UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTION OF ONLINE AND BLENDED

DOCTORAL DEGREES

by

Ashley Ann Tharpe

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Liberty University

June 2014

UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTION OF ONLINE AND BLENDED

DOCTORAL DEGREES

by

Ashley Ann Tharpe

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Liberty University

June 2014

APPROVED BY:

Vance Pickard, EdD, Committee Chair

Ralph Linstra, EdD, Committee Member

Judy Sandlin, EdD, Committee Member

James Swezey, EdD, Research Consultant

2

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of university administrators regarding prospective faculty candidates with online or blended doctoral degrees from accredited institutions located in Central Virginia. Administrators were interviewed to gauge their perceptions and completed a survey adapted from DePriest (2009) who adapted it from Levernier (2005). Data were collected through questionnaires, documents, and individual interviews. Data were analyzed using Creswell's (2007) data analysis spiral. Analyses were conducted using transcription, thematic coding, textural and structural descriptions, and a description of the essence of the experiences. The results indicated that administrators had a positive perception of online and blended education with a preference for faculty candidates with a blended doctoral degree.

Keywords: online education, blended education, doctoral degrees, distance learning

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, in particular my daughter Rachel. When writing became difficult, I held tight to the goal of finishing so I could provide us with a better life. And to my father, Steve Hudson, who shouldered the burden of paying for my bachelor's degree despite the financial challenges of being a single parent. Lastly, to my supportive husband, Nelson Tharpe, and grandmother, Joyce Hudson, who never doubted I would finish.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my heartfelt thanks to the many individuals who have contributed to my education over the years and have given up their time to assist with the completion of this dissertation.

My thanks go to my committee members for their support and encouragement: Dr. Vance Pickard, Dr. Ralph Linstra, and Dr. Judy Sandlin. I give a special thank you to Dr. Ralph Linstra who encouraged me to pursue a doctorate despite my doubts. I have had the privilege of being mentored by him for the past 10 years and feel strongly that my success is due to his guidance.

Thank you to Dr. Beverly Mahoney, who helped me to become a better writer while pursuing a master's degree. I would not be the writer I am today if it was not for her guidance at that time. Her dedication to her faith, family, and work has left a lasting impression on me.

Lastly, I would like to thank Jonathan Giles for helping me with the editing process. His unique editing comments made the process enjoyable.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

ADL…….Advanced Distributed Learning

AAUP…..American Association of University Professors

CPA…….Certified Public Accountant

GPA……Grade Point Average

MOOC….Massive Open Online Courses

USAF…..United States Armed Forces

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Distance education has expanded and evolved over the last few decades; each year more students graduate with degrees earned partly or completely online (Allen & Seaman, 2014; Garrett, 2010; Mooney, 2010; Sener, 2010). During 2012, online education exploded and gained greater media attention due to the new education platform termed *Massive Open Online Courses* (MOOC) (Daniel, 2013; Robinson, 2013). Many colleges that offer online degrees advertise it as a great way to get an education due to the lower cost of courses in comparison to traditional courses, flexible scheduling, convenience, and the advantage of earning a degree while still working full time. This trend has resulted in 11,200 college-level programs offered in 2006-2007 by Title IV degree-granting institutions (US Dept of Ed., 2008). Since 2002, Allen and Seaman (2014) have created an annual report on the state of online learning in U.S. higher education. According to Allen and Seaman's (2014):

> The number of students taking at least one online course increased by over 411,000 to a new total of 7.1 million since last year, 2013. The proportion of higher education students at least one online course is at an all-time high of 33.5 % (p.4).

Research indicated by a statistics professor at Babson College stated that in 2003 online learning was nearly unheard of ten years earlier but as of 2003 11%of all students are taking classes online; the rate of students choosing to take online classes is predicated to increase at a rate of 20 % (Roach, 2003, p.44). Based on Allen and Seaman's (2014) the predication was correct.

Online courses are classes delivered over the internet to students who are not located in the same physical location. There are several types of distance education courses such as hybrid classes, TV broadcasts, and paper modulars (Tallent-Runnels, Thomas, Lan, & Cooper, 2006,

p.93). Distance education has helped meet the intense demand for higher education, cut education costs for both universities and students, and allowed individuals to return to school that otherwise would never have the opportunity to do so.

Distance education has not been without growing pains and criticism. "Numerous debates have arisen concerning the credibility, quality, and consequences of these programs in higher education" (Adams & DeFleur, 2006, p.33). However, the educational quality of distance learning and its instruction is not the focus of this research; an understanding of the educational process is necessary to understanding perceptions of the system. Instead, the focus of this research is on the perceptions of administrators on hiring faculty members with online and blended doctoral degrees for faculty positions at accredited universities and their general perceptions of online education.

Students graduating with online degrees expect that their degree will help them advance in their career or open doors for a new job. Students spend thousands of dollars on their education and educational cost is rising faster than the cost of health care (Hyman, 2012). As of 2012, student debt passed the one-trillion dollar line (Hyman, 2012). Research, on the other hand, suggests that employers do not think highly of hiring someone with an online degree (Adams & DeFleur, 2006; DePriest, 2009; Redpath, 2012). In fact some "virtual institutions who advertise online education often claim that they are sure routes to employment, career advancement, raises in pay, and other job rewards" (Adams & DeFleur, 2006, p.33). Furthermore, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education (2013) the Obama administration wants to hold schools accountable for student employability and to require states to create more oversight over distance education programs (p.a25). Research is necessary on these claims due to the financial investment students contribute toward their education.

There is a large population of students enrolled in online courses; therefore, research needs to answer the question "how do prospective employers view online degree programs?" In particular, this study examined the perceptions of academic administrators involved in the hiring process of prospective faculty members who have earned online doctoral degrees.

Do administrators perceive online and blended doctoral degrees negatively and have perceptions of these programs improved? According to Allen and Seaman (2008), "…academic leaders do not believe that there is a lack of acceptance of online degrees by potential employers" (p.3). However, previous research by Adams and DeFleur (2005, 2006) and DePriest (2009) show that employers do not have a high acceptance of online degrees and employers prefer to hire applicants with a traditional degree. DePriest (2009) research included academic leaders in the employers surveyed. In his research Fischer (2013), provides research on the types of colleges employers prefer; he found that most institutions preferred anything but online degree programs. Academic leaders give conflicting answers about online and blended doctoral degrees. Perceptions of academic leaders require more research related to online and blended education. Employer perceptions require exploration due to the lack of in-depth qualitative research on the perceptions of online and blended programs.

Rarely is the decision to hire a prospective faculty member made by one administrator alone. Committees tend to make hiring decisions or by agreement in department level group meetings. For that reason, it is important to discover the perceptions of both deans and chairpersons when possible. "Hiring committees are designed to be objective. They are comprised of individuals who possess unique expertise within their fields" (Simplicio, 2007, p.258). Administrators have the final say in hiring decisions but they tend to follow the choice of department chairpersons who lead committees.

Situation to Self

The perception of administrators involved in the hiring process is professionally relevant and applicable to me due to working on my doctorate in a blended format. As an online chair for online health faculty members, topics involving online education are of great interest. My master's degree in Human Relations was also completed 50% online and 50% in the traditional method. This leads me to have strong assumptions that online education is equivalent and in some cases more challenging than traditional education.

To guide the study a social constructivist's paradigm was used since this is a qualitative study to determine administrators' perceptions. The social constructivist seeks to understand the world from the participants view and look for the complexity of the views. This paradigm also takes into consideration that the researcher's background shapes their interpretation of information. The type of rhetoric used is an informal literary style, defining reality through multiple participant meanings, which is in line with constructivism (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

Problem Statement

Over the last decade there has been research comparing online education to traditional education (Beard & Haper, 2002; Jaggars & Bailey, 2010; Peat & Helland, 2004; Yang & Tsai, 2008). However, there has been little research on the perceptions of employers in regards to online and blended doctoral degrees. Adams (2008) and Adams, Lee and Cortese (2012) suggested that further research be conducted on the acceptability of online education from the perspective of potential employers and if hybrid or blended learning satisfies the perception that classroom experiences are missing from complete online degrees. Other researchers have suggested additional research in the area of acceptability of online doctoral degrees by employers

(Adams & DeFleur, 2005; Gaba, 2007; Gibbson, Harris, & Colaric, 2008; Linardopoulos, 2012). Good and Peca (2007) suggested in-depth interviews with faculty members to discover attitudes about online education and their views of students enrolled in online programs. Linardopoulos (2012) suggested "comprehensive report of employer perceptions by specific industry". This study seeks to fill the gap in the literature by conducting in-depth interviews with administrators and chairpersons suggested by previous research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover the current perceptions of university administrators regarding prospective faculty candidates with online or blended doctorate degrees from accredited institutions located in Virginia. At this stage in the research, perception will be generally defined as "the act or faculty of apprehending by means of the senses or of the mind" based on the American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary (2002, p.1).

Significance of the Study

This research is significant because administrators' perceptions of perspective faculty members with online and blended doctorate degrees have the potential to influence hiring decisions. Students invest heavily in their education with the expectation that it will result in employment or promotion. However, online degrees can only lead to a job if the people responsible for making the hiring decision recognize online and blended education. Faculty pursing tenure or promotion also seek out terminal degrees while maintain their current employment.

Due to the nature of this study, it w useful to individuals with online or blended doctorate degrees to understand what perceptions administrator have about method of degree completion and other factors that may influence hiring decisions. It is unlikely that one factor alone

influences hiring decisions but education and degree prestige ranks as the second most important items in studies by Bitter (1999) and Sharabi, Arian and Simonovich (2012). This study can also help guide universities in their decision making process to offer a degree completely online, blended, or keep the program restricted to the traditional format.

Research Questions

Previous research conducted on the acceptability of online degrees came from a quantitative method (Adams & DeFleur, 2005, 2006; Columbar & Monaghan, 2009; DePriest, 2009; Metrejean & Noland, 2011; Vukelic & Pogarcic, 2011). Qualitative research related to online education has addressed students and faculty perceptions of online verses traditional education (Buorac, Roncevic, & Nemcanin, 2011; Flowers & Baltzer, 2006; Good & Peca, 2007; Graham & Jones, 2011; Leonard & Guha, 2001; Taner, Nooser, & Totaro, 2009; Young & Lewis, 2007). However, there does not appear to be any qualitative research on the current perceptions of academic administrators in relation to online education. The researcher developed the following research questions to discover academic administrator's perceptions about online education particularly online and blended doctoral degrees for fulltime faculty positions.

1. What perceptions do academic administrators have of online doctoral degrees?

Adams (2008) suggested in his recommendations for future research that more research needed to be conducted in the area of distance learning and acceptability from the perspective of potential employers. Good and Peca (2007), call for in-depth interviews with faculty members regarding attitudes about online programs. Research question one seeks to address such concerns. While this study is addressing administrators and not all faculty it is filling the gap in the literature for in-depth interviews.

2. What type of influence does the university from which the prospective faculty member earns their online doctorate degree influence hiring decisions?

3. What type of influence does the university from which the prospective faculty member earns their blended doctorate degree influence hiring decisions?

According to Burris (2004) "the prestige of the department in which an academic received a PhD consistently ranks as the most important factor in determining employment opportunities available to those entering the academic labor market" (p. 239). Bair (2003) and Baldi (2005) also found that prestige of finance doctoral programs was linked to hiring practices. Therefore, question two and three ask how the university a prospective faculty member earned his degree influences hiring decisions when a school is a known online or blended degree producing institution. Many universities offer both online and residential programs but some universities are perceived as either a residential schools or online schools.

4. Does the method of doctorate degree completion influence administrative perceptions during the candidate hiring process?

Adam's (2008) asks the question in his recommendation for future research if hybrid or blended learning satisfies the perception that classroom experiences are missing in a degree earned completely in the online format. The survey research revealed that the lack of classroom experiences were an issue for prospective employers. There has not been any qualitative research on how administrators now perceive faculty candidates from a blended program. The fourth question seeks to discern items such as the perceptions of their skills, level of expertise, and competency.

Research Plan

This study was conducted using a transcendental phenomenological research method adopted by Moustakas (1994). There have been a few quantitative studies on the acceptability of online programs using surveys; however, there has been no qualitative research on the topic. A transcendental phenomenological approach gives fresh in-depth perspective on administrators' view of online and blended programs. It helps reveal factors other than method of degree completion that may influence hiring decisions. The question has been raised as to why a qualitative method was used instead of a quantitative survey. A survey does not capture the thought process of hiring managers nor take into consideration all of the possible factors that influence hiring managers that can be discovered with interviews. Nor does a survey reveal why or if administrators have negative attitudes toward distance education.

Delimitations

Participants will need to meet certain requirements to qualify for participation in the study. Candidates are limited to administrators who play a role in the decision making process for the hiring of new faculty members. The reason for the delimitation is that these individuals are more likely to have personal experience and insight on hiring faculty members with a doctorate from an online or blended program. Administrators will also have insight on other factors that influence hiring decisions.

Limitations

The study will be limited to administrators in the school/college/department health, counseling, education and psychology in Virginia, some specialty colleges and technology or engineering schools were not surveyed due to not having the required school/college/department.

The survey is also limited to Virginia where expanding to other states would give a fuller picture of the perceptions of online doctoral degrees.

Definition of Key Terms

- "Asynchronous" is defined as "a type of online instruction that allows the instructor and the student to communicate online utilizing numerous methods of communication such as e-mail and web postings" (DePriest, 2009, p.5).

- "Distance Education" is defined as "a formal education process in which the students and instructor are not in the same place" (US Dept Ed, 2008).

- "Synchronous" is defined as "a type of online instruction that occurs when the instructor and the student communicate online at the same time" (DePriest, 2009, p.5).

- "Traditional course" is defined as a "Course with no online technology used; content is delivered in writing or orally" (Allen & Seaman, 2008, p. 4).

- "Web-facilitated course" is defined as a "Course that uses Web-based technology to facilitate what is essentially a face-to-face course. Some colleges may use a course management system (CMS), or web pages to post the syllabus and assignments" (Allen & Seaman, 2008, p. 4).

- "Blended/Hybrid course" is defined as a "Course that blends online and face-to-face. Substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, typically uses online discussions, and typically has a reduced number of face-to-face meetings" (Allen & Seaman, 2008, p. 4).

- "Online course" is defined as a "Course where most or all of the content is delivered online. Typically there are no face-to-face meetings" (Allen & Seaman, 2008, p. 4).

- "Virtual or Online Only School" is defined as a "school that offers courses or degree programs only through the use of online or Web-based delivery systems" (DePriest, 2009, p.6).

- "For-Profit School" is defined as "a private school that is owned by a parent company and run like a business for the purpose of monetary gains "(DePriest, 2009, p.5).

- "Diploma Mill" is defined as "dubious providers of educational offerings or operations that offer certificates and degrees that are considered bogus" (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2003).

- "Prestige" is defined as "an effect of the position of academic departments within networks of association and social exchange that is, as a form of social capital" (Burris, 2004, p.240). When used as degree prestige it is referring to the "esteem among constituencies" (Dedeian, Cavazos, Hunt, Jauch, 2010, p.12).

- "Epoche" is defined as "a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1994, p.33).

- "Memoing" is defined as "a process in which the researcher writes down ideas about the evolving theory throughout the process of open, axial, and selective coding" (Creswell, 2007, p.67).

- "Audit Trails" are defined as "documenting the course of development of the completed analysis. In developing an audit trail, a researcher provides an account of all research decisions and activities throughout the study." (Carcary, 2009 ,p.15)

- "Triangulation" is defined as the use of multiple sources of information to establish trustworthiness in research and develop converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2009).

- "Peer debriefing" is defined as critical analysis of research methodologies, actual data, and hypotheses by a peer of the research during a debriefing session" (Davis, 1992, p.607).

- "Member checking is based on the assumption of constructed realities and is performed by an ongoing process of testing out with informants the research analysis, interpretation, and conclusions" (Davis, 1992, p.607).

- "Massive Open Online Course" is an online course aimed at large-scale interactive participation and open access via the web. (Lewin, 2013)

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

While exploring the perceptions of administrators of online and blended doctoral degrees it was important to explore the history of distance learning along with past and current perceptions. Therefore, in this literature review, the author examines the following important aspects of distance learning: theory behind distance learning; the definition of distance learning; how the concept of distance learning has evolved; how distance learning is still growing; and how it is viewed today. The relatively new educational method, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) is reviewed due to the potential influence this new method may have online education. Since its creation, it is difficult to address online education without also addressing MOOCs. Additionally, the literature review contains results from earlier studies on faculty, student, and employer perceptions of online education.

Theoretical Framework

Equivalency Theory

Online/distance education has changed and evolved much since its first formation in the 1840s and so has theory associated with distance education. The current theory related to distance education is equivalency theory, which is the result of a synthesis of distance education theories and Keegan's (1986) three theories of distance learning.

Equivalency theory is the concept that course creators and distance education instructors should strive for equivalency with residential education to the point that regardless of how information is presented or in what format or location the learning outcomes and experiences are equivalent. According to Simonson, Schlosser, and Hanson (1999) "the key elements of equivalency theory are: concepts of equivalency, learning experiences, appropriate application, students, and outcomes" (p.71). (Simonson, Schlosser & Hanson, 1999)

There are five key elements of equivalency theory: concepts of equivalency, learning experiences, appropriate application, students, and outcomes. *Equivalency* is that concept that two students can have two very different learning experiences that result in learning the same knowledge. For instance, a distance learning student should test the same as a residential student based on learning outcomes. *Learning experiences* refers to "anything that happens to a student to promote learning" (Simonson, Schlosser & Hanson, 1999, p.71). Learning experiences are intrinsically different but should be equivalent. For example, group work in the residential format can be done in distance education with the use of small group discussion boards and group chat to collaborate on a project instead of in person. The essence of the learning experience is present but experienced differently. The element of *appropriate application* involves using the appropriate method that provides for the needs of the learner in the learning environment in which he or she is currently located. In the equivalence theory "…students are defined by their enrollment in a course not but their location" (Simonson, Schlosser & Hanson, 1999, p.71). Lastly, *outcomes* are measurable cognitive growth set by the instructor and by the student. For distance education to be viewed as a comparable to residential education learning outcomes most show equivalency. (Simonson, Schlosser & Hanson, 1999)

Review of the Literature

Defining Distances and Online Education

Distance education has changed and evolved over the years. Individuals have attempted to define it in different ways and terms. First, to research any element of distance education also referred to as online education one needs to have a clear understanding of what it is. Keegan's (1996) definition of distance education is commonly portrayed in literature based on the researcher's experience. Keegan (1996) defines distance education based on five elements:

the quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length of the learning process, the influence of an educational organization both in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student support services; the use of technical media; two way communication; and the quasi-permanent absence of the learning group throughout the length of the learning process (p.50).

Keegan (1986) defined distance education using three key theories: theories of independence and autonomy, theories of industrialization of teaching, and theories of interaction and communication. Keegan (1986) uses Wedemeyer's (1975) research on independent study. Wedemeyer's (1975) definition of independent study is similar to the current definition of distance education. In fact, Wedemeyer (1975) included the term "distance education" when describing independent study. The reason for not using the term distance education is because it emphasized separation rather than teaching and learning. Furthermore, focus was placed on describing the characteristics of an open institution and the use of independent study within these open institutions. Wedemeyer (1975) writes "…correspondence study, home study, distance education; and radio education, television teaching—in fact all forms of mediated instruction (correspondence is a medium)—belong to a larger, generic class which we in the U.S. tend to call independent study" (p.10). Independent study can be teacher directed or learner directed which recognizes that "…learning can and does take place in the absence of the teacher" (p.11).

Moore (1973) defines independent learning in a manner that agrees with Wedemeyer's (1975) definition and adds the concept of autonomous learner. Moore (1973) definition states "…independent learning and teaching is an educational system in which the learner is autonomous, and separated from his teacher by space and time, so that communication is by print, electronic, or other non-human medium" (p.663). There are three elements of independent

learning: a learner, a teacher, and a method of communication. One cannot simply look at the distances aspect of education; one must consider its effect on the learner and teacher as well. This consideration leads to Moores (1973) theory of the autonomous learner, which states that, the greater the distance between teacher and learner the greater the responsibility of the learner. An autonomous learner uses the teacher more as a guide and a resource to help solve problems. The learner seeks out knowledge in a systemic approach, questioning, testing, and analyzing. The autonomous learner is an individual that has discovered how to learn which is the very core of Carl Rogers definition of an educated man. Carl Rogers was one of the founders of humanistic psychology, which he expanded from therapy to the education process, and the development of learner-centered teaching. Rogers (1951) believed that a teacher is just a facilitator in the learning process with the student at the center. .

According to Keegan (1999) and Peters (1988), the theory of industrialization of teaching proposes that distance education should be evaluated by comparing the model with the industrial production of goods. "Peters concluded that for distance teaching to be effective, the principle of division of labor is a critical element. In his theory of industrialization, the teaching process is gradually restructured though increased mechanization and automation" (Keegan, 1999, p.66). The concept of automation can be related to online education by the development of a course shell that online educators use to function more like facilitators verses active instructors. Formalized courses with standard expectations have created an industrialized type of education with centralized leadership. This type of industrialized learning should not be viewed negatively as it gives online education a standard, which can then be used to evaluate learning outcomes and to meet accreditation standards. (Keegan, 1999).

The last key element Keegan (1999) used in his distance learning theory and definition is Holmbergy's (1989) theory of teaching for distance education. Holmbergy (1989) writes that it is nearly impossible to develop a theory of teaching in distance learning that is "universally applicable to all students, all conditions and all subject areas therefore a very general and perhaps even crude definition must be used" (p.13). The results of Holmbergy's (1989) work were his theory of teaching in distances learning which asserts:

distance teaching will support student motivation and promote learning pleasure and effectiveness if it is provided in such a way that (1) students believe that the subject of study is relevant to their individual needs, (2) students are made to feel a sense of rapport with the distance education institution, (3) access to course content is facilitated, (4) learners are engaged in discussions and decisions, and (5) the program provides for real and simulated communication to and from the learner (p.15).

These key theories: theory of independence and autonomy, theory of industrialization of teaching, and theory of interaction and communication used by Keegan (1999) create the foundation of these distance learning theories and definitions. Keegan's (1999) work continues to guide distance education today and has helped shaped its evolution. In conclusion, the current term used today for this type of education is 'online education' and is considered a legitimate field of academic study.

Defining Blended/Hybrid Education

Pinpointing a definition for blended education sometimes termed *hybrid education* may be compared to trying to hit a moving target. "Blended learning in higher education typically refers to courses and programs which combine online and classroom delivery modes" (Sener, 2010, p.4). The issue with this statement is that technology has changed to the point that few face-to-

face classes don't included some sort of online delivery such as online discussion boards, assignment submissions, online library's and databases used in the classroom, and other experiences that use an online delivery method. The question is then raised, at what point do you consider a face-to-face course a blended course?

Allen and Seaman (2010) include definitions they use with the note that other institutions may define blended differently and include the term web facilitated course. They give the following definitions

- Traditional: "Course with no online technology used — content is delivered in writing or orally" (p.5).

- Web Facilitated: "Course that uses web-based technology to facilitate what is essentially a face-to-face course with a 1 to 29% of content delivered online" (p.5).

- Blended/Hybrid: "Course that blends online and face-to-face delivery with 30 to 79% of content online" (p.5).

- Online: "A course where most or all of the content is delivered online. Typically have no face-to-face meetings with at least 80% of content online" (p.5).

"The definition of an online program or blended program is similar to the definition used for courses; an online program is one where at least 80% of the program content is delivered online and a blended program is one where between 30 and 79% of the program content is delivered online" (Allen & Seaman, 2006, p.67). For the purpose of this research, the Sloan Consortium definitions will be used.

History and Evolution of Distances and Online Education

In the western world, for approximately 80 years (1850-1930) correspondence study (another term for independent/distance study) was the only formal system of teaching and

learning that enabled learners wherever they were, and whatever their condition to

overcome the formidable barriers of space, time, social place and economic status in the

pursuit of learning (Wedemeyer, 1975, p.8).

Charles Wedemeyer is a key contributor to distance education and the Open University.

Wedemeyer's contribution was to apply principles of manufacturing to educating adult learners in

his Articulated Instructional Media Project (AIM) in the 1960's. His works in the United

Kingdom also lead to the Open University initially known as the University of the Air. The Open

University was a British government funded project committed to independent large-scale

delivery of distance education. The institution was considered a success with over 100,000 adult

students enrolled annually. The purpose of the Open University was to give people who would

never have an opportunity to go to school the chance to receive an education. The Open

University offered education to people outside the elite upper class. Success of the British Open

University was copied in other countries, expect the United States. The United States strove for a

more individual route with each institutions deciding how, when, and if to offer distance

education. Some considered reason for this path was due to the United States educational

structure. (Moore, 2003)

Distance learning is not a new concept and even during the time of Wedemeyer's (1975)

writing it was accepted that there was no significant difference between students who learned

from mediated instruction (distance/independent learning) and students in a conventional

classroom. However, as time progressed the traditional face-to-face classroom has been the

standard method of education. The twenty-first century learner, however, has witnessed an

explosion of online education curriculums. This not-so-new method of education has re-evolved

overtime due to student needs and the changes in technology. (Moore, 2003)

As with the creation and advancement of the Internet, the military has played a key role in the advancement of distance learning. In the 1940's the United States Armed Forces (USAF) provided correspondence education to military personnel, which was later termed *independent study*. The USAF also pioneered a 24-hour phone-in counseling service for students and a computerized distribution of course materials. It was also during this period, the 1950s, that television became popular; thereby proving itself a method of delivery for distance education. Some institutions that used television to broadcast educational programs were the University of Iowa, John Hopkins University, the Ford Foundation, and the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television. (Moore, 2003)

In 1997, distance learning received a push into the main stream due to the Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) Initiative by the Department of Defense and the White House Office of Science and Technology. The US military used correspondence courses to teach new skills to service members but the military sought a more efficient and cost effective method for education service members. Distance education provide the answer to the USAF's search. However, this new method of learning was not without trial and error. The military soon understood that technology must conform to the learning needs and material. At first every new technology advancement was used in a course but it was found "…that a new technology should be entertained only after sufficient research showed that a student learned faster, retained more, or possibly improved in overall ability relative to the task or job" (Duncan, 2005, p.400). Since the inception of the ADL initiative, education is no longer limited to a time or place. Instead, guided learning may take place anywhere and anytime with access to a computer and internet. In summary Keegan (1994) summarizes the evolution of online education well in his book *The Future of Online Education*

The evaluation in distance education is characterized as a move from distance learning (d-learning), to electronic learning (e-learning), to mobile learning (m-learning), a phenomenon that he suggests corresponds to the societal evolution from the Industrial Revolution, to the Electronic Revolution of the 1980s, to the Mobile Revolution at the close of the 21st Century (as cited in Fozdar & Kumar, 2007).

Growth of Online Education

Sener (2010) begins his article with a powerful statement based on research from The Sloan Consortium, stating that:

within the next five to ten years practically all higher education students will experience online education in some form during their collegiate career, and college students will be able to take online or blended degree programs and certificates in almost any subject (p.3).

This statement is reinforced by research from other sources as well such as Edventures. Garrett (2010) reported from Edventures that approximately 30% of all adult undergraduate market and 27% of the adult graduate market was taking place online in 2009". Allen, Seaman, and Sloan (2007) wrote that "Nationally, nearly 3.2 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2005 term, a substantial 35 % increase over the 2.3 million reported the previous year" (p.2). Mooney (2010) asserts the *Chronicle of Higher Education* estimates that in 2014 over 3.97 million students will be online. It estimated that the top ten fields of online-only students included health care and education comprising about 22% of the total online enrollment. Online education continues to grow with no apparent leveling of the growth rate (Allen, Seaman, & Sloan, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014).

The Obama Administration's American Graduation Initiative is new driving force for education, which is also sparking more growth in online education. The new White House initiative (2009) calls for the following:

- Call for 5 million additional community college graduates by 2020 including students who go onto four-year colleges and universities

- Create the community college challenge fund to offer more money to community colleges to expand course offerings

- Fund innovative strategies to promote college completion

- Modernize community college facilities

- Create a new online skills laboratory for online education (p.1)

With new money coming into the market for the sole purpose of creating new online skills and a goal of five million new college graduates by 2020 there is even a bigger push for online education. There are also various foundation initiatives with goals to increase the number of college graduates such as the Lumina Foundation and the Gates Foundation.

Allen and Seaman (2014) results of online growth shows that 7.1 million students have taken at least one online course, which is an increase over 411,000 from 2013. Academic officers also believe that the number of students taking online courses will continue to grow and that online education is the future of academia. Allen and Seaman (2014) included the growth of massive open online courses (MOOC's) in this survey due to the impact it is having on online education. As of 2013-2014 only a small number of institutions, about 5 %, are experimenting with MOOC's. The number of students that have taken MOOC's was not addressed in this survey (Allen & Seman, 2014).

Online Education compared to Traditional Education

There have been numerous research studies comparing online education to the traditional face-to-face classroom from the perspective of both students and educators. Research studies have shown that students in online education have performed modestly better or equal to traditional education students (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2010). Ments et al. (2010) reviewed 99 studies comparing traditional education to online education in a meta-analysis and found that students in online classes performed modestly better. However, Means et al. (2010) warned that the online medium might not be the reason for the results; instead, a combination of elements incorporated to improve traditional education may have resulted in higher performance.

The percentage of academic leaders that believe learning outcomes in online education are comparable to traditional education has been slowly rising according to Allen and Seaman (2010). From 2008 to 2009, the total of those who equate the forms of education rose by ten percent. From 2009 to 2010, the number rose another percent. Allen and Seaman (2010) have reviewed the state of online education since 2003, providing yearly reports with the Sloan Consortium and Babson Survey Research Group. Their research highlights a positive outlook for the future of online learning, increased acceptability of the format, and equality of student learning outcomes between online education and traditional education. However, according to a recent study conducted by Columbia University's Community College Research Center students in online courses are less likely to obtain a degree or do as well in the classroom compared to students in residential programs (New, 2013).

Grade point average

The question of how online students compare academically to traditional students has been studied and answered repeatedly in the literature. Recent research shows that online students are learning and they are learning as well as their traditional counterparts. Brown (2012) compared online and traditional students from 2007-2010 in an education course on how to teach reading. He found that the grade differential was small with .37 points higher for undergraduate residential students and 1.32 points higher for graduate residential students compared to the online students (Brown, 2012). Brown's (2012) results were similar those of Ledman (2008), a study which compared online and residential students in a senior capstone course in strategic management. The students received the same exams, assignments, and syllabus. The results showed no significant difference in test courses but the online students had a slightly lower final grade which could be explained by course participation (Ledman, 2008). LaMeres and Plumb (2013) presented the results of comparing an online and traditional delivery method for undergraduate lecture and laboratory components. In their words "the data showed no noticeable difference between the two delivery approaches and content was a candidate for effective delivery online" (LaMeres & Plumb, 2013, p.7).

Student satisfaction

When student satisfaction with online education was compared to traditional education, it was found that students were just as satisfied or more satisfied with online education (Enockson, 1997; Johanson, 1996; Mgutshini, 2013; Reeves & Osho, 2010). In a study by Reeves and Osho (2010) who survey community college students, it was noted that there was a statistically significant difference between online and traditional education students level of satisfaction. Online students were more satisfied with courses in comparison to students enrolled in traditional

courses. Satisfaction here "relates to student perceptions of their ability to achieve success and to feel god about the outcomes" (Reeves & Osho, 2010, p.2). Dae Shik, Lee, and Skellenger (2012) found no significant differences with graduates overall satisfaction between online verses traditional education once variables were controlled. Mgutshini (2013) looked at students experiences online and on-campus using a qualitative comparative cross-sectional study. Mguthsini (2013) results showed that students enrolled in online courses performed better than on-campus students with self-directed learning activities such as problem-based tasks. Online students' scored just as well if not better than on-campus. However, online students gave less positive self-assessments on their perceived content mastery than their on-campus counterparts. Online students may have doubts about their content mastery but their course performances show their mastery is equal to residential students.

Retention

Research is mixed when comparing student retention in online education verses traditional education. Fozdar and Kumar (2007), Nelson (2006), and Cochran, Campbell, Baker, and Leeds (2014) found that online retention was low compared to traditional education whereas Carmel and Gold (2007) and Waschull (2001) found that there was no statistically significant difference between retention levels. On the other hand, Dziuban, C.D. et al (2001) found that hybrid courses had a better retention in comparison to both online courses and traditional courses.

Atchley, Wingenbach, and Akers (2013) used a chi-square analysis to determine if statistically significant differences existed between online and traditional students. They used archived data from fall 2004 though spring 2009 with a total population (N=319,153) from one university. Results showed that online students had a lower course completion rate of 93.3% whereas traditional students had a completion rate of 95.6% (p.8). These results were supported

in research conducted by Fozdar and Kumar (2007), McLaren (2004), Nelson (2006), Paden (2006), and Roach (2002).

Cochran et al (2014) addressed the issue of student retention in online courses. Their research attempted to narrow down the role of student characteristics to predict retention in online courses. They found that in both online and traditional courses students who were not seniors were more likely to withdraw from a course. In fact, the withdrawal rate was highest for new students such as freshman. Other factors that did not apply in ever sample review was that if a student had withdrawn from a class in the past there were more likely than a student that has never withdrawn to withdraw again. Students with a cumulative GPA less than 3.0 are more likely to withdraw. Other high-risk students were individuals that had a need-based grant, loan, are male, or black. There was a high odds-ratio of drop out 12.4 if the student had a loan. It is interesting to note that it was not so much the online format that created a high risk factor. This study was limited to one university over one semester.

Why Online Education

Students, faculty, and various institutions have chosen to take or offer online and blended education for multiple reasons. Some individuals have willing participated in online education while others have been pulled into the online world due to customer and shareholder demands. Student demographics and technology has changed in recent years. There is a demand for flexible, convenient and affordable methods to obtain higher education (Klaus & Changchit, 2009).

Faculty online

Faculty play a key role in distance education therefore, their views of distance education and how it compares to traditional education have great value. Research on faculty perceptions of

online education varies with some for and some against both online and blended courses. There

has been some recent research on the perceptions of faculty about distance education and how

their perceptions differ from students (Grahman & Jones, 2011; Hattangdi, Jha, & Ghosh, 2010;

Schulte, 2010; Tanner, Noser, & Totaro, 2009). Tanner et al. (2009) compared business faculty

and undergraduate student's perceptions of online learning and found that faculty tend to have a

less positive view of online education as compared to students. The different perceptions were

thought to be caused by the different way faculty and students define experience. For a faculty

member experience means a grasp of the material while the student see's experience as both the

course material and the evolving technology that is used to deliver the course content (p.35).

Faculty members choose to participate in online education for a variety of reasons. A

literature review by Hattangdi, Jha and Ghosh (2010) found that faculty choose to teach online

classes for the challenge of teaching online, for the sake of teaching, the flexibility of the online

environment, and the financial reward. Online education also gave faculty members the

opportunity to reach a different set of students and provided increased job satisfaction. Online

education is very flexible. Faculty members can teach, grade, and communicate students when it

is most convenient for them.

However, there are faculty that choose to not participate in online education. Resistances

to change and fear of using new technology are a common barrier for faculty teaching online but

may not be the only issue. Faculty have concerns about intellectual property being taken from

them. Once a course is created all information created by the faculty member within the course

belongs to the university. Another concern is that online education is not equal to residential

education and a fear that teaching online will eventually work them out of having a residential

appointment. Schulte (2011) and Graham and Jones (2011) wrote that faculty have concerns

about the quality and integrity of the online environment. There is also the fear of a lack of

technical and administrative support. Lastly, faculty report that they choose not to teach online

due to the negative attitudes of colleagues about online education. (Hattangdi, Jha, Ghosh, 2010)

Students online

Like faculty members, students have various reasons why they choose to engage in online

classes. Dutton, Button, and Perry (2002) did a study to discover how online students differ from

lecture students giving a picture of why students choose online education. Dutton et al. (2002)

found that online students were different from residential students in that they were "older

students, students who were not full-time or enrolled in a regular undergraduate degree program,

students with greater work and/or childcare responsibilities, and students who had more career

experience" (p.10). Young and Lewis (2008) wrote that students were choosing online education

due to "work demands, family pressures and physical distance" (p.601). Estmond (1998) stated

that adult learners choose online education for one of these five reasons "…career development,

job security, upward mobility, recareering, or other professional and personal reasons" (p.33).

Whatever the reason many students are choosing online education.

The results from Dutton et al. (2002) demonstrate that online students tend to be older

students who work full time and/or have children which is supported by Bejerano (2008). Sener

(2010) points out that Notre Dame College uses the online program to target single working

mothers as part of their mission outreach, a demographic that clearly fits into Dutton et al (2002)

containing the definition of students with parenting responsibilities. The flexibility of online

education is not the only reason students choose the format over residential education. Chung and

Ellis (2003) wrote that some students found communicating online less threatening than face-to-

face classes.

On-campus students are also taking online courses even though distances and time are not an educational barrier for them. When traditional classrooms fill students take the course online instead of waiting until the following semester or signing up for the waiting list. These on-campus students also use online courses to avoid professors they may view as to challenging. Then there are other students who perceive online classes as easier than traditional courses. Lastly, many online classes are condensed into shorter time periods allowing students to complete more course work in one semester. An online course may run only eight to ten weeks compared to the regular 16-week semester. (Bejerano, 2008)

"…Online courses are not preferable for every student or every course" (Klaus & Changchit, 2009, p.20). Students who choose to take classes in a residential program do so for many reasons. Residential students rate contact with their instructor and fellow students as a top motivator for class performance. Residential students also report finding face-to-face classes more motivating while being an online student can be a lonely experience. Lastly, students tend to choose residential classes if they lack strong computer skills an issue that faculty members struggle with as well. (Dutton et al, 2002)

Klaus and Changchit (2009) provide a model showing how students decided to take a course online or residentially. The three factors in the model are lecture-based courses, instructor support requirements, and technical skills. Students will prefer to take a class online if the residential counterpart is primarily lecture based. If the student believes that a course will require faculty support thought out the term the individual will choose to take the course residentially. Lastly, if the course requires technical or scientific information such as mathematics a student will prefer the residential environment. Overall, Klaus and Changchit (2009) found that not all courses fit the online model well. (Klaus & Changchit, 2009)

Institutions online

Institutions have their reasons for offer online education as well. Brown (2012) points out that online education gives institutions the ability to reach a larger population. A small college with a residential population of 3,000 could create an online program that served 10,000 students worldwide. Online courses can also address the issue of on=campus overcrowding and course waiting lists (Brown, 2012).

<div align="center">

Diploma Mills and Distance Education

</div>

Pina (2010) suggests that some of the issues and negativity that is associated with distance education is due to diploma mills. "A diploma mill is an institution that pretends to be legitimate but actually is a fake, sells diplomas, and misrepresents itself" (Simonson, 2011, p.72). Diploma mills also create fake accreditation organization that give the fake university an appearance of legitimacy. The practice is an old swindle created in the early twentieth century that first targeted correspondence students (Moore, 2009). Distance education institutions, like diploma mills, do not typically have a physical building, recruit few full time faculty, rely on internet advertisements and e-mail, and offer classes in an online format. The similarities results in diploma mills blending in with legitimate distance education institutions (Ezell, 2009). The deceptive practices have caused confusion in the public, with legislators, and within academia. Distance education institutions, unlike diploma mills that are "…accredited, have a well-documented admission process, require courses that must be completed in a reasonable period of time, identify faculty, rarely if ever provide course credit for life experiences, review faculty credentials, and have a somewhat established reputation" (Simmons, 2011, p.72).

Diploma mills may also contribute to the loss of credibility for distance education. Diploma mills use web promotions and spamming to advertise a technique also used by the

Institute of Technical Training and the University of Phoenix. These types of advertising tactics leave people with negative perceptions on the credibility of distance education and doubt of whether academics is truly the focus of the institution or if the program centers on monetary gains.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)

In 2012 the New York Times dubbed it "The Year of the MOOC" (Pappano, 2012). As of 2013 MOOC's appear to have come out of thin air and explode in popularity overnight. MOOC's are massive open online courses provided to students all over the world free of cost. Courses have been created and taught by professors from Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology by a nonprofit organization named edX. Next Coursera was founded soon afterwards in January 2013 by professors from Stanford University. Before the inception of these MOOC's, Sebastian Thrun, David Stavens, and Mike Sokolsky founded Udacity in 2012. Now, dozens of universities worldwide are '…rushing into a still-experimental field…because nobody wants to be left behind in academia" (Lewin, 2013). Overnight, MOOC's have become a new form of online education with professionals predicting that the open courses will revolutionize education (Dua, 2013; Hyman, 2012; Lewin, 2013; Papano, 2012). The tipping point for the overwhelming popularity of MOOC's is claimed to be the result of "…the most successful online class 'Introduction to Artificial Intelligence" taught by Peter Norvig…with 160,000 students registered and 23,000 that completed the course" and the accessibility of the internet (Hyman, 2012, p.20).

MOOC's allow thousands of students to take a course free of charge. Just one course can have over 100,000 students enrolled. Short lectures have been created lasting 5-15 minutes and most work is graded automatically. Challenges occur when assignments need to be reviewed

for a subjective grade such as essays. Coursera has addressed this issue by having a group of five students review assignments. In turn, the individual student must agree to review and grade five other student submissions. This solution has raised many questions such as what type of content knowledge do the peers have in regards to grading. The other issue is that due to the large number of students interaction with the professor is limited. To solve the issue of peer connection, students have created study groups with people within their locality, within discussion boards, and on Facebook. (Pappano, 2012)

The goal of MOOC's is to provide free access to students worldwide. Students that successful complete a MOOC receive a certificate. Creators of MOOC's hope to see students receive university credit for completed courses. "Colorado State University's Global Campus has started giving credit for the introductory computer-programming course offered by Udacity if the student passes a proctored exam, even though Stanford (the founders college) does not offer credit" (Dua, 2013). Now, Georgia Institute of Technology is offering a master's degree in computer science using MOOC's (Lewin, 2013). The price is $6,600 which is only penny's compared to the residential price of $45,000 (Lewin, 2013). It is predicted that international students will be the primary customer for these MOOC degrees (Lewin, 2013). Georgia Tech has accepted 375 out of 2,360 applications for this new MOOC degree stating that only admitted students would receive credit (Schafhauser, 2014).

There are many concerns about MOOCs related to the business model, student evaluations, and certifications. The business model for MOOC's is sketchy at best on how to make the method self-sustaining. Proponents assert that any issues with the program will in time, work out (Hyman, 2012). Currently there has been little evaluation on MOOC's. Lewin (2013) wrote that lack of evaluation is due to "…the course creators being missionaries, and missionaries

are not interested in testing their message". This information conflicts with reports that stated

MOOC creators are professors from Ivy League institutions such as Harvard University. Other

skeptics ask, what do students get after completing a MOOC? Some are beginning to receive a

certificate but how these certificates will be treated in the workforce and academia has yet to be

determined. Starting in January 2014 some universities began offering credit for MOOCs

including the University of Maryland, the University College, and the Georgia Institute of

Technology (Reilly, 2013).

Another issue is the high dropout rate and fail rate of students taking MOOC's. Rivard

(2013) cites the widely quoted statistic that 90 % of student on MOOC's dropout. That is a

statistics that opponents quote to show that MOOC's are a failure. Rivard (2013) see's that

number in a different light writing that it is unfair to judge student success by the dropout rate.

The impression from the article is that many people are signing up for MOOC's to see what it is

not to actually learn content.

> People who register for MOOC's are said to include precocious high school students,
>
> college students looking for more ways to study a subject they are learning in a traditional
>
> classroom and faculty who want to watch how other faculty teach their subject. And stay-
>
> at-home parents or retires who just want something to do other then TV. (Rivard, 2013)

In essence, Rivard (2013) is claiming that people are taking MOOC's for the purpose of listening

to a lecture. This would be comparable to an individual who audits a traditional course. When

Coursera reviewed the demographics of one MOOC course in machine learning 41 % of the

course contained professionals currently working in the software industry (Kolowich, 2012). The

other 31 % contained students while the rest were individuals employed elsewhere. These

numbers do not fit Rivard's (2013) claim that MOOCs are being taken by a large number of

faculty members, retired individuals, and high school students. Kolowich (2013) followed up his research on who was taking MOOC's and found that MOOC's are largely reaching individuals who already hold a degree.

Supporters of MOOC development are pointing out the possible benefit of worldwide access to education. Since most MOOC's are still free and below typical university course prices anyone with internet access can sign up. Articles in the Chronicle claim that MOOC's are being taken by individuals in development countries but survey's show MOOC's are mostly being taken by experienced learners, not new learners, even in foreign countries (Kolwish, 2013; Winston, 2013). The topic of using MOOC's to reach developing countries such as South America and Africa was addressed during the Transatlantic Science Week that includes people from Norway, Canada, and the Unities States (Winston, 2013). According to quotes in Winston (2013), developing countries are not sold on MOOC's, for example in China where students would rather pack into a classroom from wall to wall rather than take a MOOC. "Other critics see in MOOCs yet another wave in cultural imperialism from the 'North' and the 'West' crashing across borders, washing over (or possibly washing out) local educational institutions, cultural norms and educational traditions" (Trucano, 2013). As of 2013 the first initiative has begun to use MOOC's to systematically provided education in Tanzania as a pilot program with support from the World Bank and Coursera (Trucano, 2013). The results remain to be seen.

Other issues dealing with MOOC's are directly related to faculty concerns on the threat to intellectual property/academic freedom. Faculty who have developed MOOCs are now in a battle over who own the content. Colleges are claiming they own the copyrights where in the past faculty owned their intellectual property. The fear is that if faculty members do not own their intellectual property then they will "…no longer be professional…instead faculty members will

essentially find themselves working in a service industry" (Schmidt, 2013). Colleges in the past have never asserted ownership of course development and have mostly left scholarly products of faculty alone (Schmidt, 2013). However, if colleges can own faculty MOOC's does that mean they can take ownership of all scholarly products such as articles, and books. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) plans to "undertake a campaign to urge professors to get protections of their intellectual-property rights" by creating very concise contracts and faculty handbooks for universities (Schmidt, 2013).

Another fear related to the growing conversation related to MOOCs is that if they become widely popular it will result in two types of education being created. The first education will be for "privileged students that get their own real professor; the other, financially stressed student, gets to watch a bunch of video-taped lectures and interact, if interaction is available at home or at their home campus" (Davis, 2013). A more clear and solid line of division will be created dividing the poor from the rich.

<div align="center">**Ethical Concerns**</div>

Education in general has ethical concerns and online education is no different. Issues related to trust, privacy, copyrighted material, cheating, and finding the balance between maximizing learning with the freedom to fail are noted in literature. Russell (2002) explains some of the ethical issues within distance learning are caused by Rubin (1996) theory of moral distancing. Moral distancing is the concept that the more "distance between the act and the moral responsibility for the act because of factors such as speed, privacy and anonymity" the more likely unethical acts (Russell, 2002, p.41).

Trust

When discussing trust in online education, the researcher is referring to the trust of administration toward online faculty members and the trust that residential faculty members have toward online faculty. The challenge with online education is that "trust is associated with physical presence, a crucial element that is lacking in the online environment" (Mitchell, 2009, p.64). An example of this issue is how online faculty have more rigorous' professional development than residential faculty members which leads all faculty members to believe that online faculty are somehow less qualified to teach. This different treatment gives online faculty members the impression that administration does not trust them to maximize learning for online students like their residential colleagues. The issue of trust was raised by Michell (2009), who states that it breads distrust and general suspicion of online education.

Privacy

Privacy is a concern in online education especially within discussion boards because students will reveal more about themselves in an online discussion in comparison to face-to-face instruction (Anderson & Simpson, 2007; Joinson, 2001). Due to the very nature of an online course all information submitted electronically is saved and archived for years. Anderson and Simpson (2007) write that both students and faculty enjoy the permanence of posting so they can refer back to information and keep the topic of discussion going. The permanence of information can "provoke intense responses as students manufacture and magnify slights which has led to harassment though private mail" (Anderson & Simpson, 2007, p.135).

Cheating

Cheating on exams is an ongoing problem in online education. Young (2012) reported on one cheating ring where four students used Google Documents to share a document with test questions and answers. The first student to take the exam always did poorly but by the time the

fourth student took the exam, he/she would make an A. The students took turns being first and each finished the course with a grade of an A. The student claimed that he worked hard in his other courses but he needed an "easy A on his transcript each semester because he was juggling a job and classes" (Young, 2012). The student also stated if faculty did not want students to cheat they would not make it so easy to do so. An online faculty member responded to the event by saying "To them, the courses are just hoops to jump through to get a credential, and the students are happy to pay the tuition, learn little, and add an A. This is the gamification of education, and students are winning" (Young, 2012). Reports such as these cause employers to doubt applicants with online degrees.

Plagiarizing is another common issue in all methods of course delivery that is perceived as a greater issue in online education. There are many individuals and groups that offer custom order writing such as Shadow Scholar who make more than $60,000 a year writing term papers for students (Young, 2012).

From a practical standpoint, it is often easier to cheat online (since what or who the assesse brings to the assessment cannot be seen), which increases temptation. Many students are more comfortable with computers than their instructors are, and many know full well the potential of computers for cheating. In addition, students often have less commitment to the integrity of distance-learning programs than traditional programs because distance-learning programs often lack tradition, are often taken by people with pressures from other jobs, and many programs are new and not fully debugged. In general, cheaters often point to factors like these that facilitate cheating. (Rowe, 2004)

MOOC's have further complicated the ethical concerns issue in online education. Online classes tend to be small groups of 12-30 students but a MOOC contains 100,000 plus students.

Such large classes creates the question of how and who evaluates student work. "How does one authenticate that the person doing the work is the person who signed up for the class?" (Hyman, 2012, p.21). Professors can develop personal relationships with online students in small sections but the teacher/student relationship appears to be removed in the MOOC. Students taking courses on the Coursera platform have filed dozens of complaints about students plagiarism them (Anders, 2012).

Kaczmarczyk (2001), Kennedy et al (2000), and Ridley et. Al (1998) looked at the question 'is there more cheating in online education'. Their research implies that academic integrity is no worse in online education then in traditional courses. Students still use the same methods online as they do in residential courses to cheat: having someone else complete assignments, purchasing assignments from websites, and collaborating on work (Kaczmarczyk ,2001; Kennedy et al, 2000). Based on Hyman (2012) and Young (2012) students are become more creative with online cheating as technology creates more safe guards with the creation of fake student profiles so they can take a course multiply times.

Kaczmarczyk (2001) writes that student and faculty who have never taken an online course perceive cheating as easier than with a residential course. After a student and faculty member takes an online course, their perception usually changes. Grijalva, Nowell, Kerkvliet (2006) arrived at the same conclusion after sending a survey in 2001 with 796 usable student responses. They found that "academic dishonesty in a single online class is not greater than estimates of cheating in a traditional course" (Grijalva et al, 2006).

Until now, the supposition was that, because of decreased monitoring and interaction in online classes, cheating in this setting would be greater than in traditional classrooms. Our

paper suggests that as online education expands, there is no reason to suspect that

academic dishonesty will become more common. (Grijalva et al, 2006)

Higher Education Hiring Practices

Higher education institutions differ in hiring practices but in most cases deans manage

hiring of faculty members. The process starts with the job posting which stays open for a

specified period. After a certain amount of time has passed, a pool of applicants is gathered and

a handful of individuals from this pool are selected after a reference query. Applicants attend a

hiring interview and may or may not be asked standardized question. Once these steps are

complete, the hiring committee makes a decision for or against hiring the prospective faculty

member. (Basham, Stader, Bishop, 2009)

Callie and Cheslock (2008) examined the hiring and compensation practices of business

school deans. In their work, it was found that deans preferred to hire junior faculty members

processing philosophy doctorates and with three to five years of teaching experience. Faculty that

were actively completing research that could attract grants were giving special attention during

the hiring process. These practices were a change from previous hiring processes where deans

sought senior professors with teaching experience. However, research has always been a

significant factor when seeking faculty to fill open positions. The change was thought to be

caused by funding cuts and universities pushing departments to find ways to become self-reliant.

This shift has also resulted in universities utilizing more adjunct faculty members that do not

require benefits afforded to full time colleagues. (Callie & Cheslock, 2008)

Employer Perceptions of Online and Blended Degrees

There has been ongoing research on the perspectives of employers regarding online

education and blended education. Employers have been surveyed in a varied of fields such as

business, health, accounting, and education. According to Linardopouos (2012) popular media shows a positive employer perception of online degrees while scholarly papers have found negative employer perceptions. Online and blended education has continued to grow yet it does not appear that the acceptance of online and blended degrees has grown. One would assume that with growth acceptances would follow at an equal rate. This has not been the case. Research by Adams and Defleur (2005, 2006), Adams (2008), Adams, Lee, and Cortese (2012), Carnevale (2005) and Kinneer (2013) show a lack of acceptances of online and blended degrees.

Research by Adams and Defleur (2005, 2006), Adams (2008), and Adams, Lee, and Cortese (2012) have done a series of studies looking at the acceptability of online degrees earned for obtaining employment. Adams and Defleur (2005) surveyed 109 people to pick between three degree methods a hypothetical applicant, traditional, online, and blended and then write an explanation for their choice. Adams and Defleur (2005) found that online and blended doctoral degree applicants were unlikely to be hired. There were some positive comments toward online education in their research but those comments came from respondents with some exposure to online education. They repeated this study in 2006, with a focus on bachelor degrees earned entirely or partially online with the same results.

Adams (2008) collected his previous research using four acceptability studies totaling 552 respondents to understand the factors limiting the acceptability of online courses and degrees by employers. His finding once again showed that employers have concerned about hiring an applicant with an online degree. Adam (2008) narrowed down the stumbling blocks for online degrees to three issues: face-to-face classroom experience, reputation of institution for rigor and mentored learning experiences.

When the acceptability of online degrees regarding hiring of principals at secondary schools was researched, a traditional degree was overwhelmingly preferred over other methods (Adams, Lee, Cortese, 2012). Despite the growth of online degree offerings, particularly in fields such as education and business employers still prefer traditional degrees. "..Online courses were perceived as not presenting sufficient opportunity for students to develop important social skills through interaction with other students and mentors" (Adams, Lee, & Cortese, 2012, p. 408). Research that Adams has contributed to shows repeatedly a bias against online and blended education.

Richardson, McLeod, and Dikkers (2010) sent a survey to a random sample of human resource directors in k-12 schools across the United States of America to discover perceptions of online credentials for school principals. Like researchers in previous years, their responses showed no increase in the acceptability of online degrees. The response rate for the survey was low 105 out of 500. Respondents revealed that they thought online degrees were easier than traditional degrees and that online degrees did not adequately prepare leaders to tackle state-specific issues. Other themes in the research revealed concerns about quality content and instruction, and quality assurance in the online environment. It is worth noting that "human resource directors in rural districts had a more negative perception of online learning, in comparison to their counterparts in suburban or urban districts" (p.378). Human resource officers also admitted that they would interview online candidates differently than traditional prepared candidates. Richardson (2010) followed up with study with an article address the wariness of online credentials. The school district in Illinois Valley is skeptical about any online credits, especially degrees. The superintendent is honest that he would not hire someone with an online

degree. As it stands, only three hours of online credits are allowed a year for professional development out of twelve.

In accounting, all would-be accounts are required to pass the Certification in Public Accounting (CPA). When Kohlmeyer, Seese, and Sincich (2011) completed an exploratory study to discover perceptions of public accountant employers regarding online degrees, they found a preference for traditional degrees. Even though both the online and traditional students complete the same CPA exam there was a preference across different job titles for traditional degree candidates. This result was the same even if the online degree candidate completed their degree at a school accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

Kinneer (2013) surveyed employer attitudes toward RN-to-BSN degrees degree methods. Employers in this study noted that an online degree from a for-profit college was least favorable among the various degree methods. Overall, employers concerned about the quality of credentials earned in an online environment. Once again, his results were similar to Adams finding that traditional degrees were preferred over online degrees.

Popular media gives a different picture of the acceptance of online degrees. Haynie (2013) from the Daily News reports that employers do not ask if a degree was earned online or on campus because they are more interested in the area of study and GPA. Wecker (2012) from US News writes that online graduates from prestigious universities are being accepted but degrees from for-profit schools "…was just like an advanced high school degree". Wellen (2006) states that there are various degrees of acceptances when it comes to online education. The Central Intelligence Agency accepts applicants with online degrees as well as companies such as Northrop Grumman, United Parcel Service, Boeing, and Discovery Communications.

Summary

In this chapter, the dissertation author established the theoretical framework for the research contained herein and examined literature related to the research. A theoretical framework based upon the equivalency theory lays a foundation for the examination of administrator's perceptions of online and blended doctoral degrees within the schools of health, counseling, education and psychology. Research studies regarding the history and development of online education, defining online education, growth, comparison to face-to-face education, and effects of diploma mills on distance education, gives a picture of past research that leads into the current research.

In chapter three, the dissertation author will outline the research procedures and design used to examine the perceptions of university administrators regarding prospective faculty candidates with online or blended doctorate degrees. It is expected that the knowledge gained from this study will help students in decide their method of degree completion. It will also give an in-depth look at the current perceptions of administrators regarding online and blended doctorate degrees.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of university administrators regarding prospective faculty candidates with online and blended doctorate degrees from accredited institutions located in Virginia. In this chapter, the author presents the research method and procedures used in the study, which consists of the following sections: design, research questions, participants, setting, procedures, researcher's role, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Design

This study was conducted using a transcendental phenomenological research method. There have been few quantitative studies on the acceptability of online programs using surveys; however, there has been limited qualitative research on the topic. Searches for research on the perceptions of online programs were conducted using EBSCO, ERIC, and Goggle Scholar. Many different key words were used during the search such as the following: *distance education, online education, distance learning, online learning, acceptability of online degrees, perceptions of online education, online doctoral degrees for employment, employer perceptions of online/distance education*, and other combinations of phrases.

A transcendental phenomenological approach will give fresh in-depth perspective on administrators' view of online and blended programs. The study will help discover other factors in addition to the method of degree completion that may influence hiring decisions of administrators. A qualitative method was chosen over a quantitative method to explore the topic deeper and because current perceptions were unknown due to conflicting research. A survey method does not capture the thought process of hiring managers nor does it take into consideration all of the possible factors that influence administrators.

According to Moustakas (1994) phenomenological research requires Epoche, phenomenological reduction, textural description, imaginative variation, structural description, synthesis of meanings and essences of the experience. The purpose of Epoche is to put aside prejudgments and hold interviews with an open mind that encourages the participant to describe the essence fully. By providing the researcher's role in the research and using open ended questions in the interview, the researcher attempt to fully embrace the essence of Epoche. Phenomenological reduction is accomplished by bracketing questions around the topic of online and blended doctorate degrees. The research questions and interview questions are very general and open to discover a fresh perspective on the topic. Imaginative variation was explored by obtaining various perspectives of the phenomenon from different administrators at different types of academic institutions such as private, public, and religious. Possible meanings were grouped together and a list of constructs were created based on experiences. With the comprised information, structural descriptions will be created. Lastly, information was synthesized though reflection, textural and structural meanings and essences of the experience.

Research Questions

1. What perceptions do academic administrators have of online doctoral degrees?

2. What type of influence does the university from which the prospective faculty member earns their online doctorate degree influence hiring decisions?

3. What type of influence does the university from which the prospective faculty member earns their blended doctorate degree influence hiring decisions?

4. Does the method of doctorate degree completion influence administrative perceptions during the candidate hiring process?

Participants

Using purposive sampling, participants included chairpersons and/or deans at four year accredited institutions from public, private, and private religious institutions within the Commonwealth of Virginia. The sample included different types of institutions, such as private, public, and private religious academic institutions to gain a well-rounded perspective and to determine if the different perceptions over institution type. Participants included at least one dean or chairpersons from both departments/colleges of health sciences and department/college of education. The reason for the purposive sampling was to focus on individuals who had both experience in hiring faculty members and at least a basic knowledge of online and blended doctoral degrees. The schools selected in the sample were based on convenience of location and whether there is a department/college of health sciences and a department/college of education. Due to the nature of qualitative research, pseudonyms were provided for the academic institutions and the individuals interviewed.

The logic behind interviewing chairpersons and/or deans of departments/colleges of health sciences and department/college of education was that in 2008-09 the "greatest number of degrees were conferred at the doctoral level were in the fields of health professions and related clinical sciences (12,100) and education (9,000)" (Aud et al, 2011). Furthermore, according to the US Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (2011), in 2008-09 9.7% of students were completing their entire post baccalaureate degree online in education and 9.1 in health. Given the popularity of these two fields of study, these areas provided an excellent starting point to understand perceptions of administrators regarding online and blended doctoral degrees. Twenty-four interviews were attempted with eight derived from each type of university, divided between the two departments/colleges of health sciences and education.

Setting

The interviews took place at the office location of the participant or by computer using Skype videoconferencing software. Different control types of academic institutions were chosen to provide a variety of opinions from public, private, and private religious academic institutions. The Commonwealth of Virginia was chosen as a geographic limiter due to the convenience of location to the researcher, the variety of public and private accredited schools, and the lack of research regarding this topic.

Procedures

After permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained a letter in the form of an e-mail was sent to administrators within each college/school of arts and sciences, education, and health sciences. The letter was briefly explained the purpose of the study and informed the administrators that they would be receiving a phone call about participating in the study. This gave them time to think about the study and if they would be interested in being a part of the research. Contact information for these administrators was generally public information on the institutions website.

The survey portion of the study was sent by e-mail to those administrators who agreed to be a part of the study. The e-mail also contained a request for any documents that may be disclosed regarding the hiring process such as the following: job descriptions, list of interview questions typically used to ask candidates, and any type of forms used to evaluate candidates. Interview times were scheduled once the administrator's agreed to participate. Interviews did not last more than 1-2 hours. A few days after the interview a thank you letter was sent to the participants.

All information was kept confidential on a secure computer terminal. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed which were kept on the same secure password protected computer. Any documents that were collected for the study were scanned and saved on the computer and hard copies kept in a locked filing cabinet which is located in a locked office.

The Researcher's Role

The researcher acted as the human instrument, conducting the interviews, collecting data, then synthesizing it. The researcher was not an administrator at the time nor did the researcher make hiring decisions, however, the researcher's role was more academic, as the researcher had both a blended master's degree and worked on a blended doctoral degree. Due to experience in online classes, the researcher had a positive bias toward online programs. Due to the researchers' background, the researcher had to use epoche, which was the process of "setting aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things" (Moustakas, 1994, p.85).

Data Collection

Three methods of data collection were used in this study: interviews, documentation, and a survey adapted from DePriest (2009) who adapted it from Levernier (2005). Three methods of data collection were used based on the work of Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993), who wrote that "the interview provides leads for the researcher's observations. Observation suggests probes for interviews. The interaction of the two sources of data not only enriches them both, but also provides a basis for analysis that would be impossible with only one source" (p.99). Furthermore, using three different methods of data collection to create triangulation strengthens any shortcomings that one method alone may have possessed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Brewer & Hunter, 1989).

Interviews

Interviewing is an important part of phenomenological study and is typically the primary form of data collection (Moustakas, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Interviews were held in a semi-structured format with the following open-ended questions listed below presented. Interviews were still conversational and flexible based on Moustakas (1994) who writes that "…phenomenological interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions (p.114).

Table 1
Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

Questions
Hiring Process

   a. Describe your role within the university such as length of employment, size of department/school, etc.

   b. Can you describe what your role is in the candidate faculty search process and hiring process?

   c. What information are faculty candidates required to submit to be considered?

   d. What are the disqualifying factors that you look for in faculty candidate's application?

   e. Can you describe the typical interview questions you ask?

   f. Can you describe the bearing that the school where the candidate completed their doctorate has on your hiring decision?

Experience with online education

   a. How do you define online education and blended education?

   b. Can you describe the experiences you have had related to online and blended courses and programs? (i.e. workshops, course work, teaching, required training)

c. What are your concerns about online and blended programs if any?

d. What do you think are the strengths of online education?

e. What type of future role do you see for online education in the United States?

f. Do you know which local institutions offer online coursework? If so, how do you stay current on the growth of online education in your area?

Perceptions of degree completion method

a. What are your thoughts and feelings about faculty candidates that complete a doctorate in an online or blended program?

b. Given the choice between three faculty candidates that complete a doctorate degree one in a traditional face-to-face program, one in a blended program, and the other in an online program given that all other qualifications are the same who would you hire and why?

c. What degrees would you not be concerned about the method of doctoral degree completion and which degrees would you be concerned about and why?

d. What concerns do you have about the method of degree completion?

e. Would you hire someone with an online or blended degree? Why or why not?

f. Are there any other thoughts or concerns you would like to share about online and blended programs and if so what are they?

To understand the perceptions of degree completion method there must be some understanding of the faculty candidate search and the hiring process hence the questions regarding the hiring process. Questions related to the perceptions of degree completion method were based on the purpose of the study, which was to discover perceptions of administrators regarding online and blended doctorates. Understanding how the participant defined online and blended education

could reveal if he or she had a clear understanding of the education model. This information may be helpful when synthesizing data to discover why participants may hold a certain view concerning online doctoral degrees. This was also true of the experiences he or she had dealing with online and blended programs.

It is important to note as well that the interview questions were piloted prior to the formal interviews. A peer reviewed the questions for possible revisions and refinement, and then two pilot interviews were conducted. Afterwards, changes were made, as needed, and one more peer review and pilot were conducted to finalize the questions.

Documentation. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) write that documentation is an important part of qualitative research and can include many different things. Documents that were collected included:

- list of interview questions typically used to ask candidates if available

- forms used to evaluate candidates if available

- profiles for each institution from their website

- professional development/continuing education policy if available

- equal opportunity or diversity statement

Administrators may not have been able to provide all of the documents, depending on their creation or the institution's policy. However, many of the documents collected were considered public knowledge and were available on the intuitions website.

Surveys/Questionnaires. The purpose of this study was to give in-depth data about participants' perceptions about online and blended doctoral degrees. Surveys provided objective, quantifiable data that could be replicated but did not give in-depth information on participant's feelings and thoughts. However, the survey provided demographic information about the

participants', the institution, and the college/school or division/department. Therefore, a modified version of the survey used by DePriest (2009), who adapted it from Levernier (2005), who modified the original survey created by Schmidt, Shelley, Van Wart, Clayton, & Schreck (2000) was used. Survey parts one and three of the survey were used to discover what, if any, online or blended classes and degrees were offered, with the institution, college/school or division/department and demographic information about the participant and institution.

DePreist (2009) validated the instrument using faculty members experienced in research methods and measurement to check both the face and content of the survey.

In addition, the Deans of Arts and Sciences, Education, and Business at a local community college provided assistance in validating the instrument. These administrators reviewed the questions for content and clarity and then completed a pilot survey in order to suggest any needed changes to the survey instrument and to assist in ascertaining instrument validity (DePreist, 2009, p.69).

Data Analysis

Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenological research design was used in this study and Moustakas modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis was used to analyze the phenomenological data. A full description of the reseawrcher's experience with the phenomenon were obtained from the audit trail, memoing, and documentation. A verbatim transcript of the experience of each participant was used to fully describe their experience of the phenomenon. All relevant statements were recorded and a list of non-repetitive statements was created from it. That created mean units of the experience of invariant horizons, which was created into themes. These themes were synthesized into a description of the textures of the experience with verbatim examples. Reflecting on the textural description and using imaginative

variation, a description of the structures was constructed. Lastly, a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of each individual was created. This lead to a "composite textural-structural description of meanings and essences of the experience integrating all the information to describe the experience representing the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p.122).

<div align="center">**Trustworthiness**</div>

To establish trustworthiness the following methods were used: triangulation of data, rich descriptive data, peer review, audit trail, member checking, epoche, and clarification of biases from the outset. Guba (1981; 2007) describes four general criteria for establishing trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Using triangulation and peer examination both credibility and dependability could be shown. Triangulation also shows conformability. Lastly, rich descriptive data allow for the research to be transferable.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the use of multiple sources of information to establish trustworthiness in research and develop converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2009). There are four types of triangulation that can be used: triangulation of data sources; investigator triangulation which uses different evaluators, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Yin, 2009, p.116). In this study data triangulation was used by collecting data using interviews, document analysis when available, and survey. Investigator triangulation was used in that interview questions were peer reviewed and the research process monitored by three committee members and a research consultant. Lastly, theory triangulation has been used in that various distance education theories were reviewed until one was found that gives a complete picture of the current state of what has become online education, equivalency theory.

Transferability

Transferability was addressed by using thick descriptive data (Creswell, 2007; Moustakes, 1994; Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007; Yin, 2009). Both textual and structural descriptions were used to describe the researchers experience, themes, and the underlying dynamics of the experience of the members (Moustakes, 1994). The structural description was based on the textual.

Dependability and Confirmability

Schwandt, Lincoln, and Guba (2007) write that dependability and confirmability need both an audit trail and ongoing external auditing. The audit trail consisted of a chronological narrative of research activities and how the information evolved into the current analysis. Peer review and member checks served as the ongoing external audit, as well as accountability. (Creswell, 2007)

In summary, credibility was established by using prolonged engagement though interviews, triangulation of data, peer debriefing, and member checks (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007). Transferability was established using rich and thick descriptions. An audit trail, member checks, and peer review were used for dependability, confirmability, and accountability.

<div align="center">

Ethical Considerations

</div>

Participants' confidentiality and privacy were protected by keeping all information in locked cabinets within a locked office along with all electronic data being password protected. IRB approval was gained before contacting participants. A pseudonym was used for the participant's institution and for himself or herself that he or she will be able to choose. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form after reading through the form and

asking any questions. Participants were given the opportunity to check assumptions made from

the interview and information provided to give feedback on results.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the methodology of the research, and addressed issues on trustworthiness and ethical concerns. The researcher for this study used a phenomenological method of research with four core research questions. Participants were chairpersons and/or deans at four year accredited institutions located in Virginia. Data were collected using interviews, documentation, and a survey. Trustworthiness was established using: triangulation of data, rich descriptive data, peer review, audit trail, member checking, and clarification of biases from the outset. Ethical issues were reviewed by the IRB for approval before research began. In chapter four, the researcher for this study, presents the results of the data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover the current perceptions of university administrators regarding prospective faculty candidates with online or blended doctorate degrees from accredited institutions located in Virginia. In chapter one, the researcher outlined the background of the problem and identified four specific research questions. Ten administrators participated in this study but only six completed both the survey and the interview. All survey results are included in the results because the answers provide a preliminary look at demographics and opinions about online and blended education. This chapter addresses three key areas: demographics, themes, and answers to the research questions. In the first section, the researcher provides profiles of the participants and the demographics of their institutions. Following the profiles and demographic information are the main themes revealed during the interview process. In the last section, the researcher records responses for the research questions and addresses the themes that were discovered to be related to the research questions.

Thirty-one institutions were contacted for permission to interview chairs and deans with only eight college presidents giving permission to approach faculty for interviews. From those eight institutions 25 people were contacted on several occasions from May 2013-October 2013 resulting in ten returned surveys and six interviews. Potential participants were contacted by letter, email, and phone. The interview participation rate was 20%.

Interviews were used to develop a narrative and to reveal themes related to perceptions about online and blended education, in particularly perceptions of hiring faculty candidates with online or blended doctorate degrees. Surveys were used to gain some preliminary insight into current opinions regarding online education before the interviews. The survey was divided into three parts, with part two addressing the topic of perceptions of online instruction using 32

questions and the related to demographics. Artifacts such as equal opportunity statements, job

descriptions, and interview questions were collected to discover if there were any reference or

biases against online degrees. For example, a job description requiring an applicant to have a

residential degree to apply or so many credit hours in a traditional degree setting. No such

comments were found in the artifacts.

<div align="center">

Demographics

</div>

Six people were interviewed, three women and three men. Each participant was over the

age of forty with over twenty years of experience in education. Participants worked in a

department, school, or college of health sciences. Every participant interviewed worked in a

health-related discipline. Two participants who worked in a school of education did turn in the

survey but did not agree to an interview. Table 1 summarizes the participants' profiles. Since

most of the data were requested over summer, a time when many people are on vacation some

negative participation was suspected.

Table 1
Summary Profile of Participants

Characteristics	n=10	Response	%
Gender			
	Male	4	33
	Female	6	67
Age			
	45-65 years	10	100
Position			
	Dean		
	Associate Dean		
	Chairman		
	Associate Chairman		
	Director		

Any Online/Blended Academic Experience			
	Yes	9	89
	No	1	11
Academic Field			
	Education	2	22
	Health	8	78

All participants and institutions were granted confidentiality. Data collection took place from May 2013-October 2013. Of the 25 administrators contacted all responded to the request expect 10. Reasons cited for not participating were:

- "Due to unusually high demands on my time this year related to my administrative leadership, and faculty responsibilities, I am unable to participate in your study."

- "I am an associate dean and do not think I am qualified to answer your survey."

- "My college does not confer doctorate degrees of any kind, so I do not feel that I have enough insight into related issues to participate."

- "Due to other responsibilities I cannot participate in the study."

- One person was serving as interim dean and did not feel experienced enough to answer the questions.

- Additional responsibilities were quoted as a reason by others as well as a heavy workload

- Some did not feel they meet the study criteria.

- Lastly, many simply graciously declined.

All institutions were located in Virginia, accredited, and provided equal employment opportunity statements. Eight of the nine institutions offered degrees both online and residentially, and eight of the nine offered doctoral degrees. Of the nine schools seven had a

student body lager than 20,000 students. There were six public schools with one considered a

research institution and two private religious institutions. Faculty sized varied within each

institutions school/college or division/department.

Table 2
University Demographics

Characteristics		n=10 Response	%
Online Degree Program			
	Yes	10	100
	No	0	0
Online Courses			
	Yes	10	100
	No	0	0
Blended Degree Program			
	Yes	7	67
	No	3	33
Blended Courses			
	Yes	10	100
	No	0	0
Web Facilitated Programs			
	Yes	9	89
	No	1	11
Web Facilitated Courses			
	Yes	9	89
	No	1	11
Student Body Size			
	5,000-10,000	1	11
	10,000-15,000	0	0
	15,000-20,000	1	11
	Over 20,000	8	78
University Characteristics			
	Public	6	67
	Private	3	22
	Research	1	100
	Religious	2	22
Highest Degrees Offered			
	Masters	1	11
	Doctorate	9	89

Descriptions of Participants

All participants held an administrative role within a department/school/college of health or education at the time of this study. Pseudonyms have been used in place of the participants' real names to protect their identities. Little has been provided to describe their institution and any information that could be used to identify them were removed to protect their identities.

David

David is a dean at a public university in the allied health professions. He has worked at five other universities and has been an educator for over fifteen years. Over the years, David has seen the development and growth of online education. He helped lead his department in putting an entire program online. He has created online programs and courses, and continues to teach online today. Today he does not have a standard role in the faculty hiring process but he has frequently been a member of search committees.

Paul

Paul is a chairperson at a private university in the allied health professions. He has been teaching for almost fifteen years and has experience in both teaching and taking online and residential courses. His terminal degree was earned in a blended format. He has attended conferences and workshops using online tools and has received training in online education practices. Paul considers himself to be the second level of contact in the candidate search process. The first interview the faculty candidate must pass is the phone interview with him as chairperson.

Beth

Beth is the dean of a school of health sciences. She has had over 20 years of experience in education along with professional experience in the field. Beth served in a variety of different administrative roles over the years before becoming a dean. She has never taken online courses but she has attended workshops and received training in online education. She is one of about five or six people who interview faculty candidates. Once approved by Beth, candidates moved on to the next level, the committee interview.

Joyce

Joyce has worked in education for over ten years and has professional experience in the field of health. Joyce is the associate dean for a school of health and she has been a chair, director, and faculty member. Joyce's experience with online education was new and as recent as the last three years. The subject of online education, which used to be a distant thought now takes up almost fifty percent of her administrative duties. In her current position, Joyce still has contact and a role within the department that she was promoted from so she has frequently been on the initial searches for new faculty. Joyce has also been routinely called upon to sit on hiring committees. Now a part of her associate dean duties is to review and approve all online adjunct faculty hires within her school.

Rachel

Rachel has over forty years of higher education experience, but has only been the dean at the college of health sciences for little over two years. Rachel has a broad experience base with both traditional and online teaching having taught, developed, delivered, supervised, and started traditional courses and distance learning courses. Rachel has had quite a bit of training-related online education and has been responsible for making sure faculty have training as well. For

faculty searches/interviews to move forward requires Rachel's signature and involvement. Rachel does not interview the entire faculty, but she certainly interviews the applicants for the chair and associate dean positions as well as those being interviewed for full professor level.

Steve

Steve has been working in academia for ten years with experience teaching both residentially and online in health education. Steve has had numerous training on the best practices of online education and student communication. As a chairman Steve plays a role in the approval of the new faculty hires. Steve interviews some faculty candidates and reviews all full time faculty applications. He has also been in on committee interviews.

<div align="center">

Themes

</div>

Six interviews were transcribed verbatim and significant statements were extracted with their formulated meanings creating horizontalization. The formulated meanings were then arranged into clusters resulting in six themes: hiring process, defining online and blended education, influence of degree method and institution, strengths of online and blended education, concerns of online and blended education, and future role of online and blended education. Verbatim examples have been included for each theme with textural-structural descriptions of the experiences.

<div align="center">

Hiring Process

</div>

Participants were asked six open ended questions related to their hiring process. These questions helped to discover what information faculty candidates were required to share along with typical interview questions. Participants also shared what information would disqualify a faculty member from being hired. These questions were asked in order to give the researcher a picture of the hiring process and reveal any biases related to online and blended education in the

hiring process. These questions also provided needed information on the participants' role in the hiring process as well as their influence on hiring decisions.

Application process

All six schools required at the very least the following items to be submitted to be considered for hire: cover letter, application, three references, transcripts, teaching philosophy, vita, and a background check. Participants at private religious institutions required some extra items to be submitted related to sharing their religious faith. These items included questions such as "Describe your personal faith in Christ" and "Explain how your Christian worldview informs your approach to your academic discipline and to you teaching". Additional items included a pastoral reference letter and a biographical sketch on their spiritual growth.

Rachel's university required a bit more than the other institutions. Rachel stated that that her school required the following:

> Letter of intent, vitae, description of philosophy of teaching, research details, five names of people we can contact for a reference, and once they are a finalist we let them know that we also contact people that are not on their reference lists and if they want to still be a candidate. We do that before we contact anyone. We not only like to get a reference from people they list but from people who they worked for especially their current roles.

Institutions tended to be viewed as either teaching focused or research focused. David's intuition was a Carnegie Institution that placed a high value on research experience, publications, and future research plans. David did not have a standard role in the hiring process, but was frequently part of search committees and routinely reviewed applicants research experience for the dean. David stated that "since we are a research university I want to be particular confident that the committee has brought forth a candidate who will cut it at a research university" (David).

Defining Online and Blended Education

Participants were asked to define online and blended education to give the researcher an idea of their understanding of those terms and degree methods. When participants were asked to define online education they were in agreement that online meant a fully online course or degree with no face-to-face requirement. Their responses to defining online education were very similar. For example, Paul defined it as "completing work solely online with no face-to-face component." Joyce defined it as "higher education offered outside of the classroom." Steve specifically mentioned in his definition that "online education would be a course offered fully online using a computer where the old term of distance education would have included the mail ordered course." Steve and Joyce were the only ones to mention the shift of terms from distances education to online education. Joyce stated that defining online education was a good question and the term had changed over the decades.

All of the participants defined blended education as a course or degree program that was online with a face-to-face component to it. Paul gave the longest definition stating the following:

> Blended education could be certain courses within the degree or portions of a course could be done in a face-to-face format. Generally, when I think of blended education I think of the majority of the course work being done at a distance with little face to face.

Influence of Degree Method and Institution

Institution reputation

When participants were asked to describe the bearing that the school from which the candidate completed their doctorate had on their hiring decision, if any, the answers varied slightly. Joyce, Paul, Rachel and Steve said that their only concern about the institution where a

candidate completed their doctorate was that it was accredited. David stated that, "ya, it's a big

deal!". David went on to state that:

> Every professor and department is part of a profession and they know where the degrees
>
> are in their profession and give preferential treatment to those degrees because they have
>
> had such a good track record with those PhD's that became professors.

It was very apparent in David's tone of voice that institution and program reputation was a

deciding factor in the hiring process. Candidates from unknown institutions did not make it to the

interview stage. Beth stated that "it depends on what kind of position it is." For example if they

were

> …going to teach clinical skills like anatomy and physiology I would want to be familiar
>
> with the school they went to. Meaning I wouldn't hire someone with the university of
>
> Pango Pango because I know that some of the requirements at schools around the world
>
> are not as stringent.

Paul stated that his only concern about the institution was accreditation however; Paul also stated

that that might change in the future. As Paul's program grows to include the creation of

additional graduate degrees, institution reputation may become an issue, especially related to

clinical skills and experience.

Method of Degree Completion

None of the six participants expressed negative thoughts or feelings toward candidates

who completed an online or blended doctorate degree. In fact, some of the comments were very

positive. "I think good for them. They went out there and finished what many people quit. You

can't tell me that they didn't earn that degree" (Steve). "I think they probably ran the gamut of

diversity and preparedness and experience like residential students would" (Joyce). "Generally

speaking, all things being equal, when I teach course x online and course x in the classroom I think the students that had it online learned more" (David).

There were some general concerns that participants expressed when asked about their thoughts and feelings on faculty candidates who completed a doctorate in an online or blended program. Joyce voiced concerns about the professional development that online candidates had compared to residential degree candidates. For example, had they attended conferences, did they have experience with group work outside of the virtual classroom, and how had they developed their leadership skills. Joyce also pointed out that "I spent a great deal of time in the proximity of my professors. Meaning that outside of the classroom I was still learning from them on a daily basis" (Joyce). This statement gives the impression that Joyce wondered if online students learned less than residential students, due to the lack of prolonged personal engagement with professors.

Some of the participants expressed a preference for a blended degree method. They were asked in the interview if given the choice between three faculty candidates who completed a doctorate degree, one in a traditional face-to-face program, one in a blended program, and the other in an online program, given that all other qualifications were the same, who would they hire and why. In the interviews, some participants, such as, Steve expressed a preference for the blended candidate "because they have had the best of both worlds" and others, like Beth, stated that it would come down to personality and picking the individual who was the most charismatic. For Paul, it came down to overall practical experience, but how they came by that experience was not the issue.

Next in the survey, participants were asked a series of four questions comparing the three methods of degree completion and if they were likely to hire one over the other. In these

questions, they were asked to compare one method and school type, such as a traditional program from a traditional university to an online degree from an online only university, using a scale from 1-0, 1 being strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree, 4 strongly agree and 0 unsure. "Given the options who would you most likely hire?" Results from the table show that the ten people who completed the survey, on average, appeared to prefer candidates with traditional degrees from traditional universities over those that have earned an online degree from an online only university. However, if the candidate had a blended doctorate from a traditional university, they would be more likely to pick that candidate over someone with a traditional degree from a traditional university. Some of the comments made in the interviews support this result.

Table 3

Perceptions of academic administrators when hiring for a faculty position.

	Average with unsure responses	Average without unsure responses	
29. When hiring for a faculty position, I would choose a candidate with a doctorate completed in a traditional program from a traditional university over a candidate with an online doctorate from a traditional university.	1.90	2.38	Disagree
30. When hiring for a faculty position, I would choose a candidate with a doctorate completed in a traditional program from a traditional university over a candidate with a blended doctorate from a traditional university.	1.80	2.25	Disagree
31. When hiring for a faculty position, I would choose a candidate with a doctorate completed in a traditional program form a traditional university over a candidate with a doctorate from an online only university.	2.00	3.33	Agree

32. When hiring for a faculty position, I would choose a candidate with a doctorate earned in an online program offered by a traditional university over a candidate with a doctorate from an online only university.	2.30	3.29	Agree

Strengths of Online and Blended Education

Some of the participants listed similar strengths that online and blended education gave both students and faculty. In the order of frequency, the first being the most frequent, the following were addressed related to the benefits for the students: convenience also referred to as flexibility, affordability, superiority to lecture courses, more student accountability for participation, helps introvert students find a voice, and the consistent format of online content. The strengths of online education from the faculty side were that participants stated they were able to reach more students than they would just teaching in the traditional classroom.

The most frequently stated benefit of online and blended education was the convenience to the student, also referred to as "flexible". Each participant who was interviewed voiced this benefit. A few did not use the words "flexibility" or "convenience" but implied it in their comments, such as Steve, who stated that "people can have a second chance at education. Before online education, if you had a full time job and kids, school was not an option". Beth was clear in her stating her thoughts giving only one strength, convenience. "Convenience, convenience is the number one for the student. We have more adult learners, our average age of online students here is 32 and they already have careers, families, some have been divorced and gone through loss, and military students" (Beth). Paul also clearly stated, "the biggest strength is flexibility".

The second most cited area was the financial benefit of online education versus traditional education. David talked in length about the benefits of online education and brought up how online education brought the cost of education down and made it more affordable. By the tone of

David's voice and the overall feel of the conversation, one could tell that David felt strongly that overpriced courses did a disservice to students. Paul, on the other hand, stated, "with the exception of a few online institutions, it is cost effective". Rachel did not use a phrase stating financial benefit, but did state the detriments of needing to arrange childcare to take residential courses or miss time from work. Therefore, by taking online courses and avoiding these expenses, students are more likely to be financially able to pursue higher education. Paul noted the financial benefit of online education for faculty members as it relates to conferences and continuing education credit. "It cuts down on cost. I don't have to fly to a workshop I can do it online during my office hours, saving me hundreds of dollars" (Paul).

David spent some length talking about how students learned more online than in the residential setting. David emphasized that online students had the benefit of being able to work in the field they were studying. In many cases, instead of waiting until an internship or graduation to apply a new skill, students were able to take what they learned today and apply it tomorrow. Rachel also voiced that online students had to become active learners in the online setting more so than in the traditional setting. Rachel also stated that "online education can be superior to a talking head lecture".

This leads to the next two benefits of online education, holding students more accountable for participation and helping introverted students find a voice. Rachel stated that:

A few strengths are: one, you can hold students accountable for participations, regardless of whether they are an extrovert or introvert. It allows some of your thoughtful, more reserved, students to participate who aren't vocal in a crowd. It gives those students a chance to have participation. Because in a traditional class you can have a few people that tend to dominate the discussion. And then the faculty member, the teacher, you have to

work hard to get them to give up the floor to give others a chance to participate. I think

online, you have an advantage to set it up.

Rachel went on to talk about some of the struggles of introverted students and how online

discussion boards gave them a voice. In the residential setting, these introverted students can go

weeks without ever saying a word. Discussion boards take away this silence.

Concerns and Weakness of Online and Blended Education

Participants voiced some concerns related to online learning but it is significant to note

that none of the participants voiced a concern about the value of online education versus

traditional education. All participants who took the survey agreed that "effective teaching is

possible though online education" (Survey Question13). Concerns that were expressed, in the

order of more to less frequent, were lack of accreditation, lack of career advice, poor replication

of residential learning outcomes, poor development of social and professional development skills,

and the large consumption of faculty time.

All six participants expressed concerns that online and blended degrees needed to be from

an accredited university and/or program when required. It is also important to note that this issue

of university and program accreditation was also a concern for traditional degrees, it is not an

online education specific issue. Paul stated simply that an online program is acceptable

"assuming its accredited," implying that the university from which an applicant received his

online degree bears little weight in the hiring process, as long as it is accredited. Rachel

addressed accreditation while talking about the interview screening process, stating, "I would say,

as long as its accredited, as far as screen and interviewing, as long as it (the application) got

though the phases, we wouldn't differentiate at that point". In that statement, she was answering

the question as to whether or not the school where the degree was earned had an impact on the hiring decision.

It is also fitting to note David's concern of for-profit institutions versus non-profit institutions. He had many concerns about for-profit online schools and stated that if an applicant made it into the pool, "I and other faculty I work with would frown upon it. I'm not saying they would be rejected out of hand but they would have to do something/show us something to overcome that". David's concerns with for-profit institutions were related to the reports from the Chronicle of Higher Education and congress.

> Online degrees have astronomical numbers of students in the classroom with teachers who are just citizens teaching these courses who are not full time professors or they are adjuncts. And the first question in admission when addressing students, is their ability to access financial aid instead of their academic wherewithal. These schools have low completion rates. (David)

The next concern was the lack of career and academic advice that online and blended students receive. This was not a concern that affected the candidate's chances of being hired, instead, it was an overall concern that some participants had for online students. When Steve was asked if he had concerns about online education he said no "it was the best thing that happened to education". However, later in the interview Steve expressed concerns that the "drawback is that there is a lack of career and degree planning advice online. Many students are left learning from trial and error…this sets many people up for failure". David also expressed concern for students who did not receive school or career advice; however, David spoke in regard to students picking a school for the first time. "It's a shame, they have to pay that price and weren't able to get career advice or academic advice from someone who could help them" (David).

Poor replication of residential learning outcomes in the online version of the course was the next concern. This concern could also be linked back to the issue of accreditation. Joyce and Beth stated that online and residential courses may not look the same assignment wise or format wise; however, learning outcomes should always be the same in both methods of delivery. "They need to be the same course, not necessarily the same length, but they need the same learning outcomes and measure of success" (Beth).

Development of social and professional development skills was also addressed by Joyce and Beth. Beth's concern was not so much social development, but a question of why someone would choose to take courses online. Since a faculty member needs to be a strong public speaker, the candidate, or any candidate, for that matter, would have to interview well and be able to show a certain amount of ease with verbal and written communication. Joyce stated that the ability of a faculty member to teach was a major issue and no matter their educational background required, when possible, for faculty candidates to teach a class or make a presentation to a group of peers. While expressing concerns about social development, Joyce went on to address the concern of a candidate's professional development. Joyce went on to say, "When I talk to candidates who got their education online. I ask them more about other experiences they may have like going to conferences, presented at conferences, or been published. If they haven't done those things they are at a disadvantage".

Lastly, Rachel addressed the time and toll that teaching in the online or blended format could take on a professor. This topic is not related to hiring decisions, but was an overall concern about the practice of teaching online.

I think faculty need to learn how to manage their time better and see how often they log in and especially in courses where students email teachers. It is essentially 27-7 access to the

professor that you never had with a traditional class. I see that as a challenge for the

faculty. (Rachel)

Steve also expressed the concern that faculty could reach the point where they are never

unplugging or taking a break from teaching. "There has to be a point where you can step back

and say this can wait 24 hours for a response"(Steve).

Future of Online and Blended Education

Each participant was asked what he or she thought the future would look like for online

and blended education. They were also asked in the survey if they thought online education was

largely an instructional fad. All of the participants stated in one way or another that the future of

online and blended education was bright with no end in sight. In fact, the participants could not

imagine a successful institution that didn't have an online or blended component. The

participants state it the best. "Even the elite universities that used to be snobby about online

education and said they will never go there are going there, are being forced to go there" (David).

"Will the traditional degree go away? I don't think so, but the look of the traditional degree will

never be the same" (Joyce). "I see online education as the more common form of higher

education in the future. I don't think a fully residential education can prepare students for our

current world of employment" (Steve).

Beth gave a more specific vision of the future of online education:

I think there's a lot of institutions trying to get into the online world because there is

money to be made, but I think that in the next 20-30 years, it will be narrowed down to a

handful of programs and many will go to the wayside. It is a big industry and a lot to do.

And just like any market situation, those who do the best will thrive and the others will

fall away. And just like we have 4-5 major car companies we will have 4 or 5 major

online companies. Which we already have somewhat. Some of the smaller places that are trying to do this will throw money at it and do it half-heartedly but they will not do as well.

David was very informative in his vision of the future as well. David shared some of his children's online education experiences. "Every class my children had in high school had an online component and in another generation or two with the rise of MOOC's (Massive Open Online Courses) technology is going to penetrate deeper and deeper into the educational system" (David). David saw online education as more than just a higher education event eventually affecting younger students as well.

Hiring Candidates with Online or Blended Doctorates

One of the final questions asked of the participants was "Have you ever hired someone with an online or blended doctorate degree? If so, how did the faculty member compare to faculty members with traditional degrees? Would you hire someone with an online or blended degree again?" If the participant had never hired someone with an online or blended doctorate degree, they were asked questions about why not and if they would hire someone with that degree. None of the participants claimed they would not hire someone with an online or blended doctorate degree. Rachel stated that she "would hire the one that interviewed the best but I would have a biases toward hiring the individual in the blended program" (Rachel). Rachel stated that the reason was experience and exposure. Someone from a blended program knows both methods of learning because most of their courses used both methods.

Three of the six participants, David, Rachel and Paul, had hired faculty members for full time residential positions who had earned doctorate degrees online or in a blended format. Paul's answer was short when asked to compare the two types of faculty members. "I would say those

two compare pretty well because they are directors of their programs. And in my own instances I'm from a blended program and I'm the chair so it seems to have worked for us" (Paul). Rachel said she had never thought about making the comparison but noted that in her experience, "faculty who had their own online experience as learners are better in their own online course delivery" (Rachel).

Two participants, Joyce and Beth, stated that they had never hired someone with an online or blended doctorate degree because none had ever applied. The third participant, Steve, had hired adjuncts with online doctorates, but had not had anyone apply to a full time position. Beth stated that online education was "still relatively new. Generally, when you apply for a faculty position you have already been teaching somewhere and have some academic references" (Beth). Steve and Beth said that they would hire someone with an online or blended degree. Joyce said that she would hire one, as well, but only if he or she made a demonstration of their presence in a classroom. "Most people who go through a residential program have the classroom teaching experience. I would want to see them in action" (Joyce).

Textural and Structural Description of Participants

In phenomenological studies, a textural-structural description integrates both what (texture) and how (structure) participants experienced the phenomenon, namely their experience and attitudes toward online and blended education. Each participant had a slightly different but similar experience with online and blended education. Some were creators of programs or courses, others new professors in the online and blended environment, and all had an administrative role that include online education. Online and blended experience ranges from just a few years to a few decades.

David is a dean at a public university who, due to a need for rehabilitation counselors, helped lead his university into online education back in the 1990's. He was a pioneer at the time with ten other peers that learned how to put a program online, create a course, and then teach it. David is passionate about online and blended education. He remembers the experience fondly of trying to launch the online program. Challenges he experienced were with older faculty members that were not willing to learn the new system of education. The older faulty members had to be replaced with younger faculty that knew online education or were willing to learn it. Today, his universities has hybrid courses and online classes and nothing that is just in the classroom anymore. The concept of a course without an online component is unheard of because of the benefits of online tools that are also used in the work environment. He also looks forward to the growing development a popularity of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). Online education gives the hope for affordable college education for everyone.

Paul is a chairperson at a private university who completed a doctoral degree in a blended format. Before that time, he had little to no experience with online and blended education. When he started the blended program, it was during a time that VHS tapes were used. A student would have to watch 20-30 VHS tapes then use a proctor to take exams. Over the last 15 years, things have changed with online courses being completely online using management systems such as Blackboard. Professional conferences and workshops are also being offered online to save travel expenses and boost attendances. Due to the new advancements in online and blended programs, Paul has no concerns about individuals with online and blended doctoral degrees. Currently, he teaches online, and is creating a blended program for his department. His experiences with online education were questionable and tedious at first with VHS tapes but today it is positive.

Improvements in the format of online education have resulted in opportunities for students and faculty members.

Beth serves as a dean at a private university. She has not had must experience with online and blended education even though she has helped launch an online and blended program. She has never taken an online course but has completed some training videos online required by the university and she is teaching an online course. Beth thinks there is a misconception that online is easier but that is not case. Online requires more self-discipline then residential courses, is any online class you do not have your residential peers to lean on for support. Personally, if Beth were a student again she would choose a residential or blended program over an online program because she enjoys the residential experience. Teaching online is a nice change of pace but her she gains more enjoyment teaching in the residential classroom. However, online education is a great opportunity and fills a need for students.

Joyce is an associate dean that is new to online education however she has decades of experience within her field. When she first started teaching online, she had concerns and felt unsure about the whole concept of online learning. She would not say that she had a negative impression but it was not a positive one either. Teaching online has been a nice change of pace and you can reach more students but there is little opportunity to be spontaneous. Everything in the online environment is planned out in advanced while in a residential class she can start up a conversation about what happened in the news today that relates to the content. After teaching online and having some experience with online training she feels confident that the rigor of online education is good and feels secure about the degrees her university offers. However, she is still not as comfortable with online and blended education as she is with residential education.

Rachel is a dean with over 40 years' experience in higher education. She has a broad experience having taught, developed, delivered, supervised, and started traditional courses and distances learning courses. She has seen online education develop from the mail ordered course to the online course being offered using online course management systems. Her experience has been positive and exciting to see the changes of the years. Rachel sees online education as superior to lecture because of the amount of work a student has to do to participate in the online environment. The online environment requires active learning which in turn increases critical thinking skills needed in the workplace. Rachel thinks we have overcome many of the barriers against the acceptability of online education, just as comparability, but there is still more to face.

Steve is a chairperson with over ten years of experience teaching both residentially and online. His view of online education has always been positive because he has been surrounded by online and blended education since day one has a faculty member and administrator. Steve had had numerous training on the best practices of online education and student communication. He views online education as becoming the more common form of education and one day the preferred form of education. The future of online education is bright and ready to be embraced by a generation of students raised on technology.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

Research Question One

Research question one states "What perceptions do academic administrators have of online doctoral degrees?" Themes that addressed this research question included the influence of degree method and institution, strengths of online and blended education, and concerns of online and blended education. Within these themes, participants revealed their attitudes, perceptions, and concerns regarding online doctoral degrees.

Academic administrators were able to provide definitions of online education that were similar to or matched the Sloan Consortium definition of an online degree and online courses. They clearly understood what it meant for a person to have completed a doctoral degree though an online program. However, participants were unaware of the differences between traditional course versus web-facilitated, blended, or hybrid. Based on the interviews, the inclusion of an online element in residential college classes has become the standard practice at these participants' institutions turning the traditional courses into web-facilitated courses. Administrators were positive about the use of online elements in their traditional classes and voiced seeking out additional ways to include technology to facilitate some information.

Overall, participants perceived online doctoral degrees in a positive light depending on the field of study. Allen and Seaman (2010, 2013) predicated in their research that the acceptability of online education would increase. For Beth this was the case. During the interview, she said 10 years ago, she would have concerns about a candidate with an online or blended degree but today she does not have those same concerns. However, Adams, Lee, and Cortese (2012) and Kinneer (2013) show a lack of acceptances of online and blended degrees. This lack of acceptances by some could be linked more to the prestige of the university the degree is earned. In a news article, Wecker (2012) reported that online graduates from prestigious universities are being accepted in the professional world, but degrees from for-profit or non-accredited schools were comparable with earning an advanced high school degree.

There were some concerns raised about online doctoral degrees such as the field of study in which the degree was earned. An example of degrees earned completely online that would raise concerns would be nursing, physical therapy, and other clinical based professions. Another concern raised was the type of professional development and mentorship online doctoral

graduates received if any. In a residential program, there are opportunities for mentorship from faculty after classes and a push for students to pursue professional memberships, participate in conferences, conduct research, work in groups, and pursue fellowship opportunities.

Faculty with online doctoral degrees were also perceived as self-starters, people capable of working independently, and technology literate individuals. All of the participants viewed online education as a legitimate form of education as long as the doctoral degree was completed from an accredited university. The fact that government agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency accept applicants with online degrees speaks volumes to the growing acceptances of online education.

Research Question Two and Three

Research questions two and three are slightly different because the influences of online and blended doctoral methods were viewed separately. Question two asks, "what type of influence does the university from which the prospective faculty member earns their online doctorate degree influence hiring decisions?" Question three asks, "what type of influence does the university from which the prospective faculty member earns their blended doctorate degree influence hiring decisions? " Themes that addressed these questions were institution reputation, method of degree completion and, concerns and weakness of online and blended education.

The accreditation of the institution from which the degree was earned was an area of great concern to all the participants. None of the participants would consider hiring an applicant with a doctoral degree from a non-accredited university. Nor would they hire a participants with a degree that they believed to have come from a diploma mill that received accreditation from an organization it created. Their concern was consistent with research (Ezell, 2009; Pina, 2010; Simonson, 2011).

The second influencing factor about the institution was whether it was a non-profit or for-profit institution. David showed the greatest concern with for-profit institutions stating that for-profit schools, also referred to as proprietary schools, cared more about a student's ability to pay then his or her academic success and quality of education.

The third influencing factor was the reputation of the institution, with David, Beth, and Paul stated that reputation matters. David pointed out that administrators tend to know what institutions have the best programs for their profession and give preferential treatment to candidates with those degrees. Beth and Paul prefer candidates with a degree from a university they are familiar with especially if it is a clinical degree. Influencing factors such as non-profit status and degree reputation are consistent in the literature (Wecker, 2012).

Research Question Four

Question four asked "Does the method of doctorate degree completion influence administrative perceptions during the candidate hiring process?" Themes that addressed this question included the hiring process, influence of the degree method and the institution, and strengths of online and blended education. If the participants had revealed that during the hiring process, faculty candidate applications were sorted according to the method by which the degree was completed, it would have quickly revealed that the method of doctorate degree completion influenced administrative perceptions during the candidate hiring process. However, this was not the case. Some participants, such as Joyce, did admit that they would ask more probing question of online doctoral degree candidates related to their professional development activities, teamwork experience, and presentation experience. One participant, Paul, made it clear that the method of degree completion had no influence on his hiring decision. Overall, none of the six participants expressed great concern regarding the choice of degree completion method. Instead,

the participants tended to look at the whole candidate and did not appear to focus on just one issue.

There was a slight preference for candidates with a blended doctorate degree, due to their experience with both online education and residential course work. Rachel stated that she would prefer the blended program due to the experience and exposure of both the online format and the residential format. David mentioned that someone with a blended format would be able to step into his program more quickly and easily than a candidate that only has residential experiences.

Summary

In this chapter, the dissertation author summarized the findings from the research conducted. Demographic information about the participants and institutions were included with a brief summary about each participant interviewed. Six themes were discovered: the processes by which faculty are hired, definitions of online and blended education, influence of degree method and institution, strengths of online and blended education, concerns of online and blended education, and the future role of online and blended education. Then the results from the question asking participants to compare faculty with online doctorate degrees to faculty with traditional degrees were summarized. Lastly, the research questions were addressed.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The present study revealed current perceptions of university administrators located in Virginia regarding prospective faculty candidates with online or blended doctorate degrees. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the research along with suggestions for future research and limitations. Discussion will include the emerging six themes: the processes by which faculty are hired, the definitions of online and blended education, influence of degree method and institution, strengths of online and blended education, concerns of online and blended education, and the future role of online and blended education. From the preceding themes, one can observe that there is an emergence of growth and acceptances of online and blended education.

Restatement of the Research Problem and Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of university administrators regarding prospective faculty candidates with online and blended doctorate degrees from accredited institutions located in Virginia. Based on equivalency theory the method of information delivery should still result in equivalent learning outcomes and experiences (Simonson, Schlosser & Hanson, 1999). If that is the case, then faculty candidates who have an online or blended doctoral degree should have the same opportunities for employment as candidates with a residential degree. However, if administrators do not perceive online and blended degrees as being equivalent then their perception will have a negative impact on the careers of those online and blended doctoral students. The following research questions were investigated:

1. What perceptions do academic administrators have of online doctoral degrees?

2. What type of influence does the university from which the prospective faculty member earns their online doctorate degree influence hiring decisions?

3. What type of influence does the university from which the prospective faculty member earns their blended doctorate degree influence hiring decisions?

4. Does the method of doctorate degree completion influence administrative perceptions during the candidate hiring process?

A transcendental phenomenological approach was used with six administrators. Interviews were conducted with an interview guide to increase the trustworthiness of the interview. The interview guide was reviewed by two administrators for understanding. A survey was also completed by each participant to collect demographic information and to gain more insight into the participants' exposure to online and blended education. Four people completed the survey but choose not to participate in the interview due to time constraints.

Summary of Findings and Relationship to Current Literature

Using this study alone it is difficult to make generalizations about the acceptances of online and blended education within the entire state of Virginia or the United States of America. However, these six interviews and ten surveys revealed that online and blended education is still a growing business and online and blended doctorate degrees for full-time faculty hire have become more acceptable. The participants stated that they would not hold an online or blended doctorate degree against a faculty candidate. Some participants even stated that they would prefer a candidate with a blended degree, due to the experience such a degree would give him or her.

Hiring process.

Participants were asked six open ended questions related to their hiring process. The hiring process among the six interviewed participants was consistent. All of the institutions had a

standardized application process and equal opportunity statements. One participant from a public

institution stated that all government-funded institutions must follow certain guidelines when

making hiring decisions. The Human Resources Department played a role in making sure fair

hiring practices were followed. One example of the standardization of the application process

was that all the applicants had to be asked the same questions. Participants stated that they

created open-ended questions so applicants could provide additional information if they wanted to

in order to make themselves stand out.

The application process required submission of an application, cover letter, references,

original transcripts, teaching philosophy, vita, background check, and a series of interviews if

approved. Knowledge of the hiring process was important for this study because applicants are

typically vetted well before they reach the stage of background checks and initial interviews. If

applicants were sorted based on degree method early in the application process then then

separation would have answered the research questions to a degree. Participants also shared

typical interview questions they asked which revealed more of a concern about research and

teaching experience than degree method. Two participants did state that if the candidate

completed an online or blended doctorate degree they would ask why they chose that method.

Education is a field that requires public speaking and strong communication skills. If an online

doctorate degree were pursed over a residential degree in order to avoid addressing those areas,

then the applicant would not be the best candidate for a full-time faculty position.

Defining online and blended education

Online and blended education has change greatly over the last fifty years. Some people do

not understand what online and blended education is and how those two areas are currently

defined. Understanding how the participant defined online and blended education could reveal if

he/she had a clear understanding of that medium of education and what experiences they had with it. According to the latest definitions by the Sloan Consortium online education is a course where 80% or more of the content is delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2013). Blended, also called hybrid, education was defined as 30-70% of content delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2013). What was interesting to note was that traditional education was defined as having no online technology used. Based on interviews, none of the participants' institutions had a course that fit the traditional definition. Instead, courses they referred to as "traditional" were web-facilitated, meaning that they used technology to facilitate some information, and used a course management system to post syllabi and grades. A web-facilitated course is any that offers 1-29% of content online (Allen & Seaman, 2013).

The participants used the terms "blended", "hybrid", and "web-facilitated" interchangeably, unaware of the differences between a traditional course and a web-facilitated course. This observation was very significant because it brought up the question "Are there any traditional courses or degrees being offered at the college level today?" The researcher for this dissertation did not address that question in this research, but for the six participants interviewed, the answer was no.

Influence of degree method and institution

There did not appear to be any automatic removal from the applicant pile based on degree completion method. There was a slight bias toward blended doctoral degrees by one participant, Steve, due to the experience an applicant would have in both learning formats. The fourth research question asked wheather the method of doctorate degree completion influenced administrative perceptions during the candidate hiring process. Based on the results of the interviews and the surveys, administrators who were somewhat familiar with online and blended

education did not have a bias against it. Some who had blended degrees might even be more likely to hire someone with a familiar degree method. Based on research by Rivera (2012) hiring is more than an issue of skills; people tend to hire employees who are culturally similar to themselves, which would include experiences such as education. As more candidates flood the job market with online and blended doctoral degrees and gain employment in positions of authority, the issue of degree method will fade away. As David said in his interview there will come a time when people will wonder why the question of the acceptability of online degrees was ever asked. Online and blended education is quickly becoming the norm with a new method of learning on the horizon: MOOCs.

Some participants stated that where applicants went to school did influence their hiring decision. An institutions academic reputation and for-profit status mattered. Another issue related to the institution was whether it was considered a teaching focused or research-focused institution. This was only expressed by one participant, David, who was the administrator at a research focused institution. Three participants mentioned that school reputation was an influencing factor. The survey results also showed that when hiring for a faculty position, administrators would choose a candidate with an online doctorate completed at a known traditional school over an online only university. Stenstrom, Curtis, and Iyer (2013) found in their research that university and, in particular, department ranking, was the strongest predictor of employment after completing a doctorate degree. Their research supports the findings here that institution reputation does matter. Between the results from this study and the study by Stenstrom et al (2013) people considering a doctoral program should be more concerned about picking an institution with a positive reputation for their department of study than fearful of pursing an online or blended degree.

Strengths of online and blended education

The strengths addressed by the participants can be divided into two different categories: benefits for students and benefits for faculty. Benefits for students included, convenience, also referred to as flexible; affordable; superior to lecture courses; holds students more accountable for participation; helps introvert students find a voice; and the consistent format of online content. The strengths of online education from the faculty side were that participants stated they were able to reach more students than they would just teaching in the traditional classroom.

There is quite a bit of research on the benefits of online and blended education from both the student and faculty perspective that support the results from the interviews. Brown (2012) found in survey results given over a four-year period that students preferred online education because it was a way to work their education into their lives while still maintaining time at work and with family. Even instructor's responded to the survey as finding online education more flexible, even though it required daily, reliable internet access to stay connected to students.

Participants stated that online education was more affordable for students. Taking online classes makes the cost of living on campus a nonissue and allows students to make an income while working on a degree. However, research on the topic states that the "optimism about online learning reducing the price of college is premature" (Casement, 2013, p.18). Many universities charge more for online classes or include technology fees for online classes (Casement, 2013; Post, 2010; Parker, 2012; Poulin, 2012). In a survey by the Adult College Completion Network and the Campus Computing Project, the results indicated that 63 % of all institutions charged the same amount for online classes with 29 % charging more for online classes, and only about seven percent charging less (Poulin, 2012). The perception is that online education saves students money, but the reality appears to be different.

There have been numerous research studies comparing online and blended education to traditional courses. An entire book series could be dedicated to the topic. Some of the research was addressed in chapter two herein. Based on the results of the current research, it can be concluded that online students perform modestly better or equal to their traditional student counterparts (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Brown, 2012; Means et al, 2010; Mgutshini, 2013; Redpath, 2012). Migutshini (2013) found, "a multifactorial comparison shows online students to have comparable educational success and that, in terms of student satisfaction, online learners reported more satisfaction with their learning experience than their campus-based counterparts" (p.1). All of the participants have years of experience teaching online and in the classroom. Their conclusions that online courses are superior to lecture courses fit with the results of current research. They also bring a new element to the table by pointing out how the online environment makes it easier to hold students accountable for participation and helps introverted students find a voice.

Last, faculty found being able to reach more students globally as beneficial to online education. Traditional courses require students to be physically present for long periods of time in a classroom. These classrooms tend to be located within universities or at satellite locations. Online education can reach any student who has access to the internet. Colleges, such as Pennsylvania State University and Liberty University connected outreach programs with their online education programs, reaching thousands of students worldwide.

Concerns of online and blended education

Concerns about online and blended education are well documented in the research literature. It is significant to note that some of the original concerns about online and blended education when it was in its infancy were not mentioned as a concern during the interviews. Such

concerns included whether or not students learned equally well online as their residential counterparts. Another issue used to be the quality of online degrees versus residential degrees. These concerns are still present in research but the question is being asked less frequently. Instead, participants were concerned about accreditation, lack of career advice, replication of residential learning outcomes, development of social and professional development skills, and consumption of faculty time. Participants also voiced concerns about the amount of time faculty spend teaching online courses.

In the annual Sloan Consortium online education report, 2,800 colleges and university chief academic officers were surveyed (Allen & Seaman, 2013). In the report, some of the concerns about online education were addressed such as "does it take more faculty time and effort to teach online and are learning outcomes in online comparable to face-to-face?" (Allen & Seaman, 2013, p.5). According to the current concerns sited "academic leaders believe it takes more faculty time and effort to teach online" a concern that has increased from 41.4 % in 2006 to 44.6 % in 2013 (Allen & Seaman, 2013, p.5). As supported by the interviews there is concern that online teaching is taking more time. This leads to the need for faculty to have strong time management skills and know when to let the steady stream of student requests wait until the following day.

The second area the Sloan Consortium report addressed was the question of online instruction being comparable to face-to-face instruction. The participants interviewed stated that they had no doubt those online students learned and earned their degrees, which were comparable to residential degrees. Their concerns were that learning outcomes were replicated in the online and blended courses. Allen and Seaman (2013) found that an overwhelming number, 77 %

thought "learning outcomes in online education are the same or superior to those in face-to-face" settings (p.5). That is a 20 % jump over the last ten years.

The concerns over the lack of career advice students receive and the development of social and professional skills though graduate professional development were concerns that did not appear in other research. The Distance Education Advising Commission of NACADA is committed to helping people learn how to respond to learner needs as it relates to academic advising. Accrediting bodies such as the Council of Education for Public Health and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools ask the question how and who advices students. However, there does appear to be a concern on how and if this advising is reaching the online students.

Last, there was a concern of how faculty candidates with online degrees have pursed professional development in their field. This appears to be a new concern with no research on the topic. In the academic field where conference presentations, publication, and new discoveries are highly prized activities, the results of this research would suggest all faculty candidates pursue these activities whether or not they are encouraged in the online learning environment. Administrators of online and blended programs should also consider how to encourage the same professional development of their online students that they do with their residential students.

Future role of online and blended education

The future of online and blended education appears bright with more room for growth. Joyce said it well when she stated that the traditional degree would never be the same. Online education is here to stay. Allen and Seaman (2014) found that out of 2,800 colleges surveyed only one percent stated it was not likely that a student would be taking at least one online course in the next five years (p.20).

One participant, David, brought up the topic of MOOC's. The effect MOOC's will have on education remains to be seen. Long (2013) reviewed how MOOC's were changing education and throughout the article, referred to MOOCs as simply online education. There is a fear that MOOC's will put higher education programs out of business along with how to make it self-sustaining. Five years ago, the world did not know what a MOOC was but now it is hard to talk about online education without addressing the new delivery method. MOOC's have the potential to change education the same way that online, blended, hybrid, and WebEx has changed education. Since the fall of 2013 there have been almost weekly articles in the Chronicle of Higher Education related to MOOC's and if it is here to stay.

Implications

The results of the present study revealed implications that might be useful to future doctoral students, faculty pursing tenure or promotion, and administrators deciding on doctoral degree offering methods. The most profound implication from this study is that administrator's perception of online and blended degrees do appear to be approving. Previous research has shown employers to have negative attitudes toward online degrees and an overwhelming preference for traditional degrees (Adams, 2008; Adams & Defleur, 2005, 2006; Adams, Lee, Cortese, 2012; Kinneer, 2013; Richardson, McLeod, Dikekers, 2010; Kohlmeyer, Seese, & Sincich, 2011). Yet, according to recent research, employer perceptions of online degrees are growing more positive (Chant, 2013; Linardopouos, 2012; Wecker, 2012; Wellen, 2006). But as Chant (2013) pointed out the perception of online programs has not kept pace with its prevalence. However, the continued growth of online education makes it difficult for employers to dismiss candidates with online degrees.

The second implication is that participants appear to have a slight preference for faculty candidates with a blended or hybrid degree. The blended degree gives candidates experience in both online educational methods and residential educational methods. In Public Agenda's (2013) survey of attitudes of students and employer toward online education 82% of employers felt "hybrid programs gave students a better education than online-only programs" (p.5). Given the choice, administrators who are considering offering a program online, should consider requiring a residential component or at least providing the option of a residential component.

The third implication circles back to equivalency theory. As stated in the literature review, equivalency theory is the concept that online education should strive for equivalency with residential education to the pint that regardless of how information is presented or in what format or location the learning outcomes and experiences are equivalent. Research has shown that students are learning just as well in the online environment as the residential environment (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Brown, 2012; LaMeres & Plumb, 2013; Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2010). If this is the case then employment opportunities should also be the equivalent no matter the degree method. Attitudes and perceptions should also be equivalent regarding online, blended, and residential education. If there is not equivalency then there is a bias that doctoral seeking students should be aware of before choosing a format of study.

<center>**Recommendations for Future Research**</center>

The current study should be expanded to include other academic areas to see if the findings are consistent across disciplines. Further studies could also benefit from tracking people seeking faculty employment who have completed doctorate degrees online or in a blended format. Due to the lack of generalization to the whole population, future research should expand to a national or regional level.

Due to the low number of participants in this study, this study can be used as a pilot study to create a survey based on the themes revealed. That survey could then be sent out to a variety of academic administrators that could provide a sample large enough to make generalizations related to the whole population. It would also provide quantitative data on the topic.

Technology changes quickly and it has been changing and influencing education for generations. Some of the participants mentioned Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC's) as the wave of the future. Others stated that online and blended education would become the norm. It would be beneficial research to see if other administrators shared these views and what they see for the future of education.

Based on Allen and Seaman's (2008) definitional of a traditional course, which states that a traditional course is one with no online technology used, the researcher for the current study posed the question "Are there any courses still being taught this way?". What many considered to be a traditional course may actually be a web-facilitated course that uses a course management system such as Blackboard, to post syllabi, assignments, and grades. Future research may show that the definition of a traditional course has changed.

Limitations

The largest limitation in this study was the small sample size. Despite efforts to have 20 participants, only six agreed to interviews with an additional four agreeing to complete a survey. Only nine of the 31 institutions contacted in Virginia agreed to allow the researcher to conduct research on their campus. Of those nine, only five institutions had an administrator agree to participate in the study.

This study was limited to administrators working within the academic field of health or education in Virginia. Limiting the participants and the academic field made it possible to

conduct in-depth interviews and make some generalizations that apply in those academic areas. All of the participants had experience with online education; this could have made them biased toward online education since a portion of their income was tied to it. Lastly, participants may have held back information regarding hiring practices due to legal issues that surround the topic.

Conclusion

Many of the findings in this study were consistent with and confirmed previous quantitative and qualitative research, such as the growth of online and blended education and the growing acceptances of online and blended doctorate degrees (Allen, Seaman, & Sloan, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014; Garrett, 2010; Mooney, 2010; Sener, 2010). Despite the small sample size there was consistency among the participants regarding their perceptions of online and blended education. There was even a slight preference of candidates with a blended doctorate degree due to their experience with both online education and residential course work. However, there were still lingering concerns about candidates with online-only doctoral degrees.

Existing research was used to validate the need for this study and to compare the findings of this phenomenological study to those within the review of literature. The textural and structural descriptions of the perceptions of university administrators were unique. These descriptions gave this researcher a complete view of the participants' understanding of online and blended education, along with how it affects their hiring decisions for full time doctorate level faculty positions. Specifically, the current research differs from others in the methods and procedures, allowing for understanding of the essences that described the administrators' perceptions and experience with online and blended education. The current study did not merely use a survey to judge opinions of online and blended education. Instead, the phenomenological method allowed for understanding of why participants would hire a candidate with a blended

degree over an online or traditional degree. It gave a picture of educational administrators past and current thoughts regarding online and blended education as well as their predictions for the future.

The results of this research can help guide students who are considering which method of educational study pursue. If an individual has career goals that include a full time faculty position it may be beneficial to seek out a blended doctoral program. Despite overwhelming research, that shows online students have comparable educational success to their traditional counterparts there are still concerns. These concerns could result in candidates with a blended or traditional degree having better chances of achieving full time faculty employment. Furthermore, participants in this study preferred someone from a blended degree because it gave the candidate experience in both worlds. Educators are reaching a point in education where new professors are required to be a skilled classroom professor as well as a skilled online professor. Educators still value other skills, such as ongoing professional development, research, and publications.

Colleges that are considering expanding their current educational programs should consider the advantages and disadvantages that various degree methods would have on student employment. The conveniences of a completely online degree are great for students however, long-term negative career impacts should be considered. The more graduates who find successful employment the more attractive a college will appear to degree seeking students. The rising popularity and uncertainty surrounding MOOC's also brought a new element to the table. "In the spring of 2013, forty public universities offered credits for online courses through MOC2Degree/Academic Partnerships" (Long, 2013, p.61). How this growing trend will effect online education and faculty employment remains to be seen.

REFERENCES

Adams, J. (2008). Understanding factors limiting the acceptability of online courses and degrees. *International Journal on e-learning*, 7(4), pp573-587.

Adams, J., & DeFleur, M. (2005). The acceptability of a doctoral degree earned online as a credential for obtaining a faculty position. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, *19*(2), 71-85.

Adams, J., & DeFleur, M. (2006). The acceptability of online degrees earned as a credential for obtaining employment. *Communication Education*, *55*(1), 32-45.

Adams, J., Lee, S., & Cortese, J. (2012). The acceptability of online degress: prinicpals and hiring practices in secondary schools. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 12(4), pp.408-422.

Allen, I., Seaman, J., & Sloan, C. (2006). Chapter 4: Blending In: The extent and promise of blended education in the United States. *Blended Learning: Research Perspective* (pp.65-80). Sloan Consortium.

Allen, I., Seaman, J., & Sloan, C. (2007). Making the Grade: Online Education in the United States, 2006. Midwestern Edition. *Sloan Consortium*,

Allen, I., & Seaman, J. (2008). Staying the course: Online education in the United States, 2008. *Sloan Survey of Online Learning.* Retrieved February 12, 2009, from http://www.sloanconsortium.org/publications/survey/pdf/staying_the_course.pdf.

Allen, I., & Seaman, J. (2010). Class Differences: Online Education in the United States. *Babson Survey Research Group and Sloan Consortium.*

Allen, I. & Seaman, J. (2013). Changing course. *Babson Survey Research Group and Sloan Consortium.*

Anders, G. (2012). Are they learning or cheating? Online teaching's dilemma. *Forbes*. Retrieved

   from: http://www.forbes.com/sites/georgeanders/2012/08/16/are-they-learning-or-

   cheating-online-teachings-dilemma/

Anderson, B., & Simpson, M. (2007). Ethical issues in online education. *Open Learning,* 22(2),

   129-138.

Atchley, W., Wingenbach, G., & Akers, C. (2013). Comparison of Course Completion and

   Student Performance through Online and Traditional Courses. *International Review Of*

   Research In Open & Distance Learning, 14(4), 104-116.

Aud, G., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., Tahan, K. (2011). *The*

   condition of education 2011(NCES 2011-033). US Department of Education, National

   Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

Baldi, S. (1992). Prestige determinants of first academic job for new sociology Ph.D.s .

   Sociological Quarterly, *36*(4), 777-789.

Basham, M., Stader, D., Bishop, H., (2009). How "pathetic" is your hiring process? An

   application of the leasing "pathetic dot" model to educational hiring practices. *Community*

   College Journal of Research and Practice, 33, p.363-385. DOI:

   10.1080/10668920802564980

Bedeian, A., & Feild, H. (1980). Academic stratification in graduate management programs:

   departmental prestige and faculty hiring patterns. *Journal of Management*, *6*(2), 99-115.

Bedeian, A., Cavazos, D., Hunt, J., Jauch, L. (2010). Doctoral degree prestige and the academic

   marketplace: A study of mobility within the management discipline. *Academy of*

   Management Learning and Education, 9(1), 11-25. doi: 10.5465/AMLE.2010.48661188

Bejerano, A. (2008). The genesis and evolution of online degree programs: who are they for and
what have we lost along the way?. *Communication Education* 57(3), p.408-414. doi:
10.1080/03634520801993697

Bitter, M. (1999). An investigation of factors influencing the hiring of experienced accountants.
Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 3(2).

Bogdan, R.C., & Bilken, S.K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to
theories and methods* (5th ed). Boston: Pearson Education.

Boston, W. r. (2010, January 1). Measuring Student Retention at an Online Institution of Higher
Education. ProQuest LLC

Brewer, J. & Hunter, A. (1989). *Multimethod research: a synthesis of styles.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Brown, J. (2012). Online learning a comparison of web-based land-based courses. *Quarterly
Review of Distance Education* 12(1), pp.39-42.

Burris, V. (2004). The Academic caste system: prestige hierarchies in PhD exchange networks.
American Sociological Review, *69*(2), 239-264.

Callie, T., & Cheslock, J. (2008). The hiring and compensation practices of business school
deans. *The Review of Higher Education*, 32(1), p.24-49

Carcary, M. (2009). The research audit trail – Enhancing trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry.
Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods, 7(1), 11-23.

Carmel, A., & Gold, S. S. (2007). The Effects of Course Delivery Modality on Student
Satisfaction and Retention and GPA in On-Site vs. Hybrid Courses. Online Submission.

Carnevale, D. (2005). Employers Still Prefer Traditional Degrees Over Online Learning, Study
Finds. *Chronicle Of Higher Education*, 52(5), A43.

Carr, N. (2012). The crisis in higher education. *MIT Technology Review*, *115*(6), 32-40.

Casement, W. (2013). Will Online Learning Lower the Price of College?. *Journal of College Admission*, (220), 14-18.

Chant, I. (2013). Research: As online degrees become more prevalent, questions linger. *Library Journal*, 138(18), 23.

Chung, K. & Ellis, A. (2003). Online education: Understanding market acceptance in the higher education sector of Singapore. *Interact, Integrate, Impact: Proceeding of the 20th annual conference of the Australasian society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education.* Adelaide, 7-10 December.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation. (2003). Important questions about "diploma mills" and "accreditation mills", Retrieved March 16, 2008, from http://www.chea.org/degreemills/default.htm

Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Sage, Londa New Delhi.

Dae Shik, K., Lee, H., & Skellenger, A. (2012). Comparison of levels of satisfaction with distance education and on-campus programs. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, 106(5), 275-286.

Daniel, J. (2013, March). Opening a new can of worms on distance learning. *Media Planet supplement for USA Today*, *7*, 6.

Davis, K. A. (1992). Another Researcher Comments.. *TESOL Quarterly*, *26*(3), 605-606.

DePriest, T. (2009). *Perceptions of academic administrators regarding the acceptability of online doctoral degrees for faculty members.* Doctoral dissertation, Union University

Dua, A. (2013). College for all. *Voices on Society: The art and science of delivery*, Retrieved from http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/social_sector/college_for_all

Duncan, S. (2005). The U.S. Army's impact on the history of distance education. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 6(4), 397-404.

Dutton, J., Button, M., & Perry, J. (2002). How do online students differ from lecture students? *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 6(10).

Dziuban, C.D., Hartman, J.L., Moskal, P.D., Sorg, S.E., & Truman-Davis, B. (2001). The payoff for systemic evaluation of university-wide distributed learning.

Education dept. to renew efforts to institute controversial rules. (2013, April 26). *Chronicle of Higher Education,* a25.

Enockson, J. (1997). *An assessment of an emerging technological delivery for distance education.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Northern Arizona University.

Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L., & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Estmond, D.V. (1998). *Adult learners and internet-based distance education.* New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 78, Jossey-Boss Publishers

Evans, T. (2009, January 1). An Investigative Study of Factors that Influence the Retention Rates in Online Programs at Selected State, State-Affiliated, and Private Universities. ProQuest LLC

Ezell, A. (2009). Recent developments with degree mills: accreditation mills and counterfeit diploma and transcript operations. *College and University*, 85(2), 40-45, 47-50.

Fozdar, B., & Kumar, L. S. (2007). Mobile Learning and Student Retention. *International Review Of Research In Open And Distance Learning*, 8(2), 1-18.

Garrett, R. (2010). *Overview of the U.S. adult higher education market*, Albuquerque, NM: Association for Continuing Higher Education.

Glover, K. (2005). Don't discredit my online degree. *Library Journal*, *130*(17), 39.

Graham, C., & Jones, N. (2011). Cognitive dissonance theory and distance education: faculty perceptions on the efficacy of the resistance to distance education. *International Journal of Business, Humanities & Technology*, 1(3), 212-227.

Graffam, J., Shinkfield, A., Smith, K., & Polzin, U. (2002). Factors that influence employer decisions in hiring and retaining an employee with a disability. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 17, 175-181.

Grijalva, T., Nowell, C., Kerkvliet, J. (2006). Academic honesty and online courses. *College Student Journal*, 40(10), 180. Retrieved from: http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=20522375&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Guba E. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Resources Information Center Annual Review Paper*, 29, 75-91.

Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*, Newbury Park: Sage.

Hattangdi, A., Jha, S., and Ghosh, A. (2010). A literature review of the perceptions of faculty about technology enabled distance education, *International Journal of Arts and Sciences,* 3(18), 379-390.

Haynie, D. (2013, July 1). What employers really think about your online bachelor's degree. *Daily News*. Retrieved from: http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/employers-online-degrees-article-1.1372092

Holmberg, B., & FernUniversitat, H. H. (1985). The Feasibility of a Theory of Teaching for Distance Education and a Proposed Theory. *ZIFF Papiere* 60.

Hyman, P. (2012). In the year of disruptive education. *Communications of the ACM*, *55*(12), 20-22. doi: 10.1145/2380656.2380664

LaMeres, B., Plumb, C. (2013). Comparing online to face-to-face delivery of undergraduate digital circuits content. *IEE Transactions on Education*. doi:10.1109/te.2013.2277031

Ledman, R. (2008). Comparing student learning in online and classroom formats of the same course. *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning*, 35, p.351-352.

Levernier, E. (2005). *An analysis of perceptions of online instruction by department chairs in the field of higher education administration.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Georgia Southern University.

Lewin, T. (2013, February 20). Universities abroad join partnerships on the web. *The New York Times*.

Lewin, T. (2013, August 17). Masters degree is new frontier of study online. *The New York Times.*

Linardopoulos, N. (2012). Employers perspectives of online education. *Campus -- Wide Information Systems*, 29(3), 189-194. doi:10.1108/10650741211243201

Long, C. (2013). The changing face of higher education: The future of the traditional university experience. Kennedy School Review, 13, p58-62.

Johanson, T.L. (1996). *The virtual community of an online classroom: Participant's interactions in a community college writing class by computer mediated communication.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Oregon State University.

Jung, I. (2001). Building a theoretical framework of web-based instruction in the context of distance education. *British Journal of Educational Technology.*32(5), 525-535

Kaczmarczyk, L. (2001). Accreditation and student assessment in distance education: Why we all need to pay attention. *Proc. 6th Conf. on Innovation and Technology in Computer Science Education*, Canterbury, UK, 113-116.

Keegan, D. (1994). *Otto Peters on Distance Education: The Industrialization of Teaching and Learning. Routledge Studies in Distance Education*.

Kennedy, K. & Nowak, S. & Raghoraman, R. & Thomas, J., Davis, S. F. (2000). Academic Dishonesty and Distance Learning: Student and Faculty Views. *College Student Journal*. Vol. 34, June. 309-314.

Kinneer, J. (2013). A comparison of health care recruiters' attitudes toward RN-to-BSN degrees based on instructional delivery method and college for-profit/nonprofit status. Indiana University of Pennsylvania, p.144.

Klaus, T. T., & Changchit, C. C. (2009). Online or traditional: a study to examine course characteristics contributing to students' preference for classroom settings. *International Journal Of Information And Communication Technology Education*, 5(3), 14-23.

Kohlemeyr, J., Seese, L., Sincich, T. (2011). Online versus traditional accounting degrees: perceptions of public accounting professionals. *Advances in Accounting Education*, 12, pp.139-165.

Kolowich, S. (2012). Who takes MOOCs?. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from: http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/06/05/early-demographic-data-hints-what-type-student-takes-mooc

Kolowich, S. (2013). MOOCs are largely reaching privileged learners, survey finds. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/moocs-are-reaching-only-privileged-learners-survey-finds/48567

McLean, C.H. (2004). A comparison of student persistence and performance in online and classroom business statistics experience. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, 2(1), 1-10.

Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M., & Jones, K. (2010). Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: a meta-analysis and review of online learning studies. *US Department of Education*. Washington, DC.

Melguizo, T., & Strober, M. (2007). Faculty salaries and the maximization of prestige. *Research in Higher Education*, *48*(6), 633-668.

Mgutshini, T. (2013). Online or not? A comparison of students' experiences of an online and an on-campus class. *Curationis* 36(1), p.1-7. doi:10.4102/curationis.v36i1.73

Mitchell, R. (2009). Ethics in an online environment. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 148, 63-70.

Mooney, C. (Ed.). (2010, November 5). Online learning: by the numbers. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, B28-B29.

Moore, M. (1973). Toward a Theory of Independent Learning and Teaching. *Journal Of Higher Education*, *44*(9), 661-679.

Moore, M. (2002). *Transactional Distance Theory*, Accessed on June 17, 2009 at http://cde.athabascau.ca/cmc/transactional.html

Moore, M. (2003). *From Chautauqua to the Virtual university: A century of distance education in the United States, information series 393.* ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage, London, New Delhi.

perception. (n.d.). *The American Heritage® Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved

from Dictionary.com website: http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/perception

Nelson, P.F. (2006). Student retention in online education at the community college. Retrieved

from ProQuest. (UMI 3222374).

New, J. (2013, March 8). Online courses could widen achievement gaps among different types of

students. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, a12.

Paden, R.R. (2006). A comparison of student achievement and retention in an introductory math

courses delivered in online, face-to-face and blended modalities. Retrieved from ProQuest.

(UMI 3237076).

Pappano, L. (2012, November 2). The year of the MOOC. *The New York Times*

Parker, K. (December 1, 2012). Online learning can be pricey. *San Antonio Express News*

Pina, A. (2010). *Online diploma mills: implications for legitimate distance education.* Distance

Education, 31(1), p.121-126.

Post, T. (2010). Some colleges charge higher tuition for online courses, *Minnesota Public Radio*

Poulin, R. (2012). Should online courses cost less? It just doesn't happen. *Adult College*

Completion Network.

Public Agenda (2013). Not yet sold: What employers and community college students think about

online education: A taking Stock Report from Public Agenda. Retrieved from:

http://www.publicagenda.org/files/NotYetSold_PublicAgenda_2013.pdf

Redpath, L. (2012). Confronting the bias against online learning in management education.

Academy of Management Learning and Education, 11(1), p.125-140.

Reeves, T., & Osho, G. (2010). The satisfaction of community college students regarding distance

    education versus traditional education. *National Forum of Applied Educational Research*

    Journal, 23(2), 1-18.

Reilly, R. (2013). Move over for MOOCs. *American Federation of Teachers*. Retrieved from:

    http://www.aft.org/newspubs/periodicals/oc/winter1314reilly.cfm

Ridley, D. R. & Husband, J. E. (1998). Online Education: A Study of Academic Rigor and

    Integrity. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*. 184-188.

Rivard, R. (2013). Measuring the MOOC dropout rate. *Inside Higher Ed*.

Rivera, L. (2012). Hiring as cultural matching: the case of elite professional service firms.

    American Sociological Review, 77(6), 999-1022. doi: 10.1177/0003122412463213

Roach, R. (2002). Staying connected: Getting retention right is high priority for online degree

    programs. *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 19(18), 22-25.

Roach, R. (2003).Survey Says Online Learning Equal to classroom instruction. *Black Issues in*

    Higher Education. *20(16)*, 44-46.

Robinson, R. (2013, March). Quality online programs are now the rule not the exception. *Media*

    Planet supplement for USA Today, 7, 2.

Rogers, C. (1951). *Client centered therapy: Its current practice, implications and theory.* London.

    Constable.

Rowe, N. (2004). Cheating in online student assessment: beyond plagiarism. *Online Journal of*

    Distance Learning Administration 7(2). Retrieved from:

    http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer72/rowe72.html

Russell, G. (2002). Ethical concerns about virtual schools. *Journal of Religious & Theological*

    Information, 5(1), 31-47.

Schaffhauser, D. (2014, January 21). Georgia Tech MOOC-based degree program trusn away

    nearly 2,000 applicants. *Campus Technology.* Retrieved from:

    http://campustechnology.com/articles/2014/01/21/georgia-tech-mooc-based-degree-

    program-turns-away-nearly-2000-applicants.aspx

Schmidt, S., Shelley, M., Van Wart, M., Clayton, J., & Schreck, E. (2000). The

    challenges to distance education in an academic social science discipline: The

    case of political science. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 8*(27), 1-17.

Schmidt, P. (2013). AAUP sees MOOCs as spawning new threats to professors intellectual

    property. *Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved* from:

    https://chronicle.com/article/article-content/139743/

Schwandt, T., Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (2007). Judging interpretations: But is it rigorous?

    Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation,*

    (114), 11-25. doi:10.1002/ev.223.

Schulte, M. (2010). Faculty perceptions of technology distance education transactions: qualitative

    outcomes to inform teaching practices. *The Journal of Educators Online,* 7(2), 1-34.

Sener, J. (2010). Why Online Education Will Attain Full Scale. *Journal Of Asynchronous*

    Learning Networks, *14*(4), 3-16.

Sharabi, M, Arian, O., & Simonovich, J. (2012). High-tech and public sectors employees'

    perception of factors influencing promotion. *International Journal of Business and Social*

    Science, 3(1).

Simplicio, J. (2007). A Closer look at the truth behind the hiring process: how colleges really hire.

    Education, *128*(2), 256-261.

Simonson, M. (2011). What diploma mills are not. *Distance Learning,* 8(2), 72-71.

Simonson, M., Schlosser, C., & Hanson, D. (1999). Theory and distance education: a new

    discussion. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, *13*(1), 1-10.

Stenstrom, D., Curtis, M., Iyer, R. (2013). School rankings, department rankings, and individual

    accomplishments: What factors predict obtaining employment after the PhD? *Perspectives*

    on Psychological Science, 8(2), 208-217. doi: 10.1177/1745691612474316

Tallent-Runnels, M., Thomas, J., Lan, W., & Cooper, S. (2006). Teaching Courses Online: A

    review of the Research. *Review of Educational Research*, *76(1)*, 93-126.

Tanner, J., Noser, T., & Totaro, M. (2009). Business faculty and undergraduate students'

    perceptions of online learning: a comparative study. *Journal of Information Systems*

    Education, 20(1), 29-40.

Trucano, M. (2013). Missing perspectives on MOOCs-Views from developing countries. *ICDE*.

    Retrieved from:

    http://www.icde.org/World+Bank+EduTech%3A+MOOCs+and+developing+countries.b7

    C_wJLG2t.ips

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2008). *Distance*

    Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions: 2006-07

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2011). *Doctor's degrees*

    conferred by degree-granting institutions, by field of stud. Retrieved from:

    http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=37

Waschull, S.B. (2001). The online delivery of psychology courses: attrition, performance, and

    evaluation. *Teaching of Psychology*, 28(20), 143-147.

Wecker, M. (2012, December 24). Online MBA students may face challenges with degree

    reputation. *US News* Retrieved from: http://www.usnews.com/education/online-

education/articles/2012/12/24/online-mba-students-may-face-challenges-with-degree-reputation?s_cid=DN_employers_worth

Wedemeyer, C. A. (1975). *Implications of Open Learning for Independent Study*.

Wellen, A. (2006). Degrees of acceptance. *New York Times* Retrieved from:

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/30/education/edlife/conted.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Wiggins, A. (2007). Exploring peer prestige in academic hiring networks. *Thesis University of Michigan*, 1-114.

The White House (July 14, 2009) *The American Graduation Initiative Press Release and Fact Sheet*. http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Excerpts-of-the-Presidents-remarks-in-Warren-Michigan-and-fact-sheet-on-the-American-Graduation-Initiative/

Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research design and methods fourth edition*. Sage Publishers.

Young, J. (2012). Online classes see cheating go high-tech. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: http://chronicle.com/article/Online-Classes-See-Cheating-Go/132093/

Young, A., & Lewis, C. (2008). Teacher education programs delivered at a distance: An examination of distance student perceptions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, p601-609.

APPENDECIES

Appendix A

Interview Questions
Hiring Process

a. Describe your role within the university such as length of employment, size of

   department/school, etc.

b. Can you describe what your role is in the candidate faculty search process and hiring

   process for full time residential faculty?

c. What information are faculty candidates required to submit to be considered?

d. Does the university have identifying factors within the candidate application process that

   would disqualify an applicant and if so could you identify what those factors may be?

e. Can you describe the typical interview questions you ask?

f. Can you describe the bearing that the school where the candidate completed their

   doctorate has on your hiring decision?

Experience with online education

a. How do you define online education and blended education?

b. Can you describe the experiences you have had related to online and blended courses and

   programs? (i.e. workshops, course work, teaching, required training)

c. Do you have concerns about online and/or blended degree programs and if so what are

   those concerns?

d. What do you think are the strengths of online education?

e. What type of future role do you see for online education in the United States?

Perceptions of degree completion method

a. What are your thoughts and feelings about faculty candidates that complete a doctorate in an online or blended program?

b. Given the choice between three faculty candidates that complete a doctorate degree one in a traditional face-to-face program, one in a blended program, and the other in an online program given that all other qualifications are the same who would you hire and why?

c. What degrees would you not be concerned about the method of doctoral degree completion and which degrees would you be concerned about and why?

d. What concerns do you have about the method of degree completion?

e. Have you ever hired someone with an online or blended degree?

    a. If you have hired someone with an online or blended degree how did they compare to faculty members with a traditional degree?

    b. Would you hire someone with an online or blended degree again?

f. Are there any other thoughts or concerns you would like to share about online and blended programs and if so what are they?

Appendix B

Perceptions of Online Education

This survey is a doctoral research study for the Higher Education Administration program in the College of Education at Union University. It is modeled from an instrument developed by Levernier (2005) who modified the original survey created by Schmidt, Shelley, Van Wart, Clayton, & Schreck (2000). In addition, modified questions from Adams and DeFleur's (2005) study where also included. This survey is structured to furnish information concerning perceptions of online education of Academic Deans and Division/Department Chairs.

The online collection system will provide complete anonymity as respondents will not be able to be identified by the researcher. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Your thoughtful consideration to each question is greatly appreciated.

Survey

For the purposes of this study, the term university refers to an institution of higher learning and the use of school/college refers to a Dean's particular school or college association; for example, the School of Education or College of Education. In addition, specific definitions of fully online, blended, Web-facilitated, and traditional courses/degree programs are defined below. The general term "online education," for the purpose of this survey, will refer to all forms of online education.

Definitions:
1. **Fully online course -** *For the purpose of this study, a fully online course is one in which the vast bulk of the content is delivered online with typically no face-to-face meetings.*
2. **Web-facilitated course -** *For the purpose of this study, a Web-facilitated course typically uses Web-based technologies like WebCT or Blackboard to post syllabi, course content, assignments, and student grades and may be used to deliver online tests.*
3. **Blended course –** *For the purpose of this study, a blended course is one in which a significant portion of content is delivered online, but some instruction is delivered through face-to-face meetings.*
4. **Traditional course -** *For the purpose of this study, a traditional course is one in which no online technology is used and content is delivered in writing or orally.*

Part I:

Directions:

If you are a Dean, please answer the questions regarding your college/school; however, if you are a Chair, please answer the questions regarding your division/department.

Questions:
1. How many *fully online* courses does your college/school or division/department offer?
   ( ) none
   ( ) less than five
   ( ) between 5-10
   ( ) between 11-15
   ( ) between 16-20
   ( ) between 21-25
   ( ) more than 25

2. How many **_blended_** courses does your college/school or division/department offer?
( ) none
( ) less than five
( ) between 5-10
( ) between 11-15
( ) between 16-20
( ) between 21-25
( ) more than 25

3. How many **_Web-facilitated_** courses does your college/school or division/department offer?
( ) none
( ) less than five
( ) between 5-10
( ) between 11-15
( ) between 16-20
( ) between 21-25
( ) more than 25

4. How many **_traditional_** courses does your college/school or division/department offer?
( ) less than 20
( ) between 21-30
( ) between 31-40
( ) between 41-50
( ) between 51-60
( ) more than 60

5. Do you offer a **_fully online_** degree program(s)?
( ) Yes
( ) No

6. If so, please check all **_fully online_** degree programs that your college/school or division/department offers:
( ) Bachelor's degree
( ) Master's degree
( ) Specialist's degree
( ) Doctoral degree

7. Do you offer a **_blended_** degree program(s)?
( ) Yes
( ) No

8. If so, please check all **_blended_** degree programs that your college/school or division/department offers:
( ) Bachelor's degree
( ) Master's degree
( ) Specialist's degree
( ) Doctoral degree

9. Do you offer a **_Web-facilitated_** degree program(s)?
( ) Yes
( ) No

10. If so, please check all _**Web-facilitated**_ degree programs that your college/school or division/department offers:

( ) Bachelor's degree
( ) Master's degree
( ) Specialist's degree
( ) Doctoral degree

Part II: Academic Administrators perceptions of online instruction

---

Section I: Perceptions of the prevalence, value, and legitimacy of online instruction
Directions: Please check the response that best describes your agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty with respect to each statement below.

SD = Strongly Disagree = 1   D =Disagree = 2   A = Agree = 3   SA =Strongly Agree = 4   U = Unsure = 0

		SD	D	A	SA	U
1.	Online education is largely an instructional "fad."	1	2	3	4	0
2.	The strength of online education is not in the medium, but in the way it is used.	1	2	3	4	0
3.	Online instruction cannibalizes existing courses, student enrollments, and faculty resources.	1	2	3	4	0
4.	Online instruction is not appropriate for educating and training students in people-oriented, people-driven fields such as educational administration.	1	2	3	4	0
5.	The benefits of using online instruction exceed the shortcomings.	1	2	3	4	0
6.	It is easy to do online education badly.	1	2	3	4	0

Section II: Perceptions of faculty members and student readiness and interest in participating in online education.
Directions: Please check the response that best describes your agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty with respect to each statement below.

SD = Strongly

Disagree = 1   D =Disagree = 2   A = Agree = 3   SA =Strongly Agree = 4   U = Unsure = 0

		SD	D	A	SA	U
7.	Faculty members in my college/school generally believe online education to be an instructional "fad."	1	2	3	4	0
8.	Students in my college/school show a stronger interest in completing their graduate degree programs online than in participating in programs largely delivered					

face-to-face.	1	2	3	4	0

9. Faculty members in my college/school are not ready to embrace online education.

	1	2	3	4	0

10. Faculty members in my college/school are not willing to embrace online education.

	1	2	3	4	0

11. I believe my college/school's culture can best be described as technology averse.

	1	2	3	4	0

12. The majority of students attending classes offered by my college/school are motivated to seek graduate degrees for career advancement and increased pay.

	1	2	3	4	0

Section III: Perception of congruence of online education with department's instructional mission
Directions: Please check the response that best describes your agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty with respect to each statement below.

SD = Strongly Disagree = 1   D =Disagree = 2   A = Agree = 3   SA =Strongly Agree = 4   U = Unsure = 0

	SD	D	A	SA	U
13. Using Web-facilitated instruction supports the instructional mission of my college/school more than using fully online instruction.	1	2	3	4	0
14. I believe that fully online education will play a significant role in my college/school's strategic plan over the next 3 years.	1	2	3	4	0
15. Fully online education should be a major component of my college/school's curricula.	1	2	3	4	0
16. I believe that fully online education will play a significant role in my college/school's long-term strategic plan.	1	2	3	4	0

Section IV: Perception equivalency of online instruction with face-to-face instruction.
Directions: Please check the response that best describes your agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty with respect to each statement below.

SD = Strongly Disag

ree = 1   D =Disagree = 2   A = Agree = 3   SA =Strongly Agree = 4   U = Unsure = 0

	SD	D	A	SA	U
17. Effective teaching is possible through online education.	1	2	3	4	0

18. Students can develop higher order critical thinking and analytical skills by participating in fully online and Web-facilitated education.   1   2   3   4   0

19. I believe learning outcomes of online education to be greater than traditional face-to-face learning outcomes.   1   2   3   4   0

20. Online students receive better grades than learners receiving the same instruction in a face-to-face instructional environment.   1   2   3   4   0

21. Online courses are less academically rigorous than face-to-face courses.   1   2   3   4   0

22. Online students receive equivalent grades to learners receiving the same instruction in a face-to-face environment, but learn at a lower level.   1   2   3   4   0

23. Assessing student integrity online is comparable to assessing student integrity in a face-to-face instructional environment.   1   2   3   4   0

24. Fully online, blended, and Web-facilitated instruction cannot equate to face-to-face instruction, even when delivered at its best.   1   2   3   4   0

25. It is important that faculty members' scholarly activities support what they teach in the classroom, regardless of instructional delivery mode.   1   2   3   4   0

Section V: Perception quality of online instruction with face-to-face instruction.
Directions: Please check the response that best describes your agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty with respect to each statement below.

SD = Strongly Disagree = 1   D =Disagree = 2   A = Agree = 3   SA =Strongly Agree = 4   U = Unsure = 0

	SD	D	A	SA	U
26. A quality education can best be delivered in a face-to-face instructional environment.	1	2	3	4	0
27. It is more difficult to succeed at online education than it is to fail.	1	2	3	4	0
28. Fully online instruction will improve the educational processes in my college/school.	1	2	3	4	0
29. Fully online instruction will improve the educational processes at my university.	1	2	3	4	0

30. Teaching effectiveness standards used to

evaluate faculty members who teach fully online
or Web-facilitated courses should be different from the
standards used to evaluate faculty members who
teach face-to-face courses.   1   2   3   4   0

31. Basic Web-based technologies (e.g. chat rooms,
discussion boards, posting of online course content,
grades, and assignments, and e-mail) can be used by
faculty members to effectively supplement face-to-
face instruction in my department.   1   2   3   4   0

32. Advanced Web-based technologies (e.g. streaming
video/audio lectures, field experience simulations,
and IP conferencing) can be used by faculty
members to effectively supplement face-to-face
instruction in my department.   1   2   3   4   0

Section VI: Perceptions of market forces and competition in higher education.
Directions: Please check the response that best describes your agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty with respect to each statement below.

SD = Strongly Disagree = 1   **D =Disagree = 2**   **A = Agree = 3**   **SA =Strongly Agree = 4**   **U = Unsure = 0**

	SD	D	A	SA	U
33. My college/school competes for the same students enrolled in graduate programs of education offered by for-profit online institutions.	1	2	3	4	0
34. I perceive traditional institutions offering educational administration degrees online to be "selling out" to consumer-driven interests.	1	2	3	4	0
35. Online education contributes to the de-skilling and de-professionalization of faculty members in my department.	1	2	3	4	0
36. Students choose to earn their graduate education degree from my department primarily because we maintain high academic standards and value academic integrity.	1	2	3	4	0

Section VII: Perceptions of academic administrators when hiring for a faculty position.
Directions: Please check the response that best describes your agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty with respect to each statement below.

SD = Strongly Disagree = 1   **D =Disagree = 2**   **A = Agree = 3**   **SA =Strongly Agree = 4**   **U = Unsure = 0**

	SD	D	A	SA	U

37. When hiring for a faculty position, I would choose a candidate with a doctorate completed in a traditional program from a traditional university over a candidate with an online doctorate from a traditional university.

	SD	D	A	SA	U
37.	1	2	3	4	0

38. When hiring for a faculty position, I would choose a candidate with a doctorate completed in a traditional program from a traditional university over a candidate with a blended doctorate from a traditional university.

	1	2	3	4	0

39. When hiring for a faculty position, I would choose a candidate with a doctorate completed in a traditional program from a traditional university over a candidate with a doctorate from an "online only" university.

	1	2	3	4	0

40. When hiring for a faculty position, I would choose a candidate with a doctorate earned in an online program offered by a traditional university over a candidate with a doctorate from an "online only" university.

	1	2	3	4	0

Additional Comments:

Part III: Demographics

Directions

Please check the appropriate response.

1. Student body size at your university.

Under 5,000	
5,000-10,000	
10,000-15,000	
15,000-20,000	

Over 20,000	

2. Number of faculty in your school/college or division/department.

2-6	
7-10	
11-15	
16-25	
26-35	
Over 35	

3. Choose one or more which best describes your university.

Public	
Private	
Research	
Liberal Arts	
Religious-Affiliated	

4. Highest Degree Offered at your university.

Bachelors	

Masters	
Specialist	
Doctorate	

5. Please indicate the school, college, division, or department in which you are an academic administrator.

Dean of the School/College of Arts and Science	
Dean of the School/College of Business	
Dean of the School/College Education	
Dean of the School/College of Arts	
Dean of the School/College of Science	
Chair of a Division/Department within Arts	
Chair of a Division/Department within Science	
Chair of the Division/Department of Business	
Chair of the Division/Department of Education	

Appendix C

Perceptions of Online Education

This survey is a doctoral research study for the Educational Leadership program in the School of Education at Liberty University University. It is modeled from an instrument developed by DePriest (2009) who modified it from Levernier (2005) who modified the original survey created by Schmidt, Shelley, Van Wart, Clayton, & Schreck (2000). In addition, modified questions from Adams and DeFleur's (2005) study were also included. This survey is structured to furnish demographic information.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Your thoughtful consideration to each question is greatly appreciated.

Survey

For the purposes of this study, the term university refers to an institution of higher learning and the use of school/college refers to a Dean's particular school or college association; for example, the School of Education or College of Education. In addition, specific definitions of fully online, blended, Web-facilitated, and traditional courses/degree programs are defined below. The general term "online education," for the purpose of this survey, will refer to all forms of online education.

Definitions:
4. **Fully online course -** *For the purpose of this study, a fully online course is one in which the vast bulk of the content is delivered online with typically no face-to-face meetings.*
5. **Web-facilitated course -** *For the purpose of this study, a Web-facilitated course typically uses Web-based technologies like WebCT or Blackboard to post syllabi, course content, assignments, and student grades and may be used to deliver online tests.*
6. **Blended course –** *For the purpose of this study, a blended course is one in which a significant portion of content is delivered online, but some instruction is delivered through face-to-face meetings.*
5. **Traditional course -** *For the purpose of this study, a traditional course is one in which no online technology is used and content is delivered in writing or orally.*

Part I:
Directions:

If you are a Dean, please answer the questions regarding your college/school; however, if you are a Chair, please answer the questions regarding your division/department.

Questions:
11. How many *__fully online__* courses does your college/school or division/department offer?
    ( ) none
    ( ) less than five
    ( ) between 5-10
    ( ) between 11-15
    ( ) between 16-20
    ( ) between 21-25
    ( ) more than 25

12. How many *__blended__* courses does your college/school or division/department offer?

( ) none
( ) less than five
( ) between 5-10
( ) between 11-15
( ) between 16-20
( ) between 21-25
( ) more than 25

13. How many *Web-facilitated* courses does your college/school or division/department offer?
( ) none
( ) less than five
( ) between 5-10
( ) between 11-15
( ) between 16-20
( ) between 21-25
( ) more than 25

14. How many *traditional* courses does your college/school or division/department offer?
( ) less than 20
( ) between 21-30
( ) between 31-40
( ) between 41-50
( ) between 51-60
( ) more than 60

15. Do you offer a *fully online* degree program(s)?
( ) Yes
( ) No

16. If so, please check all *fully online* degree programs that your college/school or division/department offers:
( ) Bachelor's degree
( ) Master's degree
( ) Specialist's degree
( ) Doctoral degree

17. Do you offer a *blended* degree program(s)?
( ) Yes
( ) No
18. If so, please check all *blended* degree programs that your college/school or division/department offers:
( ) Bachelor's degree
( ) Master's degree
( ) Specialist's degree
( ) Doctoral degree

19. Do you offer a *Web-facilitated* degree program(s)?
( ) Yes
( ) No

20. If so, please check all *Web-facilitated* degree programs that your college/school or division/department offers:

( ) Bachelor's degree
( ) Master's degree
( ) Specialist's degree
( ) Doctoral degree

Part II: Demographics

Directions

Please check the appropriate response.

6. Student body size at your university.

Under 5,000	
5,000-10,000	
10,000-15,000	
15,000-20,000	
Over 20,000	

7. Number of faculty in your school/college or division/department.

2-6	
7-10	
11-15	
16-25	
26-35	
Over 35	

8. Choose one or more which best describes your university.

Public	
Private	
Research	

Liberal Arts	
Religious-Affiliated	

9. Highest Degree Offered at your university.

Bachelors	
Masters	
Specialist	
Doctorate	

10. Please indicate the school, college, division, or department in which you are an academic administrator.

Dean of the School/College of Arts and Science	
Dean of the School/College of Business	
Dean of the School/College Education	
Dean of the School/College of Arts	
Dean of the School/College of Science	
Chair of a Division/Department within Arts	
Chair of a Division/Department within Science	
Chair of the Division/Department of Business	
Chair of the Division/Department of Education	

Appendix D

Participant Letter Request

Date

Participant Information

Greetings

I am a doctoral student from Liberty University writing my dissertation titled *"University administrators' perception of online and blended doctorate degrees"* under the direction of my dissertation committee and with approval from the IRB and my chair Dr. Vance Pickard.

I am writing to request your participation in this research study. This study can benefit people who are considering a terminal degree for the purpose of obtaining a faculty position. By knowing the current perceptions of administrators future faculty candidates can make more informed decisions about the method of degree completion and the institution they choose. The study will also be able to help universities decided whether a program should be offered residentially, blended, or completely online. Studies have been completed on the acceptability of online doctoral degrees for employment in business but there has been little research on the topic from the health and education side.

If you agree to be in this study, you would be asked to:
1. Agree to have conversations digital recorded.
    > *Once the conversation has been coded and transcribed the digital recording will be deleted. No references to your identity will be shared throughout the process and you will able to read the transcripts of the conversation if you chose to.*
2. Completed the demographic survey provided which should only take 5-15 minutes prior to the interview.
3. Share your perceptions of how online and blended doctorate degrees may influence your hiring decisions. The interview is estimated to take no more than one hour.
4. If additional information is required to completely understand the hiring process within your organization, additional supportive documentation may be requested from you including:
    a. copies of questions typically used to ask faculty candidates;
    b. forms used to evaluate faculty candidates;
    c. and professional development/continuing education policy if available.

    > *This documentation would only be used to assist the researcher in the transcription and will not be shared with outside organizations. No identifying information will be included in the transcription. All documents will be destroyed at the completion of the research.*

If you would like to participate in this study please let me know by e-mail or phone and we can make arrangements to meet in person at your convenience or by video chat using Skype.

Thank You,

Ashley Hudson
Doctoral Candidate

1971 University Blvd
Lynchburg VA 24502
aahudson@liberty.edu
434-592-6163

Appendix E

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTION OF ONLINE AND BLENDED
DOCTORATE DEGREES

Ashley A. Hudson
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of university administrators' perception of online and blended doctorate degrees. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a chairperson or dean within a school/department of health sciences or school/department of education. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Ashley Hudson, doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to discover current perceptions of administrators about online and blended doctorate degrees. In particularly their perceptions of faculty candidates who have earned an online or blended doctorate degrees. Research questions that will be answered relate to perceptions of online and blended degrees, the influence of the institution the degree was earned at, and the method of degree completion.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you would be asked to:
1. Agree to have conversations digital recorded.
   > *Once the conversation has been coded and transcribed the digital recording will be deleted. No references to your identity will be shared throughout the process and you will able to read the transcripts of the conversation if you chose to.*
2. Completed the demographic survey provided which should only take 5-15 minutes prior to the interview.
3. Share your perceptions of how online and blended doctorate degrees may influence your hiring decisions. The interview is estimated to take no more than one hour.
4. If additional information is required to completely understand the hiring process within your organization, additional supportive documentation may be requested from you including:
   a. copies of questions typically used to ask faculty candidates;
   b. forms used to evaluate faculty candidates;
   c. and professional development/continuing education policy if available.

   This documentation would only be used to assist the researcher in the transcription and will not be shared with outside organizations. No identifying information will be included in the transcription. All documents will be destroyed at the completion of the research.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has several risks: which includes the possibility of readers discovering who the participants are based on the limited number of institutions in Virginia that offer health and education majors or general statements summarized with the research. The researcher agrees to do all things within her power to eliminate the possibility of discovery through thorough vetting of transcribed records and documentation to shield participants for identification. Participants will be able to review the transcriptions of their interviews while the research is being collected.

The risks are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation are a copy of the study once it is completed. This study can benefit people who are considering a terminal degree for the purpose of obtaining a faculty position. By knowing the current perceptions of administrators future faculty candidates can make more informed decisions about the method of degree completion and the institution they choose.

Compensation:

You will not receive compensation but an electronic copy of the completed dissertation will be provided for you.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

The data will be stored on a secure password protected computer within a password protected folder. The digital recording device will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researchers desk with is located in a locked office. As stated above no identifying information will be included in the transcription nor will any documentation provided be used or seen by outside organizations.

Voluntary Nature of the Study and Withdrawal:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. If you withdraw from the study all information collected related to your participation will be deleted/destroyed. To withdrawal from the study contact the researcher in writing by letter or e-mail.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Ashley Hudson under the supervision of Dr. Vance Pickard. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Ashley Hudson at: 434-592-6163 or aahudson@liberty.edu or Dr. Vance Pickard at 434-592-3762 or vpickard@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ By checking this box I agree to have my voice recorded during the interview portion of this research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

IRB Code Numbers:

IRB Expiration Date: