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# BASIC SKILLS AND GLOBAL COMPETENCIES FOR BUSINESS MAJOR GRADUATES

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The projected shortage of skilled workers for the global economy elevates concerns about future economic growth and competitiveness of our nation in the world. Jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require advanced competencies, as global economy requires world class skills. In light of changing economic circumstances, our challenge is to determine what exactly those world-class skills are.

The purpose of this study was: (a) to identify basic skills and global competencies that business major graduates from community colleges need in the global economy; (b) to determine employers' demands towards the skilled workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and (c) to examine how well community colleges have adjusted their business curriculum in order to meet the needs of employers operating in the global business environment. This purpose was achieved by using survey methodology and analyzing data collected from two populations: community college educators and business leaders.

Perspectives of 285 randomly selected employers and 285 educators from community colleges in California were compared utilizing statistical tests (t-test, ANOVA, and MANOVA) that measured differences in their views. Problems identified in the literature review drove the content of the survey instrument, which ensured the instrument's content validity. To strengthen the content validity, the researcher made sure that all topics relevant to the problem of basic skills and global competencies found in the literature were included in the survey instrument. More importantly, the SCANS skills and competencies studied by this researcher had been previously validated through other studies and reports, which provided an additional check for the content validity.

Pilot testing of this study also contributed to the content validity of the instrument. Piloting of the survey enabled the researcher to decide whether all items on the questionnaire appeared to measure what the instrument claimed to measure. Construct validity was established by ensuring that the survey items tested the hypotheses and answered the research questions posed in the study.

To assess internal consistency, the researcher administered an internal consistency reliability test. The Cronbach's *alpha* ( $\alpha$ ) calculated for the 15-item list of skills was close to the upper limit of +1.00 in each of the survey questions that utilized the skills list. These results suggest that the basic skills and global competencies comprising the list of skills under study were internally consistent throughout the instrument.

The findings uncovered in this research point to the differences in Community College educators' and employers' views of skills and competencies expected from graduates with a business major. There were contrasting opinions about the quality of teaching of the job-related skills and about relevance of business curriculum to the economic needs. There were significant differences in educators' and employers' understanding of what skills make business graduates competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and what skills, accordingly, should community colleges teach. Implications for practice were recognized, including the need for extensive collaboration and greater input from business leaders into curriculum design. Business programs must be redesigned to fit the rapidly evolving global economy.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF WEB 2.0 APPLICATIONS AS PERCEIVED BY CERTIFIED EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

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Students are using technology at a heightened rate. Research asserted that constructively promoting the educational advancement of today's young technology confident students requires implementing new technology tools creatively. Remarkably, Web 2.0 is transforming into a fully collaborative online space; and the control of content has been decentralized to allow everyone to create, organize, publish, subscribe, and share information. A blog, wiki, podcast, forum, and social network can be included as Web 2.0. Surprisingly, most Web 2.0 technology is cost effective and very user friendly. What are its implications for business educators?

This research study was designed to examine the degree of perceived importance of interactive technology applications among various groups of certified educators, including business education teachers; the degree to which education professionals utilized interactive online technology applications; and, to determine if there was a significant difference between the different groups based on demographic data. Business educators felt that online event scheduling, virtual learning networks, and reviews/polling/surveys were the most important educational interactive online applications; whereas, music, social networks, and social bookmarks were the least important.

A Pearson product-moment correlation design was utilized for each of the 13 Web 2.0 applications and the overall sum score for the perceived level of importance as ranked by business educators and career and technical educators. The overall sum score could range from 13 to 52. A significant positive relationship was indicated between business education teachers and online event scheduling [ $r(54) = .110, p < .01$ ]; reviews/polling/surveys [ $r(54) = .090, p < .05$ ]; and virtual learning networks [ $r(54) = .082, p < .05$ ]. In addition, a significant positive relationship was indicated between career and technical education teachers and reviews/polling/surveys [ $r(54) = .079, p < .05$ ] and virtual learning networks [ $r(54) = .071, p < .05$ ]. The overall sum score for the perceived level of importance for the Web 2.0 applications by business educators as compared to all educators was significant at the .05 level,  $F(1, 773) = 3.992, p = .046$ .

Current position, gender, age, type of school, highest degree, and certification level were all significant for the perceived level of educational importance of the Web 2.0 applications. Respondents in city school systems indicated that Web 2.0 applications were more important than respondents in county school systems did. Steps need to be taken to ensure that county school systems have the necessary resources and training to implement Web 2.0 applications. There was not a significant difference among the schools based on Title I status. This is encouraging because federal funds that are provided to Title I schools can be used for technology purposes. If a participant held an advanced degree and/or higher certification level, they were more likely to report a higher overall sum score for perceived importance of Web 2.0 applications.

Further research is needed to determine the reasons for these differences. Business educators reported a higher overall sum score for perceived importance of Web 2.0 applications than other certified education professionals. This is promising because of the technology standards embedded within courses taught in this field.

# FINDINGS FROM THE DISSERTATION: A DELPHI STUDY TO RECOMMEND HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM CONTENT AND DELIVERY METHODS FOR A UNIT ON CREDIT IN FINANCIAL LITERACY EDUCATION

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Financial education has seen an increased focus in recent years (Davis & Durband, 2008) following the initial JumpStart Coalition (Mandell, 1998) survey which showed high school students, on average, failed to understand basic financial literacy knowledge. Despite an increased focus on financial literacy education, high school students continue to fail when their financial knowledge is tested (Mandell, 2008b). In fact, when compared with students who have never taken a course, the average score for students who have taken a course in personal finance is lower (Mandell, 2008). In the area of credit knowledge, one interesting fact is students who have credit cards in their name, score lower on the credit portion of the test compared with those who do not (Mandell, 2008). To improve education in the area of financial literacy and specifically credit education, an evaluation of what should be taught and how it should be taught may prove helpful.

This four round Delphi study surveyed a group of selected knowledgeable professionals for the purpose of gaining consensus on how credit should be defined, what content should be taught high school students regarding appropriate use of credit and how instruction of credit can best be delivered. Professionals who were bankruptcy court members, high school teachers, credit counselors, and college professors made up the panel.

Beginning with ideas generated by the participants in Round 1, a list of 366 suggested items regarding credit education was generated for inclusion in Round 2. One additional item was added in Round 3. Descriptive statistics were used to determine which items reached consensus during each round. The panel reached consensus to recommend a total of 285 items be included in a unit on credit. Two items were identified by the panel as content that should not be included with the remaining 80 items reaching no consensus during any round.

The items reaching consensus (n=287) provide a list of recommendations to curriculum writers and instructional designers regarding the content that should be taught regarding credit along with instructional methods that can be used to deliver the content. The recommendations can be broken into eight major categories. These categories include (a) how credit should be defined in the high school curriculum, (b) what students should know about using credit, (c) the rights and responsibilities of borrowers, (d) maintaining a good credit reputation, (e) suggested modifications of content for those from diverse or lower income backgrounds, (f) the relationship between risk, interest rate, and time value of money calculations, (g) what instructional methods are most appropriate, and (h) what items should not be included in a unit on credit.

# LIVE IN YOUR WORLD, LEARN IN OURS! VIRTUAL WORLDS ... ENGAGING THE NEW GENERATION OF STUDENTS!

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The purpose of the research study was to determine the effectiveness of Second Life, a 3D virtual environment as a means for engaging students through the integration of immersive learning activities in a Personal Finance High School course offering. The simulations allow students to participate in activities that are real life problems faced by business and industry and formulate solutions through interactive constructivist hands on activities. The simulations provide students with the ability to immerse themselves in the issue, analyze data and formulate answers through critical thinking and collaboration with classmates. The research addressed the following simulation objectives:

1. To develop a community of learners through the use of virtual teams that learn personal financial concepts through game simulation competitions.
2. Virtual teams work asynchronously and synchronously to apply financial concepts to develop a financial budget, balance sheet, income statement and financial ratios.
3. Virtual teams will present final financial spreadsheets, lessons learned and give a presentation in SL to classmates. Following the presentation, students are to complete evaluation rubrics for each team member and a reflective blog based on game simulation experience and content learned
4. Individual team members will apply the concepts taught through the game simulation to develop personal financial goals for current, five and ten year increments. These goals will be shared during final presentation and culminating reflective blog.

Of the students enrolled in the personal finance course, (61.1%) responded to the survey. When asked if they have a good understanding of the basic principles of personal finance (100%) responded with agree to strongly agree. When student participants were asked what part of the course they liked most one student stated "I like the overall setup of the game. It was fun and it pulled us in". When asked what contributed most to your learning one student responded "The game simulations, taking the information learned in class and recreating it to make it more stable in my mind". The following response was generated from participant response to the question, "How strongly do you associate the following characteristics with Second Life?" 1) Engaging – 87.50% agree to strongly agree, 2) Interactive – 100% agree to strongly agree, 3) Easy to use - 87.50% agree to strongly agree, 4) Social - 100% agree to strongly agree, 5) Global - 75% agree to strongly agree, and 6) Waste of time – 100% disagree to strongly disagree.

In addition students find the 3D game simulations to be fun and an engaging way to learn theory and models that can be implemented to solve issues in real life. Research demonstrates that experiences in game simulations enhance student's level of engagement in learning. Notably, curriculum alignment strengthens curriculum, instruction, standards, and assessment. Research indicates this kind of alignment can point toward improved student achievement. As noted in the findings, the game based simulation outlines the cognitive levels and expected outcomes that students can achieve. The success of this course and the simulations for the high school students lies in the collaborative efforts of the teachers, administration, admissions, and technical support provided by all participating institutions.

# CHALLENGES OF BUSINESS EDUCATION MENTOR TEACHERS IN DEVELOPING THEIR STUDENT TEACHERS

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## Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of mentor teachers regarding issues they encountered when mentoring their student teachers. The research questions were:

- (a) what are the top three areas which mentor teachers believed their student teachers were most prepared;
- (b) what are the top three areas which mentor teachers believed their student teachers were least prepared; and
- (c) what initiatives might business teacher preparation programs implement to better prepare their student teachers.

## Method

A Delphi research design was implemented which was comprised of 32 business education mentor teachers in one Midwestern state.

## Results

The expert panel could not reach a consensus on the areas in which their student teachers were most prepared. However, 93.8% agreed classroom management strategies and 81.3% believed working with and accommodating special needs' students were two of the top three skills student teachers were least prepared. In addition, 90.6% of the panel thought providing the student teachers with more experiences with classroom management in public school settings and 90.6% indicated business education teacher preparation programs could provide more information to their student teachers about the amount of workload and commitment needed to be an effective teacher.

Table 1  
*Round Three Results*

Areas	Most Prepared		Least Prepared		Advice for business education programs		Ratings	
	<i>f</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>M</i>	Importance for student teachers to learn	Impact on K-12 student learning
							<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
Technology integration	25	78.1					4.06	4.09
Appropriate dispositions	22	68.8					4.22	4.31
Professionalism	22	68.8					4.44	4.22
Classroom management strategies			30	93.8			4.53	4.69
Working with special needs' students			26	81.3			4.09	4.13
Organization and time management skills			14	75.0			4.16	4.03
More experiences with classroom management in schools					29	90.6		
More information on amount of workload/commitment needed					29	90.6		
Teaching more about working with diverse learners					23	71.9		

Note: *f* = frequency; *M* = mean; *n* = 32

# Challenges of Business Education Mentor Teachers ... *continued*

FLETCHER, MOUNTJOY, & BAILEY

## Recommendations

First, it is recommended teacher preparation programs not only discuss classroom management and special education issues, but also provide experiential learning opportunities for their teacher candidates to explore and examine ways in which they might develop classroom management skills and address special needs' students prior to their student teaching internships. Second, student teachers frequently come to the classroom with a misconception of the amount of time and effort which is needed to be effective teachers. They oftentimes do not understand what exactly is required of them and what kind of workload teachers carry, particularly for new teachers. As such, it is recommended university faculty provide ample opportunities to have candid discussions regarding the nature of teaching and the workload and commitment which are needed. It also may be highly beneficial for teacher candidates to have dialogue with practicing teachers, particularly recent graduates, to provide opportunities for them to ask questions and discover what their roles and responsibilities are as teachers.

# GENDER PERCEPTIONS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND DISTRACTIBILITY OF PERSONAL PHONE USE DURING CLASS TIME

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## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to document college students' personal phone use (text messaging and entertainment) during class time and to identify whether this use was perceived as acceptable or distracting class behavior. A further analysis identified any gender differences in these perceptions. Results of the study will provide insight to business educators as they face increasing student's personal phone use during class time.

## Procedures

The participants for this study consisted of college students enrolled in eight sections of a business course offered at a mid-sized, Midwestern university. Participants were asked to complete an online survey involving use and perceptions of cell phone use during classes. A total of 290 students volunteered to participate in the study.

## Findings and Results

Of the 290 respondents, 98% (284) have their phones turned on, 93% (271) respond to text messages received; 88% (254) create and send original text messages, and 36% (105) use phones for entertainment during classes. There were no differences found between genders.

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents reported that it was "acceptable class behavior" to text message during classes, as compared to 19% who reported that it was "unacceptable class behavior." Twenty-five percent indicated "although it is unacceptable class behavior, I do it anyway." Thirty percent reported that it was "acceptable class behavior" to use phones for entertainment purposes, as compared to 50% who reported that it was "unacceptable class behavior." Twenty percent indicated "although it is unacceptable class behavior, I do it anyway." There were no differences found between genders.

Sixty-five percent (189) of the respondents reported that phones ringing or buzzing during classes was distracting 23% (65) that other students' using phones to text message was distracting, and 42% (121) that other students using phones for entertainment purposes was distracting. All of these items differed between genders, as females perceived these occurrences to be significantly more distracting than males.

## Conclusions

The majority of students use their phones for personal reasons during class time and there are differences in perceptions between males and females whether this use is distracting to class. Most students believe that text messaging during class is acceptable class behavior, or even if they do not perceive it as acceptable, still engage in text messaging during classes. Although only a third of the students surveyed perceived that using phones for entertainment purposes was acceptable class behavior, and another twenty percent indicated that even though it is not acceptable, they do it anyway. While the majority of students indicated phones ringing or buzzing was a class distraction, using phones for text messaging or entertainment was not. Females perceived phones ringing or buzzing and students' text messaging or using phones for entertainment as more of a distraction than males.

# PRINCIPALS' AND SUPERINTENDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF CTE TEACHERS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS TO BUSINESS TEACHERS' PERCEIVED NEEDS

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Program management duties are integral to the role of CTE teachers; examples include duties associated with advisory committees, student organizations (CTSOs), local/state reporting, laboratories, program evaluation, program funding, school-to-work/career activities, and student travel. The purpose of this study was to describe Idaho secondary school administrators' perceptions of the program management professional development needs of CTE teachers and to compare these findings to previous studies by the researchers (Kitchel, Cannon, & Duncan, 2009) that addressed business teachers' perceptions of their own professional development needs.

A descriptive research design utilizing the census survey method framed the methodology of the study. The data were collected through a 24-item survey instrument based on the Borich Needs Assessment Model (Borich, 1980). The instrument allowed administrators to rate each program management item on two distinct Likert type response scales, perceived level of importance and perceived level of competence. Approximately 45% ( $n = 206$ ) of administrators participated, representing principals ( $n = 128$ ) and superintendents ( $n = 78$ ).

Importance ratings inform the preparation of pre-service teachers. Administrators indicated "Safety standards" ( $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) to be the most important program management item for CTE teachers. "Relations with fellow teachers and administrators" ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) was the second most important item, followed by "Providing career exploration activities" ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = .85$ ), and "Conducting parent/teacher conferences" ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = .92$ ).

Mean weighted discrepancy scores (MWDS) serve to prioritize in-service needs by factoring in both importance and teacher competency ratings. The MWDS ranking indicates priorities to be "Grant writing and funding opportunities" ( $rank = 1$ ), "Understanding federal, state and local funding" ( $rank = 2$ ), "Developing curriculum-based school-to-work/career activities" ( $rank = 3$ ), and "Providing career exploration activities" ( $rank = 4$ ). Interestingly, there are commonalities as well as differences between the MWDS and importance rankings.

Based on the MWDS ranking, administrators and business teachers (BT) agree that priorities for professional development should include "Grant writing and funding opportunities" (admin  $rank = 1$ ; BT  $rank = 1$ ), "Understanding federal, state and local funding" (admin  $rank = 2$ ; BT  $rank = 2$ ), and "Developing curriculum-based school-to-work/career activities" (admin  $rank = 3$ ; BT  $rank = 5$ ).

Items for which the largest discrepancies exist include "Identifying appropriate curriculum" (admin  $rank = 19$ ; BT  $rank = 8$ ), "Fundraising for CTSOs" (admin  $rank = 22$ ; BT  $rank = 12$ ), "Establishing and organizing co-op/internships" (admin  $rank = 13$ ; BT  $rank = 3$ ), and "Programs of study/pathways" (admin  $rank = 9$ ; BT  $rank = 19$ ).

While much has been written with respect to providing programs of professional learning for the general population of teachers (Danielson, 2009; Glatthorn & Jailall, 2009; Reeves, 2006), less is known about the specific needs associated with the more specialized population of CTE teachers, particularly as related to the perceptions of school leadership. This study contributes to an assessment of perceived needs and forms a foundation of awareness between business teachers' and administrators' priorities.

# Principals' and Superintendents' Perceptions ... *continued*

KITCHEL & CANNON

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# STUDENT EXPERIENCES WITH UNIVERSITY WEBSITES: MARKETING THE UNIVERSITY OR ADDRESSING STUDENT FUNCTIONAL NEEDS?

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The purpose of this study was to analyze business education graduate students' experiences with their university's home page in an attempt to determine if this site is used as a marketing tool by the university and/or as an informational portal that addresses students' functional needs. A qualitative methodology was used.

## Methods

A grounded theory method was used to develop a framework to guide university administrators and website developers in the planning, designing, testing, and revising of their university's home page. The most common strategies used to carry out grounded theory are observation and interviews. Business education graduate students were interviewed in an attempt to understand the way they experience their university's home page. Business education graduate student responses were collected and analyzed in a process that repeated itself until new data began to confirm rather than shed new light on the findings.

## Findings

Study findings revealed that academic administrators and website developers must involve a group of diverse students in the planning, designing, testing, and continuous revising of the university's home page to ensure that the students' functional needs are addressed effectively and efficiently. Website developers should ask a diverse group of students to provide the most critical information required to address their functional needs effectively and effectively. While it is important for a university to use its home page as a marketing tool to communicate and promote itself to its external constituencies, the main focus of a university's home page should be the students' functional needs, such as online course management system, course syllabus, course sequencing, and faculty contact information.

Some other information that a university should post to demonstrate that it is a student-centered institution is related to faculty and student research. For instance, posting information related to faculty research on the university's home page is fine; however, posting and highlighting student research on the home page delivers a message to the world that the university is truly a student-centered learning community. Likewise, postings of information about the success of university graduates delivers a clear message to students that their professional preparation at that university may have a significant, positive impact on society. In addition, the number of students enrolling in online courses continues to grow in the United States and this unprecedented growth has not taken place without significant challenges. For instance, student retention in online courses is lower than in traditional courses, which has become a major educational problem today. To address this problem, universities should develop a "one-stop resource center" webpage for distance education students. This site should also be a student-centered web page that is planned, designed, tested, and constantly revised using student input as the framework.

Finally, a mandatory student orientation session for online and face-to-face students must be conducted to ensure that students are able to navigate through institutional home pages and other web pages containing important student resources. Web-based modules should be used to train students in the effective use of Web resources to ensure that students' functional needs are addressed effectively and efficiently.

# THE NEW FACE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION

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In America, school funding cuts have occurred from coast to coast. Thirty-four states plus the District of Columbia have made cuts in K-12 and early education funding (NEA today, p. 15). Pennsylvania was hit especially hard in 2011 with cuts from PreK-12 education amounting to \$1.18 billion, a 15% total cut. With all of these changes, how can business educators best prepare their students for the future?

## **What skills are needed for future workers?**

Active listening, speaking, service orientation, persuasion, reading comprehension, critical thinking, writing, coordination, social perceptiveness, and negotiation are necessary background skills. A project-based environment is where learners learn by doing. Learners work in teams, refine people skills, and establish business contacts. One of the main themes from the focus interview was that we as business educators must be teaching using projects, in teams.

## **What should business educators be teaching today?**

We need to be teaching using technology, but we should also be teaching “soft” skills, such as both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Economic literacy skills were also discussed. The focus group recognized that all students were not going to college. They realized the importance of skills for “real” life, such as personal finance/ economics skills.

## **Technology**

Business educators have moved to the problem-solving approach, which is teaching how and when to use software to perform tasks more efficiently. According to the Future Work Skills 2020 (2011), new media literacy will be required. This includes videos, blogs, and podcasts.

## **Personal Finance/Economics**

Both economic and personal financial skills and competencies are needed. For example, topics of instruction include financial responsibility and decision making, income and careers, planning and money management, credit and debt, insurance, and saving and investing.

## **Soft Skills**

Ketter (2011) states that the soft skills, such as social intelligence, collaboration, communication, and listening, are critical skills that employees will need. Another theme from the focus interview was teaching “soft” skills in our classrooms. These skills are critical to not only getting positions, but keeping positions, and ones that many of our students lack.

## **How have the recent budget cuts impacted the business education curriculum?**

Business education programs in districts across the state have been faced with faculty layoffs; lack of money to buy materials, supplies, software, or hardware; larger classes; lack of staff development; and increased preps per teacher.

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## WHAT ARE BUSINESS EDUCATORS DOING TO KEEP THEIR POSITIONS DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES?

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The purpose of this communication study was to identify how business educators are changing the perceptions of the value of business courses at the high school level. These perceptions are impacted by current national assessments, technology in the business curriculum, current views of business education, and impact of business education on the students. A survey was delivered electronically to the Pennsylvania Business Education Association (PBEA) database, with a request for business educators to e-mail the survey to others. We received 84 responses from business educators in the Northeastern United States, mostly from Pennsylvania. Overall, business educators felt they were responsible for changing the perceptions of business education in their districts. Furthermore, they used approaches such as developing Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) programs, talking about business education in classrooms, and giving presentations. Since this research, teachers in Pennsylvania have been developing standards for the state. An update as to the status of the movement to keep business education in Pennsylvania schools will be shared.