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Competency-Based Education in a Postsecondary Setting: An Analysis of Leadership Perception

By

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A DISSERTATION

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COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION IN POSTSECONDARY SETTINGS: AN

ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP PERCEPTION

ABSTRACT

Competency-based education (CBE) is an initiative that is popular across higher education but has been used with varying results. Much of the literature illustrates efficacy of certain CBE programs and leadership styles during implementation. However, existing research typically includes data from administrators, students, and faculty. This case study of a southern two-year college sought to determine perceptions of leadership during implementation of a large-scale initiative like CBE. Based on previous research and recommendations, business specialists, information technology representatives, and student support service representatives were included for a more holistic understanding. Organizational culture, communication, stakeholder support, and bystander roles were themes that developed. Results showed a positive societal impact when stakeholders better understand CBE and its potential for implementation. Implications were aligned with the literature in three of the four themes that evolved. The study found that, despite extrinsic pressure to develop new CBE programs in vocational and academic programs, inclusivity of representatives from these five specific stakeholder categories (administration, faculty, student support, information technology, and business specialists) to gain multiple perspectives, can increase the potential success of large-scale initiatives like CBE.

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture is often defined by successes or failures. Leadership styles can also affect how institutional effectiveness is measured or perceived. When looking at implementation of large-scale initiatives like competency-based education programs, there is an ongoing debate among many about the leadership necessary for success and their influence on the organizational culture (Dragoo & Barrows, 2016). Kotter (2012) describes how implementing a strategy without proper planning and execution not only jeopardizes the initiative but could also have long-term residual effects on the overall health of an institution.

Higher education institutions around the country are working diligently to remain competitive and maintain enrollment levels (Laitinen, 2012; Commonfund Institute, 2017). Colleges and universities alike are required to be more fiscally accountable to help curtail the rising student debt (U.S. Department of Education, 2019; U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2018). As organizations strive to develop cost-effective ways to attract students, community colleges and universities must also ensure that students are getting the knowledge and training they need to prepare for the workforce (Mintz, 2019). Discussions regarding educational value, cost of a college degree, and the type of delivery of instruction required to develop skills graduates need to become successful in their careers dominate the literature. Such pressures may cause policy makers and leaders to implement initiatives without necessarily having an adequate strategy.

Scholars and policymakers alike are using this type of information as a springboard to look both extrinsically and intrinsically at the efficacy of their curriculum to gauge how their respective institutions prepare students for employment. A concern noted in the literature relates to the content in the curricula being taught. Laitinen (2012) identified significant gaps in the

knowledge two-year and four-year students are learning and retaining in a 2001 study called *Academically Adrift*. The study suggested that there is no statistically significant improvement based on the amount of time a student spends in a classroom concerning critical thinking and other pertinent skills commonly associated with success and positive outcomes.

One curriculum method that has been debated for decades and is reemerging is competency-based education (Nodine & Johnstone, 2015). The U.S. Department of Education, or D.O.E. (2016), defined competency-based education (CBE) as a method of instruction and learning that transitions students away from traditional lecture-style classes into a more student-centered modality. CBE focuses on mastery of a skill or achievement by allowing students to progress through content at individual paces without accounting for a narrowly defined prescribed length-of-time, making this option very attractive to schools and colleges. Unlike typical credit hours assigned to course work, CBE is not rooted in seat time and can lend itself to various modes of instruction. The pace allows gifted learners to progress through the curriculum while students requiring remediation to receive more attention from an instructor (Laitinen, 2012). Marcus (2017) reported the results of Western Governor's University's (WGU) survey of graduates and employers between 2000-2016 regarding preparation for life and the workplace to evaluate CBE preparation. The responding employers and responding graduates from CBE programs reported that CBE graduates were more prepared for their jobs compared to graduates from traditional programs (Marcus, 2017).

Student outcomes using competency-based education may provide a mechanism with incentives for schools in the form of performance funding. Universities and colleges have recognized this potential and placed new emphasis on developing or exploring options. CBE in two-year colleges is appealing because it could potentially mitigate several shortfalls including

enrollment, funding, and student outcomes. Since there is little evidence in these organizations about CBE efficacy, implementing an initiative this complex could also potentially add layers of leadership challenges through all departments (Flowers, 2017). According to Daugherty, Davis and Miller (2015), the existing literature lacks a connection between the notion of utilizing CBE and the leadership style best suited for it.

Problem Statement

Although the measurable benefits of competency-based education are well documented among elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions (Ordonez, 2014), many examples of utilization involve hands-on skill acquisition in vocational areas. There is lack of evidence in the literature that demonstrates consistent perception among stakeholders about CBE efficacy that leads to support for implementing CBE in academic areas such as philosophy, social science, business, and English. Failure to fully comprehend the risks and benefits of CBE implementation could cause significant residual long-term effects on perceptions of leadership and organizational culture. While there are many positive results of CBE implementation, potential negative impacts could be financial, cultural, or accreditation related. Further, much of the research regarding CBE is geared toward understanding the perceptions of administrators and faculty (Clerkin & Simon, 2014; Cross, 2017; Flowers, 2017; Lurrie, Mason, Parsons, 2019; Sullivan, 2015).

Higher education leaders must consider the immediate impact of not only the students and faculty, but also the residual effect CBE implementation may have on ancillary departments (Flowers, 2017). There are other stakeholders potentially impacted by CBE implementation who should be considered. Some of them include those departments or individuals responsible for delivery of content, regional or programmatic accreditation standards, compliance with federal and state regulations, fiscal or budgetary personnel, policymakers, and technology. The problem

to be studied here is that despite the growing extrinsic pressure to implement a district-wide initiative, the perception of leadership at a two-year junior college when implementing competency-based education is not well understood. Lack of information about their beliefs may have unforeseen consequences.

Purpose

As demonstrated in the literature, there continues to be support for CBE in vocational areas such as medically related careers (Morke, Dornan & Eika, 2013). However, the support for CBE in academic areas such as humanities, social sciences, business, and finance are less prominent by comparison. The purpose of this study in a two-year community college in the southern region of the US, is to examine leadership when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE by analyzing perceptions among five groups of stakeholders. Through expanded careful research and analysis described by Flowers (2017) and Lurrie, Mason, & Parsons (2019), one can deduce why higher education representatives in specific departments are reluctant to adopt CBE based on perceptions. Understanding how all stakeholders view CBE and leadership would likely provide greater chances for success when coupled with an appropriate leadership style. Careful planning using information gained from interviews, various publications, and overall improved awareness can potentially increase the likelihood that leaders will be successful in establishing or preserving a cohesive culture, whether or not CBE is an appropriate strategy (Kotter, 2012).

Research Questions

Two-year community college leaders continue to explore ways to deliver quality education in efficient and cost-effective manners that cater to working adults. The primary research question is:

How do five stakeholder groups (administrators, faculty, business specialists, information technology, and student support services) perceive the leadership style practiced within the institution when implementing an initiative such as CBE? Also, when looking at the stakeholders responsible for implementation of CBE, a related question would be: What are the challenges and opportunities perceived by the five stakeholder groups when institutional leaders implement an initiative such as CBE?

With success shown in prominent vocational areas like medical education in all types of postsecondary institutions, it is not fully understood why more academic programs are not adopting CBE in higher education. Flowers (2017) suggests that to appreciate this question fully, five groups of stakeholders should be studied: faculty, administrators, student support specialists, financial specialists, and information technology representatives. A qualitative approach using an interview protocol and selected theories seen in the literature regarding leadership styles, serve as the foundation of this research. Coupled with the comprehension of CBE for this study is a broader understanding of appropriate transformational leadership techniques.

Significance

An ongoing push for higher education institutions to make education more affordable is an impetus for developing new strategies or initiatives (Ordonez, 2014). Increasing enrollment and ultimately increasing the number of awards an institution confers in a climate of fiscal uncertainty forces organizations to regularly assess its content, delivery, affordability, and marketability to its constituents (Musto, 2019). With this in mind, transformational leaders should carefully consider all stakeholders within an organization before employing any initiative. According to Kotter (2012), there are eight primary reasons why organizations fail at change. These failures are consistent among many different types of organizations including healthcare,

business, and education. CBE is an example of an initiative where significant change occurs, and despite evidence of varying success, the notion may cause some leaders to be reluctant to adopt CBE. A combination of determining the required resources that must be allocated to an initiative like CBE versus the level of reimbursement of federal funding, both influence the decision process (Foresman, 2019). The results of this study may provide a perspective among five specific groups of stakeholders about what CBE is and the risks and rewards to consider before embarking on implementing CBE programs (Flowers, 2017). Policymakers and leaders focusing on economic outcomes without a comprehensive understanding of the risks involved with implementing CBE specific to organizational culture may manifest undesirable results and upset harmony with those involved.

Conceptual Framework

Path-goal leadership and leader-member exchange theories (Northouse, 2016) serve as the conceptual framework for this case study. Some leaders may seek to utilize different leadership approaches when implementing CBE in their organizations. The risk of selecting and deploying a leadership style is equally significant as the initiative itself (Northouse, 2016). Varying leadership styles focus on the behaviors of leaders as well as their innate characteristics. Two key methods described by Northouse (2016) include path-goal and leadership-member exchange. Path-goal leadership describes how leaders motivate followers to complete tasks. For this study, the assumption here is that CBE is a worthwhile endeavor. Motivation in higher education from an organizational perspective is often centered on student outcomes. Academic CBE is gaining momentum, so using potentially inaccurate data to support implementation may be considered a risk. Without adequate information, garnering support among stakeholders requires change agents to find all angles and develop clear goals.

Perhaps leadership-member exchange (LMX) theory would be appropriate. In short, LMX theory (Northouse, 2016) explains the processes and interactions that take place between leaders and followers during an initiative rather than the attributes of leaders or followers themselves. concentrates on followers willing to work diligently to implement CBE and support the initiative (Northouse, 2016). These followers are referred to as the *in-group*. Leaders may delegate these tasks to the in-group because of the likelihood of completing them. The LMX model may or may not naturally and consequently create an *out-group*, thus forming fault lines in the culture within the organization manifesting potential fairness issues. Such topics related to fairness may lead to negative perceptions of promotions and pay opportunities (Northouse, 2016). It is conceivable that organizational behaviors are unique to particular circumstances, especially concerning the type of leaders tasked with considering CBE.

Kotter (2012) describes an eight-step process for implementing change that leaders in various industries have successfully embraced. The risks and benefits of CBE implementation in higher education are unique to an organization and can only be genuinely identified with some assessment involving all constituents. Perception of CBE is paramount during the evaluation process, and in this case, it expands beyond faculty and administration to business specialists, information technology, and student support (Flowers, 2017). Although Kotter's (2012) description of a process is readily applicable to CBE implementation, the theoretical framework that guides this study is aligned with Kotter's first step in the process - developing a sense of urgency. All stakeholders must fully understand CBE and its benefits to the students. All of those departments and individuals should also be aware of the effort required to meet objectives.

Assumptions

The primary assumption entering this study is that most stakeholders in this two-year public junior college fully understand what CBE is and its benefits. Faculty and administrators are responsible for designing curricula and understanding student learning outcomes. Student support specialists know about learning styles, learning disabilities, and other areas related to student outcomes. However, business specialists and information technology representatives may not have the same or even similar levels of knowledge or understanding about teaching and learning (Flowers, 2017). The primary responsibility of business specialists is to analyze financial and business transactions (Flowers, 2017). Their training excludes curriculum design, teaching, or learning methodologies. As with business specialists, information technology representatives may not have training related to pedagogy or andragogy but perform specific tasks related to computer hardware and software (Flowers, 2017). Their focus is narrow and may be a disadvantage in this research. Additionally, another assumption is that all participants will respond honestly and freely without any expectation of any reward or incentive.

Limitations

When considering theories about leadership, the researcher is compelled to reference the literature and identify tacit theory, or personally-held ideas about how things work (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). The principal investigator's previous and current work experiences may cater to supposition, inference, and occasional interpolation and may be tied directly to results.

Based on the confinement to one location, organizational culture may be seen as a limitation. The site of the study does not currently have any CBE programs. To the contrary, it is the opinion of the principal investigator that such circumstances manifest an ideal situation to navigate the process with minimal impedance yielding better data to analyze. The principal

investigator's role within the research site is the supervision of academic instruction concentrated in the health science area and may cause bias. Although health science programs are vocational and competency-based in nature, there are additional duties of the principal investigator adjacent to all other academic divisions and programs. The strongest bias relates to developing, implementing, and typically requiring CBE for healthcare-related vocational fields where CBE has shown consistent results for decades (Morcke, Dornan & Eika, 2013). Some readers may speculate that the principal investigator functioning as a higher education administrator and professor within the research site may support such perception. However, significant effort is required to conduct the research with a detached perspective when narrating the results. The discussion of the methodology of this study includes descriptors of the researcher's positionality and how it relates to the validity of the study.

Many governmental agencies frequently provide testimony to legislators about CBE. This qualitative study does not include data to quantify CBE in any specific category above. Neglecting state-sponsored data typically used to guide decision making for organizations considering CBE, is not included in this study. Such data are persistence, completion, and graduation rates within programs that adopted CBE. Since the research question is centered around perception and culture, responses are descriptive.

Additionally, using representatives from all five categories of stakeholders provides a heterogeneous sample for focused critical analysis. The site's regional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, or SACSCOC, requires institutions to petition for approval of CBE programs under the substantive change policy (SACSCOC, n.d.). There is a significant amount of documentation necessary to meet this standard. An endeavor such as this may be an example of a limitation of why more institutions

do not adopt CBE. Since the literature is fragmented regarding CBE among academic programs, another limitation may be that is not fully understood in academic settings due to the lack of required manipulative skills acquisition. Many entry level certificates and degree awards include a combination of both academic and technical courses, thus creating a convergence of pedagogy and andragogy.

Finally, the sample size of the participants may be seen as inadequate to some observers. The site of the study is categorized as a junior college and has five total campuses with an overall enrollment of approximately 20,000 students. The site contains four campuses typical of a community college setting, meaning students travel to the campus as commuters. However, the main campus includes residence halls that mimic a university. The enrollment and two campus types make the site an optimal choice.

Delimitations. The research excludes students from participating in the study. It also included curricula with degree programs with traditional plans that use the credit hour distinction. The site does not have any full competency-based programs; the site does implement competency-based concepts related to workforce programs in the form of laboratory sections, as well as experiential learning such as clinical externships and practicums.

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Definitions

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The following definitions are listed for informational purposes.

Andragogy: the art and science of helping adults learn; it differs from pedagogy because it allows the student to assist with determining the learning methods in collaboration with the instructor dynamically and fluidly. Pedagogy, in contrast, places full responsibility on the teacher to design the teaching methodology, timing, and evaluation (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2012).

Business specialists: Representatives tasked with accounting for all areas of finance within

higher education institutions. Examples include financial aid representatives and Chief Financial

officers (Flowers, 2017).

Competency: A competency is a clearly defined and measurable statement of the knowledge,

skill, and ability a student has acquired in a designated program (SACSCOC, 2018).

Competency-Based Education (CBE): A method of instruction and learning that transitions

students away from seat time, in favor of a structure that creates flexibility, allows students to

progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of

learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Direct Assessment: Direct assessment is a measure of student performance based on a variety of

types of actual student work (Sorensen-Irvine & Kevar, 2017).

Information Technology: The department whose responsibility is focused on the digital

infrastructure for delivery on content, development, assessment, maintenance, networking, and

operation of computer hardware and software (Flowers, 2017).

Limited Direct Assessment: Creates flexibility for an institution to provide a mix of direct

assessment coursework and credit or clock hour coursework in the same program (U.S.

Department of Education, 2016).

Seat time: The amount of time a student spends physically present in a traditional classroom in a

traditional lecture (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Student Support Specialists: Representatives responsible for services rendered to students

including advising, tutoring, and disability services (Flowers, 2017).

Vocational Education: Training that focuses on occupationally specific programs. Examples include trade and industry, health, and technical careers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Conclusion

CBE success in vocational areas of higher education is well-documented (Nodine & Johnstone, 2015). However, academic areas have not enjoyed the same successes for various reasons and are subject to perception and interpretation. Literature about utilizing CBE in all areas of higher education areas is evolving daily. There are new studies that show signs of peaked interest and momentum (Berrett, 2015; Clerkin & Simon, 2014; Lurrie, Mason, & Parsons, 2019, Nodine & Johnstone, 2015). Transformational leaders with aspirations of implementing CBE at their institutions must carefully review the impact of not only the efficacy of CBE but must consider other stakeholders and how implementation may ultimately impact organizational culture. Incentivizing completion of milestones and different student outcomes in the form of performance-based funding and success points for most community colleges have created a sense of urgency and the need for institutions to consider CBE (THECB, 2018). A holistic approach that includes feedback and involvement from faculty, administrators, business specialists, information technology, and student support services (Flowers, 2017) provides leaders with vital information that may assist in developing a robust strategic plan surrounding CBE. Organizational culture can dictate the success or outcome of any initiative (Kotter, 2012). The results of this research may serve to provide critical feedback on organizational perception.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Community colleges enroll far more nontraditional students than universities (Sutton, 2016). Programs at community colleges account for nearly half of all postsecondary students and make up a majority of minorities and students-of-color (Mintz, 2019). Nontraditional students are often working adults with many responsibilities outside of their schoolwork such as employment and family (Porter & Umbach, 2019). They have fewer hours to spend sitting in a classroom away from their home (Sutton, 2016).

Lack of flexibility is another obstacle for community college students. Since most students are nontraditional or are employed, they must have access to the same courses during various shifts (Sutton, 2016). Courses must be offered in the evening and on weekends to reach the broadest target groups. Such obstacles warrant additional delivery methods such as online programs and competency-based education (CBE). One of the most common challenges though, relates to the cost of attendance and students' ability to pay. Students often struggle to find ways to pay for their education and student loans remain a primary source for both two-year and four-year students. As previously stated, the U.S. Senate Committee on Health Education Labor and Pensions reports that the average student debt is nearly $30,000 (U.S. Senate Committee on Health Education Labor and Pensions, 2018). However, only half of those students pursue a 4-year degree.

Moreover, only 21 percent of students are pursuing a two-year degree (U.S. Senate Committee on Health Education Labor and Pensions, 2018). Institutions are pressured to deliver the product to its consumers with these challenges at the heart of its mission. Declining enrollment, increased costs, decreased resources, and current political climate are all factors that

can impede progress and influence an organization's strategic plan. In turn, such challenges could erode morale and an organization's culture based on its perceptions of any initiative.

Institutions are continuously looking for ways to attract new students, provide cost-effective ways to deliver content, and maintain a high level of quality training employers need for their employees (Hodge, Atkins & Simons, 2016). One method to deliver training with these criteria in mind is competency-based education (CBE) (Berrett, 2015; Nodine & Johnstone, 2015). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Colleges (SACSCOC), defines competency as a clearly defined and measurable statement of the knowledge, skill, and ability a student has acquired in a designated program (SACSCOC, 2018). Students move through a set of predetermined competencies in a way that differs from traditional degree programs. Most degree or certificate plans use hours of instruction in a didactic, laboratory, or experiential manner. Competency-based education, or CBE, is a method of teaching and learning that transitions students away from seat time, in favor of flexibility, allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Progression is not tied to clock hours in this CBE model. The reduced seat time makes it attractive to the nontraditional student, especially those in community colleges (Cavanaugh, 2015). CBE has been around for decades but is gaining momentum across the country (Berrett, 2015). The literature illustrates that the burgeoning interest and implementation of CBE as a way to mitigate some of the challenges community college students face is vast. While the excitement is demonstrated, full adoption is not well documented among academic programs and some schools have abandoned it altogether (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). For example, there are only six colleges in the same state as the research site that offer CBE programs and only two are community colleges (Daugherty, Davis

& Miller, 2015). Such fragmented dispositions among two-year colleges lack evidence of rationale and perception through research.

As with any initiative, leaders tasked with determining if CBE is a worthwhile endeavor in their respective institutions must consider all implications of an initiative like CBE on an organization. Kotter (2012) suggests that there are specific reasons why different organizations fail at implementing a strategic plan. "Among those reasons include allowing too much complacency among stakeholders, failing to create a guiding coalition, and under-communicating a vision," (p. 16). Kotter (2012) also identifies consequences of these errors such as "eventual failure to implement strategies well, reengineering (course design in this case) takes too long and costs too much, and results that do not meet expectations" (p. 16). The costs of delivery of content and developing the material are considered the most profound. As such, despite the growing popularity of interest in CBE, leaders should consider the impact such an initiative has on all stakeholders in an organization other than students, administration, and faculty (Flowers, 2017). A literature review illuminates how the perception of CBE can influence these challenges and provide readers varying perspectives on CBE and the leadership challenges that exist when considering implementation.

Leadership theories such as path-goal are attributed to the faculty responsible for implementing a large-scale initiative (Dewan & Dewan, 2010). Whereas leader-member exchange theory is not easily identified in the literature. Additionally, the information available on CBE changes daily making it difficult to incorporate leadership theory into a literature review (Hodge, Atkins, & Simons, 2016). Despite the evolution of CBE at such a rapid rate, there is still ambiguity and reluctance on adopting CBE and it is not completely understood why. This chapter will discuss CBE trends, potential financial impact, and define the stakeholders affected

by implementation in a two-year college. The overarching theme is understanding how a large-scale initiative affects organizational culture among the five stakeholder groups.

Understanding CBE

Competency-based education (CBE) programs are tailored to working adults because they do not have the same classroom lecture clock hours as in a typical degree program. CBE programs are more flexible, and progression through the curricula is based on achievement of skill or competency (Nodine & Johnstone, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Such programs also provide opportunities for students to progress at their own pace, making CBE attractive to some students. The general perspective in the literature is that competency-based education is a method of instruction that may be beneficial for student success (Berrett, 2015; and Clerkin & Simon, 2014; Lurrie, Mason & Parsons, 2019). Student-centered benefits include the ability to work at an individualized pace. For areas where knowledge acquisition occurs rapidly, the student can move along the lessons faster as compared to other areas where more intense instruction is needed. The naturally occurring differentiated instruction for both the instructor and learner caters to both ends of the learning spectrum (U.S. Department of Education, 2018a). Gifted students are not impeded by students requiring more attention and vice versa.

Theorists and researchers alike demonstrate a common thread – CBE is useful but not fully understood when utilized for both academic and vocational-type programs (Hodge, Atkins & Simons, 2016). However, it is evident that the primary purpose of CBE programs is to prepare graduates for jobs and careers (Hodge, Atkins & Simons, 2016). Measurement of student success throughout the process involves a formative and summative assessment as well as employer feedback. Feedback from graduates and employers confirms that CBE can work in a variety of

programs (Marcus, 2017). These attributes are shared between both academic and vocational programs. Direct assessments (Sorensen-Irvine & Kevar, 2017) are sometimes categorized into formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments are activities designed to provide feedback to the learner about progress at particular checkpoints. If they do not pass the assessments, they do not move on, and there is no grading curve (Marcus, 2017). Examples include interactive worksheets, discussion questions, daily quizzes, or presentations. The results of the formative assessments may warrant remediation activities and have the potential to correct information before a capstone assignment or summative evaluation. Summative assessments allow the student to demonstrate mastery of content. While the purposes of achieving defined student-learning outcomes are identified for both vocational and academic programs, it is the type, frequency, and consistency of those assessments that vary (Clerkin & Simon, 2014). Beliefs about the complexity of implementing CBE were more interconnected among stakeholders than anticipated (Dragoo & Barrows, 2016). However, an in-depth look into the minutiae of assessing student achievement at schools such as Western Governor's University, or WGU, provides a better understanding of why CBE has garnered support recently. Ninety-eight percent of employers surveyed between 2000 and 2016 say that WGU students were prepared for the jobs for which they were hired (Marcus, 2017). These assessments are competency-based and students must meet a prescribed set before they move on to the next set.

The most common modality to meet these criteria is the use of technology in the form of online or distance education (Nodine & Johnstone, 2015). A recent survey in Tennessee showed that there is a similar perception about success (and results) among communities of online programs versus traditional classroom delivery (Western Governor's University, 2019). Therefore, WGU's (2019) research suggests that the ease of access, flexibility, and lower costs

are attracting more students. Students are now using technology to achieve their educational goals. The industry has shown a response to digital access as a way of obtaining a degree and certificate awards (Nodine & Johnstone, 2016). There is a significant decline in the sales of traditional textbooks and print media from one of the nation's leading textbook providers, and a shift to digital platforms and available media. The decline is between approximately eight to nine percent (Mackenzie, 2017). A concurrent (and future) increase in the use of digital platforms such as Blackboard and Brightspace has significantly increased the use of competency-based education programs across all levels of education and the recent data illustrating a significant push toward using digital technology in place of traditional textbooks and other print media is profound (McKenzie, 2017).

Funding Pertaining to CBE

Due to the rising costs of higher education (Sheets, Crawford & Soares, 2012), school leaders around the country are seeking better options for students by using innovation. Since traditional lecture programs use mainly credit-based models of curricula, time, resources, and costs can be evaluated and predicted with relative certainty. However, CBE aims to reduce time in the traditional classroom, is self-paced, and difficult to quantify based on individual learning needs (Nodine & Johnstone, 2016). As fiscal viability, enrollment management and student outcomes remain at the forefront of strategic planning for two-year postsecondary schools, leaders are tasked with providing quality education at an affordable price using two primary funding sources to support CBE programs (Daugherty, Davis & Miller, 2015). The first is through tuition and fees provided by the student. The second is based on state and local municipal support.

Tuition-based Structures

   The cost of attending a CBE program is a primary factor for both the student and the institution. Just as curricular components of CBE diverge from seat time in a classroom, tuition is set differently for some schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2018b). Traditionally, students are charged based on credit hours. However, a new subscription-based model charges the students a set fee for a term. During the term, the student may progress through the competencies at their own pace. (Daugherty, Davis & Miller, 2015). If a student reaches a set level of competency, they can progress to the next module. A subscription-based model allows a student that has previous experiences to demonstrate competency without the expectation of sitting in class relearning content. As such, it attracts those targeting learners with expanded skills learned in the workforce and allows them to translate them into a degree plan (Ordonez, 2014).

Municipal Supported Programs

   Many states offer funding appropriations to schools based on their performance and student outcomes. As previously discussed in chapter one, progress is incentivized by success points, where the state awards dollars for every success point earned (THECB, 2018a). The performance-based funding model remains a pillar of supplemental funding to tuition, fees, and local taxes. As part of their strategic plans, colleges and universities are working diligently to meet that goal in many ways (THECB, 2018a). CBE is one method of awarding degrees and certificates by accelerating the timeline from start-to-finish, thus increasing the success points awarded (U.S. Department of Education, 2018b).

   Public institutions and their students rely more heavily on federal funding. Before 2015, the Federal Government did not holistically recognize CBE, so financial aid could not be

awarded for such programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (U.S.

Department of Education, 2019). The primary reason is that regional accreditors did not have

clear parameters for CBE. As such, one can speculate that this is precisely why colleges were

financially discouraged from embracing it (Berrett, 2015). Since then, the political climate has

stifled reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. It was last reauthorized in 2013. It was

extended by Congress and is currently under review (U.S. Senate Committee on Health,

Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2018).

Accreditation

Regional accreditation is one requirement for institutions to receive Title IV funding, but

federal funding has shifted recently. Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education under the Trump

Administration, is leading the effort to place the onus of defining and ensuring these educational

programs meet specific standards onto regional accreditors (Kreighbaum & Fain, 2019). The

recent changes were entertained but precluded by the Obama Administration. The U.S. D.O.E.

loosened some of these traditional restrictions by redefining how regional accreditors review

innovative programs like CBE (Kreighbaum & Fain, 2019). The new eligibility standards allow

institutions to consider adopting CBE programs to provide the ability to offer Title IV funding to

students. Ultimately, the effort serves to bolster enrollment strategies and access. Opponents of

this effort are concerned because the changes include other allowing other programs such as

correspondence courses the same advantages (Kreighbaum & Fain, 2019). For-profit companies

typically offer correspondence courses that have a reputation of being watered-down and less

rigorous. The government traditionally prohibits any institution from outsourcing more than 50%

of its content within a program. These changes leave some believing that the new proposal opens

the door to for-profit companies because it does not distinguish between CBE and

correspondence approaches (Lieberman, 2019). As such, for-profit companies would be compensated for funds earmarked for non-profit organizations.

Western Governor's University (WGU) led the initial effort to promote full competency-based programs early, but in 2013, Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) became the first institution to receive approval to be reimbursed via Title IV funding for such programs and paving the way for others (Berrett, 2015). At first glance, the financial discussion appears to be a linchpin. In states where this research is being conducted, the six institutions participating in CBE have varying costs associated with these programs (Daugherty, et al., 2015). While some of the programs show the costs are reduced, others show that it can take several years for institutions to recover those costs (Daugherty, et al., 2015). As such, the schools offer different payment models including a subscription-based model and a more traditional per credit model.

In a plea to legislators during the discussion about the Higher Education Act reauthorization in 2007, Western Governor's University provided testimony in an attempt to convince the government to revise language that determines eligibility for Title IV funding for CBE programs. Legislative members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health Education Labor and Pensions listened to these arguments. As a result, a new definition called direct assessment now exists and aids in considering CBE as a viable option for students (Berrett, 2015). The interpretation of the original language was further developed while the U.S. D.O.E. also worked with regional accreditors to clarify and loosen some of their standards in an attempt to springboard the idea. With the financial implications of funding, developing, and implementing CBE in institutions at center stage, additional challenges surfaced fostering more in-depth discussions.

Through a series of grants between the Lumina Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Department of Education, fifteen higher education institutions made up of both two-year and four-year schools, received *Experimental Sites Initiative* (ESI) designation, providing some protection while implementing CBE (Lumina, 2015). Four of those institutions were two-year schools, and one was from Texas. The designation allows the schools to continue to receive federal funding as they developed the programs. Since then, some other institutions followed suit including the University of Wisconsin, University of Phoenix, Texas A&M Commerce, and South Texas College. Each offer CBE degrees in areas such as business and leadership. "Currently, there are thirty (30) institutions participating in the CBE experimental site program, and less than half are two-year institutions," (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, p. 2). The University of Wisconsin, University of Phoenix, Texas A&M Commerce, and South Texas College have either discontinued pursuit of CBE or have fully developed programs with consistent outcomes.

Ongoing Research

When there are promising results of CBE reported by institutions like Western Governor's University (WGU) and Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU), it stimulates in-depth discussion about potential reasons why other institutions are not intrigued by converting traditional credit hour programs into CBE (American Institutes for Research, 2016; American Institutes for Research, 2018; Berrett, 2015; Clerkin & Simon, 2014). Such a shift could, however, impact a wide range of institutional stakeholders. Beyond faculty and administrators, representatives including financial specialists, information technology, and student support services ought to be considered and part of the decision-making process (Flowers, 2017). The literature presented in this review illustrates the momentum CBE is gaining across higher

education making it impossible to ignore. Student debt (Berrett, 2015), perceived value of education (Laitinen, 2012), rising costs and adjacent factors (Commonfund, 2018), and the sudden burgeoning increase in organizations either offering CBE in some way or considering CBE (American Institute of Research, et al., 2019) corroborates the popularity. Shrinking budgets reduced reimbursement, and declining enrollment have forced schools to consider alternative educational pathways. The studies cited here and the articles presented elucidate how organizations seek to demonstrate the importance of providing quality education at a reasonable cost through innovation.

According to Nailos (personal communication, 2018), higher education institutions in Texas recently began collecting data regarding CBE in annual reporting data (U.S. Department of Education, p. 11). These data identify CBE as a new field, but none of these data are available yet (U.S. Department of Education, 2018a). Nailos recognized that higher education institutions in Texas are showing an interest in further developing these programs pending review of published data.

The American Institutes for Research with Eduventures (2018) studied the climate of CBE among postsecondary schools in the U.S. Eighty-six percent of the respondents reported that they were in the process of implementing or considering CBE programs with nursing and computer science being the most popular. When policymakers look deeply into potentially adopting a CBE model, the literature supporting it for academic areas is also scarce. The opposing polar viewpoint leaves many believers puzzled. Where is the disconnect? There may be a misconception among academic leaders about the rigor of CBE versus an established traditional program (Berrett, 2015). Evidence of those perceptions and how such decisions determine culture for an organization may influence whether or not employing CBE is in the

foreground. An ethnographic approach to understanding the risks and benefits provides vital information (Fetterman, 2010).

CBE and the Future

The most visible field in CBE-related literature is medical training (Morcke, Dornan & Eika, 2013). There has been research related to physician training, nursing, and allied health both in the United States and across the world advocating for CBE (Ferguson, Caverzagie, Nousiainen & Snell, 2017). From unlicensed assistive personnel like nursing assistants over to licensed patient care providers, the value is evident. Entry-level, mid-level, and advanced-level practitioners have all documented the use of CBE for training in their respective fields (Morcke, Dornan & Eika, 2013). Until now, there hasn't been a concerted effort in understanding how CBE is perceived in two-year postsecondary colleges. The National Survey for Postsecondary Competency-Based Education (NSPCBE) distributed by the American Institute for Research with Eduventures published a report titled *State of the Field* (American Institute for Research, 2018). There are two primary reasons why two-year schools are motivated to adopt CBE or are *currently* using CBE programs. The biggest reason is the desire to expand opportunities to nontraditional learners (70%) and second reason is the response to workforce needs (68%). Data from this report further show that the interest in *consideration* of adopting CBE in two-year colleges with the desire to expand opportunities to nontraditional learners and responding to workforce needs is slightly higher than those currently using CBE. Interestingly, a third metric worth noting here from the NSPCBE is a desire to improve completion rates.

Porter and Umbach (2019) reported that students place online learning as one of the biggest challenges with their community college experience. In a survey of over 50,000 community college students in ten different schools (Porter & Umbach, 2019), respondents were

asked about the challenges they face. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the students that responded to the survey placed online courses as the most significant challenge behind work, paying expenses, and family and friends. Subcategories of this section noted difficulty learning the material on their own and lack of interaction with faculty as primary reasons. Additionally, a related area that could severely impact the perception, development, or success of a CBE program is interaction with faculty teaching the courses. Sixteen percent (16%) indicated that faculty competence was a challenge to their success. They cited concerns about their ability to teach well and provide feedback on assignments (Porter & Umbach, 2019). Transformational leaders may see these data and become discouraged at considering implementing CBE. The primary vehicle for CBE is digital learning via learning management systems (American Institutes for Research, 2018; Berrett, 2015; Burgstahler 2017; Clerkin & Simon, 2014; Daugherty, Davis & Miller, 2015).

Unlike courses that require the development of competency involving hands-on skills, there are academic courses that often support these areas and do not have the same competency-based components. Degree plans seek to incorporate these academic courses to help the students increase critical thinking, broaden the understanding of related knowledge, or introduce students to adjacent cultures (Clerkin & Simon, 2014). Southern New Hampshire University created College for America, designed specifically for CBE programs. It seemingly has the most popular and abundant programs available. Even so, findings are still ambiguous as to the success or failure of the programs and data on educational outcomes is scarce (Hensen, 2018). There are two CBE Associate of Arts degrees with three concentrations, three Bachelor of Arts degrees with seven concentrations, and a certificate program (College for America, 2020). As more data become available on outcomes, audiences can make more informed decisions about CBE.

Stakeholders in CBE Implementation

Flowers (2017) and the American Institute for Research (2018) studied factors that potentially influence CBE implementation. Students, administrators, and faculty are obvious stakeholders noted by both. However, each published information and asserted that there are some key departments adjacent to academic instruction responsible for carrying out competency-based education initiatives. Including these stakeholders' perceptions may be beneficial.

> The survey asked respondents to identify their role to clarify their perspective on CBE. Thirty-four percent identified as a chief academic affairs officer (provost or vice president of learning), 30% identified as the institutional research officer, and 11% identified as a dean. The remaining 25% of respondents identified as presidents/ chancellors, vice provost/provost's office staff, department chairs, faculty members, or other (AIR, et al., 2018, p. 5).

Although this survey is the most current and complete look at CBE across the country, it still lacks the identification of adjacent stakeholders as Flowers does (2017).

Information technology (IT). Beyond administrators and faculty, IT representatives may be the most critical stakeholder after students and faculty in implementing CBE initiatives (Berrett, 2015; Burgstahler 2017; Clerkin & Simon, 2014; Daugherty, Davis & Miller, 2015, Dickerson, Coleman & Geer, 2012). As technology evolves at a burgeoning pace, aligning outcomes may prove to be difficult. Technology research is vast, and software solutions are designed to cater to different teaching and learning styles (Dickerson, Coleman & Geer, 2012). There are additional factors that organizations must analyze related to technology, instruction, and today's student needs (Nodine & Johnston, 2015). Distance education initiatives as fully online or hybrid – blended modalities can influence the direction of an organization. Instant

respect and credibility are given to the administrators that understand the technology they ask the faculty to use (Dragoo & Barrows, 2016).

Equally crucial to organizational harmony is an adequate representation of the sense of urgency as it relates to technology and CBE. Creating a sense of urgency and communicating to IT stakeholders the rationale for including them in the process is part of the first step (Kotter, 2012). Professionals knowledgeable in learning management system capabilities and limitations may have a profound impact on implementing CBE by identifying potential obstacles. For instance, if an instructor uploads a video or exercise for students for a particular lesson, those formative or summative assessments take space on a server. One can speculate that for a program that utilizes a self-paced online format, the number of videos and other resource material would increase substantially. As such, the increase in storage, online grading, communication, tracking, and deployment of these limited direct assessments could tax the software and hardware (Nodine & Johnston, 2015). Only an expert would be able to perform risk-benefit analyses.

Great leaders can see potential problems beforehand and act because waiting for a problem to occur can have disastrous results. Proactivity serves as an essential characteristic when implementing technology in the curriculum (Dickerson, Coleman & Greer, 2012, p. 55). As students proceed through various stages of learning, it must be determined if advanced students have what they need to challenge them with increased rigor and those lagging behind have the necessary resources to meet objectives. Balance is required to cater to both ends of the learning spectrum and technology can provide real-time evidence to the students and their instructors. Therefore, technology experts must work with instructional designers and faculty to ensure alignment of curriculum and also CBE outcomes can be supported (Nodine & Johnston, 2015). A comprehensive understanding of learning management systems, web-based

assessments, document management, troubleshooting, hardware and peripheral devices, and various adjacent software solutions is critical to the decision-making process (Dickerson, Coleman & Greer, 2012). Analytics plays an equally important role in technology and its capabilities. Feedback to the student and instructor is essential to evaluate if competency is to be achieved and skill and knowledge about technology that goes beyond teaching and learning is to be developed (Fullan, 2001).

Student support services. As with any educational program, representatives from student services are legally bound to assist students with learning disabilities (U. S. Department of Education, 2018). The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against students with disabilities. Curriculum and resources must consider all limitations and institutions are obligated to mitigate these obstacles to the best of their ability (Burgstahler, 2017). Since the delivery of CBE typically involves a learning management system, the same stipulations apply to students with disabilities. Text to voice, transcription, and audio-visual accommodations are required and are standard for all courses. Additional support measures may be needed that are specific to CBE students.

Business specialists. Competency-based degrees are a fraction of the cost of a 4-year traditional college degree. For example, Southern New Hampshire University charges $5000 for their two-year associate degree ($2500 per year), while Western Governors University charges approximately $3000 for a six-month subscription (Ordonez, 2014). Fiscal years are planned with specific budgets in mind based on traditional credit hours. Cost analyses are conducted with particular reimbursement and appropriation formulas. Since CBE uses an unpredictable pace per course among student completers, coupled with the likely reduction in cost as described above when compared to typical tuition and fees, the impact may have a detrimental effect on an

institution (Laitinen, 2012). Balancing costs and revenue may create situations where decisions affect resources (Eaton 2016).

The Lumina Foundation along with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2015) provided institutions with gap funding to subsidize the work. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education (2018b) continued to work with regional accreditors to establish an experimental site period to fund these programs similarly to traditional credit-bearing programs. Title IV funding is available to eligible schools. Both measures provide a temporary safe haven for organizations to implement CBE. Excluding this group from discussions about feasibility could be unfavorable.

Application of Leadership Theory

Choosing the best leadership approach is critical to organizational culture (Goodenough, 1963). No two schools are the same and, therefore, one leadership style may not work better than another. Transformational leadership styles would likely be more appropriate because the implementation of CBE is transformational by nature. The literature suggests that, due to the confluence of political outcomes, fiscal challenges, complex organizational cultures and competitive marketability, transformational leaders deal with the flux daily causing uncertainty for CBE (Barrett, 2015; Clerkin & Simon, 2014; Commonfund Institute, 2017; Cross, 2017; Flowers, 2017; Laitinen, 2012; Lurrie, Mason & Parsons, 2019; Ordonez, 2014; Sullivan, 2015).

Kotter (2012) describes his eight-step process that is systematic, evidence-based, and can be applied in numerous settings. The most critical step for any organization, regardless of the existing culture, is creating a sense of urgency. Most two-year schools are made up of nontraditional students (Ordonez, 2014). CBE is self-paced and may be better suited for nontraditional students (Clerkin & Simon, 2014; Ordonez, 2014). Therefore, the culture of a two-

year school considering a CBE program may be more conducive to success. The sense of urgency to create such programs may be greater in some areas.

Indeed, one could envision how motivation plays a key role in the success or failure of a program, and the path-goal leadership style is rooted in motivation (Northouse, 2016). In this style, leaders try to augment followers' goal accomplishments by providing rewards. There are some criticisms with this approach that may impede the success of the program. For example, one particular institution may not be able to illustrate expectancy among all participants adequately. As such, this approach has only received partial support through empirical studies. Until all stakeholders are identified, the feasibility is determined, and each step in the implementation process is carefully considered, motivation may be a significant factor (Kotter, 2012; Northouse, 2016).

Leader-member exchange theory uses the skills of the members to achieve goals (Northouse, 2016). At first glance, this seems like a reasonable approach to implementing CBE. By capitalizing on the followers' abilities to meet deadlines and complete tasks, others may feel left out. The result may be an incidental formation of an "in-group" and an "out-group." Such artificial or naturally occurring groups may divide an organization and stifle progress (Northouse, 2016).

Conclusion

Community and junior college settings are prime locations for CBE because learners enter college with varying capabilities, ages, lifestyles and experiences, and circumstances. The fundamental purpose of CBE is to reduce seat time and allow learners to progress through material at their own pace, potentially reducing the overall costs. The primary student population attracted to CBE programs are typically working adults in both university and community/junior

college settings (Clerk & Simon, 2014; Lurrie et al., 2019; Ordonez, 2014). According to the American Institute for Research (2018), more than 75 percent of students enrolled in CBE programs are aged twenty-five or older.

The general literature provides a robust survey about CBE in a variety of educational settings related to vocational programs. The outcomes programs seek such as completion and speed-to-competency are easily relatable to even the novice researcher. To the contrary, a literature review illustrates there isn't the same depth in understanding the holistic benefits to students (or an organization) with academic CBE programs.

The literature discussed here related the financial concerns among leaders regarding costs of implementation of CBE and the potential returns-on-investment are not fully understood (Hansen, 2018). This study serves as a representation of analyzing how stakeholders perceive the goals of CBE. The recent surge in interest coupled with the ability to fund CBE programs and lack of outcome data has manifested ambiguity surrounding CBE. By looking at perception of CBE among specific stakeholders and the potential affect implementation of CBE can have on two-year organizations, audiences can develop a more in-depth understanding of CBE and choose the necessary leadership strategy that is best suited for them (Kotter, 2012; Northouse, 2016).

This literature review illustrates evidence-based research about successful organizational change processes (Kotter, 2012), cultural theory (Anfara & Mertz, 2015), and leadership theories (Northouse, 2016) that may contribute to dealing with various perceptions about CBE. Community colleges and junior colleges provide valuable settings to gain insight from key stakeholders. The attitude of CBE among these five key stakeholders may ultimately determine the success or failure of a program and how adoption may disturb organizational culture.

The site of the study currently has no formal competency-based program. However, there are many programs in the technical workforce areas that have hands-on learning activities that are competency-based in nature. Much of the research site's focus is on traditional transfer degree and certificate programs with enrollment at the center. Literature and legislative efforts around the country often focus on student learning outcomes such as completion. Completion of degrees and certificates are incentivized for schools with performance funding (THECB, 2018). Students can focus on areas they need to learn while progressing through content they are comfortable with at a faster pace (Daugherty, Davis & Miller, 2015; Latinen, 2012). The flexibility and access of CBE caters to working individuals making it attractive to the market. Currently, there are limited prior learning assessments outside of the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). CBE programs would provide those opportunities for students otherwise not available. Additionally, depending on the cost structure of a CBE program, it could potentially be a significant cost-saving measure. At the same time, assuring accreditation standards are met makes the programs eligible for title IV federal funding.

The site in this study enjoys a high transfer rate to four-year colleges. However, the completion rates for certificates and degrees lags behind peer institutions in the state. CBE is a potential solution to mitigating this challenge and is burgeoning. However, for an institution with no existing CBE infrastructure, a large-scale initiative like this could be detrimental to organizational culture and future initiatives (Kotter, 2012). Understanding perceptions of what CBE is, evaluating risks versus benefits of implementation, and looking at adjacent stakeholders are imperative for transformational leaders.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Competency-based education (CBE) has shown in the literature to be successful for specific higher education programs in medicine, business, and other occupational-specific programs. With a long history of success in vocational programs coupled with the rising cost of postsecondary education, there is a recent push for institutions to consider implementing CBE in academic programs such as business degrees (Nodine & Johnstone, 2016). Flowers (2017) suggested that CBE implementation ought to be carefully considered among all stakeholder groups and not just administration, students, and faculty. Further examination of the most recent literature illustrates there is still some disparity between perception, purpose, efficacy, motivation, and relevancy (Lurie, Mason, & Parsons, 2019).

Through thoughtful research, researchers can seek to determine why some individuals in higher education institutions are reluctant to adopt CBE and analyze the potential effects of leadership styles on organizational culture. The methodology of this case study described here includes the participant setting and sample, the connection between the information sought after and the type of data, and analysis planned to interpret results. This chapter also discusses limitations, delimitations, and ethical considerations as part of a narrative. Finally, chapter three will summarize and connect the concepts related to how the research contributes to the general body of knowledge.

Setting

A two-year institution serves as the setting for this research. This institution offers competency-based concepts within its workforce training programs but does not have fully implemented CBE programs or initiatives. This institution offers programs with a variety of

credit bearing academic and technical areas, non-credit workforce and continuing education courses, and certificates.

The site has one of the highest transfer rates in the state among academic degree awards including associate degrees in science and art. The number of students enrolled in the college is approximately 20,000, making this institution attractive for the study. It is the only two-year school in the area and is adjacent to several major universities. There are no full CBE programs offered by the site but there are workforce programs that include CBE components. These programs include laboratory settings and experiential learning opportunities such as internships, practicum, and apprenticeships.

Site Profile

All public institutions have a web-based published profile by the appropriate governing body (THECB, 2019). These data from this online resume explain some key demographics for this site. In 2017, the total enrollment at the institution where the study took place was 18,465 students. White students made up 60% of the student population, African Americans 11%, and Hispanic/Latino 22%. The number of associate's degrees awarded by the institution in 2017 was 2,170, and there were 326 certificates awarded. The transfer rate of students to four-year colleges and universities was around 27%. The high transfer rate can be attributed to the college's proximity to major universities and remains the single greatest accomplishment for this site.

<div align="center">

Participants

</div>

Flowers (2017) identified five stakeholder groups to consider when implementing CBE: administrators, faculty, business specialists, information technology, and student support services. Participants of this research are from these five groups employed at the institution studied. Participation in the study was not restricted to part-time or full-time status. Twenty-five

employees, with five employees from each one of the stakeholder groups, were invited to participate. Based on the title of each participant's job description found in an institutional directory or through direct work experience with the researcher, participants were recruited for the study. A purposeful sampling strategy was employed to select the participants. Yin (2011) defined purposeful sampling as "The selection of participants or sources of data to be used in a study, based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to the study's research questions" (p. 311). Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study to be able to recruit participants who were considered experts in the social phenomenon being investigated. A set of inclusion criteria ensured that the selected participants have first-hand experience on the phenomenon being studied, which contributed to richer and thicker data (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibbon, 2015). The inclusion criteria for this study were: employee of the two-year institution, employee who holds a position with job descriptions in one of the five stakeholder groups (administrators, faculty, business specialists, information technology, and student support services), and an employee familiar with CBE.

The faculty and staff of the institution are diverse in terms of their ages, years of experience in the workforce, position descriptions, educational backgrounds, cultural identification and beliefs. Data saturation in qualitative studies may be accomplished with as little as five to six participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2016); however, given the diversity and size of the population, a larger sample size is needed to gather richer and thicker data (Boddy, 2016; Ness, 2015). Therefore, five participants from each of the five stakeholder groups were selected.

Type of Data

The primary source of data was from interviews conducted with a member of each stakeholder group. The interviewees are from each of the five groups representing faculty, administration, business specialists, information technology, and student support. Perceptions of CBE and leadership from each stakeholder within the five categories are central. The interview items are designed with the assumption that all participants have some level of knowledge about competency-based education. Additional prompts may be related to the category from which the participant functions. For instance, a follow-up question or item about business specialists would not be the same as one aimed toward staff from information technology.

Finally, coded data collected in the interview responses were triangulated with the literature and institutional documents for validity. Information from the respondents from the interviews were verified for reliability.

Analysis

Respondents' recordings were transcribed into an MS-Word ™ document. Thematic codes related to the content from the interviews sought to discover participants' perceptions of CBE in their institution. Additionally, there was potentially a disconnect between participant attitudes and the advantages and disadvantages in a CBE initiative. Results were also aligned with the hypotheses stated in chapter one. Use of NVivo software provided an objective look at common threads and themes throughout the responses, thus eliminating forms of bias.

The analysis strategy was based on theoretical propositions (Yin, 2014). For this study, the theoretical propositions were based on the leader-member exchange (LMX theory) or path-goal leadership theories (Northouse, 2016). Data analysis was based on one of the techniques proposed by Yin (2011), which was pattern-matching. The steps involved in the analysis were

examining, categorizing, tabulating, and creating a data display. The data were first read and re-read until the researcher formed main concepts. With these concepts in mind, the researcher began coding the interview and institutional data. The researcher employed the use of NVivo software to aid with the coding process. The coding was not automated, but rather manual. The use of the software was for easier management, organization, and storage of the data. Furthermore, the software provided counts for number of references, that is, the number of times the code occurred; hence, identifying patterns among the data became more efficient. The counts allowed the researcher to categorize data based on similarities and/or differences among the patterns. Tabulating and creating a data display were also achieved with the assistance of the software. Reports were generated to extract tables and figures to show patterns among the data.

The patterns that emerged from the analysis were used to develop the themes addressed the research questions. The patterns that emerged from interview data were triangulated with the patterns that emerged from the documentation; thus, increasing the validity of this study. The final themes were compared with propositions gathered from the LMX and path-goal theories, such as leaders delegating tasks while members are willing to work diligently to implement CBE and support the initiative (Northouse, 2016).

Participant Rights

All participants involved in this study were adults and therefore, served as their own legally authorized representative for this study. Components of the consent process comply with 45 CFR 46, Protection of Human Subjects. Informed consent was obtained for each participant in written or oral formats for the interviews. The consent forms and statements provided descriptions of how any audio and/or video recordings would be used and the method of safe destruction of these files upon completion of the study. Voluntary participation was emphasized,

and each participant confirmed his or her understanding he or she may opt out of the research at any time by affixing his or her name to the consent form (face-to-face) or responding to the oral statements (video only). Confidentiality was fostered through the use of a pseudonym chosen by the participant and used throughout the collection and analysis phases.

Interview recordings were transcribed immediately after the interviews. The transcripts were sent to the participants for member checking, allowing the participants to review the accuracy of the transcripts. Once the participants verified that the transcripts were accurate, the interview recordings were deleted. The transcripts will be saved in a password-protected computer with only the researcher having access. The transcripts will be backed up in an encrypted flash drive and will be stored under lock and key in the researcher's residence. All of the collected data will be destroyed within three years after the conclusion of this study.

<p style="text-align:center">Potential Limitations</p>

The site is an open-access institution for a majority of its programs, meaning students can enroll in courses after they have been assessed for college readiness. However, many competitive-entry workforce degree programs require specific prerequisites and minimum grade point averages. Although the setting for the study is ideal for stakeholder groups, the perceived lack of a substantially diverse student population may be seen as a limitation of the study. Data throughout the literature show that students from more socioeconomically disadvantaged areas may require more student services (Porter & Umbach, 2019). Since the study participants are not students, their perception of student success may vary based on their roles and experiences.

The researcher was embedded in the culture of the participants and, therefore, may have encountered biased responses. Strict objectivity, interpretation, and analysis were required to mitigate researcher bias. Care to avoid misleading participants during inquiry is vital to the

validity. The interview protocol must be objective and the follow up prompts must not lead the participant in a particular direction. It is conceivable that tacit participant bias could be present in responses. Participants might answer questions based on expectations of their employer rather than how they feel. While all higher education stakeholders have an interest in the outcome of the study, there are no recognized conflicts of interest. The results, settings, or participants have no known connection to a company or organization beyond the institution.

Summary

The purpose of this study conducted in a two-year community college in the southern region is to examine leadership styles when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE by analyzing perception among five groups of stakeholders. The research design most appropriate for this study is a qualitative single case study. The case study focused on a two-year community college. Twenty-five employees – five from each of the stakeholder groups: administrators, faculty, business specialists, information technology, and student support services – were selected purposefully for this study. The data was collected using a semi-structured interview protocol to illustrate directly what the perceptions of five distinct categories of stakeholders were across the institution when considering implementing CBE. The data was analyzed and triangulated using the analysis strategy of relying on theoretical propositions based on the LMX and path-goal theories (Northouse, 2016). The analysis technique was pattern-matching (Yin, 2011). Steps were taken such as member checking and triangulation to establish validity and reliability, and ultimately increase the quality of this study (Yin, 2014). The results provide readers with specific information to better prepare them when considering CBE for their institutions. Such information is vital in designing a leadership strategy that best fits their setting.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Chapter 4 contains the presentation of the results for this study. Two-year community colleges continue to explore ways to deliver quality education in efficient and cost-effective manners that cater to working adults (Ordonez, 2014). The two-year institution in this study is exploring the implementation of competency-based education (CBE). Despite the documentation describing CBE initiatives among elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions, a lack of evidence in literature exists regarding the perceptions of stakeholders on efficacy and implementation of CBE (Ordonez, 2014).

Understanding the perspectives of different stakeholder groups may contribute to the success of implementing CBE (Flowers, 2017). The purpose of this study of a two-year community college in the southern region of the U.S. was to analyze the perceptions of five stakeholder groups (faculty, administration, business specialists, information technology, and student support) on leadership styles when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. How do the five stakeholder groups (administrators, faculty, business specialists, information technology, and student support services) perceive the leadership style practiced within the institution when implementing an initiative such as CBE?

RQ2. What are the challenges and opportunities perceived by the five stakeholder groups when institutional leaders implement an initiative such as CBE?

To understand the context of the study findings, the setting of the study will first be described. Then, the data collection and data analysis methods will be provided. The results will be presented in the forms of themes, descriptions of the themes, and excerpts from the data to support the themes in an attempt to answer the research questions. Evidence of trustworthiness

will be included in this chapter in order to show the strength of the results. A summary will be provided to conclude the chapter.

Setting

The setting of this study was a two-year institution in the southern region of the U.S. The setting is adjacent to several major universities. The student population of the institution is approximately 20,000. The two-year institution in this study offers a variety of academic and technical programs, as well as non-credit workforce and continuing education courses and certificates. The institution utilizes competency-based concepts in the training programs; however, CBE initiatives have not yet been fully implemented. The institution has one of the highest transfer rates in the state among academic degree wards including associate degrees in science and arts. White students made up 60% of the student population, African Americans 11%, and Hispanic/Latino 22% (THECB, 2019)

Data Collection

Multiple sources of data were utilized in this case study. The primary source of data was information collected from interviews with members of each stakeholder group. Members from the following five stakeholder groups were interviewed: faculty, administration, business specialists, information technology, and student support. These stakeholder groups were selected for the study to provide a holistic view based on Flowers' (2017) recommendations. Secondary sources of data included documents such as organizational charts, faculty handbook, policies, and memos.

The data collection process began after securing permissions from the UNE Institutional Review Board and the community college that served as the study site. The participants were selected using purposive sampling using the following inclusion criteria: employee of the two-

year institution, employee who holds a position with job descriptions in one of the five stakeholder groups (administrators, faculty, business specialists, information technology, and student support services), and employee familiar with CBE. The researcher requested a list of contact details and positions of employees in the institution to begin participant selection. The researcher used e-mail to contact the participants. The initial contact highlighted introduction of the researcher and the study, as well as the inclusion criteria, and setting an interview schedule. After the conversation, a confirmation of the interview schedule and an attached informed consent form were e-mailed to the participants. Five administrators, four faculty members, four business specialists, five IT specialists, and five student support services stakeholders participated in this study. The target number of participants was five from each group for reliability and validity (Yin, 2014). Two participants that originally consented later declined bringing the participant rate to 23 of 25 recruited (92%).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face on the premises of the institution. Prior to the interview, the researcher reviewed the contents of the consent form to ensure that the participants understood their rights, and the scope and limitations of their participation in the study. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to protect their identities and uphold confidentiality, as stated in the consent form. Consent forms signed by the participants were collected before the recording of the interview began. A signed consent form was used as an indicator that the participant understood and agreed to its contents. Table 1 contains the pseudonyms and stakeholder category of each participant.

Table 1.

Participants' Pseudonyms and Stakeholder Categories

Pseudonym	Stakeholder category
Pink	Administration
Maggie	Administration
Henry	Administration
Cooper	Administration
Red Raider	Administration
Biper	Business specialist
Abe	Business specialist
Good Bob	Business specialist
Bobbi	Business specialist
Abby	Faculty
AggieDoc	Faculty
Bird	Faculty
Ann	Faculty
Bonnie	IT
Emma	IT
Eric	IT
Tech Nerd	IT
Sam	IT
Elena	Student support
Bailey	Student support
Cindy Lou Who	Student support
Toby White	Student support
Daisy	Student support

The interviews were audio recorded using the researcher's recording device. The recordings were immediately transferred to the researcher's encrypted computer and backed up in the researcher's encrypted flash drive. The researcher proceeded to transcribe the recordings immediately. The transcripts were saved as Microsoft Word files and were e-mailed to participants to review the accuracy of transcription. Participants were allowed to revise their responses as needed. Once the participants had agreed that their transcript was accurate, data analysis began.

The researcher obtained various documents to triangulate with the interview data. The documents included organizational charts from 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2019. Organizational

charts depict hierarchy before a major reorganization with many leadership changes in 2015 and the current hierarchy. The changes to the organizational chart for 2016, 2017, and 2018 illustrated changes in personnel and not structure. Those changes are deemed insignificant to the study and intentionally excluded. Reports about statistics, regulations, policies, news, memos, and the faculty handbook were collected. The reports included were the 2018 National Survey of Postsecondary Competency-Based Education (NSPCBE), Online Resume for Prospective Students, Parents and the Public 2014-2018, current and past Faculty handbooks, Administrative Organization Plan – Councils and Committees memo, Board Policy/Administrative Regulations Development and Approval memo, Degree plan section of the Education Code, and two newsletters. There is no evidentiary documentation to support programming for CBE. Degree plans and Board Policy sections confirm no additions involving CBE instruction.

Data Analysis

The data analysis procedures were based on Yin's (2011) pattern matching and theoretical propositions (Yin, 2014). The theory used in this study was the leader-member exchange (LMX theory) or path-goal leadership theories (Northouse, 2016). In pattern matching, the analysis involves examining, categorizing, tabulating, and creating a data display (Yin, 2011). NVivo 12 was used to aid in the data analysis through the use of nodes and node hierarchies. The automatic coding feature was not used, as the researcher was trained and equipped to analyze the data.

The transcripts and documents were imported to NVivo 12. Examining the data involved reading and re-reading the data, keeping in mind the concepts of the LMX theory and path-goal leadership theories. As such, broad concepts in the data were identified by the researcher. Two broad concepts were initially identified by the researcher during the examination phase. The

concepts were role of members and role of leaders. The concepts guided the categorizing phase

of the analysis. Each transcript and document were closely read, and chunks of data that

appeared to be related to the two concepts were assigned to a node. Each node represented one

code, in which similar data were assigned to the same node. The nodes were examined for

similarities and differences based on the theoretical propositions. Similar nodes were categorized

into the same node hierarchy. The node hierarchies, at this point, represented the initial themes.

The data were then tabulated with the use of the reference count in the NVivo software, and the

LMX and path-goal leadership theories. The final themes emerged from the tabulating phase.

The themes were finalized in the creation of data display, in which the final themes were

reviewed with the raw data, taking into consideration the node hierarchies and reference counts.

The themes are presented in the next section.

Results

This section contains the results of the study. The results are presented in the form of

themes. Description of the themes and excerpts from the transcripts and documents will be

included to serve as evidence of the results. The themes were developed using pattern-matching

based on the theoretical proposition of LMX theory and path-goal leadership theory (Northouse,

2016). The development of the themes was based on the coding process and guided by the

research questions. To help answer the research questions, themes that emerged from the data

were: using the skill of each stakeholder, the shift in organizational structure, communication,

and the bystander role in the implementation of changes.

Using the Skill of Each Stakeholder

Each stakeholder group reported different levels of awareness and involvement in

implementing CBE and changes in policies. The stakeholders' awareness and involvement

appeared to be related to their specialized skills. For instance, changes in the policies related to the curriculum were described by the administrators, faculty, and curriculum designers in the IT department. Student support services and business specialists generally reported being unaware and/or unfamiliar with specific changes related to the curriculum. Changes in the policies related to career development and job placement were more familiar to the student support services staff, with zero citations from administration, one from faculty, three from business specialists, and three from IT, compared to four from student support services. Changes related to accreditation were more familiar to the administrators with two references from the administrators, and none from the other stakeholders. The business specialists were generally involved and aware of the changes related to budget.

Fifteen of the participants were familiar with the CBE despite reporting being unaware of changes in policies, with all four faculty members expressing familiarity. One of the fifteen participants was familiar with CBE due to a previous employer. The participants familiar with CBE, however, did not consider themselves experts in the initiative. Rather, they were familiar with the related tasks assigned to them. Pink, an administrator, shared:

> I first heard about CBE with [chancellor]. For office hours and that type of thing. Once I'd been tasked with collecting information from the division leadership council and making a recommendation to her from that body. And so, she brought it to me this issue at CBE. And to be honest I was, I don't know that much about it.

All four faculty participants reported being familiar with CBE; however, AggieDoc and Abby noted that CBE was not entirely applicable to their fields, with AggieDoc teaching psychology courses, and Abby teaching health science courses. Abby explained:

Yes, I've heard about it. It is a little bit different in the academic role from what it is in our discipline. But I would think it is getting people to learn the skill set that they need at a little bit, I don't want to say quicker, but in a more precise way to get them to enter the workforce a little bit quicker and more directly.

On the contrary, Ann and Bird stated that CBE could be helpful to the students, especially those who were non-traditional. Ann works as a clinical coordinator, while Bird was a part-time faculty teaching nursing courses. Bird believed that CBE has been applicable in nursing education since the "early 90s." Ann stated:

Because we use a lot of that in what we do, and I feel like it's a great way to truly try to educate students. If you're someone who's willing to do the research and make sure that. You have a good set of standards. And I feel like you've got to be willing to go back every, if it's every year, every couple year, and re-evaluate is this type of competency that we're doing. Do we need to rethink it? Is it working? Do we need to change some things? Because I don't feel like it's like you can just create this type of course using that type of evaluation, and then not ever go back and look at it. So. Because then it ends up really not serving its [purpose].

Some participants who were familiar with CBE perceived that the skillsets required in their jobs were not entirely applicable to the initiative. Bailey from student support services shared, "I have heard of it, but I really don't have an opinion of that. I don't know enough about it to really form an opinion." Three participants were aware of the blended modality of courses, which was part of the CBE initiative. However, four participants were only aware of or only utilize face-to-face modality.

Three of the business specialists expressed that they were not familiar with the "academic side" in terms of changes in policies. Nonetheless, they generally felt "indirectly involved" when applying their roles in business to the changes. Abe shared:

I can honestly tell you that no I haven't. I haven't heard of comprehensive-based education. And I guess that's mainly because I don't have, like I said, I don't have, I'm kind of, I have an indirect role with academic side of the school, more on the business side, and I know a whole lot about that other stuff you know the academics to student services.

Bonnie and Eric, both IT specialists, were only aware of changes taking place due to the tasks assigned to them. Both participants were unfamiliar with CBE. Eric completed tasks related to changes in "software." The software may be related to the blended modality of CBE. Bonnie was not familiar with CBE but was aware of the blended modality occurring in the institution, as well as the tasks she completed related to changes in the rubrics. Bonnie narrated:

One of the things that has impacted our online and blended courses is a significant change in the rubric standards that we use within our course review process which has resulted in the requirement that all online curriculum materials and blended course curriculum materials must meet accessibility standards.

Three participants were either unaware of any changes in the curriculum, or only aware of state mandated changes. TechNerd, an IT specialist, claimed, "Curriculum itself? Not so much because that is determined by the state higher ed board. And I haven't seen the curriculum itself shift dramatically. I've seen the delivery methods shift."

In terms of accreditation, nine participants were unaware of any changes in policy related to CBE or any other initiative. Abe believed that the institution has not had an accreditation in

recent years. However, the administrators shared otherwise. Cooper from administration perceived that not all stakeholders tend to be aware of accreditation, as not all courses were affected by accreditation. Good Bob, a business specialist, perceived that he contributed indirectly to changes related to accreditation. Good Bob highlighted:

> Again, I'm presuming because I'm on the peripheral side of that, that we did have our accrediting agency has come through and had made some recommendations and again I'm presuming that those were being taken care of out of my office. I suspect and as I've been in other institutions that the institution takes those very seriously and has made those changes or is in the process of making.

Similarly, for career development and job placement, seven of the participants reported being unaware of any changes in policy. Bonnie from IT and Elena from student support services expressed familiarity with expansion of courses to include blended modality. With this, the theme reveals how certain roles were tasked with certain assignments, and not all stakeholders were familiar with all the tasks. Some tasks may be overlapping among the stakeholder groups; however, most of the time, a member of the stakeholder group was only aware of the tasks assigned to him/her to contribute to implementing initiatives such as CBE. Table 2 contains a summary of the codes in this theme.

Table 2

Using the Skill of Each Stakeholder

Code	Administrators	Faculty	Business Specialists	Information Technology	Student Support Services
Major changes in the curriculum	4	4	3	4	5
Major changes related to accreditation	2	2	4	3	4
Major changes to development and job placement	0	1	3	3	4

Shift in Organizational Structure

Generally, implementation of an initiative such as CBE involves significant changes such as a shift in organizational structure. Despite the lack of awareness among the participants, 17 of the participants noted a shift in organizational structure and none of them identified CBE as the impetus. As can be observed in the secondary documents, particularly the organizational charts, the years 2012, 2013, and 2014 show the chain of command with the board of trustees on top, followed by the president, and then the departments. In the September 2019 update of the organizational chart, the chain of command flows from the board of trustees to the chancellor, then to the vice chancellors of each department. The majority of the participants referenced the shift in the organizational structure with the past year. The shift generally involved positions or job titles to a shift in the hierarchical structure within the institution. Red Raider from administration shared:

> I would say an organizational change that was made shortly after my arrival. There was some need to get a chance to make some reassignments and to make some changes within the structure of student affairs. When I was hired to come here, I was hired to be the primary administrator for the flagship campus only just to be an executive dean.

However, my background history and training are deeply rooted in all facets of student affairs.

Cindy Lou Who from IT and Maggie from administration believed that a shift in structure occurred in the institution, but the change was not related to CBE policy or accreditation. Cooper from administration explained the change in organizational structure in terms of hierarchy:

Hierarchy from the top down. In the health sciences with the exception of the Dean we talked for a time. We actually had a Vice President that was over the health sciences and then that was moved to the Vice Chancellor. There was a vice chancellor and the title of the vice chancellors and who they represent has as changed a number of times over the last at least five or six years actually. But the levels within the division of Health Sciences started with the director levels and moving down the faculties are pretty simplified.

While Cooper perceived the change in hierarchy to be "simplified," TechNerd from IT, and Bailey and Elena from student support services shared that the shift in hierarchy was their "most dramatic" experience in terms of change. Bailey's immediate supervisor was affected by the change, which in turn affected her. Elena expressed:

I would say organizational changes would be the biggest one or the most dramatic. That was not in my involvement in that I didn't have any decision making on that process. It just happened to be a chain of administration, and the situation created concern for some individuals, and some are still reeling from changes, but others have moved on and accepted the changes as is and adapted.

Bonnie from IT and Toby White from student support services also perceived the shift in organizational structure to be the "biggest" change, but for experiences related to splitting a

department. Toby White stated, "Okay, so I guess the biggest move was my office coming under a different department." Abe from business shared that the shift in organizational structure was most noticeable in the broader role taken on by the chancellor. Abe highlighted:

> I would have to say that one of the biggest changes was I think it was last fiscal year when the policies were changed to where the leadership is. Our chancellor if you will. The policy was changed to where she could or that that position could. Determine employment or could determine basically policy changes without going to the administrative board level. And she could do them on her own, if that makes any sense or not.

Administrator Cooper and student support Daisy noted that the shift in the organizational structure affected them when their positions were added to the hierarchy. Daisy's job title was drawn from a department that split. Daisy stated, "OK. Yes. I just don't know which one to put it under so simply opening up my job position. It didn't change the hierarchy it just added to it." Bonnie and Eric claimed to be unaware of any changes in the organizational structure, while Daisy believed that the change in the organizational structure was unrelated to policies and initiatives, particularly CBE. Therefore, it is unclear from the responses if the changes made to the organizational hierarchy presented challenges and/or opportunities when the CBE initiative was being discussed or implemented. No evidentiary documents support the connection between reorganization and CBE.

Table 3

Shift in Organizational Culture

Code	Administrators	Faculty	Business Specialists	Information Technology	Student Support Services
Major shifts experienced	4	1	3	4	5

Communication

Communication when implementing any changes or any discussions regarding CBE initiatives was believed to be top-down. Nine participants shared that the president and vice president used to have the most authority. TechNerd shared, "I would say that at the time it was the president of the [college] that made the decisions." Two participants perceived that, while the president and vice president did their best to communicate and make decisions, some issues remain unresolved, including launch of any CBE programs. Abby, a faculty member, narrated:

They said that they were hearing what we were saying, and that they were listening to what we were saying, but not a lot was going on to change or to rectify that situation at all. So, we had a couple of health science directors that quit as a result of that, and there were about five more who were on the verge of quitting but thankfully we got a new dean before that happened.

In the shift of the organizational structure, the president and vice president were replaced by the chancellor and vice chancellors in both title and person. Abby believed that the communication did not improve despite the change in leadership. Abby continued:

Sadly, we are close to being back to where we were before but not quite there yet. Our current dean has resigned and there is a real possibly that the old interim dean may be put in charge of us again until a new dean is hired. Again, the health science directors have voiced our concerns to the Vice Chancellor and at this time she is doing all that she can to "assist us" during this transition but she was told that she could not serve as the interim dean.

Nonetheless, seven participants believed that the current leadership including the chancellor, vice chancellors, directors, and deans had "good performances." Bird from faculty,

and Eric from IT perceived that the top-down communication in the current leadership was effective in keeping subordinates informed. Eric believed that communication was effective due to delegation of tasks. Eric emphasized:

> On performance I would say the Dean of [campus] was very good. Keeping us informed. As far as our Dean (Academic Technology) He kinda left it up to our manager to make sure everything was being done and there were really no guidelines except for, "Here's where things go, get them in place and make sure they work."

Good Bob referenced how the current leadership was effective in communicating when getting stakeholders on board. Good Bob explained:

> I viewed their performance as...I viewed it very favorably. I did not see... I saw where everybody was on the same path and saw that there was an opportunity to improve the different portions of it. Could have been the travel [referring to a revised travel policy] but I saw that, I don't know what would have been different if I had the naysayers in the group that were saying "that's not going to work" because I think that was part of what we tried to accomplish, was to bring that group in and allow them to tell us what they thought might not work and then we would try to overcome those obstacles, and some of that is that goes back again to just communication again understanding why we're doing some of things we were doing.

However, eight participants believed that communication could still be improved within the institution. Toby White believed:

> The only thing, I think the issue is communication from top down, especially at the upper echelon. I think there needs to be a better [effort]. Or in some ways. When things are changed at the upper, or decisions are made at that level, it needs to be passed down to

middle management. reasons why, things like that. Inclusion would be certainly

wonderful if something's changed in my department, I'd sure like to have a say about it.

That's the only thing I can think of.

Similar to Toby White, Biper perceived that communication was not only top-down but must

also be bottom-up. The participants were suggesting that the communication within the

institution may be improved when leaders open the line of communication to their subordinates,

at the same time subordinates ought to take the initiative to ask their superiors about the

institution. Biper stated:

I think they can, communication could have been better at letting everybody know who

was [affected]. I think we have a problem with people [not] knowing who is in charge

and listening to the person in charge. They think they can go around the person in charge

and go over their head.

Cindy Lou Who shared that communication needed to be more formal in the form of direct

reports. Review of the documents showed that some information was circulated in news articles.

Reports such as statistics of the student population were also publicly available, but there was no

evidentiary documentation of communication protocols regarding implementation of an

initiative.

Table 4

Communication

Code	Administrators	Faculty	Business Specialists	Information Technology	Student Support Services
Executive council	2	1	3	2	5
President and vice president	3	3	1	2	0
Unsure	0	0	0	1	0

Bystander Role in the Implementation of Changes

Thirteen participants perceived being generally not directly involved or were bystanders in the implementation of changes and initiatives. Pink believed that several stakeholders felt like bystanders due to their limited authority in decision making. As an administrator, Pink shared that she only had been able to make decisions when she assumed a leadership role. Biper, a business specialist, shared that she was able to be indirectly involved in initiatives when the changes were departmental. Nonetheless, administrator Red Raider and Maggie still felt like bystanders in certain initiatives. Red Raider mentioned, "I wasn't involved with the decision to make those changes."

In one initiative, Emma from IT believed that she was affected by the change but was not involved in making the change. Emma shared, "So I was I was impacted by it. I was not involved in it. I found out what was going on after it had already occurred." Similarly, Cindy Lou Who from student support services expressed:

> I think we had some of the personnel changes that was a big adjustment because it was some of my directed leadership and so we had to adjust to just the new team members coming in. I wasn't directly involved with the change that we were given new personnel to report to.

Abe, a business specialist, perceived that several stakeholders were not involved in making changes, but were being told about the changes. Abe noted, "I don't know that they had a whole lot of, I couldn't honestly tell you how much of a role they had in, it other than just kind of being told what was going to happen." AggieDoc, a faculty member, also believed that most stakeholders were not involved with making changes but had concerns about what was happening. AggieDoc stated, "No authority, but concern." Red Raider and Elena, from the

administration and student support services respectively, both believed that the majority of stakeholders were on board with changes when informed. Elena reiterated:

> Individuals think differently. We have individuals who are very historical, and we also have individuals who are a little bit newer in the organization. So, there's going to be opposing views on how people interpret an event or a direction. I think the majority are on board with the changes.

Data do not support that CBE was a part of the discussion with any of the major proposed initiatives or changes. No administrators reported being a part of the discussions or decision-making process for the changes and only one was indirectly involved. Most notably, only one administrator indicated they were "on board" with the changes.

Table 5

Bystander Role in the Implementation of Changes

Code	Administrators	Faculty	Business Specialists	Information Technology	Student Support Services
Bystander	4	0	3	2	4
Directly involved	0	2	1	2	1
On board with changes	1	0	0	0	1
No say	1	0	0	0	0
Indirectly involved	1	0	1	0	0

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To strengthen the quality of the study, the evidence of trustworthiness will be presented in this section. Trustworthiness involves the following components: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Improving each component would improve the quality of the results.

Credibility refers to the establishment of accurate results (Yin, 2011). Techniques used to improve the credibility of this study were triangulation, member checking, and yielding high

quality data. Data triangulation involved comparing the data from different sources. Interview

transcripts and various documents were used to determine common themes in this study.

Member checking was conducted when the interview transcripts and interpretation of data were

e-mailed to the participants for review. High quality data were gathered through systematic

engagement of the researcher. The related literature in Chapter 2 was used to inform the structure

of the data presentation and analysis.

Transferability refers to the extent in which the research may be applied to a different

context (Yin, 2011). The researcher increased the tools that the readers could use to determine

whether the results of this study will be applicable to another context, such as an initiative like

CBE. Transferability was improved through rich descriptions of the setting of the study, as well

as other conditions that may affect the data, such as organizational changes at the time of data

collection. Rich descriptions of the context of the study allows readers to make a judgment about

transferability.

Dependability refers to the consistency of the results of this study when replicated (Yin,

2011). Dependability was improved through documentation of the processes and procedures

involved in this study. The researcher also practiced reflexivity or self-inquiry to minimize

personal bias that may influence the results of the study with the researcher being the sole

investigator. Reflexivity involved questioning oneself during data collection and data analysis

such that the processes and results remain in line with the purpose of the study and the research

questions (Yin, 2011).

Confirmability refers to the extent in which the results are supported by the data (Yin,

2011). Improving confirmability included objectivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As such,

confirmability was improved through documentation of the processes and procedures, including

how the researcher arrived at decisions during data collection and analysis. The additional

documentation included in the triangulation process served to confirm the complexity of the

reorganization, change in job descriptions, and the residual effects of the changes. The most

profound evidence was the reporting structure of both individual employees and departments.

Summary

This chapter contained the presentation of the results of this study in an attempt to answer

the research questions. The purpose of this study in a two-year community college in the

southern region of the U.S. was to examine leadership styles when considering the

implementation of an initiative such as CBE by analyzing perceptions among five groups of

stakeholders (faculty, administration, business specialists, information technology, and student

support). The participants of this study were five administrators, four faculty, four business

specialists, five IT, and five student support services stakeholders. Interviews from the

stakeholders served as the primary source of data for this study. Secondary sources of data were

various supporting documents. The data were analyzed using pattern-matching (Yin, 2011) based

on the theoretical propositions of LMX and path-goal leadership theories.

The themes that emerged from the data were: using the skill of each stakeholder, shift in

organizational structure, communication, and bystander role in the implementation of changes.

The majority of the participants believed that each department had a function in the

implementation of initiatives such as CBE. However, each stakeholder group appeared to only be

familiar with the changes within their departments. The leaders of institution appeared to have

been utilizing the skills of each stakeholder group. In the implementation of change, the

institution went through changes in the organizational structure. The lack of awareness for

change outside the group was associated with the lack of communication from the upper leaders

to the staff. A top-down method of leadership was perceived to be applied in the institution. The majority of the participants perceived that the chancellor and vice chancellor had the authority and most direct involvement in considering CBE initiatives. The majority of the participants claimed to be bystanders. However, some participants who were part of the administration with positions such as vice chancellor also claimed to be a bystander in some initiatives. Despite being bystanders, the majority of the participants were part of the in-group, who accepted and completed tasks delegated by the leaders (Northouse, 2016). The majority of the participants perceived that the leadership in the institution could be improved with better communication, as the majority of the participants were aware of their tasks to implement changes in policies, but were unaware that the changes were intended to implement any initiative.

The results will be interpreted and discussed in the next chapter. The discussion will include comparisons with the literature presented in Chapter 2. The next chapter also contains the implications, recommendations, and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the documents on CBE initiatives among elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions, a lack of evidence in literature existed regarding the perceptions of stakeholders on efficacy and implementation of CBE (Ordonez, 2014). Additionally, much of the research regarding the perception of CBE was found to be geared toward understanding among administrators and faculty (Clerkin & Simon, 2014; Cross, 2017; Flowers, 2017; Lurrie, Mason & Parsons, 2019; Sullivan, 2015). Failure to fully comprehend the risks and benefits of CBE implementation, it was noted, could cause significant residual long-term effects on perceptions of leadership and organizational culture.

The research problem in the current study was that, despite the growing outside pressure to implement a district-wide initiative, the perceptions of leadership at a two-year junior college when implementing initiatives such as competency-based education was not known. This research study was justified on the grounds that there are stakeholders other than those studied in the existing literature who are potentially impacted by CBE implementation and should be considered in research. Higher education leaders must consider the immediate impact of not only the students and faculty, but also the residual effect CBE implementation may have on ancillary departments (Flowers, 2017).

The purpose of this study in a two-year community college in the southern region of the US was to examine leadership styles when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE by analyzing perception among five groups of stakeholders. Through expanded careful research and analysis described by Flowers (2017) and Lurrie, Mason, and Parsons (2019), it was possible to deduce why higher education representatives in specific departments are reluctant to

adopt CBE based on perception. Understanding how all stakeholders view CBE would likely provide greater chances for success when coupled with an appropriate leadership style.

To conduct the research, a qualitative single case study research design was selected. For the purpose of data collection, purposeful sampling technique was used to select a sample consisting of five administrators, four faculty, four business specialists, five IT, and five student support services stakeholders. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview protocol to illustrate directly what the perceptions of five distinct categories of stakeholders were in institutions when implementing CBE. Secondary sources of data included documents such as organizational charts, faculty handbook, policies, and memos. The data were analyzed through one of the techniques proposed by Yin (2011), namely pattern-matching, and theoretical propositions (Yin, 2014). The theory used in this study was the leader-member exchange (LMX theory) or path-goal leadership theory (Northouse, 2016). In pattern matching, the analysis involved examining, categorizing, tabulating, and creating a data display (Yin, 2011).

The findings of the study showed that, during the implementation of an initiative such as CBE, leadership styles among five groups of stakeholders were characterized by the use of the stakeholders' specialized skills, a shift in organizational structure, top-down communication, and stakeholders' lack of direct involvement or bystander role in the implementation of changes and initiatives.

The first research question that was used to guide the current study was designed to explore how the five stakeholder groups, namely administrators, faculty, business specialists, information technology, and student support services, perceived the leadership style practiced within an institution when implementing an initiative such as CBE. In response to the primary research question, four themes emerged from the analysis, namely: using the skill of each

stakeholder, shift in organizational structure, top-down communication, and bystander role in the implementation of changes. Regarding the theme of using the skill of each stakeholder, it was found that there were different levels of awareness and involvement in implementing components of CBE and the stakeholders' awareness and involvement appeared to be related to their specialized skills. As each stakeholder group appeared to only be familiar in the changes within their departments, the leaders of institution appeared to have been utilizing the skills of each stakeholder group. Regarding the theme of shift in organizational structure, it was found that despite their lack of awareness, the majority of the participants noted a shift in organizational structure during the implementation of CBE, which generally involved shift in positions and job titles, dismissal, or resignation.

Regarding the theme of communication, it was found that the participants believed the communication during the implementation of changes and initiatives to be top-down, with the majority of the participants perceiving that the chancellor and vice chancellor(s) had the authority and most direct involvement in considering CBE and other initiatives. Regarding the theme of bystander role in the implementation of changes, it was found that the participants were generally not directly involved or were bystanders in the implementation of CBE changes or initiatives. Several stakeholders felt like bystanders due to their limited authority in decision making during the implementation of CBE. Despite being bystanders, the majority of the participants were part of the in-group, who accepted and completed tasks delegated by the leaders when implementing CBE.

The second research question that guided the current study was designed to explore the challenges and opportunities perceived by the five stakeholder groups when institutional leaders implement CBE. In response to the second research question, it was found that the majority of

the participants perceived that the leadership in the institution could be improved with better communication when implementing CBE, as the majority of the participants were aware of their tasks to implement changes in policies, but were unaware that the changes were to implement any component of CBE.

The remainder of this chapter will consist of interpretation of the findings and a discussion of the relevant conclusions that can be drawn from them. The following section will include an interpretation of the results in relation to the extant literature. This will be followed by a discussion of the limitations and the potential recommendations from the study. Next, implications of the research will be discussed.

Interpretation of the Findings

In relation to the purpose of the study, the results showed four main themes, namely using the skill of each stakeholder, shift in organizational structure, communication, and bystander role in the implementation of changes. When asked about the performance of leadership, participants' responses were categorized as positive, negative, or null. If the overall performance of leadership was neither positive nor negative, it was categorized as null (Table 7). Three stakeholder groups indicated either an overall positive or negative performance of leadership. The two remaining groups reported being neutral. Therefore, the aggregate perception of leadership performance was negative during implementation or changes in initiatives such as CBE.

Table 6.

Perception of Leadership Performance

	Administrators	Faculty	Business Specialists	Information Technology	Student Support	**Total**
Positive	2	1	2	2	1	**9**
Negative	2	3	1	2	3	**11**
Null	1	0	1	1	1	**4**
Dominant perspective	-	Negative	Positive	-	Negative	**Negative**

Alignment of Findings to Literature

The finding regarding the use of the skill of each stakeholder aligned with the recommended practices in the literature regarding the implementation of CBE (Dickerson, Coleman & Greer, 2012; Kotter, 2012). The finding regarding the theme of shift in organizational structure was not supported in the literature, in which the roles of the faculty were found to have remained unchanged (Dragoo & Barrows, 2016). The finding regarding the theme of top-down communication was not supported by the literature, in which a more effective approach in leadership styles within CBE was found to be shared leadership (Marion, Vander Els & Leather, 2017). The finding regarding bystander role in the implementation of changes was also not supported in the existing literature (Marion et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016).

As shown in Table 7, the alignment of the literature to research themes highlight that three of the four thematic findings were not aligned.

Table 7.

Alignment of Findings to Literature

	Skill of each stakeholder	Communication	Organizational structure	Bystander role
Findings	Awareness and involvement during the discussion of CBE appeared to be related to their specialized skills	Participants believe communication was top-down Chancellor and Vice Chancellors had the authority CBE implementation required additional communication	Reorganization, changes at multiple levels, resignations, new hires, and typical daily flux contributed to the process	Participants generally not involved or were bystanders due to limited authority
Aligned to literature	**YES**	No	No	No

Skill of Each Stakeholder. Regarding the theme of using the skill of each stakeholder, it was found that the stakeholders' awareness and involvement during the discussion of implementing CBE appeared to be somewhat related to their specialized skills. This finding aligns with the recommended practices in the literature regarding the implementation of CBE. CBE involves transitioning students from traditional learning to individualized, student-centered learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), which would require collaboration of different stakeholders within the institution to implement. It was noted that great leaders can see potential problems beforehand and act because waiting for a problem to occur can have disastrous results (Dickerson, Coleman & Greer, 2012). Students generally progress through the curriculum in different paces when CBE is implemented (Laitinen, 2012). As such, different stakeholders may need to provide their specialized skills to aid the institution in upholding student-centered learning through minimizing potential issues such as enrollment, funding, and student achievement. In addition, leaders in the institution may need to utilize the specialized skills of

each stakeholder and delegate tasks accordingly when implementing CBE initiative (Flowers, 2017). Relatedly, it was found that professionals knowledgeable in learning management system capabilities and limitations can have a profound impact on implementing CBE by identifying potential obstacles (Nodine & Johnstone, 2015). An example of utilizing specialized skills highlighted in the literature review was that of an instructor uploading a video or exercise for students for a particular lesson related to CBE, and those formative or summative assessments taking space on a server (Nodine & Johnstone, 2015). It was noted that, with the increase in the number of videos and other resource material as part of the CBE implementation process, there would be an increase in storage, grading, communication, tracking, and deployment of these limited direct assessments, which could tax the software and hardware (In such situations, only an expert would be able to perform risk-benefit analyses necessary for successfully implementing CBE and would be aligned with LMX theory as well as path-goal). In the current study, it was found that the leaders of the institution appeared to have been utilizing the skills of each stakeholder group when implementing CBE (Nodine & Johnstone, 2015). Motivating each stakeholder group (path-goal) coupled with utilizing their respective skillsets (LMX in-group) were clearly demonstrated in this study.

Shift in Organizational Structure. Regarding the theme of shift in organizational structure, it was found that despite their lack of awareness, the majority of the participants noted a shift in organizational structure during initial discussion of a CBE initiative, which generally involved shift in positions and job titles, dismissal, or resignation. Although in the literature it was noted that, due to the confluence of political outcomes, fiscal challenges, complex organizational cultures and competitive marketability, transformational leaders deal with the flux daily causing uncertainty for CBE success. (Barrett, 2015; Clerkin & Simon, 2014;

Commonfund Institute, 2017; Cross, 2017; Laitinen, 2012; Lurrie, Mason & Parsons, 2019; Flowers, 2017; Ordonez, 2014; Sullivan, 2015), the finding regarding shift in organizational structure was not supported in the literature, in which the roles of the faculty were found to have remained unchanged during that time. Dragoo and Barrows (2016) sought to examine the development of CBE business curricula at universities and found roles of the faculty to have either remained unchanged or unbundled within advising, delivery, and development. The authors noted that the implementation of a large-scale initiative such as CBE was complex and required the collaboration among stakeholders involved. The objective in implementing CBE was to measure student success often through formative and summative assessment, and when they graduate, through employer feedback (Marcus, 2017). Each stakeholder supposedly has a contribution in helping to achieve this goal in implementing CBE through performing their roles as needed (Laitinen, 2012) depending on the transition from traditional to student-centered learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

  Communication. Regarding the theme of communication, it was found that the participants believed the communication during the discussion of implementation of CBE changes and initiatives to be top-down, with the majority of the participants perceiving that the chancellor and vice chancellor(s) had the authority and most direct involvement in CBE initiatives. Although in the literature, the implementation of CBE was found to be associated with additional communication needs (Fitzgerald et al., 2015), more effective approach in leadership styles within CBE was found to be shared leadership, which enhanced organizational change and learning through targeting intrinsic motivation for self-improvement among employees instead of the top-down leadership approach for communication and compliance (Marion, Vander Els & Leather, 2017). Therefore, the results are not aligned with the literature.

Bystander Role. Regarding the theme of bystander role in the implementation of CBE, it was found that the participants were generally not directly involved or were bystanders in the implementation of CBE changes and initiatives. Several stakeholders felt like bystanders due to their limited authority in decision making during the implementation of CBE. Despite being bystanders, the majority of the participants were part of the in-group, who accepted and completed tasks related to the implementation of CBE that were delegated by the leaders. The latter finding is contrary to the existing research, in which it was found that, by capitalizing on the followers' abilities to meet deadlines and complete tasks, others may feel left out, and the result may be an incidental formation of an "in-group" and an "out-group" during the implementation of CBE. Such artificial or naturally occurring groups may divide an organization and stifle progress when CBE is implemented. (Northouse, 2016). Additionally, Marion et al. (2017) found a more effective approach in leadership styles within CBE to be shared leadership, which enhanced organizational change and learning through targeting intrinsic motivation for self-improvement among employees, which was contrary to employees feeling like bystanders in the CBE process.

Limitations of the Study

Multiple limitations were identified for the current study before initiating the collection of data. Although these limitations remained throughout the study, their impact on the results was reduced through procedures to increase trustworthiness. At the outset, limitations were identified across three broad categories, namely location, bias, and sample.

The first limitation was with respect to the location. It was noted that the research site that was selected is an open-access institution for a majority of its programs, meaning students can enroll in courses after they have been assessed for college readiness. It was highlighted,

however, that many competitive-entry workforce degree programs require specific prerequisites and minimum grade point averages. While the setting for the study was found to be ideal for stakeholder groups, the perceived lack of a more diverse student population was seen as a potential limitation. Based on a review of literature, it was concluded that students from more socioeconomically disadvantaged areas may require more student services (Ordonez, 2014). Due to the lack of students as participants in the current study, the absence of possible perceptions of students regarding success within CBE was not a significant limitation that affected the research findings. However, a lack of diversity within the student population may have had an impact on the perceptions of stakeholders. It is possible, for instance, that the leadership styles at the particular site may be influenced by a lack of students from more socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, since such students require more student services, influencing leadership styles in response to accommodate them. Another related concern regarding location was the homogeneity of the organizational culture, which remained a limitation throughout the study.

The second limitation identified prior to commencing the data collection process was researcher bias. It was noted that, since the researcher is embedded in the culture of the participants there may be a possibility of bias. Concerns related to bias were noted, including the need to avoid misleading participants during inquiry and ensuring the interview protocol remained objective, with follow up prompts not leading the participants. The principal investigator's role within the research site in the supervision of academic instruction concentrated in the health science was also a source of potential bias. The potential for bias, however, was limited through a number of steps. First, the researcher acknowledged that there was no potential for a conflict of interest, since although all higher education stakeholders had an interest in the outcome of the study, there were no pressure on the researcher, as the researcher

did not have a connection to a company or organization influencing the research findings, such as through funding. Although the researcher had personal ideas about work in the field due to familiarity with the research (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017), resulting in the principal investigator's previous and current work experiences leading to supposition, inference, and occasional interpolation affecting the results, steps to increase trustworthiness such as the use of a systematic interview protocol, member checking, and triangulation helped reduce the impact of the potential bias on the findings.

Finally, the third limitation was regarding the sample. It was noted that the sample size of the participants may be seen as inadequate to some observers. The site of the study was categorized as a junior college and had five total campuses with an overall enrollment of approximately 20,000 students. The site contained four campuses typical of a community college setting, meaning students travel to the campus as commuters. However, the main campus included residence halls that mimicked a university. The enrollment and two campus types made the site an optimal choice. However, since the sample was collected from only one institution, there was a lack of diversity that could have come with the inclusion of students from multiple institutions from across the country.

An additional potential limitation that was noted that the beginning of the study was that, although many governmental agencies provide testimony frequently to legislators about CBE, in the current study data to quantify CBE in any specific category and state-sponsored data typically used to guide decision making for organizations considering CBE were not included as the current study was a qualitative study. These included data on persistence, completion, and graduation rates within programs that adopted CBE. This limitation was not anticipated to be a

major concern, since the research question was centered around perception and culture and did not present as a major concern during the research process either.

Recommendations

On the basis of the review of literature and the limitations noted in the preceding section, the following recommendations are made for future researchers. First, the site of the current study was limited to one institution, and its the perceived lack of a more diverse student population was seen as a potential limitation. It is recommended that future researchers examining leadership styles when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE through an analysis of various groups of stakeholders consider including a more diverse setting involving students from more socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. Through an inclusion of such students, impact of working with such students on perceptions of stakeholders during the implementation of CBE may be possible to delineate. Future researchers may be able to identify whether the leadership styles during the implementation of CBE are influenced by students from more socioeconomically disadvantaged areas who require more student services. Additionally, through the inclusion of a diverse workplace, the impact of a heterogenous organizational culture may also be possible to reflect in such a research.

Future researchers may also consider limiting the bias that may have been present in the current study while exploring a similar purpose. In the current study, although multiple steps were undertaken to minimize the impact of the researcher's bias, including acknowledgement of no conflict of interest, systematic interview protocol, member checking, and triangulation, since the researcher was embedded in the culture of the participants, along with the principal investigator's role within the research site in the supervision of academic instruction concentrated in the health science, there remained a possibility of bias. While some bias may be

impossible to avoid, such as personal ideas about work in the field due to familiarity with the research, future researchers may consider studying institutions with no personal connection to isolate the possible impact of any such bias on the findings.

It is also recommended that future researchers target multiple institutions for conducting an exploration of leadership styles when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE. In the current study, the sample was collected from only one institution. Future researchers could introduce more diversity through the inclusion of students from multiple institutions from across the country.

Finally, future researchers my benefit from a critical ethnography framework in a longitudinal fashion to explore more robust qualitative data. Doing so over a period of time may foster more accurate data from direct observations.

Implications

Implications for Positive Social Change

The results of the current study have implications for positive social change through the expansion of the existing knowledge regarding leadership styles when considering the implementation of CBE from the perception of multiple stakeholders, namely administrators, faculty, business specialists, information technology, and student support services. The findings, which suggest that during the implementation of CBE, leadership styles among these stakeholders are characterized by the use of the stakeholders' specialized skills, a shift in organizational structure, communication, and stakeholders' lack of direct involvement or bystander role in the implementation of changes and initiatives, are relevant for social change in part because of the significance of CBE. Additionally, these findings align with the literature with regard to Kotter's (2012) successful transformative leadership and Northouse's (2016)

LMX and path-goal theories. An ongoing push for higher education institutions to make education more affordable is an impetus for developing new strategies or initiatives (Ordonez, 2014). Increasing enrollment and ultimately increasing the number of awards an institution confers in a climate of fiscal uncertainty forces organizations to regularly assess its content, delivery, affordability, and marketability to its constituents (Musto, 2019). With this in mind, it was important for expanding the understanding of transformational leadership to carefully consider all stakeholders within an organization before employing any initiative. In the case of exclusion of certain stakeholders, initiatives such as CBE which have wide-ranging impact on society through the impact on students cannot succeed. As a result, through the inclusion of such stakeholders as administrators, faculty, business specialists, information technology, and student support services, the current study helps improve the practice of CBE, as there was found to be lack of evidence in the literature that demonstrated consistent perception among stakeholders about CBE efficacy leading to support for implementing CBE in academic areas such as philosophy, social science, business, and English, and it was concluded that failure to fully comprehend the risks and benefits of CBE implementation could have a significant residual long-term effect on perceptions of leadership and organizational culture, with further societal impact.

Methodological, Theoretical, and Empirical Implications

The results of the current study expand the research on leadership styles when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE from the perception of multiple stakeholders, namely administrators, faculty, business specialists, information technology, and student support services. The expansion of the empirical research on leadership styles when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE from the perceptions of multiple

stakeholders is in response to a gap in the research in which it was found that, despite the documentation on CBE initiatives among elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions, a lack of evidence in literature existed regarding the perceptions of stakeholders on efficacy and implementation of CBE (Ordonez, 2014). Additionally, much of the research regarding the perception of CBE was found to be geared toward understanding among administrators and faculty (Clerkin & Simon, 2014; Cross, 2017; Flowers, 2017; Lurrie, Mason, Parsons, 2019; Sullivan, 2015). Failure to fully comprehend the risks and benefits of CBE implementation, it was noted, could cause significant residual long-term effects on perception of leadership and organizational culture. It was important to address the need to include the stakeholders other than those studied in the existing literature who were potentially impacted by CBE implementation. It was important for higher education leaders to consider the immediate impact of not only the students and faculty, but also the residual effect CBE implementation may have on ancillary departments (Flowers, 2017). Through an exploration of leadership styles when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE through an analysis of the perception among five diverse groups of stakeholders, the current study addressed these gaps in the research and contributed to the existing empirical research on the topic.

Recommendations for Practice

The implications of the current study extend to practice. There is currently an ongoing push for higher education institutions to make education more affordable, which has presented an impetus for developing new strategies or initiatives (Ordonez, 2014). Increasing enrollment and ultimately increasing the number of awards an institution confers in a climate of fiscal uncertainty forces organizations to regularly assess their content, delivery, affordability, and marketability to constituents (Musto, 2019). Against this backdrop, transformational leaders need

to carefully consider all stakeholders within an organization before employing any initiative.

CBE presents an example of an initiative where significant change occurs, and despite evidence

of varying success, the notion may cause some leaders to be reluctant to adopt CBE. A

combination of determining the required resources that must be allocated to an initiative like

CBE versus the level of reimbursement of federal funding, both influence the decision process

(Berrett, 2016). The findings of this study may help current practice in the field by providing

perspective of five specific groups of stakeholders about what CBE is and the risks and rewards

to consider before embarking on implementing CBE programs (Flowers, 2017). Specifically, the

results suggest a number of insights shared by these individuals that can be used to improve the

current implementation of CBE programs to improve their efficiency and enhance their

desirability among the various stakeholders. Policymakers and leaders focusing on economic

outcomes without a comprehensive understanding of the risks to organizational culture from

implementing CBE specifically may manifest undesirable results and upset harmony with those

involved. As such, it is important to deploy an appropriate leadership style designed to mitigate

potential threats while maximizing institutional effectiveness. On the contrary, understanding the

themes identified in the current research, namely that during the implementation of an initiative

such as CBE, leadership styles among five groups of stakeholders are found to be characterized

by the use of the stakeholders' specialized skills, a shift in organizational structure, top-down

communication, and stakeholders' lack of direct involvement or bystander role in the

implementation of changes and initiatives, could help reverse the observation that the support for

CBE in academic areas such as humanities, social sciences, business, and finance is relatively

less prominent. It was found, through careful research and analysis described by Flowers (2017)

and Lurrie, Mason and Parsons (2019), that higher education representatives in specific

departments are reluctant to adopt CBE based on perceptions about the challenges. The findings of the current study provided specific reasons why this may be the case, which could help policymakers increase the adoption of CBE by targeting undesirable implementation effects. One such effect was the shift in organizational structure. The shift was generally found to involve changes in positions and job titles, dismissal, or resignation. Another effect was the practice of top-down communication, which made participants believe that the chancellor and vice chancellor(s) had the authority and most direct involvement in CBE initiatives. The majority of the participants did not believe that communication was bidirectional. The third undesirable effect related to the first two effects was the stakeholders' lack of direct involvement or bystander role in the implementation of changes and initiatives due to lack of authority.

Data from this case study suggest that communication, changes in leadership and personnel, and an institutional reorganization of departments have created a culture unable to adopt CBE. The motivation for employees to complete tasks, or the reason for the organizational changes, are unclear in this study. Based on various leadership theories in the literature, path-goal and leader-member exchange leadership are evident in the data.

Path-goal leadership theory (Northouse, 2016) is divided into four basic categories. Those categories and their characteristics illustrated as shown in Table 6 represent similar characteristics described by the participants in all five categories of stakeholders within the site of the study. Although data do not show evidence of one particular behavior, they do show evidence that all four leadership styles were deployed in somewhat of a fragmented approach and likely the root-cause. Supportive leadership behavior is the least demonstrated and more transactional in nature.

LMX theory (Northouse, 2016) explains the processes and interactions that take place between leaders and followers during an initiative rather than the attributes of leaders or followers themselves. Since many of the participants' responses centered more on the results of leaders, communication techniques, and the reorganization of departments, etc., it is also unclear if a specific process was deployed. While the interpersonal relations among leaders and followers were described by some of the participants, but no significant process revealed, there is no evidence that neither a strength nor criticism of LMX leadership theory exists. Perhaps leadership instrument tools such as questionnaires may be useful to determine which leadership style is best suited for these circumstances. Both path-goal and LMX theories have published questionnaires for this purpose (Northouse, 2016). Through an understanding of these perceptions of different stakeholders, the results will help increase the chances for success in the implementation of CBE.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study in a two-year community college in the southern region of the US was to examine leadership styles when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE by analyzing perception among five groups of stakeholders. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with five administrators, four faculty, four business specialists, five instructional technologists, and five student support services stakeholders at a two-year postsecondary institution. Secondary sources of data included organizational charts, newspaper articles, faculty handbook, policies, and memos. The findings of the study showed that, during the implementation of an initiative such as CBE, leadership styles among five groups of stakeholders were characterized by the use of the stakeholders' specialized skills, a shift in organizational structure, top-down communication, and stakeholders' lack of direct involvement

or bystander role in the implementation of changes and initiatives. While some stakeholders expressed a neutral position when evaluating leadership performance, the overall perception of leadership performance was negative.

As the current study examined leadership styles when considering the implementation of an initiative such as CBE by analyzing perception among five groups of stakeholders, with results suggesting that, during the implementation of CBE, leadership styles among five groups of stakeholders were characterized by the use of the stakeholders' specialized skills, a shift in organizational structure, top-down communication, and stakeholders' lack of direct involvement or bystander role in the implementation of CBE changes and initiatives, the current chapter concludes the study. The challenges and opportunities identified to improve the likelihood of success implementation included communication among all stakeholders, educating constituents and increasing the knowledge of competency-based education, and inclusion of stakeholders in the processes associated with implementation.

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