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Welcome to the latest issue of the Journal of Work-Applied Management (JWAM). In 9.1, our first paper is titled as “Exploring a New Division 1 football program on a university campus: an application of collaborative action research in higher education” by Greene, O’Neill and Lhotksy. This work focusses on collaborative action-based research, centred on a university-based football programme, and showcases the positive impact that the collaboration had on its various stakeholders: the university’s sport management faculty, the athletic department and the sport management students.

During the action research process, these stakeholders moved through a cyclical process of reflection, planning, action and evaluation. Through the action-based process that was utilised, all stakeholders were able to learn, adapt, participate and make positive changes. The athletic department made positive changes within their marketing strategy, their game-day operations, the opportunities available for sport management students to participate and learn and the development of their relationship with the sports management faculty.

The study initially aimed to capture fan information surrounding a new football programme, however, the stakeholders quickly realised that the action-based research study had more to offer than simply producing marketing reports for the university athletic department. Inclusion of the students as equal stakeholders in the project has proved vital to student learning and involvement. The students play an important role within each cycle of the project and the consequence of this is that additional networking outside the classroom with potential employers occurs, as well as in-depth discussions and involvement in the classroom when synthesising and disseminating the gathered marketing information.

The collaboration between two separate departments within a higher education institution proved vital to the overall success of this research project and this paper aims to provide a practical approach to collaboration among individuals working in different departments of an organisation, as the findings from this research reveal that the overall success of the project was only possible through collaborating and joining up resources, abilities, areas of expertise and capabilities.

The issue’s second paper, “Organizational commitment: an empirical analysis of personality traits” by Farrukh, Ying and Mansori, investigates the impact of the five-factor model of personality on the organisational commitment of higher educational institutions in Pakistan and adopts quantitative methodologies to measure this impact. The tools used include a structured questionnaire, e-mailed to the faculty members of the social science department of higher education institutes, with software used to interrogate the resultant data.

The findings include indications that extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness are positively linked to affective commitment. The research results have implications for the personality and commitment literature, for example, they provide comprehensive empirical evidence about the dispositional basis of organisational commitment, notably, that the “Big Five” personality traits, as a whole, are significantly associated with organisational commitment.
The findings particularly emphasise the key role of agreeableness in shaping organisational commitment, indeed agreeableness, in the research, is the strongest predictor of both affective commitment and continuance commitment. The authors suggest that agreeableness may be especially relevant for predicting employee outcomes that are reliant on strong interpersonal or social exchange relationships, outcomes which are increasingly critical in employee, group and organisational effectiveness.

The paper concludes that the “Big Five” traits play an important role in understanding employee commitment to an organisation and, consistent with previous studies on personality traits in the workplace, suggests that practitioners will benefit from considering all of the “Big Five” traits in their selection systems.

Continuing with employability issues the next paper, Graham’s “Embedding employability behaviours”, looks at the way in which employability is currently embedded within HE courses to prepare students for their transition into the world of work, and furthermore identifies the teaching and learning strategies employed. A UK university is used here as an example of practice.

The paper includes a useful literature review and analyses experiential data from reports of student work placements over a period of five years. This data are used to determine the relationship of the placements to both academic results and long-term employability. The research reflects on placements from the viewpoints of the university, students and employers, as well as considering the embedding of employability within the teaching curriculum and within teaching and learning strategies for personal professional development courses and the employability passport. The role of “work placement tutor” is also examined.

The paper’s main findings centre on the skills that employers value, which, from this research, seem to be mostly “soft” skills, linked to behaviours, rather than the “hard”, more teachable, skills. According to the author this has implications for the introduction of the UK Teaching Excellence Framework and the provision of suitable metrics. The analysis of findings concludes in the identification of the 4SITE (student, institution, tutor, employer) quartet of actors for employability.

Jayakumar and Joshi’s paper “Rethinking the role of management education in developing a ‘new’ locus of CSR responsibility: an Indian case study” uses a case study to build upon theoretical frameworks and qualitative methods to explore an Indian business school’s management education programme, with regards to corporate social responsibility (CSR).

India is the first country to have mandated compulsory CSR spends through changes in its legislative framework; this paper studies the role of management education in developing individual competencies among the implementers, and impacting effective CSR implementation. The paper demonstrates that the programme in question has impacted outcomes at three levels, by, developing key individual CSR-related competencies, impacting upon participants’ professional performance and influencing effective CSR implementation within organisations. The case study provides a roadmap for other business schools when designing and implementing programmes for CSR professionals.

Baker, Peach and Cathcart investigate “Work-based learning: a learning strategy in support of the Australian Qualifications Framework” and examine the extent to which work-based learning (WBL) could potentially improve education and training pathways in Australia, and ultimately improve outcomes, including career expectations, for learners. The paper reviews education and training provision in Australia by contextualising the Australian Qualification Framework with WBL pedagogy.

An initial action research study, examining the role that WBL can provide for life-long learning, is used. What is revealed is that the application of effective WBL approaches has the potential to create a much larger flow of learners from experiential and vocational
backgrounds into higher education programmes, using a consistent and effective pedagogy. By actively considering the opportunities for learning at work, and through work, learners, educators and business managers will see the demand for WBL. The paper concludes that there is a need for further longitudinal studies to be undertaken around the outcomes of WBL for organisations, individual learners and education and training institutions.

The issue closes with two reviews, first a “Review of the 9th International Conference on Researching Work and Learning” by Garnett; as well as personal reflections on this event the author also usefully includes links which will allow readers to explore the conference papers. The final review is Shepherd’s book review of *Facilitating Work-Based Learning: A Handbook for Tutors* (Helyer, 2016).

**Ruth Helyer**
Exploring a new Division 1 football program on a university campus

An application of collaborative action research in higher education

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper is an account of collaborative action-based research that centered on a new NCAA Division I football program at a regional southeastern university, and the positive impacts the collaboration had on the multiple stakeholders involved in the research, which were the university’s sport management faculty, the athletic department, and sport management students. The paper aims to discuss these issues.

Design/methodology/approach – During the action research, these stakeholders moved through a cyclical process that involved reflection, planning, action, and evaluation. Through the action-based cyclical process that was utilized, each of these stakeholders were able to learn, adapt, participate, and make positive change.

Findings – Positive change occurred with the athletic department’s marketing efforts and game day operations, opportunities for sport management students to participate and learn, and development of relationships between two departments.

Research limitations/implications – The cyclical nature of this research model often leads to original hypotheses and research foci to be highly altered during various stages. Another limitation within collaborative action research can be the breakdown in communication among the many parties involved in carrying out this type of research.

Practical implications – While the significance of this study was initially to capture fan information surrounding a new NCAA Division I football program, the stakeholders quickly realized that the action-based research study had more to offer than producing marketing reports for the university athletic department. Inclusion of the students as equal stakeholders in this project proved vital to student learning and involvement. Having the students play such an important role throughout each cycle of the project allowed for additional networking outside the classrooms with potential employers, as well as in-depth discussions and involvement in the classroom when synthesizing and disseminating the marketing information that had been gathered.

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Originality/value – The collaboration between two separate departments within a higher education institution was vital to the overall success of the research project. The overall intent of this paper is to provide a practical approach to collaboration among individuals working in different departments of an organization, as the findings from this research project revealed the overall success of the project was only possible through the collaborative effort and joining resources, abilities, areas of expertise, and capabilities.

Keywords Higher education, Collaboration, Football, Sport marketing, Action research

Paper type Viewpoint

Introduction
The academic field of sport management has always thrived on its ability to create authentic learning experiences and produce professionals who are devoted to interdependent relationships between the community and various sporting organizations (Hoye et al., 2015). As a result of authenticity inherently built in to the world of sports management, it becomes imperative that research in the field revolves around action, participation, and human interaction (Morse and McEvoy, 2014). Specifically, sport management’s “subject matter is comprised of human processes and experiences that are reflected in thoughts, emotions, and purposeful behaviors which are shaped by the dynamic flux of social life” (Brustad, 2009, p. 112). Being in such a human-driven field, it is vital that continual examination explores the impact human actions and perceptions have on management and administration of sport (Morse and McEvoy, 2014). Due to the fact that human interactions are the cornerstone of university sport management education, it becomes vital to make sure sports management students are provided opportunities for authentic learning experiences that focus on student involvement and diverse human interactions (Astin, 1999; Braxton et al., 2000).

Throughout the action research process of this study, the research team utilized a cyclical process of reflection, planning, action, and observation to obtain information about fan behavior (Bradbury-Huang, 2010). Human interactions and collaborative experiences drove the methodology of this study, with the intention of data collected to ultimately influence participation, action initiatives, and change related to a new university football program in the southeastern region of the USA. The faculty designed the project in a way that student learning would occur in a collaborative way through student-student interaction, student-faculty interaction, as well as networking with professionals in their field with in the athletic department. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to bring attention to the execution of a collaborative action research study that focused on fan behavior associated with new NCAA Division I football program; examine the impact the collaboration had on the three diverse stakeholders involved in the process (sport management faculty, sport management students, and the university athletic department); and to specifically highlight the benefits sports management students derived from being active, and equal, contributors to the research process throughout the study.

This study offers a unique perspective and insight to sport management faculty, university athletic department employees, as well as sport management students; as each stakeholder derived very different experiences and knowledge as a result of this collaborative action research study. University athletic departments and sport management programs do not always work together, thus this study provides an example of the effectiveness and feasibility of such collaboration between the parties.

Action research
One research methodology that exemplifies the “learn-by-doing” principles in sport management is that of action research. Action research is a systematic approach toward the investigation of a particular event, occurrence, or experience that brings about some form of change (Stringer, 2007; Bradbury-Huang, 2010). “Unlike traditional experimental/scientific
research that looks for generalizable explanations that might be applied to all contexts, action research focuses on specific situations and localized solutions” (Stringer, 2007, p. 1). Researchers can use action research to approach authentic experiences, explore new innovations, and find meaning in diverse social science topics. Thus, the underlining emphasis of action research is that understanding is only possible through action, and that practice is what legitimizes theory (Bradbury-Huang, 2010).

Action research is widely accepted as a collaborative approach toward systematically investigating and inquiring, and then taking action toward a specific problem (Stringer, 2007; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992). The model of action research is often referred to as a series of action cycles. The four major components of an action cycle are: formulating a plan based on a need or a problem, acting and implementing on the agreed upon plan, observing and collecting data on the particular phenomena, and reflecting on the process for future revisions (see Figure 1). Researchers use this cyclical process to explore the details of particular phenomena, or action, through observation, reflection, and action (Thathong et al., 2009).

Much of the action research literature supports the notion that this bottom-up style of research inherently has complications along the way. As is the case in other linear research models, action research is not always a clean process that allows for step-by-step navigation (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992). Researchers will “find themselves working backward through the routines, repeating processes, revising procedures, rethinking interpretations, leapfrogging steps or stages, and sometimes making radical changes in direction” (Stringer, 2007, p. 9). Though often times a complex process, action research is an authentic and self-reflective way for individuals to formulate effective solutions to numerous social science problems.

Another major principle within action research is that of social and personal interactions (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). Respect among individual thoughts, ideas, and reflections in the pursuit for knowledge and information is a major commonality among action researchers. “Working collaboratively with others leads not only to community and organizational changes, but also to personal changes in the action researcher” (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003, p. 14). Much of the action research literature emphasizes quality social and personal interactions that stem from the following:

- establishing and maintaining positive working relationships that promote equity, encourage collaborative and creative efforts, and are sensitive to each other’s thoughts and beliefs;
- communication among all parties that facilitates understanding, truth, and sincerity toward attainment of the overall group objectives;

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**Figure 1.**

Action research plan cycle

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*Source: Adapted from Stringer (2007), Kemmis and McTaggart (1992), Zuber-Skerritt (2001)*
active engagement and participation in all aspects of the research process; and

inclusion of all parties in the research process to seek maximization of involvement (Stringer, 2007; Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992).

**Limitations**

Since action-based research is focused on a systematic approach that is designed to bring about some form of change, this type of research has inherent limitations. One such limitation is the unforeseen circumstances that arise during studies employing this research model. The cyclical nature of this research model often leads to original hypotheses and research foci to be highly altered during various stages. Another limitation within collaborative action research can be the breakdown in communication among the many parties involved in carrying out this type of research. It is important to note the limitations, as researchers are not always involved in research that is constantly evolving for the purpose of creating change.

In an effort to address these limitations, research teams need to be proactive in planning and communication efforts. Unforeseen circumstances cannot be forecasted in action research and plans may need to change immediately. One strategy to combat this issue would be for the research team to establish an open line of communication as well as a hierarchy of decision making among the collaborating parties, in an effort to expedite change quickly. Communication is often an issue in action research, especially when multiple parties are collaborating on one study. Establishing well-defined roles for each party involved would allow for more direct communication with the appropriate parties and potentially eliminate communication errors.

**A higher education application of action research**

Many years in the making, the Fall of 2015 was the inaugural season for a new NCAA Division I football program at (disclosed university name). Discussions regarding the new football program and research collaboration between the athletic department and the sport management program began in the Summer of 2015, just prior to the first season. The research team included sport management faculty and students as well as the university athletic department.

The research team engaged in collaborative action-based research for this project, which involved moving through a cyclical process that involved reflection, planning, action, and evaluation within two major phases. Phase I of this project emphasized data collection of attending fan demographics, geographics, and psychographics. This data were collected at each home football game within the inaugural season. Each cycle of the action-based process allowed for ongoing learning experiences for each party, with continual adjustments needed along the way. The change that resulted from the learning and research process positively impacted the sport management faculty, university athletic department, and sport management students.

Though data collection of attending fans (demographics, geographics, and psychographics) was the emphasis of the research agenda at the start of the process, it became evident early on to the research team that there was an opportunity, and need, for a second research agenda (i.e. Phase II). The decision to have an extension of the research agenda came as a direct result of the action research process. Initial results from Phase I revealed fan needs that could immediately be addressed in an effort to increase overall game day satisfaction. These needs prompted the research team to launch a more in-depth survey about fan perceptions of game day and overall satisfaction in their game day experiences. Phase II of the research agenda included an online survey that reached beyond the attending home game fan base (i.e. Phase I), and surveyed fan experiences of season ticket holders and
consumers of any of the university’s athletic programs. The action-based cyclical research approach played an important role in revealing the need for a Phase II.

Success for this collaborative action research was delimited by the authors in the following areas: in total, 991 land-based surveys were collected during tailgating at home football games; game day data analysis and charts provided immediate information following each home game, information that was used by local athletic administration to enhance efforts to recruit fans in future games; sport management students had opportunities to become equal party members of the research team, gaining valuable experience in planning, data collecting, and data analysis; research materials were used in the sports management classroom to further engage students in the research process, as well as foster discussion about fan behaviors in a context that was relevant to their own personal community; an overall improvement of working relationships within the two departments; immediate game day operation information for the sport marketing team to review; and the football coaching staff were provided access to post-game data regarding their fan base demographics and overall support of the new football program.

Student involvement theory applied to higher education
A secondary focus of this action research project was increasing student involvement, inside and outside the classroom. Many studies have been conducted on the relationship between student learning and level of student involvement. These studies suggest that the more involved in the academic experience the students are, the more likely they are to achieve greater academic success and satisfaction with the university (Astin, 1999; Terenzini et al., 1994).

Astin (1999) defined involvement as both physical and psychological energy students devote to their academic disciplines. Student involvement has been proven to foster relationships, create more effective educational programming, and increase retention at universities. The classroom takes on an important role in regard to the actions listed above. Specifically, the direct influence of classroom-based academic experiences of students on withdrawal decisions (Nora et al., 1996).

The design of this project was not only to collect information about the fans of a new football program, but to also increase student involvement through action-based research. From being involved in the planning process, to information gathering and surveying, in addition to data analysis and creation of reports, the sport management students were vital to the success of this project.

Methods
Throughout the research process, the team utilized each of the four aspects of an action research cycle (planning, acting, observing, and reflecting). Phase I utilized the action research cycle, and as a result, changes were implemented along the way to aid in the success of the overall research project, and demonstrating a need to employ a Phase II of the project (i.e. online survey). This section will detail how the research team was able to utilize the four-part cycle to achieve the level of success desired for each party.

Phase I: survey of fan perception of new football program
Reflection. For this research project, it was imperative that more than one unit come together in order for sport management to fulfill their vision of student involvement, learning, and change through action research of the new D1 football program. It was also vital that the athletic department engaged in collaboration in order to fulfill their visions of creating the surveys, collecting data at each home game, and having immediate access to the data after each data collection series. When both parties laid out their goals of this project, a process of
dividing responsibilities occurred. It was through the reflection stages in the action-based research model that both departments concluded this would be a fluid project with constant adjustment and change throughout the research and data collection process.

In the initial reflection stage, both departments shared goals and learning objectives that each aspired to derive from this research project. Specifically, the sport management faculty was seeking a rich action-based research opportunity for their students to engage in and learn from. The sport management faculty was also seeking involvement in this research project to add to the overall body of knowledge in the field of sport management; answering the question of how action-based research results in adaptation, learning, and change, both within the sport management department and athletic department.

In comparison, the university athletic department approached the initial reflection process with an agenda that sought specific data on fan perceptions of their new football program. From a sport business perspective, they looked at this action-based research project as a way to obtain important information about the new football program’s fan base and other demographic data that would aid in marketing efforts, as well as overall program identification for the first season. The athletic department sought information about fan identity, economic benefits, loyalty to the new program, and overall community support. Though both departments approached the early stages of the process with different objectives, a partnership with pooled ideas and resources would ultimately lead to efforts that would be found beneficial for all parties involved.

**Planning**

*Survey creation.* Both departments met on several occasions to decide on a list of survey items that would best address the desired information. Due to the unique research collaboration opportunity present with the creation of a new football program, both departments submitted an equal number of questions they regarded as necessary for the survey, some of which came directly from sport management student suggestions. Additional meetings resulted in decreasing the number of questions and finalizing the survey, an instrument aimed at seeking fan demographic information and perception of fan identity.

The research team solicited sport management students to help collect data during tailgating of all home games in the inaugural season using iPads with built-in survey software. This presented a unique opportunity for sport management students to apply what they had learned about action-based research in a professional setting, as well as gain experience in data collection, face-to-face solicitation, and professionalism. During the initial planning stage, incentives were considered for participants in the study (e.g., fan gear), but overlooked for student volunteers collecting the data. This observation led to future action that added incentives for the sport management student data collectors as a means of motivation.

*Action and observation*  

*Research software.* The sport management program used iPad tablets available for data collection as well as access to online research software that would allow for quick and easy upload from the tablets to statistical software hosted on faculty computers. Managing of all the land-based data, as well as data transfer, was through the iSurvey software by the sport management faculty. Graduate sport management students were able to learn the capabilities of this software and start initial data analysis and creation of reports for the athletic department.

*Training volunteers.* Training the student volunteers by sports management faculty occurred multiple times as the volunteer list of students did not remain the same throughout
the season. Students were brought into a classroom setting and given a brief overview of the research project and its importance to the university, athletics, sport management, and to them as students. Then students were each given a tablet with the survey uploaded. Sport management faculty went through each question of the survey to ensure all were aware of how the questions were to be asked and how to navigate in the tablet.

Data collection. Permission about collecting data outside the stadium was obtained through the stadium manager, since the university played home games off-campus at a local high school stadium while the campus stadium was being built. Student data collectors were informed that they could only collect in the designated tailgating areas. Data collection would start approximately two hours before the game and students were given a goal of no less than 20 completed surveys for undergraduate students and no less than 25 completed surveys for graduate students.

Retrieving data. After the data had been collected on the ten tablets, the faculty member overseeing the project would then immediately upload data to the laptop. The iSurvey program had many features that the faculty used to help analyze data for the sport management department, athletic department, and sport management students. A few of those features included charting of data, sorting of data, and uploading data from the website to other statistical programs such as SPSS or Excel.

Observation and further reflection

Data analysis/report data. The day after a home football game the faculty member used the iSurvey software to produce a visual and numerical data summary. The charts and figures provided visual reports of each survey item, information that was deemed highly beneficial for both the athletic department and faculty members using the data in the classroom. Faculty also used the iSurvey software to sort longitudinal data across all home games and to seek trends within the data. Athletics then used this information to produce presentations for the athletic directors, marketing teams, and ticketing offices. Once the athletic department performed their data analysis, reports were then re-sent to the sport management faculty for review and discussion. Students were involved in data analysis in the classroom setting. This allowed for critical thinking, information seeking, and application of content; in an effort to produce valid and relevant reports.

After the completion of the football season, a meeting between sport management faculties, selected sports management students, and representatives from the athletic department devised a plan that included a follow-up longitudinal study for the succeeding football seasons. A plan was constructed to continue the partnership between the two departments with each providing similar responsibilities and duties.

Phase II: online survey of fan experiences

Reflection and planning. Throughout the process of data analysis, it became evident to both departments that there was a need for an implementation of a Phase II of the research agenda. This required the creation of a second survey that would be administered online and would reach beyond game day attendees. This survey focused on the fan experience and overall satisfaction with the game day experience. The athletic department utilized its consumer database to send out e-mails to the university athletic supporters, alumni of the athletic department, season ticket holders, and current ticket holders.

Action and observation. The Phase II survey was created in SurveyMonkey through the university athletic department. The athletic department solicited any fan or alumni on their e-mail registry to complete a survey about fan experience. These e-mail blasts were sent three times throughout the inaugural season; after the initial game, after homecoming, and after the conclusion of the football season. The research team received 455 completed
surveys for Phase II. Information from this data set was able to be used by the university athletic department to analyze fan experiences and seek trends, in order to create positive change in upcoming seasons.

**Results of the action research process**

This action-based research study impacted three main groups of stakeholders of this university. Utilization of the action research cyclical methodology allowed this study to change and evolve throughout the process. The ability to revise the plan, and immediately put revised changes into action allowed for greater learning outcomes for each department. The type of impact varied greatly among the groups, but each resulted in being positively affected by the collaborative efforts that took place throughout this action-based research study of a new D1 football program. The three main groups impacted were sport management faculty, sport management students (both graduate and undergraduate), and the university athletic department. Strategically utilizing strengths and resources from each of these three groups allowed the research team to successfully collect data at each home game. This effort resulted in a sample size of 991 for the land-based survey, and 455 for the online survey. Without the collaboration of all three groups this study would not have been as successful and would not have had the opportunity to impact such a large number of stakeholders at this university.

**Action research impact on sports management faculty.** The collaborative nature of this study, encompassed with the action-based research method, allowed the sport management faculty to gain valuable experiences in several areas. First, the faculty was charged with the creation of the research tool, which initially was one land-based survey. Throughout the cyclical research process, the research team discovered the need for a second survey that was administered online. The land-based survey focused largely on demographics, geographics, and psychographics, with the online survey focusing on fan perception. The creation of the surveys were learning experiences, as both the sport management faculty and the athletic department worked together to create research tools that fit the needs of both parties. Through the action research model, the sport management faculty was able to revise the initial plan of one survey and saw the need for additional information to be collected. Specifically, the sport management faculty was more interested in the fan base and fan perceptions, while the athletic department was initially more interested in the demographic information. Working through each of the action research stages, the research team was able to make adjustments that resulted in additional learning and positive change. The information produced from the online survey was of great use to the sport management faculty both in the classroom and from a professional aspect.

The faculty also arranged the methodology of collecting the land-based surveys on tablets. One of the greatest benefits derived from the faculty was in the initial phases of the research study when programming the tablets and the education of a new research survey platform. Faculty had to install and learn a software program which neither departments had previous exposure, and then program to ten different tablets and a laptop. Upon successfully completing this task, the faculty felt more confident in administering and collecting data using the tablets. This process enabled sport management faculty to learn a new software program and offered a new up-to-date method of data collection in future research projects.

A third impact of this study had on the sport management faculty was involvement across campus. Through this collaborative effort the faculty became more active within the athletic department, attending meetings, brainstorming future projects, and learning of internships and volunteer opportunities within the athletic department. The faculty began to see the importance of these two departments working together on sport-related topics...
outside of research agendas. It was through this impact, that the faculty was then able to bring in a third party to collaborate, the sport management students. Through relationships that were built between the sport management and the athletic departments, opportunities began to arise for sport management students seeking to gain experience in the field of collegiate athletics.

**Action research impact on sports management students.** Both the graduate and undergraduate students were positively impacted by the collaboration that took place between the two departments. One of the greatest benefits resulted from the action-based research model that allowed the students to actively engage with both departments in the execution of the research project. The students were able to foster relationships with individuals in the athletic department, resulting in administration from the athletic department guest lecturing in the classrooms. These relationships offered additional opportunities for the students to volunteer at the football games, as well as engage in semester-long internships within the athletic offices. Some of the responsibilities the sport management students engaged in were game day operations, marketing, ticket sales, and promotion. Through the collaboration of departments to execute a research project, an added benefit of providing students with invaluable experience had a profound impact on the sport management program. The students were learning by hands-on experience in their chosen field and were given the opportunity to handle responsibility in the professional field of sport management.

Faculty specifically designed parts of this study with student involvement and learning in mind. Faculty knew the importance of involvement and engagement both inside and outside the classroom setting, and therefore offered multiple avenues for these learning opportunities to occur. Some examples of student involvement were review of the survey and in-class discussions, actively collecting data and working home game events, engagement in data analysis and relevant information for producing reports, and collaborative opportunities with athletics from relationships that were formed throughout the process.

A total of 31 students, both graduate and undergraduate, signed up to aid in this research process. The sport management faculty surveyed each of the sports management student involved to gain a better understanding of overall impact this research project had on each volunteer. Results from the sports management surveys revealed that the students benefited in many ways from this experience. A list of the student survey questions and results can be found in Table I.

Table I indicates that learning outcomes and valuable experiences were derived from student involvement in this research project. These results also specially align with literature supporting experiential learning theory and student involvement theory; in that learning occurs in students when they are actively learning (Astin, 1999; Kruger et al., 2015; Kolb and Kolb, 2011, 2005). Qualitative feedback from the sports management student displayed that they found this opportunity: provided a unique setting to learning about research in sport management; experience with data collection and market research; brought about additional volunteer opportunities in the athletic department; and they felt this was a quality research experience to add to their professional resume. This is of particular importance as literature suggests that research in the sport business industry is on the rise, and students with research experience are more likely to get hired by sport agencies (Morgan, 2015; Madan and Teitge, 2013).

**Action research impact on university athletic department.** The athletic department also derived many benefits from this research collaboration. First, they gained instant access to reports and files that included all the weekly data collected at each home game. One way this information was utilized was through visual reports created for use in staff meetings following each home game. Through the collaborative work between the programs, sport
management faculty were able to send the initial data analysis and quick charts immediately following each home game. This part of the process allowed this information to be available to the university athletic department before they debriefed each football game day. Obtaining this information in a timely manner was valuable to the university athletic department so change could be implemented, if needed, before the following home game.

A second benefit of this collaborative process to athletics was the type of information being collected. The information the sport management students were collecting, via the surveys, and the amount of surveys the students were collecting, provided adequate amounts of information for the athletic department to be able to identify trends and make change if needed. For example, the survey results indicated a high percentage of families with children in attendance of the first home game. The sport marketing team, a sub-division within the athletic department, immediately implemented more kid friendly activities in the tailgating areas for the remaining home games in order to accommodate this fan base. Without immediate access to the data, the athletic department may not have been able to make this adjustment for this large fan base.

A third benefit to the athletic department is the implications this relevant data will provide for the football program in the future. As stated by the university athletic director, (disclosed athletic director name), “I can’t tell you how much the surveys that you and your students developed and implemented for our home football games have helped us plan for the future. By mining relevant data, you gave us the ability to understand our fan base and much better service them while also developing strategies to maximize revenues. I appreciate the sport management department’s enthusiasm for collaboration and think there will be many opportunities in the future to work together. Thanks to you and all your students.”

Complications throughout the process
As with most action research projects, unforeseen circumstances arise. This study was no different as researchers thoroughly examined each step of the cyclical process and made adjustments when needed. One of the early hurdles was initial student involvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey item</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Average/SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) I feel exposure to this research opportunity increased my knowledge of</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>the overall research process in sport</td>
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<td>(2) This was a productive way to learn about sport research outside of the</td>
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<td>classroom setting</td>
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<td>(3) This volunteer opportunity helped me become more confident approaching</td>
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<td>fans and asking for participation</td>
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<td>(4) Utilizing technology made this experience more exciting by collecting</td>
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<td>data on tables</td>
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<td>(5) Incentives that were offered to volunteers motivated me to participate</td>
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<tr>
<td>(6) This volunteer opportunity opened doors with Athletics for additional</td>
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<tr>
<td>work experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>(7) Overall, I feel this is an experience I can add to my resume and will</td>
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<tr>
<td>be beneficial as I seek a job in the field of sport</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table I. Sports management student volunteer survey results of overall perception of research experience
Student involvement theories had been researched prior to the study and the faculty was confident that this project would offer valuable experiences to the students. However, after the initial excitement of the project, student volunteers and classroom discussions were insufficient. The faculty better educated the sport management students on the type of learning experiences they would gain by being active participants both inside and outside the classroom. This approach was successful in obtaining student involvement.

Another complication of this project that was overcome was application for the graduate students who were meeting online for course work. To combat this issue, select graduate students were asked to visit an undergraduate marketing class to aid in information synthesizing and lead discussions with undergraduate students about the marketing information they had collected.

Discussion and conclusions
As evident by the results discussed above, together the collaboration efforts and action-based research method greatly influenced the success of this study. The authors distinguished the success of this methodological approach among the three groups that worked collaboratively throughout this process: the university athletic department, sport management program, and sport management students. Through the action-based cyclical process that was utilized, each of these stakeholders were able to learn, adapt, participate, and make positive change. Learning and change were not isolated to the athletic department as one might assume, rather all of the groups involved were positively impacted by the action-based research. Each of the following areas experienced change as a result of this study: the athletic department’s marketing efforts and gameday operations, opportunities for sport management students to participate and learn, and development of relationships between two departments.

One of the most important findings from this collaborative study was the increased student involvement and opportunities presented which allowed for deeper learning of sport marketing content. Astin states that student involvement is a key component to student success at a university. Studies have shown that the greater the student involvement, both inside and outside the classroom; the more likely learning outcomes were obtained and student understanding of the content was greater (Braxton et al., 2000; Tinto, 1998). Faculty found this project to offer multiple opportunities for student involvement, including increased student-student interactions, student-faculty interactions, and student-professionals interactions. These opportunities would not have been afforded to the students without the collaborative nature of this project.

While the significance of this study was initially to capture fan information surrounding a new NCAA Division I football program, the stakeholders quickly realized the action-based research study had more to offer than producing marketing reports for the university athletic department. Inclusion of the students as equal stakeholders in this project proved vital to student learning and involvement. Having the students play such an important role throughout each cycle of the project allowed for additional networking outside the classrooms with potential employers, as well as in-depth discussions and involvement in the classroom when synthesizing and disseminating the marketing information that had been gathered. Braxton et al. (2011) state that providing active learning experiences for students will deepen not only their learning of the material but will also deepen their sense of community and connection with the University. Through this action-based research project, the faculty is confident that they provided such an experience to the students.

In conclusion, the results from this study fall in line with the previous research relating to the importance of collaborative action research in the field of sport management (Morse and McEvoy, 2014; Stringer, 2007). Brustad (2009) states, sport management's
subject matter is comprised of human processes and experiences that are reflected in thoughts, emotions, and purposeful behaviors which are shaped by the dynamic flux of social life” (p. 112). The research team utilized the action-based cyclical process to address the human processes and experiences that influence and impact the study of such a human-driven field. The impacts of this study were positive and created a research environment full of learning, participation, and change. Implications from this study include a more broad understanding of how multiple organizations can work together in an effort to more efficiently meet the needs of each stakeholder. While the present study focused on a university setting, the information presented can be transferred to many sport management organizations in an effort to encourage collaboration and action research to create change within organizations.

References


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Organizational commitment: an empirical analysis of personality traits

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of five-factor model of personality on organizational commitment in the higher educational institutes of Pakistan.

Design/methodology/approach – Quantitative methodology was adopted to measure the impact of personality on organizational commitment. A structured questionnaire was e-mailed to the faculty members of the social science department of higher education institutes. SmartPLS software was used to run the structural equation modeling technique.

Findings – The findings showed that extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are positively linked to affective commitment (AC), and neuroticism and openness has negative association with AC. Furthermore, extroversion and agreeableness were found to be negatively linked to continuance commitment. A negative link between neuroticism and continuance commitment while no relationship between conscientiousness, openness, and continuance commitment was found.

Research limitations/implications – Results have several implications for the personality and commitment literature. First, study provided comprehensive empirical evidence regarding the dispositional basis of organizational commitment notably; the authors found that the Big Five personality traits as a whole are significantly associated with organizational commitment. Second, the current findings underscore the role of agreeableness in shaping organizational commitment. Agreeableness was the strongest predictor of both AC and continuance commitment. Agreeableness may be especially relevant for predicting employee outcomes that are reliant on strong interpersonal or social exchange relationships. As such outcomes are becoming more and more critical in employee, group, and organizational effectiveness.

Originality/value – In general, findings show that Big Five traits play an important role in understanding employee commitment to the organization. Consistent with previous studies on personality traits in the workplace, practitioners will benefit from considering all of the Big Five traits in their selection systems.

Keywords Structural equation modelling, Organizational commitment, SmartPLS, Big Five personality traits, Higher educational institutes

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

In human resource management, not only is organizational commitment one of the most widely studied topics, it also poses a deep concern in organizational psychology due to its link with many employee behaviors and attitudes that has the potential to influence the organization, such as absenteeism (Somers, 1995), turnover (Jaros, 1997; Jehanzeb et al., 2013) and organizational citizenship behavior (Zayas et al., 2015).
Multiple definitions of organizational commitment have been proposed, they all consider commitment as a psychological state that describes an employee's relationship with their organization and a propensity to continue the relationship with the organization (Hackney, 2012; Meyer et al., 1997). Organizational commitment is commonly defined as a "psychological link between the employee and his or her organization that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization" (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

Affective commitment (AC) and continuance commitment were the two dimensions chosen among these constructs as the emphasis of the current study as they are most distinguishable from each other, and were discovered to have distinct relations with other relevant variables. Johnson and Chang (2006) defined AC as an identification with, involvement in, and emotional attachment to the organization. On the other hand, continuance commitment refers to commitment based on how the employee recognizes the cost related to quitting the organization, such as loss of benefits and fewer alternatives to employment. Basically, employees who have high AC stay with the organization because they want to, as opposed to employees with high continuance commitment who stay with the organization because they have to (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

1.1 Present study
Due to the considerable influence of organizational commitment on employees and organizations, the emphasis of the present research is placed on what causes an employee to commit to an organization. By discovering the reasons behind commitment, organizations will be able to thrive from the task of effectively fostering a working environment with high commitment among employees. Two categories of predictors were proposed based on past research in studying the antecedents of organizational commitment (Joiner and Bakalis, 2006; Meyer et al., 2002); personal characteristics (e.g. gender, age, and employment tenure) and job-related factors (e.g. organizational characteristics, work situations, and employees' work experiences). In this research, the “Big Five” personality traits serve as the focus for personal characteristics (John and Srivastava, 1999).

In studying the findings related to organizational commitment, although the antecedents have been frequently studied, most were conducted in western contexts, particularly in the USA and Canada; thus, the number of studies from other countries are relatively few (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

Therefore, research on organizational commitment in an international setting is both timely and worthwhile for this study. Meyer and Allen (1997) claimed that “a systematic investigation of the meaning and outcomes of organizational commitment across cultures is needed in order to assess the generalizability of research findings”(Meyer et al., 1997). In view of Pakistan’s unique cultural traditions and extensive economic restructurings during the past 30 years, the country provides a good research setting to explore employees' organizational commitment. Thus, the aim of this research was to explore the relationship between employees' personality traits and organizational commitment, particularly on AC and continuance commitment in Pakistani higher educational institutes.

2. Literature review
2.1 Relationship between the Big Five and organizational commitment
2.1.1 Big Five personality traits. In organizational psychology, there has been a clear resurgence in personality research since the early 1990s (Barrick et al., 1998). One particular focus was on identifying the role personality testing plays in employee selection and applying various personality assessments in the workplace (Sears and Rowe, 2003).

Within the last 20 years, the Big Five or five-factor model of personality emerged one of the most extensively established frameworks used to describe the most striking aspects of
an individual's personality (Digman, 1990; Judge et al., 2002). Empirical evidence across different theoretical frameworks, measures, occupation, cultures, and sources of ratings had strongly support its validity (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Liao et al., 2004; Matzler et al., 2008).

The Big Five model advocates that nearly all personality traits can be reduced to five broad factors, which are often called extraversion (sociable vs introverted), agreeableness (cooperative vs competitive), conscientiousness (organized and conscientious vs disorganized and careless), neuroticism (emotional stability vs instability), and openness (intellectual curiosity vs preference for routine, Judge et al., 1999). Smith and Canger (2004, p. 468) highlighted several reasons for the importance of this model: “(1) it permits the sorting of personality characteristics into meaningful categories, (2) it provides a common framework and vernacular for doing research, and (3) it is supposed to cover virtually all of the personality space.”

More precisely, according to Ehrhart (2006) and Bozionelos (2004), extraversion includes attributes of sociability, affiliation, and gregariousness along with the degree to which individuals are assertive, dominant, and experience positive affect. Agreeableness encompasses characteristics such as altruism, cooperation, and warmth, whereby those high in this trait are more oriented toward serving and helping others. One of the main characteristics of conscientiousness is dependability. These individuals normally possess a sense of duty, and are organized and efficient. Individuals who tend to interpret experiences in a negative light fall under the neuroticism dimension, though this is often referred to in the light of emotional instability. Its characteristics include excessive worry, low confidence, and pessimism. Finally, openness encompasses the extent of an individual’s reflectiveness, curiosity, creativity, originality, imagination, unconventionality, independence, and acceptance of diversity.

In literature, a large number of past studies have shown that the Big Five personality traits have a strong relation to job-related attitudes and behaviors (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Judge et al., 2002; Tett et al., 1991). For example, Barrick and Mount (1991) discovered that extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness have a correlation with job performance, and that the strongest and most valid predictor across all work groups and job-related criteria is conscientiousness. In a more recent study, Farrukh et al. (2016) found a positive association of extraversion, openness to experiences, and emotional stability with intrapreneurial behavior, while a negative impact of conscientiousness, agreeableness on intrapreneurial behavior was recorded (Farrukh et al., 2016). Past research has also found the link between extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism with career success (Judge et al., 1999). Additionally, neuroticism was previously found to have a significant link to an individual’s intention to staying in organization (Morrison, 1997). In more recent study, extraversion, openness to new experiences, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness have been found to have significant effects on employee job satisfaction (Kiarie et al., 2017).

Although many fields of job-related attitudes and behaviors had been researched in the light of the Big Five model, the understanding of the model’s relation with organizational commitment had been given minimal attention. The next two sections focus on the correlation between the Big Five, AC and continuance commitment, and highlight the hypotheses of the present study.

2.1.2 Big Five and AC. AC refers to “an emotional attachment to an organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in, the organization” (Allen et al., 1990). Thus, employees who remain with an organization because they want to are identified to have a strong AC (Allen and Meyer, 1996). For employees, enhanced feelings of devotion, belongingness, and stability are among the positive factors influencing this type of commitment (Meyer et al., 1993).

Extraversion. The characteristics of individuals high in extraversion are sociableness, gregariousness, assertiveness, talkativeness, and being active (Barrick and Mount, 1991).
Extraversion can be related to the idea of affectivity, which is “an emotion-based trait dimension (Watson et al., 1988) that creates a cognitive bias through which individuals approach and understand experiences and may affect how they experience and evaluate jobs” (Naquin and Holton, 2002). Affectivity has two directions: positive and negative. Positive affectivity refers to the tendency to experience positive emotional states, whereas alternatively, negative affectivity is the tendency to experience negative emotional states (Naquin and Holton, 2002).

Positive emotionality is considered as the core of extraversion in affectivity research (Erdheim et al., 2006). This means that extravert individuals have the tendency to use positive emotions to express them. Because AC primarily signifies an employee's positive emotional reaction to the organization (Thoresen et al., 2003), the logical assumption is that high extraversion should be linked to higher AC compared to low extraversion. There are several empirical findings which agree with the above assumption (Choi et al., 2015; Erdheim et al., 2006; Syed et al., 2015). Thus, based on the above arguments, it is hypothesized that:

H1. There is a positive relationship between extroversion and AC.

Agreeableness. Agreeableness is an interpersonal factor which refers to the quality of relationships through cooperation and trust (Judge et al., 1999). The tendency to be forgiving, courteous, and flexible in dealing with others is among the characteristics associated with individuals high in this factor. Organ and Lingl (1995, p. 340) argued that agreeableness “involves getting along with others in pleasant, satisfying relationship.” Thus, agreeableness should be linked to emotional warmth. This emotion may encourage their sense of belonging and identification with the values and goals of the organization, which influences the social identity of the employee with their work environment. Some empirical findings have supported this assumption. For example, Morrison (1997) reported that agreeableness was significantly correlated with overall organizational commitment ($r = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$). In a more recent study, Choi et al. (2015) discovered a positive association between agreeableness and AC.

Based on these arguments, it may be assumed that individuals high in agreeableness will have high AC. Thus, the following hypothesis was examined in the present research:

H2. There is a positive relationship between agreeableness and AC.

Conscientiousness. Dependability, industriousness, and efficiency form the basic components of conscientiousness, and those high in this dimension may tend to be persevering, hard-working, and achievement oriented (Ciavarella et al., 2004). The assumption that conscientious individuals may be more likely to experience high AC may be due to several reasons. First, past research had discovered an association between conscientiousness and a generalized job involvement tendency (Organ and Lingl, 1995). Therefore, it is likely that conscientiousness may increase the degree of employee involvement in the organization through engagement with their job; thus they are more likely to be affectively committed to the organization.

As previously defined, conscientiousness is related to characteristics such as hard work, achievement orientation, and perseverance (Digman and Takemoto-Choock, 1981; Peabody and Goldberg, 1989). These are comparable to the components of AC, which focus on identification with, and emotional attachment to, the organization. Past studies had also empirically confirmed the positive correlation between conscientiousness and AC (Choi et al., 2015; Matzler et al., 2011).

Based on the discussion above, this research tests the following hypothesis:

H3. There is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and AC.
Neuroticism. Like extraversion, neuroticism is a prominent trait in personality psychology, as highlighted by its presence in nearly every measure of personality (Costa and McCrae, 1988; Judge et al., 1999). The trait includes attributes such as pessimism, excessive worry, low confidence, and tendencies to experience negative emotions (Bozionelos, 2004). Due to its fundamentally negative nature, it was argued that individuals high in this factor are more likely to “develop negative attitudes and behaviours towards their work” (Bozionelos, 2004, p. 70). Neuroticism was identified as the main source of negative affectivity in past affectivity research and both can also be used interchangeably both in theory and measurement (Wong et al., 2015). As van den Berg and Feij (2003, p. 327) stressed, “The affective dispositions of negative and positive affectivity can be best compared to neuroticism and extraversion, respectively.” Past studies had recognized the negative link between neuroticism and AC (Kumar and Bakhshi, 2010). In a study of national differences in organizational commitment, Gelade et al. (2006) also discovered that nations with lower neuroticism had higher AC. In summary, this study posed that:

H4. There is a negative relationship between neuroticism and AC.

Openness. “Openness is related to receptivity of new ideas, inventiveness, multiplicity of interests, flexibility of thought, and the tendency to develop idealistic ideas and goals” (Bozionelos, 2004, p. 71). Openness was the only factor that commonly displayed very weak connection to occupational outcomes compared to other Big Five dimensions (Matzler and Renzl, 2007). Based on this finding, DeNeve and Cooper (1998, p. 199) explained that “openness is a double-edged sword” that “predisposes an individual to feel both the good and the bad more deeply, leaving its directional influence on affective reactions like affective commitment unclear.” On the other hand, Lounsbury et al., discovered a significant link between openness and work drive ($r = 0.40, p < 0.01$). “Work drive” is defined as “an enduring motivation to expend time and effort to finish projects, meet deadlines, be productive, and achieve success […] [it included] elements of similar constructs: work values, protestant ethic, job involvement, work involvement, and work centrality”. Based on the logic regarding open individuals’ inclination to participate in work projects, it may be assumed that individuals may develop higher feelings of commitment to projects they own or projects that had their ideas considered. Thus, it is likelier for openness to affect the degree of employees’ AC to their organization. Several recent studies also supported this concept (Choi et al., 2015; Syed et al., 2015). On the basis of above discussion, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H5. There is a positive relationship between openness and AC.

2.1.3 Big Five and continuance commitment. An employee’s consideration of the costs connected to leaving an organization is termed as continuance commitment (Erdheim et al., 2006). This describes employees who stay with the organization due to material benefits or feeling they need to do so (as opposed to wanting to do so) (Meyer et al., 1993). Consequently, employees who observed fewer available practical alternatives will have a stronger continuance commitment to their organization.

Extraversion. Because of extravert individuals’ inclination to be more socially active, they may develop more social networks compared to those low in this dimension (Erdheim et al., 2006; Zimmerman, 2010). There are empirical findings which recognizes that extraverts possess higher levels of networking intensity (the frequency and scope of using networking behaviors) (Eckhardt et al., 2016). Therefore, individuals who score high in extraversion are expected to establish more social networks with other organizations (Zimmerman, 2008). These contacts are then able to assist them to develop
more alternate employment opportunities compared to introverts (Watson and Clark, 1997). As discussed, continuance commitment is linked to the employee’s perceptions of possible alternatives. Continuance commitment becomes weaker to the organization when employees discover more employment alternatives. Therefore, it may be reasonably assumed that individuals who score high in extraversion will have low continuance commitment. The following hypothesis is thus proposed:

H6. There is a negative relationship between extraversion and continuance commitment.

Agreeableness. Erdheim et al. (2006, p. 962) proposed that even though individuals who are characterized by high agreeableness often display proper and respectful work-related behaviors (e.g. cooperation, friendliness, modesty, eagerness to help others); these appropriate behaviors are doubtful to be rewarded as they are expected behaviors. This leads to a decrease in the costs linked to quitting an organization. In a research by Erdheim et al., this argument was stressed by further demonstrating that agreeableness was not related to continuance commitment ($r = 0.02, p > 0.05$) in a sample of American employees. Another study (Khiavi et al., 2015) discovered a negative link between agreeableness and continuance commitment, thus, in the light of these past researches, we proposed following hypothesis:

H7. There is a negative relationship between agreeableness and continuance commitment.

Neuroticism. It is expected that employees scoring high in neuroticism have higher continuance commitment. Past studies have shown that neurotics are highly motivated by and are attracted to hygiene factors, such as job security (permanent job), benefits (good vacation, sick leave, etc.), pay (the amount of money that is paid), and work conditions (comfortable and clean) (Furnham et al., 1999). These employees remain with organizations because of the "side bets" they have invested in the organization (Becker, 1960), which may include remuneration, specificity of skills, work security, and work friends; this additionally serves as the fundamental reasoning for continuing employment. All this would be lost if they make the decision to quit. Hence, it is expected that there is a positive relation between neuroticism and continuance commitment.

There is also empirical evidence on the tendency for neurotic individuals to experience more negative life events compared to other individuals (Magnus et al., 1993), partially because they identify themselves with situations that result in negative affect (Emmons et al., 1985). These findings are directly linked with continuance commitment, which may result from an employee’s dread of the costs of moving on to a new job or organization (Meyer and Allen, 1997). In other words, neurotics may experience higher anxiety about facing a new work environment that may lead to harsher experiences when negative events occur in their jobs (Erdheim et al., 2006). From the above arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8. There is a positive relationship between neuroticism and continuance commitment.

Conscientiousness. Conscientiousness refers to the hard-working, responsible, and achievement-oriented characteristics in an individual (Ciavarella et al., 2004). Conscientious individuals were discovered to have a link to generalized job involvement due to their positive nature toward every role they assume (Organ and Lingl, 1995). In other words, high conscientiousness in individuals tends to result in higher work involvement. Due to this increased job involvement tendency, as Organ and Lingl (1995) highlighted, it is more likely for conscientious employees to obtain satisfying work benefits, both formal (e.g. promotions, pay) and informal (e.g. respect, recognition, feelings of personal accomplishment). It may also be reasonably assumed that these conscientious individuals...
will have higher degrees of continuance commitment due to their tendency to receive such rewards, as it will also increase the costs of leaving the current organization. Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H9. There is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and continuance commitment.

Openness. As discussed, openness is a comprehensive dimension of personality linked to the level of an individual’s unconventionality, curiosity, independence, reflectiveness, creativity, originality, imagination, and acceptance of diversity (Cui, 2010; Moss et al., 2007). No encouraging or definitive evidence were found in past literature on the link between openness and work-related attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction). However, there was a positive link found between openness, turnover (Mayende and Musenze, 2014; Salgado, 2002; Sarwar et al., 2013) and career search (Boudreau et al., 2001). These negative behaviors seem to reduce the degree of an employee’s continuance commitment.

It is more likely for individuals high in openness to experience to focus on the rewards of exploring new opportunities and downplay the costs of leaving their quitting positions. A recent meta-analysis by Fuller and Marler discovered that extraversion and openness to experience have a strong link to proactive personality. These individuals actively search for a variety of new opportunities and more stimulating and complex work experiences; they thus tend to focus on the rewards of getting a job in a new organization as opposed to the costs linked with leaving their current job (Dragoni et al., 2011). Because lack of employment alternatives is a significant factor of continuance commitment, it is plausible to hypothesize that:

H10. There is a negative relationship between openness will and continuance commitment.

3. Methodology
3.1 Participants
The target population is the deans of faculty/schools, professors, associate professors, and assistant professors of state run institutions of higher education located in Islamabad, Pakistan. The sampling procedure is important for insuring the validity of the collected data as well as representation of the population in order to draw generalized conclusions on the entire population (Pedhazur and Schmelkin, 1991). This study utilizes a university faculty/school as a sampling frame which is the list of ultimate sampling entities. The sampling frame has been obtained from 14 state run universities. The survey questionnaires were sent to more than 500 faculty members. A total number of 306 responses were given by the respondents which made the response rate around 61.2 percent.

3.2 Measure
Affective and continuance commitment were measured using two six-item scales that construct the 12-item – two component scales developed by Meyer et al. (1993). This scale has been extensively used in numerous geographical and organizational contexts and has been well accepted for representing high reliability and validity. After deleting items that did not comply with the quality criteria requisite, six-item measure of AC was used.

Sample items for AC included “I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization,” “I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own.”

A six-item measure for continuance commitment developed by Meyer et al. (1993) was utilized to measure continuance commitment level of the employees working in HEIs.
Sample items for continuance commitment, includes, “Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave this organization now.”

To elicit the information about personality traits we used Big Five model of personality measure (Goldberg, 1990). Responses were made on five-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

### 3.3 Data analysis

The current study utilized structural equation modeling. The research used the partial least square (PLS-SEM) tool for the assessments of measurement and structural model with the help of SmartPLS2.0 software (Hair et al., 2016). Big Five personality traits and organizational commitment were formulated as first order reflective constructs.

Evaluation of the model by SmartPLS involves two steps. In the first step, internal consistency, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of measurement model are assessed.

In according to Hock and Ringle, accepted value of CR is 0.60 or greater. Average variance extracted (AVE) is another criterion for the assessment of the measurement model and accepted value of AVE is 0.5 or greater.

The quality criteria given in Tables I and II showed that all the required values were achieved, thus, our measurement model is fit for further processing.

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<td>0.6611</td>
<td>0.854</td>
<td>0.7452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consic2</td>
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<tr>
<td>consic3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>extro1</td>
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<td>0.7349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extro2</td>
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<tr>
<td>extro3</td>
<td>0.8632</td>
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<tr>
<td>extro4</td>
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<tr>
<td>neuro1</td>
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<td>0.9535</td>
<td>0.935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>neuro3</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>neuro4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.6639</td>
<td>0.8868</td>
<td>0.8294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open2</td>
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<tr>
<td>open3</td>
<td>0.8686</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open4</td>
<td>0.8135</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational commitment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ac1</td>
<td>0.7294</td>
<td>0.5638</td>
<td>0.8853</td>
<td>0.8437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ac2</td>
<td>0.7797</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ac3</td>
<td>0.7775</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ac4</td>
<td>0.8471</td>
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<tr>
<td>ac5</td>
<td>0.7117</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ac6</td>
<td>0.6825</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cc1</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cc2</td>
<td>0.7967</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cc3</td>
<td>0.6255</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cc5</td>
<td>0.7984</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I. Quality criteria of model
3.4 Discriminant validity
To assess the discriminant validity we used Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria. Discriminant validity is the degree to which items differentiate among constructs or measure distinct concepts. From Table II, we can see that the values given in diagonals are higher than their correlations with other variables thus providing evidence that discriminant validity is established.

3.5 Structural model assessment and findings
The second step in PLS-SEM is structural model assessment. The relationship of structural model is determined by the path coefficient among the construct of the study (Hair et al., 2016). Critical values for two tailed and one tailed are 1.96 and 1.65, respectively. By the use of bootstrapping function of SmartPLS 2 we calculated the $t$ statistics with 5,000 re-sampling as suggested by Hair et al. (2016). Results of bootstrapping in Table III revealed that all other hypotheses except $H_5$, $H_8$, $H_9$, and $H_{10}$ are supported. In $H_5$ and $H_8$ a positive association between the variables was hypothesized, however, results showed a negative association, possible reasons of this negative association is discussed in the Discussion section. While for $H_9$ and $H_{10}$ $t$-statistic is lower than the threshold value of 1.96 for two tailed $t$-statistics to support a hypothesis, therefore, these hypotheses were not supported.

3.6 Discussion
As discussed previously, the Big Five model of personality proposes all personality facets to fall all under five broad factors, namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (Costa and McCrae, 1989; Judge et al., 1999). Empirical findings in past studies have directly and indirectly shown that the Big Five personality traits have a link to AC (e.g. Erdheim et al., 2006; Matzler and Renzl, 2007; Naquin and Holton, 2002; Thoresen et al., 2003).

### Table II.
**Discriminant validity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>agreeab</th>
<th>consic</th>
<th>extro</th>
<th>neuro</th>
<th>openness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>0.7569</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>0.3651</td>
<td>0.7879</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agreeab</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.0851</td>
<td>0.78441</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consic</td>
<td>−0.0218</td>
<td>−0.0062</td>
<td>0.0888</td>
<td>0.84416</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extro</td>
<td>−0.0288</td>
<td>−0.142</td>
<td>0.0718</td>
<td>0.2488</td>
<td>0.8041</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neuro</td>
<td>0.0511</td>
<td>0.1279</td>
<td>−0.166</td>
<td>−0.5308</td>
<td>−0.4933</td>
<td>0.7813</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>openness</td>
<td>0.3052</td>
<td>0.0981</td>
<td>0.1472</td>
<td>0.1585</td>
<td>0.2007</td>
<td>−0.158</td>
<td>0.71169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Diagonals represent the square root of the AVE while the other entries represent the squared correlation

### Table III.
**Hypothesis testing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$t$ statistics</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$H_1$</td>
<td>extro $\rightarrow$ AC</td>
<td>0.2561</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>4.6028</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_2$</td>
<td>agree $\rightarrow$ AC</td>
<td>0.3835</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>5.777</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_3$</td>
<td>cons $\rightarrow$ AC</td>
<td>0.3142</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>4.800</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_4$</td>
<td>neuro $\rightarrow$ AC</td>
<td>−0.3278</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>4.219</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_5$</td>
<td>openness $\rightarrow$ AC</td>
<td>−0.1973</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>2.560</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_6$</td>
<td>extro $\rightarrow$ CC</td>
<td>−0.2103</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>2.774</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_7$</td>
<td>agree $\rightarrow$ CC</td>
<td>−0.2461</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>2.812</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_8$</td>
<td>neuro $\rightarrow$ CC</td>
<td>−0.1737</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>2.566</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_9$</td>
<td>cons $\rightarrow$ CC</td>
<td>−0.0461</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.235</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{10}$</td>
<td>openness $\rightarrow$ CC</td>
<td>0.1021</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.451</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the first hypothesis, a positive link between extroversion and AC was expected, and empirical findings supported this claim because positive emotionality is fundamental of this personality dimension (Watson et al., 1988).

The second hypothesis sought to examine the positive link between AC and agreeableness. Statistical test endorsed this association ($\beta = 0.3835$, $t = 5.777$). Agreeableness, as defined before, is an interpersonal factor which examines the quality of a relationship through cooperation and trust (DeNeve and Cooper, 1998; Judge et al., 1999). High scoring on this factor “involves getting along with others in pleasant, satisfying relationships” (Organ and Lingl, 1995, p. 340). Erdheim et al. (2006) argued for agreeableness to be connected to emotional warmth, which may positively influence an employee’s social identity with their work environment. This will therefore encourage their sense of belonging and identification with the values and goals of the organization. As hypothesized, it was found that agreeableness has a significant relationship with AC in the current study ($\beta = 0.3835$, $t = 5.777$). This may be due to the influence of Pakistani culture, in which harmony, reciprocity, and loyalty has a high emphasis due to its collectivist culture (Earley, 1989; Warner, 1993). Certain collectivistic values, such as human heartedness (forgiveness, courtesy, kindness, and patience) and integration (solidarity, harmony, and tolerance) (Yu and Egri, 2005) are fundamental traits of agreeableness (Judge et al., 1999). To a certain degree, Pakistani collectivism is characterized by values that build collaboration and trust among individuals. This refers to the positive influence of employees to identify themselves by organizational membership (Markus and Kitayama, 1991) internalization of organizational values and goals (Traindis et al., 1990), and linking organizational interests to personal gains (Fijneman, 1996). Due to these collectivistic values, it was likelier for highly agreeable Pakistani employees to exhibit higher levels of AC.

In the third hypothesis, it was assumed that there is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and AC. Bootstrapping results (Table III) approved this hypothesized relationship ($\beta = 0.3142$, $t = 4.800$). Highly conscientious individuals are characterized as being dependable, careful, organized, hard-working, and achievement oriented. Conscientiousness has been defined as “a generalized work involvement tendency (i.e. a liking for rule-governed behaviour that probably is more characteristic of work in organizations than in other life domains)” (Organ and Lingl, 1995, p. 341). For this reason, it is more likely for conscientious individuals to develop affective bond with work organizations. In fact, conscientiousness had been previously suggested to be a dispositional root of organizational commitment (Hochwartter et al., 1999). Conscientious employees were identified as both good performers (Barrick and Mount, 1991) and good citizens (Chiaburu et al., 2011).

The fourth hypothesis of this study assumed negative relationship between neuroticism and AC. The results of statistical analysis identified negative relationship between neuroticism and AC ($\beta = -0.3278$, $t = 4.219$). Neuroticism refers to the lack of emotional stability, which means individuals scoring high in this dimension always view things negatively. As opposed to emotional instability, it is likely for individuals high on emotional stability to develop positive exchange relationships with exchange partners (e.g. supervisors, co-workers) and experience less interpersonal conflicts (Spector and Jex, 1998). These positive interpersonal relationships help to strengthen the affective bonds to the organization that provides the relationships. Additionally, it is also more likely for individuals high in emotional stability to gain higher performance evaluation scores and rewards (Barrick and Mount, 1991), as well as social support from others (Côté, 2005). According to social exchange principles, the increased identification with and involvement in the organization shows how employees reciprocate this support. Finally, individuals high in this dimension are capable of handling their emotions in various exchange contexts. Thus, it is less probable for them to view the organization through a negative and cynical lens and to have negative reactions even to seemingly unfair organizational decisions (Skarlicki et al., 1999). Consequently, they are more
likely to have a positive emotional attachment to the organization in comparison to those with emotional instability.

In the fifth hypothesis, a positive link between openness and AC was expected; however, this concept was not supported in the findings as a negative association was found ($\beta = -0.1973, t = 2.560$). One potential reason why openness was negatively linked with AC is the link between openness and turnover behavior. In a research of turnover motives, Maertz and Griffeth (2004) argued that individuals high in openness value switching jobs and are therefore more likely to quit an organization. The positive relationship between openness and turnover was confirmed by Salgado (2002). Additionally, Zimmerman (2008) explained that an open individual may view turnover from a positive light, such as to gain more experience and for personal development. This divergent thinking may reduce the degree of an open employee’s emotional bond and identification toward their organizations. The results of the findings which show openness as a significant predictor of AC further stress this argument. Therefore, this research proposes the need for organizational managers to incorporate the crucial organization goal of paying attention on enhancing open employees’ AC.

The sixth hypothesis empirically tested the impact of extraversion on continuance commitment. The findings supported the hypothesis in which there was a negative link between these two variables ($\beta = -0.2103, t = 2.774$). As discussed, individuals high in extraversion have the traits of sociableness, gregariousness, assertiveness, talkativeness, and are active (Barrick and Mount, 1991). The current study presumed that Pakistani employees who are more extraverted are more likely to have low continuance commitment. The reason for this hypothesis was due to the assumption that extraverts would have higher degrees of network activities, which also means they will develop more networks with other organizations, which could assist them to discover additional substitute employment opportunities compared to introverts.

The seventh hypothesis aimed to investigate the association between agreeableness and continuance commitment.Statistical findings revealed a negative association between the both variables ($\beta = -0.2461, t = 2.812$). As previously defined, agreeableness is an interpersonal factor which refers to the quality of relationship through cooperation and trust (DeNeve and Cooper, 1998; Judge et al., 1999). High scoring on this factor “involves getting along with others in pleasant, satisfying relationships” (Organ and Lingl, 1995, p. 340). Based on this argument, it is expected for agreeable individuals to develop more pleasant and satisfying relationships with employees or managers at other organizations. These relationships seemed to assist them to develop more substitute employment opportunities compared to their counterparts, which leads to low continuance commitment. Cheung et al. (2001) discovered the existence of several overlaps between agreeableness and extraversion. In the Pakistani context, the original five factors are not as well defined, and some aspects of agreeableness may be viewed as characteristics of extraversion. Katigbak et al. (1996) argued that warmth, gregariousness, and the positive emotion facets of the extraversion domain and the trust, altruism, and tender mindedness facets of the agreeableness domain be combined to form a factor. Thus, it is likely for individuals high in agreeableness to be extraverted and have a wider range of networks at other organizations compared to introverts. As a result, these social networks could assist them in developing other employment opportunities, which leads to a reduction in their continuance commitment to their present organization.

In examining the overall findings, interestingly, this research discovered that agreeableness was a significant predictor of both affective and continuance commitment. This means that Pakistani employees high in agreeableness are likely to show high AC and low continuance commitment. Agreeable employees’ desire to remain in the organization is unlikely to change even when they may find more alternate opportunities for employment. This means that the employees stay with the organization because they want to (AC), rather than needing to do so for material benefits (continuance commitment).
In $H_8$, this study predicted a positive link between neuroticism and continuance commitment. As opposed to these expectations, a negative link was found between these two variables ($\beta = -0.1737$, $t = 2.566$). Thus, high neuroticism in Pakistani employees shows decreased continuance commitment. As discussed previously, material benefits the organization offers are the strong motivation and attraction factors for neurotic individuals (Furnham et al., 1999). Thus, a positive link between neuroticism and continuance commitment was expected. Also, due to the tendency for neurotic employees to experience more negative life events compared to other individuals, they may fear the costs related to quitting their current position (Meyer and Allen, 1997), which means higher continuance commitment. An explanation of this involves the need to contemplate conversely when interpreting the nature of neurotics. Because neuroticism is characterized by poor emotional adjustment and experience of negative affect such as anxiety, insecurity, and hostility (Boudreau et al., 2001), a positive correlation with turnover (Hough et al., 1990; Salgado, 2002) and job search behavior (Boudreau et al., 2001) was found in some past empirical research, which suggested a more frequent tendency for neurotic employees to leave and search for alternatives. Under these circumstances, the employees will be advised to actively explore other employment opportunities. As previously discussed, employees who believe in better and more practical alternatives will have less continuance commitment. These findings are relevant for Pakistani managers to encourage them to focus on reducing neurotic employees’ stress levels to decrease their turnover rates.

In $H_9$ and $H_{10}$, this study also postulated that continuance commitment is positively associated to conscientiousness and negatively linked with openness. Both factors were not significantly related to continuance commitment in this population of higher educational institutes’ employees and their relative contributions were not prominent. This means that these two personality factors are not the determinants of the continuance commitment for Pakistani employees to their organizations. Though employees may score low on conscientiousness, or high on openness, their observations of the costs linked to quitting the organizations are unlikely to change.

4. Implications

There are several practical implications for reducing turnover and job search behaviors in higher educational institutes. Turnover costs organizations enormous amounts of money every year in several ways. These include lost institutional knowledge, costs associated with hiring and exit, training, as well as the general disruption in an organization when someone leaves. In addition, job search behaviors are also thought to increase costs because of their association with withdrawal behaviors and actual turnover. Selecting those employees who are more likely to be committed to the organization could decrease those costs. For example, this study also found a positive association between agreeableness, extroversion and conscientiousness and AC. To some extent, organizations should consider recruiting and selecting some employees who score moderate to high on above motioned traits because they are more likely to have AC than those employees with low score on this personality factor. Similarly, the association between personality and continuance commitment could also be of vital importance for the practitioners.

4.1 Future research

Study contributed to the area of organizational commitment, building a knowledge base and testing a comprehensive model with a Pakistani sample. In reviewing the literature pertaining to organizational commitment, most studies were conducted in western contexts, in particular the USA and Canada, and the number of studies from other countries is still relatively small (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Meyer et al., 2002). Therefore, a systematic investigation of organizational commitment across cultures is needed for future research in order to assess the generalizability of research findings.
5. Conclusion
In conclusion, this study provides empirical support for the relationship among the personality traits and organizational commitment. This finding adds important information to the literature on this topic and suggests that further research is needed to conclusively determine these relationships. On the basis of this research, we suggest the HR practitioners to take the results of this study into consideration before hiring employees; the finding could help them to save cost of losing talent. Moreover, HR practitioners should motivate the existing employees by introducing some reward and training programs to make them committed to organizations, which will ultimately result in high performance.

References


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Embedding employability
behaviours

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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to look at how employability is currently embedded within courses to prepare students for their transition into the world of work, identifying the teaching and learning strategies employed.
Design/methodology/approach – A review of the relevant literature was conducted. The study analysed experiential data and the logged reports of student work placements over a period of five years, to determine the relationship of such placements to both academic results and long term employability. The study considered placements from the viewpoints of the university, students and employers. It proceeded to look at the current embedding of employability within the teaching curriculum, specifically teaching and learning strategies for personal professional development courses and the employability passport. It also looked at the role of the work placement tutor.
Findings – The main revelation was that the employability skills sought by employers were mostly “soft” and therefore behaviours, rather than “hard” teachable skills, which has significant implications for the introduction of the teaching excellence framework (TEF) and the provision of suitable metrics.
Research limitations/implications – The study and findings are limited to a single university in the UK.
Originality/value – The results of the study and conclusions drawn from the analysis of findings, led to the identification of the student, institution, tutor, employer (4SITE) quartet of actors for employability. The paper also postulates the ramifications of the introduction of the TEF on employability.

Keywords
Employability, 4SITE, Student work placements, Teaching and learning strategies, Teaching excellence framework (TEF)

Introduction
The aims and objectives of this study were to look at how employability is currently embedded within courses to prepare students for their transition into the world of work or postgraduate study, identifying the teaching and learning strategies employed. The study then proceeded to investigate the actual employability skills attained and desired, from the perspectives of the university, students and employers. It also considered the roles of the work placement tutor and the quartet of employability actors. This paper gives a brief review of the relevant literature, it describes the methodology employed, the results of the study and conclusions drawn from the analysis of findings, thus presenting the student, institution, tutor, employer (4SITE) quartet of Employability actors. It also postulates the ramifications of the introduction of the teaching excellence framework (TEF) on employability.

Literature review
The main focus of this paper is the reporting and analysis of actual employability practice, rather than the discussion of the theory of employability and student work placements,

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The suggestions and feedback contributed by delegates at the Annual Higher Education (HEA) STEM Conference in Nottingham in January 2016 are gratefully acknowledged. Some of the findings of this study were presented at the HEA STEM conference, but were not published.

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essentially experiential learning. However, a short review of the relevant literature is
carried out beginning by looking at a brief history of cognitive development, before
considering employability and theories of experiential learning.

**A brief history of theories of cognitive development**

Theories of cognitive development are often central to current teaching and learning
practices, but on an implicit or subliminal level. Arguably the two most influential theories
are those of Piaget and Vygotsky (Graham, 2002).

Piaget’s theory is based upon the notion that “all children pass through a series of stages
before they construct the ability to perceive, reason and understand in mature rational
terms” (Wood, 1998, p. 43). The approach of Piaget with its emphasis on the active,
constructive nature of human development is often referred to as being “constructivist”

The theory’s main focus is on the relationship between biology and knowledge, and
suggests that all individuals tend to formalise and combine processes into coherent
logically interrelated general systems (organisation), and to adjust to the environment
(adaptation) (Biehler and Snowman, 1997, p. 49). There are four stages to Piaget’s cognitive
development (Biehler and Snowman, 1997, pp. 52-57): sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete
operational and formal.

Many criticisms of Piaget’s work (Tennant, 1997, pp. 66-68) are on conceptual as well as
methodological grounds:

Experiments are badly controlled and incompletely reported. Additionally, he is said to have a
tendency to over-interpret his data and to leave large gaps between his theory construction and
empirical findings that he is writing about (Tennant, 1997, p. 66).

Two further criticisms (Tennant, 1997, p. 66) which are core to the theory are:

1. The tension between two features of Piaget’s theory – his structuralism and his
   constructivism, and
2. The adequacy of formal operations as a complete account of mature, adult thought.

The latter criticism is of particular relevance to employability and the involvement of mature,
adult thought and the assimilation of experience. Basseches (Tennant, 1997, pp. 66-67)
suggests that structuralism (not constructivism) dominates in Piaget’s work. Additionally,
there is no further structural change after the attainment of formal operations. Formal
operational thought is a closed system structure which can assimilate any experience.
According to Basseches, this example implies that the dialectical interplay of assimilation and
accommodation ends with formal operational thought, this view however Basseches, Riegel,
Buck-Morris and others reject (Tennant, 1997, p. 67).

Labouvie-Vief and Riegel (Tennant, 1997, pp. 67-68) suggest that formal operations have
been deemed to be limited by its abstractness and removal from everyday problem posing
and solving. It is thus considered to be a type of reasoning which is correctly applied to a
very narrow range of problems, but which can play only a subordinate role in efforts to
solve the concrete problems of adult life.

The greatest criticism is in on ideological grounds, that Piaget’s invariant and universal
sequence of stages leading to mature formal operational thought and the apparent disregard
for psychological phenomena which defy structural analysis (feelings, beliefs, for instance).
According to Broughton (Tennant, 1997, p. 68) Piaget’s theory is portrayed as being an
outgrowth of liberal ideology.

Vygotsky theory agrees with Piagetian theory in some important respects, particularly
an emphasis on activity as the basis for learning (although there are crucial differences in
what each believes is the essential nature of this) and for the development of thinking. It differs in the assumptions made about the relationship between talking and thinking, and the significance placed on the role of communication, social interaction and instruction in determining the path of development (Wood, 1998, p. 37). This approach is often referred to as “social constructivism”, which stresses the role of social interaction and cultural practices in shaping the course of human development (Wood, 1998, p. 39).

Vygotsky was more of an interventionist in his view of the teacher’s role and advocated pupils learning directly from the teacher. Central to Vygotsky’s theory is the zone of proximal development (Sutherland, 1992, pp. 43-44), that for a given child, the child is at present at a level \( x \). The child has the innate or environmentally derived potential to reach a level \( x+1 \). The area in between \( x \) and \( x+1 \) is the zone of proximal development.

Children of approximately the same ability may differ in the areas (or sizes) of their zones of proximal development. A child with a large zone will have a much greater capacity to be helped by a teacher than a child with a narrow zone.

How the individual child learns to think is done by a three stage process of internalising external and social activities and making them part of his or her own mental structures (Sutherland, 1992, pp. 45-46):

1. assistance is provided by more capable others, e.g. teacher or more able peer;
2. assistance is provided by the child him/herself by talking aloud in order to solve problems; and
3. internalisation of the concept (linguistic dialogue into thought).

Scaffolding is a metaphor for the concept of teaching and learning. Vygotsky saw learning as a process of internalising social concepts through the use of appropriate language and shared action. Teaching is seen as a collaborative process in which the teacher provides needed information and demonstration, which may be just beyond (but not too far removed from) learners’ current independent thinking or action, within this area of learning (the zone of proximal development) is where teaching is most productive because this is effectively the frontier of learning and independent thinking for the learner. The challenge for teachers is to ascertain this zone for particular learners, with the help of relevant scaffolding (Cortazzi and Hall, 1998, p. 19). The teachers initially provide a great deal of guidance and support (scaffolding), and gradually encourage learner autonomy by incrementally removing this scaffolding.

Cognitive development does not happen in isolation from other evolving functions, but occurs interactively with personal and social development. Other theories of personal and social development, such as those of Prawat (Bloor, 2001, p. 17) who suggested the term “dispositions” to categorise various aspects of social development such as attitudes, values, affect, interest and sense of identity. Dispositions, according to Prawat determine whether an individual will value a particular form of knowledge or educational experience; therefore implying that cognitive development and thereby knowledge itself is inherently dispositional.

Kohlberg was concerned particularly with the ethical dimensions of personal and social activity. His six stage theory of moral reasoning (Slavin, 1996, p. 59) is an elaboration and refinement of Piaget’s theory. Kohlberg studied how children and adults reasoned about rules that govern their behaviour in certain situations, by probing their responses to a series of moral dilemmas (hypothetical situations that require a person to consider right and wrong). Kohlberg theorised that people progress through three levels as they develop abilities of moral reasoning, each level having two stages. He later suggested that stages 5 and 6 were not really separate and that the two be combined (Slavin, 1996, pp. 58-62). Kohlberg’s stage one (punishment and obedience orientation) is akin to Piaget’s stage of heteronomous morality, and Kohlberg’s level two (conditional level) has much in common with Piaget’s stage of autonomous morality.
Erikson’s main concerns were with aspects of maturity and autonomy, his theory of personal and social development (Slavin, 1996, p. 51) is similar in part to the developmental theories of psycho-analysis and deterministic stages, proposed by psychiatrist Sigmund Freud. Because Erikson’s work relates to principles of psychological and social development, it is often called a psychosocial theory. Erikson hypothesised that all individuals pass through eight psychosocial stages in their lifetimes. At each stage there are psychosocial crises (a psychosocial crisis is a set of critical issues that individuals must address as they pass through eight life stages) which must be resolved satisfactorily in order for an individual to take on new challenges, although some individuals do not completely resolve these crises and continue to deal with them in later life, e.g. “identity crisis” of adolescence.

Perry’s research was directed at the epistemological basis of students’ learning experience. Perry’s theory (Perry, 1970, pp. 12-14) relates to an attempt to give an account of how US college students construe the nature and origins of knowledge, of values and of responsibility. The theory presents a nine stage sequence of development for understanding the meaning of students’ educational experiences. Students may exercise conditions of delay, deflection and regression for these nine positions. The developmental scheme was established by analysis of interviews with college students; it clarifies the increasingly complex ways that students use to construe the nature of knowledge and learning.

Using a Vygotskyian framework, Billett (1996, pp. 141-142) examines how different forms of vocational knowledge are constructed from social sources (history, community and ontogeny), and helps to explain the limitations of transfer and the need to conceptualise expertise at a particular community of practice. Billett (1996, pp. 141-143) uses the terms cognitive structures, prepositional knowledge, procedural knowledge and dispositions.

Ackermann (1998) considers some newer trends in cognitive development, in particular the impact of post-Piagetian research and the questions and challenges her selected researchers raise. Ackermann’s (1998, pp. 376-377) “metaphors of the mind” refer to new conceptual tools and models proposed within their own explanatory principles as to how minds work, cohere, and grow.

Ackermann’s (1998, pp. 377-378) three “challenges” to classical Piagetian theory:

1. from stages to styles;
2. from decontextualised to situated knowledge; and
3. From domain-specific to domain-general knowledge.

Weinert and Helmke’s work (Ackermann, 1998, p. 381) on the role on individual differences in cognitive development, in which the authors claim that the field of developmental psychology abounds with techniques designed to wipe out individual differences. They suggest that preferred methods are cross-sectional studies, preferred techniques are mean differences to aggregate data, and preferred objects are context-free competencies (logical thinking).

Hettich (1998) develops a cognitive-structural interpretation of development, in which he stresses the point made by Chickering and Reissser (Bloor, 2001, p. 13) that cognitive development occurs interactively with social development. Hettich’s (1998) suggests seven “vectors (maps) of development”, from developing competence to developing integrity.

King and Kitchener (Hartley, 1998, pp. 48-51), group Perry’s nine positions into four categories: dualism (positions 1 and 2); multiplicity (positions 3 and 4); relativism (positions 5 and 6); and commitment in relativism (positions 7-9). Their model both incorporates Perry’s framework and John Dewey’s concept of reflective thinking as the evaluation of potential solutions to ill-structured problems. A reflective thinker is said to be one that understands that problem solving involves uncertainty but formulates a solution based on evidence and critical enquiry.
King and Kitchener’s seven stage model describes “changes in assumptions about sources and certainty of knowledge and how decisions are justified in light of those assumptions”. The stages are organised into: pre-reflective thinking (stages 1-3); quasi-reflective thinking (stages 4-5); and reflective thinking (stages 6-7). King and Kitchener (Hartley, 1998, p. 51) make seven suggestions for promoting reflective thinking in students.

Baxter Magolda (Hartley, 1998, p. 52) established a framework for knowing, she investigated gender-related patterns and conducted follow-up studies in workplace and post-baccalaureate settings. Her methodology included typed interviews and the measure of epistemological reflection, which addressed six domains of knowing: the nature of knowledge; decision making; evaluation of learning; and the roles of the learner, instructor and peers. From Magolda’s analysis of the data came four levels of knowing: absolute knowing mastery, transitional knowing, independent knowing; and contextual knowing. Gender-related patterns of knowing were found in the first three levels. Magolda also identified five teaching implications (extensions of contextual knowing) from these levels.

Ackermann (Bloor, 2001, p. 17) has argued that, with few exceptions, little attention has been paid to the importance of acknowledging individual differences in theories of cognitive development, adding that the methodology of research on cognitive development abounds with techniques designed to wipe out individual differences. Cognitive development occurs within a social context, and there is an interaction between cognitive development, social context and the psychosocial development of the individual learner. Individual differences in learners affect and interact with cognitive development, these differences need to be taken into account when planning and designing learning activities. There is a range of such individual differences and diversity of theoretical approaches to classifying them. Hartley (1998) gives a good introductory overview of these variables, identifying ways in which students might demonstrate diverse psychological characteristics, in terms of learning styles and strategies of individual preferences. A number of practical suggestions are also put forward to help teachers respond more accurately to the needs of their students. Hartley’s (1998, p. 47) four categories of individual differences are:

1. fundamental differences, in the sense that these are very hard to alter;
2. cognitive styles, these are ways in which different individuals characteristically approach different cognitive tasks;
3. learning strategies, these are ways in which individuals more consciously select methods of approach; and
4. preferences, these are less serious ways in which individuals differ.

A goal of education is the development of student autonomy, to make students “autonomous”, in the sense that they are able to take responsibility for their own learning. Autonomy, is desirable for a number of reasons: First, a person who is capable of assessing a situation, setting their own goals, working out how to achieve these in a flexible manner, is obviously well prepared for either the workplace or higher education. Second, students who take on greater responsibility for their own learning are more likely to take a “deep approach” to learning, which in turn leads to greater achievement. Third, autonomy among students is desirable from an educational institution’s point of view. Cuts in education funding in recent years have necessitated cuts in contact hours, with a need for students to work more on their own to achieve course aims.

Boud (1998) explores the various interpretations of the concept of autonomy and identifies aspects of teaching and course design that facilitate greater student independence. The three main teaching approaches for the development of autonomy are: the individual-centred approach, the group-centred approach and the project-centred approach. Garrigan (1997) suggests some key factors in the promotion of learner autonomy in higher education.
Ecclestone (2000, pp. 146-147) gives five implied connections between motivation, autonomy and assessment. Autonomy (Ecclestone, 2000, pp. 147-154) can be: procedural (technical); personal (practical, as in one’s own “practice”); critical and ultimately emancipatory. This topology relates autonomy to three different models of teaching and learning: transmission, transaction or transformation. Each has different implications for who defines knowledge and outcomes, how teachers and students engage with these definitions in order to foster autonomy and how these interpretations, in turn, affect assessment practices. Vygotsky’s ideas about “scaffolding”, learning through constructivist approaches to assessment is claimed to have potential for developing understanding of transactional forms of learning and assessment, which suggest reflective, negotiated processes of evaluation, review and recording of achievement which help learners to construct a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Also critical are ipsative targets, alongside individual feedback and criteria for assessing individual progress, and processes of peer assessment and mentoring.

The arguments for the relevance of Piaget’s theory to the understanding of adult learning and development (Tennant, 1997, p. 65):

- the emphasis on qualitative rather than quantitative developmental changes in cognition and Piaget’s related “structuralist” approach to cognitive development;
- the importance attached to the active role of the person in constructing his or her knowledge with the implication that learning through activity is more meaningful;
- a conception of mature, adult thought, i.e. formal operations; and
- the notion that not all PCET learners maybe at this level in all areas.

**Employability and experiential learning**

Experiential theories are associated fundamentally with theories of reflective learning; the most recent iteration is arguably of Gibbs (1988) founded upon Kolb (1984), in addition to action learning’s origins, attributable back to Revans (1982).

It is suggested by Simon (1995) that in the constructivist model, learners only learn though the adaptation of experiential learning by constructing knowledge from their experiences. Pegg et al. (2012) propose pedagogy for employability based on a set of case studies. Pegg et al. (2012, p. 4) begin by providing two contrasting definitions of employability:

A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (ESECT based on Yorke, 2006).

Employability is not just about getting a job. Conversely, just because a student is on a vocational course does not mean that somehow employability is automatic. Employability is more than about developing attributes, techniques or experience just to enable a student to get a job, or to progress within a current career. It is about learning and the emphasis is less on “employ” and more on “ability”. In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner (Harvey, 2003).

According to the Higher Education Academy (2016) there have been several definitions of employability over the last 20 years, shifting away from demand-led skills towards a more holistic view of “graduate attributes” that include “softer” transferable skills and personal qualities, as well as knowledge. Parallel to shifting definitions, has been the proposal of models and frameworks for employability, such as Knight and Yorke’s USEM and Dacre Pool and Sewell’s CareerEDGE, with further input from the CBI and NUS (Higher Education Academy, 2016). Employability often refers to some loose association of generic or
transferable skills and attributes perceived to be desirable by employers for successful transition into the employment market:

Gibbs (Pegg et al., 2012, p. 43) points to “[…] a lack of evidence about the long-term consequences for graduate employment of either narrowly focused vocational education or education that emphasises efficiency in generic ‘employability skills’, rather than emphasising the higher order intellectual capabilities involved in adaptable expertise. This makes relying on HESA’s very short-term employment data a risky thing to do”.

Lowden et al. (Pegg et al., 2012, p. 43) report that: “Much of the HEIs’ evidence for the longer-term impact of their employability programmes and measures was anecdotal rather than based on systematic evaluative research”. This limitation is merely a reflection of the available data, its intrinsic nature, quantity and quality. Work placements are currently of special interest due to the implementation of the proposed TEF and the attainment of value from degrees along with the considerable increases in tuition fees.

Much of the evidence (metrics) to be collected is implicitly linked to quality criteria (BIS, 2016). There is a lack of specificity and grave concerns regarding what is considered to be “evidence”. Although there is nothing directly pertaining specifically to the measurement of “Employability”, metrics relating to “Employability/destinations” and “Student satisfaction with teaching and learning” criteria are likely to be impacted by employability and therefore used.

The concerns about the implementation of the TEF are most eloquently raised in the Higher Education Policy Institute Report (HEPI, 2016).

**Literature summary**

Salient points raised by the literature review:

- current teaching and learning practices, including courses which seek to embed employability, are often inherently underpinned by old theories of cognitive development, particularly those of Piaget and Vygotsky;
- newer theories of cognitive development, fundamentally still appear to have Piaget and Vygotsky at their core;
- Vygotskyian-based approaches of social constructivism, with a more interventionist view of the teacher’s role and notion of scaffolding, are suggested to be more pertinent to the teaching of employability, due to their proactive and pragmatic nature;
- useful attributes of learning theory for employability are those relating to cognitive development occurring within a social context, the educational goal of (student) autonomy and a deep learning approach, the need for reflection and that learning through activity (Action learning) is more meaningful;
- Boud (1998) identified aspects of teaching and course design that facilitate greater student independence and learner autonomy, and he described three approaches for the development of autonomy, this is particularly important for employability as well as higher education;
- employability is strongly linked to experiential learning which is associated with theories of reflective and action learning;
- the two contrasting definitions of employability given; both emphasise that employability is not just about getting a job, but more about personal attributes;
- the HEA discusses the shift in the definitions of employability from demand-led skills towards a more holistic view of graduate attributes that include softer transferable skills and personal qualities, as well as knowledge;
parallel to shifting definitions has been the proposal of models and frameworks for employability;

- there are concerns about the focus of employability, the advocating of generic employability skills and the HESA’s reliance on short-term employability data; and

- the evidence (metrics) linked to quality criteria to be used in the evaluation of employability is of major concern for the implementation of the TEF.

Methodology

Although reviewed in the literature, specific employability frameworks or cognitive theories were deemed inappropriate for this study and were therefore not adopted. The aim and objectives of the study were achieved through the analysis of experiential data and logged reports of student work placements over a period of five years. This also entailed the review and evaluation of the teaching and learning strategies currently embedded in the relevant curriculum, specifically, the Greenwich Employability Passport (GEP) and personal, professional development (PPD) courses, which take place through all three years of an undergraduate programme. All the data used are entirely anonymous and aggregated, so ensuring that there are no ethical concerns. The original format of the raw data was both qualitative (predominantly) and quantitative. The analysis techniques employed included the use of content analysis (Bainbridge, 1987) and quantifying the qualitative data (by equation to a numeric scale) to provide “qualitative metrics”. This entailed the identification of common themes, establishing which qualitative terms could truly be deemed to be synonyms and the use of frequency counts. Identifying objective themes and synonyms was by no means a trivial classification exercise. For instance, it could be further argued that some of the skill descriptions defined in the employers’ synthesis in Table II, are also synonymous, e.g. “Person & People Skills” and “Personality and Inter-personal skills”.

Students on degree programmes in business and computing have the option of completing a work placement of approximately one academic year in an employment position relevant to their degree programme, with an appropriate employer. Whilst the students are now responsible for finding a suitable placement and have to pay a fee for the placement year, they are supported in finding the placement and throughout the placement year by the employability office, who assigns a placement tutor. Placement students submit monthly reports, have two tutor visits during the year (by telephone if outside the UK), and submit a final report and a presentation on their placement. In addition, the employer also submits a final placement evaluation report.

Analysis and findings

Analysis required the collation of all responses by category and question, and conducting content analysis to allow the identification of synonyms to enable the synthesis of responses, computing the frequencies at different stages of synthesis. A total of 58 work placement visit reports, comprised of 60 questions in nine categories including placement background details such as: health and safety, university envisaged placement skills, the student’s work, induction, training and support, student feedback, employer feedback, work placement tutor feedback, and future placement opportunities. One report category was not relevant for the student sample (the category was not applicable to their study programmes). The analysis began by firstly identifying generic skills to be gained by placement students as envisaged by the university. Table I lists the range of generic skills envisaged to be gained by placement students, according to the UK case study university’s employability office. Students are expected to gain or improve upon some, or all of the skills listed in Table I.
According to the data, all, or the vast majority of the skills listed in Table I were attained (or improved upon) by all placement students in the study. In order to assess the value of a work placement, the following key performance indicators (KPIs) were then considered, as given in the list below. Again these KPIs were derived from the UK case study university’s evaluation criteria established during student placement visits with the students and their employers.

KPIs for work placements for a UK University are as follows:

1. The student’s work includes:
   - level of current workload;
   - whether responsibilities fairly reflect on the job description;
   - type and nature of work involved;
   - suitability of work to student’s programme of study; and
   - complexity/diversity of work given to the student.

2. Induction, training and support includes:
   - level of supervision;
   - details on induction;
   - details on training;
   - information on mentor (employer) for the student;
   - frequency of appraisals/meetings;
   - any problems which have arisen so far and action taken;
   - support provided to students with disabilities; and
   - encouragement from employer towards student’s academic commitments.

3. Student feedback includes:
   - Is the student happy with the placement?
   - Has the placement met their expectations?
   - Have they developed any new/existing skills?
   - Are they coping with the transition between work and study?

4. Employer feedback includes:
   - Are they satisfied with the student’s performance so far?
   - What other support would they like from the university?
   - Has the placement partnership met their expectations thus far?
   - What skills do they think are most important in the ideal placement student?
   - What recommendations would they make as an employer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-making skills</th>
<th>Teambuilding skills</th>
<th>Application of (degree) subject area to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT and computer literacy</td>
<td>Analytical skills</td>
<td>Research skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving skills</td>
<td>Time-management skills</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy and literacy Skills</td>
<td>Ability to adapt and be flexible</td>
<td>Ability to make own judgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation skills</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>Report writing skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project management skills</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table I. Envisaged skills gained by placement students according to a UK university

Embedding employability
One of the KPIs in each of the student feedback and employer feedback categories dealt with skills. After establishing the university’s perspective on skills (Table I), the next goal was to establish the skills from the perspective of students and employers from the data for these two KPIs. The identification of employability (skills) requirements from the perspectives of both students and employers was achieved by the collation of these answers to student and employer feedback questions (in italic in the list). Table II, shows the employability skills required from the students’ and the employers’ points of view; differences and consensuses. These viewpoints have been synthesised and ranked for comparison.

The sample size, even over a period of five years, is relatively small and therefore not statistically significant. In terms of weighted rankings, the students’ number 1 perceived skill (IT skills) and the employers’ number 1 (communication) were of similar frequencies. There was a considerable difference in the skills frequencies recorded by the students and employers for the number 2 choices, this was also true of the third choices. The fourth choices for both students and employers are equally weighted.

Other skills (not ranked) for both students and employers were single instances. There was a greater variety of skills perceived by employers than students. The common skills perceived by both students and employers were communication (second for the former but first for the latter) and IT skills (first for students but only rated fourth by employers).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ views summary</th>
<th>Employers’ views summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Motivation/self-motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT skills</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time keeping/management</td>
<td>Being organised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational skills</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff management</td>
<td>IT skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer relationship management (CRM)</td>
<td>Person and people skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team working</td>
<td>Enthusiasm and passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, management and marketing skills</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts</td>
<td>Self-disciplined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative skills</td>
<td>Good listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.R.</td>
<td>Good attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business analytics</td>
<td>Common sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reliability</td>
<td>Temperate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence/self-confidence and social skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ownership and accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial and administration skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personality and inter-personal skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prioritised Skills Synthesis: Students
1. **IT Skills**
2. **Communication**
3. **Time keeping/management**
4. **Organisational skills**
   - Team working
   - Customer relationship management (CRM)

Prioritised Skills Synthesis: Employers
1. **Communication**
2. **Common sense**
3. **Motivation/self-motivated**
   - Enthusiasm and passion
   - Confidence/self-confidence and social skills
4. **IT Skills**
   - Reliability
   - Person and people skills
   - Self-disciplined
   - Personality and inter-personal skills

Table II.
Employability skills: prioritised skills synthesis
Figure 1, adds to the comparison in Table II by listing the unranked employability skills as envisaged by the university (Table I). The common skills are listed on the university skills List in colour, if they appear under either the students synthesis (red), or the employers synthesis (blue), or both (purple). Some of the relationships between university, student and employer defined skills may be an issue of semantics (different wording for essentially the same skill).

In Figure 1, the prioritised skill synthesis is compared with the list of unranked skills envisaged by the university (Table I). It can be seen that communication and IT skills (in purple) were found on all three lists, and that the university has rightly identified these skills as important for both parties. Overall, employability skills are perceived to be mostly "soft", intangible "people skills", such as common sense, rather than "hard", tangible, transferable ("teachable") skills, such as IT. In the main, employability "skills" cannot be taught, as they are behaviours rather than skills, which highlight the need for such behaviours to be experienced in a real work/world environment (a further strength not only of placements, but of the university life experience). This observation implies that whilst students may attain the same skills (such as IT skills) without a placement, the acquisition of behaviours is greatly facilitated by experience gained through a placement and/or university life.

This finding leads on to how employability is, and can be embedded within (taught) courses, and suitable teaching and learning strategies for achieving this goal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University skills list</th>
<th>Prioritised skills synthesis: students</th>
<th>Synthesis: employers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Decision-making skills</td>
<td>1. IT skills</td>
<td>1. Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• IT and computer literacy</td>
<td>2. Communication</td>
<td>2. Common sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Problem-solving skills</td>
<td>3. Time-keeping/management</td>
<td>proactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Numeracy and literacy skills</td>
<td>4. Organisational skills</td>
<td>3. Motivation/self-motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presentation skills</td>
<td>team working</td>
<td>enthusiasm and passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Project management skills</td>
<td>customer relationship</td>
<td>confidence/self-confidence and social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teambuilding skills</td>
<td>management (CRM)</td>
<td>managerial and administration skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analytical skills</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>• Critical thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>person and people skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reliability</td>
<td></td>
<td>self-disciplined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Application of (degree) subject to work</td>
<td></td>
<td>personality and interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communication skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to make own judgements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Report writing skills</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PPD courses
The current taught courses linked to employability are the PPD) courses. PPD1 and PPD2, which take place prior to any placement, provide “artificial simulations and scenarios” of employability skills, such as presentations, teamwork, reporting, time-management, etc. Whilst there can be no substitute for actual work experience, whatever is teachable is taught.

Recently, the GEP has been introduced to encourage students to gain an employability advantage through extra-curricular experience, such as work experience, volunteering, mentoring, etc. The GEP is now an integral part of PPD courses:

- PPD1: in year 1, PPD1 is concerned with student orientation activities;
- PPD2: in year 2, PPD2 is focussed on work-based skills; and
- PPD3: in year 3, PPD3 is the final year project.

Work placements take place after PPD2 (year 2), making it a four year course for students undertaking a placement.

At the end of the student work placement, presentations are given by the work placement students, to the new intake of year 2 PPD2 students. The placement students often report here on their placement being the application of what they learnt in their PPD1 and PPD2 courses. Many students progress to use their work placement experiences for PPD3 (final year project), and also request that their PPD3 tutor be their placement tutor.

The role of the work placement tutor
Sheikh (2014) “looked at students who went on a placement from 2008-2013 and” found that “75% of those students graduated with a 1st class degree. The rest had 2:1s”. Anecdotal evidence supports this statement.

The role of the work placement tutor is understated and often ignored. However, the work placement tutor constitutes the fulcrum on which the (employability) work placement experience hinges. One significant factor is having the same personal tutor for all PPD (PPD1, 2 and 3) courses and the work placement, providing continuity and a familiar face. In short, successfully embedding employability relies on the learning of behaviours or life skills, and on the convergence of the attributes, attitudes and influences of the 4SITE quartet of actors involved. As shown in Figure 2, the role of the tutor is central.

Figure 2.
Embedding employability – the 4SITE (student, institution, tutor, employer) quartet
One question not answered by this study was why students who did a placement achieved a first class or 2:1 honours degree. There was insufficient data for a definitive answer, however, whilst the student is normally the main actor in initiating the placement (implying that the student possesses a special character and/or intelligence), the other SITE actors can also greatly influence the academic outcome, namely the employer (in stretching the student’s abilities) and/or the tutor (often as a placement arbitrator, and/or as the final year project supervisor); the institution (university) appears to have the least impact. The ideal tutor inspires the student throughout their studies, encouraging and motivating them to undertake a placement and achieve their personal (academic) best.

Conclusions
Current teaching and learning, including strategies for embedding employability, is still underpinned by re-incarnations of old cognitive theories. However, a Vygotskyian-based approach maps well on to the notion of the ideal employability tutor because of its interventionist and scaffolding characteristics, supporting the desired autonomy of the student. Furthermore, the literature review identified the significance of the social context in learning, student autonomy and a deep learning approach, and the need for reflection, as being important to higher education, and this has been found to be the case for employability.

Employability and theories of experiential learning although still rooted in theories of reflective and action learning are shifting from demand-led skills towards graduate attributes, and the creation of new models and frameworks for employability. The literature review further identified serious concerns about employability data, metrics and their implementation for TEF.

Whilst acknowledging the sample size involved, from the findings it can be inferred that:

- The GEP and PPD courses form the main teaching and learning strategies for embedding employability.

The GEP is as yet untested (because the study data mostly related to placements prior to its introduction), and as the PPD1 and PPD2 courses were also being completely revised (partly to incorporate the GEP), the analysis is based mainly on the “original” PPD courses. However, initial feedback from both staff and students on the GEP and revised PPD1 and PPD2 courses is not positive, implying further work is necessary. At this point in time, comments on the reasons for this feedback would be purely speculative, so none will be suggested here, suffice to say that the original PPD courses were well regarded and established:

- Having the same tutor for all PPD courses and the work placement provides important continuity and support.

The tutor continuity is recognised by both the students and the university (employability office) as it now commonly requested by both parties. The host employer is equally keen on such arrangements when the student proceeds to do a final year project (PPD3) involving their placement host:

- Identification of the university perception of employability skills.

In general, the university’s perception of desired employability skills was found to be a mostly accurate one:

- Determination of differences and consensuses of perceptions of student work placements skills from the viewpoints of students and employers. Communication was ranked highly by both. IT Skills were also agreed to be important.
The students rating IT as the most important (teachable) skill, whilst employers ranked communication as the most important (more experienced based) skill:

- Correlation of perceived employability skills for students and employers, with those of the university, the university correctly predicting some of the common skills deemed desirable.

The differences and rankings of perceptions were as interesting as the consensuses:

- Identification of gaps between embedded employability course strategies (theory) and placements (practice). Overall, desirable employability skills were found to be “soft” (behavioural), not “hard” (teachable).
- Identifying the role and significance of the student work placement tutor.

The most significant conclusion is that it is “soft” behaviours, rather than “hard” (teachable) skills that are most desired by employers. This has implications for both pedagogy and strategy, for instance in mock employer presentations, the emphasis should be more on the peripheral time keeping and predominantly, the communication, rather than the presentation (academic) content. Teaching should perhaps be also more oriented to developing greater student autonomy. The demand from employers is for old fashioned “life skills” and personal conduct. Common sense is seldom common, but needs to be instilled somehow, and it is probably here where the influence of the tutor is greatest. This perhaps suggests a more Vygotskyian pedagogical approach to employability with the tutor providing the appropriate scaffolding rather than purely knowledge. If the desired employability outcomes are the instilling of behaviours, then this will have major ramifications for the implementation of the TEF. How can Common Sense be quantified? What metrics can, or should be used for TEF employability behaviours? As discussed in the literature review, Gibbs and Lowden et al. (Pegg et al., 2012) have grave concerns about the reliance on short-term employment data and anecdotal evidence as the foundation for TEF employability metrics. Potential employability metrics relating to “Employability/destinations” and “Student satisfaction with teaching and learning” intuitively seem inadequate to the task of quantifying employability in its entirety. Common Sense of course cannot be directly quantified, neither can behaviours. All that remains therefore are the artefacts, such as the reports. Such artefacts could be amenable to data analytics to establish suitable criteria for metrics. However, the use of analytics requires significant (big) amounts of data. A further limitation as suffered by this study, is the data source (number of institutions involved) being sufficient as well as comparable. This study does not provide a solution in addressing what metrics should be used for the TEF and employability. However, this study’s findings indicate that any TEF metrics need to be based on data of sufficient quantity (to avoid the pitfalls of relying on anecdotal evidence), relevance (quality), university/institution independent, be quantifiable and most difficult of all, be objective. The biggest issues relate to the lack of data and its qualitative and highly subjective nature. The greatest concern therefore, is the application of TEF metrics, prior to the establishment of any reliable measurement mechanisms or metrics, and this is of course not limited to employability behaviours.

References


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Rethinking the role of management education in developing a “new” locus of CSR responsibility

An Indian case study

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Abstract

Purpose – India is the first country to have mandated compulsory corporate social responsibility (CSR) spends through changes in its legislative framework. Focus has thus shifted from the “why” to the “how” of CSR and, therefore, a shift in the “locus” of CSR responsibility from the “influencer” chief executive officer toward the “implementer” CSR professionals. The purpose of this paper is to study the role of management education in developing individual competencies among the implementers and impacting effective CSR implementation.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper, using a case study design, studies the role of management education in developing individual competencies among the implementers and impacting effective CSR implementation. Building on theoretical frameworks, this paper carries out an exploratory research of an Indian business school’s management education program for development practitioners. It uses qualitative inputs gathered from relevant stakeholders of the program to understand the role of management education in facilitating the paradigm shift in CSR in the Indian context.

Findings – The paper finds that the program has impacted outcomes at three levels, namely through developing key individual CSR-related competencies; impacting participants’ professional performance; and organizational impact in effective CSR implementation.

Practical implications – The case study provides a roadmap to business schools for designing and implementing programs for CSR professionals.

Originality/value – Extant research in the Indian context is silent on key competencies required for CSR implementation and also on the role of management education in developing the same. Such competencies can ensure the efficiency of the expected large CSR spends by private corporates under the new legal requirements and alter the country’s social development path.

Keywords India, Corporate social responsibility, Individual CSR competencies, Influencers vs implementers, Locus of CSR responsibility, Role of management education

Paper type Case study

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is increasingly recognized as the sine qua non of businesses, both in advanced and emerging economies. The role of management education in influencing the cause of socially responsible business has been seen as one of the main
reasons proactively influencing locus of CSR, namely the potential business leaders. Business schools, through curricula incorporating ethical decision making, ethical leadership, and corporate governance, are expected to develop ethical business leaders who understand the responsibility of business in society, and who as “moral person(s)” and “moral manager(s)” influence ethical conduct in business organizations (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2004).

The moral-ethical “responsibility” of business toward society through “voluntary” CSR and the debate around the role of business ceased to be of relevance in India since 2014, when India became the first and only country to mandate large profitable companies to spend 2 percent of their average profit after tax (PAT) for the three preceding financial years on CSR activities. These activities, specified in Schedule VII of the new Companies Act, 2013 (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, 2014), included activities aimed at the society and environment, but precluded such activities as undertaken by companies in pursuance of their normal course of business. The onus of CSR policy lay with the company board, while CSR implementation could be handled either by the firm directly, through its non-profit foundations, through independently registered non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a track record of three years or more in undertaking similar programs/projects, or through pooling resources with other companies.

However, despite the large number of registered NGOs and CSR foundations of top Indian companies, alongside the expected sharp increases in CSR spends, CSR implementation in India, even in 2015, remained a challenge (Anand, 2015; Mukherjee et al., 2015).

The changed regulatory requirements and the need for greater efficiency from the higher CSR spends necessitate a shift in the locus of CSR responsibility away from the “influencer” chief executive officer/board of directors toward the “implementer” CSR professional. Business schools and management education, in turn, need to shift focus (away from inculcating individual personal values among prospective CSR influencers) toward developing such individual personal competencies among a new breed of professionals – the CSR professionals. “CSR professionals,” as distinct from general management professionals, refer to a group of individuals who bear the responsibility of implementing CSR in core business processes for achieving long-term effective CSR performance, and “whose individual competencies are likely to influence [such] CSR performance, in addition to important institutional and organizational factors and processes” (Osagie et al., 2016, p. 234).

The relevant question for research and practice is therefore: how can management education facilitate development of individual CSR-related competencies amongst CSR implementers, thereby ensuring effective CSR implementation?

Following a case study approach, this paper uses the graduate management program – called the Post Graduate Program in Development Management (PGP-DM) – of an Indian business school as the frame of research. It explores the program curricula and pedagogy from the lens of competency development and uses multiple stakeholder analysis to assess qualitatively the program impact on multiple outcomes. We see the implications drawn from India providing international insights into the role of management education and business schools in developing a new locus of CSR responsibility.

**CSR and management education**

It is well accepted that the term “CSR” has no single universally accepted definition (Dahlsrud, 2006; Matten and Crane, 2005). Yet, extant literature on CSR with its interpretation of the term “CSR” as the impact that businesses have on society and the societal expectations of them suggests an organizational-centric bias. Well-accepted definitions of CSR exhibiting such a bias include those which describe CSR as:

Operating a business in a manner that meets or exceeds the ethical, legal, commercial and public expectations that society has of business (Business for Social Responsibility, 2000).

A management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis (Consortium for Educational Communication, 2006) (italics ours).

Carroll’s (1979) construct of CSR and Freeman’s (1984) stakeholder approach exhibit such a bias toward the organizational level of analysis. The organization-centric CSR bias within management education leads to the phenomenon of standalone courses in ethics and sustainability in business school curricula (Baden and Parkes, 2013; Giacalone and Thompson, 2006).

Giacalone and Thompson (2006) have argued for a shift from an organization-centered world view to an individual-centric “human-centered world view” of CSR. However, even such little CSR research which exists at the individual level of analysis is largely skewed toward the development of individual (personal) values rather than toward individual competencies (Cameron, 2006; Giacalone and Thompson, 2006; Inglehart, 1997; Waddock, 2006). Such research highlights the personal values of managers, which lead them to act as “moral actors” and change agents in driving CSR initiatives (Hemingway and Maclagan, 2004; Schneider et al., 2010). Management education’s role lies in developing the right values among management students (Giacalone and Promislo, 2013). Major accreditation bodies too have commented on the role of management education and business school curricula in nurturing the right ethics and values. Thus, “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’ […]” (AASCB, 2004, p. 11).

The emphasis on “values” creates methodological problems of separating the individual from the organizational values (Agle and Caldwell, 1999). More importantly, extant literature, with its focus on adoption of CSR, largely ignores individual competencies relevant for CSR implementation.

**Individual competencies and CSR implementation**

Competencies are “a roughly specialised system of abilities, proficiencies or skills that are necessary or sufficient to reach a specific goal” (Weinert, 2001, p. 45). They represent “individual dispositions to self-organization which include cognitive, affective, volitional, and motivational elements (Rieckmann, 2012, p. 130). Mulder (2014, pp. 9, 10) conceptualized individual competencies as composed of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and as “performance requirements without which professionals would not be able to effectively function in their professional situations.” The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization too defined competencies in this sense of “knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are underpinned by values” (UNESCO, n.d).

Individual competencies have been considered in the recent literature on sustainable development in the context of “education on sustainable development” (De Haan, 2006; Rieckmann, 2012; Wiek et al., 2011). Specifically, in the context of CSR, Osagie et al. (2016, pp. 244-247) synthesized eight distinct CSR-related individual competencies that support CSR implementation in a corporate context. These included anticipating CSR challenges; understanding CSR-relevant systems and subsystems; understanding CSR-relevant standards; CSR management competencies; realizing CSR-supportive interpersonal processes; employing CSR-supportive personal characteristics and affective attributes in CSR contexts and personal value-driven competencies; and reflecting on personal CSR views and experiences.
CSR adoption and implementation in India

The concept of social responsibility was not new to India. The Indian CSR tradition—rooted in business ethics, religion, and spirituality—had deep philanthropic underpinnings captured in Indian scriptures (Agarwal, 2008; Balasubramanian et al., 2005; Jayakumar, 2016; Khan, 2008; Mohan, 2001). Traditionally, Indian companies viewed CSR as a non-strategic and religious philanthropic activity, to be undertaken in areas or activities determined by the individual owner’s preferences (Bain and Co. Inc., 2013; Charities Aid Foundation, 2012; Dasra, 2012). Changes in the regulatory environment in India, especially after 2012, necessitated a change in the approach toward CSR.

In August 2012, the Securities and Exchange Board of India made it mandatory for the top 100 Indian listed companies to include the business responsibility report as part of their annual report (Securities and Exchange Board of India, 2012). Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013 brought CSR to the forefront, urging companies to focus on relationships with multiple stakeholders including local communities and go beyond philanthropy (CII-PwC, 2013). The Act made it mandatory for large Indian companies with net worth of USD0.08 billion (INR500 crore) or more, or turnover of USD0.02 billion (INR1,000 crore) or more, or net profit of USD0.83 million (INR5 crore) or more to spend at least 2 percent of the average net profit during the preceding three financial years on CSR activities. In this sense, the emphasis in the new act was on what was done with profits after they were made, rather than how profits were made themselves. However, CSR implementation seemed to be making tardy progress even as late as 2015 when only 27 (18 percent) of the top 214 Indian companies complied with the mandatory 2 percent norms (Futurescape, n.d).

Rationale of the study

The extant CSR literature emphasizes the moral-ethical dimensions of the role of management education in developing socially responsible managers possessing the right set of personal values. While key competencies for sustainable development/CSR have been identified in educational research settings, extant research does not address “how” such competencies can be developed through management education. Again, there is a little agreement on “the most important key competencies,” and also on “the question of the global relevance of these key competencies” (Rieckmann, 2012, p. 132). Finally, despite mandatory CSR norms being implemented in India since 2014, we found no research in the Indian context on key competencies required for CSR implementation, and also on the role of management education in developing the same.

The shift in emphasis from the anticipation of CSR to the implementation of CSR and also the shift in the locus of CSR from business managers to CSR practitioners necessitates a shift in the question relevant to theory and practice. The extant research literature, with its emphasis on the “why” of CSR, whether from the organizational- or human-centered viewpoint, is incapable of addressing the new realities. This requires a paradigm shift from the “why” of CSR to the “how” of CSR implementation. It is this gap in literature, further accentuated by the changed reality in India, which provided the motivation for this study.

Methodology

This paper attempts to carry out an exploratory research of the role of management education in developing a new locus of CSR responsibility, namely CSR professionals. In doing so, it adopts a case study method of analysis. The term “CSR professionals” includes individuals working in corporate CSR roles and also those working in the development sector (comprising of funding and grassroots/implementing NGOs), who bear the responsibility of managing and executing CSR implementation and ensuring long-term effective CSR performance.
The main research questions addressed are as follows:

RQ1. How does management education facilitate development of individual competencies amongst CSR professionals?

RQ2. What is the impact of management education on the professional performance of CSR professionals?

RQ3. What is the impact of management education on organizations’ CSR implementation performance?

A single case study method is justified where a recent phenomenon is still not sufficiently understood, and where the aim of the research is to question or extend the existing theory (Ghauri, 2004; Stake, 2000). As this study aims to contribute to a more finely grained understanding of the role of management education in enhancing individual competencies required for CSR implementation in the Indian context, a qualitative research approach using a single case study method was used (Yin, 2003).

The management education program selected for the analysis was the PGP-DM program at an Indian business school. With ten batches, totaling 260 professionals belonging to both the development sector and to corporate CSR departments/foundations, between 2011 and 2016, it provided a suitable research setting for exploring the role of management education in developing individual competencies among CSR professionals.

An exhaustive survey of the extant CSR literature on the topic provided the theoretical basis for carrying out the research. Table I enunciates the research design followed in the study. The purpose of the empirical research was to obtain evidence within the dimensions of the theoretical frameworks selected for analysis, namely Osagie et al.’s (2016) individual competencies framework (ICF) and the knowledge-skills-attitude (KSA) framework. We assessed the program for three outcomes, namely development of specific CSR-related individual competencies; impact on participants’ professional performance; and organizational impact for effective CSR implementation.

As a first step, our initial investigation aimed at exploring existing management education programs in other Indian business schools directed toward building CSR capabilities among development sector professionals. We used purposive sampling for data collection, deliberately selecting data with a specific focus in mind (Punch, 1998). To ensure reliability and validity in data collection, we adopted a triangulation procedure (Yin, 1994), using multiple sources of evidence including participant feedbacks, participant final project reports, mentor feedbacks, faculty feedbacks and questionnaires administered to alumni, and a returning organization – Lupin Foundation[1].

We drew the sample from participants belonging to batches 1-7 who had gone through the PGP-DM program between 2011 and 2015. Table II provides the broad profile of the sample group of 175 participants. We analyzed program and course feedbacks for the sample participants across the seven batches to understand the impact of the program on the development of individual competencies. A sample of 100 final project reports across the seven batches and 100 faculty feedback forms from the faculty teaching various courses across different batches were analyzed further to understand CSR-related competency development. In all, 50 mentor feedback forms and 50 questionnaires administered to alumni were analyzed to understand the impact of the program on the participants’ professional performance. Finally, a questionnaire administered to Lupin was used to assess the long-term impact of the program on organizational performance through CSR implementation.

We performed a qualitative content analysis using Mayring’s (2000) content structuring, central to which is a category system, developed right on the material employing a theory-guided procedure (Kohlbacher, 2006). The feedback documents and questionnaires were read carefully to identify meaningful text passages. The two authors independently
<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Theoretical frameworks</td>
<td>Identifying the potentially critical fields in understanding CSR success through successful implementation</td>
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2. Empirical research

1. Initial study
   - Understanding other existing management education programs in business schools directed towards CSR and their focus
   - Analysis of CSR programs/courses offered by top Indian B-schools
   - Website analysis
   - Content analysis of program brochures
   - Exhaustive List of such CSR courses/programs along with their orientation: Table II
   - The PGP-DM architecture and pedagogy compared with existing management programs for the development sector professionals
   - Heterogeneous sample (Program participants, mentors, instructors, alumni and participating organization)
   - Sample composition of participants: Table II
   - Coding protocol: Figure 1
   - Documents coded using the coding system

2. Sampling
   - Data selection for subsequent analysis
   - Purposive sampling
   - Principle of heterogeneity
   - Triangulation procedure
   - Fixed sampling

3. Document analysis
   - Participant feedback analysis (250)
   - Analysis of participant reports (150)
   - Analysis of feedbacks from faculty members (100)
   - Obtaining insights into the role of management education in developing individual CSR competencies
   - Mayring’s content structuring; Deductive category application
   - Mayring’s content structuring
   1. specification of coding units of analysis
   2. Theory based establishment of main categories and sub-categories
   3. Theory based formulation of definitions, examples and coding rules

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<td>Analysis of feedback from mentors (50)</td>
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<td>4. Extraction of text passages, adjustments of coding protocols</td>
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<td>5. Revision of a category system and adjustment of coding protocols</td>
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<td>6. Revision of category system and category definitions</td>
<td>7. Identification of relevant contents in document texts</td>
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<td>8. Summarizing per sub-categories</td>
<td>9. Summarizing per main categories</td>
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<td>4. Additional field evidence</td>
<td>Exhaustive list of courses mapped to specific competency frameworks: Table IV</td>
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<td>Assess the suitability of the current program architecture in successful CSR implementation through developing individual competencies</td>
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<td>Assess the long-term impact of the program on the organization vis-à-vis CSR implementation</td>
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<td>Assess the impact of the program on participants’ professional performance</td>
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<td>Assessment of the program architecture using the Osagie ICF and KSA frameworks</td>
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<td>Content analysis and mapping individual courses to the frameworks</td>
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<td>From a returning organization perspective</td>
<td>Questionnaire (returning organization – Lupin Foundation)</td>
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<td>From alumni perspective</td>
<td>Questionnaire (alumni) (50 alumni)</td>
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<td>In-depth understanding of the theoretical constructs</td>
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**Theoretical integration**

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<th>Use of literature (throughout research)</th>
<th>Interpretation of empirical findings</th>
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<th>–</th>
<th>Empirical evidence developed theoretically (the how question)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of literature (throughout research)</td>
<td>Extracting relevant evidence</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Empirical evidence developed theoretically (the how question)</td>
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**Source:** The Authors
coded every unit of the analysis. We used the competencies derived from the Osagie framework as coding categories to group these excerpts. Specifically, it was determined that as soon as the pre-specified keywords would be encountered in a text passage in the sample documents, and/or when their meaning coincided with the definition of a category, the relevant text passage would be coded under the given category. More than one code could be given to a single excerpt. We decided that the smallest unit of analysis would be a semantic phrase and the longest unit of analysis a paragraph. In order to determine when a certain text portion from the document analyzed fell under a relevant category, we provided the main categories and sub-categories with the exact definitions and coding rules (including stop words) and illustrated with the examples of the respondents’ statements. Taken together, they comprised the coding protocol (see Figure 1).

To check for inter-rater reliability, Cohen’s κ (Cohen, 1960) was calculated for each category (code). Inter-rater agreement was high with κ values ranging from 0.67 to 0.82. Differences between the coders were discussed till an agreement was reached.

Background

Indian management education and the development sector

The Indian social development sector witnessed transformation in the new millennium, with an increase in the number, as well as the scope of development sector organizations (One World South Asia, 2010). A need arose for a large number of development professionals, trained in management principles. However, Indian business schools,

<table>
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<th>Table II.</th>
<th>Sample profile of participants</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total number of participants in the sample</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>23-54 (average age: 36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>136 male, 39 female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants belonging to corporate foundations and corporates</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants from NGOs</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of organizations from which participants drawn</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Indian states from which drawn</td>
<td>16 (of 29 Indian states)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of participants directly performing/ involved in CSR roles/ functions in their organization</td>
<td>74</td>
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Source: The Authors

Figure 1.

Coding protocol (illustration)
including the premier Indian institutes of management, despite their attempts to integrate social sector projects and ethics into management curricula, were ill equipped to provide contextual management education for the development sector (Patel et al., 2004, p. 98). Other than sporadic sponsored training programs, there were little opportunities for development sector professionals to acquire management skills. In fact, an analysis of the various programs for development management in India revealed that even as late as in 2016, the existing management educational institutes in India had failed in developing specific educational programs for this under-managed sector.

**The PGP-DM program**

As part of its mission to influence practice, and perceiving the need gap within the development sector, the business school had launched the PGP-DM program in 2011. The PGP-DM was an 18-month modular program, aimed at providing management education to develop specialized individual competencies among development sector professionals, including corporate CSR professionals. While all the participants over the seven batches studied, comprised either of professionals belonging to corporate CSR departments/foundations or NGOs, 42 percent of them had functional roles with direct CSR implementation responsibilities.

The program comprised of three semesters conducted over nine contacts, and involved 28 credits earned over 325 contact sessions. The duration for each contact varied from six to eight days. The course curriculum was designed to develop specific competencies required for CSR roles in the development sector and deploy the KSA framework.

The program deployed specific pedagogical approaches aimed at developing competencies among people working in the development sector, i.e. CSR professionals. Reading and lectures helped in building knowledge pertaining to various aspects of the development sector and CSR, while case analyses pertaining to CSR and the development sector helped in building analytical skills. Small group work required participants to test their existing mental models against those of their peers and encouraged collaborative learning. The diverse geographical and socio-economic backgrounds of the participants made for a rich learning experience. Assignment exercises – based on the principle of “learning by doing” – helped participants apply management frameworks and techniques learnt in the classroom, to their workplace. Such application exercises required active mentor inputs, thereby facilitating deeper and more meaningful development of relevant competencies. Project work, conducted over a longer duration, sought to develop scientific inquiry skills among participants, so as to identify an improvement area, i.e. area of growth for the organization.

The school, with its mission of “influencing practice” and “promoting value-based growth” believed in the maxim: “knowledge when internalized, is better implemented.” Hence, in addition to cognitive training, which helped in the development of individual competencies among CSR professionals, the program also relied on methods such as “reflection” to develop introspective and personal development approaches. The program had a half-an-hour slot each morning, allotted for reflection of the previous day’s learnings.

**Findings**

Analyzing the data provided significant outcomes on all three aspects of the role of management education in impacting the “implementers,” namely developing individual competencies through the right pedagogical approaches and curricula; impacting professional performance of participants; and long-term organizational impact in effective CSR implementation. Also, these three outcomes were found to be interdependent and mutually reinforcing.
Development of individual competencies

Program architecture analysis. Extant literature points to key individual competencies as supporting effective CSR implementation (Mulder, 2014; Osagie et al., 2016). The program structure was conceived and designed using the KSA framework, with the course curriculum aimed at developing a mix of knowledge, skills, and attitudes among participants. However, the emphasis was on the building of knowledge and skills, with a preponderance of knowledge and skill-based courses. The underlying assumption of this approach was that participants, through their choice of working in the development sector, had already exhibited the personal morals, values, and social consciousness that was relevant for socially responsible behavior.

More importantly, the course curriculum was designed to develop specific CSR competencies and analytical abilities required for successful CSR implementation. Table III evaluates the program architecture in terms of the Osagie et al.’s ICF and the KSA framework. We found that the program architecture and course design lent themselves to the development of individual CSR-related competencies, as identified under the ICF. Moreover, each course lent itself to multiple competence building as well.

Participant feedback. Quantitative and qualitative individual participant feedback collected anonymously at the end of each course, evaluating each course for its relevance, rigor, and ability to generate participant interest was an important tool for the effectiveness analysis of program. Quantitative feedback analyzed for the first seven batches across courses, and for the overall program indicated high average scores (above 8.5 on a ten-point scale). An ANOVA test carried out to test differences between group means at the program level indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between program feedback means for different batches as determined by the one-way ANOVA at the 0.05 level of significance ((F (6,168) = 0.90602, p = 0.49) (see Table IV).

The document analysis of the qualitative feedbacks substantiated program success in facilitating the development of key CSR-related competencies:

[...] This program has taught us to inculcate the feeling of “we” in ourselves, put others first, listening and then responding. To be calm and cool in all situations we face whenever it comes. (C6; Participant-Batch 7, Executive Director, Indian Association for Blind, Female, 40 years).

The program has definitely helped in the following – outlining vision and strategies, effective project management and implementing best practices in the field (C4a; Participant-Batch 6, Senior Outreach worker, Habitat for Humanity India, Male, 23 years).

I realized that it is not only money; it is about positioning and sensitizing influencing individuals and other parameters as well. This is CSR 2.0 (C4c; Participant-Batch 1, Assistant Manager-CSR, Birla Cellulose, Grasim Industries, Male, 35 years).

I have learnt how to simplify work or how [I] can perform quality and effective work with efficiency. The values like Truth, Sharing, Freedom, Mutuality, Trust and Empathy are very important in my life. I already possess some of [these] values but not all; but now onwards I am aware about what is the value of values in life. Reflection has helped me understand these values (C7c; Participant-Batch 2, Assistant Vice President (HR), Aditya Birla Group, Ultra-Tech Cement Ltd, Male, 46 years).

The qualitative content analysis of the participants’ written reports and faculty feedback on participant progress/performance for their respective courses reinforced the overall impression regarding program success in development of key competencies.

Thus, a Batch 6 participant from an NGO (volunteer, female, 28 years), demonstrating the development of competencies relating to “understanding CSR systems” and “CSR-related interpersonal processes” (C2 and C5) in her final project report, identified key gap areas
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credit&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>CSR competencies (Osagie et al., ICF)</th>
<th>KSA framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Perspectives on Development and General Management</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C1; C8</td>
<td>K Develop macro perspectives regarding factors that influence development</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>A Understand different theories and practices and thereby help participants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>develop the right attitude and approach to development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Finance for Development Sector</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C2; C4b</td>
<td>K Understand finance and accounting processes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>S Develop skills for budgeting, costing, financial analysis etc. to help</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>participants take better decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fund Raising and Resource Mobilization</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C4c</td>
<td>K Understand the importance of resource mobilization and know its different</td>
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<td>methods and processes</td>
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<td>S Develop skills for resource mobilization through experiential learning</td>
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<td>A Understand the macro perspective of resource mobilization and develop right</td>
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<td>attitude for donor management</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Advocacy and Networking</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>C3; C8</td>
<td>K Understand the need for advocacy. Learn different models of advocacy and</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>networking</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social Marketing and Building a CSO Brand</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C2; C4c</td>
<td>K Understand social marketing concepts and the need for brand building of</td>
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<td>community social organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology for</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C1; C4c</td>
<td>S Develop marketing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
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<td>K Familiarize participants with the present technology environment and its use</td>
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<td>for enhancing social impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Program development and Project Management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C4c; C4a</td>
<td>K Gain Scientific knowledge of Project planning and process of implementation</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>S Develop leadership skills and team building for project management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Communication Skills and Documentation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C4c; C4a; C7a</td>
<td>K Understand concepts of personal and organizational communication</td>
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<td>S Develop personal skills in communication</td>
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<td>A Get familiar with the ethical aspects in communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Leadership In CSR/NGO Management</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C4a; C6</td>
<td>K Learn different leadership models and styles</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>S Develop the skills to understand one’s own strengths and the of the others</td>
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<td>for team building</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A Develop the right attitude for development leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Management Of Change</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>C1; C4a</td>
<td>S Develop creativity and problem-solving skills for managing the change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Legal Aspects and Governance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>C3; C7a</td>
<td>K Get to understand the CSR regulations accounting standards and other legal</td>
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<td>requirements and frameworks within which the CSR activities are undertaken</td>
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<td>A Develop an attitude for compliance and enhance governance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III. Program structure of PGP-DM program and its assessment in terms of the ICF and KSA frameworks (continued)
within her organizational systems and processes as lack of formal training processes, lack of
documentation, formal employee benefit schemes (health insurance, provident fund, etc.),
and incorporation of appropriate technology within the organization.

It was found that the process of developing key individual competencies was closely
linked to the pedagogy used. Not only did the pedagogy encourage knowledge building in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>CSR competencies (Osagie et al. ICF)</th>
<th>KSA framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Problem Solving and Creative</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C1; C4b; C8</td>
<td>S Develop</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thinking and Negotiations</td>
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<td>problem-solving and negotiation skills</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Development Research</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>K Understand</td>
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<td>Management of Volunteers and</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C6; C4a</td>
<td>S Develop</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning CSR/NGO</td>
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<td>leadership</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>HR Management in CSR/NGO</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C5; C1</td>
<td>K Understand</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Electives – Group 1* and Group</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C2; C3</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Project work – Evaluations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C1; C4c</td>
<td>K Practical</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Field Visit and Case Study/Report</td>
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<td>K Understand</td>
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<td>reflection</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: "1.5 credits were equivalent to 18 on-contact sessions of 70 minutes each, as also
off-contact work of 60 hours

Source: The Authors
key areas in the development sector through awareness, it also encouraged competence development through perturbation among participants – that is the process of reframing existing knowledge and integrating and critically evaluating new knowledge.

Thus, commenting on the usefulness of the course “perspectives on development” in awareness building, one participant from Batch 7 wrote in his anonymous feedback for the course: “This course helped me to understand the different development models from the perspective of an NGO” (C1). The feedback from another participant from the same batch highlighted the role of perturbation and competence building: “Before this course, I had a very narrow minded perspective. This course opened my mind to global perspectives and how the development (experience) can be lost as well, as in the case of Argentina” (C8).

The program through its course design and delivery challenged existing mental models and the participants’ world views and thereby aided competence development. At the same time, the pedagogical elements of “learning by doing,” “reflection” and interaction with development sector experts aided competence development through facilitating deeper learning. The “learning by doing” component, with its approach toward praxis, helped in bridging the theory-practice gap; the “reflection” component helped participants reflect on class learnings, compare with their own personal views, and also seek the impression of other colleagues; interaction with development sector experts exposed participants to best practices in the sector, as well as to the attitudes required for leadership roles.

**Impacting professional performance of participants**

The modular nature of the program was designed to provide participants the opportunity to apply the program learnings to their professional lives on a real-time basis during the off-contact period, discuss the application outcomes with mentors and faculty members, and strengthen learning through repeated iterations. Such “learning by doing” helped strengthen individual competencies and impacted participants’ professional performance positively.

The impact of the program on participants’ professional performance was validated through mentor feedbacks, alumni feedbacks, and feedback from the Lupin Foundation.

**Mentor feedback.** The program required each participant to have a mentor – a senior member usually from his own organization, to mentor him on various aspects of the course as applied to the professional organization. Mentor feedback regarding the program and its usefulness was collected on a timely basis as part of the program design. Content analysis of 50 sample mentor feedback forms

---

**Analysis of variance (One-Way)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Program Feedback Batch 1</td>
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<td>221.78</td>
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<td>Program Feedback Batch 2</td>
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<td>196.83</td>
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<td>Program Feedback Batch 4</td>
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<td>Program Feedback Batch 7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>214.44</td>
<td>9.32348</td>
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**ANOVA**

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<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-level</th>
<th>F crit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>2.04623</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.34104</td>
<td>0.90602</td>
<td>0.492</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>63.23751</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>0.37641</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>174</td>
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**Source:** Authors calculations

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| CSR responsibility
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<td>63</td>
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Table IV: Anova table for participants' program feedback
attested to the relevance of application exercises, the relevance of the overall program to the participants’ current work and professional performance, and also contributed to organization goals.

A mentor from Hindalco Industries – an aluminum manufacturing subsidiary of a large Indian corporate, commented on the impact of the program on the sponsored participant – a 36 year, Male, Assistant Manager-CSR, from batch 6: “ [The program] [...] improved the managerial capability in various aspects. Enriched his problem-solving attitude. The course is relevant to his current nature of job. He actively involved other team members for them to be benefitted with the same” (Mentor, Hindalco Industries, October 25, 2014).

Alumni feedback. An alumnus from Batch 5 testified to the impact of the program on his professional performance: “ I can see the program impact on aspects such as fund-raising and analytical skills. I have been able to distinguish myself from my peers, especially in fund-raising, due to the skill sets (creative and interpersonal skills) gained as part of the course [...]” (Zonal Manager, Dr Reddy’s Foundation, Male, 35 years).

Feedback from Lupin Foundation. Lupin Foundation was a returning organization to the PGP-DM program, sending participants from various Lupin group companies to each batch of the program since the program’s inception in 2011. A questionnaire, mapped to the ICF, was sent to the Lupin Foundation head in July 2016 to validate the impact of the program on the participants’ professional performance and to track the organizational impact of the program (see the Appendix). The responses indicate that the program did have the desired outcomes through developing specific individual competencies. Thus:

We observed improvements among our team members who did PGP-DM. We are getting inputs from them regarding model development to showcase CSR work. It has given them futuristic perspective for sustainable and replicable rural development models (C1; Q1).

The quantum of our work in Dhule district is huge and each of our team members who attended the PGP-DM programme is handling the scale effectively. Though we are implementing more than 30 activities in 7 verticals, our team members are able to manage the complexity in the field situations and execution systems to get results in specific period of time. The challenge of maintaining the MIS/intervention data was tackled by our team through online software that maintains the huge base line and intervention data of 0.131 million families (C2; Q3).

Our Head Office and corporate team handle a lot of these aspects (legal and compliance) as well.[…] However, CSR executives are now able to understand how to comply with the legal environment. They also understand drivers, i.e. the macro perspective and normative fundamentals of CSR challenges. They have developed the ability to construct rules and incentives in order to regulate the CSR-related behavior of others (C3; Q4).

They (participants) have developed the ability to motivate, enable, and facilitate collaboration and cooperation in working on CSR challenges. They have developed skills of persuasiveness and networking skills; are able to identify a broad group of stakeholders and have good communication skills. They successfully manage, negotiate, and represent their Foundation’s interest while showing respect, navigating, and mapping distinctive ideas and inputs of stakeholders (C5; Q8).

The Foundation further testified that four participants who had gone through the program, and who had demonstrated significant enhancement of competencies, had been promoted to higher roles within the organization (C6; Q10).

Impacting organizational performance in CSR implementation
Participant’s project reports containing recommendations for improving or growing their respective organizations, arrived at through structured root cause analysis and problem-solving, when implemented by the organization, constituted the direct organizational impact of the program. Additionally, the program, through fostering individual competencies, had an indirect impact on organizational effectiveness as well.
The Lupin questionnaire demonstrates the impact of the program on facilitating organizational change toward effective CSR implementation:

Each of our team members has actively contributed to the vision document preparation conducted by our organization in Feb 2016. They embedded their experience and sector knowledge to frame it in terms of input, output, outcomes and impacts (C4a; Q5).

[…] Yes, our team has developed abilities to handle the projects independently. Our professionals are able to design strategies and systems for its timely implementation. Projects are now being implemented with result-based management and proper record keeping of activities. The executives are actively involved in the preparation of small proposals for fund raising and partnerships with other development agencies (C4c; Q7).

Individually the change (in the participants) has occurred and it has also contributed substantially towards capacity building and grooming of other team members in the organization (C6; Q9).

Other validation. The Tata Trust (associated with the Tata group of companies and responsible for the group CSR activities) provided a USD0.31 million grant to the program for a three-year period – April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2016 – with the objective of promoting management capacity building among NGO and CSR professionals for a greater social impact. This provided further validation of the program’s success in achieving its objectives. Further, 20 percent of the organizations sending their participants for the program were returning organizations, another testimony of the relevance of the program.

Discussion
A discussion of the findings will need to be prefaced by a mention of the limitations of the study. The study, being a single case study, suffers from the limitation of outcomes not being generalizable. Moreover, the preconditions for the case may prevent it from being easily replicable across management schools. Specifically, the case presents a program initiated by a business school, which given its rich historical legacy and its mission, did not view the program for its commercial revenue-generating aspects. The program fees were nominal, and in fact, most of the students were either funded by corporate or covered by scholarships from trusts, such as the Tata Trust. This may not be possible in other business schools where commercial considerations decide on the program offerings.

Despite these limitations, the sample size of 175, drawn across four years, and the multiple evidence obtained are sufficiently large and robust to conclude that the outcomes presented by this qualitative case analysis may be similarly replicated by other management education institutions in comparable settings.

The findings of our study reveal that the PGP-DM program for development practitioners, aimed at impacting the CSR and development space, has facilitated outcomes at three levels.

First, the program, through specific pedagogy design and implementation, has led to the development of individual CSR-related competencies. Such competencies relate not only to better CSR-related knowledge, but also to the right attitude and skills needed for effective CSR implementation. Pedagogical techniques used such as “learning by doing” and “reflection” correspond to those pointed out by theoretical literature for holistic competence development (Rychen and Salganik, 2003) and contributed to internalization of competencies.

Second, the modular nature of the program and the projects and assignments, designed towards “learning by doing,” has indeed enhanced professional performance. Such active learning environments have been identified as major contributors to professional development (Garet et al., 2001).

Third, the program also had an impact on the sponsoring organizations through improving their long-term effectiveness in the development/CSR space. This is borne out not
only by evidence from a returning organization questionnaire, but also from the number of returning organization-sponsored participants across batches.

Thus, it appears that the program acted as a change agent at multiple levels, namely the individual level, at the level of the group (community) of CSR professionals and at the organizational level. We expect the first-order impact of the program on the participant group to translate into second- and higher-order impact through community network effects, and also through participants’ organizational involvement. The changes at the three levels would thus be mutually reinforcing.

Conclusion
Traditionally, CSR has been viewed through an organization-centric, rather than an individual-centric lens. Even within the latter, the emphasis, if at all, has been on the development of the right individual values for encouraging CSR adoption, rather than development of individual competencies for ensuring CSR implementation. The role of management education in developing a new breed of CSR professionals is going to become increasingly relevant in India, as legal requirements necessitate a shift in emphasis from anticipation of CSR to implementation of CSR. However, business schools in India have not incorporated the special needs of the development sector in tailoring specific programs for the purpose. The PGP-DM program of the business school in question presents an example of how management education can build a category of CSR professionals through building individual competencies required of implementers. Such individual competencies not only affect the professional performance of the individual CSR professionals, but also have long-term organizational impact in terms of effective CSR implementation.

Our results also provide several directions to those at the helm of management education. The CSR effectiveness will be marred by the dearth of effective managers, possessing individual competencies required at various stages of CSR implementation. Management education programs will need to tailor special executive programs for the development sector. At the same time, these key competencies and frameworks provide a template for assessing potential CSR managers and leaders for their future potential as well.

Note
1. Lupin Foundation is the independent CSR arm of Lupin Ltd – an Indian transnational pharmaceutical company based in Mumbai and the seventh largest global company by market capitalization. The Foundation was set up in 1988 with the objective of providing an alternative sustainable and replicable model of Holistic Rural Development in the country. Operating in 2,400 Indian villages, Lupin Foundation is one of the largest NGOs in the country (www.lupinfoundation.in/node/96).

References


Further reading

Appendix. Lupin questionnaire using the competency framework
Q1. Did PGP-DM program help the executive in enhancing the ability to mentally foresee CSR-related issues, key concepts that will develop in the future? (C1)
Q2. Did the program help the executive’s ability to think creatively, critically, and anticipate potential consequences of Foundation and individual actions? (C1)
Q3. How effective was the program in developing the ability to mentally visualize, understand, and analyze complex and dynamic systems and issues as relevant for CSR practice? (C2)
Q4. How far was the program effective in helping the executives understand CSR drivers, standards, and regulations? (C3)
Q5. Has pursuing the PGP-DM program enabled the executives to develop a CSR vision and give the company’s CSR program direction? (C4a)
Q6. How has the ability to identify, plan, implement, and manage projects, decisions, and strategies that support CSR been enhanced? (C4b)
Q8. How far have the executives’ communication and other interpersonal skills improved that has helped them in their CSR role? (C5)
Q9. How has the PGP-DM program helped in developing personal characteristics and attitudes that support CSR? (C6)
Q10. Have any one of them been promoted to higher responsibilities due to enhanced management skills development through PGP-DM? (C6)
Q11. How has the self-learning improved and has the course led to reflection on one’s own actions and assumptions? (C8)

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Work-based learning
A learning strategy in support of the Australian Qualifications Framework

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Toowoomba, Australia, and
Malcolm Cathcart
Leeds Trinity University, Leeds, UK

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to assess the extent to which work-based learning could potentially improve education and training pathways in Australia.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper reviews education and training provision in Australia through a contextualisation of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) with work-based learning pedagogy to determine the extent to which it might contribute to improved outcomes for learners.

Findings – People seeking to advance their career aspirations can consider the application of work-based learning to support lifelong learning pathways through the AQF.

Research limitations/implications – There is a need for further longitudinal studies on the outcomes of work-based learning for organisations, individual learners and education and training institutions.

Practical implications – The application of effective WBL approaches has the potential to create a much larger flow of learners from experiential and vocational backgrounds into undergraduate programmes and onto higher education programmes using a consistent and effective pedagogy.

Social implications – By actively considering the opportunities for learning at work and through work learners, educators and business managers may recognise that there would be more demand for work-based learning.

Originality/value – This paper represents an initial action research study which examines the role WBL can provide for lifelong learning.

Keywords Pathways, Lifelong learning, Work-based learning, Australian Qualification Framework, Institutional learning, Work applied learning

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The notions of learning being “lifelong” (as opposed to learning up to when you finish your formal “education”) have been evolving in parallel with related social and economic developments (such as changes in the nature of work, the expansion of information technologies and the globalisation of markets) over some 40 years or more (Andersson et al., 2013; Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, 2013; CEDEFOP, 2010; Pitman and Vidovich, 2013).

During the latter part of this evolution, there has been a development in education management to construct qualifications frameworks (QFs) not only as a means of connecting a person’s own lifelong learning journey with various levels of accredited learning (within the education services industry) but also to recognise learning that occurs outside formal education settings (AQF Council, 2009, 2013; CEDEFOP, 2013. As a result of...
this development, QFs are now a part of governments’ education policy, such as it applies within Australia, New Zealand, Europe and Britain. From a policy perspective, it appears that one important function of QFs is to build capacity into the education system to be able to respond to the labour market’s need for not only higher levels of skills but also different skills.

However, it is clear that QFs do vary in purpose and are applied across a wide spectrum from being “transformational devices to descriptive tools” (CEDEFOP, 2010, p. 10). As well, QFs are a mechanism for bringing a level of “regulation” to the education and training industry and its various layers and sectors. For example, standards and obligations regarding the transfer, accumulation and recognition of credit are generally incorporated within QFs. This brings the promise of clear pathways of progression that enable learners to not only see and plan how to progress, but also to use their progressive achievements as the foundation for the next step. As part of the credit process, QFs have been designed to incorporate the recognition of non-formal learning (be it from work or personal interests) and to give certainty to the credit that will be granted from a previous level of (lower or related) study through articulation. This approach has become more recognised in higher education (HE) in the UK with a number of universities actively working to help “workers to be capable and competent” and to “encourage future progression and developments, and a genuine interrogation of practice, with the potential for new theories to be created in action” (Helyer, 2016, p. 1).

Building capacity into the education and training system is an important driver for QFs because contemporary developed economies are facing ongoing challenges to produce sufficient numbers of graduates to meet labour market demands (Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, 2013; CEDEFOP, 2011; deWeert, 2011; Hackett et al., 2012). In recent years in Australia, there has been a significant increase in enrolments in bachelor degree awards (AQF Council, 2009; Kemp and Norton, 2013). However, this growth begs the question to the authors from an action research perspective of whether the HE sector can sustain this development (deWeert, 2011; Kemp and Norton, 2013) without adopting other pedagogical approaches.

It seems likely that to achieve longer term continued growth in the number of tertiary level graduates, the education and training system in Australia will need to have a number of different pathways for both entry into and progression through undergraduate degrees. It is somewhat surprising with the emphasis on being a clever country that the Australian education and training system has been reluctant to embrace some developments, which have been adopted and proved to be effective in other developed countries and regions. In a country noted for its early development of initiatives such as distance education and professional doctorates, we seem to be reluctant to digress from such a strong focus on traditional, academic progression as the primary pathway for responding to the emergent needs of the Australian labour market, i.e. completed vocational qualifications (plus work experience) tend to provide entry and advanced standing into university programmes. A review of university credit policies indicates that the actual credit is more likely to be based on university qualifications that has been previously completed by an individual rather than any other source of learning.

Australia was an early adopter of QF having first established its national QF in 1995 (AQF Council, 2013; Burke et al., 2009) with important iterations leading to the current Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which came into operation from 2015 (AQF Council, 2013). The challenges that have prompted the implementation of the AQF are many. One such challenge is that by 2025, according to modelling developed for Australia’s latest workforce strategy, Australia could have a 2.8 million shortfall on the number of higher-skilled qualifications that industry will demand. (Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, 2013, p. 9).
Another important challenge is that many Australians lack language, literacy and numeracy skills to participate in training and work. Only just over half (54 per cent) of Australians aged 15-74 years have been assessed as having the prose literacy skills needed to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work (Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, 2013, p. 9). The journey for learners who seek to move between the vocational sector to HE is not an easy one. This represents the major challenge for the efficacy of policy tools such as the AQF. In short, there is a reasonable level of doubt that the current approach to education and training service delivery in Australia will achieve the nation’s desired outcomes in regard to graduate numbers.

This review has been undertaken as part of an ongoing action research-oriented project being implemented by a small group of researchers seeking to develop, promote and expand work-based learning in Australia. As an action research group, we have applied our own version of work applied learning (WAL) approach by recognising the potential of a strong work-based learning pedagogy and have dedicated our efforts towards doing something about it. That is, we are researching, writing, and presenting on WBL to encourage wider collaboration, reflecting on our contribution and depending on how successful or unsuccessful we are modifying our efforts anew towards effecting a change in education and training (Garnett et al., 2016, p. 59).

Work-based learning is an important pathway available to learners in the UK (and to varying degrees in other European countries) and the project members set out to better understand whether work-based learning is likely to be a beneficial addition to the provision of learning pathways for individuals engaged in lifelong learning and achieving graduate targets in Australia.

The current position in the Australian HE context is to apply the notion of work-based learning to many other iterations that can certainly be accepted as WBL such as work integrated learning, industry placement, work experience albeit under a compliance to an institutional curriculum framework. Quite understandable though the challenge is rapidly shifting towards fostering “performative knowledge which meets the needs not just of individual professionals but also of their professional contexts and organisations” (Garnett et al., 2016 p. 57).

Summary of methodology
To support the review of the Australian education system’s performance and to ensure the need for completeness, the authors first undertook a desktop review of this performance using key elements of the AQF. The researchers identified six key issues from the literature (AQF Council, 2009; Burke et al., 2009; CEDEFOP, 2010; CEDEFOP and EQF, 2013; CEDEFOP and ETF, 2013; AQF Council, 2009; deWeert, 2011; Guthrie et al., 2011; Hackett et al., 2012), which would provide the basis for a complete review of performance. The issue headings identified from this analysis are as follows: labour market; standards and quality; international; credit and RPL; pathways; and responsiveness. The researchers applied these issues as the foundation for a baseline assessment of the AQF with a view to using this baseline to assess the extent to which new offerings, such as work-based learning, would be likely to lead to improved performance.

Drawing on previous work-based learning research and literature (Cairns and Malloch, 2011; Costley, 2000, 2011; Costley and Lester, 2012; Garnett, 2013; Garnett et al., 2009; Garnett and Young, 2008, 2009; Cunningham et al., 2004; Portwood, 2000; Roodhouse and Mumford, 2010), the key characteristics of work-based learning were mapped against the overall baseline assessment of education and training services, in order to identify and determine if and where improvements can potentially be achieved.
Review of education and training services in Australia

As noted previously, the contemporary concepts of lifelong learning and QFs have gained in status to be the foundation for extensive efforts by governments, educators and business to respond to major changes in labour markets. The characteristics and structure of labour markets are changing, in part because the nature of work is changing. Work is changing because both the objects and means of production are changing and because product life cycles have shortened (Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, 2013). As a result, the labour market now requires more people to have more knowledge skills. It also requires people to change jobs (and to re-skill) more often. Andersson et al. (2013, p. 406) suggest that:

As a concept, lifelong learning partly replaces former concepts such as adult education (Lindeman, 1926), and lifelong education (Faure, 1972). Lifelong learning has become the dominant manner in which the education and learning of adults is addressed in policy terms.

No longer is it expected that a person’s original training or qualification will be the primary basis of what they do at work over their working life. This is the context within which the AQF has been developed. The primary intent of the AQF is usually illustrated as a wheel with equal segments given to each of the ten levels from leaving secondary school (Level 1), post-secondary, vocational to the highest academic award (Level 10) (AQF Council, 2013). The thrust of the AQF is directed towards supporting a life-long learner’s journey, through time and the achievement of qualifications around the wheel (see Figure 1). All segments are depicted as being equal in size and connected to the next one through a white zone. This illustration conveys the impression of a simple, consistent progression from the lowest level to the highest level of learning.

![Figure 1. The Australian Qualifications Framework wheel](Source: AQF Council (2014))
In conjunction with detailed descriptions of the learning and the learning outcomes expected at each of the ten levels in the circle, the AQF also includes several supporting policies that underpin the overall objectives of the framework (AQF Council, 2013). The material is comprehensive and framed in the familiar lexicon of many QFs developed in jurisdictions throughout the world. This does not detract from the essential thrust of the material and it is very clear that the primary objective of the AQF is to enable a learner to progress around the circle through a supported, rewarding, integrated and articulated learning journey. This paper endeavours to assess the extent to which this is what is actually experienced or provided to learners in Australia.

As noted earlier, the framework for this paper comprises six key issues (and their related questions), which have been identified from a study of the literature relating to QFs. In simple terms, the objective is to make a broad assessment of how well what is depicted in Figure 1 is actually a reflection of the operation of education and training systems in Australia. Of particular interest is the qualifications offered at level seven and/or eight by the university and the higher vocational sectors. The issues headings and questions developed by the research group through consultation and analysis are as follows:

1. Labour market – how are education and training services linked to the demands of the labour market?
   Answer – the education and training sector has generally responded by increasing enrolments and graduate numbers. In the vocational education and training (VET) sector this is generally achieved through a specific funding-driven initiative to address labour market needs. The HE sector has an emphasis on demand-driven funding, uncapped numbers and student loan schemes, as the basis to achieve the government targets. The latter approach can sometimes prove to be unsustainable as evidenced by the lack of employment opportunities for graduates in comparison to vocational graduates.

2. Standards and quality – is there an integrated system to allow a progressive learning journey for each individual student/learner?
   Answer – the education and training sector is still a “split” governance model. This could be viewed as a flaw and substantial failure in governance design in the system as even the adoption of a unique student identifier (Australian Government, 2016) to record and manage ongoing VET does not extend into the HE sector. Without some significant change to governance it will not provide an incentive to adopt new practices or standards beyond traditional lecture/classroom style delivery.

3. International – to what extent is there “mobility” for learners and workers across national boundaries?
   Answer – the AQF is well aligned with other QFs throughout the world and there are clear and high levels of both student and worker mobility. The current market suits the education and training sector’s formal academic orientation and traditional delivery. The success of the approach to the migration of skilled workers provides a “back up” to shortfalls in the provision of education services domestically.

4. Credit and RPL – are different forms of knowledge recognised and can learners gain full recognition of their prior achievements as they progress on their learning journey?
   Answer – the overall approach by the education and training sector is still somewhat limited through institutional traditions that recognise predominately classroom and/or institutional outcomes. Evidence indicates that this situation is developing more rapidly in the VET sector (particularly in the private provider sector).
Pathways – are there multiple connected/integrated ways in which learners can gain their learning and qualifications?

Answer – it appears that alternative pathways for learners are more likely to be implemented by small independent providers, vocational providers, while government and HE institutional funding models support the single mass attendance tradition of teaching and learning.

Responsiveness – are there a variety of education products to suit varying needs of learners with different backgrounds?

Answer – the preferred approach by education and training institutions is towards learners who “fit the system”. The added demands and workload for staff are a barrier to consider an alternative education programme offering that alters the role of the teacher and his/her relationship with course content and the learner.

Whilst previous reviews and literature provide a basis for developing these headings/questions, it is also considered that the objectives expressed within the AQF itself provide a good source for framing the review (AQF Council, 2013).

As developments in regard to AQF were reviewed, it was difficult not to note the potential for the “reform” agenda of the AQF to be overtaken by a “marketing” agenda that potentially shifts emphasis from driving change in education and training services to growing business opportunities and maintaining the status quo. Others have noted the scope for QFs to be simply “descriptive” rather than “transformational”. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Australia is moving more towards a “descriptive” QF as evidenced by the dilution of the strategic agenda of the Australian Qualifications Council, through its narrowing planning objectives over recent years (AQF Council, 2014).

If there is no clear evidence of responsiveness in the AQF to the major issues confronting the community and its economy, it is possible that its policy life cycle is will be more short lived than anticipated. Of course, it would not be the first policy agenda to be rendered ineffective by key stakeholders with opposing interests. It is against this background that we now consider each of the six headings in turn drawing on the contribution of Helyer, Boud and Solomon, and Major and conclude with a summary “answer” to each issue/question from a work-based learning perspective.

Characteristics of work-based learning

As advocates and practitioners of WBL, the authors have a unilateral view that many of the challenges that are being experienced in Australia can be addressed more effectively through adoption of WBL pedagogical approaches that transcend the artificial divide between VET and HE. The characteristics of WBL will be highlighted by applying the same questions used above to assess education and training services in Australia. This approach provides a real opportunity to both discuss some key characteristics of work-based learning and to identify the points where this pathway could make a fundamental improvement to education and training services in Australia.

The revised set of questions developed by the WAL group then becomes:

- Labour market – how is work-based learning linked to the needs of the labour market?
- Standards and quality – is there an integrated system to allow a progressive learning journey for each individual student/learner using work-based learning?
- International – to what extent is there “mobility” for learners and workers across national boundaries that have undertaken work-based learning?
Credit and RPL – are different forms of knowledge recognised and can learners gain full recognition of their prior achievements as they progress on their learning journey using work-based learning?

Pathways – are there multiple connected/integrated ways in which learners can gain recognition and qualifications using work-based learning?

Responsiveness – does work-based learning provide a variety of education products to suit varying needs of learners with different backgrounds?

Labour market
The curriculum of a work-based learning qualification is built upon and around the learning agreement, established through a process of resolution negotiated between the education and training providers, the student and the student’s employer (Garnett, 2000; Major, 2016). Learning objectives are established for each student and these are intended to reflect a consensus of the parties. The common ground that reflects this consensus means that the curriculum is not borne out of a particular disciplinary perspective, nor is it borne out of a predefined vocational or professional prescription (Portwood, 2000; Major, 2016). This means that work-based learning sits in a unique and direct relationship between the workplace (and its needs) and the student’s personal and professional aspirations. Unlike conventional vocational or disciplinary courses/programmes, it is not separate to or outside the labour market. It is embedded in it. Consequently, it is considered that any risk associated with conventional programmes not being relevant (in that they sit outside the labour market), are greatly reduced through a work-based learning approach.

Standards and quality
The philosophy of work-based learning is to recognise a broad range of learning and learning experiences without any diminution in the standards and quality of that learning (relative to traditional, academically centric programmes) (Brodie and Irving, 2007; Doncaster, 2000; Garnett, 2010). There is no requirement to adjust any of the standards set out in QFs which is well evidenced by the accreditation of work-based learning programmes across the UK, and to a much lesser extent (by virtue of the limited number of such programmes being offered) in Australia.

Boud and Solomon (2001) captured the potential influence of WBL and its ability to “equip and qualify people already in employment to develop lifelong learning skills, not through engagement with existing disciplines, bodies of knowledge or courses defined by the university, but through a curriculum unique for each person”.

In fact, the standards and quality of work-based learning are applied in an integrated manner to experiential learning and academic learning and in so doing, it is ensured that all forms (of learning) are dealt with in the same comprehensive manner. In this way, any risks associated with the unstructured approach to different types of learning (evident in the current diverse and at times unstructured and unfunded approaches to RPL in Australian institutions) are thus avoided. The epistemological and pedagogical justification for work-based learning is now well established in universities (Costley, 2000; Garnett and Young, 2008, 2009; Garnett and Workman, 2009; Major, 2016; Portwood, 2000). However, the primary issues for quality and standards in the Australian context revolve ensuring the removal of any ad hoc, institution-by-institution, department-by-department interpretation of different forms of learning (and its recognition).

International
It is clear that because the standards and quality of work-based learning operate within the overall existing QFs in place in those jurisdictions where there are these two elements in
place – QF and work-based learning, the mobility issue is no different to any other award in those jurisdictions and with over 40 countries adopting QFs, the opportunity for mobility will be enhanced. There is also opportunity for students to be undertaking WBL programmes from within country and with overseas institutions, such Chester and Middlesex universities.

Credit and RPL
As noted previously, work-based learning brings all credit and RPL considerations into a structured, formalised and financially sustainable environment. It is testimony to the enormous financial rewards accruing to Australian universities for their core academic programmes that they have not recognised further organisational and financial benefits to them in adopting the philosophy and structure of work-based learning. As set out in the literature (Armsby, 2000; Armsby and Costley, 2000; Ball and Manwaring, 2010; Costley and Armsby, 2007; Costley et al., 2010; Cunningham et al., 2004; Major, 2016), the structure of work-based learning is simple, with a focus on three primary elements: review of learning and claims for recognition of past learning (incorporating academic and experiential learning); development of a learning plan incorporating learning objectives and a preferred award title that encapsulates the thrust of the qualifications sought; and work-based projects that provide the opportunity for and evidencing of learning to achieve the student’s desired learning outcomes.

Pathways
Unlike the majority of traditional formal learning pathways offered by Australian providers, work-based learning offers a customised pathway for each student. To the extent that the structure set out above is the basis for all work-based learning awards and is more or less a “given”, this “framework” enables a student to pursue multiple pathways to achieve their learning objectives. This may involve elements of course work as required but also involves completely individualised project plans and activities that plot the course of the student’s learning journey. The way to achieve learning is via the medium of work-based projects/activities which may involve the student in multiple roles, in multiple settings and seeking to achieve divergent outcomes. It may, as is the case at Chester University (Major, 2016) involve undertaking or integrating more traditional forms of university-based study through the selection of modules from across the range of the university’s module portfolio, assuming that those selected made for a coherent programme and that the student had the necessary prerequisites to undertake the study.

The nett outcomes of this learning may be a new product or an improved way of doing a particular activity or project at work. In any event, the artefacts for assessment may be presented in a variety of ways consistent with the student’s learning outcomes.

There is the added benefit identified by Wall and Tran (2016, p. 230) of the “enabling opportunities for work-based learners to share their current localised knowledge and understandings helps to boost their agency, and therefore motivation to engage”.

All these divergent approaches are subjected to assessment in ways consistent with all education and training programmes and in line with the QF for that jurisdiction. The scaffolding of the work-based learning programme provides a multiplicity of in-built pathways.

Responsiveness
The responsiveness of work-based learning begins with the philosophy and orientation of the programme to align the support “beside” the student, and in so doing, facing the learning challenge with them. This is the model championed by the early twentieth century educationalist and Philosopher John Dewey, and is the basis for the concept of the work-based learning
learning tutor assisting the learner in understanding and explaining the learning they are seeking (Elkjaer, 2008; Lester, 2004; McKernan, 2007). Without having a predetermined set of knowledge facts to deliver to the student, the work-based learning tutor/facilitator is able to respond to the specific circumstances the learner wishes to explore and to advise the learner on the way forward; on ways and means of handling the situation and in coming to terms with an environment where the learner is undertaking work in areas that have not been codified to the extent needed by the learner and their organisation.

Importantly it has been noted that it is the essence of this “responsiveness” that may cause some hesitation on the part of some practising academics to entertain the practice of work-based learning. It is the necessity for this responsiveness that we contend is causing senior administrators to avoid such flexible, hand-crafted solutions. There is a definite shift, implicit in work-based learning, in relation to the power relations between student and adviser. Our observation is that education and training providers have many staff members who are not well experienced in workplaces outside the education and training sector. Furthermore, with the “casualisation” of the workforce (Halcomb et al., 2010), many staff members who are responsible for the delivery of standard “content-” driven programmes are contracted to deliver fixed, existing, content-based programmes. Under these circumstances and with the advantages of very large “cohorts” in popular subjects, this “cookie cutter” method for education and training delivery offers substantial profitability under existing government funding arrangements.

Summary of WBL key characteristics
Utilising the brief review above, it can be seen that work-based learning has the potential to improve results in five of the six areas reviewed in this study. The reasons for this go to the heart of what makes contemporary work-based learning an important reform mechanism for education and training.

Work-based learning:
- connects education and training into the workplace and builds the curriculum around what knowledge and learning is valued and needed by individuals and their workplaces;
- puts equal value on accredited learning regardless of its source or origin;
- has an established pedagogy which aligns with existing QFs enabling it to contribute to international (student and worker) mobility and to conform with established quality and regulatory requirements;
- provides a multiplicity of learning pathways and responsiveness by virtue of a simple and clear structure; and
- provides the opportunity for the teacher/tutor to “sit beside” the student/learner as they confront the issues and problems which are important to each student and their workplaces.

Given the characteristics of work-based learning, it is apparent that a broader implementation of work-based learning has the potential to create a much “wider neck” in the hourglass, which has been used to describe HE services in Australia. This “wider neck” is illustrated in Part 1 of Figure 2 and is intended to represent a larger flow of learners from experiential and vocational backgrounds into undergraduate programmes. The 2013 National Workforce Development Strategy reiterates just how narrow this “neck” is – in 2010, 78 per cent of learners with a prior VET qualification were not given any credit on entry to university (Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, 2013). Work-based learning is a well-established approach to teaching and learning and provides an integrated method for assessing all types of prior learning.
Over time, a wider implementation of work-based learning could contribute greatly to building a single, “connected” wheel of learning similar to the hypothesised one illustrated on page six of this paper and the flux that links and encourages the connection is work-based learning. The academic foundations of work-based learning are now well established and, with sufficient interest in and application of work-based learning, the AQF wheel could be reconnected by the incorporation of work-based learning and better provide the pathway between each of its segments. This reconnection is illustrated in Part 2 of Figure 2, with an element of work-based learning being able to contribute between all levels in the QF.

In considering the two parts of Figure 2, it is important to recognise that work-based learning is only being presented as “one” pathway and that a vibrant, sustainable education and training services environment will strongly support multiple, diverse pathways. The dominant, existing “academic-centric” pathway provides excellent opportunities for many learners. This is because content driven, discipline/vocational centric programmes are highly efficient and widely understood and accepted. However, those learners who do not “fit” this dominant pathway are less likely to progress and thereby, a significant opportunity for expanding our workforce skills is lost.

Conclusion
This review arises from the confluence of three important areas of enquiry that are as follows: the notions of lifelong learning education policy approaches such as QFs and work-based learning. The objective of this review was to assess the extent to which work-based learning could potentially improve education and training pathways in Australia. To do this, a desk review of education and training services in Australia was undertaken (using key elements of the AQF as a basis for the review) and areas of achievement and improvement were identified. A review of work-based learning was then undertaken to identify its key characteristics and to assess the extent to which it would operate as a mechanism for improving education and training services in Australia. Several elements of work-based learning were identified that could lead to a material improvement in education.
and training services in Australia. However, this research has also identified underlying barriers within the Australian education and training system that are likely to inhibit future benefits of work-based learning by Australian providers.

Some authorities have already identified that new providers and new institutions will enter the market to respond to the more flexible needs of individual learners, businesses and the labour market (deWeert, 2011). Australian universities have a strong future demand for bachelor degrees offered via the conventional academic pathway and the incentives are very high to consider any diversion from this path. In the absence of government policy, which was a significant factor in the development and growth of work-based learning in the UK (Garnett and Workman, 2009), the growth of work-based learning will, most likely, depend on these new providers: be they new institutional structures or players from other jurisdictions. Early indications from the current research being undertaken into work-based learning in Australia certainly is that learners’ and employers’ interest in work-based learning is growing and likely to expand. The challenge then for HE in Australia is to embrace work-based learning as the "architecture of HE" (Boud and Solomon) that is driven by the learner and not the institution.

References


General review

Review of the 9th International Conference on Researching Work and Learning

This is a personal reflection upon the Researching Work and Learning (RWL) conference held in Singapore on the 9th to the 11th of December 2015. The RWL conference was established in 1999 and is the leading international research conference series in the field of work and learning. The aim of the conference is to provide “a critical platform for researchers and professionals to share research in work and learning, engage in dialogue with colleagues and experts from around the world, and deepen their knowledge in the areas of work and learning”.

The theme of the conference was “Work and Learning in the Era of Globalisation: Challenges for the 21st Century”. The conference was immaculately organised and hosted by The Institute for Adult Learning, The National Institute of Education and SIM University, Singapore.

The call for conference papers identified the following key questions:

- How does globalisation mediate skills, performance and work?
- What are the implications of the changing nature of work for learning through work?
- In what ways can vocational education and training policies and systems be responsive to the changing nature of work and global and regional pressures?

And was intended to be of relevance to:

- academics;
- researchers and study teams;
- human resource development professionals;
- adult educational consultants and training providers;
- adult educators and trainers;
- workforce development specialists and policy makers; and
- anyone else interested in work and learning.

A large international audience explored the conference themes through a rich and intensive programme of plenary key notes, parallel sessions and posters. With some hundred and eighteen conference contributions on offer it was not possible to sample more than a handful of the high quality sessions available. My report focuses upon the sessions I was able to attend and which made a particular impact upon me.

The conference got off to a thought provoking start. Emeritus Professor Raewyn Connell was the opening keynote speaker who drew upon her southern theory work to draw the attention of delegates to some of the complex and sometimes subtle differences between “Northern” (Europe and North America) and “Southern” (Asia and the southern hemisphere) ways of theorising or viewing the world. It is always good to have your world view...
challenged and I found it a timely reminder of the multiple perspectives that can and should
be brought to bear upon workplace learning both globally and locally.
Ramon Wenzel of the University of Western Australia led a challenging and interactive
session putting forward a framework for the research of work and learning. This stimulated
me to reflect upon the breadth and diversity of the field and the attractiveness of developing
common recognition and understanding of at least the broad parameters of the field.

The full paper is available at: www.rwl2015.com/abstracts-01.html

Julie Reddy and Heidi Bolton of the South African Qualifications Authority drew upon
their personal experiences of introducing and supporting colleagues within the South
African Qualification Authority to implement change using an action research approach.
I was initially attracted to this session by the use of action research and their account of the
strengths and pitfalls of the approach both reinforced my appreciation of the action research
approach but also further strengthened my conviction in the advantage of the work-applied
learning approach which enables action research to reach further into organisations by
linking it with real life work teams supported as action learning sets.

The full paper is available at: www.rwl2015.com/abstracts-02.html

David Boud of Deakin University and Donna Rooney of the University of Technology
Sydney examined early studies to shed light upon the conditions for “learning conducive
work”. This was of particular interest to me as it is a key element in work-based learning
and core to the potential to combine individual learning with the attainment of
organisational objectives. The focus was upon informal learning and built upon earlier
studies in Europe and Australia which introduced the notion of learning-conducive work
and the role of organisational context. The more recent role of practice theory was also
identified and examined. The presentation was stimulating and I was very taken with the
notion of a meta-analysis of the considerable number of papers now available on informal
work. I look forward to the next stage in this work.

The full paper is available at: www.rwl2015.com/abstracts-05.html

An important part of my rationale for attending the conference was to present on behalf
of the Australian Institute of Business (AIB) with Carol Costley of Middlesex University a
paper which was also jointly authored with Selva and Param Abraham of AIB. The paper
we presented took a comparative case study approach to identify and examine the features
of higher education infrastructure needed in order to support learning through work as part
of a course leading to a higher education qualification. The cases chosen were the AIB and
Middlesex University, UK. These institutions were chosen as they both have large numbers
of students engaged in learning through work but were of different types (private and
public) operating in different countries (Australia and the UK). The comparison of the two
cases highlighted significant structural capital issues relating to the curriculum offer and
how it was delivered and supported both academically and administratively. The focus
upon implementation of programmes designed to provide learning through work seemed to
be of great interest and left me wondering about the extent to which there was a theory and
practice divide between the various conference contributions.

The full paper is available at: www.rwl2015.com/abstracts-04.html

The above is a very personal snapshot of what was available at the conference and
I hope it might serve to inspire the reader to check out the 10th International Conference on
RWL to be held in South Africa in 2017.

To find out more please see: http://greenskills.co.za/rwl-conference-comes-to-sa/

Jonathan Garnett
Facilitating Work-Based Learning: A Handbook for Tutors  
Edited by Ruth Helyer  
2016  
Keywords Business, Work-based learning, Degree apprenticeships  
Review DOI 10.1108/JWAM-10-2016-0016  

That there are so few books dedicated to teaching in higher education, raises the question why this very specific book on work-based learning (WBL). Should we “gloss over it” because we know how to teach, or because we are not engaged in WBL, or because we are already? What follows is a review biased towards using this title with the area of business education, rather than say nursing, social work, the creative arts or engineering. That said, without experiencing these fields, I find it likely that my review is relevant to these and other types of work. Most work places “suffer” from competing ways in which knowledge can be used in practice because of the complex practise involved. But then this complexity is what makes WBL challenging, exciting and worthwhile.

What type of educator might benefit most from using this edited work of Helyer of 13 chapters? In my view, both WBL and non-WBL tutors can find inspiration in this book in every chapter and in the order in which they are placed; starting with the Introduction (Helyer, 2016) that emphasises it is not the experience that matters but the learning, combined with Chapter 1’s point (Helyer and Garnett, 2016) that transcliplinarity matters, which can take us to the use of threshold concepts (Land et al., 2016).

Chapter 2 (Workman and Helyer, 2016) stresses that effective WBL starts with the tutor and so reinforces the need for the book. It might have considered taking a more critical look at the relationship between student, teacher and employer that WBL creates. What tensions might exist within this nexus and how might the tutor manage these?

Chapter 3 (Workman and Bravenboer, 2016) helps WBL tutors design programmes and curriculum that are distinct, acceptable and suitable. It talks of balancing traditional subject areas with real-world contexts. This theme progresses in the following Chapter 4 on negotiation and WBL (Laycock and Karpel, 2016) where the detail of partnering with a wider range of stakeholders is discussed, as is the related need to include different pedagogies such as heutagogy, experiential and reflective learning. Making sense of these pedagogies as a student is difficult, so tutors need pay attention to engaging students in these learning processes that make up an effective WBL, even within a well-designed programme. Recognising and accrediting prior experiential learning (Armsby and Helyer, 2016) is delved into greater detail in its own chapter, including useful misconceptions, showing how WBL tutors can learn from the experience of others in identifying these.

Tony Wall’s Chapter 6 “Turning practitioners into practitioner-researchers” sits regally on the top of the debates in this area of learning. What constitutes a research project is not agreed upon and can vary, sometimes rightly, sometimes questionably, within the same institution, in particular as regards to axiology (what is valued in research). A confused
axiology amongst academics leads to confusion amongst students as to whom their research needs to convince and what “convince” might involve. Wall does not ignore the “different research worlds that exist” (p. 115). He quotes Hammersley (2012) regarding the lack of agreement as to what about social research methods should be taught to ensure students are neither philosophically oppressed nor obsessed. He proposes a practical axiology that values change and practical outcomes. Practitioner research “shifts from theory generation to making a change” (p. 117). What then becomes valued in practitioner research is not a reduction of the types of research a student might choose from as that would be defeatist. Instead the axiology becomes clear in a range of projects. Wall’s comprehensive approach to making practitioner-researchers avoids attempts to generate theory that are better left to PhDs. Returning to Helyer’s introductory point, it is the learning about how difficult it is to create knowledge that matters, not the production of perfect research.

Minton and Walsh’s Chapter 7 is full of interesting ideas such as using buddy systems that pair more experienced with less experienced students, how to help students develop more autonomy and creating students who are experts. All of which help to lower the operational complexity of effective and efficient WBL tutoring. At this point in the book, the reader has a sense of journey with Chapter 2 being delved into in by Minton and Walsh in more detail. Quality is not left untouched. Again, picking up on all previous chapters, Chapter 8 reminds us how to bring what is learnt from those chapters into a coherent approach to quality against that complex practice back-drop, whatever your chosen specific approach to WBL.

Less seemingly directly useful is Chapter 9 by Andy Price, because it addresses the use of social media to enhance WBL as it is a moving feast. The chapter does provide a way of remaining updated and sensibly suggests that students are asked what social media they use, how and why. He also highlights how social media creates an identity for both student and academic. It might have added that students frequently need to learn about critical digital literacy including how to select knowledge, how to discern how to use the text, how others might use it and how it was meant to be used. E-portfolio considerations are also missing.

From here on, I felt the journey I was being taken on was less clear but still valuable. Learning in the workplace globally, Chapter 10, has less clarity of purpose, not least as measured by how much scrawling of my own notes around it there are. More content on dealing with diversity in the workplace would have been useful. Importantly it does remind us to not impose a way of thinking on all global cultures, especially when giving feedback. Chapter 11, on learning to learn (Helyer and Price), covers reflection. It might have covered use of theory from different sources. It felt more simplistic than it might have been. I liked the inclusion of voluntary work and extra-curricular experiences as a source of learning and contrast. Billett, in the last chapter, makes the important point that learning needs to be made worthwhile and personalised, something our current “time jealous” students value (p. 260) and yet what we are asking them to do is not easy and it is so easy to be too critical of what they achieve, rather than giving students the confidence, using feed forward to gain more from their learning.

What is missing from this book? Following on from Wall’s chapter that talks of Levi-Strauss’ concept of bricoleur (1966), a chapter dedicated to how to use theory, and what theory can provide vs other forms of knowledge would allow WBL to lead relevant parts of higher education forward. Theory use is trickier in the real world than in a classroom. Whether we are too devoted to theory (vs say other forms of more immediate more accessible and so sometimes more practical in more basic situations) needs to be discussed. We need more facilitation of how to use theory and other sources of knowledge in the workplace and more sharing of how we scaffold student achievements to add more value to their endeavours.

Whether you are, or are not, a WBL specialist, you will find this book useful because it provokes you to question your teaching practice. Given that as faculty we are also time
jealous, if you are willing to spend your time reading this book, do practise what we WBL tutors preach and ensure that your reading turns into inquiry and then into action. Just as this is the test of WBL, it ought to be our test of how useful this book is to us.

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Reference


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