Workplace-Readiness Skills Necessary for Student Success in the Workforce as Perceived by Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators

by

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Abstract

This study was designed to determine (a) the extent to which Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perceive specific workplace-readiness skills are important for student success in the workplace; (b) whether or not statistical significance is found between / among the following four variables in the Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perception of the level of importance of specific workplace-readiness skills for employability: teaching experience, area of teaching certificate, class of professional educator certificate, location; and (c) what employer support, if any, plays a role in incorporating workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar required course components. A survey was developed and distributed to Alabama Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators. Each educator was asked to assess the degree of perceived importance of specific workplace-readiness skills. Additionally, these Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators were asked to indicate the extent they integrate workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar, and what employer support methods are used to enhance the workplace-readiness learning activities in the Cooperative Education Seminar.

Forty-five (45%) of the sample (n=139) of Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators responded to the online Qualtrics survey. Each of the twenty-four specific workplace-readiness skills included yielded a high mean score ($M \geq 4.08$), the scale consisted of the following choices: (5) = Very Important through (1) = Unimportant, indicating that Alabama Cooperative

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Education Teacher-Coordinators perceive all twenty-four skills to be important. Statistical significance at the .05 level was found between categories of specific workplace-readiness skills as perceived by Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators.

The extent of inclusion of workplace-readiness skill learning activities in the Cooperative Education Seminar yielded a mean score ($M \geq 3.00$), the scale consisted of the following choices: (5) = To a Great Extent through (1) = Not at All; indicating that Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators are integrating workplace-readiness learning activities at or above a moderate extent. Statistical significance at the .05 level was found between categories of workplace-readiness skill learning activities. Strong positive correlations were found among most of the methods of employer support and learning activity categories indicating employer support is being utilized to enhance workplace-readiness learning activities in the Cooperative Education Seminar.

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I. NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction and Background

Unemployment among high school-aged youth increased in the 1980s due to increasing skill levels required by employers. Because of this, legislation passed the School-To-Work Opportunities Act to develop a system of high quality transition from school to work (Bailey & Hughes, 1999; Stasz & Kaganoff, 1997; Stone & Aliaga, 2005).

Work-based learning provides students with the opportunity to practice skills in an alternative setting. (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997; Lee, McGuiggan & Holland, 2010). It is similar to that of experiential learning, often informal in the planning of specific learning practices. Such experiences may increase awareness about appropriate behavior in dealing with operations in a work setting (Harmer, 2009; Lester & Costley, 2010). Past research points to a steady climb in occupations that require higher levels of education. Workforce preparation courses that are incorporated into Career Technical education claim to have the unique ability to identify deficiencies identified by employers and remedy them accordingly (Bailey & Gribovskaya, 1999; Barton, 2007; Kim, 2011). The problem is, despite claims to the contrary (Ascher, 1994; Bailey & Hughes 1999; Stasz & Kaganoff, 1998), it is unclear if work-based learning opportunities are effective in promoting students' academic and occupational development (Rhoder & French, 1999; Stasz & Kaganoff, 1997; Stern, 1997).

Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators maintain consistent contact with licensed business mentors who employ students participating in

work-based learning. Monthly out-of-school collaboration between the mentor and coordinator allows for precise evaluation of students' job performances. In addition to evaluation, these visits allow the coordinator insight to the knowledge and skills participating employers desire of new entrants in the workforce. The Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinator has a unique position of assigning mentors to their students. Criteria for choosing these mentors include assisting in career development, training for skill development, advising in current and future job opportunities, and maintaining ethical standards that reflect positively on the student, business, and work-based learning program. Child Labor Laws and the needs of the business/community are concerns that the Coordinator must review before choosing where to place a student for training. Follow-up with business partners and self-evaluation are conducted annually to ensure the Cooperative Education program is functioning in a manner favorable to students' occupational and academic objectives (Alabama Department of Education, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

Business executives often find difficulty in deciding the most effective avenues to successfully accomplish their goals. The workforce is often overlooked when strategizing, and resources such as technology, innovations, and time become areas of central focus. Interest in technology, innovation, and time strategies is common and the potential to spend money to improve them can supersede more important areas such as human capital. The workforce should be most concerned with achieving goals that have been developed regardless of the difficulty executives find in management (Gubman, 1998).

By the end of the twentieth century, graduating from college was the path that provided the least resistance into the workforce. A census from 1990 showed only about a quarter of high school graduates were successful in completing a collegiate program. Resnick and Wirt (1996) believe a low percentage of college graduates has left a large number of people who have high aspirations for their careers but far fewer options to earn competitive wages. Similarly, Olsen (1997) found that the gap between what employers desire of their employees and what education provides was originally brought to attention in national reports in the middle of the 1980s. Knowledge has become an increasingly valuable asset to businesses. Earnings are based on the skills that an employee can demonstrate to prove his or her value to the success of a business. Therefore, education has the challenge of providing students with the skills the workforce demands at a level only a handful were expected to achieve in the past. The gap created by the new knowledge-based economy has created much discussion in the roles employers and educators play in preparing young people for the workplace.

Bailey, Hughes, & Moore (2004) suggest that America's economy experienced growth in the 1990s that was highlighted by a low unemployment rate. School systems faced trouble, though, as the economy was experiencing its greatest success at the end of the decade. Remedial courses were required for many students entering college programs, while many did not complete high school at all. Of the students that did complete high school, only a third went on to pursue higher education. Young people without post-secondary education had difficulty acquiring finances sufficient to support a family. The benefit of hard work in the classroom was challenging for most high school students to see. One of the only reasons students exerted any effort was to get into college, but at the same time, colleges were allowing almost anyone with a high school diploma to attend. Bailey, Hughes, and Moore found a common approach to

increase student interest was to add additional emphasis on academic courses in high school traditionally used for college preparation. Education reformers identified an alternate approach to help motivate students for school and work upon completing high school. Work-based learning can be a beneficial approach for engaging students during high school so they will be prepared for experiences they will encounter in work and school after they graduate.

The U.S. labor market has changed since the industrial revolution due to factors such as globalization. Managers desire the acquisition of knowledgeable people who can use new technology to increase profits. However, employees need to have the capability to overcome obstacles in a work place and not depend on technology as the only means of success. Every organization can benefit from people who can apply their knowledge. Employees who can apply their knowledge will add value to the jobs they are responsible for doing. Managers have long been confronted with finding workers that have thinking skills which will allow them to take on a variety of responsibilities (Gordon, 2000). Google's senior vice president of people operations, Laszlo Bock, stated that the company's hiring decisions are based highly on an individual's ability to put new knowledge to use. While grades are important for students at a collegiate level, the jobs that they desire will require much more than grades alone. Skills including leadership, collaboration, and lifelong learning are applicable among all jobs. Delivering results in any position for a company to progress toward its goals is much more desirable than being considered an expert (Friedman, 2014).

The way people work has changed as a result of a period known as the Information Age. Information is readily available through the use of technology. Workers, as a result, find that their labor is more strictly observed than it once would have been. The need for higher levels of skills has become necessary to cope with the performance levels that rapidly changing

workplaces need to run effectively. Basic skills including teamwork, communication, decision-making, and problem solving are as important as specific workforce skills that employees should continually improve. An employee's ability to work as part of a team will allow a long term commitment by an employer to develop. Communication allows for jobs to be done in an efficient and effective manner. It is also a key ingredient to effective teamwork. Decision-making requires confidence in the skills that an employee has developed. The ability to use good decision-making practices is beneficial for daily activities to be carried out without interruption. Production is directly related to the capacity that employees are able to use problem solving skills to critically evaluate procedures to make improvements when necessary. Educating and building work skills will lead to successful change in the new information age (Moore, 1992).

Olsen (1997) found that the link between work and learning has never been more important. Higher skills equal higher pay for employees. Assembly line jobs are being phased out while jobs that require mathematics, reading, problem solving, and technology are growing. Olsen found that for workers to be able to meet the demands of these new jobs they must have the ability to communicate, work as part of a team, and evaluate their own work. With an increase in workers changing jobs and transferring skills from one job to the next, learning beyond formal education is necessary to account for changes in new jobs that are being created. Age and education play a major role in the success of workers in an economy that demands high skills from its workers. Being able to use technology can add additional value to the work skilled employees perform. Successful businesses need highly educated young workers to be successful. Innovation in education can lead to positive outcomes for young workers.

Schools as well as employers should stress the importance of work ethic skills. Employability skills do not have to be taught as a stand-alone course, but preferably incorporated

into all courses. Expectations of regular class attendance, being on time, completing homework, being respectful to others, using conflict resolution tactics, and producing quality work can help force issues of work ethic such as being dependable, persistent, honest, and self-motivated. Educators should value the importance of teaching such skills to students as they are expected of all individuals entering the workforce (Olsen, 1997).

The value of quality employees is growing stronger in today's economy due to cost reductions and technological innovations. Companies refrain from additional costs they may incur due to employing poor employees and adding new jobs. As a result, employers will take a strategic approach to critical hiring decisions. Employees now have more responsibilities which impact the success of businesses (Gubman, 1998).

Employers that work with schools to employ young people in their businesses have a profound impact on the success of students entering the world of work. As a result of their participation, the turnover rate with young people in the workplace will decrease by half when compared to employers that do not engage with schools in employing youth. Shapiro and Iannozzi (1998), state that "By actively engaging with their local education systems, establishments may be helping to generate a future labor force that is more stable, more work ready, and presumably better matched to the workplace of the future" (p. 161). The complexity of organizations, experience to develop valuable employees, and a vast amount of technology that requires development of human capital are evidence of the tactics businesses initiate to meet the demands of the American economy.

The purpose of this study was to provide data to be used by administrators and teachers to improve the transition for students from high school to the workforce. It may be valuable to educators because the findings will help identify specific workplace-readiness skills for

implementation into the Alabama Career Tech Course of Study. The research is significant because it will reveal workplace readiness skills that are identified as important for a smooth transition from high school to the workforce as perceived by Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators. This study will also add to the existing body of research on workplace-readiness skills in the workplace.

Statement of the Problem

Equipping young people with skills needed to enter the workforce is a priority for policies on the transition from school-to-work. An open line of communication is needed between employers and schools to establish specific skills that are needed for student/employer success. Research completed at the National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce revealed that employers experience difficulty when relaying future skills they need and will require. Schools that have aspirations for work-relevant reform dream of having a meeting with employers to determine what they need from entry level workers. As a result of this gathering, schools can act accordingly to restructure their efforts. The majority of young entrants to the workforce face realities which are uncertain, and the time it takes to obtain permanent employment upon graduation is longer than workers in the past experienced. Obtaining credentials after high school is becoming more vital to the success of new entrants to the workforce (Zemsky, 1997).

The research problem of this study was to determine the importance of the integration of specific workplace-readiness skills into the Alabama Cooperative Education Seminar as perceived by Alabama Secondary Cooperative Educator Teacher-Coordinators along with identifying what factors impact their ability to incorporate these skills. Cooperative Education

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Teacher-Coordinators were selected to participate in this study because of the working relationship they share with employers of businesses and industries. Specifically, this study was designed to determine (a) to what extent Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perceive specific workplace-readiness skills are important for student success in the workplace; (b) the statistical significance found between / among the following four variables in the Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perception of the level of importance of specific workplace-readiness skills for employability: teaching experience, area of teaching certificate, class of professional educator certificate, and location; (c) what employer support, if any, plays a role in incorporating workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perceive specific workplace-readiness skills are important for student success in the workplace?

2. Is statistical significance found between / among the following four variables in the Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perception of the level of importance of workplace-readiness skills for employability:

      (a)   teaching experience

      (b)   area of teaching certificate

      (c)   class of professional educator certificate

      (d)   location

3. What employer support, if any, plays a role in incorporating workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar?

Definition of Terms

Career and Technical Alternative Baccalaureate-Level Certificate (CT ABC) - The CT ABC is a grade level specific and teaching field specific certification only issued upon recommendation from a superintendent or administrator who will employ the applicant. It is available for some areas of career and technical education and allows the individual that has met all CT ABC requirements to apply for a Class B Professional Educator Certificate (Alabama State Department of Education, 2011).

Career and Technical Education (CTE) - Programs that help students gain skills, technical knowledge, and the rigorous academic foundation and real-world experience they need for high-skill, high-demand, and high-wage careers. An active partnership with employers drives innovation and performance to become competitive in a global workforce (Hersperger, Slate, & Edmonson, 2013).

Class A Professional Educator Teaching Certificate - A Professional Educator Certificate on the master's degree level is earned by successfully completing an Alabama State-approved Class A program for teaching fields where Class B certification is also available (ALSDE, 2011).

Class AA Professional Educator Teaching Certificate - A Class AA Professional Educator Certificate on the sixth-year level is earned by successfully completing an Alabama State-approved Class AA program for teaching fields. Institutions may require program completers to earn an education specialist degree (ALSDE, 2011).

Class B Professional Educator Teaching Certificate - A Professional Educator Certificate on the bachelor's degree level is earned by successfully completing an Alabama State-approved Class B program for teaching fields (ALSDE, 2011).

Communication - The process of conveying a message, thought, or idea which results in a high degree of understanding between the sender and receiver to facilitate relationships, accomplish goals, and influence organizational processes (Keyton et al., 2013).

Cooperative Education Seminar - A required component of the Cooperative Education work-based experience providing students with opportunities to discuss workplace issues and develop employability skills, ethics, personal finance, leadership, teamwork, and technical foundations related to career opportunities or continuing education (Alabama Department of Education, 2012).

Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinator - A provider of ongoing supervision for students while integrating student's work-site experience with learning at school. They manage all requirements of cooperative education including collaboration with partners, selection of students, selection of training stations, placement of students, and documentation. They also teach the Cooperative Education Seminar (Alabama Department of Education, 2012).

Emergency Certificate - Issued for only one year to applicants who have earned a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited senior institution. It is not an alternative certificate and used only when an individual who holds a valid Alabama certificate is not available (ALSDE, 2011).

Ethics - Accepted standards of conduct for what is valued as right or wrong behavior for a person or group (Moore, 2009).

Flexibility - Ability to adjust easily to change and adapt to new practices to improve organizational outcomes (Eldridge & Nisar, 2006).

Interpersonal Skills - The ability to lead, teach, negotiate, and work as part of a team with people from culturally diverse backgrounds in a business setting through social communication and interactions (Medlin, Southard, & Bates, 2006).

Lifelong Learning - Continuing to engage and construct knowledge about new technologies, new practices, and new ideas throughout the life of a worker (Billett, 2010).

Qualtrics - An online private research software company that allows users to do many kinds of data collection including market research, customer satisfaction, product testing, employee evaluations, and website feedback. The flexible platform is used by top universities for simple or complex research (Botelho, 2014).

Social Responsibility - Acting in a manner that does not adversely affect others and performing actions to achieve goals while maintaining a balance between society, the economy, and the environment (Barber & Venkatachalam, 2013).

Special Alternative Certificate (SAC) - An option that allows a superintendent or administrator to employ an individual for up to three years who is completing Class A Professional Educator Certificate requirements in a teaching field through State-approved Alternative Class A program provided by an Alabama institution. This option is not a prerequisite for a Professional Educator Certificate (ALSDE, 2011).

Teamwork - Setting goals, assigning roles, and communicating within a group to achieve a common purpose (Magney, 1996).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is formed from the situated learning theory, in which Mislevy (1997) found that students would attain a deeper understanding of knowledge when provided opportunities to learn information in authentic situations. The success a student

experiences will depend on the connections they are able to make across meaningful settings. Mislevy also explained "the nature of the knowledge we construct is conditioned and constrained by technologies, information resources, and social situations as we learn about tools, physical and conceptual, and how and when to use them" (p. 188). Ryken (2006) found that career and technical education (CTE) provides learning experiences related to student's career interests that high schools do not traditionally undertake. Gilli (1980) explains that the complexity and change that the world of work is challenged with calls for additional assistance in addition to what the U.S. Employment Service offers first time job seekers. Schools have the best opportunity to assist young people in making the connection between their initial job placement, decision-making skills, and maturity levels. This connection is often made while taking into account knowledge gained through exploration of career opportunities (Gilli, 1980).

Limitations

Limitations are the conditions beyond the control of the researcher that may place restrictions on the conclusions of the study and their applications to other situations. Limitations in this study include the number of teachers responding to the survey and the use of a self-reporting survey instrument. Educators in other states may have different ideas about workforce-readiness skills; therefore, generalizations beyond this study must be made with caution.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries beyond which the study is concerned. This study involves only Alabama secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators teaching grades 9 - 12.

II.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act, launched in 1994 by the Clinton administration, developed National Skills Standards Board in an attempt to improve industry and educational relationships to establish skill standards and certification that would link workplace skills and education in a systematic manner. The cooperation between businesses, workers, and educators to develop skill standards would produce a system beneficial to all parties. In an economy that requires workers to have transferrable skills, a system that focused on the knowledge, skills, and ability levels would be beneficial to the educators preparing students for the workforce, students entering the workforce, and businesses who employ those students. To ensure effectiveness of this system, Goals 2000 formulated a national system including skill standards and skill certification that would help build the relationships needed to produce strong work skills (Pearlman, 1997).

In a similar attempt to improve the quality of school to work transition, the 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act was created. Using existing programs as a guide, states and others who have an interest in producing quality workers were encouraged to develop their own unique systems that would be most beneficial for their corresponding locations. A reform of the current educational system could ensure that American students are equipped with an education relevant to their career choice, structured skill development, and industry driven credentials. The act also encompasses other elements critical to the success of work development systems including school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. Central to the initiatives

is an increased focus on providing beneficial school to work opportunities for youth, as educators

and businesses are addressing challenges America faces with global competition. This results in

a need to educate and train students to develop proficient skills they will be confronted with in a

work environment.

Workforce 2000, Hudson Institute's Landmark Study, explained that the changing nature

of jobs in America requires higher levels of skill and education for workers in the future. A

decline in skills and education compared to what generations of the past were equipped with

would take public and private efforts to overcome (Judy and D'Amico, 1999).

In a survey of the readiness of new entrants into the workforce conducted by The

Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, Partnership for 21st Century Skills,

and the Society for Human Resources Management (Casner-Lotto, Barrington, & Partnership for

21st Century, 2006), the skills that America's future workforce are equipped with are not

sufficient to handle the demands that the workplace will require. Additionally, applied skills

such as professionalism/work ethic, oral/written communication, teamwork/collaboration and

critical thinking/problem solving are among the top skills that applicants need to be successful in

the workplace. In fact, applied skills are more coveted by employers than basic knowledge,

including reading comprehension and mathematics. For new applicants to be ready for a global

workforce, entrants must come equipped with work-readiness skills that will transfer to

productivity that will allow companies and the economy to thrive.

The term skill has been used to describe a wide variety of characteristics among people.

While many different abilities such as worker traits and abilities can be covered using this term,

problems develop as strategies are developed to enhance critical issues with skills. Skills gap is

used to express the amount of people that the workforce needs to be ready to enter the workforce

and the number of people who actually are prepared to meet those demands. Skills gap can take

on several different meanings including fundamental abilities, cross-functional skills, or

specialized knowledge. Employers' interest has shifted from the gap in skills to a gap in

attitudes and personal qualities that individuals applying for positions are equipped with

(Pearlman, 1997). In an analysis of data from the National Federation of Independent Business,

Bishop (1998) found that, according to employers, employee performance can somewhat be

contributed to academic skills blue-collar workers are equipped with. Significant contributions

to performance, though, are attested to occupational skills, the ability to learn, and the ability to

lead others (Holzer, 1997).

Braun (1996) discussed a model to aid in the transition from school to work.

The model is an alternative path to what traditional schools offer. The transition model urges all

students to develop skills that will be reflective of the skills needed in the workplace with

additional attention on those students who would have interest in working immediately after high

school. Merging traditional academics and work-readiness skills can have countless advantages

for students including motivation and meaning for learning. The abundance of tasks that

teachers are responsible for though, can lead to resistance when confronted with additional tasks

such as integrating work-readiness skills. A seamless integration, accounting for obstacles such

as resistance, can be accomplished with a strategic systematic philosophy. According to Moore

(1992), all instructors should continuously develop a knowledge base of the relationship between

customers and suppliers: "Every instructor or teacher should be aware that the learners

themselves, as well as the companies, are their customers. Each education system, whether

company or school, is a supplier to a consumer" (p.12).

According to Boyett and Boyett (1995), research on the learning process has uncovered valuable information that can be useful for individuals and organizations. Learning in the past has been confined to the space within the walls of a classroom. Information would be transferred by an expert to students and as a result learning should have occurred. Similarly, for a work environment learning would have taken place as a result of explicit information such as guidelines, procedures, and skills that management shares with its employees. Research has led to a new way of learning where it is a result of becoming involved with the procedures of an organization and maintaining a social approach with colleagues. Learning is an active process involving many different avenues to gain knowledge, skills, and expertise. Work, itself, is the most important ingredient for real learning. According to Elliot, (2007) career and technical education utilizes the best strategies when it comes to educating students.

Career and Technical Education is the premier educational delivery system in the world. It addresses all learning styles by employing pedagogical strategies that embrace all of the multiple intelligence areas and incorporate the current knowledge in brain-based research. In fact, CTE educational strategies are utilized in the top 30 academic schools in America. In summary, Career and Technical Education employs the best teaching strategies to reach all students, in all classes, everyday, if learning and retention are the outcomes (Elliot, 2007, p. 7).

With career placement one of the major components in a career education program, the success of graduates finding a job in line with their career objectives carries high expectations in public school systems. While many of the students that graduate high school choose to pursue more education, most of those graduating will choose to enter the workforce (Gilli, 1980).

The Importance of Workplace-Readiness Skills

An economic survey by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago found that businesses in the U.S. are more focused on the way information and knowledge is shaped to impact productivity in today's workplace. Jobs being created now have higher demands than jobs in the past required. Gordon (2000), discussed "skill standards" that are essential for a work environment. Reading comprehension, writing, oral communication, retaining information, problem solving, critical thinking, knowing how to learn, and cross-functional skills were revealed as the basic knowledge employees need based on a report submitted at Penn State University.

Carnevale, Gainer, and Meltzer summarized the skills employees would need to be competitive in a global marketplace in addition to the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic in their 1991 government study. The groups of skills include (Moore, 1992):

1. Knowing how to learn

2. Reading, writing, and computation

3. Communication

4. Creative thinking and problem solving

5. Self-esteem, goal setting, motivation, and personal/career development

6. Interpersonal skills, negotiation, and teamwork

7. Organizational effectiveness and leadership

According to Bishop (1998), a 1987 study of the National Federation of Independent Business shows evidence that occupational skills are the most important for acquiring new jobs in the U.S. economy. Of all skills ranked, occupational skills accounted for 54 % of the top two choices for businesses. Work habits were most closely correlated with organizational skills and

accounted for 65% of the top choices compared to 19% basic academic skills such as reading and math. While basic math and reading skills are important for the long term success of employees, students who choose to work during their high school career and participate in vocational classes have a better chance to attain better starting jobs than those with little experience. Turnover amongst employees has created a greater need for employers to hire people with an ability to learn new skills at a faster pace. This will help account for the greater needs of occupational skill development. Gubman (1998) explained that "Businesses expect basic values from their employees – honesty, integrity, ethical behavior, and compliance with law. Beyond those, companies have at least four performance expectations they need from their employees in much greater quantities than before: a sense of urgency, results, learning, and collaboration" (p. 177).

In a study of 217 U.S. companies for the American Compensation Association, competencies were used to identify how companies build skills for performance and guarantee employee fit based on company values and culture. Many competencies can be found in employees for a good fit in an organization although projecting skills they need is a challenging obstacle. Change in high performance workplaces force companies to continue to develop competencies so that they meet demands that the future will bring (Gubman, 1998). With change a common theme among today's organizations, employers prefer employees who display transferable skills more than technical competencies or occupational skills. An employee with a good mix of each will have a substantial advantage over other applicants. Foundation skills including basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities along with workplace competencies are identified across many organizations as being fundamental requirements for new jobs (North & Worth, 2004). Structure and requirements of jobs have become the center of attention of political issues concerning skill development of the workforce. U.S. firms who traditionally

provided their workforce with development opportunities have turned to the labor market to hire employees already equipped with the skills they need to be productive in their respective organizations. Others who have underdeveloped skills are left to take alternative approaches for skill development that often results in a change of occupation (Salzman, 1998).

Boyett and Boyett (1995) state that leaders of the future will be committed to assisting others face change and overcome unexpected obstacles. Future leaders decisions must be based on the realities they are confronted with. The unpredictability of change in the ways businesses operate is evidence that change itself is very different than it has been in the past. Accepting change and the possibilities that it offers will require workers to face the future with confidence.

According to Gilli (1980), specific job skills are less important to those entering the workplace than a broad range of skills that can be universally applied to many career choices. Specific skill training for jobs that constantly undergo change becomes meaningless for new entrants. Decisions about a specific career should only be made upon a complete understanding of what an occupation requires of workers. Ideally a meeting between an employer and a potential worker should take place and give both parties a chance to evaluate possible commitments. The potential employee would have the opportunity to acquire an overview of job characteristics that would not be obtainable otherwise. While the employer would have to commit to an employee before they acquire skills necessary for a position, they would also have a chance to communicate with applicants to discuss what training the employee needs in a school setting and those that the organization would provide. This approach to career decision-making would clear some of the educational dysfunction when preparing students to enter an occupation as many of the skills students are equipped with are not applied due to a change in occupation (Gilli, 1980).

According to Gray (2009), based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2007) including 2.5 million high school graduates in 2006, 9% of students making the transition from high school directly into the workforce on a full time basis reported receiving assistance in school prior to obtaining employment. Many of those students were enrolled in a career and technical education program and received assistance from their CTE teacher as a result of their participation. The effort CTE provides in developing career plans, developing workplace skills, and providing assistance to students for job placement is equal to the effort schools exert for preparing other students for college. In addition, those that received assistance from their CTE teachers earned 17% higher wages at the age of twenty eight.

Work is more difficult than it was in the past for young people to find as they grow up in an increasingly modernized society. Maturity is often a key characteristic in hiring decisions. As a result of status among adults being defined by the jobs that they have, jobs become the defining symbol showing a young person has developed in status from a child to an adult. Ceremonies of religion, high school graduation, and marriage are not nearly as significant in meaning for a young person's perception of his or her entrance into the adult world when compared to his or her job status. Rejection is a common result found for young people in their attempt to enter the world of work due to a lack of skills and education that the labor market demands (Venn, 1964).

Kim, Rojewski, and Henrickson (2004) noted the activities focusing on academics and technical skills in growing employment sectors outline the courses offered in secondary career and technical education for youth development in education and occupations. Application of academics, critical thinking, problem solving, attitude, general skills, and job specific skills are competencies encouraged in these courses through applied learning. Business related courses are

the most popular of all courses offered in career and technical education with more than half of all students completing at least one while enrolled in high school. Other courses offered include family and consumer science, agriculture, trade and industry, marketing, technology, and health occupations education. The direction of CTE continues to develop to create the most beneficial opportunities for students to develop academic and occupational skills needed after graduation (Kim, Rojewski, & Henrickson, 2004). Gentry, Rizza, Peters, and Hu (2005) indicate "Purpose and connection serve as the foundation of any good CTE program. Also important are a firm grounding in the theory and skills of a field, as well as, support from school and family" (p. 49).

According to McClain and McClain (2007), training in America's industrial and occupational trades has trended toward a focus on knowledge in recent years. While training has always been a necessity to promote employment practices throughout the last century, labor intensive training has become the second priority while knowledge and thinking has taken the top priority in America's corporations. Workers of the past are at a disadvantage in today's workplace as a result of a new range of skills being required for high performance jobs. The timeline of training measures is the key to remedying skill deficiencies of current workers. The second focus needs to be on training young people with proper skills demanded by employers for high performance jobs. These measures will ensure the success of businesses and industries for the future.

Leadership

Freeman (2009) explains that in response to the recession that has made an impact on many business and organizations, experiences that leaders have had should lead to a new way of dealing with downsizing. The common thinking is that leaders should make the tough decisions

about letting people go, and then have a subordinate carry out the order quickly without advanced notice. Leaders have to acknowledge the loyalty that employees have shown to their organizations and rethink thoughtless notions of dealing with others. In what Freeman describes as using "soft hands", leaders can make tough decisions without losing the respect of the people that work for them. The principle of "soft hands" that Freeman describes includes being respectful, fair, personable, consistent, positive, ethical, and honorable. The value that is created with customers and employees, even during the struggle of a recession, is much greater than if the tough decisions are carried out the old way.

Communication

Medlin, Southard, & Bates (2006) identified two specific skill sets, including interpersonal skills and the basic communication skills of speaking and listening as essential for entry level workers according to the 1991 U.S. Department of Labor Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. Studies from the late 1980's and 1990's found that oral communication is the most important skill that an entry level employee can possess. According to the 1999 magazine report, *Training*, communication skills training is offered in 88% of companies in the U.S. Oral communication, decision-making, and leadership are what managers are most interested in during the hiring process. Graduates often emerge from educational institutions with similar technical skills. Candidates for open positions with strong communication skills stand out to employers because of the added value they bring. Not only will the organization benefit financially by hiring an individual with technical skills and interpersonal skills but they will also save by not having to spend money on communication skills training.

Mascle (2013) reports every business has high expectations when it comes to written communication skills. Individuals hoping to work in a business setting should equip themselves with writing and business communication skills that organizations require for employment. Writing skills of employees are reported as unsatisfactory by employers (Conrad & Newberry, 2012). The National Commission on Writing (NCW) research showed that less than one third of employees display proper writing skills that are considered important in business. An estimated 3.1 billion is spent to remedy writing shortcomings. Keyton et al. (2013) reported that the quantity of communication at work does not equal the effectiveness of communication. Communication is used within organizations to accomplish tasks. It is a tool for employees to use to drive action that will lead to achieving goals. As a result, employees who communicate effectively are actually performing work-based tasks because they are using their communication skills to benefit the organization.

Cooperation

Milton and Westphal (2005) noted employers need employees who are cooperative. Often, employees work in groups to accomplish tasks and with management to reach goals that the organization sets. Despite its importance, there are employees who are uncooperative in work environments. Identity of individuals is often one of the conditions that employees struggle with when they are working with a group of people. Successful organizations that can identify the struggle tend to have better success in accomplishing their goals. Confirming an employee's identity will often result in the desired cooperation that an organization prefers (Milton & Westphal, 2005). According to Bahrami (1988) a new more technical environment requires cooperation among employees in an organization as opposed to confrontation. Rapid

changes organizations face include global competition and advances in technology that pose

productivity issues. Overcoming these issues requires cooperation and flexibility to improve

their position with their competitors. Members of management have an obligation to recognize

cooperation amongst members to meet organizational goals. Likewise, employees have a very

similar role in recognizing quality decisions that management makes for profitability. This

mindset will ensure that the long term relationship amongst all members of an organization

continues (Bahrami, 1988).

Interpersonal Skills

Doo (2006) reported that interpersonal skills have a strong influence across many

spectrums in the business world. The majority of employers that look to hire new candidates

specifically ask that the applicant be able to showcase them. To accomplish this mission in a

professional setting can have a major impact on an individual's success including their overall

contribution to an organization's success. Many personality traits employees have are difficult to

enhance. Interpersonal skills, on the other hand, can be changed or developed to benefit the

employee and an organization. It would be detrimental to employ an individual who was unable

to interact with others, co-workers and customers alike, when a primary concern is to have

positive encounters that reflect positively on an organization (Doo, 2006).

Responsibility

Warton and Goodnow (1991) pointed out that children at an early age are confronted with

the idea of responsibility. Assigning household chores to children introduces them to the ideas

of accountability and consequences. When chores are completed children are rewarded and they

face consequences when they are incomplete. Three principles of responsibility include direct-cause responsibility, self-regulation, and continuing responsibility. Direct-cause responsibility is completing multiple tasks within a time limit and distributing others to members of the family who have the capability to complete them. Accomplishing a chore in a timely fashion without needing to be reminded or rewarded for contributing to the household responsibilities allows children to develop self-regulation skills. Continuing responsibility is a case where others are asked to do a job but the responsibility still lies with the individual that was initially chosen to complete the chore (Warton & Goodnow, 1991).

According to Solbrekke (2008), in a professional setting the normal practices in an organization are guided by rules. The guidance that professional ethic rules provide can only be as effective as the decisions that are made. Responsibility lies with an individual making decisions regardless of the consequences of making the wrong decision. Self-monitoring plays an important role in demonstrating moral and social values. In other words, individuals must use their best judgement to make decisions that will help an organization succeed.

Barber and Venkatachalam (2013) asserted that social responsibility is a topic businesses are confronted with addressing. Social responsibility in a business atmosphere involves hiring and keeping highly capable employees. The organizations that take this approach in hiring are more likely to foster creativity. Responsible employees can be given the freedom to generate new creative ideas. Employees will therefore turn ideas into profitable products. Social responsibility is important for the financial success of a business and should be applied in education to cultivate transferable skills and conduct.

Lifelong Learning

Keeling, Jones, and Botterill (1998) suggest with change being such a common theme in industry today, lifelong learning may be one of the most important tools organizations and employees can embrace to deal with the challenges that it brings. The process of learning can be utilized in a variety of settings such as home, work, and in the community. The workforce is dependent on employees that are skilled in their craft and flexible to ensure stability in the economy. Lifelong learning can assist employees in cultivating open and creative practices. Many authors have validated the importance of developing employees' knowledge base and job specific skills. Employees making the leap from learning in an educational setting to lifelong learning in a workplace setting can make a difference in surviving challenges for organizational success. Lifelong learning is one of the most important trends in education that can provide students with what they need to establish themselves for long term success (Keeling, Jones, & Botterill, 1998).

Billett (2010) describes lifelong learning as an interactive process in an organization. Individuals develop knowledge as they engage in activities with others in a work environment. Lifelong learning is a product of being actively engaged with others, receiving instruction, and following rules. Each individual's lifelong learning process will be dependent on the practices they choose to engage in. New experiences will add to the body of knowledge that they have and contribute to their development as an employee.

According to Jenkins (2003), organizations are utilizing lifelong learning skills more than ever before.

During the last two decades, increasing emphasis has been placed by policy-makers, employers and individuals alike, on the positive role of human capital in promoting

economic prosperity and social inclusion. There is a presumption that continual skill formation, one aspect of lifelong learning, has become highly important for those who are already in the labour market, in order to meet the ever-expanding skill needs of employers.

Critical Thinking

Reid and Anderson (2012) identified six skills that the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills recognized as industry needs and the educational requirements to achieve them.

    A. Creative Thinking - generates new ideas

    B. Decision Making - specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternative

    C. Problem Solving - recognizes problems and devices and implements action plans

    D. Seeing Things in the Mind's Eye - organizes and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects, and other information

    E. Knowing How to Learn - uses efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills

    F. Reasoning - discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or more objects and applies it when solving a problem.

Positive Attitude

According to Choi, Oh, Guay, and Lee (2011), people generally have an interest in positive experiences in their daily lives. The result of individuals having success in sustaining these experiences can carry over into a work or social environment. Success and performance employees experience can be linked to their attitude towards satisfaction with the work they are performing and the business they are employed with. An important development that many organizations rely on is teamwork. The use of teamwork can produce outlets for individuals to express emotions that organizations in the past may not have cultivated. The emotional intelligence to carry out job responsibilities can be representative of attitudes individuals exhibit at work (Choi, Oh, Guay, & Lee, 2011).

Flexibility

Eldridge and Nisar (2006) noted organizational systems were once centered mass production systems based on conditions relating to the economic demands of goods and services. Trends in advanced technology and market forces have driven these systems to change their productivity process to accommodate for the satisfaction of customers, global competition, and skill enhancement. These changes in organizational structure require flexibility of employees. Participation, task flexibility, and working as part of a team are emphasized to overcome barriers organizations are faced with in their attempt to modernize production systems. An employee's ability to utilize skills strategically will improve the chances for positive organizational outcomes (Eldridge & Nisar, 2006).

According to Silverman, Pogson, and Cober (2005), "When employees do not use feedback to learn and improve, they add less value to the organization because they are less

productive, innovative, and flexible" (p. 136). Organizations are constantly faced with new

economical demands. The nature of employment and careers has shifted from a traditional

ranking system to a more dynamic system where employees take on a number of different roles

at one time. The ability of flexible employees to achieve goals will determine organizational

success.

Change in organizational needs is a common theme that organizations and employees

face while seeking advantages over competitors. Flexibility is necessary to accommodate for

changes in the environment, develop new ideas, and reduce costs (Leana & Barry 2000).

Dynamic organizations require employee initiative to develop ideas that will contribute to how

they function. Workplace methods, policies, and procedures are among the topics employees can

make suggestions about to help their organization cope with change (Seppälä, Lipponen, Bardi,

& Pirttilä-Backman, 2012).

Teamwork

Hirst, Van Knippenberg, and Zhou (2009) found that creativity is a trait of an employee

that will be beneficial. Fostering creativity can have a profound impact on innovation that can

give an organization an advantage over competitors. Employees often reveal the creativity that

they have when working with a team of coworkers.

Nielsen and Randall (2012) suggest the advantage of using teamwork within an

organization is seen in many different areas. Employees report higher levels of job satisfaction

and are found to not miss work as much as employees working for an organization that does not

deploy the use of teamwork. Patient mortality rate is found to be better in the healthcare industry

as a result of developing and deploying a teamwork approach. Employees may take on

managerial roles as a result of working on a team. Employees claim that their personal satisfaction with work and well-being are enhanced as a result of implementing a team approach to accomplish tasks and goals set by organizations (Nielsen & Randall, 2012). According to Kuipers and Stoker (2009) four different types of teams are apparent in organizations: work, parallel, project, and management. An additional form of teamwork found is self-managing work teams. This team is formed among competent employees that are able to control behavior to improve performance of others. Self-managing teams reduce the need for management during projects and allows managers to act as coaches or mentors as the task is being carried out (Kuipers & Stoker, 2009).

Business Ethics

Brenkert (2010) defined business ethics as principled guidelines that individuals use to guide decisions that they make. They are much more commonly discussed now than they have been in the past. Key developments are cited as reasons for the focus on business ethics. First, attention to business ethics has increased due to society focusing on social responsibility. Two organizations have formed as a result, including the Ethics and Compliance Officer Association and a Corporate Responsibility Officer Association. Ethics initiatives have formed among organizations to assist with the way employees act and the decisions they make. Second, a string of scandals from the 1970's until now have had a major impact on how society views businesses morals. The ultimate goal that businesses have is to function in an ethical manner (Brenkert, 2010).

Punctuality / Time Management

      Häfner and Stock (2010) reported that in the past 20 years, time management has gained more research interest due to the vast amount of people that are pressed for time and pressure that their jobs require of them. Managing time is an important characteristic for employees to contribute to an organization by completing work and meeting deadlines. Global competition, faster telecommunications, and the pressure from competitors force organizations to take time management into consideration when evaluating employees. According to Jex and Elacqua (1999), time management can be a tool used to alleviate some of the stressors that occur in a work environment. Creating an organized approach, taking advantage of training programs, and setting goals are three behaviors related to time management behaviors one can practice for better performance.

      According to Rapp, Bachrach, and Rapp (2013), "Because time is a scarce resource, employees must choose how to use their time. Decisions about time use directly impact how well individuals can perform any particular aspect of their role" (p. 669). Performance can be enhanced with proper time management. Additionally, time management is one of the few skills that can be coupled with many other predictors to determine how well an employee performs in the workplace.

      Green and Skinner (2005) assert that four generations of time management have developed from what organizations have found necessary to be effective for success. Generation one is centered on notes and checklists. Generation two adds planning and setting goals through the use of a computer. Generation three focuses on priorities and organization to meet goals. The fourth encompasses the previous three generations but also promotes reducing work that is deemed unnecessary to maintain focus on successful practices.

Problem Solving

      According to Zhou, Hirst, and Shipton (2012), the ability of employees to apply problem solving skills in a work environment is at an all-time high due to changes in organizational structures, globalization, and other hurdles organizations have to overcome in order to be profitable. Creating new ways of dealing with change organizations are faced with is one of the responsibilities that come with accepting a job offer. Employees often experience a spike in problem solving abilities when the tasks they are accountable for challenge their abilities. The growth that employees experience can be associated with skills that are acquired while overcoming obstacles to produce quality work. Repetitive jobs do not offer the same growth opportunities as jobs that require problem solving skills (Zhou, Hirst, & Shipton, 2012).

Summary

      The literature review indicates that specific workplace-readiness skills are a priority for employers as they make decisions about new candidates that may potentially be hired. For the Cooperative Education Seminar to have an effective outcome the workplace-readiness skills that employers are asking of new entrants to the workforce should be emphasized. Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators that have a clear understanding of the importance of workplace-readiness skills that employers are asking of new entrants into the workforce including leadership, communication, cooperation, interpersonal skills, responsibility, lifelong learning, critical thinking, positive attitude, flexibility, teamwork, business ethics, punctuality/time management, and problem solving will be better prepared to make an impact on the success students have making the transition from school to the work. Therefore, research was conducted to determine the perceived importance level of specific workplace-readiness

skills that are being taught by Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators, the extent they

integrate workplace-readiness learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar, and

the extent they utilize employer support methods to enhance learning activities in the

Cooperative Education Seminar.

III.   METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The focus of this study was to determine the perceived importance level of specific workplace-readiness skills for student success in the workplace that are being taught by Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators in the state of Alabama. This study also examined the extent workplace-readiness learning activities are integrated into the Cooperative Education Seminar. Furthermore, the study examined selected employer support impacting the integration of workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar.

Permission to conduct this study was granted from the Auburn University Instructional review Board (Appendix A). Researchers at Auburn University must receive permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to use the response of human subjects. Protocol, a request for exempt status, an information letter, and a copy of the survey instrument were sent to the IRB for approval prior to the survey being sent to participants. Permission was also granted by the participants who completed the online survey.

Sample

The population of this study was Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators. The Alabama Department of Education 2014-2015 provided the roster of names and e-mail addresses from which the sample was taken. The directory is available at the State of Alabama Department of Education. The population included Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators listed in the directory.

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A convenience sample was taken from the population. According to Andres (2012) "A convenience sample is appropriate and the findings will be meaningful if the sample is appropriate for the question at hand" (p.98). Each name was selected from an alphabetized listing of 139 Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators listed in the directory. However, only Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators (n=63) who completed the online survey were included in the study. It is reasonable to consider each respondent as a sampling unit, because the respondents answered the surveys individually and not as a group.

Research Design

The research design for this study was a quantitative research approach that was conducted by surveying Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators. According to Cresswell (2009),

> Quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. The final written report has a set structure consisting of introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and discussion (p. 4).

Survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Cresswell, 2009). Survey research is a common systematic tool used to draw samples, interview respondents, and analyze data to determine the interest of a population (Lee, Benoit-Bryan, & Johnson, 2012). According to Hart (1987), "(1) The objectives of most research require factual, attitudinal and/or behavioral data. Survey research provides the researcher with the means of gathering both qualitative and

quantitative data required to meet such objectives, (2) One of the greatest advantages of survey

research is its scope: a great deal of information can be collected from a large population,

economically, (3) Survey research conforms to the specifications of scientific research: it is

logical, deterministic, general, parsimonious and specific" (p. 26). New Internet-based methods

of administering surveys alleviate some of the deficiencies found with traditional self-

administered questionnaires (Grant, Teller, & Teller, 2005). The survey designed by Qualtrics

survey software for this study was sent, through e-mail, to all Alabama Secondary Cooperative

Education Teacher-Coordinators participating in the quantitative study. After responses to the

survey were received, the data was analyzed, and results were reported.

Instrumentation

Data were collected through a research-designed survey entitled Workplace-Readiness

Skills Assessment (See Appendix C). The Workplace-Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA) is

comprised of six sections: Section 1: Importance of Specific Workplace-Readiness Skills -

results reveal specific workplace-readiness skills perceived by Alabama Secondary Cooperative

Education Teacher-Coordinators to be most important; Section 2: The top three specific

workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of successful students in the workplace; Section 3:

The top three specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of unsuccessful students in

the workplace; Section 4: Workplace-Readiness Learning Activities – Extent Cooperative

Education Teacher-Coordinators integrate workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the

classroom; Section 5: Employer Support – Extent employer support methods are used to

enhance workplace-readiness learning activities in the Cooperative Education Seminar; Section

6: Teacher Background/Demographics - Includes years of teaching experience, area of teaching certificate, class of professional educator certificate, and location.

In Section 1 of the survey instrument, a five-point Likert-type scale was provided. Respondents were instructed to rate the level of importance of each specific workplace-readiness skill: (5) = Very Important, (4) = Important, (3) = Neither Important or Unimportant, (2) = Of Little Importance, and (1) = Unimportant. In Section 2, respondents were instructed to identify the top three specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of successful students in the workplace. In Section 3, respondents were instructed to identify the three specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of unsuccessful students in the workplace. In Section 4, a five-point Likert-type scale was provided. Respondents were instructed to rate the extent that they integrate workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar: (5) = To a Great Extent; (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent; (3) = To a Moderate Extent; (2) = To a Small Extent; (1) = Not At All. In Section 5, a five-point Likert-type scale was provided. Respondents were instructed to select the extent they utilized employer support methods to enhance workplace-readiness skill learning activities in the Cooperative Education Seminar: (5) = To a Great Extent; (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent; (3) = To a Moderate Extent; (2) = To a Small Extent; (1) = Not At All. The demographic data in Section 6 includes the number of years the educator has been teaching, area of teaching certificate, class of professional educator certificate, and location.

An information letter was provided in an attachment to an e-mail including a link to the WRSA survey. The letter explained the purpose of the WRSA survey and the importance of each Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinator responding to the best of

his or her ability. The instrument used was Qualtrics survey software and preferred for this study because of the manageability of survey items and the quick turnaround of data collection.

Validity and Reliability

The foundation for the items of the survey was derived from the research objectives of this study and the review of literature. The areas included in the review of literature focused on topics such as leadership, communication, cooperation, responsibility, lifelong learning, critical thinking, positive attitude, flexibility, teamwork, business ethics, time management, problem solving, and the importance of these topics for student success in the workforce. A panel of university faculty members was used to evaluate the face validity of the survey instrument. The most prominent internal validity concern in designing the survey was the presence and degree of measurement error. Developing questions and concepts that were worded clearly in the survey instrument controlled the degree of measurement error. This was addressed during the development of the survey.

Content validity and usability of the survey instrument were determined through a panel of expert judges. Based on knowledge and experience in descriptive survey research design, survey instruments, and /or data collection, a selected group of educators and researchers were asked to review the survey instrument for clarity of questions and concepts. The comments, input, and recommendations of panel members were considered and incorporated into the final instrument. An e-mail was then sent to the sample for data collection.

The original design of Likert's response scale was used to assess levels of approval regarding statements that reflected various attitudes. Since the original design, Likert-type scales have been labeled with terms that describe levels of agreement (Woltz, Gardner, Kircher, &

Burrow-Sanchez, 2012). Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure internal consistency of the

Workplace-Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA). Section 1: Importance of specific workplace-

readiness skills consisted of items scored with a Likert-type scale using 5 possible values.

Respondents were instructed to rate the level of importance of each specific workplace-readiness

skill for student success: (5) = Very Important, (4) = Important, (3) = Neither Important or

Unimportant, (2) = Of Little Importance, and (1) = Unimportant. In Section 4, a five-point

Likert-type scale was provided. Respondents were instructed to rate the extent that they

integrate workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar:

(5) = To a Great Extent; (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent; (3) = To a Moderate Extent; (2) = To a

Small Extent; (1) = Not At All. In Section 5, a five-point Likert-type scale was provided.

Respondents were instructed to select the extent each semester they utilize employer support to

enhance workplace readiness learning activities in the Alabama Cooperative Education Seminar:

(5) = To a Great Extent; (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent; (3) = To a Moderate Extent; (2) = To a

Small Extent; (1) = Not At All.

　　According to Baş (2013), generally accepted reliability coefficients should be at least .70.

Results from the Cronbach's Alpha for the scales used to determine Section 1: Importance of

specific workplace-readiness skills was .93. Cronbach's Alpha for the scales used to determine

Section 3: Extent Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators integrate workplace-readiness

skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar was .972. Cronbach's Alpha for

the scales used to determine Section 4: Extent each semester employer support is utilized to

enhance workplace-readiness skill learning activities was .906.

Data Collection

Each of the 139 teachers in the sample received an e-mail from the Alabama State Department of Education including (a) an attachment of the information letter (Appendix B) describing the study and outline of procedures to be followed: (b) a web link giving participants access to the WRSA survey designed through the use of Qualtrics survey software.

Follow-up procedures were conducted with all subjects to ensure that subjects who did not complete the survey were contacted. Follow-up e-mails were sent to the subjects with a valid e-mail address listed in the 2014-2015 Alabama Department of Education Cooperative Education Directory. Respondents were only contacted once for follow-up. At the conclusion of the data collection, 63 usable surveys were completed online of the 139 that were sent, which resulted in a 45.3% participation rate.

Data Analysis

Statistical treatment of the data included the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to organize, summarize, and describe the collected data.

To analyze research question 1 (To what extent do Alabama secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perceive specific workplace-readiness skills are important for student success in the workplace), like items of specific-workplace readiness skills were grouped together to form broad categories including: Skills, Positions, Traits, Time, and Pursuit of Knowledge. Means for these categories were examined to determine which were most important as perceived by Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators. A within-subjects ANOVA was used to make comparisons about the importance among the different categories of specific

workplace-readiness skills. A within-subjects ANOVA is used to compare means among groups that are somehow associated with each other (Ross & Shannon, 2008). An F-test determined overall differences among the categories of specific workplace-readiness skills. Post hoc tests (Bonferoni) were used to determine differences between specific workplace-readiness skill categories. Descriptive analysis were used to identify the top three specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of successful students in the workplace and the top three specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of unsuccessful students in the workplace.

For research question 2 (Is statistical significance found between / among demographics in the Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perception of the level of importance of workplace-readiness skills for employability), a Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) was used to determine the relationship between the perception of the level of importance of specific workplace-readiness skill categories and the number of years that the Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinator has been teaching. A Pearson product-moment correlation is used to understand the strength of association between two continuous variables (Ross & Shannon, 2008). A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) test was conducted to determine the mean differences between the different categories of specific workplace-readiness skills as perceived by Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators and area of teaching certificate (Agriscience Education, Technical Education, Health Science, Business Education, Marketing Education, Business/Marketing Education, Business Administration, and Family and Consumer Science Education); and location (Rural or Urban). MANOVA is a test used to determine mean differences among levels of each independent variable on multiple dependent variables. These dependent variables should align linearly and share a common theme (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010; Pedhazur, 1997). The alpha level was set at .05 to determine

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statistical significance. If the result happened less than .05, differences were considered

statistically significant. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the relationship between

the perception of the level of importance of specific workplace-readiness skill categories and the

class of professional educator certificate (B, A, AA, Emergency Certification, Alternative

Baccalaureate Level Certificate, and Special Alternative Certificate).

To analyze research question 3 (What employer support, if any, plays a role in

incorporating workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education

Seminar), items of learning activities were grouped together to form broad categories including:

Skills, Positions, Traits, and Pursuit of Knowledge.   Means for these categories were examined

to determine the extent that Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators incorporate the

learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar. A within-subjects ANOVA was

used to make comparisons about the integration of workplace-readiness skill learning activity

categories. A within-subjects ANOVA is used to compare means among groups that are

somehow associated with each other (Ross & Shannon, 2008). An F-test was used to determine

overall differences among the categories of workplace-readiness skill learning activity

categories. Post hoc tests (Bonferoni) were used to determine differences between specific types

of workplace-readiness skill learning activities. Methods of employer support were grouped

together to form broad categories including: Skills, Positions, Time, and Pursuit of Knowledge.

A Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) was then used to determine the relationship

between employer support categories and workplace-readiness skill learning activity categories.

A Pearson product-moment correlation is used to understand the strength of association between

two continuous variables (Ross & Shannon, 2008).

IV.   STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction and Restatement of the Problem

This study was designed to determine perceived importance level of specific workplace-readiness skills for student success in the workplace that are being taught by Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators in the state of Alabama. This study also examined the top three specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of successful students in the workplace and the top three that are reflective of unsuccessful students in the workplace. Furthermore, the study examined selected employer support impacting the integration of workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar. Reviewed literature in Chapter 2 revealed the necessity for Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators to incorporate workplace-readiness skills and activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar to prepare students for the workforce. This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected from Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators utilizing the researcher-developed Workplace-Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA) instrument.

Descriptive Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were run in SPSS to summarize, analyze, organize, and describe the data and to provide an indication of the relationships between variables. The Workplace-Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA) instrument was designed to collect data regarding the area of teaching certificate of the

respondents, class of teaching certificate, years of teaching experience, and rural or urban school system. Sixty-three (63) survey instruments were used to compile data in the study. Table 1 reports the demographic information related to area of teaching certificate and class of teaching certificate held. The largest of respondents held a teaching certificate in Business/Marketing Education (38.1%) and held a class A (master's level) certification (36.5%).

Table 1

Demographic Data of Respondents

Categories	*n*	Percent
Area of Teaching Certificate (*n=55*)		
Business/Marketing Education	24	38.1
Business Education	13	20.6
Agriscience Education	5	7.9
Technical Education	5	7.9
Marketing Education	5	7.9
Family and Consumer Science Education	2	3.2
Business Administration	1	1.6

(Table Continues)

(Table 1 – Continued)

Categories	n	Percent
Class of Teaching Certificate (*n=54)*		
A	23	36.5
AA	15	23.8
B	13	20.6
Alternative Baccalaureate Level Certificate (ABC)	3	4.8
Emergency Certification	0	0
Special Alternative Certificate (SAC)	0	0

Table 2 identifies the years of teaching experience as reported by respondents. The majority of respondents (38%) have been teaching from 1 – 5 years. The average years of teaching experience was 8.98 years.

Table 2

Years of Teaching Experience
(n=50)

Number of Years	*n*	Percent
1 - 5 years	24	38
6 - 10 years	9	14.4
11 - 15 years	7	11.2
16 - 20 years	5	8
21 - 25 years	4	6.4
26 - 30 years	1	1.6

Table 3 reports the location of school where respondents serve as Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators. The majority of respondents (52%) taught in a rural location. While many respondents, 34.9% taught in an urban location.

Table 3

Location of School of Respondents
(n=55)

Categories	*n*	Percent
Rural	33	52.4
Urban	22	34.9

Research Questions

Research Question 1

To what extent do Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perceive specific workplace-readiness skills are important for student success in the workplace? This research question is addressed by survey question Q01-1 – Q01-24 on the Workplace Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA). A five-point Likert-type scale was used for analysis. The scale consisted of the following choices: (5) = Very Important, (4) = Important, (3) = Neither Important or Unimportant, (2) = Of Little Importance, (1) = Unimportant. Table 4 reports the mean and standard deviation of each specific workplace-readiness skill relating to the respondents degree of importance. All means were very high ranging from 4.08 to 4.92 indicating that the majority of Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators believed all specific workplace-readiness skills were important to students becoming successful in the workplace.

Table 4

Importance of Specific Workplace-Readiness Skills

Category	n	M	SD
Respectful to others	63	4.92	.272
Listens to instructions	63	4.90	.296
Is on time for work	63	4.89	.317
Takes instructions seriously	63	4.87	.336
Completes tasks	63	4.86	.353
Works well with others	63	4.84	.368
Completes tasks in a timely manner	63	4.78	.419
Able to use constructive criticism	63	4.76	.429
Consistent in behavior	63	4.76	.429
Continues to produce quality work	62	4.69	.465
Speaks clearly	63	4.67	.475
Has positive encounters with others	63	4.65	.481
Exhibits emotional stability	63	4.63	.485
Self-monitors behavior	63	4.59	.496

(Table Continues)

(Table 4 – Continued)

Category	n	M	SD
Able to overcome obstacles	63	4.56	.532
Accepts change	63	4.52	.503
Are socially responsible	63	4.49	.693
Considers risk in decision-making	63	4.43	.712
Expresses positive emotions	63	4.41	.557
Makes decisions based on organizational goals	63	4.40	.610
Takes on multiple roles at once	63	4.21	.572
Engages in new activities	63	4.21	.765
Open to creative practices	63	4.19	.820
Communicates creative ideas	63	4.08	.809

(5) = Very Important (4) = Important (3) = Neither Important or Unimportant (2) = Of Little Importance (1) = Unimportant.
Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q01_1 – Q01_24 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Additionally, five scales were formed based on similar characteristics of skills that Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators may observe in their evaluation of student progress in a work environment. These scales were used in the within-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) to make comparisons about the importance among categories of specific workplace-readiness skills. Specific workplace-readiness skill variables including respectful to others, speaks clearly, listens to instructions, takes instructions seriously, has positive encounters with others, engages in new activities, takes on multiple roles at once, and accepts change were

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combined together to form scale 1: Skills. Specific workplace-readiness skill variables including

consistent in behavior, exhibits emotional stability, and works well with others were combined

together to form scale 2: Positions. Specific workplace-readiness skill variables including self-

monitors behavior, completes tasks, are socially responsible, and continues to produce quality

work were combined together to form scale 3: Traits. Specific workplace-readiness skill

variables including is on time for work and completes tasks in a timely manner were combined

together to form scale 4: Time. Specific workplace readiness skill variables including open to

creative practices, communicates creative ideas, makes decisions based on organizational goals,

able to overcome obstacles, and considers risk in decision-making were combined together to

form scale 5: Pursuit of Knowledge. Table 5 reports the means, standard deviations, and

reliability estimates of the measurement scales used to conduct the analysis.

Table 5

Summary of Measurement Scales and Reliabilities for Specific Workplace-Readiness Skill Categories

Scale	# of items	Mean	SD	Reliability Estimates
Time (e.g. Is on time for work)	2	4.8333	.33601	.778
Positions (e.g. Consistent in behavior)	3	4.7460	.32635	.631
Traits (e.g. Self-monitors behavior)	4	4.6561	.35623	.632
Skills (e.g. Respectful to others)	8	4.6127	.30134	.780
Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Open to creative practices)	5	4.3302	.55435	.845

(5) = Very Important (4) = Important (3) = Neither Important or Unimportant (2) = Of Little Importance (1) = Unimportant.
Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q01_1 – Q01_24 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity was violated, x^2 (2) = 105.278, $p < .001$. Epsilon (ε) was .515, as calculated according to Grreenhouse - Geisser, and was used to correct the within-subjects ANOVA. A large effect size was found between categories of specific workplace-readiness skills, $F(2.058, 127.617) = 35.95$, $p < .001$, $n^2 = .367$. The Bonferroni post hoc test was utilized to identify differences in categories. Each mean difference was considered significant and above the .05 level. Skills was rated lower than Positions and lower than Time. Traits was rated significantly lower than Time. Pursuit of Knowledge was rated lower than all other categories including Skills, Positions, Traits, and Time. Table 6 reports the findings from the within-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) for research question 1.

Table 6

Within-subjects ANOVA results for Specific Workplace-Readiness Skill Categories

	[a]df	MS	F	p	Effect Size
Workplace Readiness Skills	2.058	4.454	35.95	<.001	.367
Error	127.62	.124			

(5) = Very Important (4) = Important (3) = Neither Important or Unimportant (2) = Of Little Importance (1) = Unimportant.

[a] df are adjusted for a violation of sphericity using the Greenhouse-Geisser epsilon (ε=.515).

Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q01_1 – Q01_24 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Successful Students

Survey item Q02: Please identify the top 3 specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of successful students in the workplace on the WRSA was used to support this research question. The majority of participants (64.4%) expressed being on time for work as reflective of successful students in the workplace. Many participants (45.8%) expressed working well with others as reflective of successful students in the workplace, while (42.4%) reported respect to others as reflective of successful students in the workplace. Table 7 reports the total responses and percent of the findings.

Table 7

Top 3 Specific Workplace Readiness Skills Reflective of Successful Students
(n=59)

Category	Total Responses to Item	Percent
Is on time for work	38	64.4
Works well with others	27	45.8
Respectful to others	25	42.4
Listens to instructions	17	28.8
Able to use constructive criticism	17	28.9
Completes tasks in a timely manner	14	23.7
Completes tasks	11	18.6
Takes instructions seriously	10	13.6
Continues to produce quality work	8	13.6
Exhibits emotional stability	6	10.2
Accepts change	6	10.2
Speaks clearly	5	8.5
Self-monitors behavior	5	8.5
Expresses positive emotions	4	6.8

(Table Continues)

(Table 7 – Continued)

Category	Total Responses to Item	Percent
Makes decisions based on organizational goals	4	6.8
Consistent in behavior	3	5.1
Able to overcome obstacles	3	5.1
Are socially responsible	3	5.1
Has positive encounters with others	2	3.4
Considers risk in decision-making	1	1.7
Takes on multiple roles at once	1	1.7
Engages in new activities	1	1.7
Open to creative practices	1	1.7
Communicates creative ideas	1	1.7

Note: Data and information obtained from item Q02_1 – Q02_24 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Unsuccessful Students

Survey item Q03: Please identify the top 3 specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of unsuccessful students in the workplace on the WRSA was also used to support this research question. The majority of participants (54.2%) expressed being late to work as reflective of unsuccessful students in the workplace. Many participants (45.8%) expressed disrespect to others as reflective of unsuccessful students in the workplace, while (39%) reported being unable to work well with others as reflective of unsuccessful students in the workplace. Table 8 reports the total responses and percent of the findings.

Table 8

Top 3 Specific Workplace Readiness Skills Reflective of Unsuccessful Students
(n=59)

Category	Total Responses to Item	Percent
Late for work	32	54.2
Disrespectful to others	27	45.8
Does not work well with others	23	39.0
Does not listen to instructions	16	27.1
Unable to use constructive criticism	16	27.1
Fails to completes tasks in a timely manner	7	11.9
Does not accepts change	7	11.9
Unable to complete tasks	6	10.1
Does not take instructions seriously	6	10.1
Fails to produce quality work	6	10.1
Exhibits emotional instability	5	8.5
Are not socially responsible	5	8.5

(Table Continues)

(Table 8 – Continued)

Category	Total Responses to Item	Percent
Fails to considers risk in decision-making	5	8.5
Does not make decisions based on organizational goals	4	6.8
Inconsistent behavior	4	6.8
Does not take on multiple roles at once	4	6.8
Does not self-monitor behavior	3	5.1
Has negative encounters with others	3	5.1
Difficult to understand speech	2	3.4
Unable to overcome obstacles	2	3.4
Expresses negative emotions	1	1.7
Does not engage in new activities	1	1.7
Not open to creative practices	0	0
Does not communicate creative ideas	0	0

Note: Data and information obtained from item Q03_1 – Q03_24 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Research Question 2

Is statistical significance found between / among the following four variables in the
Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perception of the level of importance of
workplace-readiness skills for employability: (a) teaching experience, (b) area of teaching
certificate, (c) class of professional educator certificate, (d) location?
Survey questions Q01_01 – Q01-24, Q1: To what extent do you perceive specific workplace-
readiness skills as important for student success in the workplace, on the Workplace-Readiness
Skills Assessment (WRSA) were used to address the extent respondents perceived specific
workplace-readiness skills as important for student success in the workplace. A five point
Likert-type scale was used for the analysis. The scale consisted of the following choices: (5) =
Very Important, (4) = Important, (3) = Neither Important or Unimportant, (2) = Of Little
Importance, (1) = Unimportant.

Teaching Experience - Survey question Q06 and workplace-readiness skill categories
from questions Q01_01 - Q01_24 on the Workplace-Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA) were
used to address part (a) of this research question. A Pearson Correlation was used to determine if
there was statistical significance found between the perceived importance of categories of
specific workplace-readiness skills for employability and teaching experience. Table 9 details
the results.

Table 9

Pearson Correlations for Specific Workplace-Readiness Skill Categories and Teaching Experience

	Teaching Experience		
Workplace-Readiness Skill Category	*n*	*r*	*p*
Skills (e.g. Respectful to others)	50	.042	.771
Positions (e.g. Consistent in behavior)	50	.082	.570
Traits (e.g. Self-monitors behavior)	50	.140	.333
Time (e.g. Is on time for work)	50	.049	.733
Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Open to creative practices)	50	.047	.748

(5) = Very Important (4) = Important (3) = Neither Important or Unimportant (2) = Of Little Importance (1) = Unimportant.
Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q01_1 – Q01_24 and Q06 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

The Pearson Correlation results indicated that statistical significance ($p < .01$) was not reached between teaching experience and categories of specific workplace-readiness skills. Overall, Alabama Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perceptions of the level of importance of specific workplace-readiness skill categories Skills, Positions, Traits, Time, and Pursuit of Knowledge are not affected by teaching experience.

Area of Teaching Certificate - Survey question Q07 and categories of specific workplace-readiness skills from questions Q01_01 - Q01_24 on the Workplace-Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA) were used to address part (b) of this research question. A one-way

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if there were significant differences among areas of teaching certificate and specific workplace-readiness skill categories.

Prior to the study, categories were collapsed for area of teaching certificate. Agriscience Education, Technical Education, Health Science, and Family and Consumer Science were collapsed to form the category, other (n=12). Business Education, Marketing Education, Business/Marketing Education, and Business Administration were collapsed to form the category, business (n=43). Area of teaching certificate categories and specific workplace-readiness skill categories: Skills, Positions, Traits, Time, and Pursuit of Knowledge were used in the MANOVA to determine teaching certificate differences in specific workplace-readiness skills. MANOVA results did not reveal significant differences among the area of teaching certificate categories on the dependent variables (Specific Workplace-Readiness Skill Categories), Hotelling's Trace = .021, $F(5, 49) = .204$, $p = .959$, multivariate, $n^2 = .020$. Table 10 reports the means and standard deviations for specific workplace-readiness skill categories by area of teaching certificate.

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations for Specific Workplace-Readiness Skill Categories by Area of Teaching Certificate

	Area of Teaching Certificate	
Workplace Readiness Skill Category	Business (*n*=43)	Other (*n*=12)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Skills (e.g. Respectful to others)	4.63 (.31)	4.58 (.27)
Positions (e.g. Consistent in behavior)	4.77 (.32)	4.67 (.35)
Traits (e.g. Self-monitors behavior)	4.67 (.35)	4.58 (.39)
Time (e.g. Is on time for work)	4.84 (.34)	4.79 (.33)
Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Open to creative practices)	4.35 (.62)	4.30 (.46)

 (5) = Very Important (4) = Important (3) = Neither Important or Unimportant (2) = Of Little Importance (1) = Unimportant.
Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q01_1 – Q01_24 and Q07 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Location - Survey question Q09 and categories of specific workplace-readiness skills from questions Q01_01 - Q01_24 on the Workplace-Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA) were used to address part (d) of this research question. A one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if there were significant differences among location in specific workplace-readiness skill categories.

Location categories rural (n=33) and urban (n=22) along with specific workplace-readiness skill categories: Skills, Positions, Traits, Time, and Pursuit of Knowledge were used in

the MANOVA to determine location differences in specific workplace-readiness skills.

MANOVA results did not reveal significant differences among the location categories on the

dependent variables (Specific Workplace-Readiness Skill Categories), Hotelling's Trace $= .101$,

$F(5, 49) = .986$, $p = .436$, multivariate, $n^2 = .091$. Table 11 reports the means and standard

deviations for specific workplace-readiness skill categories by location.

Table 11

Mean and Standard Deviation for Specific Workplace-Readiness Skill Category by Location

Workplace Readiness Skill Category	Location	
	Rural (*n*=33)	Urban (*n*=22)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Skills (e.g. Respectful to others)	4.65 (.28)	4.58 (.33)
Positions (e.g. Consistent in behavior)	4.78 (.31)	4.70 (.36)
Traits (e.g. Self-monitors behavior)	4.66 (.36)	4.64 (.36)
Time (e.g. Is on time for work)	4.83 (.35)	4.82 (.33)
Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Open to creative practices)	4.30 (.60)	4.39 (.58)

 (5) = Very Important (4) = Important (3) = Neither Important or Unimportant (2) = Of Little Importance (1) = Unimportant.
Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q01_1 – Q01_24 and Q09 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Class of Certification - Descriptive Statistics were used to address part (c) of this research

question. Table 12 reports the means and standard deviations of the respondent's class of

certification. Categories were collapsed for class of teaching certificate. B, A, and AA were collapsed to form the category Traditional. Emergency certification, Alternative Baccalaureate Level Certificate (ABC), and Special Alternative Certificate (SAC) were collapsed to form the category Alternative Certification.

Table 12

Mean and Standard Deviation for Specific Workplace-Readiness Skill Category by Class of Certification

Workplace Readiness Skill Category	Class of Certification	
	Traditional (*n*=51)	Alternative (*n*=3)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Skills (e.g. Respectful to others)	4.62 (.31)	4.60 (.17)
Positions (e.g. Consistent in behavior)	4.74 (.33)	4.78 (.38)
Traits (e.g. Self-monitors behavior)	4.63 (.36)	4.83 (.29)
Time (e.g. Is on time for work)	4.81 (.35)	5.00 (.00)
Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Open to creative practices)	4.33 (.60)	4.20 (.40)

(5) = Very Important (4) = Important (3) = Neither Important or Unimportant (2) = Of Little Importance (1) = Unimportant.
Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q01_1 – Q01_24 and Q08 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Research Question 3

What employer support, if any, plays a role in incorporating workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar?

Learning Activities - This research question is addressed by survey questions Q04-1 – Q04-25 and Q05-1 – Q05-16 on the Workplace Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA).). A five-point Likert-type scale was used for analysis. The scale consisted of the following choices: (5) = To a Great Extent, (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent, (3) = To a Moderate Extent, (2) = To a Small Extent, (1) = Not at All. Table 13 reports the mean and standard deviation of each workplace-readiness learning activity that is being integrated into the Cooperative Education Seminar. Means ranging from 4.38 to 3.0 indicate that the majority of Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators integrate the workplace-readiness learning activities into the Seminar at least to a moderate extent.

Table 13

Extent Workplace-Readiness Learning Activities are Integrated into the Cooperative Education Seminar

Category	n	M	SD
Discuss responsibilities and job duties in the workplace	48	4.38	.789
Receive and follow instructions	47	4.36	.819
Identify ethical and unethical behaviors in the workplace	48	4.29	.898

(Table Continues)

(Table 13 – Continued)

Category	n	M	SD
Reinforce the need for interpersonal skills and the need to work cooperatively in the workplace	48	4.25	.812
Address time management of personal and work schedules	48	4.21	.898
Discuss respect for customer as professional behavior	48	4.21	.905
Determine characteristics of professionalism in the workplace	48	4.17	.930
Determine personal responsibility for making career choices	48	4.08	1.048
Techniques to manage conflict in the workplace	48	4.04	.898
Identify behaviors that promote effective teamwork	48	3.94	.954
Discuss methods for improving the communication process in the workplace	48	3.92	.986
Explain leadership skills and practices	48	3.92	1.028
Have students complete work and organize into a portfolio	47	3.81	1.076
Apply leadership skills through the participation in career and technical student organizations	48	3.75	1.139
Work with class members to generate alternative solutions to solve a problem	48	3.69	1.133

(Table Continues)

(Table 13 – Continued)

Category	n	M	SD
Participate in career and technical student organizations	48	3.67	.966
Have students follow a written instructional plan	48	3.67	1.191
Interact with team members in business situations	47	3.60	1.056
Identify mistakes on an assignment and make corrections	48	3.56	1.219
Contribute to group work assignments	48	3.44	1.183
Investigate company rules and policies through the use of the Internet	48	3.44	1.253
Have students proofread business documents	48	3.38	1.196
Work with others to plan a project and develop membership roles	48	3.17	1.342
Have students interpret tables and charts to support written and oral communication	48	3.02	1.263
Present PowerPoint presentation to the class	48	3.00	1.321

(5) = To a Great Extent (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent (3) = To a Moderate Extent (2) = To a Small Extent (1) = Not at All.

Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q04_1 – Q04_25 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Additionally, four scales were formed based on similar characteristics of learning

activities that Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators may combine based on similarities

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as they proceed during the Cooperative Education Seminar. These scales were used in the

within-subject analysis of variance (ANOVA) to make comparisons about the extent among

categories the learning activities are being integrated into the Seminar. Learning activity

variables including discuss methods for improving the communication process in the workplace,

participate in career and technical student organizations, present PowerPoint presentation to the

class, reinforce the need for interpersonal skills and the need to work cooperatively in the

workplace, techniques to manage conflict in the workplace, discuss respect for customer as

professional behavior, and have students interpret tables and charts to support written and oral

communication were combined to form scale 1: Skills. Learning activity variables including

explain leadership skills and practices, apply leadership skills through the participation in career

and technical student organizations, identify behaviors that promote effective teamwork,

contribute to group work assignments, interact with team members in business situations, and

work with others to plan a project and develop membership were combined to form scale 2:

Positions. Learning activity variables including identify ethical and unethical behaviors in the

workplace, determine personal responsibility for making career choices, receive and follow

instructions, discuss responsibilities and job duties in the workplace, determine characteristics of

professionalism in the workplace, have students complete work and organize into a portfolio, and

have students follow a written instructional plan were combined to form scale 3: Traits.

Learning activity variables including work with class members to generate alternative solutions

to solve a problem, have students proofread business documents, investigate company rules and

policies through the use of the internet, and identify mistakes on an assignment and make

corrections were combined form scale 4: Pursuit of knowledge. The learning activity variable

address time management of personal and work schedule formed the scale Time, but was omitted

because it only contained one item. Table 14 reports the means, standard deviations, and reliability estimates of the measurement scales used to conduct the analysis.

Table 14

Summary of Measurement Scales and Reliabilities for Learning Activity Categories

Scale	# of items	Mean	SD	Reliability Estimates
Traits (e.g. Identify ethical and unethical behaviors in the workplace)	7	4.0171	.75032	.890
Skills (e.g. Techniques to manage conflict in the workplace)	7	3.7321	.81060	.892
Positions (e.g. Contribute to group work assignments)	6	3.6285	.96648	.924
Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Work with class members to generate alternative solutions to solve a problem)	4	3.5156	1.0332	.883

(5) = To a Great Extent (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent (3) = To a Moderate Extent (2) = To a Small Extent (1) = Not at All.
Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q04_1 – Q04_25 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity was violated, x^2 (2) = 43.310, $p < .001$. Epsilon (ε) was .743, as calculated according to Grreenhouse - Geisser, and was used to correct the within-subjects ANOVA. A large effect size was found between categories of workplace-readiness skill learning activities, $F(2.228, 104.727) = 25.33$, $p < .001$, $n^2 = .350$. The Bonferroni post hoc test was utilized to identify differences in categories. Each mean difference was considered significant and above the .05 level. Skills was rated lower than Traits but higher than Pursuit of Knowledge, and Traits was rated higher than all other categories including Skills, Positions, and Pursuit of Knowledge. Table 15 reports the findings from the within-subject analysis of variance (ANOVA) for research question 3.

Table 15

Within-subjects ANOVA results for Learning Activity Categories

	[a]df	MS	F	p	Effect Size
Learning Activities	2.228	4.255	25.330	<.001	.350
Error	104.727	.168			

(5) = To a Great Extent (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent (3) = To a Moderate Extent (2) = To a Small Extent (1) = Not at All.
[a] df are adjusted for a violation of sphericity using the Greenhouse-Geisser epsilon (ε=.515).
Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q04_1 – Q04_25 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Employer Support - Survey questions Q05_1 – Q05_16 and workplace-readiness skill learning activities from questions Q04_01 - Q04_25 on the Workplace-Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA) were also used to address this research question. A Pearson Correlation was used to determine if there was statistical significance found between the extent categories of workplace-readiness skill learning activities are integrated and categories of employer support for integration of these learning activities. A five point Likert-type scale was used to determine the extent Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators utilized employer support to enhance workplace-readiness learning activities in the Cooperative Education Seminar. The scale consisted of the following choices: (5) = To a Great Extent, (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent, (3) = To a Moderate Extent, (2) = To a Small Extent, (1) = Not At All.

Four scales were formed for employer support. These scales are reflective of the support strategies that are used to enhance the experience of students that participate in the Cooperative Education Seminar. Employer support variables including job fairs, classroom speakers, advertising for co-op program, open line of communication, flexibility of interview process upon request were combined to form scale 1: Skills. Employer support variables including financial

support (classroom), receptive to needs of co-op program, and willingness to serve on advisory committees were combined to form scale 2: Positions. Employer support variables including opportunities for increased responsibilities and business tours available to students were combined to form scale 3: Time. Employer support variables including mock interviews, training opportunities, career interest assessments, and financial incentives were combined to form scale 4: Pursuit of Knowledge. Employer support variables including employer expectations made clear and provide leads for job openings through chamber of commerce were combined to form scale Traits, but was omitted because it was not supportive with a Cronbach's Alpha of .345. Tables 16 – 19 detail the results.

Table 16

Pearson Correlations for Employer Support Category Skills and Learning Activity Categories

Learning Activity Category	Employer Support – Skills (e.g. Job fairs)		
	n	r	p
Skills (e.g. Techniques to manage conflict in the workplace)	46	.711**	<.001
Positions (e.g. Contribute to group work assignments)	46	.613**	<.001
Traits (e.g. Identify ethical and unethical behaviors in the workplace)	46	.747**	<.001
Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Work with class members to generate alternative solutions to solve a problem)	46	.593**	<.001

(5) = To a Great Extent (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent (3) = To a Moderate Extent (2) = To a Small Extent (1) = Not at All.

** = statistically significant at p<.01 level.

Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q04_1 – Q04_25 and Q05_1 – Q05_16 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Table 17

Pearson Correlations for Employer Support Category Positions and Learning Activity Categories

Learning Activity Category	Employer Support – Positions (e.g. Willingness to serve on advisory committees		
	n	r	p
Skills (e.g. Techniques to manage conflict in the workplace)	46	.537**	<.001
Positions (e.g. Contribute to group work assignments)	46	.475**	<.001
Traits (e.g. Identify ethical and unethical behaviors in the workplace)	46	.615**	<.001
Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Work with class members to generate alternative solutions to solve a problem)	46	.350*	<.001

(5) = To a Great Extent (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent (3) = To a Moderate Extent (2) = To a Small Extent (1) = Not at All.

** = statistically significant at p<.01 level.

* = statistically significant at p<.05 level.

Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q04_1 – Q04_25 and Q05_1 – Q05_16 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Table 18

Pearson Correlations for Employer Support Category Time and Learning Activity Categories

Learning Activity Category	Employer Support – Time (e.g. Business tours available to students)		
	n	*r*	*p*
Skills (e.g. Techniques to manage conflict in the workplace)	45	.582**	<.001
Positions (e.g. Contribute to group work assignments)	45	.529**	<.001
Traits (e.g. Identify ethical and unethical behaviors in the workplace)	45	.660**	<.001
Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Work with class members to generate alternative solutions to solve a problem)	45	.502**	<.001

(5) = To a Great Extent (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent (3) = To a Moderate Extent (2) = To a Small Extent (1) = Not at All.

** = statistically significant at p<.01 level.

Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q04_1 – Q04_25 and Q05_1 – Q05_16 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

Table 19

Pearson Correlations for Employer Support Category Pursuit of Knowledge and Learning Activity Categories

Learning Activity Category	Employer Support - Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Career interest assessments)		
	n	*r*	*p*
Skills (e.g. Techniques to manage conflict in the workplace)	46	.731**	<.001
Positions (e.g. Contribute to group work assignments)	46	.690**	<.001
Traits (e.g. Identify ethical and unethical behaviors in the workplace)	46	.710**	<.001
Pursuit of Knowledge (e.g. Work with class members to generate alternative solutions to solve a problem)	46	.637**	<.001

(5) = To a Great Extent (4) = To a Fairly Great Extent (3) = To a Moderate Extent (2) = To a Small Extent (1) = Not at All.
** = statistically significant at $p<.01$ level.
Note: Data and information obtained from questions Q04_1 – Q04_25 and Q05_1 – Q05_16 on the WRSA survey (Appendix C).

The Pearson Correlation results indicated that there are strong positive correlations between all categories of employer support and learning activity categories except for the employer support category Positions and the learning activity category Pursuit of Knowledge which yielded only a moderate positive correlation. Overall Alabama Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators utilize the methods of employer support to enhance workplace-readiness learning activities to a great extent in the Cooperative Education Seminar that they teach.

V.   SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Workplace-readiness skills are identified as being necessary as students make a successful transition from a high school setting to the workforce. Demonstrating these skills along with the ability to apply new knowledge is desired among employers who hire new entrants. Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators are in a unique position to assist students in developing these skills. Employer support is often one of the tools utilized as a result of the relationship Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators and employers share. A research survey instrument was developed to assess the extent Alabama Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perceive specific workplace-readiness skills as important for student success in the workplace and what employer support plays a role in incorporating workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar. Analyses were conducted to determine the perceived degree of importance of twenty-four specific workplace-readiness skills, whether or not opinions differ based on demographic factors, and what employer support plays a role in incorporating workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar.

In the previous chapter, data collected from Alabama secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators utilizing the researcher-developed Workplace Readiness Skills Assessment (WRSA) survey instrument were presented and analyzed. This chapter includes summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Summary of Findings

Most Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators held a teaching certificate in business/marketing education (38.1%), had obtained a class A teaching certificate (36.5%), were experienced in teaching between 1 – 5 years (38%), and taught in a rural location (52.4%). The majority of respondents expressed being on time for work (64.4%), working well with others (45.8%), and being respectful to others (42.4%) as reflective of successful students in the workplace. The majority of respondents expressed being late for work (54.2%), disrespect towards others (45.8%), and unable to work well with others (39%) as reflective of unsuccessful students in the workplace.

Alabama secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators were asked their perception as to what extent they believe specific workplace-readiness skills are important for student success in the workplace. Each of the twenty-four skills yielded a mean score (M ≥4.08). The scale consisted of the following choices: (5) = Very Important and (1) = Unimportant; indicating that Alabama secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perceived all twenty-four skills to be Important. A within-subjects Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to identify differences in responses to specific workplace-readiness skill categories. A large effect size was found, $F(2.058, 127.617) = 4.454$, $p <.001$, $n^2 = .367$. Post hoc test, Bonferroni, revealed significant differences in categories where Skills was rated lower than Positions and lower than Time, Traits was rated lower than Time, and Pursuit of Knowledge was rated lower than all other categories including Skills, Positions, Traits, and Time.

A Pearson Correlation design was utilized to determine if there is a statistically significant relationship between the perceived level of importance of specific workplace-readiness skill categories and teaching experience. The Pearson r Correlation yielded results, $r =$

.042, *p* = .771 (*p*<.01) for the category Skills, *r* = .082, *p* = .570 (*p*<.01) for the category Positions, *r* = .140, *p* = .333 (*p*<.01) for the category Traits, *r* = .049, *p* = .773 (*p*<.01) for the category Time, and *r* = .047, *p* = .748 (*p*<.01) for the category Pursuit of Knowledge. Results indicated there was not a strong statistically significant correlation between specific workplace-readiness skill categories and teaching experience.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to determine if there were significant differences among areas of teaching certificates and specific workplace-readiness skill categories. No statistical significance $F(5, 49) = .204$, *p* =.959, multivariate $n^2 = .020$ was found between specific workplace-readiness skill categories (Skills, Positions, Traits, Time, and Pursuit of Knowledge) and area of teaching certificate category Other (Agriscience Education, Technical Education, Health Science, Family and Consumer Science) or teaching certificate category Business (Business Education, Marketing Education, Business/Marketing Education, Business Administration). Additionally, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to determine if there were significant differences between location and specific workplace-readiness skill categories. No statistical significance $F(5, 49) = .986$, *p* = .436, multivariate, $n^2 = .091$ was found between specific workplace-readiness skill categories (Skills, Positions, Traits, Time, and Pursuit of Knowledge) and location categories rural or urban. Descriptive statistics were used to address the class of certification of respondents. Each of the workplace- readiness skill categories yielded a mean of (M ≥4.33) for the class of certification category Traditional (B, A, AA) and a mean of (M ≥4.20) for the class of certification category Alternative (Emergency certification, Alternative Baccalaureate Level Certificate, Special Alternative Certificate).

Alabama secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators were asked the extent they integrated workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education

Seminar. Each of the twenty-five learning activities yielded a mean score (M ≥3.00). The scale

consisted of the following choices: (5) = To a Great Extent and (1) = Not at All; indicating that

Alabama secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators integrate workplace-readiness

skill learning activities into the Seminar at least to a moderate extent. A within-subjects Analysis

of Variance (ANOVA) was used to identify differences in responses to learning activity

categories. A large effect size was found, $F(2.228, 104.727) = 4.255, p <.001, n^2 = .350$. Post

hoc test, Bonferroni, revealed significant differences in categories where Skills was rated lower

than Traits but higher than Pursuit of Knowledge, and Traits was rated higher than all other

categories including Skills, Positions, and Pursuit of Knowledge.

A Pearson Correlation design was utilized to determine if there is a statistically

significant relationship between employer support categories and learning activity categories.

The Pearson r Correlation for the employer support category Skills yielded results, $r = .711, p =$

.000 ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Skills, $r = .613, p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning

activity category Positions, $r = .747, p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Traits,

and $r = .593, p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Pursuit of Knowledge. Results

indicated there was a strong statistically significant correlation between Skills category of

employer support and categories of learning activities. The Pearson r Correlation for the

employer support category Positions yielded results, $r = .537, p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning

activity category Skills, $r = .475, p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Positions, $r =$

.615, $p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Traits, and $r = .350, p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for

the learning activity category Pursuit of Knowledge. Results indicated there was a strong

statistically significant correlation between the Positions category of employer support and

categories of learning activities. The Pearson r Correlation for the employer support category

Time yielded results, $r = .582$, $p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Skills, $r = .529$, $p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Positions, $r = .660$, $p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Traits, and $r = .502$, $p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Pursuit of Knowledge. Results indicated there was a strong statistically significant correlation between the Time category of employer support and categories of learning activities. The Pearson r Correlation for the employer support category Pursuit of Knowledge yielded results, $r = .731$, $p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Skills, $r = .690$, $p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Positions, $r = .710$, $p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Traits, and $r = .637$, $p = .000$ ($p<.01$) for the learning activity category Pursuit of Knowledge. Results indicated there was a strong statistically significant correlation between the Pursuit of Knowledge category of employer support and categories of learning activities. Results from the Pearson Correlations indicate Alabama Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators utilize methods of employer support to a great extent to integrate workplace-readiness learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were based on the findings of the study:

1. The majority of Alabama Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators were supportive of the incorporation of specific workplace-readiness skills in the Cooperative Education Seminar. This study indicated that respondents perceived all twenty-four specific workplace-readiness skills analyzed to be important (M ≥4.08 on a 1-5 scale) for student success in the workplace.

2. Not all specific workplace-readiness skill categories were perceived as equally important by Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators. For example,

Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators identified Skills as being less important than Positions and Time, Traits as less important than Time, and Pursuit of Knowledge as less important than all other categories including Skills, Positions, Traits, and Time.

3. Respondents identified being on time for work, being able to work well with others, and being respectful to others as the top three specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of successful students in the workplace. Respondents also identified being late for work, being disrespectful to others, and being unable to work well with others as the top three specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of unsuccessful students in the workplace.

4. The perceived level of importance of specific workplace-readiness skill categories were not impacted by demographic information. Teaching experience, area of teaching certificate (Agriscience Education, Technical Education, Health Science, Family and Consumer Science, Business Education, Marketing Education, Business/Marketing Education, Business Administration), or location of school (rural or urban) were found to have no significant effect on the respondent's perception of the importance of specific workplace-readiness skill categories.

5. The majority of Alabama Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators indicated they incorporated workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar to a moderate extent (M ≥3.00 on a 1-5 scale).

6. Not all workplace-readiness skill learning activity categories were incorporated to the same extent as perceived by Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators. For example, Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators identified Skills as being

integrated less than Traits but more than Pursuit of Knowledge and Traits was integrated more than all other categories including Skills, Positions, and Pursuit of Knowledge.

7. When analyzing the degree that employer support plays a role in incorporating workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar, strong statistical significance was found between all methods of employer support categories and workplace-readiness skill learning activity categories. Results indicated that employer support is being utilized to a great extent to integrate the workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Consideration should be given to implementing professional development opportunities that focus on workplace-readiness skill areas in need of improvement according to business leaders. Raising Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators' level of awareness in areas that need improvement would allow them to devote time and resources to overcome deficiencies in specific skill areas.

2. Highlighting employer support opportunities at the local and state levels would convey that Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators are progressive in their approach to integrate workplace-readiness skill learning activities relevant to the needs of employers.

3. Colleges providing teacher education should develop instruction that elaborates on existing support opportunities that business leaders are willing to provide. Entering a

teaching environment with tools to address specific workplace-readiness skills would be beneficial to a new teacher's effectiveness.

4. A follow-up study should be conducted in two years to determine progress toward the goal of preparing Alabama business/marketing education students to enter the workforce with a better understanding of specific workplace-readiness skills and tools employers can provide to address these skills.

5. This study should be repeated in other states. A universal set of workplace-readiness skills would be ideal for any student entering the workforce.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Auburn Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Office of Research Compliance
115 Ramsay Hall, basement
Auburn University, AL 36849

Telephone: 334-844-5966
Fax: 334-844-4391
IRBadmin@auburn.edu
IRBsubmit@auburn.edu

May 20, 2015

MEMORANDUM TO:	Alex Hale
	Department of Curriculum and Teaching

PROTOCOL TITLE: "Workplace -Readiness Skills Necessary for Student Success in the Workforce as Perceived by Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators"

IRB AUTHORIZATION NO: 14-559 EP 1501

APPROVAL DATE: January 5, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: January 4, 2016

Your protocol was approved as "Expedited" by the IRB under federal regulation 45 CFR 46.110(7):

"(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies."

Note the following:
1. RECORDS: Keep this and all protocol approval documents in your files. Please reference the complete protocol number in any correspondence.
2. MODIFICATIONS: You must request approval of any other changes to your protocol before implementation. Some changes may affect the assigned review category.
3. RENEWAL: Submit a renewal a month before expiration. If your protocol expires and is administratively closed, you will have to submit a new protocol to continue your research.
4. FINAL REPORT: When your study is complete, please submit a final report to the Office of Research Compliance, Human Subjects.

If you have any questions concerning this Board action, please contact the Office of Research Compliance.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bernie Olin, Phar.D.
Chair of the Institutional Review Board #2
for the Use of Human Subjects in Research

cc: Dr. Leane Skinner

APPENDIX B

Information Letter

AUBURN
UNIVERSITY

5040 HALEY CENTER

AUBURN, AL 36849-5212

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

INFORMATION LETTER
for a Research Study entitled
"Workplace-Readiness Skills Necessary for Student Success in the Workforce as Perceived by
Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators"

Dear Professional Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinator:

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to determine the extent at which Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perceive specific workplace-readiness skills are important for student success in the workplace, the statistical significance found between/among demographic data in the Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators perception of the level of importance of workplace-readiness skills for employability, and what employer support (if any) plays a role in incorporating workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar. This study is being conducted by Alex K. Hale, a doctoral candidate, under the supervision of Dr. Leane Skinner, an Associate Professor in the Business/Marketing Education program at Auburn University.

Alabama Secondary Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators are in a unique position to assist students in high school to make a smooth transition from high school the work force. A solid grasp on academic subjects in combination with workplace-readiness skills such as problem-solving skills, the ability to communicate effectively with others, cooperation, and others are traits of an employee who will be an asset to an organization. The purpose of this study is to provide information that may be used by Alabama Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinators to assist students in making a smooth transition from high school to the workforce. You were selected as a participant because you are listed as a teacher in the 2014-2015 Alabama State Department of Education Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinator Directory and are age 19 or older.

If you decide to participate, it will take approximately 15 minutes to complete the online survey. You are receiving an e-mail with a link to the survey and an information letter as an attachment to the e-mail.

There is no compensation or costs to the participants of this study. Although there are no direct benefits for participating, there is the potential of utilizing the revealed information to improve Cooperative Education in the state of Alabama.

Your input, as a professional Cooperative Education Teacher-Coordinator, is very important to the success of this research. Information collected through your participation may be used as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the PhD in Career and Technical Education and future publications.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time by closing your browser window. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Once you've submitted anonymous data, it cannot be withdrawn since it will be unidentifiable. Your decision whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or the Department of Curriculum and Teaching.

If you have any questions, you may contact Alex K. Hale at (706) 518-4450 (haleale@auburn.edu) or Dr. Leane Skinner (334) 844-3823 (skinnal@auburn.edu).

For more information regarding your rights as a research participant you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334) 844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, PLEASE CLICK ON THE LINK PROVIDED. YOU MAY PRINT A COPY OF THIS LETTER TO KEEP.

Alex Hale   11-11-2014
Alex K. Hale   Date

Doctoral Candidate

Principal Investigator

"The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from January 5, 2015 to January 4, 2016. Protocol # 14-559 EP 1501"

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0rN6oRJ6VTviHbv

APPENDIX C

Researcher-Developed Survey Instrument

Workplace-Readiness Skills Assessment

Workplace-Readiness Skills Assessment

Q01 To what extent do you perceive specific workplace-readiness skills as important for student success in the workplace?

		Unimportant	Of Little Importance	Neither Important or Unimportant	Important	Very Important
Q01_1	Respectful to others	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_2	Consistent in behavior	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_3	Speaks clearly	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_4	Listens to instructions	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_5	Takes instructions seriously	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_6	Has positive encounters with others	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_7	Self-monitors behavior	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_8	Completes tasks	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_9	Open to creative practices	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_10	Engages in new activities	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_11	Considers risk in decision-making	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_12	Communicates creative ideas	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_13	Expresses positive emotions	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_14	Exhibits emotional stability	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_15	Takes on multiple roles at once	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_16	Accepts change	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_17	Able to use constructive criticism	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_18	Works well with others	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_19	Makes decisions based on organizational goals	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_20	Are socially responsible	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_21	Is on time for work	O	O	O	O	O

Q01_22	Completes tasks in a timely manner	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_23	Able to overcome obstacles	O	O	O	O	O
Q01_24	Continues to produce quality work	O	O	O	O	O

Q02 Please identify the top 3 specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of SUCCESSFUL students in the workplace.

Q02_1	❏	Respectful to others	Q02_13	❏	Consistent in behavior
Q02_2	❏	Speaks clearly	Q02_14	❏	Listens to instructions
Q02_3	❏	Takes instructions seriously	Q02_15	❏	Has positive encounters with others
Q02_4	❏	Self-monitors behavior	Q02_16	❏	Completes tasks
Q02_5	❏	Open to creative practices	Q02_17	❏	Engages in new activities
Q02_6	❏	Considers risk in decision-making	Q02_18	❏	Communicates creative ideas
Q02_7	❏	Expresses positive emotions	Q02_19	❏	Exhibits emotional stability
Q02_8	❏	Takes on multiple roles at once	Q02_20	❏	Accepts change
Q02_9	❏	Able to use constructive criticism	Q02_21	❏	Works well with others
Q02_10	❏	Makes decisions based on organizational goals	Q02_22	❏	Are socially responsible
Q02_11	❏	Is on time for work	Q02_23	❏	Completes tasks in a timely manner
Q02_12	❏	Able to overcome obstacles	Q02_24	❏	Continues to produce quality work

Q03 Please identify the top 3 specific workplace-readiness skills that are reflective of UNSUCCESSFUL students in the workplace

Q03_1	❏	Disrespectful to others	Q03_13	❏	Inconsistent behavior
Q03_2	❏	Difficult to understand speech	Q03_14	❏	Does not take instructions seriously
Q03_3	❏	Does not listen to instructions	Q03_15	❏	Has negative encounters with others
Q03_4	❏	Does not self-monitors behavior	Q03_16	❏	Unable to complete tasks
Q03_5	❏	Not open to creative practices	Q03_17	❏	Does not engage in new activities
Q03_6	❏	Fails to considers risk in decision-making	Q03_18	❏	Does not communicate creative ideas
Q03_7	❏	Expresses negative emotions	Q03_19	❏	Exhibits emotional instability
Q03_8	❏	Does not take on multiple roles at once	Q03_20	❏	Does not accepts change
Q03_9	❏	Unable to use constructive criticism	Q03_21	❏	Does not work well with others
Q03_10	❏	Does not make decisions based on organizational goals	Q03_22	❏	Are not socially responsible
Q03_11	❏	Late for work	Q03_23	❏	Fails to completes tasks in a

					timely manner
Q03_12	☐ Unable to overcome obstacles	Q03_24	☐ Fails to produce quality work		

Q04 To what extent do you integrate the following workplace-readiness skill learning activities into the Cooperative Education Seminar that you currently teach?

		Not At All	To a Small Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Fairly Great Extent	To a Great Extent
Q04_1	Discuss methods for improving the communication process in the workplace	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_2	Identify ethical and unethical behaviors in the workplace	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_3	Explain leadership skills and practices	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_4	Determine personal responsibility for making career choices	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_5	Apply leadership skills through the participation in career and technical student organizations	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_6	Identify behaviors that promote effective teamwork	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_7	Work with class members to generate alternative solutions to solve a problem	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_8	Participate in career and technical student organizations	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_9	Contribute to group work assignments	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_10	Receive and follow instructions	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_11	Have students proofread business documents	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_12	Interact with team members in business situations	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_13	Present PowerPoint presentation to the class	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_14	Work with others to plan a project and develop membership roles	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_15	Address time management of personal and work schedules	O	O	O	O	O

Q04_16	Discuss responsibilities and job duties in the work place	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_17	Investigate company rules and policies through the use of the Internet	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_18	Identify mistakes on an assignment and make corrections	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_19	Determine characteristics of professionalism in the workplace	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_20	Have students complete work and organize into a portfolio	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_21	Reinforce the need for interpersonal skills and the need to work cooperatively in the workplace	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_22	Techniques to manage conflict in the workplace	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_23	Discuss respect for customer as professional behavior	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_24	Have students follow a written instructional plan	O	O	O	O	O
Q04_25	Have students interpret tables and charts to support written and oral communication	O	O	O	O	O

Q05 To what extent do you utilize the following employer support to enhance Workplace-Readiness learning activities in your Cooperative Education Seminar course?

		Not at All	To a Small Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Fairly Great Extent	To a Great Extent
Q05_1	Job fairs	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_2	Classroom speakers	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_3	Advertising for Co-Op program	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_4	Financial support (classroom)	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_5	Mock interviews	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_6	Training opportunities	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_7	Open line of communication	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_8	Receptive to needs of Co-Op program	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_9	Career interest assessments	O	O	O	O	O

Q05_10	Opportunities for increased responsibilities	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_11	Financial incentives (pay raises)	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_12	Business tours available to students	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_13	Willingness to serve on advisory committees	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_14	Employer expectations made clear	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_15	Provide leads for job openings through Chamber of Commerce	O	O	O	O	O
Q05_16	Flexibility of interview process upon request	O	O	O	O	O

Q06 Background / Demographics How many years have you been teaching the Cooperative Education Seminar?

O 1	O 7	O 13	O 19	O 25
O 2	O 8	O 14	O 20	O 26
O 3	O 9	O 15	O 21	O 27
O 4	O 10	O 16	O 22	O 28
O 5	O 11	O 17	O 23	O 29
O 6	O 12	O 18	O 24	O 30

Q07 In what area do you hold a teaching certificate?

1	O Agriscience Education	9	O Marketing Education
4	O Technical Education	10	O Business/Marketing Education
5	O Health Science	11	O Business Administration
8	O Business Education	12	O Family and Consumer Science Education

Q08 What class of professional educator certificate do you currently hold?

1	O B	4	O Emergency Certification
2	O A	5	O Alternative Baccalaureate Level Certificate (ABC)
3	O AA	6	O Special Alternative Certificate (SAC)

Q09 Is your school in a rural or urban location?

1	O Rural	2	O Urban