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Message from the Editor in Chief

Dear researchers,
Defining and identifying quality are extremely difficult task and they constitute a perennial challenge in higher education; seeking to assure it within higher education institutions is another. Furthermore universities have seen the provision of higher education to become a product and have been driven by competition to examine the quality of their services, to redefine their product and to measure participants' satisfaction.

The quality of higher education is a really important topic, especially for students and academic staff. In addition, national and international institutes with several governments set themselves the goal of improving their quality in higher education. With the growth of mass higher education, and the rise of student centred approaches to learning and teaching, it has become increasingly clear that high quality education is education that meets the needs of the student at that particular moment, and promotes their future development.

As an editor-in-chief of this journal, I am very happy to announce that the first volume and first issue of The Online Journal Quality in Higher Education (TOJQIH) is published. I would like to thank all authors for their contrubiton and support.

I hope that this journal will contribute to the quality processes of higher education. Thank you for reading TOJQIH.

January 2014
Prof. Dr. Muzaffer ELMAS
Editor in Chief

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A FOUR-PILLAR DESIGN TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF STATISTICAL REASONING AND THINKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

In this paper an investigation of the connections and tensions among the four pillars of, content, pedagogy, technology, and assessment is presented from a standpoint of building a structure that is conducive to developing quantitative reasoning and analysis skills among university students, and, possibly, faculty members.

Purpose of Study

Traditional curricular materials and pedagogical strategies have not been effective in developing quantitative reasoning abilities of students. Much of the changes proposed by several research studies and various reform movements over the past decade have supported efforts to transform teaching practices to include an emphasis on students' development of conceptual understanding rather than a focus on mechanical calculations (Chance & Garfield, 2002).

Despite some very recent research studies investigating conceptual understanding of various topics among college students in statistics courses, there are still several unanswered questions regarding how we, as educators, can help students develop quantitative analysis skills at the post-secondary level (Budé, 2007; Slauson, 2008). The purpose of this paper is to propose a variety of learning experiences and environments to support students in developing quantitative analysis and reasoning skills.

Background and Theoretical Framework

The guiding theory for statistics education reform is based on a learning theory arising from earlier ideas and writings of Jean Piaget on cognitive development, and is referred to as constructivism (Garfield, 1995; von Glasersfeld, 1995; Wheatley, 1990). Constructivism views learning as an active process and learners as cognitively active human agents who construct their knowledge through interaction with the environment. The basic tenets of constructivism are in stark contrast with, and pose a strong challenge to the earlier conceptions of learners as passive beings whose empty minds are to be filled with information transmitted directly from and controlled by a central knower. According to Dewey (1933, p. 261), the mind of the student is "treated as if it were a cistern" into which information is filled with one set of pipelines and pumped out by way of another set of pipelines in the form of regurgitation on demand. In his analysis of the teacher-student relationship, Freire (1970, p. 72), varying the metaphor, used "the banking concept of education" as another metaphor for the traditional lecture-and-listen format, which is prevalent in our educational settings. This vivid metaphor also illustrates the above mentioned narrative character of teaching as a futile cycle of teacher, the depositor, making deposits which students, the depositories, who in turn receive, memorize, and repeat (Freire, 1970).

Several researchers indicated that in these traditional narrative-based settings students were not learning what statistics educators wanted them to learn (delMas & Liu, 2005; Gal, 2003; Konold, 1995). The efforts to improve the quality of statistics education extend beyond a mere criticism of this narrative character of teaching and learning. Statistics education research community embraces the idea that students construct knowledge by constantly negotiating and renegotiating new knowledge in relation to past experiences. To a large extent, this negotiation process is influenced by social, cultural, and historical backgrounds of students, as well as of those around the students (von Glasersfeld, 1995). It is through this complex network of rich interactions that students are able to propose or challenge new ideas, engage in dialogue about those ideas, and try to make sense of those ideas. Constructivism, along with the above outlined Vygotskian perspective, known as social constructivism, which takes into account social interactions and historical or cultural influences on learning, has become the guiding theory for our efforts to improve the quality of statistics education, and for much research in mathematics education, as well as science education (Hassad, 2008; Mvududu, 2005).

Despite the above described views, which guide the statistics education reform movement, there are many introductory statistics courses at the college level that continue to use the traditional lecture-and-listen format (Moore, 1997). In addition to using the lecture-and-listen format predominantly, many such courses also heavily rely on having students do assignments in textbooks or in computer labs, and take multiple choice or traditional tests emphasizing formulae, rote memorization skills and procedural knowledge, as opposed to conceptual knowledge of statistics (Garfield, 1995). Statistics education reform, guided by the views of constructivism and social constructivism, shifts the emphasis more toward conceptual knowledge, and focuses on helping students develop conceptual understanding of various statistics topics.

Some of the basic goals of quantitative skills are often stated or referred to by the statistics education researchers in terms of statistical literacy, statistical reasoning and statistical thinking (Zieffler, Garfield, Alt, Dupuis, Holleque, and Chang, 2008). Even though there has been an ongoing discussion among researchers on how to define these concepts unanimously, there continues to be a great deal of discordance regarding the definitions and the nature of these concepts which have several different competing models (delMas, 2002). As a result, the concepts and definitions of statistical literacy, statistical or quantitative reasoning and thinking remain unclear, overlap with one another, and often are used by many researchers interchangeably (Ben-Zvi & Garfield, 2004; delMas, 2002; Garfield & Chance, 2000). Motivated, in part, by the lack of clear and commonly used definitions of these terms as the outcomes of student learning, the recent research efforts have focused on conceptual understanding in quantitative analysis, in general, and statistics education, in particular (Budé, 2007; Slauson, 2008).

Hiebert & Lefevre (1986) view knowing-why as an indicator of conceptual understanding, as opposed to knowing how-to, which they consider to be an element of procedural understanding. Other researchers focus on the relational aspect of conceptual understanding (Dantonio & Beisenherz, 2001). In their view, conceptual thinking and understanding require the learner to create patterns or relationships among the different pieces of information gathered by the learner. A common thread emerging from the attempts made by several of the above cited researchers to define conceptual

understanding is the formation of cognitive connections among the related components of a cognitive entity.

A Design to Improve Conceptual Understanding

The researchers have considered and proposed a multitude of changes in college and university level statistics course so that we, as statistics educators, can best help students learn. Much of these changes suggested by statistics education reform efforts have focused on the development of conceptual understanding of the underlying statistical ideas. These changes were made possible, in part, by recent trends in society toward quantitative literacy, and the abundance of advance technologies in computing and communicating. Based on a review of the literature focusing on the changes proposed to improve quantitative reasoning skills of students and faculty in higher education, I identified the following four broad and interconnected areas to consider: changes related to content, pedagogy, technology, and assessment.

Content Related Considerations

Statistical content is broadly viewed as what we, as educators, want students to learn in statistics. The traditional content, and approach to teaching statistics as a sequence of linearly and hierarchically ordered disjoint topics padded with a series of techniques lead students to view statistics as a collection of fragmented formulae and procedures taught in isolation without any interconnectedness established among the various topics. This fragmented view of statistics, created and promoted, in a large part, by the traditional content and approaches, tends to impress upon our students an image of statistics as a collection of specific, factual and behavioral objectives (Begg, 2004). In addition to their fragmentarily organized content, the traditional statistics courses have been also largely based on probabilistic inference (Moore, 1997). The content related changes, which were suggested by the joint curriculum committee of the American Statistical Association (ASA) and the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), advocated exploring and producing data, not just realistic, but real data arising from real problem settings. Interpretations of graphics, developing strategies for explorations of data, and informal inference need to be brought to the forefront of statistics education. The conceptual meanings of P-value, confidence, significance should be emphasized in college level statistics courses where the students may be at any level of mathematical sophistication or ability. There is a need for statistics educators to stress conceptual understanding rather than mere knowledge of procedures in teaching and learning of statistics. With the emphasis placed on conceptual understanding, there should be fewer procedures, recipes, calculations, and derivations (Turegun, 2009). It is more important for students to grasp the reasoning of statistical inference than the number of different inferential procedures they are taught. Numerous statistics courses contain a great deal of material with a collection of ideas which are presented disjointly by instructors, understood superficially and forgotten quickly by students. There is little value in knowing a set of procedures if students do not understand the important underlying concepts. For example, we, as faculty members and researchers, should consider how useful ideas of statistical inference could be taught from a conceptual point of view informally.

Identifying correctly, introducing early and revisiting often of the central ideas, building connections among different ideas, emphasizing common elements of analysis or interpretation, and

minimizing time devoted to mathematical details were some of the points we need to take into consideration. In organizing our course content, the emphasis needs to be placed on students' conceptual understanding and practical use of statistical reasoning rather than memorization of statistical formulae and procedures. A decade earlier, Wheatley's (1991) mathematics education research resulted in similar recommendations. He advocated a more problem-centered content focus, and an emphasis on practical and contextual use of mathematics.

Pedagogy Related Considerations

Pedagogy can be broadly viewed as what we, as statistics educators, do to help students learn. Traditional pedagogic practices currently used in teaching statistics courses is, to a large extent, based on the lecture-and-listen model. In this model, students are conceived to be passively listening to lectures so that their empty minds can be filled with information transmitted directly from a central knower. We, as educators, need to remember that "we overvalue lectures" (Moore, 1997, p. 125). We also need to remember that, as teachers, we tend to "underestimate the difficulty students have in understanding basic concepts of probability and statistics" (Garfield, 1995, p. 31). The difficulty of subject matter combined with the passive and oppressive character of the traditional teaching and learning practices based on the traditional lecture-and-listen model has been one of the leading causes of frustration and dissatisfaction experienced by students and faculty with the statistics courses over the years. The widespread frustration and dissatisfaction with the course have led researchers to investigate alternative models, such as a move away from the traditional lecture-and-listen model toward activity-based courses which promote, and support active participation and interaction among all participants. Moore (1997) considered asking students to work in groups cooperatively, and having students communicate their findings orally and in writing to be necessary components of good pedagogy. He further stated that "the core of new pedagogy is genuinely active learning" (Moore, 1997, p. 130). Making changes from traditional lectures to active learning techniques pose considerable challenges to many statistics instructors. The traditional training of many statistics instructors could be one of the reasons which might make the change from a teacher-centered approach of lecture-and-listen format a difficult and challenging one for them. Another reason for the reluctance to make the change is identified as the ease with which statistics instructors can prepare a lecture. Contrary to preparing a lecture, designing a student-centered learning environment where students are engaged in the activities, group discussions and projects are generally more challenging and time and labor intensive practices for the faculty members. In an effort to alleviate such difficulties statistics educators might apply a cooperative approach to teaching and learning statistics. Based on the premise that statistics education ought to resemble the inherently cooperative nature of the practice of statistics, collaboration among statistics educators, as well as among students, may be considered to enhance and sustain the efforts of cooperative teaching and learning of statistics. The proper choice of curricular material and textbooks that emphasize and structure activities through which to illustrate concepts may also alleviate difficulties and challenges faced by the statistics instructors in making the pedagogical changes.

Although some traditionally oriented statistics instructors tend to believe that increasing interaction and active learning in our classrooms might cause them to "cover" less material, I believe this can be taken as an opportunity to focus on "big" ideas, to go deeper with those ideas, and use them

as threads to weave a curriculum matrix for statistics courses (Turegun, 2009). When examined from a paradoxical perspective, teaching less may lead to learning more. Hence, less is more. Arguments in favor of active learning, which might be perceived by traditional statistics instructors as an implication for a decrease in the "material coverage", are actually attempts to increase learning by focusing on the "big" ideas of statistics.

Technology Related Considerations

Computers, graphing calculators, the Internet, statistical software packages, Web applets, and various apps are among the several forms of technology available to statistics educators in order to support the development of conceptual understanding and quantitative reasoning abilities of students. Several researchers have explored the use of these different forms of technology to improve teaching and learning of introductory statistics. For the most part, the decision regarding what form of technology to use might be dependent upon the issue of accessibility by students. Using computers or calculators merely to generate statistics, to follow algorithms or to produce graphs of data are very limited views of technology use in statistics education. These types of limited technology use do not tend to extend beyond the notion of, what I refer to as, "using technology for the sake of using technology." Technology use in that sense becomes a tool for doing statistics, not a tool for teaching and learning statistics.

Using technology to help students visualize concepts and understand abstract ideas is considered to be far more important than using technology solely to automate messy statistical computations. For example, simulating drawing samples from various populations and observing the distributions of statistic values computed from these samples are better ways of illustrating the Central Limit Theorem than providing a mathematical proof for it. Majority of the college and university faculty members, from various departments, such as mathematics, statistics, psychology, business, sociology, and economics, have been making changes in their courses over the past decade. The most common changes are in the form of increased use of technology. While there has been a considerable increase in the usage of technology, many instructors are still unaware of excellent Web resources, such as graphing calculators, Web applets, and apps. The use of graphing calculators has certain advantages, such as portability and suitability to active participation. However, several researchers expressed concerns regarding the use of graphing calculator technology (Moore, 1997). Limited amounts of data entry and small screens with static graphs are considered to be some of the weaknesses of graphing calculators. Although initial uses of technology focused on the computational power only, the uses of technology need to be shifting more toward the conceptual power to illustrate abstract statistical concepts. The applets have been gaining an increasing importance because of their effectiveness in illustrating various statistical concepts visually. For example, instead of using calculators to generate z-scores, it is possible to have students explore the empirical rule of 68-95-99.7 by using a Normal distribution Java applet. The website http://www.causeweb.org has an excellent collection of applets in order for students and faculty to illustrate various abstract concepts vividly.

Unfortunately, using a simulation or applet for the sole purpose of demonstration by instructor in front of a classroom with students being only passive learners does not ensure active learning, and can in fact lead to poor learning. Even though the concepts of randomness, confidence, and significance

should be introduced to students through the use of simulations and applets, the importance of having students perform physical simulations first with hands-on manipulatives such as coins, dice and cards prior to the use of the calculator or computer was pointed out by Chance & Rossman (2006). Since the use of a computer simulation only for demonstration purposes is not sufficient for developing deep graphical understanding of concepts, having students perform physical simulations first with hands-on manipulatives is especially important.

Technology, in general, is viewed to serve content and pedagogy. The use of graphing calculators ties in with and encourages active participation. But, to a certain degree, technology has changed content and makes possible or allows new forms of pedagogy. Even though not all statistics teachers agree on what is simply a rule, automating anything that is simply a rule is considered good pedagogy (Moore, 1997). Yet, the of use technology in statistics education goes beyond the simple automation of rules. What makes the use of technology an effective learning tool, in addition to computing and producing static or dynamic graphs, is the capability of technology to illustrate various statistical concepts visually and make abstract concepts more concrete.

Assessment Related Considerations

The traditional method of assessing student learning consists of module tests, generally with multiple-choice questions, designed for ease of grading. The traditional exam questions place a strong emphasis on the procedural or computational aspects of statistics, and do not evaluate high-level cognitive and conceptual understanding of students (Zieffler, Garfield, Alt, Dupuis, Holleque, and Chang, 2008). These traditional testing methods tend to evaluate the rate of defects in the final product. The connection of the traditional testing methods to the actual statistical practice is an unexamined assumption. The efforts to improve assessment practices in statistics education should start with challenging and questioning this assumption. There is a need for appropriate assessment materials to evaluate students' statistical reasoning and conceptual understanding. We must search for new and innovative ways of assessing what our students know about statistics. Most statistics teachers tend to view assessment as separated from teaching, and as limited to testing, grading exams, quizzes and homework assignments. This traditional view of assessment and its related forms are considered to be too narrow and too specific to provide useful information about what students know and understand (Garfield & Chance, 2000). Even worse, several misconceptions about statistical topics, such as probability, may still persist, even though students are able to use appropriate terminology or formulae to answer questions correctly on a traditional test.

An emerging view of assessment, as an ongoing evaluation of students' learning over the course of the semester with constant gathering of information and providing feedback, can be very valuable in informing our teaching. In this emerging view of assessment, teaching and assessment no longer appear to be in a dichotomous relationship, but rather in a continuous cyclical relation of informing one another with the ultimate goal of improving student learning. As part of the considerations regarding assessment, instructors are encouraged to collect a variety of assessment information from sources other than individual student tests, the results of which traditionally were used to assign grades and rank students. Among some of the alternative forms of assessment are cooperative group activities,

computer lab exercises, portfolios, projects/reports, presentations, essay questions, journal entries, and open-ended writing assignments. These alternative forms of assessment may be structured to provide some rich information in assessing the nature of student learning. Walking around the class to observe students as they work in small groups on an activity, and having students explain their answers are some of the ways to informally assess students' statistical reasoning. Being able to hear students express their understanding of what they have learned is important because it provides teachers with an ongoing, informal assessment of how well students are learning and understanding statistical ideas. Written reports on group activities are useful sources of information in assessing students' ability to solve a particular problem, apply a set of skills, demonstrate understanding of an important concept, or use statistical reasoning.

If our efforts focus on teaching our students what we, as statisticians or statistics educators, value most, then we must also assess what we value most. This is one of the important elements that we need to remember when designing assessment instruments. On a final note on assessment, I am in complete agreement with Ben-Zvi & Garfield (2004), and have become accustomed to regarding assessment as being a continual and recursive process, as opposed to being a sporadic and conclusive one; students as being active participants in this process, as opposed to being the objects of the assessment; and assessment outcomes as an opportunity for all students to achieve their potentials, as opposed to filtering and selecting students out of the opportunities to learn statistics.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the efforts outlined and proposed in this paper to improve the quality of statistical reasoning and thinking among students and faculty members in higher education can be gathered in the following four categories: considerations related to content, pedagogy, technology, and assessment. I regard these considerations in the four categories as the four pillars to raise the quality of statistics education. Considerations for content, pedagogy, technology, and assessment should not be evaluated as independent of one another or in a dichotomous relationship with each other. These four categories can be viewed as being the nodes of an organic web. We, as statistics educators, need to be cognizant of the connections, interactions, and tensions among these four pillars while pursuing our goals to improve the quality of statistics education in post-secondary level. Using these four pillars to build a holistic and flexible curriculum structure or matrix is one of the fundamental components in developing quantitative reasoning and analysis skills among university students, and, possibly, faculty members.

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ACADEMIC QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (AQIP): A PEER REVIEWER'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The Higher Learning Commission is an accrediting commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, one of six regional accrediting agencies in the United States. The Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) is an alternative to the traditional accreditation process and integrates the principles and processes of continuous improvement into the culture of colleges and universities. AQIP is grounded in the concept that systematic improvement is gained by using achievable action projects. Presented from the experience of a seasoned peer reviewer, the paper seeks inform readers of the AQIP process, identify Higher Learning Commission Criteria and AQIP Categories, and explore the principles of high performing organizations. The results of impromptu study of twenty-one AQIP projects found institutions often would benefit from establishing a more collaborative environment, engage in market research and assessment when developing and implementing projects, and utilize relevant research and professional standards as part of institutional quality assurance processes.

INTRODUCTION

"Accreditation is the primary means by which colleges, universities and programs assure quality to students and the public" (Eaton, 2012, p.4). The one hundred year old accreditation process relies on self-reflection and external review by peers to ensure quality assurance and improvement. Self-reflection is commonly done extensively through self-study and peer review processes that can take many forms dependent upon the accrediting agency. The purpose of this paper is to describe the peer review process associated with Action Projects identified within the Higher Learning Commission's Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP).

Accreditation and the Higher Learning Commission

In addition to fifty-two (52) state and territorial boards of higher education and the U.S. Department of Education, regional accrediting agencies in the United States are one leg of a Triad tasked with ensuring quality in higher education institutions. The federal leg of the Triad is the United States Department of Education (DOE). The DOE is responsible for oversight and compliance of the accreditation process, ensuring the viability of the accrediting agencies. In short, the DOE accredits the accrediting agencies. State governments are responsible for the establishing policies, licensing institutions and providing funding for institutions within their respective states. The accrediting agencies

ensure quality assurance through the establishment of standards and criteria on which institutions are measured and assessed. In addition to the development and renewal of standards, accrediting agencies establish accreditation processes that include institutional reflection through a self-report, peer review and analysis, and an agency verification upon analysis of the institution's self report and peer review. The process can take anywhere from one to two years and is repeated every 7 to 10 years depending upon the accrediting agency's regulations (Higher Learning Commission, 2013[1])

Located in Chicago, Illinois, the Higher Learning Commission is the higher education wing of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA). The Higher Learning Commission is the largest of the six regional agencies in the United States, accrediting higher education institutions in eighteen states, primarily located in the central region of the country and has over thirteen hundred institutional members, all of which are responsible for providing human resources, known as peers, to support for the accreditation process.

Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)

The Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) is an alternative accreditation process of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Unlike the Commission's Standard Pathway and Open Pathway, the AQIP Pathway requires a review of a panel of peer institutions to be admitted to the program (Higher Learning Commission, 2013). The AQIP accreditation program, originally developed in 1999-2000, integrates the principles and processes of continuous quality improvement into the culture of colleges and universities. The AQIP process is grounded in the concept of systematic improvement and relies on a systems thinking approach to quality improvement. In addition to periodic systems appraisals and quality check-up visit by peer reviewers, AQIP institutions participate in focused action projects and strategy forums throughout the seven-year review period (Higher Learning Commission, 2008).

AQIP institutions are required to conduct a regular and ongoing cycle of Action Projects that reflect the institution's record for quality improvement activities. AQIP Action Projects are central to institutional success because they demand that the institution develop the constructs and processes required to organize and oversee regular quality initiatives. The Action Project process broadly engages faculty and staff in the selection of projects and also through participation on project teams. Unlike drawn-out processes associated with strategic planning, AQIP Action Projects guarantees the institution completes several short-term quality assurance projects (Higher Learning commission, 2013[3])

AQIP Action Projects are guided by two primary sets of guidelines, AQIP Categories and the Higher Learning Commission's Principles of *High Performance Organizations* (Higher Learning Commission, 2010). All AQIP projects fall within nine categories, which are used to compartmentalize action projects including:

- AQIP Category One: Helping Students Learn;
- AQIP Category Two: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives;
- AQIP Category Three: Understanding Students and Other Stakeholder Needs;

- AQIP Category Four: Valuing People;
- AQIP Category Five: Leading and Communicating;
- AQIP Category Six: Supporting Institutional Operations;
- AQIP Category Seven: Measuring Effectiveness;
- AQIP Category Eight: Planning for Continuous Improvement;
- AQIP Category Nine: Building Collaborative Relationships.

There are ten philosophies that form the *Principles of High Performance Organizations* (Higher Learning Commission, 2010) and that undergird the AQIP categories. These include:

- Focus: Mission, vision and purpose focus institutional efforts;
- Involvement: Broad-based and inclusive engagement of faculty, staff, and students;
- Leadership: The development of quality culture utilizing effective communication through leadership and leadership systems;
- Learning: Creating a learning-centered institution focused on seeking effective ways to engage students and enhance the learning environment;
- People: Respect through investments in individuals;
- Collaboration: Working together for achievement of a common mission;
- Agility: Flexibility and responsiveness to changing needs and conditions;
- Foresight: Focused on planning and future thinking;
- Information: Fact-based information gathering, analyzing and using;
- Integrity: Responsible institutional citizenship that models values.

Systems Thinking

A distinguishing characteristic of the AQIP process is the focus on systems and processes. In his ground breaking book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization (2006; 1990)* Peter Senge identifies systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision and team learning as essential elements of the learning organization. Senge further emphasizes that systems thinking is the "cornerstone of the learning organization" (Senge, 2006; 1990). The concept (of systems thinking) views a system as an adaptive whole, which can survive as its environment may change and deliver shocks to it. In such a whole, each functional part will be properly linked to others and appropriate information will be continuously available to enable adaptation to take place in response to the monitoring of performance (Checkland, 2012, p.466). As Aristotle offered "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." Checkland suggests that in order for a system to be adaptive the units must be considered a part of overall system that is made up functional sub-systems. System adaptability requires processes of communication, control procedures to manage the change; and methods to address "emergent properties that characterize the evolving system (Checkering, 2012, p. 466).

Peer Review

Peer Review is a primary element in the advance of all professional fields in the United States Using peer experts to serve as reviewers has been a long-standing tradition in academic culture of the United states (Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors, 2013). "Peer review in accreditation is based on the fundamental assumption that quality in higher education is best served through a process that enables peers of the

organization, informed by standards created and applied by professionals in higher education, to make the judgments essential to assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning (Higher Learning Commission, 2013[1]). Peers judge institutional quality based on respective institutional missions. Review of quality is collegial, primarily qualitative, formative, and focused on improvement (Eaton, J. 2012).

AQIP project reviewers are selected based on their experience and interest. Application is done online during selected times of the year and reviewed by Higher Learning Commission professional staff. Upon selection, AQIP project reviewers are assigned to a peer mentor who will provide training about expectations and the review process. Training is conducted annual before each project review cycle. AQIP project reviewers are evaluated based on projects reviewed.

AQIP Project Review Process

Process Goals infuse the principles and benefits of continuous improvement into the culture of colleges and universities, and assure and advance the quality of higher education. Action Projects make a serious and visible difference to institutional performance, embody challenging but attainable goals and are designed to stretch the institution in new ways to learn and excel. Institutions are to focus on both efficiency and benefits to students and other stakeholders. Action project charters consist of: project title; context statement that aligns the project with the institution; problem or opportunity to be addressed; key stakeholders involved or impacted; vision and objectives; project sponsor; scope; budget and timeline; constraints and assumptions; critical success factors and risks; and approach and organization (Higher Learning Commission, 2008).

Depending upon the stage and age of the project to be reviewed, action projects will have one or more updates. Each update will describe: past accomplishments and current status; how the institution involved people; anticipated next steps; any "effective practices" that should be shared; and what challenges the institution still faces in implementing the project.

AQIP project reviewers are expected to adopt a review philosophy conducive developing a positive and trusting relationship with each institution (Higher Learning Commission, 2010[2]). Overall the reviewer is exhorted to accentuate the positive by adopting a "glass is half-full attitude" rather than half-empty. Reviewers should highlight and praise things an institution is doing right and trust the institution to have good intentions and motivation, be competent, capable and ultimately do what they set out to do. While maintaining this positive attitude is deemed important, project reviewers should recognize what is important and beneficial, have high expectations, be able to redirect misdirected and wrong efforts and hold the institutions accountable.

In writing the review, project reviewers are tasked to evaluate progress in action projects and identify major accomplishments and best practices that warrant recognition. Recommendations should be specific and when possible, supported by research or useful professional standards and guidelines as well as other helpful resources. An overarching statement should be made to summarize the project's progress.

METHODOLOGY

The intent of the AQIP update project reviews used in this study was to provide constructive feedback to institutions based on the reviewer's knowledge skills and experience. The peer reviewer approached these reviews without the intention of collecting data for this study. Research findings from these reviews were unintentional, that is, research was not the original intent of the project review. No approvals were sought from any institution research board (IRB). To ensure confidentiality and anonymity the names of the institutions reviewed have been removed and only the institution's type was used in the analysis.

The process of project review is similar for all subject institutions. The reviewer is allotted 10 days to review the AQIP project, assess and make an overall judgment of the institution's progress, provide analysis of the projects status, and make targeted recommendations for improvement. The average time spent on a each project review ranged from three to four hours. All reports were uploaded into an automated system and reviewed by the reviewers mentor supervisor before being published for the institution viewing. The review was blind and reviewer signed the mandatory *Confirmation of Objectivity Form.* Final reviews were to be at least 500 words but should not exceed 1000 words. All reviews complied with these requirements. The final reviews were the key documents examined for this study.

Data used in this research came from twenty-one Higher Learning Commission member community colleges located in the states of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Arkansas and were generated and collected in groups of seven, per year, during three years from 2011, 2012, and 2013 for a total of 21 projects. Analysis of the data was accomplished using the qualitative inquiry method of document analysis, which focuses on in-depth studies of fairly small samples, even single cases (n=1) selected intentionally (Patton, 2002). A systematic procedure for appraising or assessing records, document analysis includes printed and electronic material (Bowen, 2009). Examination of data from these documents is used to produce meaning, gain understanding, and develop knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Documents examined in this review included project charters and updates. In selected cases institutional websites were used to clarify information.

Data were disaggregated from the reports by topic and entered into an Excel spreadsheet. While excel spreadsheet is not a true database (Db pros 2013; Allen, 2013), the software has a data sort function sufficient to identify common and similar elements. As documents were reviewed for the defined purpose of supporting institutions quality improvement efforts, several interesting patterns emerged which led to the development of a research questions: *to what extent do selected community colleges engage in collaborative practices in addressing Academic Quality Improvement Program projects* and *to what extent do selected community colleges utilize research and professional standards to support Academic Quality Improvement Program projects.* In order to answer these questions, consultant recommendations for each project were reviewed and analyzed with the intent of developing themes and patterns.

FINDINGS

AQIP action projects from twenty-one (n=21) Higher Learning Commission member community colleges were reviewed over a three-year period from 2011 to 2013. The largest number, n=17, and greatest percentage 80.95% of institutions were seen as making reasonable progress toward project goals. One institution made excellent progress and three colleges, 14.2%, completed projects. Institutions with completed cases were advised to use their projects as a springboard to future projects.

Findings relative to project focus tended to group into two major categories: Academic and Academic Support, n=13 (61.9%); and Other Operational processes, n=8 (38.1%). Projects are noted in Table 1: Projects and Processes Reviewed.

Table 1: Projects and Processes Reviewed (continued on next page)

Academic and Academic Support	**Other Operational**
Create an online Degree Audit Program (DAP	Create a web page to describe institution's quality program and align with institutional strategic plan
Develop roadmap for students from first contact to graduation	Quantify current partnerships and resources to maintain them Student Success
Academic and Academic Support	Other Operational
System of tracking students in the enrollment process	Use data to enhance student satisfaction
Develop and implement a standardized procedure for advising students	Investigate assessment software
Expanding career exploration learning resources and early interventions	Surge Green Challenge
Develop, implement, and sustain a continuously improving student orientation program	Benchmark with peers
Develop a prior learning assessment program	One Card System
Develop a 21st century learning experience	Master Planning
First Year Experience (FYE)	
Assess general education program	
Initiating learning communities	
Evaluate advising process	
Student Success	

Projects were organized using the AQIP categories prescribed in the AQIP project guide. Categories and the number and percentage of projects within each AQIP category are located in Table 2: Project Categories.

Table 2: Project Categories

AQIP Category	Number and Percentage of Projects N=23*
Understanding student's and other stakeholder needs	n=8; 35%
Valuing people	n=2;9%
Leading and communicating	n=0
Supporting institutional operations	n=6;26%
Planning for continuous improvement	n=0
Building collaborative relationships	n=1;4%
Measuring effectiveness	n=0
Helping students learn	n=4;17%
Accomplishing other distinctive objectives	n=0

* Two projects identified valuing people and helping students learn as related categories resulting in n=23

Themes that emerged from the document analysis clustered around nine areas. Collaboration, including limited or inconsistent communication or not engaging with groups that could or should be involved in the project was the most common recommendation, occurring in sixteen (n=16) of the projects. The need for more marketing activity including evaluation, assessment and feedback occurred in twelve projects (n=12). There was limited use of research and/or professional standards that would have benefited eleven (n=11) projects. Focusing on students and stakeholders was recommended in nine (n=9) projects. There were seven projects Recommendations that were limited in scope and that could not be clustered

Table 3: Peer Reviewer Consultative Suggestions

AQIP Category	Number and Percentage of Projects N=23*
Collaboration (communication & engagement)	n=16; 76.9%
Marketing, Evaluation, & Feedback	n=12; 57.14%
Research & Professional Standards	n=11; 53.38%
Focus on Students and Stakeholders	n=9; 42.86%
KPIs and Outcome Measures	n=6; 28.57%
Design or Visualizing Process	n=5; 23.81%
Professional Development and Training	n=3; 14.29%
Involve Institutional Leadership	n=3; 14.29%
Specific Recommendation	n=7; 33.33%

DISCUSSION

The use of AQIP project reviews was helpful in gaining some insight to operational efficiency and effectiveness of institutions reviewed. In general these institutions embraced the AQIP process and made acceptable progress toward project goals. Viewing these projects in an aggregated way did not provide a definitive view of the overall quality of American mid-western community colleges but did provide some insight as to how the institutions worked and some areas to consider for focused improvement. The three recommendations most often made focus on collaboration, marketing and use of research and professional standards

Collaboration, including communication and engagement was recommended in a large majority of the reviews. Collaboration recommendations usually arose from projects that were developed and led by small groups of people within the institution. Many of these projects were planned as broad reaching efforts but implemented with a limited scope. Often faculty and students were not included in the planning or implementation phase and were often informed about the project rather than actively involved.

The next largest group of comments was focused on marketing, evaluation and feedback. The term marketing is presented in the broadest of terms and suggests that institutions often miss opportunities to identify client and stakeholder needs. Too often, AQIP projects had a defined process that was not grounded in institutional reality that ultimately limited the impacted of the project. The use market research to understand the institution and the effected clientele, to determine appropriate courses of action through the use of the collected data, and to assess the project's progress was missing in many AQIP projects.

Research and professional standards were identified as possible shortcomings in slightly more than 50% of the projects. The study of American higher education is common in the United States and scholars produce both theoretical and practical studies that are useful in operating institutions of higher education. There are several institutions in the United States that focus specifically on American Community Colleges that would be valuable resources. There are also a plethora of associations that provide professional standards for most academic, academic support, and co-curricular functional areas of an institution. Standards from these organizations were recommended on numerous occasions.

The focus on students and other stakeholders had similar issues as those articulated with collaboration. Many of the student-focused projects did not include students in the planning or implementation phases, and did not provide opportunities to develop student-learning outcomes. Students were often seen as reactors rather than proactive engagers. Project activities were often projected onto the students rather than having students engaged in the development process. Similarly, the involvement of stakeholders was often limited to those specifically mentioned in the project's charter. Projects were often specifically designed for a target audience and other potential stakeholders were omitted from considered partners.

Many of the projects were focused on inputs and processes and did not address possible outcomes or provide key performance indicators of success. Do to pubic awareness of and political engagement with institutional accountability, the focus of American accreditation has moved away from inputs and processes to output and results. Outcomes, measured by key performance indicators, are used to determine organizational effectiveness and continuous quality improvement.

The recommendation of implementing a design and visualizing process occurred when institutions engaged in overly complex processes that would be benefitted by better organization or by some type of visual representation of the process. Concept maps, flowcharts, and dashboards were recommended to serve as tools to support project clarity.

A few projects developed to be implemented by faculty, staff and students did not accommodate for sufficient and necessary education and training. In these cases, professional development for faculty and staff, and supplemental instruction for students, to clarify their role and function, were recommended.

In rare cases, especially when the project had stalled or was not moving forward at the desired rate of progress, recommendations were made to involve institutional leadership. In many of these cases, it was unclear whether institutional leadership, beyond the assistant vice president or director level, had formally supported the project.

Recommendations focused specifically on the project occurred in one-third of the reviews and were outside the scope of this study. These recommendations were aggregated and eliminated from the data analysis.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The three most common recommendations made during the review process involved collaboration, marketing, and use of research and professional standards. These project review recommendations were refined to develop overall recommendations to facilitate and support quality assurance efforts of community colleges.

The first recommendation is for institutions to consider engaging partners in a collaborative and synergistic way by involving a variety of constituents (faculty, departments, students etc.) in all stages of their AQIP action projects. The old saying "two heads are better than one" attributed to Aristotle, provides the foundation for this recommendation. In studying the synergistic effect of collaboration on information seeking, Shah and Gonzalez-Ibanez (2010) concluded, "working in collaboration, achieved something greater and better than what could be achieved by adding independent users, thus, demonstrates…a synergic effect" (p. 1). In her literature review of collaborative research Bukvova (2010) identifies access to expertise, resources, exchange of ideas, pooling expertise for addressing complex problems, keeping focus, learning new skills, achieving high productivity, producing high quality results, prestige, political and personal factors and fun pleasure. Concerns about collaborative research included tensions caused by determining who should get credit for the research and determining final responsibility and accountability for the outputs (Bukvova (2010).

The next recommendation is to start AQIP projects with the end in mind. In, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Powerful Lessons for Personal Change,* Covey (1989) makes the case that growth can be gained by envisioning what the person wants to achieve. This second habit, Begin With the End in Mind is a key concept for both personal and organizational mission, vision and purpose statements.

Organizational complexity necessitates working together to establish a clear vision of what is to be accomplished. Conducting market research, by engaging stakeholders, developing goals with measurable outcomes, and assessing results, is made possible by establishing a clear vision of what is to be achieved and beginning the journey with the end in mind.

Finally, the study of higher education and the development of standards by professional associations and consortiums focused on the creation of guidelines has provided institutional management in higher education with the tools to operate using good or best practices. One such organization focusing on standards for higher education is the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education-CAS (2013). A consortium of forty professional associations representing nearly every academic support and co-curricular functional area, CAS develops and revises standards and provides tools used in the self-assessment process. Organizations focused on the study of American community colleges include the American Association of Community Colleges (2013), The Council for the Study of Community Colleges (2013) and the Center for the Study of Community Colleges (2013). Several institutions of higher education have research centers focused on the study of American community colleges. These include: Community College Research Center at Columbia University (2013), the Bill J. Priest Center for Community Colleges at the University of North Texas (2013), the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Memphis (2013), and the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) at the University of Texas (2013). The aforementioned center conducts a nation wide survey of community college students and recently published *A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success* (2012), a useful tool for institutions undertaking continuous quality improvement efforts.

This study emerged from the reviews of twenty-one community colleges that are members of the Higher Learning Commission using the Academic Quality Improvement Program as a form of accreditation. While not planned, the research produced interesting and illuminating results that warrant further investigation. Future research efforts might focus on the aforementioned recommendations of collaboration, market research and use of professional standards. Research questions generated by this impromptu study might include: *to what extent do American community colleges engage in collaborative practices that lead to institutional synergy*; and *to what extent are American community colleges aware of and utilize professional standards and research results focused on community colleges.*

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ETHICS AND VALUES TOWARDS MANAGEMENT EDUCATION QUALITY: A GLOBAL SCENARIO

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Abstract

Global competition, emergence of consulting business and Internet based transactions are changing the product offerings in management education. The trends of evolution of management education indicate that knowledge creation is becoming more students based. This will usher in a variety of changes, including, paradoxically, a trend towards closer interaction among industry, students and faculty.

The challenge is to ensure high quality management education that could financially sustain itself, but at the same time capable of generating a pool of leaders who could emerge as the real global business leaders. As manufacturing, research and services are getting relocated, executives need to develop a global outlook and business schools have to reorient rapidly to meet this global business challenge. This paper outlined the basic ethics and values to improve the quality of management education as management education is an extraordinary model of a liberal education. It is steeped in intellectual traditions drawn from theories and concepts representing a wide range of social sciences including economics, sociology, psychology, mathematics, and statistics.

Keywords: *Management, Education, Quality, Value and Ethics.*

Value of Management Education

Why do the best youth study management? There is a huge demand for managers not only in business enterprises but also in non-profit and non-governmental organizations. But it is questionable as to whether the demand is for what they have been taught. Prospective employers benefit from the fact that these young people have the semantics of business. The content is not as important. The learning from daily interactions with other bright young people, not faculty or the courses taught is the student's most valuable gain. Employers do not get ready-made managers because they have studied management for two years. Employers have to spend years in training them to become useful. But many of the institutions attract good students and that saves the employers the time and money they would otherwise have spent in searching. It is not surprising that there is a trend everywhere in the world including India for employers to seek out other good postgraduate students (in commerce, economics, social work, engineering, etc) instead of recruiting only MBAs (or equivalents), as they have tended to do for thirty years.

The Value Proposition for Management Education

Over the course of the last hundred years, business has transformed the world. It has been a driving force in shaping society and the catalyst behind extraordinary economic growth and opportunity. Effective man agreement of business has spurred the creation of jobs, the generation of wealth, and access to opportunity for an increasingly diverse population. Management education has produced leaders capable of creating effective organizations that are the core of these profound, global achievements. Successful students

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of management education acquire the knowledge and skills that enhance and enrich their lives and enable them to make meaningful contributions to their organizations. In turn, organizations that are successful in meeting their goals and fulfilling their purposes become enormous assets to societies, fostering greater productivity and a more desirable quality of life.

The value of management education to individuals, organizations, and society is almost incalculable. A Report from an AACSB (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business is a not-for-profit corporation of educational institutions, corporations, and other organizations devoted to the promotion and improvement of higher education in business administration and management. Founded in 1916, AACSB International established the first set of accreditation standards for business schools in 1919. Through nearly eight decades, it has been the world leader in establishing and maintaining business school accreditation standards).

Individuals who pursue management education are typically passionate about the opportunity to "make things happen." They are convinced that their participation in management will create lifelong rewards including:

- Development of a portfolio of personal skills that will strengthen their abilities to communicate, solve problems, make decisions, and lead organizations.
- Professional competence within an individual management discipline, the capacity for integrating and applying knowledge from other disciplines, and a strategic perspective on the management of organizations.
- Adaptability that comes from the acquisition of knowledge and skills that readily transfer to different work environments and to other dimensions of productive lives.
- Creation of personal wealth, self-sufficiency, and a sense of well-being.
- Ability to assist others through philanthropic donations of the personal wealth created by successful enterprise.

Ethics in Management Education

The[9] Ethics Education in business is not only a challenge for companies but also an opportunity to strengthen management education. At issue is no less than the future of the free market system, which depends on honest and open enterprise to survive and flourish. All of us in management education need to ponder more deeply and creatively on how to advance the awareness, reasoning skills, and core principles of ethical behavior that will help to guide business leaders as they deal with a changing legal and compliance environment. Four broad themes that inform ethics education are: **a.** The Responsibility of Business in Society, **b.** Ethical Decision-Making, **c.** Ethical Leadership, **d.** Corporate Governance. While many other topics could have been included, these four areas are widely viewed as cornerstones of a comprehensive and viable ethics education curriculum in business schools.

a. Responsibility of Business In Society

In addition to providing a return to owners, business is charged with other straightforward tasks acting lawfully, producing safe products and services at costs

commensurate with quality, paying taxes, creating opportunities for wealth creation through jobs and investments, commercializing new technologies, and minimizing negative social and environmental impacts. Unless management attends to all its responsibilities, achieving fair returns to shareholders will not be possible. There is more to the story of business, however. Business and society are mutually interdependent. Society depends on business for wealth creation while business depends on society for an environment wherein it can meet its obligation to create that wealth.

It is essential for business in general and management education students in particular to understand the symbiotic relationship between business and society, especially in terms of the moral dimensions of the power placed in the hands of owners and managers. The actions of business leaders affect not only themselves, but customers, employees, investors, suppliers, governments, citizens, and communities. Moreover, abuse of dependency by corporations undermines trust in business and in the markets needed to ensure commercial success. A society where those holding power are neither moral nor accountable creates a state where the strong do what they will and the weak what they must. In short, the power of business must be exercised so that it does not punish or exploit those who are dependent on its largesse or vulnerable to its demands. By defining the purpose of a business in terms of its social context, the various broader impacts on different constituencies, quality of life, regional economy, security, safety, or environment can be better understood and measured in the near and longer terms. Indeed, many firms are beginning to expand the transparency of their social reporting and efforts are now being directed to developing benchmark data and standardized approaches to social reporting.

Business schools are addressing these societal responsibilities in myriad ways. In many instances, traditional, functional-area MBA courses are overlaid with courses that explore the relationships between businesses, managerial decision-making, and leadership in the context of the societies wherein the businesses exist. Students frequently confront and analyze complex dilemmas in global, social, political, ecological, and ethical contexts in business. Special centers and programs that encourage responsible leadership are offered in many schools. Students often participate in projects that involve them in the realities and vagaries of real business environments. These exercises help them to understand how business decisions affect groups, organizations, and societies. By developing a perspective on the shared or common good, these programs challenge leaders to balance the impact of decisions and actions on themselves, their organizations, and societies.

Ethical Leadership

Business schools should help students to see the criticality of ethical leadership to effective and successful management. Significantly, findings from cognitive moral development research verify that most working adults are at the conventional level of cognitive moral development. That is, they look outside themselves, primarily to peers a-nd leaders, for guidance in ethical dilemma situations. The messages leaders send and the contexts they create are potentially the greatest motivating force behind ethical conduct in business organizations. To be considered ethical leaders, executives must be both “moral persons” and “moral managers.” As noted in the literature, executives become moral persons by expanding their awareness to include multiple stakeholder interests and by

developing and applying their own ethical decision-making skills to organizational decisions in ways that are transparent to their followers.

Executives become moral managers by recognizing and accepting their responsibility for acting as ethical role models. They must also "manage ethics" by communicating about ethics and values on a regular basis and by holding organization members accountable for ethical conduct. Most students will not be executives early in their careers; but they need to understand that, even as supervisors, they will play a key ethical role in the organization by influencing the daily conduct of their direct reports. Supervisors demonstrate ethical leadership through being open, fair, trustworthy, and caring with employees; by communicating about ethics and values; by role modeling ethical conduct; by focusing on means as well as ends in reward systems; and by disciplining unethical conduct when it occurs. Within business education, interaction with executives can communicate to students the realities of the current business environment and the ethical expectations of real businesses.

Another way students learn about ethical behaviors is through the ethical culture they observe in their respective business schools. Students cannot be expected to internalize the importance of ethics and values unless business schools demonstrate such commitment within their own organizations. This means that business school deans need to think of themselves as ethical leaders who communicate regularly about ethics and values; who model ethical conduct; and who hold community members faculty, staff, and students accountable for their actions. Academic policies and systems should clearly be an integral, living part of the school's culture, and not simply a stack of documents in the file drawer.

Ethical Decision-Making

Business schools typically teach multiple frameworks for improving students' ethical decision-making skills. Students are encouraged to consider multiple stakeholders and to assess and evaluate using different lenses and enlarged perspectives.

Traditionally, ethical decision-making frameworks have included consequentiality, deontological, and virtue ethics approaches. The consequentiality approach requires students to analyze a decision in terms of the harms and benefits to multiple stakeholders and to arrive at a decision that produces the greatest good for the greatest number. A deontological approach raises issues related to duties, rights, and justice considerations and teaches students to use moral standards, principles, and rules as a guide to making the best ethical decision. Virtue ethics focuses on the character or integrity of the moral actor and looks to moral communities, such as professional communities, to help identify ethical issues and guide ethical action. In some environments, new frameworks with new names combine these precepts in different ways. Regardless of the terminology or particular features, the central purpose behind understanding and applying these frameworks lies in giving students the tools they need to identify and think through ethical issues. Above all, they learn what questions should be asked of themselves and others and what factors need to be considered in their decision-making.

Resolving ethical issues requires reflection on underlying values. An important part of the values clarification process involves prioritizing one's values and being prepared to deal with values conflicts that might occur, for example, when success and security clash with justice or honesty. In recent years ethics education has advanced a number of exercises aimed at helping students to clarify their personal values. One approach requires students to identify five or six values that they would choose to guide behavior in an ideal society or business. Research indicates that people around the world tend to identify a similar set of values, suggesting that people from different cultures generally agree that honesty, fairness, and respect for human life, for example, are important. Ironically, a missing piece in most ethics education in the field of business is the development of "moral courage," which is particularly important in organizational contexts. Learning how to name and locate the problem, analyze and map the power structure and politics that influence the problem, build allies and mentors, and apply effective persuasion skills can equip students with the skills they need to put their values to work in the corporate world.

Corporate Governance

Although ethics education is vital, it is unrealistic to expect that it can, with a single stroke, negate the likelihood of management wrongdoing. Situational pressures often occur many years after graduation, when classroom discussions or a course in ethics are far from the consciousness of the stressed manager. Knowing the principles and practices of sound, responsible corporate governance can also be an important deterrent to unethical behavior. Moreover, understanding the complex interdependencies between corporate governance and other institutions, such as stock exchanges and regulatory bodies, can be an important factor in managing risk and reputation.

In recent years, several schools have established centers for corporate governance. While governance concepts and practices may be mentioned in management education degree programs, few business schools have designed curricula that include each element, establish learning goals, and measure outcomes. Nonetheless, it is difficult to refute the premise that students who understand the principles and practices of corporate governance are much more likely to emerge as effective leaders. Management degree programs should not only offer students ethics education, but also solid background in corporate governance. Appropriate topics may include:

- The role and responsibilities of the governing board of directors.
- The role and responsibilities of the audit committee.
- An understanding of internal controls, the role and responsibilities of management, and critical monitoring activities such as internal auditing.
- Elements of an effective code of conduct.
- Components of an effective corporate compliance program.
- The role and responsibilities of independent public accountants, counsel, and regulatory bodies.

These topics are applicable to any organization, including nonprofits or governmental agencies. With prudent corporate governance, any business entity seems much less vulnerable to corruption. Bringing governance into the classroom helps to

prepare students for the realities of the business world and arms them with powerful insights for operating within business environments.

CONCLUSIONS:

World is shrinking day by day with advancement of technology and education but that does not mean that values and ethics should be forgotten. This paper provide the elements which are effective for each individual getting management education for understanding the role and responsibilities towards quality of management education.

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QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN AN INTERNATIONAL ALTERNATIVE BREAK COURSE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of a multi-disciplinary international alternative break course involving service learning as part of the curriculum. Nursing, Consumer Science & Retailing, Hospitality and Tourism Management, and non HHS students integrated each discipline into a holistic service-learning course, successfully meeting simultaneous learning objectives in the Colombia study abroad course. Participants in the course wrote pre and post reflections, completed weekly journals and a final reflective presentation and research paper. The initiative was deemed a success on the basis of post metrics / discussions with host recipients and student travelers. Three themes emerged from the qualitative data which included (1) appreciation, (2) empathy, and (3) learning about self.

Keywords: *qualitative, service-learning, alternative break, reflection, multi-disciplinary, appreciation, empathy*

INTRODUCTION

Alternative break programs are a relatively new concept in higher education. Its roots transpire from international service learning, allowing students to venture out into a new location on a shorter time period, usually during spring break. While the popularity is increasing, the research is growing at a slower pace. This article supplements the developing research by sharing qualitative data on an international alternative break program with service-learning created by three professors from three different disciplines. Due to the course being open to all students, it attracted a variety of majors from nursing to engineering. The course's main purpose was to educate students on marketing feasibility and the management of international nonprofit agencies through service-learning. This allowed students to engage in new material, yet reach a higher understanding of their focused major with the coordinating professor. Coursework involved several classes prior to the alternative break consisting of research assignments, group discussions and discourse, traditional lectures on material, and reflection activities. The "nucleus" of the course was an alternative break in Colombia where students immersed themselves in the local population through service-learning activities. This article discusses the qualitative results found in this alternative break program that encompasses service-learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Comparative to other forms of learning, service-learning is recent to the academic world, with its beginnings occurring in the 1990s. However, its origins appeared in the 1930's by the philosopher John Dewey. Dewey (1938) was a great advocate of "doing" rather than "sitting" and allowing information to be deposited into a student's mind without interaction (Freire, 1970). Dewey argued that this was not conducive to learning, and students must interact with their environment for productive learning to occur. When students are engrossed in their environment, they become inquisitive and want to learn, a concept very different during this time. Though there were followers of Dewey's reform, their form of learning and teaching didn't quite "catch on" until Kolb emerged.

Kolb (1986) is the founding father of experiential learning, a concept of learning not very different from Dewey's model. Kolb, being a proponent of active learning, believed that students must go through four phases. These phases, cyclical in nature, beings with actual interaction between student and the experience, reflection on the nitration, analysis of the experience, and then using his/her analytical skills to move on to more challenging experiences. Then, the cycle continues as the student advances intellectually.

Service-learning is supported by research demonstrating great learning potential. Service-learning, considered to be very hands-on through the use of community service, has several founded benefits. Astin & Sax (1998) discovered that service-learning increases grade point average and inspires civic responsibility amongst its participants. Eyler & Giles (1999), known for years of research on service-learning, found the service-learning experience to be positive among students. In addition to higher academic learning, Eyler, Giles, Stenson, Gray, & At (2001) found that personal development transpired, and improved "the learning experience" (Joseph, Stone, Grantham, Harmancioglu, & Ibrahim, 2007, p. 328).

Transformative learning theory naturally lends itself to the concept of service-learning, as it focuses on the transformation of the person within. This transformation can

be activated when a student is propelled into a new environment and culture, creating shock waves in his/her's own ideal perception of the world. Due to the "tremor" enforced on their schema of belief patterns and convictions, they become cognizant that they may be wearing biased lenses, not allowing them to truly learn.

> *"Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. Transformative learning has both individual and social dimensions and implications. It demands that we be aware of how we come to our knowledge and as aware as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives. Cultural canon, socioeconomic structures, ideologies and beliefs about ourselves, and the practices they support often conspire to foster conformity and impede development of a sense of responsible agent (Mezirow, 2000, p.7-8).*
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> *Transformative learning can arise through reflective discourse (Mezirow, 2000). Similar to service-learning, reflection is a necessary element for the stimulation of intellectual development. Through alternative breaks, many opportunities surface for dialogue to transpire, allowing students to ponder about their thought processes and compare their own personal and preconceived knowledge to their peers.*

Complementary to transformative learning, Vygotsky (1978) argues that any progression of self and erudition happens at a particular point designated as the zone of proximal development. "The zone of proximal development defines those functions that will mature tomorrow but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). According to Vygotsky, this zone stimulates internal growth. Alternative breaks can incite the zone of proximal development through its group interaction and teamwork, as well as a focused goal on providing services to a deprived community. This amalgam of such activities triggers a higher level of comprehension not discovered in a typical lecture classroom.

ALTERNATIVE BREAK

Alternative breaks assist service-learning curriculum in higher education, as its main purpose to help certain communities when and where needed. This learning experience is called an alternative break, because it usually occurs during spring break, which dedicates a much shorter time period than a traditional study abroad course. This concept is attractive to students, as they only have to devote a week of community service and travel. When the alternative break is curriculum-based, it tends to start in the beginning of the semester, have the alternative break in the middle or near the end of the semester, and conclude with a debriefing class.

As mentioned earlier, there is limited research on alternative breaks. However, some researchers have found ways to research alternative breaks, acknowledging its academic value. McElhaney (1998) found that alternative breaks support a positive transformation among students on their biased perceptions of the world, and acknowledge they have the power to make change in the world. In an alternative break class organized by DuPre (2010), she found that relationships were of upmost importance. "Students

learned not only about themselves through their interactions, but also about the world beyond their campus walls" (p.26).

This alternative break study describes the results of a group of multi-disciplinary college students that experience an academic alternative break course involving a service-learning project. The key question the researchers wanted to answer was whether students are affected by service-learning sustained by an international alternative break course? In order to find the and discussions.

METHODOLOGY

Thirty-one students participated in the study with twenty-six females and five males (females = 26, males = 5). Ages ranged from 19-23. The students derived from a plethora of declared majors including nursing, hospitality and tourism, management, consumer sciences and retailing, liberal arts, science, engineering, economics, public relations and advertisement, and education. The three professors responsible for the class held four classes prior to the alternative break that involved traditional lecturing, reflection assignments, and research papers concentrating on the analysis of international marketing, feasibility analyses for business and nonprofit organizations, and international nursing by nonprofits.

The service-learning project involved participation in nonprofit humanitarian activities involving children at a public hospital, nonprofit organizations, and impoverished communities by distributing toys, hygiene kits, educational kits, painting a mural on a public children hospital wall, conducting eye exams, doing fluoride treatments, blood pressure measurements and body mass index calculations. All activities were sponsored through Bridges of Hope International and Foundations Cartagena Global in Cartagena, Colombia. In addition to the pre and post-test, reflections occurred throughout the semester and at the end. This venue of community service was chosen to support the literature of the class.

Several procedures were followed to concrete the analysis of the data by coding the data and interpreting the data through three different viewpoints. The data collection process first began at the beginning of the semester. Researchers received informed consent for all participants (Cooney & Kleinsasser, 1997).

Prior to coding, researchers began looking for themes arising within the collected reflections (Foss & Waters, 2007). In an attempt to uncover new insights or typologies, the researchers analyzed the data by using content analysis. The results of the content analysis were shared amongst the three faculty researchers to check for inter-rater reliability. Agreement was reached amongst the three faculty researchers (Neuendorf, 2001; Bown & Sparks, 1998). All three researchers color coded general themes among the written reflections (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). To ensure credibility of the emerging themes, all three researchers compared information discovered among their analysis when coding was complete. Researchers conversed among each other to discuss themes and subthemes (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). The combined sources supported a triangulation of data in order to understand the phenomenology (Mathison, 1988).

The multi-disciplinary course consisted of four classes and two packing parties including a personal journal that combined detailed notes and comments about the Colombian people and culture, as well as artifacts from the trip. This was collected near the conclusion of the classes. The post-travel class required students to deliver presentations with teaching aids. Students returned to the United States and were required to attend a post-departure class where they presented their research and/or reflections to the class and professors. Throughout the course, students were expected to respond to their highest selves through reflections and discussions. Logistically, professors reviewed safety procedures before and during trip. Also, professors made certain to have a debrief of closure and full-circle class on learning and impact.

The schedule for Cartagena, Colombia occurred during spring break in March for seven days. This trip had a multi-faceted focus including: Cultural opportunities, educational opportunities, recreational activities and humanitarian projects which included the following: (a) Visit to Casa Del Nino – only children's hospital on the coast of Colombia focused on treating those who are marginalized and often medically neglected. Visits were made to each of the hospital rooms, as well as the emergency rooms. Students were dressed as clowns, fairy-tale characters etc. and distributed toys, games, clothing, shoes and sandwiches and juices to parents who were staying with their children. Over 250 people were served in the hospital; (2) Visit to FunDaVida – home for children suffering from cancer. Thirty children are currently in treatment. Bookbags, school supplies, toys and hygiene packets were distributed at this location. Over 50 people were the recipients of these items; (3) Visit to Actuar Por Bolivar – This non- profit institution is focused on helping to break the cycle of generational poverty through education of children and training provided to young people and adults who need to learn a skill or trade. Over 250 children received new shoes, toys and school supplies; (4) Visit to Los Granitos De Paz – A non-profit organization focused on one of the poorest communities, Rafael Nunez with over 15,000 people. Their program includes an early childhood center, production patios (micro-enterprising initiative focused on growing fruit, vegetables, and herbs to sell), and outreach program to Sr. Citizens through recreation and feeding program. Over 250 children received shoes, clothing, and school supplies. The teaching and support staff (approximately 50) received educational resources and teaching aids; (5) Visit to INHASAOR – School for approximately 100 deaf students. Shoes, clothing, toys, games were distributed to over 100 deaf students (preschool age through 20 years old); (6) Eyeglass and Health Clinic – Over 250 low-income individuals received eye exams, new glasses and health screening at the clinic. Each patient also received new shoes and clothing; (7) Exodo Center - feeding center and program focuses on children and young people at high-risk, received clothing, toys, shoes and school supplies for over 350 children. This program is connected with the National Police of Colombia; and (8) Playa Blanca – small community where students distributed clothing, shoes, hygiene packets, etc. to those living in communities near the beach. Approximately 15 families were impacted.

RESULTS

Three main themes emerged from the data and analysis. A brief description of the themes is described as (1) appreciation: This theme involves a newfound perception about being aware of one's surrounding and beginning to appreciate what he/she has; (2)

empathy: The theme identified students' higher level of empathy. Empathy is defined as "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner relationships with their classmates, faculty, service recipients, and community" (Merriam-Webster, 2012); and (3) learning about self: This theme was based on students' comments that they were beginning to learn about more about their inner selves.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this research support that service-learning does affect personal development and emotional maturity (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, Gray, & At, 2001). Students were emotionally affected, appreciating their lives and resources lived (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). One student said "It changed my perspectives a lot and made [me] much more thankful for everything I have". Other students said:

> *"It changed my perspectives a lot and made much more thankful for everything I have".*
>
> *"We should be grateful for the life we have."*
>
> *"I am blessed. Even people impoverished in America have more than those who are impoverished in the 3rd world country."*
>
> *"I learned to be more appreciative of what I have."*

Students participating in the service-learning project felt more "empathy" toward others (Billig, 2000). Students' experiences of simultaneous wealth and poverty was difficult and yielded a heightened sensitivity to the needs of the poor. One student stated "it made me realize the type of things I could do to help other people". Others mentioned:

> *"It increased my awareness about poverty…"*
>
> *"Definitely, I am inspired to use my good fortune to further help those in need."*
>
> *"I feel like everyone has a chance to show their true compassion."*
>
> *"It made me realize the type of things I could do to help other people."*

The final finding of the study, researchers discovered that students were learning more about themselves. This could have occurred due to their time spent with others (students and Colombian residents) and the reflective process required of them. Reflection is significant in service-learning, as it allows students to analyze what their experience was and what it meant to them (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). One student wrote "it had decreased a few hidden prejudices I had that I don't think about everyday", while another student mentioned that "I have learned very much about myself as an individual." Other students said:

> *"This trip really put my life in perspective."*
>
> *"I have learned to really appreciate what I have and how much my family means to me."*

Additionally, the quality of instruction attributed to the success of the alternative break course, as it prepared students for the week in Colombia. Although having three professors create and manage the course was challenging and time-consuming, the professors felt that the experience was enlightening and extremely beneficial to students. One of the professors said the experience was "life-changing" and plans on continuing her international alternative break endeavors.

These findings suggest that service-learning is a necessary element of an alternative break course, as it supports scholarly and personal progress. It also suggests that service-learning enhances students' level of appreciation and empathy not discoverable in a traditional classroom.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the qualitative nature does not allow the results to be generalized to other populations. The results could be different for an alternative break trip in North America or for participants that are not multi-disciplinary. However, this study discovered three themes among its participants that support the value of service-learning integration. Second, the amount of participants was small and their academic focus significantly varied. A future study should use a larger scale of participants that are in majoring in one particular discipline. Lastly, the lack of a male's viewpoint should be noted. Though service-learning is not gender-based or gender-biased, it tends to attract a more female population. It would be ideal to compare reflective thoughts between genders for a more thorough conclusion.

Future research

Though cultural awareness was not explored in this qualitative study, continued research should investigate on how an international alternative break course can affect the level of cultural awareness, responsiveness, and understanding. Additionally, alternative breaks should be further explored as a form of curriculum that stimulates personal, social, and academic growth.

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WHY QUALITY MATTERS: STRATEGIES FOR DESIGNING QUALITY E-LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

This paper examines the need to improve the quality of course development and delivery in online environments. The Quality Matters rubric will be discussed as an assessment framework for the connection between delivery and design using peer assessment to guide the development of quality online courses that are student-centered and support active learning and student engagement in the online environment. The Quality Matters rubric can be used to improve course design as well as engage faculty in a discussion concerning the quality of e-learning courses offered on a university campus.

INTRODUCTION

In this discussion, e-learning and online learning are viewed as the same delivery method in which the instructor and students are separated by time and distance and content may be delivered synchronously or asynchronously depending upon the design of the course, faculty and student abilities as well as institutional decisions concerning the delivery of content across the internet (Moore, 1993). The terms may at times be used interchangeably when discussing course design and delivery as within the United States the term online learning is more readily used while internationally the term e-learning is used (Moore, Dickson-Deane, Galyen, 2011).

Whether called online learning, e-learning, distributive learning, distance learning, virtual learning, or MOOC, universities are examining the need to expand the delivery of their courses within an electronic delivery system. Many universities do this to provide more access to people who are not in locations conducive to attending a face-to-face campus course, while others have seen a drop in campus enrollment and want to use this electronic delivery as a means of balancing the budget within the university by acquiring more students in online environments. For the discussion within this paper, the term online learning will be used to describe those courses that are delivered electronically across the Internet and have a faculty member in one location and students in other locations accessing information in a common electronic location and format (Moore, et al., 2011).

Students are also part of the issue driving universities to seek online environments as a way to lessen the burden of costs and loans associated with earning a degree. Students having grown up in a digital environment want a more flexible means of obtaining an education, allowing them to stay at home to cut costs in earning a degree. Parents with small children, who do not have child care, are also seeking to earn a degree without leaving home. Finally, the online environment allows for 24/7 engagement, thus, providing educational access to many different styles and times for learning by individuals.

THOUGHTS ON QUALITY COURSE REDESIGN

Myths of e-Learning Course Development

There are many myths that surround the development and delivery of online courses. In particular, students see online courses as easier and self-paced. In the majority of e-learning and online delivery, courses a course schedule with required due dates and deadlines. The anywhere/anytime notion typically refers to the access to the course in which the student has 24/7 access although the instructor is not present and the work is completed in a more flexible manner than the typical traditional classroom. An exploration of some of these myths is in order to help faculty begin to understand the differences when moving to an online/e-learning environment.

Myth 1: My course content is the same online or face-to-face. Many beginning online educators *believe that the content of their course can be taken directly from the classroom to electronic without any* change in design or delivery. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Those notes from the classroom have to be developed into an electronic format, edited, possibly presented as video and then paced to work within the delivery of the learning management system (LMS) being used at the institution. No matter the LMS product being used, there will be a particular way in which the content is uploaded and viewed. The faculty member must be aware of these differences and plan the delivery of the content accordingly. While the actual content may be the same, the delivery of that content will be different (DeMari, R., & Bongiovanni, 2010).

Myth 2: Online learning is not personal and my passion does not translate. The thought that an online classroom is impersonal can also be played out in the traditional classroom. Students can be allowed to 'lurk' in either setting if the faculty member is willing to just ignore the lack of participation by the student. Students often note their lack of participation in the real-world classroom and may attempt to carry this to the online classroom space. The perceived anonymity of the computer screen and the fact that the student is working from the personal environment of his/her home allows many students to take risks and share personal and professional learning when in the LMS as this online environment is a familiar place. Technology can bring students together when there are problems within the LMS in a way that promotes a connectedness of 'surviving the technology' (DeMari, R., & Bongiovanni, 2010). In the same way thoughtful preparation is required to engage students fully in the

passion of learning in a face-to-face environment, the online learning environment requires the same. The passion of the educator comes with preparation of a learning environment that facilitates active and engaged learning to draw the student into the passion (DeMari, R., & Bongiovanni, 2010).

Myth 3: Everyone knows how to use the technology but me and is doing other things when I am teaching. The e-learning/online classroom requires a teaching delivery that matches with the characteristics of the virtual environment. This can be daunting for an instructor who may lack needed technology skills. The virtual classroom has all the same communication features of the traditional classroom -- slides, flip boards, whiteboards, voice, video -- they are just in a different version. Using these well-established classroom tools to deliver learning online limits instructors' options and ability to engage students. They must to use classic tools differently and exploit the virtual qualities of the learning experience. The virtual classroom can becomes a safer place for creative risk taking. Instructors can also become so enamored with the technology they lose site of the delivery of content. Students, who are active users of technology, find the online environment a great distraction and the ability to discuss electronically with friends on Facebook or SMS, makes the issue of control difficult for some instructors. The best strategy is to use the ability of the virtual environment allow for texting, chatting, and breakout into group areas to accelerate learning and deeper understanding of the content. Simply using these well-established classroom tools to deliver learning online limits instructors' options and ability to engage students. In fact, educators risk becoming disembodied online voices presenting "stuff" — they need to use these tools differently and exploit the virtual qualities of the learning experience. The virtual classroom becomes a safer place for creative risk taking. The technological expertise of the instructor in operating the virtual classroom builds confidence in working in this new venue but the technology itself is not the end result.

While myths will continue to abound in the area of online, e-learning and distance education as a whole, most of the world is moving forward in using these virtual environments to reach the many students that seek flexibility and access to learning.

First Look at Quality in Course Redesign

In April of 1999, the Pew Charitable Trust funded an 8.8 million dollar experiment to determine the nature of online course development called the Program in Course Redesign (http://www.center.rpi.edu/PewGrant.html). The work hosted by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, sought to help colleges and universities in their efforts to redesign classroom instruction through the infusion of technology in the hopes of not only achieving quality course design but cost savings as well (Twigg, 2003). This work is now seen as seminal to the beginning discussions on course redesign in the movement to virtual learning.

The project managed by the Center for Academic Transformation, each institution was required to focus on learning outcomes measured by student performance and achievement

along with a rigorous evaluation of these measurements. Experts provided oversight to examine the assessment to ensure reliability and validity. Cost analysis of the redesign was also a consideration, as the Center noted that change has a cost and this cost has to be reasonable or institutions will not engage in redesign. Out of the work of the Pew Charitable Trust funding and the Center for Academic Transformation six characteristics of course redesign were identified (Twigg, 2003).

- Whole Course Redesign
- Active Learning
- Computer-based Learning resources
- Mastery Learning
- On-demand Help
- Alternative Staffing (Twigg, 2003, p. 30)

While each college or university used these six characteristics, each characteristic was impacted by the discipline involved, the student body make-up in the institution and the faculty teaching the course. After an examination of the different grant projects within institutions, five models emerged with the range being denoted along a continuum of fully online to fully face-t0-face. The following examples, (1) supplemental, (2) replacement, (3) emporium, (4) fully online and (5) buffet, were identified and suggest ways in which the characteristics of redesign can be embedded within the learning model of the institution as well as support improved course redesign (Twigg, 2003).

The Supplemental Model. The supplemental model kept the lecture intact as a delivery method in the course and continued the number of class meetings typical to the course. A group of supplemented lectures, and textbooks with additional computer-based activities were added. Three weekly online mastery quizzes were developed which allowed the student to retake the quiz until a perfect score was reached (Twigg, 2003, p. 31).

The Replacement Model. This model reduced the number of class-meeting time replacing face-to-face time with activities, which included online meetings to engage the student in interactive learning within small groups. The redesign identified that some of the activities of the class could be better developed for online learning and that group work could be completed at any location and outside of course contact time thus expanding the time on task for the student in completing coursework. This model does not assume that face-to-face meetings are the best setting for all activities and that classes need to meet according to the desired learning outcomes not just so that the students are face-to-face (Twigg, 2003, p. 32).

The Emporium Model. The emporium model was first developed at Virginia Technical University was developed on the idea that students learn best when ready to learn. Students of mathematics were allowed to choose when to access the course materials, which materials to use and how quickly to work through the content with the support of instructional software and one-on-one face-to-face help. This model removes all class meetings and replaces them

with a learning resource center. The online materials in the learning resource center include on-demand personal assistance. It is easy to see that this model requires extensive commitment of time, space and equipment to be successful (Twigg, 2003, p. 34-35).

The Fully Online Model. The use of fully online in the study was limited due to the understanding that in most cases faculty work alone in the design and development making this a labor-intensive endeavor. The one fully online example completed in the study was based on the Academic Systems® mathematics software and the addition of a nonacademic course assistant. The Academic Systems software presents the content at such a quality level that instructors do not spend course time delivering the content. The course non-academic assistant was responsible for non-math questions and to monitor progress. This allowed the instructor to concentrate on academic interactions with students. Class size was increased to 100 students concurrently, which was the typical amount for 4 classes. The instructor took advantage of the Academic Systems software's large bank of problems and answers for each topic to increase comprehension and past. A built in tracking system allows the instructor to know every student's performance including the time on task in each module. Successful completion of math was increased by 6% and the number of sections taught decreased while class size increased (Twigg, 2003, p. 36).

The Buffet Model. The final model of the quality redesign to successfully improve the quality of student learning while reducing the cost of instruction is the Buffet model, which takes into account the individuality of students. This model seeks to personalize the instruction through the use of information technology. This model customizes the learning environment for each student by offering an assortment of interchangeable paths to match their individual learning styles and abilities. These offerings included lectures, individual discovery labs both in-class and web-based, group reviews, small group study sessions, remedial procedures, training modules, contractual learning modules, written presentations, problem-solving, large group activities, homework assignments and graded or self-graded projects. Each student was provided with a 'buffet' of learning resources, contexts and designs in which the student determined the best way to learn the material for the course. To increase the likelihood of success, each student enters into a contract that indicates the student choices for learning, an orientation of the buffet style of learning study skills assessments and suggestions for completing the course (Twigg, 2003, p. 37-38).

All of the models have a unique manner for engaging students in the learning process. What was unique across all models was the treatment of courses as a set of products and services continually being improved. The dedication of faculty teams to work to redesign these courses spoke to their dedication to student learning. It is important to note, however, that the information technology enabled best practices to be captured in the form of interactive Web-based materials and sophisticated course-management systems to help faculty view the performance of students and to adjust accordingly.

TPACK as a Theoretical Model for Online Development

At the heart of the work of present day educators are the three knowledge bases of content, pedagogy and technology. As each knowledge base (content, pedagogy, and technology) enter the classroom setting, there is a relationship of each with the student and also with the teacher as well as the interaction of these components and the unique understanding that we have of each. These three knowledge bases (content, pedagogy, and technology) form the core of the technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge (TPACK) framework (e.g., Koehler & Mishra, 2008; Mishra & Koehler, 2006), which can be used to extend the quality of instruction and engage students in higher order thinking skills. This new framework presented by Mishra and Koehler in 2006 is being examined as a framework for the development of new an more integrative ways to think about teacher practice and the integration of technology. The TPACK perspective is consistent with Shulman's (1968) idea of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and now seeks to include educational technology.

The framework of TPACK can play a major role in the development of online learning environments as instructors seek to understand the use of technology to support their content and identify ways in which the traditional class pedagogy can be implemented in the online environment. As an instructor critically examines his/her own content, pedagogy and technology use, an understanding emerges from the interactions among content, pedagogy and technology knowledge.

> TPACK is the basis of effective teaching with technology, requiring an understanding of the representation of concepts using technologies; pedagogical techniques that use technologies in constructive ways to teach content; knowledge of what makes concepts difficult or easy to learn and how technology can help redress some of the problems that students face; knowledge of students' prior knowledge and theories of epistemology; and knowledge of how technologies can be used to build on existing knowledge to develop new epistemologies or strengthen old ones.
>
> By simultaneously integrating knowledge of technology, pedagogy and content, expert teachers bring TPACK into play any time they teach. Each situation presented to teachers is a unique combination of these three factors, and accordingly, there is no single technological solution that applies for every teacher, every course, or every view of teaching. Rather, solutions lie in the ability of a teacher to flexibly navigate the spaces defined by the three elements of content, pedagogy, and technology and the complex interactions among these elements in specific contexts. (Koehler, M. & Mishra, 2009, p. 66)

With the increased use of online environments which are inherently based in technology and its use, the TPACK framework offers several possibilities for research in the examination of faculty professional development and faculty's use of technology as well as options for examining the complex phenomenon of technology integration not only by instructors of online courses but students within those courses as creators of content (Peruski & Mishra, 2004). The use of technology tools for analysis within LMS environments may provide researchers with opportunities to focus on the ecological integration of technology by faculty and student in virtual learning environments. How do these three core knowledge bases, pedagogy, content and technology play out within the context of anywhere, anytime learning? Does the solutions lie in the ability of an instructor to "flexibly navigate the spaces defined by the three elements of content, pedagogy, and technology and the complex interactions among these elements in specific contexts?" (Koehler, M. & Mishra, 2009, p. 68).

The Quality Matters Process

Faculty development is a critical component for any robust online program. The Quality Matters Program (QM) is an international organization of broad institutional sharing and collaboration in an effort to understand online course quality. QM is a quality "assurance process that has been developed to improve and certify the design of online and blended courses" (Quality Matters Program, 2013, para. 1). The membership with QM is by institutional subscription although there is opportunity for individual subscription at a much higher cost. These membership institutions work together to provide trained peer reviewer and support other institutions as they implement the QM process (Quality Matters Program, 2013). The QM Program is a not-for-profit subscription service that provides the tools and training to support a quality assurance process in online course design and comes from the work of the University of Maryland's participation in a FIPSE grant. All areas of the QM process are focused on student learning.

The QM process recognizes that the faculty member is an integral part of both course design and course delivery. To this end, QM provides intense professional development to member institutional faculty. The QM process provides on-site, online, and Web-based professional development opportunities to instructional designers, faculty, administrators, and adjunct instructors (Quality Matters Program, 2013).

Quality Matters promotes a peer review process in which QM Peer Reviewers are selected from a database of trained professionals to review a course per an institution or faculty request. Any subscribing institution may conduct internal or informal reviews or contract with Quality Matters to conduct an official review. Courses that successfully meet the QM rubric standards in an official course review are eligible for QM recognition. QM is

dedicated to the continuous improvement of online course design.

The QM process is composed of four distinct characteristics and the process is:

1. Continuous
   a. The process is designed to ensure that all reviewed courses will eventually meet expectations.
   b. The process is a rubric-based review integral to a continuous quality improvement process.
2. Centered
   a. The development of the rubric is based on national standards of best practice, the research literature, and instructional design principles.
3. Collegial
   a. The review is part of a faculty-driven, peer review process.
   b. The review process is intended to be diagnostic and collegial, not evaluative and judgmental.
4. Collaborative
   a. The review is based on collaboratively identified evidence found in the course rather than the personal preference of an individual reviewer.
   b. The review is flexible and not prescriptive (many ways to meet each standard).
   c. The review team consists of three experienced online instructors as reviewers along with the course faculty developer.

The QM process is about course design, which is seen as the forethought, and planning a faculty member puts into the development of a course. Course delivery is about the actual teaching and implementation of the course design. QM is about design not delivery or faculty performance and should be seen by administrators seeking to improve online quality at an institution as a first step in securing faculty quality in online teaching and learning in the institution.

The QM Rubric. There are many factors that influence course quality. These factors include: (1) course design, (2) course delivery, (3) course content, (4) institutional infrastructure, (5) learning management system, (6) faculty readiness and (7) student readiness. While there are many factors, the QM Rubric only examines course design. The Quality Matters Rubric contains 8 general standards and 41 specific standards to evaluate the design of online and blended courses. "The Rubric is complete with annotations that explain the application of the standards and the relationship among them. A scoring system and set of online tools facilitate the evaluation by a team of reviewers" (Higher Ed Program>Rubric, 2013, para. 1). The rubric is divided into the eight critical course standards below:

1. Course Overview and Introduction
2. Learning Objectives (Competencies)
3. Assessment and Measurement
4. Instructional Materials

5. Learner Interaction and Engagement
6. Course Technology
7. Learner Support
8. Accessibility

Each of these standards is further divided to help the reviewer and faculty member identify the elements of the standard within each course component. Each element is given a point value of 1 to 3 that is used in the scoring of the course standard. An instructional designer or faculty member developing a course can use the rubric not only as a peer review of their course but to guide them in the development process. Institutions and faculty benefit from the peer review process through improved consistency and rigor of course design, professionalism and commitment to online learning and useful and constructive feedback. It is important to note that less than 50% of courses in a QM-managed review meet the rubric standards upon initial review; however, all meet the requirements after amendment of the site to meet the deficiencies identified in the review.

The Quality Matters Rubric can be found at https://www.qualitymatters.org/rubric. The rubric is copyrighted so the use of the rubric as an individual for one time use is allowed; however, use within an institution would require a subscription to the Quality Matters Program which at the Basic level is $1650.00 per year at the time of the writing of this paper. In the end, the goal of the Quality Matters Process is to improve online instruction to facilitate student learning and ensure institutional quality in the delivery of online content.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The use of the Quality Matters Rubric provides a foundation in which the content, pedagogy and technology of the TPACK framework can be used to examine course design. While the characteristics provided in the discussion on redesign are clearly identified as needed, the Quality Matters Rubric takes the redesign to a new level. Just a quick examination of the list of critical course standards suggests that the use of the TPACK framework could easily support the theoretical research of a faculty member in course design. TPACK can be seen in the design of course objects (content); instructional materials (content); learner interaction and engagement (pedagogy); accessibility (pedagogy) and course technology and learner support (technology) of the QM rubric.

The QM Rubric places a means of self-reflection on a faculty member's course design that can allow for a continuous improvement model that not only informs the faculty member but also informs the university of course design quality. Universities can use this information to begin to develop professional development that embraces the QM Rubric and builds a set of standards for the institutions faculty to meet as they design their online courses. This is of particular importance in that most faculty work alone in the design of their course without an instructional designer, media specialist or pedagogical coach. Through self-reflection on the

interchange of technology, content and pedagogy and how it aligns within the QM Rubric for design of a course, the faculty member may find new and engaging ways to reach students and to engage in active learning in an online environment to improve student learning in their courses.

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