

Texas School District Hiring Managers Perceive Academic Accomplishments of PK-12 Campus Administrator Applicants in Relation to the Applicant's Institution's Reputation.

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This study was designed to test if educational leadership degree earned through an online program was related to Human Resource (HR) Directors' hiring decisions of administrators in Texas public school. The research question addressed in this study was: What is the relationship of an institution's reputation to Texas school district hiring managers' perception of academic accomplishments of PK-12 campus administrator applicants? The research design was a cross sectional survey that was a revised replication of Adams, Lee, and Cortese (2012). The sample is a stratified sampling of Human Resource (HR) Directors or designee for hiring administrators for the school district by Regional Educational Service Centers (ESC). Despite the increasing number and quality of online degrees, many employers are still not willing to hire applicants who earned a degree online (Adams, 2008; Adams & DeFleur, 2005; Bailey & Flegie, 2012; Columbaro & Monaghan, 2009; Glover, 2005; Guendoo, 2007, 2008; Udegbe, 2012; Zuppek, 2010).

This study will provide information to assist individuals within the area of higher education to gain a perspective of how their online programs will be received in the job market by their graduates. In addition, this study allows individuals, to look at data to assist in making degree or certification choices. Furthermore, this study will allow individuals to have a better perspective of how to respond to prospective employers, by knowing the opinions of Human Resource Directors.

I. RESEARCH DESIGN

The cross sectional survey research design was a replication study of Adams, Lee, and Cortese (2012), with the exception that this study investigated perceptions regarding the hiring of Pk-12 administrators instead of teachers. Additionally, this was a regional study (Texas) instead of a national study. According to Creswell (2012), cross sectional survey research design is used to discover an individual's opinion, ascertain essential beliefs, and determine attitudes as well as community needs. Babbie (2010) suggested that survey research was one of the best ways for a researcher to collect original data when a population is too large and in too vast of a geographic expanse to observe directly.

II. SAMPLE

Stratified sampling was used to select a representative sample from the total population of Texas school districts ($N= 1,012$) to participate in the study. The sample was stratified by educational service center (ESC) region, of which there are 20 within the state of Texas. ESC centers are regionally located throughout the state of Texas and act as a liaison between the individual school districts and the Texas Education Administration (TEA), which is the headquarters for the state of Texas. The ESCs provide support to school districts through workshops and technical assistance of directives by TEA. ESCs also provide school districts with information in an advisory capacity. The actual number of participants who responded to the survey was 115 with a 41.37% response rate of the cross-sectional stratified sampling from the total population of Texas public school. Since this was a blind study, knowing the identity of the school district and location of the participants was impossible. We do know the participants were primarily from rural school districts of Texas by their response to the setting of their school district.

Using Ocher's (2007) sample size formula to maintain proportional representativeness in the stratification process, respondents from 278 districts were found to be an appropriate sample size with a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error. Ocher's formula is as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of districts in ESC Region}}{\text{Total number of districts in Texas}} = \frac{x (\text{Number of districts per Region})}{\text{Number of districts in sample}}$$

For the purpose of this study, the respondents were serving as either an HR Director or the designee for hiring administrators within the selected school districts. Table 1 shows the number of schools and required sample size identified for each regional service center needed, based upon Ocher's (2007) formula.

III. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The survey was administered via the Internet using *SurveyMonkey* and participants were provided an electronic link to the survey in the initial contact email. Respondents were given the option of exiting the survey or participate. All questions were set up to require a response. Respondents were given the option to make comments on selected questions throughout the survey and were able to make any follow-up comments on the final page of the survey. To increase response rates, a follow-up email letter was sent after one week of the survey being available (Dillman, 2007, 2014).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics, extracting the raw data collected from an online survey collection program, where respondents completed the survey questions. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the sample. Means, standard deviations, and content analysis of comment sections throughout the survey. Chi-square analyses were used to test the relationship between applicant selection and the respondents' demographic traits and their background information as were completed in original survey (Adams et al., 2012). The survey instrument contained both close-ended and open-ended questions. Since the focus of this study was to look at opinions, beliefs, and attitudes, it was important to allow the respondents to maintain anonymity, which the survey questionnaire allowed (Patten, 2001).

Research question. The Research question asked, “What is the relationship of an institution’s reputation to Texas school district hiring managers’ perception of academic accomplishments of P-12 campus administrator applicants?” The reputation of an institute of hiring education was a noteworthy area of contention. Most of the information for this question was drawn from the open-ended portions of question responses. Reputation should be questioned more fully if this type of study were examined for further research.

One question did speak to the area of reputation, which asked if respondents considered online coursework from for-profit institutions equivalent to traditional coursework. Respondents corroborated their opinion with almost a 64% reply of no. In addition to looking at this question in isolation, it was also compared to the two hypothetical hiring situations for a school administrator. To answer this question, descriptive statistics were used to compare the response options for two different hypothetical hiring scenarios by the sample of participants and their responses to their opinion of an institution’s reputation. Hiring Situation One with two candidate possibilities, Applicant A (traditional face-to-face education) and Applicant B (fully online education); Hiring Situation Two with two candidate possibilities, Applicant A (traditional face-to-face) and Applicant B (hybrid). The results of these comparisons are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1 Results of Chi-Square and Descriptive Statistics for Institutional Reputation by Applicant for Hiring Situation One.

Institution Reputation Response	Hiring Situation One	
	Applicant A (Traditional) % (n)	Applicant B (Fully Online) % (n)
Yes	24.34 (28)	12.17 (14)
No	59.13 (68)	4.35 (5)

Note. $\chi^2 = 13.559$, $df = 1$, $p = .000$

Table 2 Results of Chi-Square and Descriptive Statistics for Institution Reputation by Applicant for Hiring Situation Two.

Institution Reputation Response	Hiring Situation Two	
	Applicant A (Traditional) % (n)	Applicant B (Hybrid) % (n)
Yes	9.57 (11)	26.96 (31)
No	36.52 (42)	26.96 (31)

Note. $\chi^2 = 10.542$, $df = 1$, $p = .001$

The survey question invited open-ended responses. There was a definite split between the respondents and their opinions for those who chose to respond to the open-ended comment section. The following comments were provided regarding reputation as it related to the survey question: “My preference would

depend upon the reputation of the university. For instance, I would be more interested in hiring an individual with a Tier One university background than an individual with a degree from local college.” Another comment from this question was, “The reputation of the said university would be important to me, but the method by which instruction was delivered would not be.” One last comment on reputation was, “If the educational institution is not highly rated, then we would not be as interested in that applicant.”

V. CONCLUSIONS

Based on this quantitative, cross-sectional stratified sampling survey, there were several conclusions about the increased number and quality of online degrees and the many employers still not willing to hire applicants who earned an online degree (Adams & Defleur, 2005; Adams et al., 2012; Columbaro & Monaghan, 2009; Guedoo, 2007, 2008; Monaghan, 2009; Tharpe, 2014; Thompson, 2009; Udegbe, 2012; Zuppek, 2010). The respondents to this study seemed to imply a preference to candidates with traditional coursework; however, the findings appeared to suggest that online learning, or, at least, hybrid coursework, has gained favor with a greater percentage than the Adams et al. (2012) study revealed. Nonetheless, online education coursework and degrees are far from widely accepted within the field of public, not for profit education.

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