategies as the two most useful strategies, largely due to the collaborative reading both promoted among students (Tseng & Yeh, 2018). At the same time, students indicated summarizing and clarifying were less useful, largely as a result of challenges the EFL students encountered with their texts (2018). Study results also indicated that annotations supported RT strategies by promoting a collaborative environment in which students could discuss and respond to individual RT strategies (predicting, clarifying, questioning, summarizing) and providing ways to organize and respond to reading material in a way to simulates face to face discussions conversation (2018).

The success of this study illustrates that RT strategies can be effectively employed in collaborative, online learning environments and perhaps more powerfully with the adoption of complementary tools such as online annotation software. Applying RT strategies and online annotation tools are especially powerful in empowering “students to easily see and respond to each other’s use of RT strategies in a collaborative learning environment” (Tseng & Yeh, 2018, p. 800). Online RT strategies, combined with annotation tools, also supported student sharing and discussion via multiple media forms, including text and images (Tseng & Yeh, 2018). Challenges revealed themselves in student written reflections and identification of summarizing and clarifying as less useful than questioning and predicting strategies. In particular, as a result of low English proficiency levels students struggled to identify which vocabulary definitions fit specific contexts (2018).

RECOMMENDED RESPONSES TO HIGHLIGHTED CHALLENGES

The above referenced cases encountered a variety of challenges in connection with the application of RT in online higher education classrooms. There are a variety of ways to overcome these challenges and successfully incorporate RT in online higher education legal courses for the benefit of non-law students’ reading comprehension.

One challenge involved varying degrees of success with certain unique RT strategies. For example, in Tseng & Yeh’s (2018) study, data showed that students struggled to apply both clarifying and summarizing strategies given limited English language proficiencies. To address

this challenge (for ELL learners and more broadly in any course where students are exposed to significant amounts of new vocabulary such as in law courses), teachers might first spend time on key vocabulary and/or provide students with additional resources to support vocabulary development. As Mustafa et al. (2019) write, “vocabulary is a strong predictor of reading comprehension, vocabulary homework is seen as a way to improve reading comprehension” (p. 21). Relatedly, research has found that student struggles with reading comprehension often originate in a limited vocabulary (with respect to both size and depth) (Kheirzadeh & Tavakoli, 2012; Mustafa et al., 2019; Zuhra, 2015). Tseng and Yeh (2018) suggest that teachers might look to online annotation tools to monitor and document both student understanding and use of RT strategies as well as to identify areas to emphasize in feedback with students. Additionally, to address vocabulary-related challenges not unlike those highlighted in the shared cases, Mustafa et al. (2019) examined the impact of web-based homework designed to help improve student reading comprehension of academic texts and found that when students received reading skill training focused on vocabulary instruction along with associated vocabulary homework (paper-based or electronic) students achieved improved reading comprehension scores (whereas students who received reading skill training only did not). Thus, Mustafa et al. (2019) encourage teachers “to assign vocabulary homework as a compulsory learning requirement in teaching reading comprehension” (p. 37).

This strategy might be adopted and applied in conjunction with RT in online learning environments, as well. Applied to law courses for non-law students, instructors might first assign vocabulary homework on key legal terms used in an assigned case or legal article. Instructors might also share support resources to further develop student’s legal vocabulary. May (2014) notes the importance of first remembering and understanding foundational legal concepts and terminology before students can interpret and apply the law. In particular, “students must first master the knowledge base” (May, 2014, p. 241) and strategies to help students do so include lectures, in-class discussions, and online quizzing. To address some of the challenges students faced when working to comprehend complex texts (and as further illustrated by the challenges identified in the above referenced studies), teachers might prepare supporting resources that help students “master the knowledge base” such as vocabulary flashcards and review sheets to aid students as they apply RT strategies (May, 2014, p. 241). As an example, a document with vocabulary flashcard practice for foundational legal terminology is shared as a supplemental resource.

Recommendations for the identified challenges also rest within studies presented in this paper. For example, Huang & Yang’s (2015) work on ET-RT offer suggestions to address challenges with student struggles applying RT strategies associated with limited vocabulary. Perhaps, for example, instructors might incorporate ET in advance of RT to further support student vocabulary and RT competence.

Another challenge involved the potential for drawbacks in the way the online RT interventions were designed (distinct from the potential of the strategy itself to prove useful in online environments). That is, the design of the RT intervention might be just as important as the RT content. To address this challenge, future studies might test varying versions (for example, extended periods for RT instructional units compared with shorter instructional units) of online interventions. In fact, prior research has highlighted concerns associated with limited time for students to practice newly introduced RT strategies (Chang & Lan, 2019; Chou, 2016; Hashey &

Connors, 2003; Takala, 2006). Additional practice opportunities embedded within presented RT instructional experiences are also recommended (Chang & Lan, 2019).

Finally, a similar challenge highlighted the difficulties of accounting for the many factors (i.e., personal experience, emotional development, and cognitive development) that impact reading skills development and acquisition (Huang & Yang, 2015). One recommendation to account for some such factors includes adopting an experimental design that breaks students into groups based on one (or more) of such factors to the extent possible (Tseng & Yeh, 2018). By way of example, in legal course settings, testing groups might be broken down based on language background, personal prior exposure to legal concepts, and/or some other distinguishing factor.

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

The increasing prevalence of online learning combined with universal challenges students encounter when reading complex text (for example, non-law students reading legal materials) present opportunities for instructors to support the reading and learning experience of all online students. Constructivist RT is one such strategy that has shown promising potential, as reflected in the case studies described in this paper. As discussed above, there are interesting opportunities to build upon the work in the examined studies (including the combination of RT with ET strategies and vocabulary support materials as well as study design and instructional unit modifications), with the goal of further enhancing RT applications in online higher education courses (including legal courses for non-law students).

A variety of supplemental resources may be helpful to anyone interested in incorporating RT strategies in their own online instruction. The resources shared in this section are applicable for instructors teaching non-law students in legal courses as well as for instructors supporting struggling readers in all online learning environments.

For a sample lesson plan incorporating RT (and which can be adapted to online learning environments), see: <http://olms.cte.jhu.edu/olms2/data/ck/sites/1943/files/Reciprocal%20Strategy%20Lesson%20Plan.pdf>.

For RT role cards (which can be adapted to online, small group discussions), see: <https://www.prodigygame.com/blog/reciprocal-teaching/#lesson-plan>.

For free online annotation, workshop, and collaborative note sharing tools (to support RT in online environments), see:

- Google Docs, at: <https://www.google.com/docs/about/>
- RemNote, at: <https://www.remnote.io/>
- Padlet, at: <https://padlet.com/>

For free online meeting options for group collaboration, see:

- Zoom, at: <https://zoom.us/>
- Google Hangouts, at: <https://hangouts.google.com/>
- Skype, at: <https://www.skype.com/en/>

For a sample (and adaptable) document with embedded practice flashcards for terms from the United States Courts Glossary of Terms, see:
<https://www.remote.io/a/qEuMmP6qR9Hyg3pkN>

For more on Bruner's theory of constructivism, see: <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/bruner.htm>

For tips on managing effective online discussion boards, see:
<https://er.educause.edu/blogs/2018/11/10-tips-for-effective-online-discussions>

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**THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT:
STRATEGIC HRD TO TRANSFORM ORGANIZATIONS INTO
HIGH-PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This study surveys the evolution of human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD). An exploration of the foundational and essential literature discusses how HRM and HRD aim to enhance organizational performance to develop and train employees. It then explores the issues and trends of HRM in today's global business climate, workplace environment, strategic hiring, and how the organizations use the HRD strategies to develop themselves into high-performance organizations (HPO).

INTRODUCTION

The role of effective employee management is critical for enhancing organizational performance of every business across the globe. Every business organization, small to large, engages in some aspect of human resources (HR). Human resource management (HRM) is focused on the well-being of organizational employees, compensation, creating a safe & healthy work environment while focused on production. HRM is also intently focused on identifying/recruiting candidates, hiring, training, and overall employee development (Gilley et al., 2009). Strategically, HRM also communicates and serves the interests of both employees and the company as a market-driven entity in for-profit as well as in non-profit organizations (Mathis et al., 2016).

HRM is about understanding and managing an organization's human capital and its business operations with the goal of high performance (High Performance Organization Center, 2020; Gilley et al., 2009). According to Reed (2017), HRM is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors that influence an organization's HRM are organizational culture, business strategy, nature of operations, skills of the available workforce, and the role of HR (Reed, 2017). External factors that influence an organization's HRM are the labor market, competitive forces, regulatory climate, industry best practices, and academic theories (Reed, 2017). HRM covers organizational development, individual development, human capital management, human resource development, labor relations, legal compliance, benefits, compensation, recruiting, retention, termination, diversity, HR information system, training, and workplace safety (Nkomo et al., 2010; Reed, 2017).

Within a small business, the owner often takes the role of an HR manager and supervises HR functions of the company including hiring, payroll, documentation, and employee training (Reed, 2017). Larger companies deal with the same HR issues but tend to have specific HR professionals to directly handle all HR functions. Generally, HR specialists need to know many areas of HR rather than one aspect of HR to meet organizational needs (Lay, 2013; Reed, 2017).

Today, organizations recognize that hiring motivated and capable employees is critical for business success (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). The workforce reflects the human intellectual capital, which allows organizations to stay competitive among their peers (Friedman, 2015). Over the years, the scope of HRM has become more diverse and complex. Now, HR involves strategically meeting staffing needs, providing effective and individualized training, complying with federal and state regulations, enforcing policies, and providing benefits that protect employees (Stanford, 2015).

The theoretical transformation of HR to HRD seeks to create a human-centric approach that allows for organizational effectiveness through investment in learning (Reed, 2017; Sheehan et al., 2013), sustained creativity and innovation (Loewenberger, 2013), an increase in competitive readiness, renewed capacity, and a rise in profitability (Gilley, et. al., 2009). The current understanding of HRD is not solely focused on a singular aspect or attribute, but rather creates a holistic employee driven strategy. This theoretical foundation directly creates organizational success through human resources focused efforts. Even as human resources practitioners operate in a fluid and ever-changing landscape (Arcichvili, 2012), research on this topic continues to show the power of this framework when allowed to grow effectively and to its full potential (Ruona & Gibson, 2004).

As argued by past researchers, being sensitive to the workers' needs is the greatest benefit of the business organization (Blanchard & Spencer, 2015). As an HR professional, one's task is to

pay attention to the policies and practices in the organization that affects the motivation and safety of employees, who are assets to the company. HRM is a term used for the evaluation, decision-making, process, and activities that would meet the requirements of employees and aid the performance of the organization (Gilley et al., 2009). This study explores what encompasses the role of HRM, how it has evolved into human resource development (HRD), and the practical implications to business leaders. This essay then discusses important HR issues relating to developing into high-performance organizations (HPO).

HISTORY OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Extant literature on this topic offers various definitions of HRM (Huselid, 2011). Initially, HRM was defined as the management of individuals within the organization based on the framework presented in Drucker's theory (Drucker, 1985). The second is Strauss and Sayles' theories based on employee management (Jennings, 1961), third is Thatcher's method of control (Guest, 1990). Another is Ulrich's theory based on economic research (Hayton et al., 2011). However, the history of HRM started long before these definitions of HRM were published. For example, the Ancient Chinese organized people into specific groups to form armies; their specific actions displayed successful practices of HRM such as management, training, and the transfer of knowledge in an organized manner (Hayton et al., 2011).

During the Industrial Revolution, factories developed people management to increase productivity and output (Northouse, 2018; Wren & Bedeian, 2017). Fast and inexpensive mass production became popular in many industries. Production plants forced workers to labor long hours, and the workforce became exhausted resulting in large production inefficiencies (Northouse, 2018; Wren & Bedeian, 2017). Businesses began to understand that employee satisfaction and motivation directly results in more efficient work output. It was with this realization that factories started to care about human relations and workplace safety (Reed, 2017; Wren & Bedeian, 2017). During the 20th century, most organizations started personnel management to deal with regulatory compliance in protecting workers' rights and safety. After World War II, more personnel development and training programs were introduced to businesses. Additionally, trade unions developed to protect workers' interests (Reed, 2017; Society for Human Resource Management, 2009).

The introduction of modern HRM started in the 1970s (Reed, 2017). Technological development allowed multinational corporations (MNCs) to grow and globalization became the trend. HRM methods began to influence globalized workforces and evolve managerial behavior across cultures. HR started to deal with complex information systems and problem-solving relating to employee information available to HR professionals. As businesses continue to operate in a global marketplace, there is a critical need for organizational leaders to understand that employees come from diverse cultural backgrounds (Reed, 2017). Organizational culture cannot continue to be rigid nor myopic, but rather it must support employees with diverse nationalities within the organization. Global HRM procedures need to produce diverse employees who can perform at expected levels (Reed, 2017; Society for Human Resource Management, 2009).

CURRENT ISSUES IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Every organization, regardless of size, location, and goals, needs to manage human resource issues. These issues include everything related to the people side of operating an organization. Included within the scope of HRM are the specific duties of recruiting talent, hiring procedures, training, development, and compensation. Once a candidate becomes an employee, the role of HRM is there to provide employees with a safe, healthy, and productive work environment with open communication. Most importantly, organizations are faced with the ultimate challenge of finding a balance between how to best serve the needs of employees and how to optimally serve the global needs of the organization.

Legal Issues

There are numerous local, state, and federal regulations that will make it illegal to discriminate based on race, religion, age, disability, gender, marital status, etc (Russ-Eft, 2000). Some nations, like the United States, specifically prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. Organizations need to make their hiring decisions based on the ability to do the task (Reed, 2017). Pregnancies are considered short-term disability (Reed, 2017). Organizations should not take, for example, pregnancy, into the promotion or hiring decisions. The prohibition against discrimination extends not only to intentional behavior but may also cover unintentional actions (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2008; Reed, 2017). When HR decisions are being made, seeking legal advice is recommended.

Laws to protect workers' interests have been passed and implemented. Examples of these legal regulations include the Equal Pay Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, etc. Organizations today have policies that explain what sexual harassment is and the penalties for violating such policies. The organizations are responsible for reinforcing employees to understand that sexual harassment is not tolerated (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2008; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Friedman, 2015; Gilley et al., 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Lay, 2013; Manroop et al., 2014; Mathis et al., 2016; Nkomo et al., 2010).

Strategic Staffing

Traditional ideas of hiring the best people to fill a vacant position have been updated to more complex and dynamic notions. As HR practitioners are operating in a constantly changing and hard to predict environment (Arcichvili, 2012), the need to adopt an agile framework for employment selection has emerged which is comprehensive, coordinated, and dynamic (Ruona & Gibson, 2004). Strategic HR has taken on this challenge to analyze the requirements of the organization and the conditions of the global market to select employees which will ultimately provide an organization with a competitive advantage (Ruona & Gibson, 2004). Strategic HR hiring decisions require more information to assess the qualities and organizational fit of a candidate more so than traditional HR approaches. The HR information systems available to HR practitioners now use as much information as possible about candidates to identify factors that could affect the productivity and efficiency of organizational performance in the long-term (Bassi, 2011; Blunt, 1990; Chermack & Kasshanna, 2007).

Traditional and current strategic hiring practices have five major/distinct differences from one another. First, while traditional staffing tries to fill a job position, strategic staffing considers task duties that are focused on business goals to optimally enhance an organization's competitive

advantage (Reed, 2017). Second, traditional staffing practices created job descriptions for a position, but strategic staffing analyzes the competencies needed to produce maximized performance in any task (Reed, 2017). Third, traditional staffing aims to find an individual who best fits the job while strategic hiring determines the combination of both internal and external resources that can optimize the tasks that need to be accomplished (Reed, 2017). Fourth, while traditional HR looks for technical competence, strategic staffing looks for candidates who are technically qualified and able to carry forward the organization's values and objectives (Reed, 2017). Lastly, traditional hiring decisions are primarily the results of an interview, whereas strategic staffing views the results of an interview as only one of many sets of tools available to make the best hiring selection for both the candidate and the organization (Bassi, 2011; Kuchinke, 2013; Reed, 2017).

Strategic hiring decision-making considers multiple factors of future organizational performance. For example, some questions that HR managers ask are: "what are the most important priorities that the organization is dealing with, and how can it best stay competitive?" "what are the trends in this competitive industry?" "what are the organization's long-term strategic goals?", etc. Strategic HRM emerged intending to increase efficiency in globalized competition with hiring being the central focus. Improved strategies for attracting, retaining, and developing talents; methods such as balance scorecards to evaluate the workforce, and stress the contribution of strategic HRM to create organizational competitive advantage (Bassi, 2011; Kuchinke, 2013; Reed, 2017). Within the dynamics of hiring the right employee for the position, past researchers have postulated that a primary function of human resources is to function as the ethical gatekeepers of an organization (Villegas et al., 2019).

Workplace Environment

What do organizations need to do to be recognized as an employee-friendly workplace in the current globalized competitive market? Levering and Moskowitz (2000) gave the illustration of American companies who are dedicated to quality improvement extends to not just their goods and services they offer but also to the employee working environment as well. The six areas postulated by these researchers measure the quality of the workplace through 1) pay and benefits, 2) advancement opportunities, 3) job security, 4) supportive organizational culture, 5) openness and fairness, and 6) organizational values and motivation (Levering & Moskowitz, 2000). Levering and Moskowitz (2000) introduced the idea of how to create an employee-friendly workplace which is both healthy and productive.

Organizations known for employee friendly HRM policies have adopted the idea that their people are valuable assets and need to be treated as such (Levering & Moskowitz, 2000). The step that organizations take to integrate this value into their daily business practices varies from one organization to another. Organizations may not always take human concerns over business practices, but it means that the wellness of employees is regularly taken into consideration when organizations are making financial decisions (Levering & Moskowitz, 2000).

There are very few organizations that guarantee lifetime employment in the marketplace today, but organizations that place value on employees' wellbeing look at layoffs as a last resort, not an immediate response to an economic downturn (Levering & Moskowitz, 2000; Reed, 2017). For instance, Steelcase, a Michigan based furniture company experienced sales dip in the 1990s, it was forced to terminate over 1,000 employees. But before they took this step, the organization cut the salaries of executives and froze pay increases for the entire organization. It can be seen from

Steelcase's example that the company showed a reasonable commitment to its employees' job security (Levering & Moskowitz, 2000).

Organizations are now required to provide a safe work environment by both federal and state regulations (Reed, 2017). However, many employee-friendly organizations have created work facilities and introduced policies that exceed the legal requirement. A Wisconsin mail-order business, Lands' End, invested in an employee recreation center with a gym with exercise equipment, and a swimming pool (Levering & Moskowitz, 2000). Merck and Company, in New Jersey, created a convenience store, on-site automatic teller machines for employees, and cafeterias that provide after-hours food service to provide comfort while they are working overtime (Levering & Moskowitz, 2000). These organizations embody the idea that an organization's human capital (employee) is the greatest asset of the company (Fulmer & Ployhart, 2013).

Now, several organizations are committed to the idea of providing a balance between work and home (Reed, 2017). HRM policies do differ from one organization to another, but they recognize the challenges for raising a family with work responsibilities. The benefits of these organizations may even provide allowances for childcare and eldercare (Levering & Moskowitz, 2000). Some organizations realize that the unknown in the business environment increases employees' stress and thus they do not perform optimally due to an unpredictable future (Reed, 2017). The traditional idea of keeping employees in the dark about organizational performance is being gradually replaced with more open communication with employees. Organizations increasingly practice transparency by sharing financial matters with employees and even providing employees the opportunity to collaborate with management on problem-solving (Werner, 2014).

Most organizations aim to highly perform through organizational and strategic use of their resources. One of the important organizational resources is its human capital, which can be used effectively to lead organizations into high performance organizations (HPO) (High Performance Organization Center, 2020). A characteristic of a high-performance organization (HPO) is its ability to adapt and quickly address both consumers' as well as employees' needs (High Performance Organization Center, 2020) while instilling strong cooperation & relationships between organizational units (de Waal, 2007).

One example of organizations addressing employees' work needs is through providing alternative work arrangements. Alternative work arrangements include condensed work week, flexible work schedules, homeworking, part-time job-sharing, and lasting part-time work arrangements (Reed, 2017). As the access to information is available using high-speed internet networks, many organizations can offer alternative work arrangements (Huselid, 2011). These arrangements allow employees to manage their schedules. According to a survey, nearly 85 percent of American organizations offer some type of alternative work arrangement, and it is estimated that more businesses now offer flexible work schedules (Cappelli, 2016; O'Bannon, 2016). This is done so that organizations give employees some degree of control over their work schedules, and this will allow flexibility to take care of personal responsibilities unrelated to work. The reasoning behind alternative work arrangements is that by allowing employees to deal with personal responsibilities, they will be more productive at work, and less likely to change jobs when competitors offer more money (Cappelli, 2016).

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN HRM

Where Senge (1990) theorized the need for entities to grow into learning organizations, HRD takes things a step further through a dynamic process used to improve organizational productivity and performance. This practice aims to continually enhance the development of the organization and simultaneously develop the careers of employees (Gilley et al., 2009). HRD designs learning for employees and assesses the process, programs, employees, and evaluates the impact of skill development within the organization (Reed, 2017). HRD then implements how such factors influence organizational productivity and effectiveness. HRD also provides performance evaluations of employees and promotes the development of their careers (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017).

Employee Performance

Developing and implementing an organized performance evaluation process frequently creates additional work for supervisors (Reed, 2017). The performance evaluation also places pressure on employees by forcing them to set goals and adhere to behaviors needed to achieve these goals (Kuchinke, 2013; Werner, 2014). One challenge of the performance evaluation process is that it puts both employees and managers into a potentially uncomfortable situation as managers are required to give evaluations that employees may not enjoy receiving (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). It can be difficult for many managers to be clear and constructive when they conduct performance appraisal meetings when and if they are forced to give negative feedback or news to employees (Kuchinke, 2013; Werner, 2014). Generally, the benefits of structured and effective performance evaluations outweigh the time, effort, and energy the process requires for both individual and organizational productivity/effectiveness (Reed, 2017).

Even with the potential for an uncomfortable situation, structured performance evaluations have benefits for the organization. They can also enhance the effectiveness of the mentoring that is already taking place between managers and employees (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). A well-implemented appraisal can motivate employees to improve their performance (Kuchinke, 2013; Werner, 2014). It can also provide an objective and legally defensible basis for HR decisions including compensation increases and promotions. It establishes a fair performance standard that is in keeping with company values (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2008; Nkomo et al., 2010). These processes also motivate employees to improve their skills so that they can make more contribution to organizational success (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017).

A performance evaluation process aims to establish a systematic way to evaluate employee performance and provide constructive feedback to employees (Kuchinke, 2013; Werner, 2014). It sets up measurement systems, performance standards, documentation procedures, and deciding how to communicate to employees. Commonly used performance evaluation methods are management by objectives, critical incidents reporting, essay appraisals, rating checklists, and behaviorally anchored rating scales (Mathis et al., 2016; Reed, 2017). The extent to which employees are involved in establishing performance criteria, how performance is rated, the amount of time and effort required to evaluate employee performance can vary (Lay, 2013; Mathis et al., 2016; Nkomo et al., 2010).

Training and Professional Development

One important question an HR professional should ask when one considers HRD is this: What do you do when you develop your employee, and then they leave (Reed, 2017)? Another question to ask is: What do you do when you do not develop your employees properly and they stay (Reed, 2017)? Not addressing the various needs of employees can result in poor performance of both individual employees as well as negatively impact organizational performance. Organizations that want to remain competitive in the market need to engage in organizational development (OD) initiatives to address the changes in the dynamic marketplace (Reed, 2017).

HRD is the part of HRM, which deals with developing employees so that they have the skills and knowledge they need to perform their jobs both now and, in the future, (Reed, 2017). HRD is concerned with HR competencies of employees through talent management and OD interventions are performed where appropriate to continue to develop HR competencies (Reed, 2017). This concept moves past the administrative roles of HRM and focuses intently on knowledge transfer, and the application of learning at both individual and organizational levels (Gilley et al., 2009).

It would be ideal if every employee an organization hires onboarded with all the information needed to do complete their work, possess the required skills for success, and had the necessary experience needed to perform their assignments perfectly. This is not reality, however. To maintain a competitive advantage, organizations need their employees to keep learning and continually improve to make contributions to organizational performance (Schachter, 2017). Employee training and development involves a broad range of educational activities (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). These trainings may not be built into job functions but are specifically aimed to produce positive improvements in how employees work. These learning activities can range from video learning, attending workshops, to formal education paid for by the organization (Reed, 2017). The overall aim of training and development is to accomplish organizational goals most cost-effectively and efficiently possible (Bassi, 2011; Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017).

The goals that underline training practices in most organizations are becoming increasingly linked with other HR functions such as hiring, promotions, and such, are in line with the organizations' strategic objectives (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). Rosen and Berger (1992) suggested that training in organizations traditionally has been peripheral to routine operations and planning. Small organizations usually viewed it as a luxury and not as a necessity. Due to organizations not prioritizing learning and training in the past, the budgets for training in many organizations increased or decreased depending on their bottom line at that time (Rosen & Berger, 1992). Learning and employee training is central to HRD, and should not be considered an expense, but rather an investment with a mutual benefit to both the employee and organization (Sheehan, et al, 2013).

The ability of employees to obtain the information and skills is needed to deal with the changing and dynamic complexities of the globalized market (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). The concept of Learning Organizations describes organizations that recognize that in the current highly competitive marketplace, it is not that what employees currently know that determines an organization's success, but their ability to quickly learn and adapt to such a changing business environment (Reed, 2017; Senge, 2006).

Organizations use training to attract a competitive skilled workforce (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). Organizations today are spending more on employee education than in the past, as traditional approaches to training have continued to transform (Blunt, 1990; Reed, 2017; Senge,

2006). It used to be the case that HRD departments operated in isolation with their budget and objectives (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). The training department would often create workshops that employees would participate in with very specific learning objectives. What is ineffective with this approach is that these trainings had little to no relationship to organizational strategy or goals (Blunt, 1990; Reed, 2017; Senge, 2006). However, organizations that are concerned with productivity and improvement are working more closely than ever with senior managers and employees themselves (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). These organizations are verifying the skills needed to keep them competitive through the training. Training and education are no longer tangential activities to organizational strategy but are vital parts of an organization's hiring and promotions (Blunt, 1990; Senge, 2006).

What makes an organizational training program successful takes more than a well-designed curriculum and workshops (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). A company needs an environment that is conducive to continuous development (Reed, 2017) while fostering an environment of individual growth through probing and discovery (de Waal, 2007). The momentum for such a learning environment needs to be created from the top levels of the organization. Executives and organizational leaders need to be strong advocates of employee learning and education (Reed, 2017). Several of the accepted practices seen in organizations, which are recognized for their excellent training programs include A vision that emphasizes continuous learning as a mission statement, and a clerical assistance system that makes it easy for staffs to understand about the training, a systematic evaluation that is aligned to strategic objectives and its core competencies, a tuition reimbursement policy, communication facilitation between the education department and managers, performance evaluation activities that take into account what supervisors have done to enhance individual and career development of the employees they oversee (Blunt, 1990; Reed, 2017; Senge, 2006).

To understand how much employees have learned in a workshop setting depends greatly on the subject they learned (Reed, 2017). The knowledge acquisition that takes place during training that concentrates on specific knowledge areas can be measured by giving tests before and after the session and comparing the outcomes (Reed, 2017). However, the subject matter of many training programs, for instance, leadership abilities, does not apply to this measurement approach. Determining whether a training session has had a constructive effect on actual work performance depends on the nature of training (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). The challenge that organizations experience is that performance in most professions is influenced by variables that may have minute effects on what has been learned in the training program (Blunt, 1990; Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017; Senge, 2006).

Measuring the bottom-line benefits of training is the challenge that HRM faces to build a rationale for the value of training (Reed, 2017). The effects and benefits of training cannot be directly measured by cost-benefit analysis (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). The cost may be easy to quantify but the indirect benefits of training may lead to reduced turnover, reduced absence, reduced complaints, a less hostile and hectic workplace with fewer healthcare or workplace safety issues, and the need for less managing (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). When an HR specialist is pressured by the administration to provide a return-on-investment (ROI) rationale for training, one must work with senior management to develop a financial measurement for those indirect benefits of training (Reed, 2017). Otherwise, the ROI will be skewed heavily to the cost side (Blunt, 1990; Senge, 2006; Reed, 2017).

STRATEGIC HRD IN HIGH-PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATIONS

One needs to understand the importance of strategic HRD as well as what High-Performance Organization (HPO) means to see the synergistic influence HRD and HPO models have on one another to lead business organizations to higher efficiency, effectiveness, profitability, and productivity. Research by de Waal (2007) describes HPO as:

A High-Performance Organization is an organization that achieves financial results that are better than those of its peer group over a longer period, by being able to adapt well to changes and react to those quickly, by managing for the long term, by setting up an integrated and aligned management structure, by continuously improving its core capabilities, and by truly treating the employees as its main asset. (p. 4).

Furthermore, the High-Performance Organization Center (2020) developed an HPO framework based on extensive research, and now success factors of HPOs are validated around the world. According to the High-Performance Organization Center (2020), these five HPO success factors are as follows:

1. Quality of management and employees
2. Openness
3. Continuous improvement
4. Long-term orientation
5. Continuous improvement

Likewise, Thoman and Lloyd (2018) summarize these five key characteristics of an HPO as follows: a) an HPO is dynamic and adaptable to the changing business environment, b) it is committed to long-term business planning and allocates resources accordingly, c) it can integrate its functions and business units effectively, d) it focuses on continuous improvement to enhance its performance, and e) it perceives its employees as assets and treats them with respect. Moreover, HPOs frequently use Kaizen, Lean, and Six Sigma approaches to improve their processes, operations, and productivity while recognizing their employees' dedication and handwork through employee recognition programs and teambuilding efforts (Ohno & Bodek, 1988; Yamamoto et al., 2019).

Strategic utilization of HRD within HRM to develop HPOs that will thrive in the changing global business environment is what many business leaders are aiming to accomplish (High-Performance Organization Center, 2020). Organizations that are committed to being continuously improving as successful HPOs need to implement HRD initiatives strategically. Gilley et al. (2009) suggest focusing on four distinct areas of HRD to lead organizations to long-term growth and business success: a) short-term individual development of each employee, b) long-term career development of each employee, c) long-term organizational performance management, and d) long-term and continuous organizational development (OD). Strategic HRD approach often requires the implementation of change, which needs to occur continuously within HPOs. Successful HPOs are flexible and able to adapt to change from within and change around themselves (High-Performance Organization Center, 2020). Skilled HR leaders need to collaborate

and partner with executives and managers at all levels of HPOs to introduce well-planned OD interventions to guide HPOs through process changes necessary for continuous growth and improvement so they can thrive in the competitive and ever-changing business environment (High-Performance Organization Center, 2020; Reed, 2017).

CONCLUSION

HR professionals today face the challenge of changing demographics of the global workforce (Gilley et al., 2009; Reed, 2017). The percentage of working women with children under school age, for instance, has consistently increased for a few decades (Cappelli, 2016; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). This is a trend that helps understand why childcare support is a vastly demanded benefit (Cappelli, 2016; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Levering & Moskowitz, 2000).

Additionally, because more people live longer now than ever, a growing number of workers are taking on the obligation of caring for their elderly parents or other family members, a trend that is a new addition to the employee benefits, such as eldercare (Cappelli, 2016; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Levering & Moskowitz, 2000). Employees' family and personal health can influence their work performance, and now employers consider their family and personal health concerns are no longer a matter that organizations can ignore (Reed, 2017). Therefore, the HRM function itself has started to take on more operational and strategic importance for organizations than ever before.

Organizational leaders increasingly request HR specialists to help develop long-term employment approaches and to introduce and follow through on practices that help employees receive the care they need to meet the changing weight of their work (Cappelli, 2016; Reed, 2017). Competitive market environments in many industries have never been stronger (Reed, 2017). Organizations are now facing the challenge of satisfying the requirements of their customers more efficiently without raising prices (Bassi, 2011; Reed, 2017).

Advancements in technology created more convenience, but also more stress (High Performance Organization Center, 2020). Technology alone cannot be a solution to the overload that many people experience in their jobs (Bassi, 2011). We need to understand technology well enough to put it into strategic and effective use to ultimately lessen the pressure that organizations and employees experience. The principal asset of an organization is its people (Fulmer & Polyhart, 2013; Gilley et al., 2009). HRM is no longer an administrative function in business, but rather a strategic differentiator in the current global business environment (Reed, 2017). HRM needs to function to support employees receive the development and training that they need to best use advanced technology effectively on their jobs. As organizations implement HRD processes, they must be willing and able to accept change, and in this case, change means learning (High Performance Organization Center, 2020; Reed, 2017; Schein, 1996).

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GAME ON! USING TECHNOLOGY TOOLS TO INCREASE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

For today's college students, technology is an inseparable part of life. Faculty can leverage technology to be a useful tool in supporting student motivation and engagement. Motivating students to engage and participate in class are challenges common to any instructor. Providing communication options to encourage student participation is a way of enhancing formative assessment. Embracing technology in the classroom with gamification apps allows students to have fun and be motivated to engage in activities while enabling instructors to gain valuable information on student learning. This paper explores the use of gamification to increase student feedback time, engagement and motivation using two free platforms: Kahoot! and Flipgrid.

INTRODUCTION

Engaging students and evaluating their understanding of concepts are challenges common to any instructor and are essential to effective teaching. If students don't provide feedback, instructors will be challenged to assess learning and redirect teaching. Technology can support formative assessment by enhancing learning performance, attitude and motivation across disciplines (Bhagat & Spector, 2017). For today's college students, technology is an inseparable part of life and it can be a useful tool in supporting both faculty and students inside and outside the classroom for increased engagement. Embracing technology in the classroom can allow students to be engaged and have fun which increases motivation while providing assessment of learning for the instructor. This paper explores the use of gamification to increase student feedback time, engagement and motivation using two free platforms: Kahoot! and Flipgrid.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Each year technology becomes more complex and more prevalent in our daily lives. Education has benefited from advancements in technology and computers moving from overhead projectors and videotapes to smartboards and video streaming with internet in the classrooms. The technology has evolved with a paperless trend as students have laptops and cell phones to access e-books rather than bringing print textbooks and notebooks to class. Educators are then competing with Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and other technology platforms for the attention of students in the classroom.

Walk into almost any classroom today and you will see students seemingly glued to their phones (Gleason, 2019). Smartphones are a normal part of life as students are living in a digital world. Students are coming to class with no book but will have their cell phone charged and in hand ready to access materials digitally. Educators are then challenged with incorporating teaching methods to engage and motivate students with the increasing presence of mobile technology. The question then is, "Can educators incorporate the use of smart phones in the classroom to bridge the gap between technology and student engagement?"

Technology is one of the most important components in the future of classroom learning. Instructors must lead the charge of innovation and integration of technology into the classroom to ensure that students achieve the best learning outcomes (Dryer et al., 2015). Technology can expand content delivery options in a class adding variety, motivation and engagement to the lesson, while providing instructors the opportunity to reach students at a variety of learning styles (Dryer et al., 2015). According to Mandernach (2009) there is a vast amount of data to support the theory of well-designed multimedia resources boosting student learning outcomes. Interactive applications that are supported by technology can supplement readings from texts and aid students in becoming more engaged in the classroom material. Using technology to create engaging formative assessment is one way that faculty members can enhance student learning while helping students prepare for summative assessments (Robertson et al., 2019).

Kahoot! and Flipgrid are two smartphone apps that offer options for addressing formative assessment. These apps provide a path to incorporate technology into the classroom while enhancing student motivation, participation, and feedback. The research questions addressed in this study are:

1. How is the time for student feedback impacted by using a technology based formative assessment tool as compared to traditional feedback?
2. Does the delivery of a technology based formative assessment tool increase student motivation and participation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A condition for increasing motivation is creating a sense of belonging in the classroom (Quay & Quaglia, 2004). Students who feel part of the class community are more connected to the course which also builds on motivation. Technology incorporated in the classroom can aid in supporting student motivation which then can lead to improving engagement and student grades. Technology may be viewed as a replacement for human instruction, but the, “human touch isn’t necessarily about *not* using technology – it’s about leveraging it in a way where the human touch can be improved” (Mooney, 2008, p. B9). Instruction can be enhanced by incorporating technology to impact student motivation, participation and feedback.

Student Motivation and Engagement

Student engagement and motivation are common concerns for educators at all levels. Motivation is defined as a state that arouses, directs and sustains human behavior in such a way that it plays a fundamental role in learning (Glynn et al., 2005). A motivational design theory that this paper supports is the Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction or ARCS Model (Keller, 1983). The ARCS model is an approach that is intended to enhance the learning environment to stimulate and sustain students’ motivation to learn therefore improving retention and course grade. Attention is the first condition as an element of motivation and is a prerequisite for learning. A student has to at least be paying attention to a stimulus for learning to occur. The second category of Relevance addresses the connection between the subject matter being taught and the learner’s need to find that material meaningful. Confidence, which is the third factor in the ARCS model, can influence a student’s persistence and accomplishment. Confidence building strategies can include providing opportunities for students to experience success. Satisfaction is the last element in the model where if students feel good about their accomplishments, they will be more motivated to participate and complete the work (Keller & Suzuki, 1988).

To support the ARCS theory, instructors can increase student engagement and motivation by incorporating technology supported activities into their classrooms and providing timely feedback on assignments. According to a study by Onodipe and Ayadi (2020) the use of technology in the classroom has been demonstrated to increase motivation to learn the material in class and to receive better grades. When students use technology to engage with the material, they are more motivated because technology has the novelty factor when compared to traditional learning environments. Instructors can increase student engagement and participation by creating a classroom environment that is social and active (Basko & McCabe, 2018).

Reading and writing are still key to academics and educational success, but technology is changing the ways we receive and communicate information. Integrating digital literacy skills into academics is becoming important for student success. The American Library Association’s digital literacy task force defines digital literacy as the “ability to use information and communication

technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills” (Heitin, 2016, p. 5). Digital literacy skills include finding and creating digital content along with communicating and sharing it effectively, which reflects the importance of students being social media savvy.

Social media has a large presence in today’s technology-based world with a variety of platforms at our students’ fingertips, such as Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook. Using a form of electronic communication for social networking provides a powerful way of creating learning opportunities for classes that enable students to create and share content and ideas. Social media can leverage the power of social networks to express opinions and build knowledge helping students to learn from each other (Gleason, 2019). Many video games for students today can be played through signing in and competing electronically, thus building a social platform for game playing. Gamification is a strategy that incorporates the challenge and competition of an online video game while helping educators overcome the challenges of timely feedback, motivation, and participation in the classroom.

Gamification

Gamification is about incorporating game dynamics into non-gaming environments. Games are designed for fun but also to challenge the player to advance to the next level and to keep playing. Gamification of education can be defined as . . . “a developing approach for increasing learners’ motivation and engagement by incorporating game design elements in educational environments” (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017, p. 1). This approach to instruction meets the increasing student challenge of engagement and at the same time imparts important course concepts. According to Subhash and Cudney (2018), the increasing presence of technology in the classroom is moving content delivery away from the traditional “chalk and talk” methods.

For the purpose of this study, the focus of gamification was specifically geared to game-based student response systems (GSRs). Licorish, Owen, Daniel & George (2018) define GSRs as “. . . a gamification approach that makes use of game principles and student response systems tools to support learning, engagement, motivation and fun during the learning process (p. 3).

The two systems explored in this study are Kahoot! and Flipgrid. Licorish, Owen, Daniel and George (2018) described Kahoot! as a vehicle to feature course content in the form of quizzes in which students are the contestants in a “game show” environment. Flipgrid takes a different approach to increasing student motivation through creating an active, social learning community by providing students a place to share ideas, receive feedback and have peer-to-peer discussions via video postings.

Kahoot!

Kahoot! has been in existence since 2012 and is a free game-based learning platform that incorporates fun into a variety of subjects using the free app (Kahoot! History, 2020). Kahoot engages the students by requiring them to login to the game with a pin number from their phone, which connects students to the instructor’s already created Kahoot! game. Students answer questions from their phone in a competitive environment turning their phone into a live student response system. “The platform enables teacher-learner interaction in classroom settings of various sizes via competitive knowledge games using existing infrastructure (which includes good Internet connection)” (Tan et al., 2017, p. 570).

Kahoot was the project of a graduate student at the Norwegian University of Technology and Science (NTNU). Kahoot! software meets the criterion of engagement that gamification has identified in several studies (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017; Subhash & Cudney, 2018; Tan et al., 2017). In the eight years of existence Kahoot! has been used in K-12, higher education, and has also been adapted to training in business and industry. Today, the Kahoot! movement spans far beyond classrooms as it is utilized in business training sessions, at sporting and cultural events, or in various social and learning contexts (Kahoot!, 2020). In a study by Tan et al. (2017), students “found Kahoot! to be beneficial in terms of: 1) inducing motivation as well as engagement, and 2) fostering and reinforcing learning (for both theoretical and practical aspects)” (p. 565).

To support faculty, Kahoot! has created opportunities to earn certifications in three levels consisting of bronze, silver, and gold. The certifications are video based and can be completed in approximately one hour with an 80% or better being required to earn the certification (Kahoot! Certified, 2020). With each Kahoot! game played, there is a downloadable spreadsheet that provides formative assessment data for the entire game and by question. Because Kahoot! is fairly new, there is limited research on its’ efficacy, especially in higher education. Three studies published since 2017 are reviewed below to reflect some of the current research in the field on Kahoot!.

In a study conducted by Tan et al. (2017), Kahoot! was used in a public university in Malaysia to enhance learning in an English Media class. Fifty-one students participated in the study with 78.4% indicating that they had never played Kahoot!. In nine areas, 98% of students indicated their attitudes toward Kahoot! was favorable. Such areas included those of fun, interest, excitement, positivity, and motivation. Responses in an open-ended question revealed that students “enjoy the competitiveness” and “subconsciously, it feels like a flash revision that makes me remember the lecture more, winning or losing the quiz” (p. 577). The researchers recommended further qualitative research be conducted.

In a study conducted by Esteves et al. (2018) Kahoot! was used in an engineering undergraduate school in Portugal. In this study, there was a comparison between the traditional approach to teaching and the utilization of Kahoot! In the comparison, the average theoretical grade improved by 6.4%. In the study 84 students participated rating Kahoot! with 94% indicating they would “recommend it” and 92% indicating they “learned something.” In a comments section, one student wrote, “The subject contents are hard and very theoretical. Kahoot! helped a lot lightening the burden” (p. 125).

Licorish et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study of 14 students using Kahoot! in the classroom. The four questions the study addressed are listed below:

1. How does Kahoot! influence classroom dynamics?
2. Does the use of Kahoot! influence students’ engagement, and how?
3. In what ways does the use of Kahoot! influence students’ motivation towards learning?
4. How does the use of Kahoot! enrich learning experiences? (p.7)

“The questions were focused on understanding students’ experiences using Kahoot! and the tool’s influence on classroom dynamics, their engagement, motivation and learning.” (Licorish et al., 2018, p. 8).

Eleven participants indicated that the discussion generated by the Kahoot! game was one of the most beneficial outcomes. Nine participants reported that Kahoot! helped them recall

information during and after class. Kahoot! afforded more opportunities for students to engage with each other and the instructor while creating a fun environment. Kahoot! provided a two-fold advantage in that it was a break from lectures, but it also inspired student to pay more attention during lectures so that they might perform well during Kahoot!. Students were motivated by the competitive nature of the game. Students reported that because of their participation in Kahoot! their learning of the subject matter was enhanced (Licorish et al., 2018). Researchers suggested further studies on a larger scale be conducted.

Flipgrid

Flipgrid is a video discussion platform designed to allow students to engage in conversations through video and audio by using a free account in the mobile app or website. Students enjoy using their smartphones and this medium capitalizes on the technology already at their fingertips and at the same time increases classroom engagement. Assignments and discussions that are textually-based may not be effective for all students and lack the personal connection that comes from seeing and hearing others (Green & Green, 2017). In Flipgrid, students may view their own recordings to evaluate speaking strengths and weaknesses for improvements. This application also supports the growing importance of improving digital literacy skills of students (Vorholt, 2018).

In June 2018, Microsoft purchased Flipgrid and is now offering it to the K-12 and higher education community at no cost. As a part of Microsoft, the Flipboard community helps expand the company's presence in the increasingly competitive educational technology market. The platform supports more than 20 million users in 180 countries and across a wide range of learning environments, from pre-kindergarten classrooms to PhD programs (Hernandez, 2018).

Flipgrid has two key elements: a grid and a topic. A grid is created to organize related topics or discussions. Within a topic, there are options for having multiple student responses that are threaded. Sharing a grid with students can be done through a class URL or a QR code that is created with your topic. Students create their free Flipgrid account and then can upload short videos as responses to posted discussion questions. This embraces the technology already at the students' fingertips while improving student engagement and motivation.

One research study on the use of Flipgrid reflected student communication skills improved by having them use Flipgrid to post routine 3-minute videos. The study showed that speaking anxiety went down and that student self-confidence went up (Hashim et al., 2019). Another research study conducted by Stoszkowski (2018) reported using Flipgrid in class aided in evenly distributed class participation using videos. Students who might sit back are now more involved and those who might otherwise dominate discussions are less likely to do so. The ease of formative feedback was also noted in this study as instructors can email comments directly to the individual student. Stoszkowski (2018) also indicated the strength of the tracking feature in Flipgrid. The number of views on each video along with total engagement time across the group can all be tracked within the Flipgrid application.

METHOD

The authors chose to utilize the nonprobability method of sampling to analyze Kahoot! and Flipgrid applications in the classroom for this study. The most common reasons for using

nonprobability sampling are cost and time. The non-probability method fits this study because it is used when funds and time are limited (Glen, n.d.; Laerd Dissertation, 2012). Furthermore, non-probability sampling is used for ease of access and in some cases is the only option available (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). In nonprobability sampling randomization is not used in selecting the sample rather subjective methods are used to decide which elements are included in the sample. Nonprobability sampling mostly involves judgment instead of randomization where participants are selected due to easy access (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). Thus, nonprobability sampling is a sampling technique that does not give all the participants or units in the population equal chances of being included (Ilker et al., 2015).

Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling and is used when members of the target population meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, or availability at a given time (Ilker et al., 2015; Laerd Dissertation, 2012). In many experiments a convenience sampling is possible because the researcher must use naturally formed groups as participants in the study (Creswell, 2003). “Captive participants such as students in the researcher’s own institution are main examples of convenience sampling” (Ilker et al., 2015, p 2).

A convenience sample does make it difficult to reflect a true experiment as groups are not randomly assigned (Creswell, 2003). Classes for this study were already established and students were on the class roster. The assumption made with convenience sampling is that the members of the target population are homogeneous and there would be no difference in the research results obtained from a random sample (Ilker et al., 2015). Homogeneous based sampling was applied for this study and is defined as a sample whose elements share equal characteristics or traits (Laerd Dissertation, 2012). Therefore, the argument is made that there would be no difference in research results obtained from a random sample.

This study used nonprobability convenience sampling to analyze Kahoot! and Flipgrid use in separate 400 level business classes. These classes were already established, and enrollments completed for the Fall 2019 semester. Kahoot! was implemented in a Management & Leadership course and Flipgrid was used in a Senior Seminar course. Both courses reflected graduation requirements for students pursuing a bachelor’s degree in the School of Business and they were being delivered on main campus in a traditional 15-week semester.

One of the major shortcomings identified of nonprobability sampling is the findings may lack generalizability (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). For nonprobability sampling it’s impossible to know how well you are representing the population (Glen, n.d.). However, through this method of nonprobability research, an event can be studied to gain valuable insights towards further research. Threats to the validity of this study can be addressed by repeating and expanding this study to reflect the outcomes of larger data sets (Creswell, 2003).

Kahoot!

Kahoot! was utilized in a 400 level Management & Leadership course to reinforce ideas in the assigned reading. This is a required course for all Management and Human Resource Management majors in the School of Business. Twenty-four students were in the class and all students participated in the Kahoot! game during the in-class session. Students were notified a week in advance of the game and were advised to review the book. Since many of the students were familiar with Kahoot!, they needed little instruction. The game contained 25 questions with a time allotment of 20 seconds per question to record their answer using their mobile devices. Students competed on an individual basis and everyone in the class had their own device to actively

participate. Students looked forward to the game and were very competitive when answering the questions.

Flipgrid

The formative assessment used for a 400 level Senior Seminar class was the same for a control and experimental class and this differed only by the delivery requirements for the assignment. For the control class, a one-page paper was required for this assignment and for the experimental class a Flipgrid video was required.

Flipgrid was introduced to a Senior Seminar class with 15 students as a reflection activity to have students record a video to discuss key concepts learned during a business simulation project (as opposed to writing a paper). From a quick poll at the beginning of class, the results reflected that none of the students in the class had ever used Flipgrid before, so this was an entirely new platform for students to learn.

Students were established in teams for their Senior Seminar class where they competed in a business simulation program. Teams are normally allowed 15 minutes to meet and debrief their performance before writing their reflection paper. The same parameters of the assignment were maintained but what changed was the delivery mode from a paper to a video reflection. The assignment was posted in their Flipgrid account which reflected the following:

Welcome to Flipgrid! Tap the green plus button below to open the Flipgrid camera. Then, record a short video reflecting on your biggest learning points from your Capsim [business simulation] company this week.

Two instructors were present during the class to take notes and observe any problems or questions in setting up the Flipgrid app. There were no technical questions or problems from students installing and establishing their accounts on the Flipgrid app.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Kahoot!

The Kahoot! software application addressed the first research question asking, “how is the time for student feedback impacted by using a technology based formative assessment tool as compared to traditional feedback?” Feedback from Kahoot! is immediate for the students. The students’ scores are based on answering questions correctly, and on how quickly the students respond. At the end of the game, students are given their total score and the top five scorers for the game are displayed. The Kahoot! game reflected in this study was played as a review on reading the book, *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. Students were tasked with recalling information from a two-month time period. The Kahoot! Game Data Table reflects that 66.33% of the questions were accurately answered. To see what questions were specifically missed the most, the instructor can view each sheet tab (as provided in the downloadable spreadsheet located in the instructor’s account) to see student responses by question. All 24 students participated in this Kahoot! game, which reflects 100% active student engagement in the class.

For other classes the review of “Good to Great” (Collins, 2002) was accomplished by a two-page thought paper. In this example, with 24 students in a class, turnaround time would be a

minimum of 72 hours. With Kahoot! students review the content in a fun and engaging way and the instructor can provide comments and feedback at each question. Students enjoy the competitiveness of the game, which supports the ARCS model (Keller, 1983) towards building motivation in the class. Using Kahoot! builds students' attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction through quick, supporting feedback using a gamification model.

Kahoot! has features that provide tracking of completed games under the instructor's account. The Kahoot! Game Data Table (Table 1) below summarizes the data available to download in Microsoft Excel which provides the responses from each game. Summary sheet tabs are made available to give the instructor an overview of the entire game results. In addition, the spreadsheet file has sheet tabs for each individual question that breaks down the results by question to reflect formative assessment data.

Table 1: Kahoot! Game Data Table

Good to Great Review Fall 2019	
Played on:	10/16/2019
Hosted by:	Dr. Jervaise McDaniel
Played with:	24 Players
Played:	25 of 25 Questions
Overall Performance	
Total Correct Answers (%)	66.33%
Total Incorrect Answers (%)	33.67%

The ranking, final score, and total points for each student indicated to the instructor that over 50% of the class had a good grasp of the content. Eleven of 24 students (46%) placed above the 70th percentile and corresponding total scores for this group were above 20,000. Total scores in the Kahoot! game are calculated by giving the correct answer and how fast the answer is submitted.

To further aid the instructor in shaping future exams and lectures, Kahoot! provides a report that identifies which questions were problematic for the students. The number of questions that fell below the 50th percentile in correct answers indicate content that needs further review. The questions should then be examined for validity and structure to determine if the question should be thrown out, rephrased, or the material should be reinforced with the students.

At the end of the Kahoot! game is a feedback option that the instructor can click on to enable for quick overall student input on how they felt about playing Kahoot! in class. This can be easily incorporated into the game so that students may indicate their perceptions of using Kahoot!. The feedback feature, once built into the game, asks players to complete a short feedback form asking them to self-report their perceptions of playing the game. Students gave this Kahoot! a 4-star rating and all students reported that they learned something, and they would recommend it again.

Kahoot! also offers an advanced reporting option for instructor access which reflects the mean answer time for each question and a chart graphing the question-by-question progress of the top 10 players. The advanced report also reflects the number of players whose accuracy was 35%

or less and those players that did not answer all the questions. This type of data aids the instructor in reviewing student engagement in the class and helps to re-direct teaching to better accomplish the learning objectives.

Flipgrid

The Flipgrid video activity addressed research question two asking, “does the delivery of a technology based formative assessment tool increase student motivation and thus participation?” Results are reflected in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2

Class Type	Total Enrollment	Number of Students Participating	Participation Rate
Control Class	18	14	78%
Experimental Class	15	15	100%

For the Flipgrid analysis all teams successfully completed their video and uploaded it to the Flipgrid site for 100% participation as compared to the paper assignment from the control group which reflected a 78% participation with four students not submitting the written paper assignment.

The Flipgrid videos were reviewed by the class and students were asked how they felt about using Flipgrid to record their Capsim reflections rather than submitting written paper reflections. The Flipgrid site supports students commenting to each other on their posted videos via text or even with another video post. Flipgrid also records the number of video views and time spent watching the videos, reflected as engagement time. Comments from the students in the class included the following:

It’s like an academic Facebook. I’ve never seen anything like it. I don’t like discussion boards, so this is great. This is better interaction.

It’s better than submitting a discussion post with text.

It’s a neat way to share our ideas about Capsim.

I’d rather record a video than type a reflection paper.

The instructors observed the students being excited and curious to download and use the Flipgrid app since this was a new experience, thus stimulating their attention per the ARCS model and increasing motivation to participate (Keller, 1983). Through the instructor’s Flipgrid account, the video posts were monitored. The instructor could then verify that all teams had a video posted and 100% of the class participated in the video reflection activity.

Flipgrid also supports instructor feedback and scoring via a 5-point scoring rubric based on Ideas and Performance. The rubric can be customized if needed but a default scoring rubric is provided with the account setup. Feedback from the instructor is private to the student. Videos

were scored and feedback was provided by the instructor on this assignment using the Flipgrid Video Feedback feature. The ARCS motivation model (Keller, 1983) is supported by the instructor providing quick, personalized feedback through the Flipgrid platform.

FUTURE RESEARCH

For this study one limitation was the small sample size and both courses were from the School of Business. Kahoot! and Flipgrid, were the applications used independently in two 400 level classes at a small University with instructors that are open to new technology applications for classroom use. Further research should consider the instructor's ability to incorporate technology tools and how different courses and class sizes may be able to utilize these technologies.

Both of these classes reflected 100% student engagement and from the instructor's qualitative observations students were motivated to participate during these class activities. Future research should include multiple classes at various levels to increase the data analysis. Another suggested research study would be to incorporate the use of Kahoot! in a class and then follow-up in the same class with a video posting using Flipgrid to assess student perceptions of engagement and motivation. This research could be conducted to see if there is a statistically significant result on using Kahoot! and Flipgrid and the impact on students' final class grade.

As technology develops, new GSRs are introduced and existing GSRs add features and support faculty with reports on student assessment. Kahoot! and Flipgrid have features that can collect quantitative and qualitative data to aid educators on formative assessments. Both platforms offer the opportunity to address different learning styles. The quality and features of both Kahoot! and Flipgrid grows as technology improvements are made. There is currently not enough research on gamification and in particular on the advantages of specific games such as Kahoot! and Flipgrid. Dichev and Dicheva (2017) reviewed studies on gamification and determined the following:

- (i) The practice of gamifying learning has outpaced researchers' understanding of its mechanisms and methods.
- (ii) Insufficient high-quality evidence exists to support the long-term benefits of gamification in educational context.
- (iii) The understanding of how to gamify an activity depending on the specifics of the educational context is still limited. (p. 25)

As noted throughout this paper, technology is prevalent not only in the lives of students, but also in the lives of faculty. Educators would be remiss if they did not seize the opportunity technology presents to enhance student motivation, participation and feedback providing it fits well in their classroom. Each instructor's classroom is a unique learning environment, so the focus is how to make the technology support students and instructors in these learning environments.

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