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ABSTRACT

Areas of business education that need to be researched were identified through a two-round study. First, 2 groups of more than 40 Delta Pi Epsilon members generated ideas for research topics at regional and national conferences. The resulting list of topics was edited and rated by a Delphi panel consisting of 15 educators from postsecondary and secondary institutions and state and county departments of education across the United States. In round 2, the Delphi panel members were given summaries of the results of the first Delphi round and asked to re-evaluate their original responses based on the round 1 results. Both Delphi rounds elicited 100% response rates. The top 10 overall topics identified were as follows: (1) the basic workplace skills needed by industry; (2) communication skills for the millennium; (3) how soft skills should be taught and measured; (4) computer literacy components desired by industry; (5) whether computer courses should teach skills or concepts; (6) the best way to measure and evaluate competencies in spreadsheets, presentation graphics, and databases; (7) differences in achievement with distance learning and classroom teaching; (8) whether problem-solving skills are being taught in software instruction; (9) development of instruments for measuring business competencies; and (10) preparing students for employers multi-skills expectations. (Contains 12 tables.) (MN)

NEEDED RESEARCH IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

SIXTH EDITION

Martha H. Rader
William J. Wilhelm

DELTA PI EPSILON

Needed Research in Business Education (Sixth Edition) is an official publication of Delta Pi Epsilon. Delta Pi Epsilon is a national honorary graduate society for professionals in business education. The purpose of the Society is to support and promote scholarship, leadership, and cooperation toward the advancement of education for and about business. The Society publishes the *Delta Pi Epsilon Journal, Instructional Strategies: An Applied Research Series*, and other research-based materials. Information about these publications and other activities of the Society may be obtained from the Delta Pi Epsilon National Office, P.O. Box 4340, Little Rock, AR 72214.

Needed Research in Business Education

Sixth Edition

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by

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In Cooperation with the
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Preface

The primary objective of Delta Pi Epsilon is to conduct and disseminate research in business education. Programs of the Society encourage research by individuals, groups within the profession, and Delta Pi Epsilon chapters. Delta Pi Epsilon supports research through the following programs and activities:

- The national Delta Pi Epsilon Research Conference
- Presentation of the Delta Pi Epsilon Research Awards for outstanding doctoral dissertations, master's theses, and independent research
- Funding of research projects through the Delta Pi Epsilon Research Foundation
- Sponsorship of national research projects
- Publication of research periodicals, monographs, and bulletins

Through these programs, Delta Pi Epsilon has encouraged the involvement of business educators in needed research in business education. *Needed Research in Business Education* is intended to continue the tradition of stimulating and fostering quality research in business education. The Research Projects Committee hopes that the Sixth Edition will provide assistance to business educators in determining the direction that their research efforts might take in the next few years.

Contents

Introduction

This research project, which was conducted in several stages over a two-year period, began as a continuation of the *Needed Research in Business Education* series published by Delta Pi Epsilon. Five previous editions of *Needed Research in Business Education* have been published by Delta Pi Epsilon in the past forty years. The first edition was published as Delta Pi Epsilon Research Bulletin No. 1, *Questions To Be Answered Through Research in Business Education* (1961). Successive editions were published as *Needed Research in Business Education* in 1972, 1978-79, 1988, and 1995.

The first five editions of *Needed Research in Business Education* contained a lengthy list of research questions generated by Delta Pi Epsilon members who were asked to brainstorm with their colleagues and fellow DPE members to generate ideas for research topics. In the first five editions, the suggested research topics were arranged into various categories of research questions and edited by members of the Research Projects Committee; however, the topics were not prioritized. The Sixth Edition not only has continued the tradition of generating a list of timely research topics but also has added an additional research procedure to prioritize the suggested topics within categories and overall. This procedure was added in order to identify the most important research topics.

Data Collection

Data collection involved the use of two procedures: (1) generating the needed research topics by the use of an Affinity Diagram technique with two groups of participants, and (2) prioritizing the research topics by the use of a two-round Delphi technique.

Affinity Diagram Technique

Two groups of more than forty Delta Pi Epsilon members generated ideas for research topics at a Delta Pi Epsilon session at the Western Business and Information Technology Educators regional conference and at the Delta Pi Epsilon national conference. Each group of business educators participated in an Affinity Diagram session to generate a list of ideas for quality research topics needed for the millennium. The Affinity Diagram procedure is a Total Quality Management technique for generating ideas and grouping them into categories. The collection and arrangement of verbal ideas in this technique allows the researcher to clarify and define a problem.

The researchers then aggregated the data generated by the two groups of business educators by eliminating duplicate items, editing the topics, and

collapsing the data into one list of more than 100 research topics. The topics were grouped into the following eleven categories: business communication, distance learning, ethics, instruction/curriculum, international business, keyboarding/word processing, marketing/accounting/basic business, research methods, teacher preparation, technology, and workplace skills.

Delphi Technique

The Delphi process affords the researcher the opportunity to glean a consensus of expert opinion and potential answers to research questions. The Delphi panel consisted of business educators who had demonstrated an understanding of and concern for the status of business education by serving in various leadership roles throughout the profession. Members of the Delta Pi Epsilon Research Projects Committee submitted more than thirty candidates' names to the researchers. The final Delphi panel consisted of 15 educators throughout the United States from universities, community colleges, high schools, and state and county departments of education.

In the initial round of the Delphi study, panel members rated each of the research topics generated through the Affinity Diagram Technique on a questionnaire that asked respondents to rate each research topic on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 = very important, 4 = somewhat important, 3 = of neutral importance, 2 = somewhat unimportant, and 1 = very unimportant. After rating each topic, the panel members ranked their top 10 topics, with 1 as their top choice, 2 as their second choice, etc. A 100 percent rate of return was received for the first round of data collection from the Delphi committee. In the second round of the Delphi procedure, participants were provided with a summary of the results from the first round and were asked to re-evaluate their original responses based on the computed means of the ratings and rankings provided by the entire group from round one. A 100 percent rate of return was also received for the second round of data collection from the Delphi panel. The results of the two-round Delphi allowed the researchers to prioritize the research topics in order of their importance both overall and within each category.

Data Analysis

The researchers organized the research topics into eleven categories of similar focus. These categories included business communication, distance learning, ethics, instruction/curriculum, international business, keyboarding/word processing, marketing/accounting/basic business, research methods, teacher preparation, technology, and workplace skills. Descriptive statistics were computed for all research topics in each category. The research topics in each category were sorted in descending order of importance utilizing the mean rating score for each topic. Next, the research topics were sorted

overall in descending order of importance. The first criterion chosen for the sorting procedure was the mean rating score for each research topic. The second criterion chosen for sorting the topics was the standard deviation scores of the ratings for each topic. The third criterion chosen for sorting the topics was the ranking frequency for each topic. Ranking frequency was the total number of times a topic was ranked in the top ten by panel members.

Findings

The categories of research topics prioritized in descending order of importance are shown in Tables 1 through 11.

Table 1 BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	Communication skills for the millennium	4.5	0.6
2	Developing students' speaking and listening skills in all types of business instruction	4.0	0.8
3	E-mail impact on workforce productivity	4.0	0.7
4	Are good editing skills essential for today's office?	3.9	0.7
5	Proper manners/rules for e-mail	3.7	0.9
6	Need for speaking/listening skills	3.7	0.8
7	Online resumes compared to traditional: what recruiters look for	3.3	0.9
8	Correct letter format	3.3	0.8

Table 2 DISTANCE LEARNING

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	Are there differences in achievement with distance learning vs. classroom teaching?	4.1	0.8
2	Comparing online learning vs. other delivery systems—different age levels	4.0	0.8
3	Computer instruction: the effects of online vs. traditional learning	4.0	0.7
4	Prevalence and efficacy of online methods courses	3.9	0.7
5	Impact of distance learning on the business curriculum	3.9	0.6
6	Contribution of distance learning in business education	3.9	0.6
7	Advantages and disadvantages of distance learning	3.6	0.7
8	Prevalence of dishonesty in distance learning	3.6	0.6

Table 3 ETHICS

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	Ethics on the Internet	4.1	0.6
2	Ethics in the classroom, in business, and business education	4.1	0.5
3	Ethics in our research: Is it present and what ethical standards should be followed?	3.8	0.7
4	Business ethics: How has it changed?	3.7	0.7
5	How can ethics be taught?	3.7	0.5
6	What is the impact of technology in fostering cheating?	3.5	0.7

Table 4 INSTRUCTION/CURRICULUM

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	Are we teaching problem-solving skills in software instruction?	4.1	0.8
2	Is School-to-Career making an impact on high school graduation rates?	4.1	0.7
3	Relevancy—Is the business education curriculum reflecting the business world?	4.1	0.7
4	To what extent do business education classes at the secondary level focus on developing critical thinking skills?	3.9	0.7
5	How does technology instruction with group-support systems compare to traditional instruction?	3.9	0.6
6	What are effective assignments?	3.8	0.9
7	How can business teachers adapt instruction for special-needs students?	3.8	0.7
8	Is the business education curriculum attuned to anticipated changes in the business world in the 21st century?	3.7	0.9
9	Teaching and learning methods in a changing environment	3.7	0.9
10	How is active learning vs. lecture related to achievement?	3.6	0.6
11	Student-centered vs. teacher-centered learning in business education	3.6	0.6

continued

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
12	Role of interdisciplinary studies in high schools	3.5	0.6
13	Is collaborative learning effective across age levels?	3.5	0.6
14	What is the service/social consciousness of business students?	3.4	0.8
15	The status of concurrent community college credit for high school business education courses	3.4	0.7
16	Business education standards for diverse student groups	3.3	0.9
17	Effectiveness of encouragement and support vs. discipline	3.3	0.9
18	The status of vocational and academic integration	3.2	0.9
19	Comprehensive guidance programs—impact on business education	3.2	0.6
20	Implementation of cooperative learning in business education	3.1	0.5
21	Recordkeeping in the modern office	2.9	0.6

Table 5 INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	Global Competencies: What does business want?	4.0	0.8
2	Integrating international business into all business classes	3.9	0.9
3	How does the global economy affect our teaching and curriculum?	3.9	0.8
4	Integrating with Language Arts for international business education	3.6	0.6
5	Need for International Business—a part of the business administration program or a program by itself?	3.5	0.7
6	Global studies—a place in business education?	3.5	0.7

Table 6 KEYBOARDING/WORD PROCESSING

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	Is keyboarding instruction still necessary?	3.9	0.7
2	The impact of voice recognition on keyboarding	3.8	0.8
3	Value of keyboarding for K-3 children related to later experiences on computers	3.7	0.8
4	How do you keep keyboarding relevant for high school students who have previously taken keyboarding?	3.4	0.6
5	How can word processing production skills best be developed?	3.3	0.6
6	Keyboarding speed: Do employees still need minimum wpm skill?	3.2	0.8

Table 7 MARKETING/ACCOUNTING/BASIC BUSINESS

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	Measuring the basic business competencies of students	4.1	0.7
2	Integrating basic business competencies into computer applications instruction	4.1	0.7
3	Basic economic understanding: How do we achieve it?	3.9	0.7
4	What topics should be included in a high school marketing course?	3.6	0.6
5	Identifying new personal finance skills needed by students	3.6	0.6
6	What is the outcome of using Quickbook (Peachtree) vs. traditional accounting instruction?	3.3	0.8

Table 8 RESEARCH METHODS

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	The development of instruments for measuring business competencies	4.1	0.7
2	Sampling methods used in business education	3.9	0.8
3	Survey methodology with technology	3.9	0.7
4	Reliability and validity in research in business education	3.8	0.9
5	Quality and reliability of Internet research documents	3.8	0.8
6	The quality of research in business education	3.7	0.8

Table 9 TEACHER PREPARATION

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	Teaching and learning methodology for business educators in a rapidly changing environment	4.1	0.5
2	Have competencies for effective teachers changed due to changes in the business world?	4.0	0.9
3	Preparing business computer teachers: Do they need traditional skills as well as computer skills?	4.0	0.8
4	Steps to build stronger business teacher education programs	4.0	0.5
5	Teacher training models: What should they include for education reform?	3.9	1.0
6	States with alternative methods of teacher certification: Does it work?	3.9	0.7
7	Characteristics of the most effective computer teachers	3.9	0.7
8	Certification and teacher shortage: Are the standards being lowered?	3.9	0.6
9	Professional skills needed by business education students	3.8	0.7
10	Shortage of business teachers—now and in the future	3.8	0.6
11	What is the perception of teaching as a career—how has it changed?	3.7	0.6
12	What do post-baccalaureate education teachers need?	3.6	0.7

continued

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
13	Are teachers prepared to meet the needs of special-needs-students?	3.6	0.5
14	How will the role of the business educator change, and how should it?	3.5	1.1
15	Students at risk and business education	3.4	0.5
16	The status of teachers' salaries compared to salaries in business: Has it changed?	3.3	0.7
17	Flexibility in training—willingness to change	3.3	0.5

Table 10 TECHNOLOGY

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	Skills vs. concepts: How should we be teaching computer courses?	4.2	0.7
2	What is the best way to measure and evaluate competencies in spreadsheets, presentation graphics, and databases?	4.2	0.7
3	How can we make students more effective consumers of information available on the Internet?	3.9	0.6
4	Preparing future workers to use voice technology: How will voice activation affect business teaching areas?	3.9	0.6
5	The impact of E-commerce on instruction: need and competencies	3.7	0.6
6	Identify Internet/Web skills in the high school curriculum	3.7	0.6
7	Should Internet and Web-designing skills be taught in the high school curriculum?	3.5	0.5
8	What ergonomical issues are associated with the usage of laptop and palmtop computers?	3.5	0.5
9	College students using Internet instruction: How much time is wasted online?	3.3	0.8
10	Measuring the waste of work time on Internet and e-mail	3.1	0.8
11	Historical research on the impact of technology over the last ten years	3.1	0.6
12	Adaptive equipment to be more inclusive in classroom and industry	2.7	0.7

Table 11 **WORKPLACE SKILLS**

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.
1	What basic workplace skills are demanded by industry?	4.7	0.5
2	How should we teach and measure soft skills?	4.4	0.7
3	What computer literacy components are desired by industry?	4.2	0.8
4	Preparing students for multi-skill expectations of employers	4.1	0.7
5	Employers' need for critical thinking skills	4.0	1.0
6	Certification in computer areas—the demand for hiring employees with various certifications	3.9	0.6
7	Effectiveness of group/team work vs. individual work as a skill required by employers	3.7	0.8
8	What are the critical factors for a successful student business internship/cooperative work experience?	3.7	0.8
9	What is the role of business education in welfare reform?	3.5	1.1
10	The importance of business education to business and government in the workforce	3.5	0.8
11	Employers' perceptions of the importance of technological skills vs. soft skills	3.5	0.5
12	Do employers value creative/innovative thinking as an employability skill?	3.4	1.1
13	Status of self-directed learning in the workforce	3.4	0.8
14	Future of horizontal line management—team dynamics	3.2	0.7

The top ten overall research topics ranked in order of importance are shown in Table 12.

Table 12 TOP TEN OVERALL TOPICS - by Mean Rating, Standard Deviation, and Ranking Frequency

Final Rank	Topic Description	Mean Rating	Std. Dev.	Ranking Frequency
1	What basic workplace skills are demanded by industry?	4.7	0.5	9
2	Communication skills for the millennium	4.5	0.6	11
3	How should we teach and measure soft skills?	4.4	0.7	7
4	What computer literacy components are desired by industry?	4.2	0.8	2
5	Skills vs. concepts: How should we be teaching computer courses?	4.2	0.7	7
6	What is the best way to measure and evaluate competencies in spreadsheets, presentation graphics, and databases?	4.2	0.7	5
7	Are there differences in achievement with distance learning vs. classroom teaching?	4.1	0.8	10
8	Are we teaching problem-solving skills in software instruction?	4.1	0.8	1
9	The development of instruments for measuring business competencies	4.1	0.7	5
10	Preparing students for multi-skill expectations of employers	4.1	0.7	4

Conclusion

The overall ranking demonstrates a keen interest in research focusing on the skills that businesses want from their employees. The top-rated category of research topics was workplace skills. Of the top ten topics overall, the top four were related to workplace skills, including business communication, and five others were related to teaching and measuring workplace skills and competencies. Business educators appeared to be most interested in research in the area of "soft" skills, although research regarding technical skills was also of concern. Research in the area of methodologies for teaching and measuring these skills also was very important, especially distance learning.

Determining other trends toward specific groups or categorizations of research topics in these data will require further investigation. The data are presented here for the reader who seeks an overview of the relative importance of potential topics for business education research, as well as a more specific listing of these same topics by area of interest or specialization.

Business educators are encouraged to actively pursue research about these "most-needed" topics in the next few years to contribute to the body of knowledge in our rapidly changing field. Hopefully all levels of researchers, ranging from graduate students to senior researchers, will take advantage of the results of this study to select timely and important topics for their dissertations, theses, and other business education research projects.

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