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NONTRADITIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THEIR
TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

by

Christopher Ihesiaba Nnoduechi

A dissertation submitted to the
Department of Leadership, School Counseling, and Sport Management
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is deservedly dedicated to the following:

Mom & Dad

The church of Christ

My wife, Crystal Lynnette Nnoduechi

My mother, Peninah Nnenna Nnoduechi

My siblings, Obi, Jossy, Ngozi, and Ugo

Dr. Christopher Okafor (rest in peace)

My friends, Acie Sanders and

Michelle C. Sanders

El Shaddai

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Soli Deo Gloria!—To God alone be the glory!

The doctoral program was a wilderness journey; the dissertation, the Red Sea. Completing the dissertation was a test of resilience, a refining of my reliance on God. Numerous humbling experiences provided opportunity for refinement of character. Lessons learned include becoming comfortable with my challenges and being comforted by the successes. Through confounding experiences, God demonstrated himself *Jehovah-Rohi*, the Lord my Shepherd.

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Gloria in excelsis Deo.

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ABSTRACT

This retrospective, nonexperimental, quantitative study was designed to explore nontraditional students' perceptions of satisfaction with their graduate education experience in a customized transnational educational context. This study was undergirded by theories and concepts gleaned from multiple disciplines. Disconfirmed expectations theory of consumer satisfaction derived from expectancy theory, which describes the motivations and behaviors of consumers who purchase a service but cannot fully evaluate the service until it has been consumed, provided the overarching conceptual framework for the research.

This research analyzed data from 62 graduates of a customized, transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership. Participants responded to a quantitative instrument that contained 18 questions related to various aspects of the respondents' educational experience. The qualitative component involved responding to six open-ended questions.

Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted on the quantitative data. The analyses performed include frequency distributions, means and standard deviations, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, and a correlation matrix for the dependent and independent variables and for the six subcategories. To examine whether differences in satisfaction with specified aspects of the program were reflected in differences in subscale satisfaction, *t* tests were also conducted. Conventional content analysis was employed to analyze qualitative data. Statistical analyses indicated that participants were satisfied with every aspect of their educational experience.

This empirical study contributes to the knowledge bank of student satisfaction in a transnational context. When the particular and peculiar needs of nontraditional learners are considered when designing graduate level programs, institutional accommodations are provided, courses that are relevant to students' needs are taught by instructors with relevant andragogical skills, the appropriate support systems are in place, and the overall goal is to provide education that is relevant to the personal and career goals of the students, students will be satisfied with their educational experience.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

These are the days of constancy of change. Higher education continues to be reshaped by a multitude of forces. These include but are not limited to (a) the unrelenting forces of globalization—“the broad economic, technological, and scientific trends that directly affect higher education and are largely inevitable in the contemporary world” (Altbach, 2006, p. 123)—and (b) the unceasing demands of internationalization—“the variety of policies and programs that universities and governments implement to respond to globalization” (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009, p. iv). The implications are many and diverse for all stakeholders, especially for higher education leaders and administrators. Constancy of change is one of the major implications. Change heralds challenges. Expansion of knowledge bases is critical in meeting the challenges. The present study contributes to the knowledge base necessary to address the complex diverse needs and complex expectations of nontraditional graduate students in transnational settings by examining factors that affect their satisfaction.

Background to the Problem

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) now operate in a globalized and internationalized landscape. One major outcome of globalization and consequent internationalization of higher education is the increase in cross-border education, which in a broad sense involves, among other things, sending students to study abroad, sending faculty to teach abroad, setting up satellite campuses overseas, or engaging in other forms of interinstitutional partnership (Knight, 2007). Law (2010) noted that globalization has “provided a rationale for restructuring the postsecondary

education systems worldwide, mainly to meet the need for a workforce that is equipped with not only the traditional discipline knowledge and skills, but also a broad range of generic capabilities” (p. 64).

The demand for higher education and professional certification is increasing globally, challenging the capacity of the public sector to meet this critical need. To meet this challenge, new types of educational providers have emerged, giving rise to cross-border education (Knight, 2006). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) observed in a position paper that cross-border education has initiated and sustained an educational milieu where “nation-states are no longer the sole providers of higher education and the academic community no longer holds the monopoly on decision-making in education” (UNESCO, 2004, p. 6). Cross-border education has ushered in diversity of educational providers and a variety of stakeholders. The phenomenon of transnational education—an outgrowth of cross-border education in which the learners are based in a nation different from the one where the awarding institution is located (UNESCO-CEPES and Council of Europe, 2001)—is critical in the study of higher education in a global and globalizing era.

The TNE phenomenon has affected both the conceptualization and delivery of higher education. McBurnie and Ziguras (2001) asserted that the study of higher education is now firmly contextualized in the globalization of trade in goods and services (p. 85). Varghese (2009) noted that the “number of students pursuing studies in domestic and private institutions has increased and, in cross-border institutions, it has almost doubled to 2.7 million in the last decade” (p. 9). Varghese (2009) also argued that “higher education in the context of globalization has become a market-determined process, replacing the near monopoly position previously enjoyed by the state” (p. 9). The transnational nature of higher education increases

the need for more international educational partnerships as the student population diversifies and the competition among institutions for well-qualified students intensifies (Hadfield, 2003). In addition, concern for quality of learning and teaching increases both globally and locally. Providers of higher education continue to explore and devise ways to satisfy the increasingly complicated needs of their diverse student populations while ensuring quality of educational services. Assessment of students' satisfaction with their educational experience becomes not only a necessity but an imperative.

In the United States, IHEs have to compete in what Bruininks, Keeney, and Thorp (2010) have conceptualized as the “new normal” (p. 113). This encompasses (a) changing demographics, (b) changes in spending priorities, and (c) increased and increasing demand for accountability and increasing competition. Several years prior to the present study, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings established the Spellings Commission to “consider how best to improve our system of higher education to ensure that our graduates are well prepared to meet our future workforce needs and are able to participate fully in the changing economy” (U. S. Department of Education, 2006, p. 30). The Spellings Commission noted that “the continued ability of American postsecondary institutions to produce informed and skilled citizens who are able to lead and compete in the 21st-century global marketplace may soon be in question” (U. S. Department of Education, 2006, p. 29). To ensure America's continued leadership in higher education, the Spellings Commission recommended cultivating a culture of accountability and transparency with new systems of data measurement and publicly available information databases to compare higher education institutional information. The Spellings Commission recommended increased focus on student learning, continuous innovation and quality improvement, and development of more strategies for lifelong learning (U.S. Department of Education , 2006). These

recommendations underscored the need to incorporate students' and/or alumni perspectives in the innovation and quality improvement process. Assessing student satisfaction is a way of eliciting this critical feedback.

The present study was aimed at adding to the knowledge base of higher education, especially higher education delivered in transnational contexts. In this study, I investigated the perceptions of satisfaction by graduates of a customized transnational graduate program designed to provide continuing education opportunities for administrators and educators in an emerging nation. In the study, I focused on graduates' perceptions of satisfaction along selected dimensions of Flint and Associates' eight principles of effectiveness for serving adult learners (Flint & Associates, 1999). In the study, I focused on the evaluation of nontraditional student perceptions of satisfaction in terms of personal experience, program content, and perceived impact on personal life and professional career.

Statement of the Problem

The University of North Florida (UNF) Master of Education degree program in Belize, Central America, merits an empirical study because of its uniqueness. It was a partnership between an institution in a developed nation and one in an emerging nation. Though now defunct, it was the first master's degree program to be offered on-site in Belize. The program was designed to increase the intellectual assets of a developing nation and improve its workforce. It had a unique design and delivery method, which offered participants high-quality education at comparatively low cost and was designed to equip them with current theories and practices in education and educational administration without dislocating them from their own educational and cultural milieu. Despite the presumed benefits of the UNF Master of Education degree program in Belize, there has been no formal assessment of the satisfaction of the alumni with

their educational experiences and outcomes. As a result, UNF and other institutions considering similar graduate level partnership programs in developing nations do not have sufficient information concerning the perceptions of satisfaction of students with this type of program. Because this program is now defunct and many of the program graduates are far along in their careers, there is a need to elicit the participants' perceptions of satisfaction with the program.

An additional problem is the lack of sufficient research examining the satisfaction of international graduate students in educational leadership programs. Educational leadership development seems critical to educational outcomes, especially because of the crucial roles school leaders play in setting direction and providing the context for successful schools. Little empirical evidence exists to support what seems to be a general consensus among educational scholars and practitioners that effective educational leadership preparation programs are research based, employ cohort groupings and mentors, provide experiential training in authentic settings, and are structured to enable collaboration between the program and area institutions (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

The present study contributed to general academic knowledge in nontraditional education, leadership development, and human capacity building. Because the UNF Master of Education program was designed to prepare participants to become more effective educators and educational leaders and provide them with the knowledge required to improve their skills and advance their careers (Smith, Flinchum, Mahung, & Stone, 1997), in this study I examined the extent to which these goals were met. I also evaluated the perceptions of the graduates relative to how their behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes have been shaped by their program experiences.

Because of insufficient prior research, a need existed and still exists for a study investigating the requirements and satisfaction levels of the growing population of nontraditional

learners in transnational graduate education programs. Serving the needs of adult learners has become a high priority for IHEs. Assessing the satisfaction of adult learners with their educational experience is necessary for institutions to develop and implement programs appropriate for the learning styles and objectives of adult learners. According to Noel-Levitz & Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL, 2009):

Satisfaction assessment enables institutions to strategically and tactically target areas most in need of immediate improvement. It facilitates the development of planning and intervention priorities specific to adult learners, and it helps institutions examine student transactions with all major aspects of their experience, including academic, registration, and customer service. (p. 1)

Moreover, assessing adult learners' satisfaction with their educational experience provides insight into the unique strengths and challenges faced by IHEs, which can assist administrators with improving programs. The information is useful for administrators and faculty when designing educational programs to improve the fit between student expectations and experiences, thereby increasing satisfaction.

Student satisfaction is a critical indicator of educational program effectiveness, efficacy, and impact (Jalali, Islam, & Ariffin, 2011; Law, 2010; Lo, 2010). As the *2009 National Adult Student Priorities Report* (Noel-Levitz & CAEL, 2009) indicated,

Satisfaction assessment enables institutions to strategically and tactically target areas most in need of immediate improvement. It facilitates the development of planning and intervention priorities specific to adult learners and it helps institutions examine student transactions with all major aspects of their experience, including academic, registration, and customer service. (p. 2)

IHEs are placing greater emphasis on student expectations and satisfaction (Goho & Blackman, 2009; Law, 2010). Relative to the importance of student satisfaction in assessing educational program effectiveness, Astin (1993) suggested that student satisfaction is perhaps the key to assessing education outcome.

Student satisfaction has positive impacts on key issues such as student recruitment, motivation, and retention (Elliot & Shin, 2002; Thomas & Galambos, 2004; Tinto, 1993). Even though student satisfaction is a complex concept influenced by multiple societal, institutional, and personal factors, it is still considered a relevant tool for assessing educational quality and is very useful to institutions in ascertaining and understanding student experiences as well as for assessing overall quality (Goho & Blackman, 2009; Noel-Levitz & CAEL, 2009; Thomas & Galambos, 2004). Study of student satisfaction is especially warranted to maintain the ability of institutions of higher learning to attract international and domestic students.

Furthermore, student satisfaction is crucial in an era characterized by transformations in conceptualization and delivery of higher education. The specific program investigated in the present research is noteworthy in many ways. It was a cross-border program in conception and execution, involving collaboration between institutions in two different nations. It required a specially designed program of study to meet the particular and unique needs of the students. It also involved employing faculty from two different nations in the delivery of instruction. Therefore, the special nature of this program warranted investigation of the graduates' perception of its effectiveness and relevance through an examination of their satisfaction. Furthermore, it is important to investigate program effectiveness and relevance, given the ongoing transformations in the higher education milieu. Issues of program relevance, effectiveness, and quality in higher education are critical for student satisfaction, given the increased globalization of higher education.

One important consequence of the unprecedented transformations in the global higher education milieu is *massification*, a term referring to mass access to higher education (Altbach et al., 2009). As Guri-Rosenblit, Sebkova, and Teichler (2007) noted, one of the defining features

of the late 20th and early 21st centuries is the rapid expansion of higher education across all continents. At the beginning of the 20th century only about 500,000 students were enrolled in higher education institutions throughout the world, whereas by 2000, about 100 million students were enrolled in institutions of higher learning (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). This unprecedented surge was initiated by several converging forces and has caused IHEs to deal with the demand for expanded infrastructure and expanded teaching corps. The increase in student enrollment has also increased competition to attract students, with IHEs adopting methods used in commercial enterprises to develop and maintain competitive advantages. More students are competing for limited spaces at universities in many countries. In addition, increased competition for status and ranking among universities has implications for funding from both government and private sources (Altbach et al., 2009; Bjarnason et al., 2009). With the challenges and consequences of meeting the increasing demands of massification of higher education, evaluation of graduates' perception of their educational experience has become even more critical.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this retrospective, nonexperimental, quantitative study was to investigate satisfaction with education experience among a population of international graduate students in an educational leadership program offered by a partnership between an IHE in America and an IHE in Belize. The present research was a process of scientific inquiry that included two kinds of data: quantitative and qualitative. I employed quantitative data obtained from a survey of graduates of the UNF Master of Education program in Belize to determine the relationships between (a) each of the independent variables—accommodations, course work, instructors, support systems, career goals, and personal goals—and (b) the dependent variable of satisfaction with the program. In the qualitative component of the study, I used data obtained using an open-

ended qualitative survey to assess the satisfaction of the graduates with the program, with particular emphasis on the impact of the program on their personal lives and professional careers.

Conceptualizing Adult Learner and Satisfaction

Assessing adult learners' perceptions of satisfaction with their educational experiences requires developing the concept of the adult learner and satisfaction. The terms *adult student* (Kasworm, 2003), *adult learner* (Knowles, 1968), and *nontraditional student* (Justice & Dornan, 2001) tend to be used interchangeably in the literature. These terms are employed interchangeably in this study to refer to the same general category of student. Although there may be a generalized understanding of the term *adult learner*, its definition differs among scholars, educators, and policy makers. Various organizations and government agencies committed to the support of adult learners and to the promotion of adult learners' interests employ different definitions, as do IHEs. This diversity of perspectives adds to the variety of definitions and also the richness of research in adult education. As the demographic composition of students in higher education continues to change and IHEs, associations, and businesses establish programs to support an adult student population, the definition of the term *adult learner* will continue to change.

Aslanian (2001) defined an adult learner expansively: someone over 25 years of age who has full-time employment and a family and who is primarily motivated to attend school for career and personal reasons. Voorhees and Lingenfelter (2003) defined an adult learner as someone who is 25 years or older and involved in postsecondary education. The National Center for Education Statistics (2002) offered an encompassing definition of the adult learner. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, nontraditional students exhibit one or more of seven characteristics: delayed enrollment into postsecondary education, part-time

attendance, financial independence from parents, full-time employment while enrolled, dependents other than a spouse, a tendency to be a single parent, and lack of a standard high school diploma.

Defining adult learners using both chronological age as well as various other factors provides a more comprehensive view of this student demographic that is increasingly critical for IHE enrollment. The defining characteristics of adult learners support the need for segmentation of the student population when assessing educational outcomes to ensure that an institution can obtain data concerning the needs and satisfaction of this important student group. In attempting to conceptualize the adult learner in the context of postsecondary education, Pusser et al. (2007) suggested that institutional leaders should “view the adult learner as a diverse set of individuals with distinctive demographics, social locations, aspirations, and levels of preparation” (p. 4). This observation conforms to the widely accepted view of adult learners as a student group with unique needs and diverse aspirations and motivations. According to Kasworm (2005), conceptualizing adult learners is critical in satisfying their diverse needs.

The notion of student satisfaction has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. Elliott and Shin (2002) defined student satisfaction as “a student’s subjective evaluation of the various outcomes and experiences with education and campus life” (p.198). Sometimes scholars characterize student satisfaction as a key outcome of higher education (Astin, 1993; Hirschberg & Lye, 2010; Sanders & Chan, 1996). Other times scholars view it as an ever-present campus variable (Astin, 1993; Sanders & Chan, 1996). For example, Harvey, Plimmer, Moon, and Geall (1997) described satisfaction as a “quality enhancement tool designed to improve the quality of the *student* experience” (p. 3). Administrators at IHEs employ data from student-satisfaction studies to better understand students’ needs and expectations, improve and change institutional

services, and create a more conducive environment for student development. Therefore, student satisfaction provides an indication of institutional responsiveness to students' needs and functions as a measure of institutional effectiveness and vitality (Malik, Danish, & Usman, 2010; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996).

As Bond and King (2003) noted, evaluating a complex system such as a school, even when focusing on one aspect of the system, is a very challenging task. This is compounded by the fact that teaching is a unique kind of service, an intangible that consists of performances and actions rather than objects, making it difficult for consumers to fully comprehend (Al Khattab & Fraij, 2011). An evaluative measure that many scholars tend to consider is student satisfaction with their educational experiences. Satisfaction, which is relative, involves a perception that a given program has met its goals or that a given service, product, or experience has met the expectations of the consumer of the service. Education may be conceived as a product and the students as the consumers. Desai, Damewood, and Jones (2001) argued that teaching in a "higher educational setting is analogous to service delivery in the business sector. Students, as consumers of professorial output, have needs and wants, which, if better understood, should result in an improved educational experience" (p. 136).

Proceeding from the assumption that a university is a service rather than a physical product, the marketing services literature has been used to evaluate how universities are serving their customers. Engelland, Workman, and Sing (2000) applied the service quality (SERVQUAL) instrument developed by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990) to evaluate the campus career services. Conversely, some scholars have criticized the students-as-customers paradigm. For example, Clayson and Haley (2005) discussed the harm that treating students as customers could create. Other scholars have conceptualized students as both customers and

products. Obermiller, Fleenor, and Raven (2005) developed a description of two perspectives: “students as customers” and “students as products.” Muncy (2008) argued that there are times when adopting a students-as-customers approach can benefit both the students and the universities and times when it can hurt them. The concept of students-as-customers remains controversial.

Although the consumer-oriented view of education remains controversial, the competitive and dynamic nature of higher education and the demands for quality assurance and accountability in higher education justify the central concern of IHEs with student satisfaction (Elliott & Shin, 2002). The changing demographics of higher education has warranted continued evaluation of the services offered by IHEs. The steady rise in adult student population has highlighted interest regarding recruitment, retention, and meeting the needs of this nontraditional group (Boylston, Peters, & Lacey, 2004).

The study was undergirded by theories and concepts from multiple disciplines. These concepts and frameworks span adult learning theories, service quality, and globalization. The multidisciplinary approach is warranted based on the assumption that adult learners, especially learners in transnational contexts, have unique needs and learning styles and bring varying expectations to their learning environments. Meeting their needs requires a better understanding of their different expectations, unique experiences, and varying learning styles, to support the use of appropriate andragogical instructional approaches.

Investigating adult learners’ perceptions of satisfaction with their educational experiences requires employing a set of organizing principles that are elastic enough to accommodate and connect the different factors involved in meeting the unique needs and varying expectations of this population. The principles for servicing adult learners developed by Council for Adult and

Experiential Learning (CAEL) provide a general framework for organizing the needs of the adult learner and suggestions for meeting the needs (Flint & Associates, 1999). The eight principles outlined in the framework are outreach, life and career planning, financing, assessment of learning outcomes, learning process, student support systems, technology, and strategic partnerships (Flint, Zakos, & Frey, 2002). The major assumption underlying these principles is that meeting the unique needs of the adult learners will lead to their satisfaction with their educational experiences. Meeting the adult learners' needs, however, does not guarantee satisfaction, because intervening variables such as availability of posteducation employment and personal characteristics may significantly impact the program graduates' perceptions of satisfaction.

Research Questions

The Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners, as defined by CAEL (Flint & Associates, 1999), undergird the research questions for this study. The two main research questions are as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of the graduates of a customized transnational Master of Education program of their education experience in terms of their satisfaction with their educational experience?
2. To what extent are the perceived levels of satisfaction with the educational experience related to the following variables: (a) institutional accommodations, (b) course work that is relevant, (c) instructors who are knowledgeable in teaching adult students, (d) support systems to help with the educational process, (e) achievement of career goals, and (f) achievement of personal goals?

UNF and University of Belize Bilateral Cooperation

Because it includes an investigation of the perception of satisfaction of the graduates of this customized transnational program, the study has significance for bilateral cooperation in education. A significant bilateral educational cooperation program aimed at developing intellectual capacity existed between UNF and the University of Belize (UB), Belize, Central America. In the summer of 1996, UNF initiated a program that provided Belizeans with a unique opportunity to earn a Master of Education degree on-site in Belize. This was the first master's degree to be offered on-site in Belize. The program was designed to serve the needs of secondary school principals and practicing educators who desired to improve their teaching skills and of other educational professionals needing to complete a master's degree. This program has produced numerous alumni who work in the Belize education system (Smith, Flinchum, Mahung, & Stone, 1997).

This program merits close investigation because of its special nature. It was a customized program designed to meet the unique needs of Belizean educational administrators and educators. It offered Belizeans the opportunity to earn an advanced degree in education, thereby enriching their intellectual capacities and professional skills. In addition, it offered UNF faculty opportunities to develop their multicultural and global perspectives (Smith et al., 1997). Writing on the first phase of the program, taking place between 1996 and 1998, Smith et al. (1997) noted that the plan and design of the program “merits special consideration by other IHEs that seek to develop similar programs” (p. 95).

The program was offered by UNF, which was the degree-granting institution, through UB. Students who desired to take the credits leading to the degree had to fulfill the requirement through UNF or through another accredited university in the United States. UNF retained

control of course offerings, ensured that all course work met the same standards as maintained on its Florida campus, and made admissions decisions regarding matriculation. UB identified qualified candidates from secondary school principals and other educational professionals and made provisions for classrooms, computer laboratories, and office spaces needed for program coordination and instructional delivery. UNF employed a coordinator to act as liaison between UNF and UB. By offering the program on-site in Belize, the creators of this method of program design and delivery considered the unique needs of students from a developing country who may otherwise not have been able to afford the high cost of graduate education in the United States. The students were held to the same standards required of students in Florida. They were exposed to current thoughts and practices in education and educational administration while receiving instruction in their home area. UNF faculty were exposed to multicultural and global experiences.

In this study, I investigated perceptions of the graduates of this program of their education experience, especially as the program affected their personal lives and professional careers. The investigation included examining their perceived levels of satisfaction with the educational services they received.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following operational definitions were employed.

Adult learner and *nontraditional learners* are terms used interchangeably in this study.

The terms are defined expansively as someone over 25 years of age who has full-time employment and a family and who is primarily motivated to attend school for career and personal reasons (Aslanian, 2001).

Andragogy denotes a theory of adult learning based on the assumption that adults are self-directed, motivated, and reflective learners (Knowles, 1978).

Constructivism denotes learner-centered educational theory that posits that each learner must construct his or her own understanding by tying new information to prior experiences.

Cross-border education is used in a broad sense to encompass among other things, sending students to study abroad, sending faculty to teach abroad, setting up satellite campuses overseas, or engaging in some other forms of interinstitutional partnership (Knight, 2007). *Cross-border education* and *transnational education* are used interchangeably in the current study.

Educational leader denotes anyone possessing an advanced degree in education and in a position of responsibility for setting goals of educational institutions.

Globalization is used in this study to refer to “the broad economic, technological, and scientific trends that directly affect higher education” (Altbach, 2006, p. 123).

Leadership denotes the process of influencing others to achieve the goals and objectives established by the leader (Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006).

Leadership development denotes the acquisition of the skills and capabilities through formal and informal training necessary to lead effectively in different roles and contexts (Chemers, 2000).

The phrase *leadership preparation programs* denotes university-based degree programs preparing individuals for positions of leadership in various fields, including education (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007).

Transnational education (TNE) refers to outgrowth of cross-border education in which the learners are based in a nation different from the one where the awarding institution is located (UNESCO-CEPES & Council of Europe, 2001).

Summary of Methodology

The study was a retrospective, nonexperimental study that utilized both quantitative and qualitative data. A written survey questionnaire was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Collection of qualitative data within the context of a primarily quantitative study was warranted because quantitative data alone would not provide a comprehensive answer to or a richer understanding of the research questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Both the quantitative and qualitative data were collected from a convenience sample of graduates of the UNF Master of Education program in Belize (n = 62). A slightly modified form of a questionnaire developed by Sum, McKaskey, and Kyeayne (2010) for assessing satisfaction among graduate students was used to obtain data for the quantitative phase of the study. The qualitative phase of the study employed descriptive survey instrument to collect narrative data. Narrative data were analyzed using content analysis.

Significance of the Research

The study may benefit administrators of the UNF–Belize program as well as other administrators considering similar international programs. Sparse evaluative research exists on this special program; the present study partially remedied the deficiency. The perceptions of the graduates of UNF–Belize program have not been formally evaluated since the inception of the program. This study provided data concerning the graduates' perceptions of program effectiveness, as measured through their attainment of career goals. The study helped fill in gaps in knowledge of the constituent elements of an effective leadership graduate program, especially

in the international context. The perceptions of effectiveness of education programs by the graduates, as measured in terms of their perceived preparedness in meeting the challenges of their jobs and in achieving their professional goals, are critical for determining the effectiveness of any given program.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study was delimited to graduates of the UNF–UB Master of Education program who are Belizean nationals. This delimitation was necessary to reduce the effect of confounding variables on the findings of the study. The inclusion of graduate students of a nationality other than the Belizean could introduce personal or cultural variables that could influence the findings. Also, the study was delimited to alumni who participated in the UNF–UB master’s degree program between 2000 and 2010.

Effects of educational programs are difficult to study and studies of program effects have inherent limitations. Data concerning the perceptions of graduates of the UNF–UB program were obtained from self-reporting instruments. As a result, the information provided by the respondents in the study could be inaccurate or incomplete, with testing and social desirability biases possibly influencing responses.

A major limitation of the study was that factors other than the training received in the UNF–UB program may have impacted the skills of the graduates. Some of the graduates have obtained more advanced degrees (e.g., doctoral degrees) and/or received other training that might have influenced their effectiveness as educational leaders, thereby affecting their personal and professional lives. Additionally, employment of a structured, written questionnaire was a limitation because of the restrictive nature of the instrument and the tendency to yield terse responses.

Another limitation was the difficulty with generalizing the findings of the study to a larger population because the research examined only a single population of UNF–UB educational program graduates: a special group within that population that attended an alumni event and were willing to complete the questionnaire. Those who attended may be those who are most satisfied.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the rationale for this study and its significance for adding to the knowledge base on adult learners' satisfaction in the context of transnational higher education. A statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions to be answered, and the limitations and delimitations of the study were introduced. Also included were the significance of the study and the operational definition of specialized terms employed in the study.

Chapter II presents a review of related relevant conceptual and empirical literature. The theoretical framework for the study and gaps in literature are also presented. Chapter III presents the current study's overall research design, including the epistemological grounding, research methodologies, setting, participants, data collection, and data analysis protocol. Chapter IV presents and discusses the results from the analysis of the data. Chapter IV also provides a more thorough description of data collection and specific types of instruction received by the participants. Chapter V presents a detailed discussion of the findings, potential limitations of the study, implications of the study for educational leadership practice and scholarship, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the literature review in this chapter, I discuss previous research that has investigated student satisfaction with graduate level studies with a particular focus on international students in educational leadership programs. The literature review covers both conceptual and empirical literature, emphasizing currency and also highlighting the classics when warranted. The literature review encompasses the following areas: adult learning theories, satisfaction with graduate education, cross-border education, graduate level educational leadership programs, and a brief review of education and educational leadership in Belize, Central America. Gaps in knowledge and implications in the literature are briefly explored. The chapter concludes with a brief summary. A theoretical–conceptual framework undergirding the study is also provided.

The next section of the review of literature covers adult learning theories and issues related to satisfying the adult learner in higher education.

Adult Learning Theories

The use of adult learning theories to shape the educational methods used in graduate programs increases the understanding of students, the social problems that impact their learning, and approaches to address the problems (K. Brown, 2006). Education at the graduate level and particularly degree programs intended to enhance professional skills involve adult learning for both domestic and international students. Graduate students often have previous work experience in a professional field and are self-motivated and self-directed in their pursuit of additional education (Buchanan, Kim, & Basham, 2007). Adult learners bring unique

experiences to the teaching and learning environment. They also have diverse expectations, which ultimately affect their perceptions of satisfaction with their educational experience.

Educating nontraditional learners poses some unique challenges for educators.

According to N. Franz (2007), no “clear consensus exists on the specific theoretical base of adult education” (p. 1). Some of the major theories related to adult learning include behavioral theory, andragogy theory, and transformative learning theory (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). These theories have some common elements concerning a motivational requirement to support learning but differ in the models used to describe the mechanisms leading to motivation and knowledge acquisition among adults (Huang, 2002). The theories are also based on a fundamental assumption that the adult learner has different needs that must be met by an educational program when compared to a child or adolescent learner (Buchanan et al., 2007). Some of these theories are reviewed in the following sections.

Behavioral Theory of Learning

The early behavioral theory of learning postulated that learning occurs in response to a stimulus that motivates the actions that result in learning. If the learning meets the expectations of the learner, the knowledge will be accepted and reinforced through repetition. If the learning fails to meet the expectations of the learner, it will be rejected, and the knowledge will be lost. In addition, the theory proposed that learning takes place through repetition of a cue and response in which the perceived benefits of the knowledge are reinforced through repetition (Bandura, 1969; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). One of the shortcomings of the behavioral theory of learning is its failure to distinguish between the external stimuli used to motivate children to learn and the internal stimuli motivating adult learners.

The behavioral learning theories are the foundation for the constructivist approach to education. In this model, the role of the teacher or instructor is to shape the students' experience of the environment to enable them to construct knowledge from their experience (Huang, 2002; Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). The adult students bring their past experiences with them into the educational environment. The learning process assists the students with developing reasoning processes to develop a better understanding of the meaning of these experiences and how they fit into a larger pattern of knowledge. At the same time, learning takes place in a sociocultural environment in which students interact with each other. This interaction results in a social construction of knowledge concerning the meaning of experiences. In effect, the theory postulates that individuals construct knowledge concerning the reality around them through interactions with others, which produces a collective understanding. The learning process occurs through these interactions whether they are formal in a classroom or informal through contact with instructors and peers.

Andragogy Theory of Learning

The andragogy theory of learning originated with the seminal work of Malcolm Knowles (1980) that distinguished self-directed adult learning from externally directed pedagogical approaches used to motivate childhood learning. In the andragogy model, the adult learner is presumed to be self-motivated and autonomous, with the learner adopting full responsibility for acquiring knowledge. The extent and quality of an adult's experience depends on the learner's motivation. The teacher has a collaborative rather than a directive relationship with the adult learner and does not attempt to control the learning process. The teacher provides information and guidance but allows the adult learner to set the pace and direction of the learning experience based on the assumption that the adult learner can determine the type and extent of useful

knowledge (Knowles et al., 2005). The andragogy theory also considers some methods of adult education more effective, such as self-guided discovery, because they conform to the motivations and autonomous position of the adult learner.

Andragogy relies on several assumptions concerning the adult learner. The adult student needs to understand how the learning will occur, the content of the material that will be learned, and the reason the learning is important (Huang, 2002). The adult learner will not voluntarily engage in learning unless this basic information is apparent. The adult learner also desires to take control over the techniques of learning, which is important to maintain autonomy in the learning process. As a result, the adult learner determines the most suitable approach to learning to match his or her particular style of acquiring information and knowledge about a topic. The andragogy theory is also based on an assumption that adult learners will seek education when some event or situation creates a need for new knowledge or information. As a result, they are strongly motivated to learn to solve a personal problem or to achieve a goal or objective (K. Brown, 2006).

Transformative Theory of Learning

Transformative learning theory is based on the premise that the learning experience for adults produces some type of transformation in perceptions or viewpoints (N. Franz, 2007). The transformation results in a more mature guide for action. The transformative process is bounded by a frame of reference composed of existing paradigms and assumptions that influence thinking and the understanding of events (Taylor, 2008). In this theory, learning consists of challenging existing paradigms and assumptions, requiring reflection and assessment of their validity. The outcome of the learning process is a paradigm shift that results in a different understanding of reality and the type of actions necessary to achieve goals.

In the general learning context proposed in transformative learning theory, the educator functions as a facilitator to assist the adult learner with challenging paradigms and development of new perspectives the learner will use to guide future actions (N. Franz, 2007). Critical reflection plays a central role in the learning process, with the educator in a horizontal relationship with the learner and intended to provide guidance and mentoring rather than instruction. In addition, transformative learning theory incorporates elements of constructivism by presuming that the adult learner has multiple interactions with peers from different backgrounds and often from different cultures, encouraging the learner to challenge existing paradigms and perspectives (Taylor, 2008).

Research conducted by K. Brown (2006) determined that the application of the principles of both the andragogy and transformative theories of adult education were effective in motivating and shaping the perspectives of 40 graduate students in educational administration programs. A quantitative approach was used to assess the possible effects of transformative learning strategies on preservice leaders' attitudes toward issues of diversity in education. The content and methods used in the program relied on transformative learning theory and focused on assisting students to develop critical thinking skills and reflections focusing on social justice and equity in the educational institution. The transformation from the current state of understanding to a more reflective state of understanding was intended to support the ability of the students to take action to improve social justice and equity in the schools where they would be employed after completion of the program. The specific procedure relied on challenging the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the students concerning approaches to education. The specific instructional methods used in the program relied on andragogy theory, with students presumed to be self-motivated and self-directed. Using data obtained from a questionnaire, K.

Brown (2006) determined that the use of transformative approaches in graduate education increased the students' perceived growth in awareness of social justice and equity issues and strategies for action to implement social justice.

Variants of transformative learning theory include neurobiological transformation theory and cultural–spiritual transformation theory (Taylor, 2008). The neurobiological variation of the theory is based on evidence that the cognitive processes change during learning. For the learning to occur, however, there must be some initial discomfort motivating the discovery process leading to the learning. The process is strengthened by emotive and sensory experiences. The cultural–spiritual variation of the theory contends that learners construct meaning from their social, cultural, and spiritual experiences. Narratives or the storytelling that occurs internally and through interactions with others provide the foundation for constructing meaning (Taylor, 2008).

Summary of the Selected Theories of Learning

The various theories concerning adult education and learning have a common factor in the assumption that individuals have an innate desire to learn that motivates adults to acquire knowledge. As Ahl (2006) noted, the theories do not agree on the various situational, structural, or dispositional barriers that can moderate the motivation to learn. The situation or environment can increase or decrease the motivation to learn, creating variability in outcomes of the learning process. In addition, the theories do not fully address the motivations and needs of adult learners who attend programs because of employment requirements or the need to obtain a certification for career advancement (Buchanan et al., 2007).

The application of adult learning theory in graduate education is significant because of the effect of teaching methods on the satisfaction of the student with the educational experience (Umbach & Porter, 2002). A pedagogical educational approach using didactic and controlling

pedagogical methods could reduce the satisfaction of autonomous adult learners in graduate programs. Conversely, employment of appropriate andragogical approach can increase learners' satisfaction. Other salient factors, apart from the use of appropriate learning theories, also affect nontraditional learners' satisfaction. In the following section, some issues that frame student satisfaction are examined.

Students' Satisfaction With Educational Experience

Many issues frame the discourse on student satisfaction with educational experience. Some of these issues and concepts are explored in this section of the literature review.

Student-as-Customer Concept

The student is being increasingly viewed as a customer. However, the student-as-customer concept remains contested. Some of the research examining student satisfaction adopts a marketing perspective, viewing the student as a service customer with the institution providing an educational service. Nicolescu (2009) noted that “[m]arketing theories and concepts, which have been effective in business, are gradually now being applied by many universities ... with the purpose to gain competitive advantage” (p. 37). According to Arambewela, Hall, and Zuhair (2006), education is a “service that is experienced by students and other stakeholders of educational institutions who form judgments about service delivery performance in terms of its quality and consistency, which are basic properties of a service” (p. 109).

The educational institution offers students a bundle of tangible and intangible products (Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006). The tangible product is the physical environment of the institution where residential education services are provided, such as the buildings and laboratory facilities. The intangible products are the explicit service of the faculty providing the instruction and the implicit service that includes factors, such as the way faculty members treated students.

From this perspective, the student is a customer purchasing services from the institution and forming opinions concerning the value of the service after the service has been delivered.

Arambewela and Hall (2007) noted that universities have inherent difficulty with developing uniform service performance because of the substantial variation in needs and attitudes among the students receiving the services.

Examining perceptions of satisfaction requires conceptualizing students and other stakeholders as customers. Many IHEs adopt the perspective that students are customers of the institution (Bailey & Dangerfield, 2000; Pitman, 2000; Scott, 1999; Siu & Wilson, 1998; Tan & Kek, 2004; Wright & O'Neill, 2002). Because this perspective of students is customer oriented, it has raised concerns among some scholars that faculty and administrators will overemphasize students' evaluations (Barnard, 1999; Pitman, 2000; Schwartzman, 1995). Barnard (1999) noted that it "is not education's purpose to please the customer, but to provide a learning environment that supports a mission of excellence in education" (p. 62). Because IHEs are increasingly adopting the position that they are providers of education services, the input of student customers is necessary to ensure the service meets the needs of students.

The premise that IHEs consider students as customers is well supported by previous research. In a study exploring the perceptions of students as customers, Pitman (2000) found that all IHE staff recognized students as customers. In another study, Siu and Wilson (1998) observed that faculty described students as customers of the institution. Educational institutions, however, offer a unique form of service. The IHEs do not have total control over the final delivery processes related to the service (Hill, 1995). The student-as-consumer interacts with the IHE to coproduce the service during the education delivery process (Owlia & Aspinwall, 1998; Scott, 1999). As a result, both the student and the institution have important roles to play in

customer satisfaction. The services provided by IHEs are subjective and intangible, which also creates substantial difficulty for evaluating the overall service experience of students (Scott, 1999; Sureshchandar, Rajendran, & Anantharaman, 2002; Wright & O'Neil, 2002).

The student-as-customer concept remains contested. One of the criticisms of this concept is that because customers usually exchange money for goods or services, the students who see themselves as customers may not take active roles in producing knowledge but would rather exchange passive participation in exchange for enrollment in their institutions. Therefore, critics of the student-as-customer model have proposed alternative models. In these models, students are conceptualized as producers (Ray, 1996), trainees (R. S. Franz, 1998), employees (Gillespie & Parry, 2009), and clients (Bailey, 2000). Models in which students are producers, trainees, employees, or clients emphasize student accountability, in that each requires the student to take an active role in producing knowledge.

The criticisms of student-as-customer concept are sometimes based on oversimplified portrayal of the nature and role of the customer. However, the idea of students as customers has some significant implications that must be foregrounded in the discourse of student satisfaction. A relationship seems to exist between the extent to which students act as customers and their attitudes and behaviors. A study by Finney and Finney (2010) that examined the relationship between students' perceptions of themselves as customers of their IHE and their attitudes and behaviors found that students who perceived themselves as customers were more prone to feel entitled and to hold attitudes and engage in behaviors that are antagonistic to their success.

Student Expectations and Satisfaction

Student expectations are central in discussing issues related to student satisfaction. As Tan and Kek (2004) noted in their work on service quality in higher education, a critical

component of measuring students' education experiences is student expectations. Wright and O'Neill (2002) observed that students base their assessment of their academic providers' performance on the difference between expectations and actual experiences. Because of the importance of students' expectations in their perceptions of satisfaction with their educational experiences, scholars have suggested that IHEs should develop a customer orientation toward their students to ensure that services conform to expectations (Newson, 2004). Consequently, delivery of educational services by IHEs should be aligned to not only meet but also to surpass the expectations of the students (Wright & O'Neill, 2002).

Students are major stakeholders of IHEs. The viability of any organization depends on the extent to which it satisfies the major stakeholders. The demands of many stakeholder groups, such as funding sources and the public demand for accountability and transparency, have brought student satisfaction issues to the foreground at IHEs (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Sum et al., 2010). Several studies have also linked student satisfaction to issues such as student recruitment, retention, and motivation, as well as to fundraising (Elliot, 2003; Elliot & Shin, 2002; Wood, Gasser, & Winward, 2010).

A variety of institutional factors affect students' educational experience and ultimately affect their perception of satisfaction. Some of these factors are reviewed here.

Institutional Accommodations and Facilities

Perceptions of the physical environment of the university, including facilities such as laboratories, can influence student satisfaction with the institution (Douglas et al., 2006). Dissatisfaction develops when the physical environment does not meet minimum student expectations for quality (Oshagbemi, 1997). The expectations of the student for the physical environment at the institution are subjective and often depend on the student's past experience

with the physical structures in past educational experiences. In addition, students place lower value on aspects of the environment that are not critical to education, such as furnishings or the décor of buildings. Grebennikov and Skaines (2007) found that the availability of living accommodations perceived as adequate by students as well as assistance in obtaining accommodations were important factors for students that did not live near the institution. Some research, however, suggests that the physical accommodations at a university play only a minor role in student satisfaction with the educational experience (Arambewela & Hall, 2007). Even if the student perceives the accommodations as inadequate, other factors such as perceptions of academic quality and social interactions have a greater influence on overall satisfaction with the educational program (Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007).

From a review of research literature, Lovitts (2005) concluded that both the institutional and social environment play an important role in the motivation of graduate students in residential programs to learn and to engage in educational activities beyond the minimal requirements of the program. The department in which the student studies largely controls the environment in graduate studies through its balance between andragogical and pedagogical educational approaches. In general, graduate students value a more collaborative method of education, with instructors functioning as self-directed-learning guides. In studies intended to enhance professional skills, graduate students also expect instructors to model the behaviors required by the profession. The conclusions drawn by Lovitts (2005) imply that institutions offering graduate programs should make some accommodations in approaches to education to meet the expectations of adult learners. The findings of Buchanan et al. (2007), however, indicate that student expectations for graduate education are varied and depend on whether their

goals involve career advancement, intellectual growth, or socialization and community involvement.

Relevance of Course Work

The literature generally suggests that students in graduate programs with professional experience in the workplace often require that the course work is relevant to the profession and can be applied in practical situations (Huang, 2002). The relevance of the course work is related to the autonomy found in the adult learner, with control of the learning process essential for satisfaction with the educational program. In addition, the course work must be authentic in that it is related to the experiences of the students in practical situations and perceived as appropriate for the field of study.

Reynolds, Ross, and Rakow (2002) investigated the differences in the satisfaction of teachers and their principals with the course work offered in schools of education that were classified as professional development schools from those not classified as professional development schools. The professional development schools relied on the authentic learning paradigm, in which the material was geared toward practical application in the secondary school educational environment. The nonprofessional development schools offered course work that was more theoretical and general. The research collected data using a telephone survey, with qualitative methods used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that teachers were more satisfied with the learning they received at the professional development schools and perceived the education experience as relevant to the teaching profession. In addition, the principals were more satisfied with the effectiveness of the teachers who had attended postgraduate programs at professional development schools rather than schools offering general programs. Although the findings of this research indicated that relevance of the course work is a significant factor for

satisfaction with the learning experience, the small sample size and the qualitative approach to the methodology reduce the ability to generalize the findings.

Quality of Instructors

Research evidence indicates that student assessment of the quality of instructors is subjective and based on their overall interactions with instructors (DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005). The perceived quality of instructors contributes to the overall perceptions of the quality of the educational program among students. The students form an expectation concerning the quality of instructors before entering the institution based on factors such as the reputation of the institution and marketing information from the school (Shanka, Quintal, & Taylor, 2006). These expectations may not be realistic and can lead to a gap between the expectations and the experience with instructors.

The degree of interaction with instructors also contributes to satisfaction with the educational experience, with satisfaction increasing proportionate to the amount of contact with instructors (Umbach & Porter, 2002). The student and particularly adult learners are more satisfied with the quality of the instructors when they perceive that they have a personal relationship with the instructor (Bain, Fedynich, & Knight, 2010). This suggests that student assessments of instructor quality are subjective and depend on interpersonal factors rather than evaluation of instructional methods or styles. In contrast to the findings of Bain et al. (2010) and Umbach and Porter (2002), Douglas et al. (2006) determined that students placed greater value on the teaching ability and expertise in subject matter than on personal relationships when evaluating instructor quality. These findings, however, were based on research in universities in the United Kingdom, with variations in cultural factors accounting for the differences from the findings of research conducted in the United States.

The differences in the findings of various researchers concerning the relationship between faculty interaction and student satisfaction may be because of the effect of student personality and demographic variables. Research conducted by Kim and Sax (2009) determined that factors such as student race, gender, and socioeconomic status influenced the degree of interaction with faculty and the relationship between faculty interactions and satisfaction. The data were obtained from students in a large research university in the United States. The frequency of interactions was lower for some racial groups of students, such as African Americans, but was similar for groupings based on gender or socioeconomic status. The frequency of interaction with instructors was also positively correlated with both higher satisfaction with the quality of instructors and a higher grade point average among students.

Martin, Milne-Horne, Barrett, Spalding, and Jones (2000) determined that the perception of instructor quality has a correlation with the perception among students that a graduate program effectively prepared them for employment. The factors influencing perceptions of instructor quality among international students may also be related to the degree that faculty members understand the differences in academic and personal needs between international and domestic students (Trice, 2004).

The accessibility and promptness of response of instructors have been identified as a factor contributing to the perception of satisfaction with instructor quality (Ivanovka & Stick, 2007). Students evaluate the accessibility of instructors based on flexibility to accommodate the needs of the students rather than a subjective perception of the quality of the information provided by the instructor. The flexibility of the instructor is more significant in distance education at the graduate level because of the asynchronous contact between the instructor and the student (Arambewela & Hall, 2007). Arambewela and Hall (2007) also found that access

and feedback were separate antecedent variables accounting for a substantial amount of the variance in the perception of education quality among graduate students. In the model developed in Arambewela and Hall's research, subjective estimates of instructor knowledge, accessibility, and feedback interacted to influence perceptions of quality, which in turn influenced the level of student satisfaction.

Support Systems

In their analysis of the differences in student satisfaction among university departments, Umbach and Porter (2002) found that the academic ability of students was inversely related to their satisfaction with the educational experience. The researchers concluded that a highly selective academic department in a university resulted in greater competition during the course of study. The students perceived the competitive environment as less supportive, and it was a source of dissatisfaction with education. In addition, students that did not have the personal characteristics to thrive in a highly competitive environment were less motivated to complete the graduate program.

In contrast to the findings of Umbach and Porter (2002), Bain et al. (2010) determined that the degree of personal support provided to graduate students by professors and faculty advisors increased the motivation to succeed and improved perceptions of the educational program. These authors concluded that high levels of faculty support for students created a more nurturing educational environment that created a sense of connection to the institution, which encouraged students to persevere and succeed. Martin et al. (2000) also found that the perception of support services in a graduate program positively influenced satisfaction with the program. In addition, these researchers identified a positive correlation between perceptions of

support services and perceptions that the graduate program adequately prepares students for employment after completion of the graduate program.

Some research evidence indicates that students also value social support system because of the concern that they will not fit into the social environment of the institution (Shanka et al., 2006). Social concerns include the ability to form friendships with other students, the general social climate in the institution, and the range of extracurricular activities. Some of these factors are beyond the control of the institution because they depend on student personality characteristics, although the institution can attempt to promote a social climate that fosters acceptance of diversity.

The next section of the literature review focuses on career goals and anticipated outcomes as motivating factors for pursuit of graduate studies.

Career Goals and Outcomes

Career goals and anticipated outcomes are important motivating factors for students to pursue graduate degrees, particularly after they have some professional experience (Huang, 2002). Individuals that have entered the workforce often experience events or circumstances that increase the perceived value of a graduate degree for career advancement. These individuals have experience in the profession, with the education intended to provide a competitive advantage for career advancement. From this perspective, the career goal associated with the education may be to increase marketability in a changing professional environment (Fenwick, 2002). In some cases, the intended outcome may be a change in career path that the graduate degree will enable. In the context of education, graduate degrees can improve existing teaching skills and support a transition into administrative tasks (Reynolds et al., 2002).

Research conducted by Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2009) concerning the characteristics of students in graduate educational research programs determined that the majority have the career goal of entering educational administration. These students perceived that a master's degree in educational leadership is a necessary credential to compete for administrative positions in schools and school systems. The research supporting these findings was based on a meta-analysis of data in published studies.

According to Buchanan et al. (2007), the graduate student with a career objective is considered a goal-oriented learner, with the goal functioning as the motivation for engaging in the activity of learning. The student has the expectation that completion of the task will lead to the desired objective. In this orientation, satisfaction with the learning activities is not fully determined until the completion of the task and the student assesses the degree of congruence between the expected outcome and the actual outcome. In effect, the experience of learning is less important than the outcome of learning as an antecedent factor influencing satisfaction.

An investigation conducted by Knight, Tait, and Yorke (2006) found that the perceived need to obtain knowledge concerning changes in education is an important motivating factor for instructors in higher education to pursue professional training and development. Knight et al.'s (2006) qualitative research relied on survey data and interviews with full-time and part-time instructors attending a single large online university in the United Kingdom. The participants in the study believed that ensuring that professional knowledge and practice conform to the generally accepted approaches in education was necessary to maintain employment at the institution and to secure advancement such as the transition from part-time to full-time status.

Research conducted by Marginson (2006) found that the career goals of many international students in cross-border education involve the status accruing from attending a

foreign university and the improvement in their prospects for obtaining better employment after graduation. The findings of this research suggest that international students assess factors such as the reputation of the institution in their particular field of study when selecting a foreign university. Arambewela et al. (2006) also determined that reputation of the graduates of the institution in a profession is a significant factor influencing students to select an institution.

The findings of Martin et al. (2000) in an investigation of factors influencing satisfaction with graduate education programs indicate that several factors related to career aspirations moderate satisfaction. Significant differences exist in the factors influencing satisfaction among students intending to find postgraduate employment at the local, national, or international levels. In the Martin et al. (2000) study, students with local employment aspirations were less concerned about content of the educational programs than were students intending to work nationally or internationally. Students seeking employment internationally, however, evaluated their educational experiences based on their ability to find postgraduation employment in the field and the specific geographic location they had envisioned when they began their graduate studies.

Personal Goals and Outcomes

The personal goals of graduate students include acquisition of knowledge for its own sake to satisfy needs for intellectual growth and to engage in a nonroutine activity involving socialization and involvement in the academic community (Buchanan et al., 2007). For students motivated to undertake graduate studies primarily by a learning orientation or a social-activity orientation, their expectation is that the experience of the graduate program will meet these objectives. As a result, satisfaction depends on congruence between the expectation of achieving these personal objectives and the experience of the graduate program while studies are occurring. Satisfaction is higher when the program meets expectations for personal intellectual growth or

increased opportunities for social or community activities. Personal goals for intellectual growth or socialization, however, can exist simultaneously with career goals, creating complexity if the personal goals factors influencing student satisfaction with graduate programs are intertwined with the career goals factors.

In an analysis of research concerning educational leadership programs in the United States, Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2009) found that doctoral dissertations in the field are rarely available for other researchers and are often not considered as reliable sources of information as postgraduate research. The practice of discounting the value of educational leadership research conducted in graduate school marginalizes the accomplishments of students motivated by the need to acquire knowledge for its own sake. The practice can reduce satisfaction of students with their achievements in graduate programs if the findings of the research are discounted because of the status of the researcher as a student. At the same time, the student is expected to apply the knowledge obtained in the dissertation process to practical situations in the field of education.

Summary of Factors That Affect Students' Satisfaction

Students are being increasingly viewed as customers who are purchasing services from their institutions. IHEs face challenges in developing uniform service performance because of the diversity of the expectations and needs of the students receiving the services. Students' expectations and needs are central in discussing issues related to student satisfaction. Students tend to base their assessment of satisfaction on the difference between expectations and actual experiences. Multiple institutional factors affect students' actual experience and ultimately affect their perception of satisfaction. Some of these factors include institutional accommodations and facilities, relevance of course work, support services, and quality of

instructors. Personal and professional goals affect students' expectations, and achievement of these goals moderates their perceptions of satisfaction.

The next section of the review of literature focuses on some theoretical and conceptual issues that frame the discourse of students' satisfaction with their educational experience.

Theoretical and Conceptual Issues

Satisfaction with education is the affective response to the overall educational experience (DeShields et al., 2005). It is a particularly important construct among adult learners attending a university to obtain an advanced degree because the educational experience and outcomes must match the expectations of the student to sustain the motivation to learn (Knight et al., 2006). Various personal and institutional factors can influence the perceptions of students toward the educational experience and their satisfaction. The institutional environment and accommodations to student needs (Lovitts, 2005), the relevance of the course work to the needs of the student (Huang, 2002), and the perceived quality of instructors (DeShields et al., 2005) can influence student satisfaction with graduate programs. In addition, the graduate student must perceive that the education supports attainment of professional and personal objectives (Buchanan et al., 2007; Fenwick, 2002; Jalali et al., 2011).

The scope of marketing activities by institutions of higher learning envisions students as the primary customers, although the language used in educational marketing avoids commercial terms (Nicolescu, 2009). Nonetheless, the general approach in educational marketing is customer-centric, with the institution attempting to persuade prospective students that a given program is the best alternative to meet their educational needs. In the marketing approach used by education, students are segmented in terms of a demographic or psychographic characteristic such as international students or high-achieving students. The marketing approaches in

education also recognize that students purchase an educational service only one time and are not repeat consumers of the service although they may recommend the service to others. As a result, the institution providing the educational service is inherently less concerned with developing and maintaining an ongoing relationship with students based on satisfaction with the service.

Although student dissatisfaction can lead to reputational damage in the long run, the student that has consumed the service will not purchase it again regardless of their level of satisfaction (Clewes, 2003; Krehbiel & McClure, 1997; Tan & Kek, 2004).

Various theories attempt to identify the determinants and processes that lead to satisfaction in organizations that can be applied to the experience of students in graduate schools. The theory of motivation is useful in conceptualizing factors that affect students' satisfaction with their educational experiences.

Satisfaction and Motivation

Research related to human motivation and psychological theory has a long history. Several theories and research on motivation have focused on individuals' beliefs, values, and goals as primary influences on motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). It seems that the processes influencing motivation are cognitive, conscious, affective, and often under control of the individual (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998). Eccles et al. (1998) provided a comprehensive review of motivation theories.

Atkinson (1964) proposed the first formal model of achievement motivation based on expectancies and values. Expectancies are one's perception of the probability of success or failure on a given task, whereas values are related to the importance of an activity or outcome. Wigfield and Eccles (2000) further refined the expectancy–value model of achievement

motivation. This model incorporated the work of many other motivation theorists (e.g., Battle, 1965; Crandall, 1969; Weiner, 1985).

Expectancy–value theory seems to be directly linked to uses and gratifications theory, a theory associated with Martin Fishbein (1967). It proceeds from the assumption that individuals are goal-oriented beings and behavior is a function of expectancies one has and the value of the goal one is working toward. The expectancy–value theory of achievement motivation posits that an “individual’s choice, persistence, and performance can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do on the activity and the extent to which they value the activity” (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 68). Eccles and Wigfield (2002) examined the relations between expectancies and values and how they relate to children’s performance and activity choices. In this model, expectancies represent a person’s beliefs about how well the person will perform within a given domain, be it now or in the future. Values represent the degree of importance that an individual assigns to an activity or outcome.

The achievement value of a task affects motivation. Eccles (Parsons) et al. (1983) identified four components of achievement value: attainment value (importance of doing well), utility value (usefulness of completing the task), intrinsic value (pleasure derived from engaging in a task), and cost (that of choosing one task at the expense of another). It is assumed that one’s ability beliefs, one’s perceptions of task difficulty, and one’s goals and self-concept directly influence one’s expectancies and values. These expectancies and values are also influenced by the person’s perception of others’ attitudes and expectations. Therefore, expectancies and values act as mechanisms in the determination of activity choices, performance, and persistence.

According to expectancy–value theory (Eccles et al., 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), learning motivation can be viewed as a function of expectancy of success and a subjective value

of the task or learning opportunity. These two basic factors are themselves influenced by a variety of preceding factors, in particular, socializing agents, psychological characteristics, individual beliefs, and affective memories (Eccles, 2005; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). The Wigfield and Eccles (2000) model differed from Atkinson's model in that instead of focusing primarily on cognitive perceptions, it also considers social and psychological influences on choice and persistence. In Wigfield and Eccles's (2000) model, both negative and positive costs of engaging in activities are taken into account when determining the relative value of tasks and the probability of success (Eccles, Lord, Roeser, Barber, & Jozefowicz, 1997).

The expectancy–value theory of achievement motivation helps researchers understand why individuals engage in specific activities. Even though expectancy–value theory was originally developed to explain school children's achievement and course choices, the expectancy–value model of achievement choice provides an appropriate framework for studying and understanding nontraditional learners' motivation and achievement outcomes. Adults' learning motivation is a necessary prerequisite for adult learning (Courtney, 1992). From an individual learner's perspective, adult learners are likely to be internally motivated, problem oriented, and self-directed (Knowles et al., 2005). Understanding these motivational factors that influence the adult learner's decision to access learning opportunity is important in promoting adult learning (Gorges & Kandler, 2012). Understanding adult learning requires better understanding of the motivational factors that influence the adult learner's decision to access a learning opportunity. This understanding ultimately helps to identifying factors that influence adult learners' satisfaction with their educational experiences, especially as it provides indicators of both the expectancies of the learners and the values derived from the experience.

Expectancy–value theory can be applied to understanding the motivations of students for attending a graduate program and the degree of satisfaction they experience from the program. Expectancy–value theory postulates that an individual assesses whether an effort expended to achieve a goal will indeed result in attaining the goal (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Hancock, 1995). In addition, the individual must perceive that the value of the goal is commensurate with the amount of effort necessary to achieve the goal. The expectation that the goal is achievable and valuable motivates the individual to make the necessary effort to attain the goal (Erez & Isen, 2002).

Dissatisfaction develops if the individual subsequently discovers a significant discrepancy between the original expectations and the actual ability to achieve the goal or the actual value of the goal (Arambewela et al., 2006). In this theoretical model, satisfaction is highest when there is substantial congruity between the expectations formed before receiving the educational service and the experience of the service. If the actual experience disconfirms the validity of the expectations, dissatisfaction develops. Graduate students in universities have different expectations than do undergraduate students because of their former experience with institutions of higher learning (Arambewela & Hall, 2007). As a result, they compare their graduate experience with their undergraduate experience when assessing a university or an educational program. In teacher education programs at the graduate level, students have an expectation that the educational process will foster the development of interpersonal skills and the acquisition of professional knowledge relevant to the field (Umbach & Porter, 2002).

Graduate students often have high expectations concerning the benefits of the educational program, which are necessary to justify the substantial commitment of time and resources necessary to pursue advanced education (Buchanan et al., 2007). The institution offering the

graduate program, however, may have objectives that diverge from the expectations of the student, such as producing graduates who have a positive impact on a professional or social problem (K. Brown, 2006; Orr, 2006).

In expectancy–value theory, the satisfaction of the student with the graduate program depends on the degree of congruence between the student’s expectations and the actual experience and outcomes of the graduate program. Although the graduate student often makes the assumption that the program can be successfully undertaken and will lead to the desired valued goal, unanticipated difficulties or failure to achieve the goal can result in dissatisfaction with the program. At the same time, factors such as the personality characteristics of the student can influence perceptions of congruence between expectations and outcomes (Erez & Isen, 2002).

Research based on expectancy–value theory investigating the factors influencing student satisfaction in universities has verified that the expectancy gap construct can identify factors contributing to or detracting from student satisfaction (Arambewela & Hall, 2007; Tan & Kek, 2004). In the research of Tan and Kek (2004), the SERVQUAL questionnaire was modified for use among university students. The SERVQUAL questionnaire was developed and validated to assess the perceptions of service quality among customers in a commercial context. The instrument measures the gap between the expectations of student and the actual educational experience of the student across various dimensions. In the modified SERVQUAL instrument, the magnitude of the aggregate gap scores correlates to the level of student satisfaction. Although this modified instrument was validated by research, it is not widely used by universities to assess student satisfaction. Arambewela and Hall (2007) used an unmodified SERVQUAL instrument to assess the gap between expectations and experiences among graduate

students. Their findings determined that congruence between expectations and experience for education-related factors, such as quality and access to instructors, accounted for the largest amount of variance in satisfaction among graduate students. Grebennikov and Skaines (2007) also found that the gap between expectations and both academic and nonacademic experiences influences student satisfaction.

Based on service marketing theory and expectancy–value theory, Hassan, Ilias, Rahman, and Razek (2009) developed and tested a model to identify the broad factors influencing student satisfaction with educational institutions. The model was based on the traditional approach to service quality, how the five dimensions of tangibility, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy influence student satisfaction. Tangibility includes the physical elements of the institution, including accommodations and facilities for instruction. Assurance, reliability, and responsiveness are related to factors such as the perceived quality of instruction, the interactions with instructors, and the reputation of the institution. Empathy is the degree of concern demonstrated by the institution for the student’s needs. Regression analysis of data obtained from undergraduate university students indicated that each of the five dimensions contributed to the variance in student satisfaction with the institution, with perceptions of empathy accounting for the largest amount of variance. Hassan et al.’s findings suggested that multiple factors influence student satisfaction with an educational experience.

Some prior research suggests that the marketing campaigns conducted by institutions of higher learning are instrumental in shaping many of the expectations of students prior to entering an educational program (Pereda, Airey, & Bennett, 2007). Competition has increased among institutions to attract students, particularly among second-tier universities that do not have a research orientation or a strong global reputation. Many universities have adopted the marketing

practices used in commercial enterprises, including branding and sales techniques emphasizing the attributes in a university valued by students (Douglas et al., 2006). The branding aspect of marketing links the institution with tangible attributes such as the ability to obtain a degree in certain subjects and the physical facilities of the institution. The branding also links the institution with intangible attributes such as quality of the education, social atmosphere, and utility of the degree for professional advancement. The branding efforts are essentially a marketing communication providing carefully crafted information to prospective students that fosters the development of expectations concerning the educational experience at the institution. The information available in the market interacts with the goals and objectives of the students for pursuing higher education to motivate them to select a particular university or degree program.

Two-Factor Theory

The two-factor theory is another model of satisfaction. This theory postulates that satisfaction depends on the ability of the organization to meet perceived extrinsic and intrinsic needs of the individual; variables affecting the external needs are known as *hygiene factors*, and variables affecting the internal needs are known as *motivation factors* (DeShields et al., 2005). In the context of graduate education, the hygiene factors include variables such as cost and living accommodations for residential students. The motivation factors include variables such as relationships, opportunities for increased knowledge and responsibility, and the opportunity for career advancement. In this theory, improvements in the hygiene factors do not increase satisfaction, but deficiencies in these factors can lead to dissatisfaction (Oshagbemi, 1997). As a result, reducing the cost of the educational experience will not inherently result in higher student satisfaction, but increasing the cost could lead to dissatisfaction if the experience does not meet the expectations created by the pricing. Improving the motivation factors, however, can increase

satisfaction. An education experience that improves opportunities for advancement in a profession or meets personal goals increases satisfaction.

Although the two-factor theory is normally applied to employment situations, it is also relevant to the satisfaction of adult students with an educational experience. DeShields et al. (2005) developed and administered a questionnaire based on the two-factor theory to identify the factors contributing to satisfaction with the educational experience among undergraduate students. The analysis of the survey data confirmed the validity of the theory when applied to the determinants of satisfaction with undergraduate level education. The findings indicated that relationships with faculty and the experience in the classroom were motivation factors and instrumental in determining satisfaction with the general educational experience. The research findings have limitations, however, because the study relied on data obtained from business students at a single small university. The findings cannot be generalized to students in other universities pursuing different courses of study. Other research, however, has confirmed the importance of intrinsic motives for pursuing higher education for satisfaction and outcomes (Knight et al., 2006; Lovitts, 2005).

Theoretical Framework for the Present Study

Many studies on student satisfaction do not define the term *satisfaction*. Sinclair (2011) reviewed 34 studies and noted that only six provided definitions of *student satisfaction*. Five of these definitions were grounded in marketing literature, whereas one was grounded in social cognitive theory. Therefore, the theoretical framework for the present study incorporates elements of the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1980) and the expectancy-value theory.

The expectancy–value theory postulates that an individual assesses whether an effort expended to achieve a goal will indeed result in attaining the goal. In addition, the individual must perceive that the value of the goal is commensurate with the amount of effort necessary to achieve the goal. The expectation that the goal is achievable and valuable motivates the individual to make the necessary effort to attain the goal (Erez & Isen, 2002). Dissatisfaction develops if the individual subsequently discovers a significant discrepancy between the original expectations and the actual ability to achieve the goal or the actual value of the goal (Arambewela et al., 2006). In the expectancy–value theory model, an individual is motivated to pursue a goal as long as the perception exists that the goal is worthwhile and attainable.

Expectancy–value approaches have been proposed by some theorists to explain adult learning motivation (Courtney, 1992). Ajzen (1991) proposed in the theory of planned behavior that the relation of expectancy and value probably varies across individuals and contextual aspects. Task value is a strong motivator in an individual’s choice of task. Feather (1992) examined students’ choices of college majors and activities to pursue and found values to be strongly predictive of these choices. The study also found that student’ expectancies for success and values were positively related. Because motivation is a fluid attribute that is affected by numerous factors, some that take place before learning has actually begun and others that happen while it takes place, the expectancy–value theory helps researchers understand the factors that affect adult learners’ overall satisfaction with educational experience.

Expectancy-disconfirmation theory theorizes that customer satisfaction is related to the size and direction of the disconfirmation (Oliver, 1980). Disconfirmation is the difference between the customer’s expectations and the performance of the product or service (Oliver, 1980). The theory describes the motivations and behaviors of consumers who purchase a service

but cannot fully evaluate the service until it has been consumed. This theory proposes that consumers form expectations about the quality of a service prior to purchase, with the experience of receiving the service either confirming or disconfirming the expectations (Teas & Palan, 2003). The consumer's satisfaction depends on whether the service experience conforms to the expectations established before the service was purchased. If a large gap exists between the expectation and the service experience, the consumer is dissatisfied (Arambewela & Hall, 2007; Tan & Kek, 2004). As a result, satisfaction is highest when there is substantial congruity between the expectations formed before receiving the service and the experience of the service. If the experience disconfirms the validity of the expectations, dissatisfaction develops.

The theoretical framework for this study also relies on the theory of service quality, which proposes that both tangible and intangible factors influence the perceptions of individuals concerning the quality of services they receive. The perception of service quality controls the consumer's evaluation of the service and the estimate of whether the service has met expectations (Parasuraman et al, 1985). A service is intangible, although it is often associated with a physical environment in which the service is rendered. The service is also often variable and tailored to meet the needs of the consumer. The consumer must also often participate in rendering the service. The evaluation of quality of the service depends on factors such as the personal characteristics of the service recipient as well as perceptions of the tangible environment where the service is rendered, the responsiveness of the service provided to individual needs, the reliability of the service provider, and whether the service provides the promised benefit (Tan & Kek, 2004).

A recurring theme in the expectation-disconfirmation literature is that satisfaction is a function of the size and direction of disconfirmation. The assumption is that the consumers are

satisfied in the case of positive disconfirmation and dissatisfied in the case of negative disconfirmation. Oliver (1980) hypothesized that prior expectation and disconfirmation are the only determinants of satisfaction, but subsequent research by Churchill and Surprenant (1982) indicated that actual performance (experience) exerts independent effects on satisfaction beyond its impact through disconfirmation. Also, in some cases, experience is the only determinant of satisfaction (S. A. Brown, Venkatesh, Kuruzovich, & Massey, 2008).

Expectancy-disconfirmation theory and the theory of service quality support a model for the proposed study in which expectations of service quality is an antecedent variable formed prior to the service experience, perceptions of service quality are the independent variables, and satisfaction is the dependent variable. The information the student receives prior to selecting a university and personal characteristics and situation influence the expectations for the educational service experience (Hassan et al., 2009). During and after the service experience, the student evaluates whether the service experience meets expectations across several dimensions: institutional accommodations and facilities, relevance of course work, quality of instructors, support systems, and effectiveness of the service for meeting career and personal goals (DeShields et al., 2005; Douglas et al., 2006; Huang, 2002; Umbach & Porter, 2002). The perceived congruity between expectation, service experience, and value of service determines satisfaction. Also, the perceived value of the educational experience, especially as it relates to its value for personal and professional improvement, influences perceptions of satisfaction. The conceptual model is depicted in Figure 1.

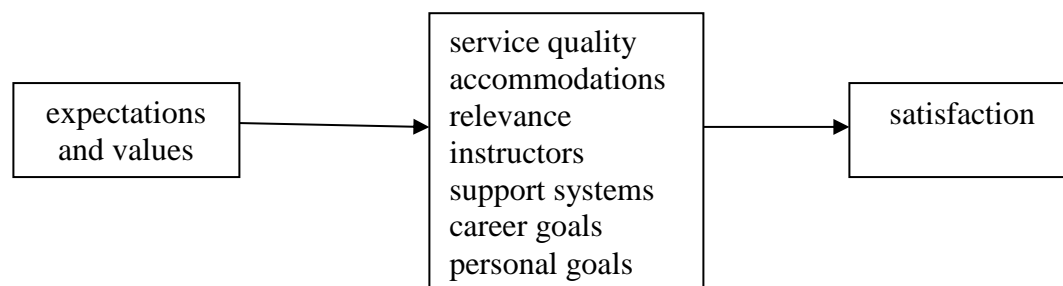


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

The general research concerning student satisfaction with higher education often focuses on domestic students, although some studies consider the perceptions of international students in undergraduate and graduate programs. International students represent an increasing proportion of the student population in the industrialized nations (Marginson, 2006). These students have different expectations for educational programs and different determinants of satisfaction when compared to domestic students (Arambewela et al., 2006). In the following section, the literature concerning cross-border education and satisfaction with the educational experience among international students is examined.

Cross-Border Education

Cross-border education occurs when “providers, programs, course materials, teachers or students move beyond national borders” (Varghese, 2008, p. 1). The literature examining cross-border education generally adopts the perspective that globalization is fostering a trend toward internationalization of education with large well-established institutions competitively positioned in global markets. From this perspective, institutions of higher learning have become organizations providing an educational service, sometimes for profit, in an increasingly globalized environment. A particular difficulty faced by institutions, however, is the substantial variation among international students in the factors that contribute to satisfaction with education. Research evidence indicates that cultural norms and values influence the perception

of factors relevant to satisfaction with higher education (Douglas et al., 2006; Tan & Kek, 2004). As a result, institutions that host a large number of international students from many different nations can have difficulty developing standardized programs and methods to improve satisfaction.

Higher Education in the Era of Cross-Border Education

Cross-border education is fundamentally a market-driven activity intended to meet the perceived learning and educational needs of international students who are willing to pay international prices (Uvalic-Trumbic, 2002; Varghese, 2008). Competition to attract students in the global education market has created pressures on institutions and academic systems to develop programs suitable for international students (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Although the specific motivation for developing cross-border education programs varies among institutions, the purpose for the program is generally based on commercial considerations. International programs can expand the number of students at the institution and can improve competitive positioning by offering students a broader curriculum. Research conducted by Marginson (2006), however, determined that cross-border education can be considered a positioned product. With this type of product, the buyer examines the benefits of the purchase in terms of the value it will provide for social status or financial opportunities. As a result, the prestige and reputation of the graduates of the institution are the most significant factors for establishing the competitive position of the institution and the value of its services in the cross-border educational market.

The types of cross-border programs offered by institutions also vary and depend on the strategy adopted by the institution to attract international students (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Some strategies include operating a branch campus in an international location or forming a joint venture or collaborative arrangement with an institution in another nation (Varghese, 2008).

According to Arambewela and Hall (2007), setting up “offshore campuses by foreign institutions through branch campuses, subsidiaries or partnership arrangements, providing courses and qualifications to local students has contributed to the expansion of the international higher education” (p. 129).

In this model, the host nation functions as the importer of educational services, whereas the nation where the institution is located is the exporter of educational services (Marginson, 2006). Institutions can also attract international students by enhancing the curriculum with material aimed at the needs of the students. The curriculum enhancement can include employing professors from the students’ home country to create a more familiar academic environment or establishing support programs for students from specific nations. Institutions with a strong international reputation, such as major research universities, attempt to recruit international students for residential studies at the main campus of the university, which is presented as necessary to take full advantage of the facilities and faculty of the university.

Distance education is a significant factor in cross-border education and occurs when the buyers of the educational product remain in their home nation but are electronically connected to an institution in a foreign nation (Varghese, 2008). The distance education approach to cross-border education provides an economic benefit for both the institution and the student because the cost of educational service delivery is far below the cost of traditional residential programs that require students to travel to a host country to receive the educational services. Roach and Lemasters (2006) conducted an investigation of the level of satisfaction among international students pursuing a master’s degree in education administration and leadership with distance education through an American university. The university had a residential program for the same degree and had recently implemented a program that fully relied on distance education to

attract a larger number of international students. The findings of the research determined that the students were satisfied with the academic aspect of instruction when instructors were responsive to the requests and needs of the students. The expectations of students taking online courses are based only on assumptions about the learning experience and do not include expectations about the facilities or social environment of the institution offering the degree. As a result, students tend to assess satisfaction with online learning primarily in terms of relevance of course material, instructor support, and outcomes relevant to career or knowledge goals.

The general pattern of cross-border education involves institutions from industrialized nations providing educational services to students from developing nations (Varghese, 2008). This pattern is attributable to the belief that IHEs in industrialized nations are of better quality than similar institutions in developing nations. Investigations of the pattern of internationalization among institutions, however, suggest that not all industrialized nations have the same competitive advantages. The IHEs in the United States attract the largest percentage of international students from developing nations, followed by the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (Arambewela et al., 2006). A common factor among these nations is the English language. Students from non-English speaking nations sometimes obtain education from English-speaking institutions to enhance their practical knowledge of the language and to improve their prospects for employment after graduation. According to Marginson (2006), “global competition in degree programs is an export import market in positional goods, characterized by uni-directional student flows and asymmetrical cultural transformations” (p. 18). The cultural transformation takes place because the student must adapt to the educational paradigms and perspectives of the institution providing the educational services.

Marginson (2006) determined that the reputation of the institution is more important to international students than the quality of the teaching or the education they receive. Because space in the large research universities in the industrialized nations remains limited, many international students attend second- and third-tier universities. The students remain focused on the status and economic gains from graduating from a university in an industrialized nation regardless of the institution's reputational position. In contrast, Arambewela and Hall (2007) noted that the choice of a study destination among international students in residential study programs is a two-stage process with multiple factors affecting the decision in each stage. Students initially select a country based on factors such as knowledge of the language, cost, lifestyle, and visa and immigration barriers. Students make assumptions based on available information concerning their ability to function in a nation's educational and social environment. The second stage involves the selection of an institution in the country. Student base the decision on the type of program offered at the institution, the reputation, and assumptions about the teaching method. The conflicting research findings suggest that multiple factors influence the decision of international students to select a particular institution for cross-border education.

Despite the assumptions of international students that institutions in industrialized nations offer higher quality education when compared to those in their home nation, quality assurance is an issue in cross-border education. There are inherent difficulties with establishing educational programs and standards suitable for international students (Altbach & Knight, 2007). At the current time, insufficient guidelines and quality-assurance approaches exist to fully protect international students from fraudulent practices in cross-border education, although the reputation of the institution is an indicator of integrity (Varghese, 2008). As a result, the reputation of the institution in the international educational community is a critical element for

assessing quality among international students that do not have a substantial amount of knowledge about the institution prior to enrollment.

Pereda et al. (2007) determined that both professional and personal goals motivate students to seek education in foreign countries. The lack of available education programs in students' home nations to support career goals is a significant factor for obtaining foreign education. As with domestic students, the expectation of the international student is that the degree will result in professional advancement or increased employment opportunities. Another motivating factor is the desire to obtain cross-cultural educational experience, which is a personal goal. The international education increases personal skills in language and understanding of another culture. Regardless of the individual motivations for international students to obtain an education in foreign institutions, they begin the educational program with expectations about the nature of the experience. The satisfaction of the students with the educational program depends on whether the experience is reasonably close to the expectations formed at the time they select an institution (Trice, 2004).

Factors Influencing Satisfaction Among International Students

International students are a segment of the university student body with needs and perceptions that can differ significantly from domestic students (Szekers, 2010; Trice, 2004). Because of cultural differences as well as difficulties with adjustment to foreign educational institutions, the gap between expectations and the educational experience of international students can be substantial, leading to lower satisfaction with an educational program. At the same time, the ability of the institution to accommodate the needs of international students may depend on available resources and the number of foreign students in a program (Douglas et al., 2006). The research suggests that considerable variability exists among institutions in their

approach to international students, which results in different levels of satisfaction with the educational experience (Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007; Pereda et al., 2007).

A case study of cross-border education involving Finnish institutions providing educational services to Russians (Alaoutinen and Voracek, 2004) determined that cultural differences had a significant effect on the learning process and outcomes. Some of the cultural differences involved fundamental attitudes toward education, including perspectives of academic honesty, communication skills, learning habits, and capability to work independently or in teams. Alaoutinen and Voracek's (2004) findings imply that it is unreasonable to expect international students to adapt to the cultural norms of the foreign institution without extensive support and guidance. The cultural paradigms from the institution offering the education are embedded in the institutional structure, policies, and approaches to education. Foreign students often have only minimal understanding of the educational practices and expectations of the nation exporting the educational services. These findings are similar to those of Trice (2004), who determined that faculty in American universities are cognizant of the difficulties faced by international students with cultural adjustment but are often uncertain as to the approaches that should be used to assist these students.

The attitude of faculty toward international students can be a critical influence on the perception of the students of the quality of the institution and their satisfaction with the educational program. Trice (2004) examined the attitudes of faculty in four departments of a university in the United States, with data collected through interviews. The research was motivated by prior studies indicating that faculty in American universities often do not value or understand the international student population and fail to consider their special needs and priorities. At the same time, faculty members recognize the need for international students to

maintain enrollment. Trice's research failed to confirm the findings of previous studies. Most of the interviewees recognized that there were significant differences between domestic and international students in their academic needs. Approximately half of the interviewees also recognized that international students also had personal needs differing from American students. The research also produced the unanticipated finding of faculty concern that international students would have difficulty applying knowledge obtained in context-specific programs when they returned to their homeland. A context-specific program involves the acquisition and application of professional knowledge in a specific environment, such as an educational leadership program with extensive material on school administration in the American educational system. The findings also indicated that segregation of international students often occurred, which reduced the value of the cross-cultural educational experience.

Research conducted by Robertson, Line, Jones, and Thomas (2000) also examined the relationship between attitude of faculty toward international students and satisfaction among this student group. The findings were similar to those of Trice (2004), indicating that a negative faculty attitude will reduce the satisfaction of international students with the educational experience. However, Robertson et al. (2000) also examined the factors leading to the negative attitude among faculty. The instructors perceived that the international students often did not have sufficient language skills to communicate at a level commensurate with the course level or degree program. As a result, instructors believed that they had to slow the pace of lecturing, which had a negative effect on the amount of material presented to domestic students. The faculty also believed that any formal assistance provided to international students with language skills was insufficient because of the inherent difficulty with improving skills while taking

advanced courses of study. In addition, instructors perceived that international students lacked critical thinking skills, which are particularly important in graduate programs.

Research evidence also indicates that substantial variation exists in the factors influencing satisfaction with a residential university experience among international students. Douglas et al. (2006) found that the cultural learning style influences the preferences of international students for the availability of different types of learning materials. Asian students value a wide range of physical textbooks in the university library, whereas European students value direct assistance and support from instructors. Robertson et al. (2000) identified variation among international students from various nations in feelings of social isolation, which was related to the amount of cultural differences between the student's home nation and the host nation for studies. All international students, however, expressed difficulty with understanding colloquial language both in the classroom and in social interactions, even students from nations using the same language as the host country.

The research identifying factors influencing satisfaction among international students, however, often used samplings of undergraduate students. Grebennikov and Skaines (2007) compared factors influencing satisfaction among undergraduate and graduate domestic and international students. The findings indicated that statistically significant differences existed between international and domestic students in the influence of various factors on satisfaction with the educational experience. Among graduate students, however, no differences existed between domestic and international students in the factors influencing satisfaction. The researchers, however, did not offer an explanation to account for the similarity in expectations and factors influencing satisfaction in international and domestic graduate students. To some degree, the findings of Grebennikov and Skaines were confirmed by a subsequent investigation

by Kim and Sax (2009), who determined that gender, social status, and ethnicity do not have a significant influence on the amount of interaction with faculty and the overall satisfaction of students with the institution.

International students are also often dissatisfied with the level of support provided by foreign educational institutions. Students perceive that the institutions do not appreciate the range of difficulties faced by an international student receiving education in a foreign nation with different customs, norms, and language (Arambewela et al., 2006). Grebennikov and Skaines (2007) determined that international students will also seek advice or assistance from faculty or their assigned advisors when they encounter a nonacademic problem such as an issue with accommodations or cultural and social adjustment. The response of the faculty to the problem of the international student is significant for the student's level of satisfaction with the institution.

Substantial research evidence indicates that many universities fail to meet the needs of international students despite the considerable efforts made to market universities to international students (Pereda et al., 2007). According to research conducted by Haggis (2006), universities with international students at the undergraduate and graduate levels anticipate that these students will experience difficulties with adjustment to the academic curriculum and the educational norms of the institution. Universities can approach the issue from the premise that the problem lies within the student or they can attempt to adapt the educational experience to meet the needs of the international students. Universities presuming that adjustment problems lie within the student provide programs such as tutoring or mentoring to assist students with adjusting to the university environment. This approach is often based on the assumption that the international student is academically or linguistically deficient and must acquire the knowledge and behaviors necessary to integrate into the educational environment. Haggis indicated that the alternative

approach of adapting the educational experience to meet the needs of the student requires alteration to the teaching approaches to more closely conform to the values and norms of students from different cultures. It requires a departure from the mass education paradigm found in many universities to embrace a more flexible approach to education that uses some degree of customization to the needs of the students. The research supporting the conclusion of Haggis, however, was qualitative and based primarily on a review of previous studies. As a result, the conclusions are not well supported by empirical evidence.

The position adopted by Haggis (2006) is similar to the argument advanced by Ahl (2006) concerning the need to perceive learning motivation as the result of the interaction of the individual with institutional situations and structures. The discourse concerning adult students and particularly international students frames any difficulties with learning in terms of inadequate learner motivation. The difficulty may be the result of the relationship between the student and the institutional policies and procedures rather than an inherent shortcoming of the student. From this perspective, the institution should moderate its practices to meet the needs of international students. In contrast, Grebennikov and Skaines (2007) found that the majority of international students are relatively satisfied with the academic courses and procedures but have a lower level of satisfaction with personal and social experiences. The institution has only limited control over the personal behaviors and social environment of graduate students. At the same time, negative personal and social experiences among international students can influence their academic motivation.

Some research findings indicate that international students often form their expectations about a university educational experience with only sparse knowledge about the institution based on published information and reputation (Shanka et al., 2006). Prior to enrollment, international

graduate students evaluate the competency of the educational staff based on credentials and professional status. In addition, students evaluate the formal support programs for international students. The international student also has substantial gaps in knowledge about the institution because of the difficulty with obtaining accurate information about the educational experience from individuals that have attended the institution. In many cases, the international student bases the selection of an institution on assumptions about the value of the institution's degree in their home nation for improving employment opportunities (Szekers, 2010). As a result, the international student enters the institution with some expectations that may not be realistic and based on incomplete or inaccurate information (Arambewela et al., 2006). The actual experiences with both academic and nonacademic aspects of the institution are equally relevant for the overall satisfaction of the international student with the education (Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007).

Educational Leadership Programs

Research evidence suggests that the number of graduate level educational leadership graduate programs in the United States has increased substantially over the past decade. The expansion in graduate programs in educational leadership has occurred primarily in comprehensive educational institutions that do not specialize in research. At the same time, the labor market in education in the United States has not expanded sufficiently to support specialized professional degrees for educational leadership (Baker et al., 2007). As a result, many institutions rely on international students to support these programs. Roach and Lemasters (2006) provided evidence that institutions with residential graduate level educational leadership programs face substantial competition from institutions offering distance education programs to international students. The distance education approach has competitive advantages for

attracting international students because of the lower cost and the ability of the student to obtain a degree without disruption to work or family life. These factors are particularly important for employed educators seeking a degree in educational leadership to enhance their career prospects.

According to Robinson (2006), the focus of graduate level educational leadership programs is shifting away from the effective management of schools and toward leadership of the people responsible for teaching and learning. In this emerging model, management and administration of schools is a separate task from leadership. The management of schools involves the organization of the physical and human resources in the school to perform the tasks necessary to educate students. Leadership, however, involves inspiring the human resources of the school to adopt a vision of educational excellence, which motivates teachers and other personnel to educate students. In contrast, Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2009) argued that leadership in the context of educational institutions is synonymous with administrative responsibility. The conflicting opinions concerning the nature of educational leadership are indicative of the variable theories and perspectives influencing the content of educational leadership programs.

In the past, graduate level leadership education programs have functioned to regulate entry into education administration (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2009). Because of this orientation, many educational leadership programs have focused on teaching the technical skills necessary to administer an educational institution operating in the public sector. The theoretical and practical aspects of managing human resources to maximize their contribution to the organization were considered a secondary objective of the program. The increased recognition of the importance of leading personnel to enable schools to achieve their educational objectives, however, has produced an increased balance between administration and leadership in the

content of educational leadership programs. The balance between administrative and leadership content is apparent in the institutions that have added educational leadership graduate programs in the past decade (Baker et al., 2007).

According to Orr (2006), “the research in the leadership preparation field has been characterized as scant and of limited methodological quality” (p. 2). In the United States, organizations such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Council strongly influence the content of educational leadership programs. As a result, the university programs in educational leadership focus on providing the information deemed necessary by external bodies, which results in standardization of content. Despite the efforts to standardize educational leadership curricula, innovation and existing learning theories have influenced program content and methods of delivery. Adult learning theory has fostered the greater use of self-directed learning, particularly in the use of developmental and self-reflective practices in field experiences intended to apply leadership in practical situations.

Orr (2006) further indicated that, ideally, leadership theory and leadership education theory intersect in graduate educational leadership programs. Leadership theory should guide the program components and processes as well as the learning outcomes in terms of ability to understand and apply the principles of leadership. The desired general outcome of the educational program is to improve school leadership, which occurs only when the graduates of the program learn leadership methods and can apply those methods in the specific school environment where they are employed after completion of the program. This perspective, however, considers the outcomes of the programs in terms of the teaching profession and society in general and does not consider whether the program meets the objectives or needs of the

graduate students. It also conflicts with the traditional paradigm concerning the administrative nature of educational leadership (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2009).

Some evidence from research suggests that the way the curriculum for leadership programs is designed influences the students' perceptions of quality and satisfaction. Fenwick (2002) examined student perceptions of a graduate leadership programs using a problem-based learning approach. Because leadership is a subjective topic linked to the interaction of many different variables, the instructional approach can be significant for the ability of students to apply theoretical principles in practical situations. The researcher collected data using questionnaires and interviews from 166 past students in a graduate program in leadership at a single Canadian university using problem-based learning. Qualitative descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that the students as midcareer professionals believed that the problem-based approach produced significant long-term learning gains in the methods to apply leadership principles in practice. The participants in the study were also very satisfied with the problem-based approach to learning. The findings, however, are suspect because problem-based learning in leadership programs were not compared with the traditional didactic approach. In addition, the qualitative analysis of the data suggests that the findings are functionally a case study that cannot be generalized.

Subsequent research by Ivanovka and Stick (2007) confirmed the findings of Fenwick (2002) concerning student satisfaction with graduate educational leadership programs among a population of distance education students. The research used a mixed methods approach with doctoral students in an educational leadership program. The findings indicated that students valued emphasis on developing critical thinking skills and the application of theory to practical problems that could be applied in practical situations.

The importance of interactions with faculty and advisors is also a significant factor contributing to satisfaction with graduate educational leadership programs (Bain et al., 2010). The student must perceive the relationship as personal, with the faculty tailoring responses and advice to the specific needs of the students. The subjective perception of the student concerning the personal nature of the relationship controls the degree of satisfaction, which creates variability in the expectations of the student for the extent of the relationship. In effect, some students may require more attention from faculty to perceive the relationship as personal.

Based on the findings of survey research among university instructors, Knight et al. (2006) suggested that professional development programs in educational leadership or administration adopt some of the approaches and perspectives used in commercial firms. In this model, formal educational interventions are intended to provide the knowledge to educators to lead and manage others. The acquisition of the formal knowledge, however, must be supplemented with mentoring or coaching to assist with the practical application of the knowledge. Because of the substantial variation in the way in which leadership skills are applied to different individuals and in different situations, educational leaders may have difficulty applying theoretical knowledge in practical circumstances. Although some activity-based training can occur as part of the formal training in educational institutions, some form of subsequent support for students after completion of the program may be necessary.

Some assessments of research into the content of educational leadership programs are highly critical of the effectiveness of the programs for providing a knowledge base that can support practical leadership. In a discussion of curriculum standards for educational leadership programs, English (2006) identified a trend toward standardization of the content across institutions. The content is often theoretical and addresses only a limited number of the

responsibilities of school leaders. In addition, the content often emphasizes the more concrete elements of administrative tasks rather than the application of leadership skills necessary to inspire and guide subordinates in the school system. English (2006) further argued that the content of educational leadership programs is static and presumes that the same knowledge base concerning educational leadership is relevant in all situations. As a result, the content of advanced programs for educational leadership encourages use of traditional methods and stifles innovation. In contrast, Orr (2006) considered the trend toward standardization of content beneficial because it reduces variation in quality. According to Buchanan et al. (2007), however, the content of a graduate program has less importance to students with an objective of career enhancement because obtaining the degree rather than knowledge acquisition is the objective of these students.

Some research evidence suggests that institutions have to develop a comprehensive global approach to attract and retain international students for graduate level educational leadership programs. Bogotch and Maslin-Ostrowski (2010) used a case study approach to examine the processes used by a small university in Florida to develop an international educational leadership program over a 10-year period. The education department established a comprehensive internationalization policy that was intended to coordinate the efforts of faculty and to justify an increase in the budget for the department. In addition, it developed a curriculum that was general in administrative areas to allow the information to be adapted to the practices and regulations in the home nations of international students. The process involved the stages of internationalization analogous to the stages used by commercial enterprises. Initially, the department focused on attracting international students to residential programs tailored to meet the needs of the students. As the department gained competencies with international students, it

formed joint venture relationships with foreign universities to develop collaborative programs that included instruction in both the United States and foreign locations.

This section of the review of literature focused on issues related to educational leadership programs. It seems that the focus of graduate level educational leadership programs is shifting away from effective school management toward leadership in teaching and learning. Some evidence from research suggests that the design of leadership program curriculum influences students' perceptions of quality and satisfaction. Studies indicate the need for leadership preparation programs to develop programs that provide a knowledge base that support practical leadership in an educational terrain that is characterized by change and globalization.

Education and Educational Leadership in Belize

The literature concerning the educational system in Belize is relatively sparse. Lewis (2000) provided an overview of education in Belize in the colonial period based on a review of primary and secondary historical sources. Bennett (2008) provided a historical perspective on education in Belize, spanning the periods from the establishment of formal education in Belize during the colonial days to the state of education in postindependence Belize. According to Bennett (2008), establishment of formal education in Belize “originated with the establishment of a small primary (elementary) school in Belize settlement in 1816” (p. 1).

When Belize gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1981, the nation's educational system was based on the British colonial model. In this approach, schools were used to train students for employment after graduation and to maintain social order by imparting values and norms that supported colonial authority. The educational process in the nation has traditionally relied on rote memory and discouraged critical thinking because it could lead to ideas challenging the existing social order. Compulsory education began in 1915, which resulted

in an increase in enrollment and the number of primary and secondary schools in the nation. After World War II, the nationalist movement in the nation advocated greater expenditure on education, which was viewed as a necessity to develop the self-reliance and civic knowledge to support independence. The enrollment in secondary schools until 1981 remained low because most students did not finish primary school. Three teacher training schools that existed at the time of independence provided 3-year programs that led to certification but not to a university degree (Lewis, 2000).

Pandos (2000) discussed the education system in Belize following independence, outlining some of the challenges inherent in the system. Primary education is free and compulsory, but secondary education is optional. Although the government pays tuition for secondary schools, students face additional fees that reduce enrollment. Although the Ministry of Education establishes national curricula and formulates education policy, the Catholic Church administers the schools and makes all decisions concerning teacher and principal employment. The Ministry of Education funds the school system, but the resources available in the nation are limited. The founding of University College of Belize in 1986 resulted in secondary school teachers obtaining a baccalaureate degree in education. The Belize Teachers Training College opened in 1992 with programs intended for new teachers and to improve the professional skills of teachers already in positions in the schools. Challenges for educational leadership in the nation include the continued practice of hiring untrained teachers at the primary school level and a shortage of teachers leading to high student-teacher ratios. In addition, few opportunities for development of skills of teachers exist in the nation because of the policy focus on new teacher training. The educational outcomes for students in Belize are poor, as measured by performance on national and international examinations (Pandos, 2000).

According to Bennett (2008), 21 secondary schools were in operation in Belize in 1980. Eleven of these schools were run by the churches. Also, in 1980, 2-year postsecondary education was offered only at St. John's College Sixth Form and the Belize Technical College. However, junior colleges existed in all of the administrative districts except Toledo District. Teacher training was achieved through full-time teacher training programs, in-service trainings, and a series of annual examinations set by the Ministry of Education (Bennett, 2008). UB opened in 1986. According to the Commonwealth Secretariat (2011), five institutions of tertiary education have been established, with several additional "junior colleges." Belize also shares in the regional University of the West Indies, which has its main campuses in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Relative to education statistics, *The Abstract of Education Statistics 2008/09*, published by the Ministry of Education and Youth (2011), indicated that total enrollment from preschool to tertiary was 97,356 for 2008–2009 school year. Of this number, 3,391 and 3,581 were enrolled in junior colleges and tertiary education, respectively. Of 2,948 primary teachers, 1,254 received formal training, representing 42.5%. Of 1,272 secondary school teachers, 378 received formal training, representing 29.7%.

Concerning educator training, Bush and Charron (2002) noted that in the past teachers and principals had little opportunity to obtain a graduate level degree in educational leadership in Belize. The Ministry of Education and the Belize Teachers Training College established a 1-year in-service program to provide primary school principals with management training but did not address leadership in the curriculum. The program involved attending a workshop 1 day a month and the preparation of an activities portfolio under the guidance of a supervisor. Successful completion of the program led to certification and an increase in compensation. The

focus of the program was on the administrative tasks associated with school management and could be considered a traditional approach to educational leadership that does not emphasize motivating human resources (Robinson, 2006). This program is now defunct.

The UNF and UB master's program became the major leadership training program in Belize. Chan (2005) examined the historical development of higher education in Belize from 1954 to 2005. Chan (2005, p. 5) located the inception of higher education in Belize in 1954 with the establishment of two teacher training colleges. However, higher education in Belize has evolved with the emergence of offshore institutions and bilateral relations between UB and foreign universities. Chan noted that as of 2005, 20% of Belizean senior educational administrators held bachelor's degrees, 62% held master's degrees, and 15% held doctoral degrees. These statistics include employees of offshore schools.

Chan (2005) also noted that administration of higher education institutions in Belize is "evenly split in terms of 50% being collegiate and the other 50% non-collegiate" (p. 20). The program offered jointly by UNF and UB was noted in the report as having contributed to the internationalization of higher education in Belize (Chan, 2005).

King (2012) noted that most female higher education leaders in Belize were transnationals, women living in two different nations. The implication is that it may be difficult to fully track female higher educational leaders in Belize because many of them reside overseas. According to the Commonwealth Secretariat (2011), in 2009, the female-male ratio for gross enrollment in tertiary education was 1.85:1.

Implications and Gaps in the Literature

An implication of the research concerning student satisfaction is the importance of the gaps between student expectations and the educational experience (Arambewela & Hall, 2007;

Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007; Hassan et al., 2009; Tan & Kek, 2004). The research based on expectancy theory and gap analysis indicates that graduate students use the same processes as other consumers of services when evaluating an educational program. The existing research has identified numerous expectations among students, including adequacy of physical accommodations and environment (Oshagbemi, 1997), relevance of course work (Reynolds et al., 2002), and perceived quality of instructors (Shanka et al., 2006). Previous research has also examined some of the expectations of international students based on their unique situation involving consumption of an educational service in a cross-cultural context. Some of these factors include a need for adjustment support (Arambewela et al., 2006) and perceived effectiveness of communications and relationships with faculty (Trice, 2004). These findings imply that international students are more likely to be satisfied with educational programs in institutions providing a wide range of supports for cross-cultural adjustment and the communication needs of foreign students.

A particular gap in the literature concerning international students is research examining the moderating effect of institutions with collaborative teaching arrangements with universities in the students' home countries. The research investigating satisfaction of international students with a cross-border educational experience assumes that the institution indiscriminately seeks students from all nations with no customization of course work or support systems for the specific cultural needs of students. Some institutions, however, have formed a collaborative relationship with other universities in specific nations and have gained expertise in educating students from that nation (Bogotch & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2010). Insufficient investigation has been conducted of the effect this type of collaborative arrangement has on the satisfaction of international students.

An additional implication of the literature is the effect on international students of the transition in many institutions offering graduate programs in educational leadership from an administrative orientation to a combined administrative and leadership orientation (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2009; Robinson, 2006). The educational administration elements of a graduate program in educational leadership can be specific to the nation where the program is offered because administration often entails compliance with local laws and norms. As a result, the content may not be relevant to students from other nations that use different administrative practices. In contrast, leadership is more universal and can be relevant to international students regardless of the specific administrative practices used in their home nations. Previous research has not focused on the expectations of international students for the relevance of course work in graduate administration programs and the perceived congruity between expectations and the program experience. A gap in the literature also exists concerning the perspectives of international students in educational leadership programs of the applicability of the knowledge obtained through the program to the schools in their home nation.

Summary

The literature examining adult learning theory and its application to graduate studies is relevant because graduate students often have previous work experience in a professional field and are self-motivated and self-directed in their pursuit of additional education. The manner of applying adult learning theories in the context of graduate education can influence student satisfaction with the educational experience, with a pedagogical approach generally associated with lower levels of satisfaction. Satisfaction with education is the affective response to the overall educational experience. Factors influencing student satisfaction include the institutional environment and accommodations to student needs, the relevance of the course work to the

needs of the student, the perceived quality of instructors, and the relationship between education and achieving personal and career goals. Graduate education is a service that students purchase from institutions. As a result, institutions adopt a marketing approach to influence students to select the institution in a highly competitive environment.

Expectancy–value theory is often used by researchers examining the gap between student expectations and student experiences with graduate studies. Students are satisfied when the gap between their expectations and experiences is relatively small. The two-factor theory can also account for student satisfaction, with satisfaction increasing if the educational experience addresses the higher order needs of the student. Factors such as style of instruction and the educational approach of specific departments within the institution can mediate student satisfaction.

Research investigating the factors influencing student satisfaction with education has identified categories of factors related to institutional accommodations, social environment, relevance of course work, quality of instructors, and support systems. In addition, the career goals and personal goals of students are factors influencing satisfaction with the educational experience.

Cross-border education is a market-driven activity that is a solution for educational institutions faced with increased competition. Cross-border education is a positioned product, with the reputation of the institution determining the value of the education in terms of social status or employment opportunities. Institutions penetrate international markets with various strategies, including establishing a branch campus abroad or forming partnerships with foreign institutions.

The needs and perceptions of international students often differ significantly from those of domestic students. The expectations of international students vary across cultures, creating difficulties for universities with a diverse international student body when attempting to standardize support programs.

The number of graduate level educational leadership programs in the United States has increased substantially in the past decade, which has also increased competition to attract students. The trend in educational leadership programs is away from an exclusive emphasis on administration and toward the inclusion of more general leadership theories and principles. In graduate educational leadership programs, approaches emphasizing practical application of theoretical knowledge, such as problem-based learning, can increase student satisfaction. The sparse literature concerning professional education of teachers in Belize indicates that the system of teacher education has been undergoing changes over the past several decades.

Chapter III presents the current study's overall research design, including the epistemological grounding, research methodologies, setting, participants, data collection, and data analysis protocol. Ethical issues and the studies limitations are also discussed.

CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this retrospective, nonexperimental, quantitative study was to investigate nontraditional international students' satisfaction with a customized, transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership program. The study identified the degree of satisfaction these graduates have with various aspects of their educational experience. Responding to Likert-type scale questions, the participants retrospectively assessed their satisfaction with their overall educational experiences along selected dimensions of the Eight Principles of Effectiveness for Servicing Adult Learners (Flint & Associates, 1999). The data-gathering instrument provided opportunity for collection of some qualitative data in the form of brief narratives, which provided a richer understanding of the participants' responses to the Likert-type scale questions.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) have defined a paradigm as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (p. 99) and observed that "a paradigm encompasses three elements: epistemology, ontology, and methodology" (p. 99). *Epistemology* refers to the system an individual uses to organize knowledge, whereas *ontology* refers to the individual's understanding of the nature of reality. *Methodology* refers to the approaches used to acquire knowledge. Methodology can be broadly conceptualized as the theoretical arguments employed to justify research methods and designs rather than a mere listing of data collection and data analysis methods (Case & Light, 2011; Clough & Nutbrown, 2002; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2009).

This chapter includes the research problem, research questions, and the null hypotheses. The chapter also includes a brief discussion of the philosophical perspectives undergirding the research, describes the population, explains the process for selection of participants,

states the sample size, and explains instrumentation, research procedures, and data analysis. Issues of external validity, limitations, and ethical considerations are covered.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were partly undergirded by the Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners, as defined by CAEL (Flint & Associates, 1999). Adult learners' experiences encompassed analysis of six composite scales: institutional accommodations, relevance of course work, knowledgeable instructor who employed relevant instructional approaches, adequate support systems to help with the challenges of educational process, achievement of career goals, and achievement of personal goals. Additionally, the researcher collected some data using descriptive qualitative survey questions to provide additional insights into the participants' attitudes regarding research questions posed by the study.

The two overarching research questions were as follows:

1. In terms of their satisfaction with their educational experience, what are the perceptions of the graduates in a Master of Education program in educational leadership?
2. To what extent are the perceived levels of satisfaction with the educational experience related to the following variables: (a) institutional accommodations, (b) course work that is relevant, (c) instructors who are knowledgeable in teaching adult students, (d) support systems to help with the educational process, (e) achievement of career goals, and (f) achievement of personal goals?

From the research questions, the following null hypotheses were derived and tested.

H_{01} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between institutional accommodations and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

H_{02} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between the course work and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

H_{03} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between instructors who are knowledgeable in teaching adult students and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

H_{04} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between support systems and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

H_{05} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between achieving career goals and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

H_{06} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between achieving personal goals and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

Research Design and Approach

This retrospective, nonexperimental, quantitative research study used the survey method for quantitative data collection and provided opportunity for collection of some qualitative data. The qualitative data were used as a supplement to further explain the understanding of the participants of their satisfaction with their educational experiences. The quantitative data were

collected with a survey questionnaire originally developed by the Career and Human Resources Department of University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, and modified by Sum et al. (2010) for use with master's degree students (see Appendix A). Appropriate permission was elicited and granted to use the instrument for this study (see Appendix B). The qualitative data were collected with a separate descriptive survey instrument. In the analysis of the quantitative data of the study, both inferential and descriptive statistical analyses were employed. In the qualitative component, a combination of summative content analysis and thematic analysis was used to identify key words, phrases, themes, and patterns in the data, and to provide a richer understanding of the participants' responses to the Likert-type scale questions (Ezzy, 2002).

Because the quantitative study entailed the incorporation of qualitative data, incorporation of some elements of a mixed methods approach in explaining and justifying the research methodology was warranted. The mixed methods approach combines the positivist research paradigm of quantitative methodologies with a constructivist research paradigm associated with qualitative methodologies. The positivist paradigm assumes that an objective reality exists that can be measured and quantified (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, the researcher is an external observer of the phenomena under investigation who collects data that can be used to gain a better understanding of the phenomena. The assumptions of positivism permit testing of hypotheses established prior to the investigation, using deductive reasoning. This was accomplished by the employment of a survey questionnaire using Likert-type scale questions. The constructivist paradigm underlying the qualitative component of the study assumes that individuals construct meaning from their experiences and relationships with others, which results in variable and relative understanding of meaning depending on the individual and the situational context. The constructivist paradigm supports a research approach

in which the subjects of the study control the direction of the enquiry, with the researcher participating with the subjects to define the boundaries of the investigation (Flick, 2006). The qualitative component of the data-gathering document provided the participants an opportunity to exercise some control over their responses by writing brief narratives that contained their feelings.

A quantitative research approach with opportunity for collection of qualitative data is suitable when the purpose of the study is to obtain information about a complex phenomenon that cannot be easily analyzed solely with a quantitative or qualitative approach (Newman & Ridenour, 2008). Even though this approach was not necessarily a mixed methods approach, it embodies some characteristics of a mixed methods approach. Consequently, the study design and approach can be justified by employing the same rationale used for a mixed methods study.

A quantitative research approach with opportunity for collection of qualitative data is a pragmatic approach to research that balances the strengths and weaknesses of the quantitative and qualitative approaches to research in order to obtain a broader understanding of the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The quantitative research approach with opportunity for collection of qualitative data permits the examination of a topic from multiple perspectives, with an integration of the data providing a richer understanding with greater nuance (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene, 2007; Howe, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Supporting the synthesis of data obtained from the rigorous statistical analysis of data from quantitative methods with the descriptive data obtained from the qualitative analysis provides additional advantages, such as a more balanced understanding of the participants' responses (Alivernini, Lucidi, & Manganelli, 2009).

Quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are based on different ontological and epistemological assumptions. Quantitative research is based on the positivist research paradigm and the ontological assumption that reality is objective. The epistemological assumption in quantitative research is that reality can be parsed into separate factors that can be measured and analyzed to provide an understanding through deductive reasoning. Qualitative research is based on the phenomenological ontological assumption that reality is subjective and is constructed by the individual experiencing the reality. The epistemological assumption in qualitative research is that knowledge can be constructed by obtaining a holistic understanding of the subjects' perceptions of reality, using inductive reasoning. Employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues, which seems warranted when investigating many issues related to education (Pegues, 2007; Spillane et al., 2010).

Understanding the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the different research approaches is fundamental to justifying research design. Prasad (2005) provided a philosophical framework for the various approaches to qualitative research, situating them within the wider framework of postmodernism. Creswell (2006) described five traditions of qualitative inquiry, contextualizing each within its separate philosophical framework. Johnson (2009) encapsulated the differences between the quantitative and qualitative approaches and observed that qualitative research “tends to view facts and values as rightfully entangled and quantitative research prefers to emphasize separation of facts and values in the name of objectivity” (pp. 449–450).

This empirical research proceeded from the assumption that both quantitative and qualitative elements exist in the ontological and epistemological aspects of the material world. The research also adopted the position that one method of disciplined inquiry—qualitative,

quantitative, or mixed methods—need not necessarily be privileged over the other. The undergirding idea is that the research questions should drive the choice of methods (Creswell, 2009).

The changing contexts of higher education are creating new and complex challenges that dictate using multiple perspectives and approaches to conceptualize, observe, and analyze topics related to higher education. The issue of student satisfaction with educational experience is a particularly complex, multifaceted phenomenon appropriate for examination using multiple perspectives and approaches. As Creswell (2009) noted, employment of either qualitative or quantitative methods may be inadequate in capturing the complexities of the problems in social sciences. The two methods complement one another to provide a more layered and multipronged approach to research (Hesse-Biber, 2008). The foregoing provides justification for inclusion of a qualitative component to a quantitative study.

Sample and Setting

In this section, the study population, sampling procedure, and setting of this study are described.

Population

The study population is the group of individuals or events about which a researcher desires information, with the approach for choosing the members of a sample from the population appropriate for the size of the population and the research method (Singleton & Straits, 2005). The population investigated in this study was graduates of the customized Master of Education program conducted by UNF through a partnership with UB in Belize. This population shares the commonly accepted characteristics of adult, nontraditional students because they are older individuals seeking additional education. Additional characteristics

defining the population include enrollment, participation, and graduation from a specific educational program.

Sampling Methods

A sample is a group of individuals selected by a systematic approach to be participants in a study (Singleton & Straits, 2005; Trochim, 2001). A sample is a subset of the accessible population, which is a subset of the entire population. In the present study, a sampling of the entire accessible population was attempted. As a result, random sampling was not employed. Some of the individuals in the study population could not participate in the research, which can affect the validity of the findings of the quantitative phase of the study. The total population was about 350 (J. P. Kemppainen, e-mail communication, April 19, 2013). The sample surveyed was 62. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970, p. 608), the ideal sample size for a population of 350 should be 183. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) suggestions were based on an article, "Small Sample Techniques," published by the research division of the National Education Association in 1960. However, only 62 participants were recruited for the study. Therefore, a convenience sample of attendees to an alumni event was used.

The following section outlines the sampling procedure for the study. On securing UNF's Institutional Review Board's approval (see Appendix C), I collected data during an alumni event after requesting permission (see Appendix D) and being granted appropriate permissions (see Appendix E).

Setting

With the permission of alumni event organizers, I administered the research questionnaire during a UNF alumni event in Belize City, Belize. Appropriate protocols for recruitment of human research participants were adhered to (see Appendix F). Informed consent/waiver of

signed informed consent was sought from each participant and granted (Appendix G) before administration of research instruments. Each research participant completed the research questionnaire in a manner that guaranteed the participant's anonymity. When the participants completed responding to the questionnaire and exited the venue of research, the researcher collected data-gathering documents and secured them in a briefcase. The completed questionnaires remained in the secure briefcase until the researcher transported them back the United States for analysis.

Instrumentation and Materials

In the following section, the quantitative and qualitative instruments that were used to collect data for the research are described.

Instrument

The instruments used in the study were designed to obtain data concerning student perceptions of their educational experience, which are relevant to satisfaction. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the quantitative phase of the study used an instrument developed by Career and Human Resources Department of University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, and modified by Sum et al. (2010). This instrument has been previously used once (Sum et al., 2010). I slightly modified this instrument for the purposes of the present study by deleting items not appropriate for the population under study and adding three items: "Value of UNF-UB program for achieving career goals," "Value of UNF-UB program for achieving personal goals," and "How would you rate your satisfaction with *your* input into the graduate program?" Also, UNF-UB was substituted for WED, which was the acronym used by Sum et al. for Workforce Education Department.

The quantitative instrument (see Appendix A) consisted of three sections, with a total of 18 questions. The first section contained only one question, which asked the participants to rate their overall satisfaction with their educational experience. This question measured perceptions of the dependent variable of the study of overall satisfaction. The second section contained 16 questions, which asked the respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with various educational experiences. These questions measured perceptions of independent variables of the study. The third section asked the students to rate their satisfaction with their input into the program.

As Simon and Francis (2001) noted, scores obtained using an instrument are valid if they measure the constructs the instrument is designed to measure. Survey instruments using a Likert-type scale are generally effective in measuring a person's feelings or perceptions (Waddington, 2000). The Likert-type scale commonly provides seven interval options; fewer than five options may likely decrease reliability (Simon & Francis, 2001).

In creating the research instrument, Career and Human Resources Education, the original creators of the instrument, reviewed relevant literature and employed a panel of experts to generate the items in the instrument. Additionally, the creators of the instrument employed focus groups and pilot studies from which reliability data were collected using the instrument for their study. Furthermore, the instrument was further reviewed by another panel of researchers before administration (Sum et al., 2010). For the present study, the researcher estimated the consistency reliability by conducting statistical analysis on the responses to the items and computing Cronbach's alpha for scores on the subscales of the instrument.

Potential errors inherent in survey methodology encompass measurement invalidity (incorrect measurement of construct of interest), measurement error (departure from true value of the issue being measured), processing error (related to data processing), coverage error

(mismatching sample frame with target population), no-response error (nonrepresentative data resulting from limited response by participants), sampling error (variance between sample frame and actual population), and adjustment error (erroneous adjustments to compensate for aforementioned errors; Groves et al., 2004).

The quantitative data were analyzed with descriptive statistical methods widely accepted in the social and behavioral sciences (Schacht & Aspelmeier, 2005). Frequency distributions, means and standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha, and correlation matrices were the descriptive statistical analyses employed. Additional analysis identified the variables that had the largest effect on students' perceptions of satisfaction.

The qualitative instrument consisted of six open-ended survey questions designed to obtain descriptive data from the participants to complement data gathered using quantitative data-gathering instrument and to provide a deeper insight into the participants' responses. The open-ended survey questions were designed to allow participants some flexibility with their responses. The questions were also designed to elicit brief narratives from the participants.

Content analysis was used to analyze the data from the qualitative survey questionnaire. Qualitative data analysis loosely followed the following steps: preparation of data, definition of unit of analysis, development of categories and coding scheme, text coding, assessment of coding consistency, drawing of conclusions from the coded data, and reporting of methods and findings (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Essentially, the analysis had three major phases: preparation, organizing, and reporting. I followed inductive content analysis approach, which involved deriving categories from the data by moving from the specific to the general through observation of particular instances and combination of same into a larger whole (Riessman, 2008).

The themes hypothesized to exist were already in place prior to the thematic analysis. In order to accommodate the a priori themes, I recruited and briefly trained three associates to independently conduct a thematic analysis of the questionnaires. The associates were not made aware of the hypothesized themes (Riessman, 2008).

The qualitative component of the study was employed to clarify the findings of the quantitative phase of the study. The findings enhanced understanding of the perceptions of satisfaction with the educational experience among the participants.

Summary

Quantitative and qualitative survey questionnaires accompanied by an explanatory letter and an informed consent statement/waiver of informed consent were disseminated to participants in the study during an alumni event in Belize. Completed survey questionnaires with no identifying marker were collected and secured by the researcher. Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted on data obtained in the quantitative phase of the study whereas content analysis was used on the data obtained in the qualitative phase of the study. Relevant and warranted conclusions were drawn from the statistical analysis.

Ethical Issues

The study adhered to the tenets of the basic ethical principles of beneficence, no maleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice, and respect for people's rights and dignity (American Psychological Association, 2010). The research was guided also by the ethical standards set forth by the American Educational Research Association (2011). The research was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of UNF's Institutional Review Board, which ensured that the rights of the human participants were protected during all phases of the research process.

Limitations of the Study

There are certain limitations that are inherent in a retrospective investigation. Cohen, Kasen, Bifulco, Andrews, and Gordon (2005) stated that retrospective reports are subject to “simple forgetting” and “possible bias” (p. 345). Card (2007) noted that retrospective data may result from the “individual’s distorted perceptions of relationships or willingness to report certain aspects of relationships” (p. 40). Card also observed that there may be “distortions of memories of relationships (especially when subsequent events occurring in a relationship alter perceptions of earlier stages of relationships)” (p. 41). Schroder, Carey, and Vanable (2003) noted the ways in which retrospective methods may involve specific errors:

Memory error is affected by at least three factors that determine the demands of recall: (a) length of the reference interval, (b) level of measurement, and (c) frequency of the behavior being assessed. Furthermore, accurate responding is affected by individual limitations such as literacy skills. (p. 104)

These limitations can be addressed and minimized in a variety of ways. Huston and Robins (1982) suggested bias in retrospective studies can be reduced by making it easier on the participants by “mak[ing] demands on the memory that are not excessive” (p. 909). I attempted to minimize these potential errors by limiting the number of questions asked of the participants in the qualitative section to ensure that excessive demand was not made on their memory.

Also, some of study’s limitations arise from it being a questionnaire-based investigation (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). Questionnaires inherently have a number of drawbacks. For example, a questionnaire occurs after an event. This means the subjects may not recall important factors. In the case of this research, the subjects may have forgotten significant factors relating to their educational experience. This was especially true for individuals who graduated from the program in its early years.

Questionnaires are also standardized instruments that can lead to confusion on the part of the participants. In the case of this research, the instructions and questions were stated in a relatively simple manner. However, room for confusion still existed. For example, the instructions after the initial question indicated that the respondent was to rate her or his satisfaction level with the graduate program according to certain characteristics. The characteristic of “program advisement” was an example of a relatively simple concept that could be misconstrued by the participant. Some of the participants may have responded to this question to indicate how well they were satisfied with their advisor. Other people may have taken this as an indication for them to rate their satisfaction with the advice given in courses regarding later actions that should have been taken by the student.

Questionnaires are generally limited according to whether they choose open-ended or closed-ended questions (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). Open-ended questions are able to generate significant amounts of information but can be difficult to analyze or process. Closed-ended questions often ignore significant variables by being too focused. In this study, the questionnaires were split into quantitative and qualitative sections (Creswell, 2009). The quantitative aspect of the questionnaire involved closed-ended questions related to satisfaction with the program in general or by certain characteristics in particular. The qualitative portion asked six open-ended questions. I hoped that employment of open-ended quantitative questions minimized the closed-ended questions problem by providing the participants with the option to expand on their responses to the quantitative questions.

Another disadvantage of questionnaires is that the respondents may only briefly consider each question in order to avoid spending too much time on the research instrument (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). An attempt was made to avoid this problem by keeping the questionnaire

relatively short. Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to know whether the participants took the questionnaire seriously and considered the questions. The study was conducted while the respondents were at a social event. It could be that the atmosphere in which the questionnaires were answered tended to encourage a casual attitude toward any behaviors or opinions. In this case, the respondents may have thought only briefly about each question. This type of environment may also have encouraged the respondents to answer in a more positive fashion. In fact, this may be the reason that the majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the graduate program. Possibly, only those satisfied attend these events.

Another drawback of questionnaires is that they can be affected by social forces (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). For example, some people answer questionnaires in a way that they believe might meet with favorable opinions from the researcher (i.e., based on social desirability). Because the present research was conducted with individuals who were attending an alumni function, it is likely that they believed the researcher would be pleased to find that the graduate students approved of the program. Although social forces are likely to have been a factor for this study, one should not assume that they invalidate the findings. For example, even though the majority of answers were positive with regard to satisfaction, differences existed in the ways the subjects responded relative to one another. These differences are likely to have remained noteworthy even if higher levels of satisfaction were reported. Further, because the surveys were administered only to persons who had successfully completed the program, it is likely that those persons with the least favorable opinions (i.e., those who had dropped out or been removed from the program) would not have been sampled.

Certain limitations are inherent in research that employs a correlational approach. Correlation investigates whether a relationship exists between variables but does not imply a

causal relationship. For example, a positive correlation between student satisfaction and institutional accommodations could be due to several factors. It cannot be assumed that because the two factors are related that the institutional accommodations were the cause of higher levels of student satisfaction. A third factor could account for both observations. For instance, perhaps institutions that have higher levels of accommodations also cater to an upper socioeconomic level of students or student satisfaction may be related to socioeconomic status rather than to the accommodations.

Conclusion

This study employed a retrospective, nonexperimental, quantitative approach with a component for collection of qualitative data. I relied on survey instruments to collect data in both the quantitative and qualitative components of the research. Quantitative research focuses on the identification of differences in data to explain or predict, whereas qualitative research is an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). The quantitative instrument is a modified form of a questionnaire developed by Sum et al. (2010). The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlations, and test of mean differences. A researcher-created qualitative questionnaire was used to gather data that was triangulated with the quantitative data to provide a richer understanding of the students' experience and factors that affected the students' satisfaction. The qualitative data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis. Whereas the quantitative data established the relationships between the variables, the qualitative data provided insights concerning the details of the participants' satisfaction with their educational experience in terms of satisfaction. A discussion of the ethical considerations to protect the rights of all participants was included in this chapter.

Chapter IV presents and discusses the results from the analysis of the data. Chapter IV also provides a more thorough description of data collection and specific types of instruction received by the participants. Tables, graphs, and narrative discussions are included to organize and present the findings of the study, which is intended to provide credible evidence to substantiate the findings (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002).

CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this retrospective, nonexperimental, quantitative study was to investigate nontraditional international students' satisfaction with a customized, transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership. The program was offered by UNF, which was the degree-granting institution, in partnership with UB, in Belize, Central America. The population for the study was alumni of the program. The research instrument, a quantitative survey, was administered during an alumni event. The participants retrospectively assessed their satisfaction with their overall educational experiences along specified dimensions. Though principally a quantitative study, opportunity was provided for collection of narrative data from the participants by asking them to respond to six open-ended questions contained in the qualitative survey component. The responses from the qualitative survey provided a richer understanding of participants' responses to the quantitative Likert-type scale questions. For the sake of anonymity, I ensured that the survey forms did not contain any personal identifying markers. No information to identify participants was solicited or gathered. Therefore, no demographic information is reported. No data were missing.

This chapter presents findings from data analyses. The first section focuses on quantitative data analysis, and the second section focuses on analysis of the qualitative responses. A conclusion is provided at the end. In the quantitative component of the study, descriptive statistics were employed to describe and summarize data. Parametric and nonparametric tests were conducted. In the qualitative component, content analysis was used to

identify themes and patterns in the data and provide a richer and better understanding of the participants' responses to the Likert-type scale questions (Ezzy, 2002).

Analysis of Quantitative Data

This section focuses on the analysis of quantitative data. Data were collected using a questionnaire. The quantitative portion of the questionnaire consisted of 18 questions that were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Answers to each of these questions included the options of *extremely unsatisfied*, *unsatisfied*, *somewhat satisfied*, *satisfied*, or *extremely satisfied*. The *extremely unsatisfied* choice was assigned a score of 1, whereas the *extremely satisfied* was assigned a score of 5. The options of *unsatisfied*, *somewhat satisfied*, and *satisfied* were assigned scores of 2, 3, and 4, respectively (Brace, 2008).

In this section of the analysis, the frequency distribution of the responses was analyzed. The means and standard deviations of responses to each of the items and the subscales are reported. Cronbach's alpha was computed for scores on the whole instrument and for each of the subscales.

Research Questions Addressed

The two main research questions in the present study are as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of the graduates of a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership of their education experience in terms of their satisfaction with their educational experience?
2. To what extent are the perceived levels of satisfaction with the educational experience related to the following variables: (a) institutional accommodations, (b) course work that is relevant, (c) instructors who are knowledgeable in teaching adult students, (d) support systems to

help with the educational process, (e) achievement of career goals, and (f) achievement of personal goals?

The questions in the data-gathering instrument were designed to elicit answers to the two research questions. The first question asked in the survey instrument was this: “To what extent are you satisfied with the UNF–UB graduate program?” This question served to represent the perceived level of satisfaction in the research framework. Six variables were hypothesized to be associated with the perceived level of satisfaction: institutional accommodations, relevant course work, knowledgeable instructors, support systems, career goals, and personal goals.

The institutional accommodations consisted of five elements of the graduate program that were already in place and not easily affected by students. These elements were admission procedures, graduate program costs, distribution of courses delivered by distance, reputation of the Master of Education program, and the reputation of UNF.

Relevant course work was another subscale in the survey questionnaire. This variable consisted of four items in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate their levels of satisfaction with the following: courses offered through the department, perceived level of preparation for their desired career goal or position, participant input into the program, and perceived level of preparation for a doctoral program.

Another variable was knowledgeable instructors, which consisted of a single questionnaire item. The knowledgeable instructors variable was determined by inquiring about the subjects’ satisfaction regarding faculty members involved in the program.

The support systems subscale contained five questions. These questions inquired as to the satisfaction level of the respondents regarding program advisement, the level of satisfaction with other students in the graduate program, and the level of satisfaction with interaction

between students and faculty involved in the program. Questions were also asked regarding participants' satisfaction related to (a) networking opportunities among faculty and students as well as to (b) communication within the department.

The relevance of the graduate program with regard to student career goals was expected to be an equally important variable relative to the participants' overall satisfaction. The participants were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with regard to the value of the UNF–UB program for achieving their career goals. This was accounted for by one survey question. Specifically, the participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with the value of the program relative to achieving career goals.

Another variable that was posited to be important with regard to perceived levels of satisfaction with the program was personal goals. This variable was accounted for by one survey question. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction regarding the value of the UNF–UB program for the achievement of their personal goals. The general research framework for this empirical study is shown in Figure 2.

Descriptive Statistical Analyses

Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted on the data collected. The analyses performed include frequency distribution of all responses, means and standard deviations of all the responses, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, correlation matrix for the dependent and independent variables (correlation matrix for the 18 items), and correlation matrix for the dependent variable and the 6 subcategories.

Frequency, means, and standard deviations. Table 1 shows the frequency counts of the responses for the 18 items. Mean and standard deviations are also presented in the table.

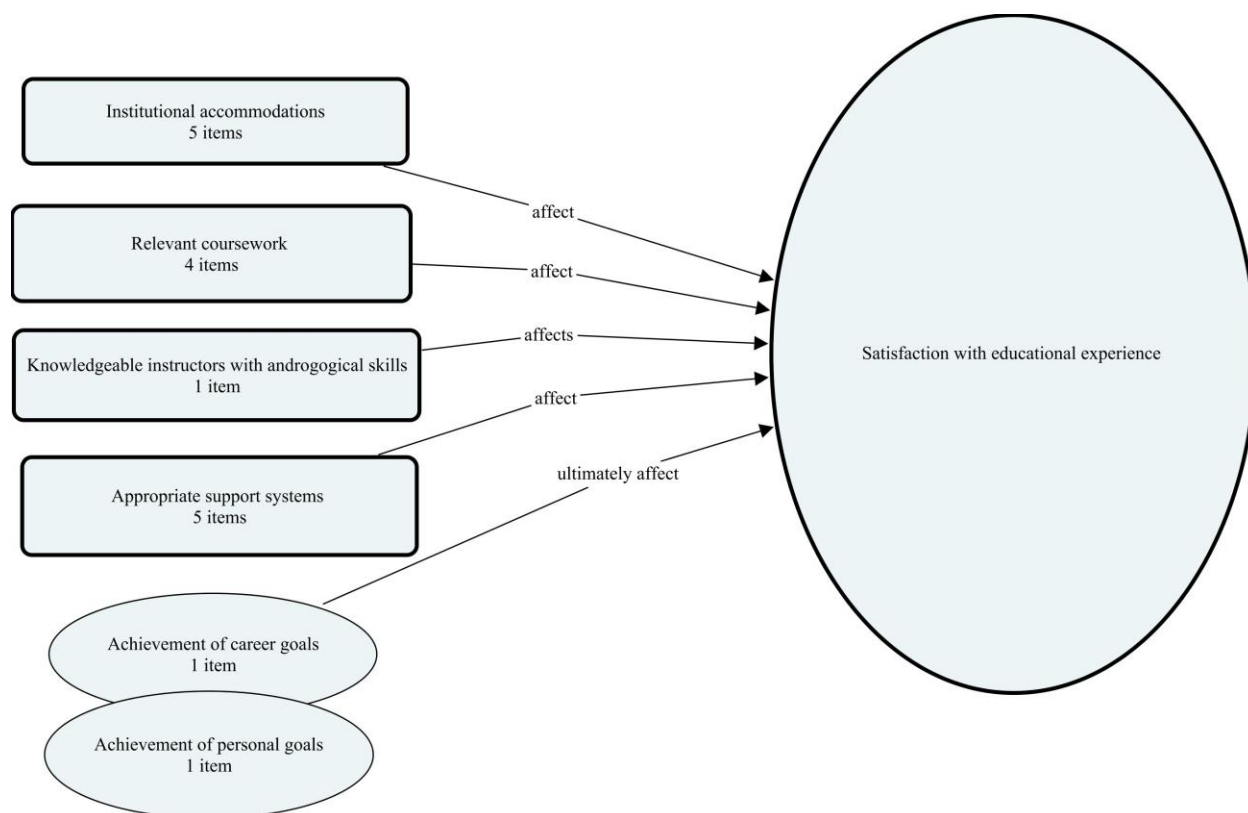


Figure 2. Research framework.

The means ranged from 4.39 to 4.77. The standard deviations ranged from 0.42 to 0.74. Standard deviation shows how much variation or dispersion exists from the mean. In other words, it is a measure of the variability or the spread of the data. A low standard deviation indicates that the data points are close to the mean, and a high standard deviation indicates that the data points are more spread out. As the standard deviations are small for the 18 measures (i.e., 0.74 or less), they suggest that, for each measure, the responses are very close to the means. The results in Table 1 indicate that most responses are either *extremely satisfied* (5) or *satisfied* (4).

Cronbach's alpha analysis. Cronbach's alpha analysis was performed to determine the internal consistency of scores on the subscales. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is usually considered to be a method of measuring internal consistency (Urdan, 2010). Further,

Table 1
Frequency Count, Means, and Standard Deviations of Responses

Variable	Frequency counts of the responses					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	Extremely satisfied (5)	Satisfied (4)	Somewhat satisfied (3)	Unsatisfied (2)	Extremely unsatisfied (1)		
Satisfaction	43(69)	18(29)	1(2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.68	0.50
Admission	51 (82)	8 (13)	3 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.77	0.53
Distance	28 (45)	32 (52)	2 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.42	0.56
Costs	34 (55)	25 (40)	3 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.50	0.59
Reputation-MEd	42 (68)	17 (27)	3 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.63	0.58
Reputation-UNF	48 (77)	14 (22)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.77	0.42
Courses	34 (55)	26 (42)	2 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.52	0.57
Career prep	38 (61)	19 (31)	4 (6)	1 (2)	0 (0)	4.52	0.70
PhD prep	30 (48)	27 (44)	4 (6)	1 (2)	0 (0)	4.39	0.69
Input	41 (66)	20 (32)	1 (7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.65	0.52
Advisement	30 (48)	29 (47)	3 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.44	0.59
Students	28 (45)	31 (50)	3 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.40	0.59
Interaction	38 (61)	24 (39)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.61	0.49
Networking	35 (56.)	19 (31)	8 (13)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.44	0.72
Communications	35 (56)	18 (29)	9 (15)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.42	0.74
Faculty	37 (60)	23 (37)	2 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.56	0.56
Career goals	46 (74)	16 (26)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.74	0.44
Personal goals	48 (77)	12 (19)	1 (2)	1 (2)	0 (0)	4.73	0.58

Note. Numbers in parentheses after frequency counts are the percentages. MEd = the Master of Education program; UNF = University of North Florida.

Cronbach's alpha indirectly indicates the degree to which a set of items consistently measure a single latent construct. George and Mallery (2003, p. 231) provided the following guidelines for alpha values: .90 to 1.0 are excellent, .80 to .89 are good, .70 to .79 are acceptable, .60 to .69 are questionable, .50 to .59 are poor, and below .50 are unacceptable. The reliability of the scores on the entire scale was tested using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 2 facilitates the identification of dispensable variables by listing down the deleted variables in the first column together with the expected resultant Cronbach's alpha (and the standardized alpha). The results indicated an acceptable level of internal consistency, as the alphas showed a relatively limited spread. In other words, removing any one of the items would not appreciably improve the overall Cronbach's alpha for the measure.

Table 2
Cronbach's Alpha Analysis if Item Deleted

Deleted variable	Cronbach coefficient alpha	Standardized Cronbach coefficient alpha
Satisfaction	.88	.88
Admission	.88	.89
Faculty	.88	.89
Courses	.88	.89
Advisement	.89	.89
Students	.88	.89
Interaction	.89	.89
Networking	.89	.90
Communications	.89	.89
Costs	.88	.90
Distance	.88	.89
Career prep	.88	.88
PhD prep	.88	.89
Reputation MEd	.88	.89
Reputation UNF	.88	.88
Career-goals	.88	.89
Personal-goals	.88	.88
Input	.88	.89

Note. MEd = the Master of Education program;
 UNF = University of North Florida.

Cronbach's alphas for scores on the subscales that include more than one item were also computed. The Cronbach's alphas for scores on the subscales institutional accommodation, relevant course work, and support system were .73, .71, and .63, respectively. The associated Cronbach's alpha analyses are presented in Tables 3–5. The results in Table 3 suggest that costs may need to be removed from the institutional accommodation subscale, as the removal of costs would result in an increase of the alpha to .77. The results in Table 4 suggest that all four relevant course work items should be kept. The results in Table 5 suggest that advisement may need to be removed from support system subscale, as the removal of advisement would result in an increase of the alpha to .70. However, as the increase of the alpha values are not significant, both items (program costs and program advisement) were retained in the subcategories.

Table 3

Cronbach's Alpha Analysis for Institutional Accommodation if Item Deleted

Deleted variable	Cronbach coefficient alpha	Standardized Cronbach coefficient alpha
Admission	.69	.72
Costs	.77	.78
Distance	.61	.64
Reputation-MEd	.70	.70
Reputation-UNF	.62	.63

Note. MEd = the Master of Education program;

UNF = University of North Florida.

Table 4

Cronbach's Alpha Analysis for Relevant Course Work if Item Deleted

Deleted variable	Cronbach coefficient alpha	Standardized Cronbach coefficient alpha
Courses	.66	.67
Career-prep	.58	.59
PhD-prep	.67	.67
Input	.67	.68

Table 5

Cronbach's Alpha Analysis for Support System if Item Deleted

Deleted variable	Cronbach coefficient alpha	Standardized Cronbach coefficient alpha
Advisement	.70	.70
Students	.63	.63
Interaction	.48	.46
Networking	.53	.55
Communications	.47	.50

One of the two main research questions is as follows: To what extent are the perceived levels of satisfaction with the educational experience related to the following variables: (a) institutional accommodations, (b) course work that is relevant, (c) instructors who are knowledgeable in teaching adult students, (d) support systems to help with the educational process, (e) achievement of career goals, and (f) achievement of personal goals?

The following are the items for each of the six subcategories:

1. Institutional accommodation: admission procedures, graduate program costs, distribution of courses delivered by distance, reputation of the Master of Education program, and reputation of UNF;

2. Relevant course work: courses offered in the department, preparation for desired career goal or position, preparation for a doctoral program, and students' input into the program;

3. Support system: program advisement, satisfaction with other students in the program, interaction with faculty in the department, networking opportunities among faculty and students, communication within the department;

4. Knowledgeable instructors: faculty members in the department;

5. Career goals: value of UNF–UB program for achieving career goals; and

6. Personal goals: value of UNF–UB program for achieving personal goals.

Table 6 displays the descriptive statistics for the six subcategories: institutional accommodations, relevant course work, knowledgeable instructors, support system, career goals, and personal goals. The subcategories, institutional accommodations, relevant course work, and support systems comprised 5 items, 4 items, and 5 items, respectively. Therefore, in order to obtain the means that are comparable to the means of the other three subcategories

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics of the Six Subcategories

Subcategory	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Institutional accommodations	4.62	0.37	3.80	5.00
Relevant course work	4.52	0.45	2.75	5.00
Knowledgeable instructors	4.56	0.56	3.00	5.00
Support system	4.46	0.40	3.40	5.00
Career goals	4.74	0.44	4.00	5.00
Personal goals	4.73	0.58	2.00	5.00

(knowledgeable instructors, career goals, and personal goals), the average score for each individual on each of the multi-item variables was obtained by adding the scores for the individual items and then dividing by the number of items. The results in Table 6 suggest that the mean and standard deviation of each subcategory are very close to each other. The subcategory means range from 4.46 to 4.74 and the subcategory standard deviations range from 0.37 to 0.58.

Null Hypotheses Tested

Each of the variables was hypothesized to be positively associated with perceived levels of satisfaction. The following null hypotheses were tested:

H_{01} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between institutional accommodations and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

H_{02} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between the course work and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

H_{03} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between instructors who are knowledgeable in teaching adult students and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

H_{04} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between support systems and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program.

H_{05} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between achieving career goals and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

H_{06} : A statistically significant ($p = .05$) relationship does not exist between achieving personal goals and student satisfaction with a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership.

Table 7 presents the correlation matrix for the dependent variable (satisfaction) and the six subscales.

Table 7

Correlation Matrix for the Dependent Variable (Satisfaction) and the Six Subcategories

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Satisfaction	—	0.63**	0.68**	0.54**	0.47**	0.36**	0.42**
2. Institutional accommodations		—	0.75**	0.34**	0.53**	0.61**	0.67**
3. Relevant course work			—	0.41**	0.39**	0.55**	0.67**
4. Knowledgeable instructors				—	0.63**	0.20	0.23
5. Support system					—	0.30*	0.42**
6. Career goals						—	0.81**
7. Personal goals							—

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 7 shows the correlation matrix (Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients) for the dependent variable (satisfaction) and the 6 subcategories. A p value less than .05 suggests the rejection of the null hypothesis and hence indicates that the correlation the two variables is statistically significantly different from zero. Among the 21 correlation coefficients reported in Table 7, 18 correlation coefficients were statistically significantly different from zero at the .01 level, and 1 additional correlation coefficient was statistically significantly different from zero at the .05 level.

The correlations between satisfaction and the six subcategories (institutional accommodations, relevant course work, knowledgeable instructors, support system, career goals, and personal goals) were all statistically significantly different from zero at the .01 level. The

highest correlation is between satisfaction and relevant course work (.68), and the lowest correlation is between satisfaction and career goals (.36).

The following conclusions were reached:

1. The correlations between satisfaction and admission (.28), costs (.27), distance (.54), reputation of the Master of Education program (.59), and reputation of UNF (.50) are all statistically significant at the .05 level. This implies a positive relationship between satisfaction and institutional accommodation.

2. The correlations between satisfaction and courses (.78), career-prep (.62), PhD-prep (.32), and input (.37) are all statistically significant at the .05 level. This implies a positive relationship between satisfaction and relevant course work.

3. The correlations between satisfaction and, advisement (.48), students (.50), and interaction (.35) are all statistically significant at the .05 level; however, the correlations between satisfaction and networking (.08) and communication (.19) are not statistically significant at the .05 level. This implies a positive relationship between satisfaction and support system.

4. The correlation between satisfaction and faculty is .54 and is statistically significant at the .05 level. This implies a positive relationship between satisfaction and knowledgeable instructors.

5. The correlation between satisfaction and career-goals is .36 and is statistically significant at the .05 level. This implies a positive relationship between satisfaction and the value of the program for achieving career goals.

6. The correlation between satisfaction and personal-goals is .42 and is statistically significant at the .05 level. This implies a positive relationship between satisfaction and the value of the program for achieving personal goals.

Two-Sample t Test

After performing the following statistical analyses—frequency distributions of all responses, means and standard deviations of all the responses, Cronbach’s coefficient alpha, and correlation matrix for the dependent and independent variables (correlation matrix for the 18 items)—further statistical analysis seemed warranted based on the relatively small sample size and the perceived lack of variance in the participants’ responses. The results in Table 6 suggest that the means and standard deviations of each subcategory are very close to each other.

The subcategory means range from 4.46 to 4.74 and the subcategory standard deviation range from 0.37 to 0.58, indicating an overall high level of satisfaction across all six areas and very little variation across responses on the subscales. Additionally, as noted in Table 1, most participants chose either *extremely satisfied* (5) or *satisfied* (4) in response to the individual items

To examine whether differences in satisfaction with specified aspects of the program were reflected in differences in subscale satisfaction, I conducted a series of parametric tests to compare the satisfaction means of (a) those grouped as extremely satisfied with the various components of the program with (b) those grouped as less than extremely satisfied.

The rules for grouping into extremely satisfied and less than extremely satisfied are described as follows: For the three subscales (knowledge instructors, career goals, personal goals) with 1 item, participants with a score of 5 were placed in the “extremely satisfied” category, and participants with a score less than 5 were placed in the “less than extremely satisfied” category. For a 5-item subscale (institutional accommodations, support system), if a participant chose *extremely satisfied* (5) for 3 of the 5 items, then that participant was placed in the “extremely satisfied” category. Otherwise, the participant was placed in the “less than extremely satisfied” category. For a 4-item subscale (relevant course work), if a participant

chose *extremely satisfied* (5) for 3 of the 4 items, then that participant was placed in the “extremely satisfied” category. Otherwise, the participant was placed in the “less than extremely satisfied” category.

The two-sample independent t test was deemed an appropriate parametric procedure for comparing the means between the two groups. Also, it was considered useful in determining whether the average difference between the two groups is really significant or if it is due instead to random chance.

The following null hypotheses were investigated using the two-sample t test.

1. The mean satisfaction score for those extremely satisfied with institutional accommodations did not differ from the mean satisfaction score for those who were less than extremely satisfied with institutional accommodations.
2. The mean satisfaction score for those extremely satisfied with relevant course work did not differ from the mean satisfaction score for those who were less than extremely satisfied with relevant course work.
3. The mean satisfaction score for those extremely satisfied with support systems did not differ from the mean satisfaction score for those who were less than extremely satisfied with support systems.
4. The mean satisfaction score for those extremely satisfied with knowledgeable instructors did not differ from the mean satisfaction score for those who were less than extremely satisfied with knowledgeable instructors.
5. The mean satisfaction score for those extremely satisfied with career goals did not differ from the mean satisfaction score for those who were less than extremely satisfied with career goals.

6. The mean satisfaction score for those extremely satisfied with personal goals did not differ from the mean satisfaction score for those who were less than extremely satisfied with personal goals.

Table 8 presents descriptive statistics of satisfaction score by the two categories, extremely satisfied and less than extremely satisfied, based on each of the six subscales (institutional accommodations, support system, relevant course work, knowledge instructors, career goals, personal goals).

Note that if the test result of the folded F test was significant, then a t test with unequal variances was conducted; otherwise, a t test with equal variances was used. Based on the folded F test, the sample variances were determined to be different for the two samples of interest. When the sample variances were determined to be different between the two samples, Satterthwaite's approximation for the degrees of freedom was computed (Valliant & Rust, 2010).

Based on Satterthwaite's approximation of the degrees of freedom, the results of the two-sample t test suggest the following:

The difference between participants who were extremely satisfied with institutional accommodation (4.80) and participants who were less than extremely satisfied with institutional accommodation (4.35) was statistically significant, $t(21.61) = 2.81, p = .0102$.

Table 8
Descriptive Statistics of Satisfaction by Two Categories

Subscale and category	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	KS	<i>F</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Institutional accommodations								
Extremely satisfied	45	4.80	0.40	-1.55	0.43	<0.01	0.0347	0.87
Less than extremely satisfied	17	4.35	0.61	-0.31	-0.48	<0.01		
Support system								
Extremely satisfied	30	4.87	0.35	-2.27	3.39	<0.01	0.0087	0.78
Less than extremely satisfied	32	4.50	0.57	-0.56	-0.68	<0.01		
Relevant course work								
Extremely satisfied	32	4.97	0.18	-5.66	3.20	<0.01	<0.0001	1.44
Less than extremely satisfied	30	4.37	0.56	-0.07	-0.80	<0.01		
Knowledgeable instructors								
Extremely satisfied	37	4.89	0.31	-2.63	5.21	<0.01	0.0013	1.15
Less than extremely satisfied	25	4.36	0.57	-0.13	-0.68	<0.01		
Career goals								
Extremely satisfied	46	4.78	0.42	-1.41	0.01	<0.01	0.0418	0.75
Less than extremely satisfied	16	4.38	0.62	-0.42	-0.45	<0.01		
Personal goals								
Extremely satisfied	48	4.79	0.41	-1.48	0.21	<0.01	0.0469	0.96
Less than extremely satisfied	14	4.29	0.61	-0.19	-0.26	<0.01		

Note. KS = *p* value of Kolmogorov–Smirnov test of normality; *F* = *p* value of the test of the folded form of the *F* statistic.

The difference between participants who were extremely satisfied with support system (4.87) and participants who were less than extremely satisfied with support system (4.50) was statistically significant, $t(51.71) = 3.09$, $p = .0032$.

The difference between participants who were extremely satisfied with relevant course work (4.97) and participants who were less than extremely satisfied with relevant course work (4.37) was statistically significant, $t(34.47) = 5.67$, $p < .0001$.

The difference between participants who were extremely satisfied with knowledgeable instructors (4.89) and participants who were less than extremely satisfied with knowledgeable instructors (4.36) was statistically significant, $t(34.00) = 4.26, p = .0002$.

The difference between participants who were extremely satisfied with their career goals (4.78) and participants who were less than extremely satisfied with their career goals (4.38) was statistically significant, $t(19.94) = 2.45, p = .0238$.

The difference between participants who were extremely satisfied with their personal goals (4.79) and participants who were less than extremely satisfied with their personal goals (4.29) was statistically significant, $t(16.56) = 2.91, p = .0099$.

For two-sample t test, one can assume the variances are equal between the two samples and the test statistic follows a t distribution with degrees of freedom equal to the total sample size minus 2, or one can regard the variances are unequal between the two samples and the test statistic follows a t distribution with degrees of freedom equal to Satterthwaite's approximation (Khuri, 2010). The equal variances assumption was tested using the test of the folded form of the F statistic (the folded F test). A significant test result ($p < .05$) suggests the variances are unequal.

Assumptions underlying the two-sample t test are that each of the two populations being compared should follow a normal distribution and that the two populations are independent. Normality was examined through skewness, kurtosis, and Kolmogorov–Smirnov test of normality. The sample skewness measures the tendency of the deviations to be larger in one direction than in the other. Skewness is a measure of symmetry. Observations that are normally distributed should have a skewness near zero, as normal distribution is symmetric (Sheskin, 2000). Normality was also examined through kurtosis. The sample kurtosis measures the

peakedness of the distribution and the heaviness of its tail, relative to a normal distribution. Observations that are normally distributed should have a kurtosis near zero. Additionally, normality was examined using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test of normality. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test procedure is a goodness-of-fit test for the null hypothesis that the values of the analysis variable are a random sample from the normal distribution. A p value of less than .05 of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis of normality.

As the results of skewness, kurtosis, and Kolmogorov–Smirnov test of normality suggested in Table 8, the normality assumption of the t test may not be satisfied. Thus, the Wilcoxon rank-sum test was also performed to ensure the above conclusions from t test were valid.

Cohen's d

Further, Cohen's d was calculated. Cohen's d is an estimate of effect size used to indicate the standardized difference between two means and is employed in the present study to accompany reporting of t test. Effect-size estimates are metrics designed specifically to characterize results in more functional and meaningful ways by discussing the magnitude of an effect in addition to estimates of probability (Cohen, 1992). One way of interpreting effect sizes is to rely on commonly accepted benchmarks that differentiate small, medium, and large effects. In general, ≤ 0.20 is a small effect size, 0.50 is a moderate effect size, and ≥ 0.80 is a large effect size (Cohen, 1992).

Cohen's d for the six subscales were as follows: institutional accommodation, $d = 0.87$; support system, $d = 0.78$; relevant course work, $d = 1.44$; knowledgeable instructors, $d = 1.15$; career goals, $d = 0.75$; and personal goals, $d = 0.96$. Moderate-to-large effect sizes are evident in all the subscales. Relevant course work and knowledgeable instructor subscales have the largest

effect sizes of 1.44 and 1.15, respectively. The results of Cohen's d support the statistically significant results of the two-sample t test, Satterwaite's approximation of degrees of freedom, and Wilcoxon rank-sum test.

Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test

The Wilcoxon rank-sum test, a nonparametric version of the traditional t test, may be used as an alternative when the normality assumption does not seem tenable and the sample size is small to moderate (Sheskin, 2000). The Wilcoxon rank-sum test assumes that all the observations from both groups are independent of each other, and it examines whether the distributions of both groups are equal. A Wilcoxon rank-sum test is generally used to compare the locations of two populations, to determine whether one population has shifted with respect to another. In other words, the Wilcoxon rank-sum test investigates differences in medians, with the assumption of identical spreads. The results of the Wilcoxon rank-sum test are presented in Table 9.

Table 9
Results of the Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test

Subscale	Test statistic	p
Institutional accommodations	382.5	.0027
Support system	1,108.0	.0043
Relevant course work	671.5	<.0001
Knowledge instructors	558.0	<.0001
Career goals	372.0	.0083
Personal goals	290.0	.0016

The results of the Wilcoxon rank-sum test coincide with the results of the two-sample t test.

Measurement Validity

Regarding measurement validity, the small sample size sample prohibited factor analysis to look at the construct structure of the instrument. The creators of the instrument employed a

panel of experts to generate the items, used focus groups, and conducted pilot studies to assure content validity (Sum et al., 2010).

Analyses of quantitative data encompassed performance of descriptive statistical analyses including frequency distribution of all responses, means and standard deviations of all responses, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, and correlation matrix for all 18 items. Null hypotheses were tested. Additionally, two-sample independent *t* test was conducted. Further, Cohen's *d* was conducted. Wilcoxon rank-sum test was also conducted.

The next section presents qualitative data analysis.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

Employing open-ended survey questions, qualitative data were collected and analyzed for this retrospective, nonexperimental, quantitative study. The primary purpose of the qualitative component of the research was to provide a richer and deeper understanding of the participants' responses to the Likert-type scale questions. The participants were asked to respond to the following open-ended survey questions.

1. What made you choose this program to obtain your master's degree?
2. What do you consider to be strengths of the program?
3. What modifications, if any, to the program would you suggest?
4. How would you describe the effects of participating in the program on your personal life?
5. How would you describe the effects of participating in the program on your professional life?
6. How would you describe the effort you put into your graduate education program?

These questions are related to the hypothesized themes that there are relationships between institutional accommodations, support systems, knowledgeable instructors, career goals, and personal goals and the participants' perceptions of satisfaction. The participants were requested to respond to the open-ended survey questions in the form of brief narratives.

Only 34 of the 62 participants responded to the qualitative component of the questionnaire. The length of responses ranged from one sentence to full paragraphs. Of the 34 participants, 21 answered with one or two sentences. The rest of the participants responded with paragraphs consisting of three to five sentences.

Rationale for Data Analysis Approach

The information provided by the qualitative portion of the survey was analyzed using content analysis. Qualitative content analysis has been defined as a “research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) discussed three approaches to qualitative content analysis: conventional content analysis, directed content analysis, and summative content analysis. These distinctions are based primarily on the degree of involvement of inductive reasoning and on how initial codes are developed. Conventional content analysis employs a grounded theory approach; coding categories are gleaned directly and inductively from the raw data. In directed content analysis, initial coding proceeds from theory or relevant research finding. Summative content analysis starts with words or content counting and extends the exploration to encompass latent meanings and themes. I used conventional content analysis.

I deemed conventional content analysis a more appropriate method of analysis for a variety of reasons. It provided flexibility in the exploration of the meanings embedded in the

participants' responses. It allowed for grounding the examination of participants' responses and emerging themes in the data. It enabled condensing of raw data into themes and categories based on valid inferences and interpretations. It allowed for examination of both manifest and latent meanings, themes, and patterns embedded in the participants' responses (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

Description of Data Analysis

This section of the study presents a description of the way conventional content analysis was conducted and an explanation of the way the process was slightly modified for the particular and peculiar purposes of this study.

Qualitative data analysis loosely followed the following steps: preparation of data, definition of unit of analysis, development of categories and coding scheme, text coding, assessment of coding consistency, drawing of conclusions from the coded data, and reporting of methods and findings (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The qualitative data analysis had three major phases: preparation, organizing, and reporting. I followed inductive content analysis approach, which involved deriving categories from the data by moving from the specific to the general through observation of particular instances and combination of same into a larger whole (Riessman, 2008).

The first step in data preparation was making several copies of the participants' responses. These uncoded copies of the responses would later be given to my associates with some background knowledge in research, whom I recruited for the purposes of member checking or what I prefer to call *checking researcher bias*. The qualitative analysis proceeded with initial reading of the participants' responses to the open-ended survey questions with the purpose of making sense of the whole data set.

I determined that the responses to each research question rather than physical linguistic units or sentences were the best unit of analysis because the goal of the analysis was to determine the themes that emerge from the responses to the open-ended survey questions (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Also, the whole responses provided a better context for accurately decoding meanings embedded in the responses and extracting emergent themes. I reread the responses to the questions with the intent of decoding and noting emerging themes and gleaning both manifest and latent meanings, when applicable.

Next, I read the responses to each of the six open-ended questions again, focusing on the keywords, phrases, and sentences, noting how they related to the hypothesized themes. Creating categories was relatively easy because the text was already divided into meaningful units based on each question. In other words, the text was already relatively categorized by the research questions that the participants were responding to. I used open coding, which involved writing notes and headings in the text while reading it. I highlighted key words, phrases, and sentences that I deemed critical in decoding the participants' responses (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). I repeated the same process for all the questions. I transferred the notes and headings from the margins on to coding sheets. Then I created groups based on each question and the notes and headings I had written in the text while reading. These groups were loosely based on the responses to each open-ended research question.

After the initial groupings, I closely examined the text again, taking note of any words, phrases, and themes that might previously have been overlooked. From these groups, I categorized the possible themes. These themes were largely based on the hypothesized constructs that impacted participants' satisfaction. As Cavanagh (1997) noted, categories are created for the purposes of providing a means of describing the phenomenon, increasing

understanding, and generating knowledge. The possible themes were organized into proto-themes (Riessman, 2008). I ensured that all the previously noted items fit into one of the proto-theme categories. Additional proto-themes were added at this time. After the themes had been confirmed, axial coding of the data was conducted. Axial coding involved assembling data in new ways after open coding by making connections between categories. This required reexamination of information and ensuring that the items of interest fit properly into the themes and that each was accounted for (Riessman, 2008). At this stage, emergent themes were organized under the hypothesized themes that there are relationships between institutional accommodations, support systems, knowledgeable instructors, career goals, and personal goals and the participants' perceptions of satisfaction. Additional themes included motivation for choosing the program, perceived strength of the program, participants' input into the program, and recommendations for program modifications.

The next step was the abstraction phase. This step involved making sense of the identified themes and categories relative to the questions the participants responded to, making inferences, and presenting my reconstruction of meanings derived from the data. The next section presents the patterns, themes, categories, and conclusions drawn from the responses of the participants to the research questions. First, the responses are presented under the hypothesized themes. Then they are presented under responses to the qualitative research questions.

Participants' Responses Grouped According to Hypothesized Themes

Without exception, all the participants indicated satisfaction with their educational experience. Essentially, the participants indicated that their perceived level of satisfaction was affected by the program's impact on their career goals, institutional accommodation during the

course of study, support system available, knowledgeable instructors, relevant course work, and impact of the program on their personal goals. Excerpts from comments of participants' responses to the open-ended questions are employed to support and illuminate each of the themes.

Career goals. All of the 34 respondents linked their satisfaction with the program to the impact it had on their career goals. Most of the participants indicated that career enhancement was the primary motivation for enrolling in the program. Overall, participating in the program made them more effective educators and educational leaders. A participant stated, "The effect of the program on my professional life include making me a leader in my school. I have used my knowledge in everyday execution of my duties. I plan to do more research and share information with students." Another participant responded, "I believe I am more competent and well prepared in my field relative to graduates from other schools." Another participant wrote, "I have grown and developed to an extent that I can competently share my expertise with other stakeholders in the educational community. I have established a firm commitment to make a difference in Belize." Another participant responded, "I am able to analyze people/situations much better than before. I have a better understanding of teaching pedagogy." Another participant stated, "It [participating in the program] has given me more confidence as an educator."

Continuing on the effects of participating in the program on the participant's personal life, a participant responded that participating in the program imbued him or her with "confidence to lead in my school and willingness to share my experiences with subordinates to encourage students to do their best and rise above their situations for what they want." Another responded that participation in the program has "helped me to become an open-minded person

who can work with anyone.” A participant, in describing the effect of the program on his or her professional life, stated, “I have been promoted to principal.” Another participant indicated, “I gained the respect of my colleagues and added confidence in my own leadership skills. I am sure the institutions I headed benefitted from my professional improvement.” These excerpts represent some of the few specific examples of the direct impact of the program on a participant’s professional status.

Personal goals. All the participants seemed to indicate a certain level of fulfillment and self-actualization as a result of having participated in the program. A participant indicated that “[c]ompleting the program helped me meet a goal of improving myself in my field.” Another participant stated, “It has given me more confidence as an educator, but I have not seen much financial benefit since our Ministry [of Education] does not really give much for a master’s degree. It is more for self-development.” Another participant stated, “I think the acquisition of the degree was a major success but more importantly, the quality of professional and collegiate interaction truly enriched my life.” The respondents believed that their personal lives had been enhanced as a consequence of participation in the program.

Institutional accommodations. The ability of the program to meet the unique and diverse needs of the students and the responsiveness to the needs of the students were critical factors in the participants’ perception of satisfaction. One participant responded to the question regarding why he or she chose the program for a master’s degree as follows: “The availability of the academic opportunity. The fact that I could complete most of the course here in my country was important. This accommodation assisted me as an individual to reduce the overall cost of my education.” Another participant indicated that convenience was a key factor. Specifically, the participant indicated that the classes were “done in Belize during school vacation.” A

respondent indicated that the program “was the most convenient [and] cost effective way to get my master’s degree. I know that I could not afford traveling overseas for two years to earn a master’s degree, being married and having children.” Overall, these nontraditional learners were satisfied because the program met their unique and diverse needs.

Support systems. The responses that emerged relative to the hypothesized theme of support systems were diverse. The responses ranged from supportive faculty to other assistance rendered such as subsidized textbooks. These responses were all related to the participants’ perceptions of the program’s responsiveness to the diverse needs of the students. A participant responded that the “support and help I was given by faculty and other students were the most important factors in completing the program.” Another participant indicated, “I struggled to pay my tuition, but the program director was very understanding and was flexible with the deadline. This made it possible to complete the program.” Another participant responded concerning the perceived strength of the program that the “caring and supportive lecturers at UNF who came for the first semester to do the face to face summer session helped me survive and excel in the program. The fact that our textbooks were sponsored, which reduced our expenses greatly was helpful.” The participants indicated that the support system was critical in their perceptions of satisfaction with the program.

Knowledgeable instructors. All the respondents indicated satisfaction with the instructors and the instructors’ ability to meet their unique learning needs. For knowledgeable instructors, a participant responded that “[e]veryone who taught the classes was very knowledgeable on the subject matter. They could answer all of our questions.” Another participant considered “the expertise of the professors” as a strength of the program. Responding to the question on what the participants considered to be the strengths of the program, a

participant indicated that the “student-friendly program and expertise of the professors who were willing to motivate and encourage students during the program” affected the participant’s satisfaction level. The perception that the instructors were knowledgeable in their fields and responsive to the students unique needs contributed to the respondents’ satisfaction with the program.

Relevant course work. The respondents felt that the course work was relevant to their unique needs. For relevant course work, the following response is indicative of some of the responses: “I really think the topics we learned are applicable and help me do my job.” Responding to the question on what the participants considered to be the strength of the program, another participant noted, “The fact that courses were tailored/adapted to suit the Belizean context.” Participants had some suggestions for improvement in this area. One suggested the addition of more local content to the course work. Another participant suggested the addition of a course in school finance. A participant suggested, “Allow local instructors to deliver courses relevant to Belize.” Generally, the participants indicated satisfaction with the course work.

In the next section, the emergent themes from the analysis of the data are presented and are organized under the open-ended survey questions.

Participants’ Responses to the Qualitative Research Questions

One of the research questions for this study was the following: “What are the perceptions of the graduates of a customized transnational Master of Education program of their education experience in terms of their satisfaction with their educational experience?” I constructed six questions to elicit information from the participants in order to illuminate their responses in the Likert-type scale questions. The following exemplifies the participants’ answers to the questions based on a synthesis of the responses.

Responses to Question 1. The first question asked the respondents why they chose this program to obtain their master's degree. A synthesis of the responses indicated that affordability of fees, flexibility of schedules, and proximity to participants were the three major reasons that made them choose the program. Most participants indicated their inability to afford the cost of obtaining a master's degree housed in the United States or any other developed country. Some indicated that they chose the program because it was offered during summer when they could afford to attend classes without any conflict with their teaching or administrative jobs. Others indicated that they chose the program because it was offered in Belize City, Belize, making it possible for them to juggle family commitments and educational demands.

Responses to Question 2. The second question asked the participants what they considered to be the strengths of the program. There were diverse responses to this question. The overarching themes that emerged from the respondents' brief narratives are the collaboration between UNF and UB, personalized assistance from the staff and faculty of the program, and the application of theories to Belize's educational and cultural milieu. This response from a participant sums up responses to the question: "UNF professors were very understanding and helpful throughout the process. The program director provided much needed assistance when I was struggling financially. Our lectures involved using examples from Belize education system."

Responses to Question 3. The third question asked the participants what modifications, if any, to the program they would suggest. Few suggestions were given for modifications to the program. One major suggestion was more options in the course offerings in the cognate areas. One participant suggested a course in school finance. Another suggested a required trip to the campus of the UNF. A few suggested employment of more local instructors. Overall, no

overarching theme of suggested modifications to the program emerged. The following excerpt from a participant provides an example of the suggested modifications: “I would have liked a tour of UNF’s campus. I also wanted a course in school finance. If possible, let them use more Belizean instructors.”

Responses to Question 4. The fourth question asked the participants to describe the effects of participating in the program on their personal lives. This theme has been discussed previously under the “personal goals.” The participants indicated that the program equipped them with skills and dispositions needed to lead outside of the educational milieu. A participant responded, “The effects of the program on my personal life are that I have become a stronger individual in my family. I am able to guide family members when problem arise. I find myself acting as a mentor and leader.” Some indicated a certain pride in being one of the few Belizeans with an advanced degree from a reputable university: “I feel fulfilled in being of the few Belizean’s with a master’s degree from UNF. I am humbly proud of this achievement.” Essentially, the program seemed to have enhanced the participants’ sense of self-efficacy, self-worth, and self-actualization.

Responses to Question 5. The fifth question asked the respondents to describe the effects of participating in the program on their professional lives. All the respondents to this question indicated positive effects on their personal and professional lives. The participants indicated that the program has equipped them with the necessary skills and dispositions to lead. On the effects of the program on the participant’s professional lives, a participant indicated as follows: “I am the leader in my school. I have used my knowledge in my everyday execution of my duties. I plan to do more research and share information with students.” Not only have the participants

been equipped with the necessary leadership skills and dispositions, some suggested that the program prepared them to become lifelong learners.

Responses to Question 6. The last question asked the participants to describe the effort they put into their graduate education. Without exception, the respondents indicated that they put forth their best effort. A participant wrote, “I worked hard in my graduate program to achieve the highest grades because I plan to someday continue my education.” Another responded: “I got what I put in. I believe that I worked hard and had many sleepless nights but they were all worth it in the end.”

From the responses to the questions, the participants seemed to have been very satisfied with their educational experience. They indicated positive effects on their personal and professional lives. They offered very few suggestions for program modification.

Checking Researcher Bias

As noted, this study employed content analysis. Themes hypothesized to exist were already in place in the form of constructs of interest prior to the content analysis. In order to accommodate the a priori themes, three associates of the researcher were recruited to do a content analysis of the questionnaires. This was a form of member checking done for the purposes of validation. These associates were briefly trained by me in ways to conduct content analysis. They were not made aware of the hypothesized themes (Riessman, 2008). However, they were aware of the questions that the participants had responded to.

The use of the three independent reviewers was done to guard against researcher bias and as form of validation to further establish dependability and credibility of data. The a priori knowledge of the researcher regarding the themes may have led to findings that were a type of wish fulfillment; in other words, the researcher might find the hypothesized themes in the text

due to having the knowledge that these were possible ideas expressed by the respondents. Furthermore, having three individuals examine the same text and doing a content analysis allowed for a comparison of their findings. Finally, the themes discovered by the volunteers were compared with the themes I had hypothesized.

I compared the findings of the thematic analysis of the three associates who conducted thematic analysis of the qualitative data to check for correspondence between hypothesized themes and the themes that emerged from the data. Table 10 presents the correspondence between the hypothesized themes and the independent reviewer themes.

Table 10
Independent Reviewer Themes and Corresponding Hypothesized Themes

Corresponding hypothesized theme	Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 3
Institutional accommodations	The school	The college	The university
Relevant course work	Information learned	Class work	Topics covered
Knowledgeable instructors	Professors	Staff	Teachers
Support systems	<i>No match</i>	Relationships	<i>No match</i>
Career goals	Professional aims	Career	Profession
Personal goals	Individual importance	Personal	Individual preferences

Despite the volunteer reviewers being previously unfamiliar with content analysis, they found remarkably similar themes in the questionnaire responses. With regard to institutional accommodations, Reviewer 1 had assigned the name of “the school” to this theme. Reviewer 2 called it “the college,” whereas Reviewer 3 referred to it as “university.” The hypothesized theme of relevant course work appeared with different names among the reviewers. These names included “information learned,” “class work,” and “topics covered.” The hypothesized theme of knowledgeable instructors appeared with the names “professors,” “staff,” and “teachers” among the reviewers. The hypothesized theme of career goals was called “professional aims” by Reviewer 1. Reviewer 2 referred to it as “career goals” or “career,” whereas Reviewer 3 referred to this theme as “profession.” The hypothesized theme of personal

goals was also identified by all three reviewers under different names. Reviewer 1 called this theme “individual importance,” whereas Reviewer 2 labeled it as “personal.” Reviewer 3 referred to it as “individual preferences.”

Only in the category of support system was there no match among the three independent reviewers. This may be attributable to the fact that support system measured diverse items, such as level of satisfaction with program advisement, with other students, interaction with faculty, networking opportunities, and communication with the department. With the exception of the category of support systems, in which there was no match between the hypothesized theme and the themes that the three reviewers uncovered, the three associates and I found remarkably similar themes in the analysis of the participants’ responses. This process helped to further validate the findings by helping establish the dependability and credibility of the conclusions drawn from the analysis.

Conclusions Drawn From Qualitative Analysis

Overall, the responses to the open-ended, qualitative questions were positive. All respondents indicated satisfaction with their overall educational experience. No participant indicated any appreciable form of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the program. Regarding modifications, if any, to the program that the participants would suggest, some of the responses suggested “more options in the courses.” This response indicates that some of the participants would have liked more course offerings, from which they could select their preferred courses. Another suggestion was for the program to “[offer] more selections for cognate areas.” A participant suggested, “Allow more local instructors to deliver courses relevant to Belize.” Another suggested, “Include a trip to the UNF campus, even though the video tour was appreciated.”

The following statement seems to encapsulate the sentiments of the alumni: “It is the most economical program offered in Belize. The program provided quality professors to lecture in Belize. Therefore, we received quality education for our money.” It was a quality and cost-effective program delivered on convenient location by knowledgeable professors who cared about their students.

Conclusion

This chapter presented analyses of data, accounting for the procedure by which data were analyzed. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed to analyze quantitative data, and content analysis was utilized in analyzing qualitative data. In the quantitative analysis, parametric and nonparametric tests were conducted. Cronbach’s alpha was computed for scores on the whole instrument and for each subscale. The Wilcoxon rank-sum test was also conducted because the normality assumption did seem tenable and because of the small sample size. Quantitative analysis indicated relationships between participants’ satisfaction with their educational experiences and the following variables: institutional accommodations, support systems, knowledgeable instructors, career goals, and personal goals.

Narrative data collected through the open-ended survey questions were analyzed using content analysis. The analysis indicated that the participants were satisfied with their overall educational experience. Affordability of cost, flexibility of schedules, and proximity to home were some of the reasons the participants offered for choosing the program. Few suggestions were offered for program modifications. The participants indicated that the program has made positive impacts on their professional and personal lives.

Chapter V presents a detailed discussion of the findings. Potential limitations of the study are discussed. Implications of the study for educational leadership practice and scholarship are also discussed. Finally, recommendations for future research are made.

CHAPTER V SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter focuses on the conclusions that can be drawn from this retrospective, nonexperimental, quantitative research and the implications of these conclusions for leadership practice and scholarship. The chapter consists of a summary of the study, brief review of the findings from the study, the limitations of the study, implications for leadership practice and scholarship, and a conclusion.

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted to determine variables that affected student satisfaction in a Master of Education program in educational leadership offered in a transnational setting. Institutional accommodations, relevant course work, knowledgeable instructors, support systems, career goals, and personal goals were variables theorized to affect students' satisfaction with their educational experience. Theories and concepts gleaned from multiple disciplines undergirded this study. These concepts and frameworks span motivation theories, adult learning theories, consumer satisfaction theories, and globalization. Disconfirmed expectations theory of consumer satisfaction derived from expectancy theory provided the conceptual framework for the research.

The study involved data collected from 62 graduates of a customized, transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership. Data were collected using a quantitative survey to allow the participants to indicate which elements of their learning experience contributed to, or limited, their satisfaction with the program. The quantitative instrument contained 18 questions related to the various aspects of the

participants' educational experience. The qualitative component involved participants responding to six open-ended questions. Analyses of both qualitative and quantitative data indicated that the participants expressed positive opinions regarding their overall experiences with their graduate program. Examination of the section measuring areas of the program that the participants felt needed improvement or modification revealed that the majority of the participants did not feel that the program needed any major modifications. Therefore, the overall conclusion was that the program met most of the expectations and needs of the students.

Findings of the Study

In this section, findings on perceived student satisfaction with different aspects of their transnational educational program are presented. The following research questions undergirded this study:

1. What are the perceptions of the graduates of a customized transnational Master of Education program in educational leadership of their education experience in terms of their satisfaction with their educational experience?
2. To what extent are the perceived levels of satisfaction with the educational experience related to the following variables: (a) institutional accommodations, (b) course work that is relevant, (c) instructors who are knowledgeable in teaching adult students, (d) support systems to help with the educational process, (e) achievement of career goals, and (f) achievement of personal goals?

Based on the quantitative and qualitative analyses, the following answers to the research questions were provided.

Overall Perceptions of Satisfaction with Educational Experience

The participants indicated a high level of satisfaction with their overall educational experience. Of the 62 participants in the study, 43 indicated that they were extremely satisfied, 18 stated that they were satisfied, and one indicated being somewhat satisfied. Except for 2 items (career preparation and doctoral studies preparation) in the 18-item survey, to which one participant each indicated being unsatisfied, all the participants indicated satisfaction with all the items in the survey. The means of the item responses on the Likert-type scale survey ranged from 4.39 to 4.77. The standard deviations ranged from 0.42 to 0.74. The subcategory (institutional accommodations, relevant course work, support systems, career goals, and personal goals) means ranged from 4.46 to 4.74, and the subcategory standard deviation ranged from 0.37 to 0.58.

Additionally, Pearson correlation analysis of the six subcategories indicated that correlations between satisfaction and the six subcategories were all statistically significantly different from zero at the .01 level. Qualitative data analysis supported the findings of the quantitative data analyses relative to participants being satisfied with their educational experience. Participants' responses indicated satisfaction with their overall educational experience. Therefore, I concluded that the participants were satisfied with their overall educational experience.

Student Satisfaction and Relevant Course Work

Data analyses indicated that a positive relationship exists between participants' satisfaction with their educational experience and the relevant course work. The results of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients analysis of satisfaction and the six subcategories indicated that the correlation between satisfaction and relevant course work

was statistically significantly different from zero at the .01 level. The correlation between satisfaction and relevant course work was .68, which was the highest correlation among the six subscales. Also, Pearson correlation analysis for the 18 items revealed that the correlations between satisfaction and courses (.78), career preparation (.62), doctoral studies preparation (.32), and input (.37) were all statistically significant at the .05 level.

Results of the qualitative data indicated that the participants were satisfied with the course work. They felt that the course work was relevant to their needs by providing them with the skills needed to effectively lead their institutions. Some of the participants expressed satisfaction that the course work was specifically designed to suit their local contexts. Though some of the participants made suggestions concerning addition of more local content to course work, overall, they expressed satisfaction with the relevance of course work to their needs.

Student Satisfaction and Institutional Accommodations

The study determined that a positive relationship exists between participants' satisfaction with their educational experience and the subscale institutional accommodations. The results of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients analysis of satisfaction and the six subcategories indicated that the correlation between satisfaction and institutional accommodations was statistically significantly different from zero at the .01 level. The correlation between satisfaction and institutional accommodation was .63, which was the second highest correlation.

Also, Pearson correlation analysis for the 18 items indicated that the correlations between satisfaction and the items that make up the subscales, admission (.28), costs

(.27), distance (.54), reputation of the Master of Education program (.59), and reputation of UNF (.50) were all statistically significant at the .05 level.

Analysis of the narrative data indicated that institutional accommodations available to the students were critical to some of the participants' successful completion of the program and contributed to their satisfaction with the program. Convenience, cost, and flexibility of schedules were some of the identified factors that facilitated the participants' completion of the program. Institutional responsiveness to individual needs was also a factor in participants' satisfaction.

Student Satisfaction and Knowledgeable Instructors

Data analyses also indicated that a positive relationship exists between participants' satisfaction with their educational experience and the theorized variable knowledgeable instructors. The results of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients analysis showed that the correlation between satisfaction and knowledgeable instructors were statistically significantly different from zero at the .01 level. The correlation between satisfaction and knowledgeable instructors was .54, which was the third highest correlation.

Results of the analysis of qualitative data supported the quantitative analyses findings of the existence of a positive relationship between satisfaction and knowledgeable instructors. The participants expressed high opinions of the instructors and their ability to meet the students' unique and diverse learning needs. Analysis of narrative data indicated that the ability of the instructors to meet the students' needs contributed to the participants' success and consequent satisfaction with the program.

Student Satisfaction and Support Systems

A positive relationship was indicated between participants' satisfaction with their educational experience and support system. The results of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients analysis of satisfaction and the six subcategories showed that the correlation between satisfaction and support systems was statistically significantly different from zero at the .01 level. The correlation between satisfaction and support system was .47, which was the fourth highest correlation.

Also, Pearson correlation analysis for the 18 items indicated that the correlations between satisfaction and the items that constituted the support system subscale, advisement (.48), student interaction with other students (.50), and interaction with faculty (.35), were all statistically significant at the .05 level; however, the correlations between satisfaction and networking (.08) and communication (.19) were not statistically significant at the .05 level.

The mixed findings of the quantitative analysis relative to support system were also reflected in the findings from the analysis of the narrative data. The participants provided diverse responses concerning aspects of the support system that affected their overall satisfaction levels. Support system was the only category in which there was no match among the researcher's themes and the three independent reviewers. This may be due to the fact that support system measured diverse items, such as level of satisfaction with program advisement, other students, interaction with faculty, networking opportunities, and communication with the department. However, overall, all the respondents attributed the success of their educational endeavors to some components of the support system.

Student Satisfaction and Achievement of Personal Goals

A positive relationship was found between participants' satisfaction with their educational experience and the achievement of personal goals. The results of Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients analysis of satisfaction and the six subcategories showed that the correlation between satisfaction and personal goals was statistically significantly different from zero at the .01 level. The correlation between satisfaction and personal goals was .42, which was the second lowest correlation.

In the qualitative analysis, all the participants indicated a certain level of fulfillment and self-actualization as a result of participation in the program. This reported sense of fulfillment contributed to their perceptions of satisfaction with the program. Thus, the findings of the qualitative analysis supported the quantitative analysis finding of a positive relationship between participants' satisfaction and achievement of personal goals.

Student Satisfaction and Achievement of Career Goals

The study also established that a positive relationship exists between participants' satisfaction with their educational experience and the achievement of career goals. The results of Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients analysis of satisfaction and the six subcategories showed that the correlation between satisfaction and career goals was statistically significantly different from zero at the .01 level. Career goal was found to have the lowest but statistically significant and positive correlation with satisfaction at .36. Results of the qualitative data analysis indicated that all of the 34 respondents linked their satisfaction with the program to the impact it had on their career goals.

Conclusions Drawn From the Study

This study investigated the determinants of transnational students' satisfaction with their graduate education experience. The study focused on graduates' perceptions of satisfaction along selected dimensions of Flint and Associates' Eight Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners (Flint & Associates, 1999; Noel-Levitz & CAEL, 2009). The variables posited to be contributory to students' perceptions of satisfaction include (a) institutional accommodations, (b) course work that is relevant, (c) instructors who are knowledgeable in teaching adult students, (d) support systems to help with the educational process, (e) achievement of career goals, and (f) achievement of personal goals. The research provided an insight into transnational students' perceptions of their overall educational experience, taking into consideration the participants' personal experience, program content, and perceived impact on personal life and professional career.

The following conclusions were drawn from the study.

Diverse Factors Related to Student Satisfaction

Multiple factors affect students' perceptions of satisfaction with their educational experience. The results of this study underscored the importance of both educational and noneducational factors in meeting the needs of transnational students. This finding is consistent with prior research that suggested that meeting the diverse expectations of students are a consequence of a combination of both educational and noneducational factors (Elliot, 2003; Elliot & Shin, 2002; Wood et al., 2010).

Data analyses revealed that all the six hypothesized attributes had statistically significant and positive impact on students' satisfaction in higher education. However

the level of satisfaction differed relative to each of the six variables. Therefore, the participants' perceived satisfaction with their educational experience was a consequence of an effective combination of diverse factors.

The quantitative analysis indicated that correlations between satisfaction and the other variables were all statistically significantly different from zero at the .01 level with the exception of support system, for which results were inconclusive. The highest correlation was between satisfaction and relevant course work (.68). The second highest correlation was between satisfaction and institutional accommodations. The third highest correlation was between satisfaction and knowledgeable instructors. The fourth highest correlation was between satisfaction and support systems. The fifth highest correlation was between satisfaction and personal goals. The lowest correlation was between satisfaction and career goals (.36). This finding is useful for educational institutions in prioritizing action to achieve positive outcomes in the satisfaction levels of students. Knowing the level of correlations between satisfaction and the six subscales can be helpful to universities to prioritize efforts and resources and deploy them more effectively to improve overall student's satisfaction.

Sensitivity to Students' Diverse Needs

Related to the diverse factors that affect students' satisfaction are the diverse needs of the student. The research also underscored the need for sensitivity to the unique and diverse needs of the students. The current study found that positive relationships existed between the participants' satisfaction with their educational experience and institutional accommodations, relevance of course work, support systems, knowledgeable instructors, value of educational program on achievement of career goals, and value of

the program in achievement of personal goals. This finding is consistent with the Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners, as defined by CAEL (Flint & Associates, 1999). The major assumption underlying the principles for serving adult learners is that meeting the unique needs of the adult learners will lead to their satisfaction with their educational experiences. Analyses of the narrative data indicated that each participant had needs that had to be met for successful completion of the program, thus confirming the assumption that nontraditional students have unique needs. The current study did not only indicate sensitivity to the diverse needs of adult learners, it also indicated that serving adult learners requires effective combination and optimization of both educational and noneducational factors that affect the students' educational experiences.

The findings concerning the significance of educational and noneducational factors in student satisfaction are supported by the review of literature that identified a variety of factors that influence student satisfaction. These factors include the institutional environment and accommodations to student needs (Lovitts, 2005), the relevance of the course work to the needs of the student (Huang, 2002), the perceived quality of instructors (DeShields et al., 2005), and the relationship between education and achieving personal and career goals (Buchanan et al., 2007; Fenwick, 2002). The fact that both educational and noneducational factors interface in satisfying the needs of transnational students highlights the complex nature of transnational students' satisfaction and underscores the need for sensitivity to the diverse needs of the students.

Diverse Students' Expectations

The study also highlighted the diverse nature of the expectations of transnational students relative to their educational program. Even though the participants in this study indicated a relatively high degree of satisfaction with various components of their educational experience, some of them also indicated their unmet expectations, as evidenced in the recommendations they made relative to program improvement. Some wanted more course offerings. Others recommended utilization of more indigenous instructors. One recommended expansion of cognate areas.

These diverse expectations are consistent with literature on satisfying adult learners. The needs and perceptions of international students often differ significantly from those of domestic students (Szekers, 2010; Trice, 2004). International students often develop expectations about a foreign institution based on sparse information, which increases the risk that the reality will vary substantially from the expectation (Shanka et al., 2006). The current study indicated the need (a) for sensitivity to the diverse expectations of nontraditional adult learners and (b) for modification of the factors that shape their overall educational experiences to suit their particular and peculiar needs in order to increase their levels of satisfaction.

Knowledgeable Instructors and Relevance of Curricula

The current study underscored the need for knowledgeable instructors delivering relevant courses in special settings. Adult learners have different needs and learn differently. The findings of this research indicated that of the six variables postulated to affect students' perceptions of satisfaction with their educational experience (institutional accommodations, relevant course work, knowledgeable instructors, support systems,

career goals, and personal goals), relevance of courses offered, institutional accommodation, and knowledgeable instructors were indicated as the three most important factors that had stronger relationship with student satisfaction compared to the other three variables. This finding has special significance, especially as it relates to knowledgeable instructors and relevant courses.

The need for relevant courses delivered by knowledgeable instructors in an environment that provides special accommodations to students who need these accommodations is an important finding of this study. This finding is consistent with literature on student satisfaction. Lovitts (2005) concluded that “environmental contexts” are critical to graduate students’ success. Huang (2002) also highlighted the significant role of relevant course work in students’ success and satisfaction. Some of the participants in the study indicated that offering the courses during the summer in their home country was critical to their successful enrollment and completion of the program. Offering the core classes during summer was one of the special accommodations made for the students. Some studies indicated that students valued instructors’ teaching ability and expertise in the subject matter (Bain et al., 2010; Douglas et al., 2006). This program employed a combination of both indigenous and expatriate instructors in order to meet the unique needs of the students.

The participants’ relatively high level of satisfaction with institutional accommodations, relevant course work, and knowledgeable instructors indicated that the participants deemed the curriculum to be relevant to their peculiar needs and that the instructors were equally sensitive to their needs. The current study indicated a continued need for sensitivity to the unique and diverse needs of transnational students, as these

needs are critical to their success with their education and their satisfaction with their educational experience.

In the next section, some of the limitations of the current study are discussed.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the contribution of the study to new knowledge in transnational education, several limitations were inherent in this study. A significant limitation is the small sample size, which indicated that the respondents may not necessarily be representative of most alumni of the program. The total size of the study population for this disciplined inquiry was about 350, but only 62 could be reached for participation. This small size potentially limited data collection and analysis. It also limits generalizability. Also, the study has the limitation of using self-reporting data in a survey focused on one program offered by one institution.

Another limitation is the probability of having missed significant factors in the conceptual framework that might have explained the phenomenon of satisfaction more thoroughly and more broadly. Six factors (institutional accommodations, relevant course work, knowledgeable instructors, support system, career goals, and personal goals) were hypothesized to have positive relationships with the participants' perception of satisfaction with their educational experience. Other significant factors may have played vital roles in the high satisfaction levels expressed by the participants.

Another limitation is that data gathering occurred during an alumni event. Alumni events may attract people who want to be associated with their alma mater, which implies some element of satisfaction with their educational experience. This may account for the lack of variance revealed from analysis of the data.

Recommendations for Educational Leadership

Global education system and economic landscapes have been in state of rapid transformation occasioned and sustained by some factors that include “continued ascent of the knowledge economy, which has created powerful new incentives for people to build their skills through education” and “the explosive growth of higher education worldwide, which has increased opportunities for millions and is expanding the global talent pool of highly-educated individuals” (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012, p. 13). The “historical movements of students from developing to developed countries has shifted to multidirectional flow of students all over the world in pursuit of wide range of higher educational opportunities” (Belyavina & Bhandari, 2012, p. 2). Given the complexity of this educational landscape that educational leaders must navigate and the variety of factors identified in this study that affect the satisfaction level of transnational students, higher education leaders must continue to anticipate increase in international students, increased opportunity for delivery of higher education in transnational contexts, and increased competition for students who must now be treated as customers of educational services.

Educational leaders must also be aware of the diversity of the transnational education landscape and that transnational education is a differentiated marketplace for customers with diverse expectations and needs. Cross-border education is a market-driven activity (Varghese, 2008) that is a solution for educational institutions faced with increased competition (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Developing a segmented approach in targeting services to the students should be an integral part of the organizational strategy. Given that both educational and noneducational factors affect the perceptions of

satisfaction of transnational students, sensitivity to the unique needs of transnational students and cross-cultural understanding of all employees of higher institutions are essential. Development of cross-cultural awareness through seminars and trainings and effective teaching methods aimed at students from different cultures and learning styles and regular course evaluations are some of the challenges that higher education leaders must address. Continuous internal audit of student services to ensure that the service delivery meets with student expectations is also beneficial.

For institutions to remain competitive, the leaders need to devise effective ways of delivering educational programs that are affordable; use schedules that are flexible to accommodate the unique personal, family, and professional obligations that the students must juggle; and deliver in optimal proximity to the students. Various models of delivery of transnational higher education range from full program delivery at an off-shore location, a combination of face-to-face and other flexible delivery options, and e-learning (McBumie & Ziguras, 2001). The findings of the current study are relevant in meeting the challenge of positioning IHEs in meeting the unique demands of transnational educational landscape. Appropriate combination of institutional factors that affect student satisfaction will result in student satisfaction, as the findings of this study indicate. Additionally, the findings of this study suggest that student input is needed in identifying delivery methods that best meets the students' unique and diverse needs. Therefore, need exists to elicit these inputs at various stages of the students' educational experience and even after graduation.

In an academic landscape characterized by increasing knowledge complexity and cultural diversity, this study bears significant ramification for conception and delivery of

content. Even though the participants indicated satisfaction with the relevance of course work, they also indicated the need for more course offerings in the cognate areas. The usual approach has been to create a “one size fits all” curriculum for students. The diversity of expectations and needs of transnational students indicate a need to reevaluate this practice. As educational leaders must anticipate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for the future of a diverse student population, new educational paradigms must also take into consideration the diverse and unique needs of a diverse student population. The challenge is the creation of demand-driven programs adapted to suit the particular and peculiar needs of a diverse student population.

This study highlighted satisfaction with the quality of instructors, especially the instructors’ ability to empathize with the unique situations and guide them through the challenges of higher education. This implies that instructors should become coaches and mentors rather than mere dispensers of knowledge. A continued redefinition of teaching and learning is needed, just the same way the customer service departments of other service providers continue to anticipate and respond to the perceived needs of the customers.

The findings of the study indicated that nontraditional students are unique customers with diverse expectations. The diversity of expectations is evident in some of the recommendations made by the participants, such as the suggestions of offering more cognate choices and delivery of content by more indigenous instructors. Also, career goal was found to have the lowest, but statistically significant and positive, correlation with satisfaction (.36). The low satisfaction score of career goals seems to suggest that successful completion of the program did not necessarily translate to success in

achievement of intended career goals, which may be a consequence on unmet expectations. As Buchanan et al. (2007) indicated, student expectations for graduate education are varied. Wright and O'Neill (2002) observed that students tend to base their assessment of their academic providers' performance on the difference between expectations and actual experiences.

The findings of the current study indicate the need to manage these expectations. Given the high expectations of some students, universities must carefully manage the high expectations of students before they enroll in the programs. Provision of objective information about higher institution programs is a way of managing these expectations. Another way of managing the expectations is through entrance interviews, during which program objectives are presented to potential students.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on analyzing factors that were theorized to affect transnational students' satisfaction with their educational experience. This study has highlighted factors that are relatively highly correlated to the participants' satisfaction, such as relevant course work, institutional accommodations, and knowledgeable instructors. Additionally, the study also underscored factors that are relatively moderately correlated to the respondents' satisfaction, such as support systems and the impact of the program on achievement of career and personal goals. Additional research that focuses on the factors with relatively low correlations to gain a deeper understanding of underlying reasons for the low correlations is recommended.

I recommend that similar studies be replicated with a larger population sample. The current study consisted of 62 participants. The small population sample limited

generalizability. I recommend a future study involve more alumni of the program in order to obtain more representative data of the alumni perceptions of satisfaction with their educational experience. Studies should be conducted of similar programs at other universities, using research methods that intentionally seek out those that might be dissatisfied with their educational experience. Such a study should also indicate the time since graduation to determine the effect of time on students' perceptions of satisfaction.

Another study that focuses on the impact of the program on the participants' personal and professional lives is recommended. This study should further explore the impact of the program on the participants' self-efficacy and leadership efficacy. Because the participants indicated satisfaction with the effect of the program on their professional lives, this relationship can be further explored in a detailed study focusing on self and leadership efficacy. This study will add to the knowledge bank of leadership preparation programs.

Another area that warrants additional research is the importance of support systems in the transnational leadership graduate program. I hypothesized in the qualitative component that this would be a distinct theme of responses in the qualitative component of the study. However, only the second reviewer listed a similar theme, labeled "relationships." Neither the first nor the third reviewer indicated any theme that matched this finding. No definitive conclusions were reached concerning its relationship to the participants' satisfaction in the quantitative analysis section. Only two of the four items in this section were found to be statistically significant relative to participants' satisfaction with the program. The theme of support systems is likely to require

additional research. A research study needs to be designed that concentrates on this attribute of a program in isolation from other factors.

Support systems in a transnational graduate program can be simple or complex. The complex systems are more likely to benefit from being the focus of an entire research project. Such support systems could be broken into a number of subdivisions (e.g., professional vs. personal support systems, social vs. academic support systems). An academic support system might be the provision of a tutor for students having difficulty with a particular topic. The social support systems could be formal or informal. Formal groups could be organized by students or faculty and address specific issues. Informal social supports might be as simple as regular telephone conversations with a friend.

Holistic student satisfaction research that incorporates many dimensions of learning, teaching, institutional factors, and demographical factors is recommended. A range of teaching, learning, demographic, and educational variables collectively interact to generate satisfaction. Demographic information was neither solicited nor collected in this current study because of the need to ensure anonymity of the participants. A study that collects demographic information is recommended in order to fully understand the effect of demography in student satisfaction in higher education offered in transnational setting.

Conclusion

In this study I explored the factors that affect nontraditional students' satisfaction in a program offered in a transnational setting. The factors theorized to affect students' perceptions were institutional accommodations, relevant course work, knowledgeable instructors, support systems, career goals, and personal goals. The theoretical approach

was based on consumer satisfaction theory, which considers satisfaction as a function of the extent to which students' expectations about the institution are met with positive confirmations of expectations leading to higher levels of satisfaction.

The relevance of graduate student satisfaction analysis in a transnational context is supported by the fact that if graduate students are viewed as consumers of graduate education, their satisfaction is critical to institutional success and competitiveness, especially in an increasingly competitive educational landscape. Institutions that are effective in meeting the unique needs of the students would have satisfied customers. This has implications for recruitment and retention of additional customers.

Data analyses yielded significant results. All six factors theorized to affect students' perceptions of satisfaction (institutional accommodations, relevant course work, knowledgeable instructors, support systems, career goals, and personal goals) were found to have positive relationships with students' satisfaction. Narrative data also indicated that participants were satisfied with their overall educational experience. A combination of educational and noneducational factors interacted to provide conditions and services that addressed the needs of the students, which resulted in the satisfaction with the program. Although all participants indicated being satisfied with their educational experience, further research is still needed on the relationship between these educational and noneducational factors and the graduates' satisfaction, especially given the moderate-to-low levels of the satisfaction levels with some of the factors.

This disciplined inquiry provided insights into factors that affect nontraditional students' satisfaction in a graduate educational program offered in a transnational setting by indicating factors such as relevant course work, institutional accommodations, and

knowledgeable instructors that were more pronounced in influencing student's satisfaction with their educational experience. The study also highlighted three factors (support systems, personal goals, and career goals) that had moderate-to-low levels of correlation with participants' satisfaction.

The study underscored the complex nature of student satisfaction at the graduate level in a transnational context. The students bring diverse expectations and a variety of unique needs that affect their perceptions of satisfaction. Managing these diverse expectations and meeting these unique needs pose special challenges to institutions offering higher education in transnational settings. Also, a variety of both educational and noneducational factors interact to meet the students' diverse needs and affect their perceptions of satisfaction. This study also highlighted the importance of managing and optimizing the effectiveness of these factors with input from the consumers of educational services, the students.

Rapid expansion of transnational education phenomena implies that more institutions of higher learning are joining the rank of transnational educational providers or expanding their transnational educational offerings (Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012). The contemporary higher education landscape is characterized by competition, complexity, and diversity. Delivery of transnational higher education brings complex challenges, as the students bring diverse expectations that must be addressed and redressed. They also bring unique needs that must be met in order to ensure satisfaction of the students with their educational experience. Examination of factors that impact the educational experience and satisfaction of nontraditional transnational students is critical

in meeting the unique challenges occasioned by the complex transnational educational landscape.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Quantitative and Quantitative Survey Instrument

Please indicate with check mark.

1. To what extent are you satisfied with the UNF-UB Graduate Program?

Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Extremely Unsatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Please indicate how satisfied you are with each of the Educational Leadership Graduate Program characteristics listed below.

Characteristics	Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Extremely Unsatisfied
a) Admission procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Faculty members in the Department	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Courses offered in the Department	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Program advisement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Other students in the Graduate Program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Your interaction with faculty in the Department	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Networking opportunities among faculty and students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Communication within the Department and with students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Graduate Program costs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Distribution of courses delivered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	by distance					
k)	Preparation for your desired career goal/position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l)	Preparation for a PhD program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m)	Reputation of MEd Program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n)	Reputation of UNF	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o)	Value of UNF-UB program for achieving career goals					
p)	Value of UNF-UB program for achieving personal goals					

3. How would you rate your satisfaction with *your* input into the graduate program?

Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Extremely Unsatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Qualitative Survey Instrument

1. What made you choose this program to obtain your master's degree?

2. What do you consider to be strengths of the program?

3. What modifications, if any, to the program would you suggest?

4. How would you describe the effects of participating in the program on your personal life?

5. How would you describe the effects of participating in the program on your professional life

6. How would you describe the effort you put into your graduate education program?

Appendix B

Permission to Use Research Instrument

Re: Request to Use Research Instrument
 vichetsum@gmail.com [vichetsum@gmail.com] on behalf of Vichet Sum
 [vsum@umes.edu]
 Sent: Saturday, May 07, 2011 7:56 PM
 To: Nnoduechi, Christopher
 Cc: vsum@ufl.edu

Hi Chris,

I am sorry that I didn't get back to you soon enough. I just got done with a research meeting in my post doctoral program in the Hough Graduate School of Business here at the University of Florida. I am in Gainesville now; I am not that far from where you are. I'll travel back to Maryland to teach on Sunday afternoon.

And yes, feel free to adapt the instrument for your dissertation. Permission is granted!

Here is the citation:

Sum, V., McCaskey, S. J., & Kyeyune, C. (2010). A survey research of satisfaction levels of graduate students enrolled in a nationally ranked top-10 program at a mid-western university. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 7(2), 1-17.

Good luck with your dissertation,

On Sat, May 7, 2011 at 12:00 PM, Nnoduechi, Christopher <cnnodeuc@fscj.edu> wrote:
 Dr. Sum:

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Florida, which is located in Jacksonville. I am currently working on a dissertation that is focused on assessing students' satisfaction with their educational experience. The survey instrument you and your colleagues employed in "A survey research of satisfaction levels of graduate students enrolled in a nationally ranked top-10 program at a mid-western university" seems like the perfect match for my study.

I am therefore writing to request your permission to utilize the same instrument for my academic research. I am willing to pay for the instrument. I am awaiting your response.

Thanks,
 Chris Nnoduechi

Vichet Sum, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Management
 Department of Business, Management and Accounting
 University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Princess Anne, MD 21853

Tel: 410-651-6531

URL: <http://www.umes.edu/bma/facultyprofile-Sum.shtml>

Alternative E-mail: contact@vichetsum.com

Kiah Hall Suite 2117C, UMES, Princess Anne, MD 21853

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday: 1:30PM - 5:30PM and Wednesday: 10:00 AM - 12:00PM

Appendix C

UNF's Institutional Review Board Approval



Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
1 UNF Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32224-2665
904-620-2455 FAX 904-620-2457
Equal Opportunity/Equal Access/Affirmative Action Institution

UNF IRB Number: 11-128
Approval Date: 03-09-2012
Expiration Date: Exempt - None
Processed on behalf of UNF's IRB KLC

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 9, 2012

TO: Mr. Christopher Nnoduechi

VIA: Dr. Marcia Lamkin
LSCSM

FROM: Dr. Katherine Kasten, Chairperson
On behalf of the UNF Institutional Review Board

RE: Review by the UNF Institutional Review Board IRB#11-128:
"Adult Student Satisfaction with Educational Experience"

This is to advise you that your project, "Adult Student Satisfaction with Educational Experience" was reviewed on behalf of the UNF Institutional Review Board and has been declared Exempt, Category 2." Therefore, this project requires no further IRB oversight unless substantive changes are made.

This approval applies to your project in the form and content as submitted to the IRB for review. Any variations or modifications to the approved protocol and/or informed consent forms that might increase risk to human participants must be submitted to the IRB prior to implementing the changes. Please see the [UNF Standard Operating Procedures](#) for additional information about what types of changes might elevate risk to human participants. Any unanticipated problems involving risk and any occurrence of serious harm to subjects and others shall be reported promptly to the IRB within 3 business days.

As you may know, **CITI Course Completion Reports are valid for 3 years**. Your completion report is valid through 11/17/2012 and Dr. Lamkin's completion report is valid through 9/16/2012. If your completion report expires within the next 60 days or has expired, please take CITI's refresher by following this link: <http://www.citiprogram.org/>.

Should you have any questions regarding your project or any other IRB issues, please contact Kayla Champaigne at 904-620-2312, or K.Champaigne@unf.edu. Please note that the dean and/or chair of your department will be sent a copy of your approval documents.

Appendix D
Request to Use Alumni Event for Data Collection

University of North Florida
Department of Leadership, School Counseling, and Sport Management
1 UNF Drive
Jacksonville, Florida, 32224, USA

December 20, 2011

Event Coordinator
UNF-UB Alumni Event
Belize City, Belize

Dear Sir/Madam

I write to request permission to use the Alumni Event to collect data for a research project. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of North Florida (UNF) in the department of Leadership, School Counseling, and Sport Management. The study designed to determine the satisfaction level and the impact of the program on graduates of the University of North Florida-University of Belize Masters in Educational Leadership Program. This research will be beneficial in achieving the objectives of UNF-UB Alumni. The research is being supervised by UNF and its Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The research is completely anonymous and voluntary. The research involves administration of questionnaire to event participants who have already granted their permission to participate in the study. Administration of question will take approximately 20 to 25 minutes. Administration of research questionnaire will not interfere with conference events as it will be administered during break sessions. There are no foreseeable risks to research participants.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the researcher, Chris Nnoduechi (Phone: 904-803-2875; Email: cnnoduechi@gmail.com). You may also contact my faculty research supervisor, Dr. Lamkin (Phone: 904-620-1804; Email: m.lamkin@unf.edu).

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Respectfully,

Christopher Nnoduechi

Appendix E

Permission to Use Alumni Event for Data Collection

Betty M. Flinchum, Ph.D.

December 21, 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Christopher Nnoduechi 's doctoral dissertation involves alumni of the University of North Florida (UNF) and University of Belize (UB) Master of Education (MED) program. The primary purpose of his research is to determine the level of satisfaction of the graduates who participated in this program.

The program was conducted in Belize, through a partnership between UNF and UB. All of the graduates from that program are now educational professionals in Belize. Therefore, to gather the data for the research, it is necessary for the questionnaires to be filled out in Belize by those alumni who elect to participate.

As initiator/director of the MED program in Belize and UNF Emeritus Professor, I am involved in an alumni event in Belize. Chris Nnoduechi has requested and has been granted permission to seek data from those alumni in attendance.

If there are further questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Betty M. Flinchum, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus in Education
College of Education and Human Services
University of North Florida
Jacksonville, FL 32224
Email: bettyflinchum@aol.com; bflinchu@unf.edu

Appendix F
Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

University of North Florida
Department of Leadership, School Counseling, and Sport Management
1 UNF Drive
Jacksonville, Florida, 32224, USA

XX-XX-XXXX

Dear UNF Alumni:

My name is Chris Nnoduechi. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of North Florida (UNF) in the department of Leadership, School Counseling, and Sport Management. I would like to formally invite you to participate in a critical research to determine the satisfaction level of graduates of the University of North Florida-University of Belize Masters in Educational Leadership Program.

The research is being supervised and has been approved by UNF and its Institutional Review Board (IRB). Your participation is strictly voluntary. You may choose to not to participate. You may also choose to stop your participation at any point during the research without fear of any adverse consequences. There is no monetary compensation for participation. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this research study. This study involves completion of survey questionnaire. If you choose to participate in this survey, it will take approximately 20-25 minutes of your time.

This study is completely anonymous. There will be no identifying marker. Your name will not be recorded on any data records. Only those directly involved with this project will have access to the data. After completion of this study, all surveys will be destroyed. The information you provide will be used only for the purposes of this study.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. You may contact Dr. K. Kasten at kkasten@unf.edu or 904-620-2498

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact the researcher, Chris Nnoduechi (Phone: 904-803-2875; Email: cnnoduechi@gmail.com). You may also contact my faculty research supervisor, Dr. Lamkin (Phone: 904-620-1804; Email: m.lamkin@unf.edu).

Thank you in advance for anticipated cooperation.

Christopher Nnoduechi

Appendix G

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT/WAIVER OF SIGNED INFORMED CONSENT

XX- XX, XXXX

The study you are being asked to complete is a dissertation research that is a component of a doctoral degree in the department of Leadership, School Counseling, and Sport Management at the University of North Florida. We are trying to determine the satisfaction levels of graduates of the University of North Florida-University of Belize Masters in Educational Leadership Program. You are being asked to participate in the research by responding to the questions in the survey. This will take between 20 to 25 minutes.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. You may choose to not to participate. You may also choose to stop your participation at any point without fear of any adverse consequences. There is no monetary compensation for participation. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this research.

Your identity will remain anonymous. Only those directly involved with this project will have access to the data. There will be no identifying marker in the survey you are completing. After completion of this study, all surveys will be destroyed. The information you provide will be used only for the purposes of this study.

By proceeding to complete the survey instrument attached to this Informed Consent Statement, you acknowledge that you fully understand your rights as a research participants and also waive your right to a signed informed consent. The anonymous nature of the study necessitates a waiver of signed informed consent because a signed informed consent may compromise the anonymity of the research.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. You may contact Dr. K. Kasten at kkasten@unf.edu or 904-620-2498

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact the researcher, Chris Nnoduechi (Phone: 904-803-2875; Email: cnnoduechi@gmail.com). You may also contact my faculty research supervisor, Dr. Lamkin (Phone: 904-620-1804; Email: m.lamkin@unf.edu).

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Christopher Nnoduechi

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