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ARTICLE

The Impact of a Comprehensive Program on College Success of Academically and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students

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ABSTRACT

Low rates in college graduation and persistence have been a significant and persistent issue among urban high school graduates in the Unites States of America, especially for the academically and socioeconomically disadvantaged student population. In response to a college completion initiative, higher education institutions in one large city have joined forces to battle this issue. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the effects of one such university's comprehensive support program on public high school graduates' success in college graduation and persistence, and identifies a set of unique high impact practices that have contributed to the success of the program.

1. Introduction

The school district of focus, referred to as District Public Schools (DPS), for the purpose of this study serves more than 54,300 students, with 74% of them living in the city proper. Like other large, urban school districts across the country, DPS consists of a highly diverse student population, with 42% Hispanic, 34% Black, 14% White, 9% Asian, and 1% Other/multiracial. Moreover, DPS serves an increasingly growing high-need population, with 71% of students in the category of economically disadvantaged, 21% identified in need of Special Education services, and 32% classified as English language learners.

While DPS students' postsecondary enrollment has steadily increased from 62% for the Class of 1993 (Sum et al., 2010)[20] to 71% for the Class of 2017, exceeding the 2017 national average of 62%, suburbs included (NCES, 2019),[15] DPS graduates' college graduation and persistence rates remain troubling. For example, of the 1,904 DPS Class of 2000 graduates who had enrolled in a two- or four-year college, only 675 (35.5%) had graduated from a two- or four-year college by June 2007, 8% below the national average of 43.6% in six-year college graduation rate.

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The racial disparity in college graduation and retention is alarmingly stark among DPS graduates. Take DPS Class of 2003 for example, gaps between the degree attainment rates varied widely across the four race-ethnic groups, ranging from 30.3% Hispanic and 33.4% Black to 60.6% White and 62.3% Asian. Disparity in college success is also evident among the academically disadvantaged DPS graduates who largely attend two-year colleges with an open enrollment policy. For instance, the Class of 2000 DPS graduates attending two-year public colleges obtained college degrees at a rate barely half as high as their national peers (12% vs. 26%)

Background

Academically and socioeconomically disadvantaged students face a myriad of barriers in college success due to the lack of familiarity, guidance and support in academic, financial, and social-emotional areas. Specifically, this group of students are less prepared for college in terms of college work, system, and culture, in addition to the financial challenge which is enormous. Exacerbated by both academic and financial challenges, academic low achievers from low income families and minority groups are more vulnerable to the social-emotional stress.

College readiness is identified as a key factor that affects college success (Pitre & Pitre, 2009).[18] Previous research attributes the low rates of college enrollment and graduation of academically and socioeconomically disadvantaged students in part to their low level of academic and practical knowledge needed to be successful in higher education. The majority of this group are first-generation college students, and a high percentage of first-generation college students attend low performing K-12 schools, which consequently affects their college readiness (Hudley et al., 2009).[8] The low level of college readiness typically leads to low levels of college success. A 2009 Pell Institute study found that only 11% of first-generation college students will have a college degree within 6 years, compared to 55% of their peers whose parents had college experience and education (The Pell Institute, 2009).[23]

In addition to the academic barrier, lack of financial resources and support is a paramount challenge that impedes this group from successfully attaining a degree. According to a Pell Institute's report (2004),[22] 54% of first-generation students were financially independent, compared to only 27% of their counterparts. In addition, 30% of first-generation college students are financially responsible for others, while only 14% of non-first-generation students have dependents. It is thus not uncommon that first-generation students must work full time and attend college part time, which contributes to their lower graduation rates (Bers & Schuetz, 2014).[3] A 2018 report by National Center for Education Statistics found that 54% of first-generation college students dropped out without a degree because of financial difficulty, compared to 45% of their non-first-generation counterparts (Redford, Hoyer, & Ralph, 2018).[19]

While social-emotional stress is a universal issue that many college students may need to deal with, underrepresented college students are more vulnerable to the stress of adjustment and adaption to college system, environment, and culture. Many studies have found that social-emotional development can impact academic-related outcomes (Bavarian et al., 2013)[2] and students' overall college experience (Walton & Cohen, 2011).[27] Furthermore, a 2016 report published by the World Economic Forum[28] found that the social and emotional proficiencies, also known as soft skills, are required to succeed in the fast-changing knowledge economy. It is thus imperative that universities guide students who academically, economically, socially and emotionally to develop and acquire soft skills through social-emotional learning.

As seen in the above discussion, academic, financial, social and emotional barriers impede the success of college students in the disadvantaged group. Higher education institutions in the U.S. have been exploring and experimenting various models to assist this group to enroll, persist and graduate from college. Building upon Tinto's student departure theory (1975, 85)[24][25] and student learning community model (1997),[26] the use of remedial courses and learning community has been an established approach that is widely used on U.S. campuses to address retention and graduation issues. To reach out and prepare students who have been labeled "at-risk" before their start of college study, summer bridge programs have been adopted in several large state university systems (e.g., the California State University System, the City University of New York System). Since the early 2000s, new models of comprehensive support, pathway programs to support student success have emerged; such programs are distinct in extended length (which is normally at least one year beyond the first year), and one-on-one relationship building (Linkow et al., 2017).[10] Boston Coaching for Completion (BosC4C) is one such exemplary program.

Following the release of a landmark study that revealed the Class of 2000 Boston Public School (BPS) graduates' seven-year graduation rate of 35% (Sum et al., 2010),[20] "Success Boston College Completion," a city-wide collaborative initiative, was launched, aiming to improve college completion rates for Boston's public school graduates. In response to the initiative, Boston

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Coaching for Completion (BosC4C, formerly Success Boston Coaching program that was launched in 2008) is designed to provide coaching and support to BPS students, particularly students who are academically at risk and are from low income family and minority groups. BosC4C coaches help students "navigate and manage the academical, financial, logistical, and social-emotional challenges" (Linkow et al., 2017, p.13)[10] through one-on-one, high touch interaction. The most recent 2018 report on the impact of this coaching program shows that the six-year college graduation rate of BPS Class of 2011 reached 52%, a 17% increase from Class 2000's 35% (McLaughlin & Eaton, 2018). [11]

Many universities have similar comprehensive support programs including Excel University (EU, pseudo name). Located in a large city, EU is a large, non-profit, highly ranked, private university with a tradition in promoting social equity and social mobility. Because BosC4C is a similar program and because the demographics of Boston and BPS are comparable to District and DPS, the Success Boston College Completion information is used as a comparison for the Bridge to Success (B2S) program at Excel. Beginning with the Class of DPS 2009, the B2S program at EU recruits high school students from the greater region, who do not meet traditional college entry requirements, to attend an initial year of college at EU in preparation for enrollment in a 2- or 4-year college upon completion. The overall intention for the program is to enable at-promise high school students, from the metropolitan area, to access the university and be successful in the first year of college and beyond.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the impact of the B2S program on DPS graduates' college success in graduation and persistence and identify the promising practices of the program that have contributed to the success of the students. Specifically, the study examined the following questions:

1. What are the effects of the B2S program on students' success in graduation and persistence?

2. How does the B2S program model help students succeed in their first year of college and beyond?

3. How do B2S program student support services help students succeed in their first year of college and beyond?

Research Design

To answer the above questions, the study adopted mixed-methods approach (Morgan, 2014)[13] to examine both the outcome and the process (O'Sullivan, 2004) [17] of the B2S program. Specifically, a quantitative descriptive design and descriptive data analysis were conducted to examine the outcomes of the comprehensive support program; a qualitative focus group approach (in combination with other qualitative data collection techniques) was used to explore the process of the program.

The purpose of the quantitative descriptive analysis was to provide an analysis of the college graduation and persistence status of the comprehensive support program students. College graduation (as measured by degree, diploma, and credential attainment) and persistence (as measured by college enrollment status) are two key measures of college success in two-year and four-year colleges. Given the ethical and practical constraints, experimental design was not feasible to be used to examine the causal effect of the comprehensive support program on persistence and graduation rates. Following the common practice adopted by studies on the same topic (see for example, Sum et al., 2010; McLaughlin & Eaton, 2018),[20][11] descriptive statistics were used to show the increase or decrease in students' graduation and persistence rates across years or across similar groups. The quantitative analysis started with a general description of the demographic characteristics of the 2009-2016 participants of the comprehensive support program. Next, it looked into comprehensive support program students' college graduation rates and persistence rates, in general and by cohort, year, gender, race/ethnicity, college type and major of study. Comparison analysis with BPS graduates and Success Boston Coaching students was provided whenever the comparison data is available.

The qualitative aspect of the comprehensive support program analysis was designed to describe program activities, in terms of how the academic model helps students succeed in their first year of college and beyond as well as how the program's student support services help students succeed in their first year of college and persist in enrollment and to graduation. In order to achieve these goals, the focus group approach is most suited, thus adopted for identifying the themes of the program model. Originated in sociology research, the focus group approach is an in-depth interview data collection technique that is accomplished in a group, with a focus on the discussion and interaction inside the group (Liamputtong, 2011).[9] The focus group method is a particularly useful approach when the purpose of a study is "to understand better how people consider an experience, idea, or event, because the discussion in the focus group meetings is effective in supplying information about what people think, or how they feel, or on the way they act" (p. 3). Interview data were collected from (1) alumni, (2) focus group with current 1st year cohort, (3) focus group with writing center, (4) focus group with leadership team, (5) focus group with faculty, and (6) focus group with advisors, as

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well as document analysis, including course syllabi and other documents that emerged from the interviews. The interview questions were developed around the research questions in a semi-structured format (Doody & Noonan, 2013).[6] The interview data was transcribed and emergent themes were summarized (Liamputtong, 2011).[9] Each summary was sent back to the focus group participants for member validation (Boeije, 2010).[4]

2.Outcome Analysis: Results and Discussion

Since its inception in Fall 2009, EU's B2S program enrolled a total of 475 students who successfully completed the program by the end of Spring 2017. There is a highly balanced gender composition across the eight cohorts. Of the 475 students, 236 (49.7%) are females, compared to 239 (50.3%) males. In contrast, the race/ethnicity composition of B2S students is unbalanced in general; Black students represents the largest racial group (53.3%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (25.9%). Asian and White together make up about 12.5% of the B2S student population.

As discussed previously, this study examined two measures of college success of B2S program students: graduation from a two-year or a four-year college, and persistence in college enrollment. The following section will report B2S program students' college graduation, disaggregated by student demographic group, college type, and field of study.

2.1 College Graduation Rate in General, and by Gender and Four Major Race/Ethnicity Groups

As Table 1 below shows, B2S students' six-year graduation rates significantly exceed their comparable peers from Boston Public Schools. For example, the first cohort of B2S students surpass their comparable peers from Boston Public Schools Class of 2009's first year enrollees of two-year college by nearly 19% points in six-year college graduation rate. Similarly, the 2nd cohort of B2S students exceed their peers by 10% points.

Table 1. A Comparison of Six-year College Graduation Rates of B2S Cohorts of 2009 & 2010 and Boston Public School Classes of 2009's and 2011's First Year Enrollees of Two-year College

	B2S Cohort of 2009	BPS Class of 2009's 1st-Year Enrollees of 2-Year College, Immediate Fall Enrollees
6-Yr Graduation Rate	44.0%	25.3%*
	B2S Cohort of 2010	BPS Class of 2011's 1st-Year Enrollees of 2-Year College
6-Yr Graduation Rate	34.0%	24.0%**

*Data source for BPS Class of 2009's 1st-year enrollees of 2-year college: See McLaughlin et al. (2016).[12] Reaching for the cap and gown: Progress toward Success Boston's college completion goals for graduates of the Boston Public Schools. Table 1.14, page 34. Available online at https://www.tbf.org/-/media/tbforg/files/reports/success-boston-capgown-2016-report.pdf

**Data source for BPS Class of 2011's 1st-year enrollees of 2-year college: See McLaughlin, & Van Eaton (2018).[11] Staying the course: Six-year college enrollment and completion experiences of BPS class of 2011 graduates. Chart 6, page 25. Available online at https://www.tbf.org/-/media/tbf/reports-and-covers/2018/success-boston-april3.pdf

Table 2 provides a gender and race/ethnicity breakdown of college graduates from B2S program Cohort 1 (2009-2010) to Cohort 5 (2013-2014). Similar to their Boston Public School peers, female college graduates outnumbered male among B2S program students by 22%, that is, for every 100 male college graduates from B2S program, there would be 122 female graduates. While the gender composition is highly balanced among B2S program students in general, 49.7% female vs. 50.3% male, as discussed previously, the gender-based disparity is identified among college graduates, with females exceeding their male peers in the B2S program by 22% in college graduation.

Table 2. B2S Program Completers' College Graduation by Number and Percentage of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Gender & Race/Ethnicity (as of the end of Fall 2017)

Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Female	57	61%
Male	36	39%
Total	93	100%
Race/Ethnic	**Number**	**Percentage**
Black or African American	43	46%
Hispanic or Latino	26	28%
Asian	11	12%
White	3	3%
Other	10	11%
Total	93	100%
Gender & Race/Ethnic	**Number**	**Percentage**
Black or African American Females	24	26%
Black or African American Males	19	20%
Hispanic or Latino Females	18	19%
Hispanic or Latino Males	8	9%
Asian Females	7	8%
Asian Males	4	4%
White Females	2	2%
White Males	1	1%
Others Females	5	5.5%
Others Males	5	5.5%
Total	93	100%

Note. "Other" includes Unknown: 4; Two or more Races: 5; Non-Resident Alien: 1.

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With the availability of six-year college graduation rates for Boston Public School Class of 2009, and Success Boston Coaching cohort of 2009, this study took a closer look into B2S cohort of 2009's six-year college graduation rates with these two comparison groups. Similar to EU's B2S program, Success Boston Coaching program targets low socio-economic status Boston Public Schools graduates who are normally first-generation or minority bound for public two-year and four-year institutions. As Table 3 displays, while B2S's cohort 2009 students' six-year graduation rate of 44% is 7.3% lower than Boston Public School class of 2009's 51.3%, it should be noted that the participants of B2S program are District Public Schools graduates who are academically at risk and most likely to leave before college completion, and their 44% six-year college graduation rate is in fact comparable to Success Boston Coaching class 2009's 44.3% rate of six-year college graduation.

All females in the three comparison groups have reached the goal of 52% for six-year college graduation rate – a goal set in 2008 by former Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino for Boston Public School Class of 2009. Both Boston Public Schools class of 2009 and Success Boston Coaching class of 2009 female's six-year graduation rates reach 58%. B2S program females reach the highest rate of 75% among the three groups, 23% points higher than the city's goal and 17% higher than the peers in Boston Public Schools and Success Boston Coaching program. In contrast, none of the males' six-year college graduation rates among the three comparison groups reaches the goal of 52%. While B2S cohort of 2009's male college graduation rate of 37% trails behind Boston Public Schools peers' 42.2%, it leads Success Boston Coaching peers by 1.8% points. For Boston Public Schools class of 2009, the six-year college graduation rate disparity between female (58%) and male (42.4%) is close to 16%; for Success Boston Coaching class of 2009, the gender disparity is 22.8%. The gender disparity is most substantial in B2S cohort of 2009, with females (75%) exceeding males (37%) by 38% in 6-year college graduation rate.

Among the four major racial/ethnic groups, the six-year college graduation rates from B2S cohort of 2009 varied substantially between Black and other three groups, with Black having the lowest college graduation rate (28%), trailing 72% points behind White and Asian and 47% points behind Hispanic/Latino. In addition, B2S's Black students have the lowest college graduation rate among the three comparison groups (SBC's 53.2%, BPS's 42.1%).

The gender and race/ethnicity disparities in college graduation rates presented above reveal that male students and Black students have the lowest college graduation rates among the B2S cohort of 2009 students. It is imperative that further research look into these two groups of students in the B2S program to examine if such a pattern has presented and persisted in other cohorts when the 6-year college graduation rates become available.

Table 3. Six-year College Graduation Rates of B2S Cohort of 2009, by Gender and the Four Major Racial/Ethnic Groups

	B2S Cohort of 2009 (Completers of B2S)	BPS Class of 2009 (First-Year Enrollees) *	SBC Class of 2009 (First-Year Enrollees) *
Total	**44%**	**51.3%**	**44.3%**
Gender			
Male	37%	42.4%	35.2%
Female	75%	58%	58%
Race/Ethnicity			
Black	28%	42.1%	53.2%
Hispanic	75%	45%	45.1%
Asian	100%	75.3%	65%
White	100%	64.1%	40.9%

Note. Fifty-two out of the 475 B2S program completers whose records are not found in NSC are excluded from the percentage calculation for graduation rates.

*Data source for BPS Class of 2009 and SBC Class of 2009: See McLaughlin et al. (2016).[12] Reaching for the cap and gown: Progress toward Success Boston's college completion goals for graduates of the Boston Public Schools. Available online at https://www.tbf.org/-/media/tbforg/files/reports/success-boston-capgown-2016-report.pdf

2.2 College Graduation by College Types and Majors of Study

This section analyzed the college types that the 93 B2S program participants graduated from as of the end of Fall 2017. As Table 4 shows, the majority of the B2S students (81%) graduated from four-year colleges (including both public and private types). There is a pretty fair share between private (53%) and public (47%) colleges that the 93 B2S students graduated from.

Table 4. Types of College that B2S Students Graduated from, Cohorts 1-6 (2009-2014)

2-Year		**4-Year**		**Public**		**Private**	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
18	19%	75	81%	44	47%	49	53%

In the absence of comparison data from Boston Public School and Success Boston program in terms of the types

of college that students have graduated from, this section will compare the gender and race/ethnicity compositions and percentages of two-year vs. four-year college attendance among B2S cohort of 2009, Boston Public Schools class of 2009, and Success Boston Coaching cohort of 2009. As Table 5 shows, B2S cohort of 2009 has the most balanced gender share of male (51%) and female (49%), as compared with Boston Public School class of 2009 (42.8% male vs. 57.2% female) and Success Boston Coaching class of 2009 which has a disproportionally high percentage of female (62.4%) (as compared to 37.6% male). When combining the Black and Hispanic/ Latinos (two groups that are normally underrepresented in college), B2S cohort 2009 has the highest number of Black and Hispanic students (75.6%), as compared to Boston Public Schools class of 2009's 65.2% and Success Boston Coaching class of 2009's 71%. B2S cohort of 2009 has disproportionally low share of White (4.9%), as compared to Boston Public Schools class of 2009 (19.7%), but is similar to Success Boston Coaching class of 2009's 4% of White.

The B2S's 41 completers from cohort of 2009 started matriculation into 2-year and 4-year colleges in Fall 2010. It is notable that B2S cohort 2009 has the highest number of students (33 out of 41, 80%) attending 4-year colleges after completing the B2S program, as compared to Boston Public Schools class of 2009's 73.3% and Success Boston Coaching class of 2009's 58% of students attending 4-year colleges. This number is even higher than Boston Public Schools 2003's exam school graduates' 74.3% 4-year college enrollment rate.

Table 5. Types of College Attended: A Comparison of B2S Cohort of 2009, Boston Public Schools Class of 2008, and Success Boston Cohort Class of 2009

	B2S Cohort of 2009		**BPS Class of 2009 Fall Enrollees ***		**SBC Cohort Class of 2009 Enrollees ***	
	41	100%	2183	100%	250	100%
Gender						
Female	20	49%	1248	57.2%	156	62.4%
Male	21	51%	935	42.8%	94	37.6%
Race/Ethnic						
Asian	6	14.6%	308	14.1%	21	8%
Black	22	53.7%	872	40.0%	72	29%
Hispanic	9	21.9%	551	25.2%	105	42%
White	2	4.9%	430	19.7%	10	4%
Other	2	4.9%	22	1.0%	42	17%
College Type						
Two-Year	8	20%	576	26.4%	105	42%
Four-Year	33	80%	1601	73.3%	145	58%

Note. "Other" includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Non-resident Alien, Two or more races, and Races unknown.

* Data Source for the gender, race, and college types attended by BPS Class of 2008 Fall Enrollees and SBC Cohort Class of 2009 Enrollees: See Sum et al. (2010).[20] The college success of Boston Public School graduates from the classes of 2000-2008: Findings from a post-secondary longitudinal tracking study and the early outcomes of the Success Boston college completion initiative. Available online at https://www.bostonpic.org/assets/resources/Research_ Postsecondary_College-Success-Findings-CLMS.pdf

Regarding the majors of study pursued by B2S graduates (as of the end of Fall 2017), as Table 6 displays, the top three majors (24%) pursued by graduates of B2S include Business Administration, Criminal Justice, and Psychology; 15% in General Concentration, Management, and Political Science. Fifteen percent (15%) pursued STEM majors, including Biology, Electrical Engineering, Automotive Technology, Chemistry, Computer Engineering, Health Sciences, Information Technology, Marine Biology, and Mechanical Engineering.

Table 6. Majors Pursued by B2S Students (as of the end of Fall 2017)

Percentages	Majors
8%	**Business Administration**
8%	**Criminal Justice**
8%	**Psychology**
5%	General Concentration
5%	Management
5%	Political Science
3% / each	Biology Communications & Journalism Liberal Arts
2% / each	Accounting, Communication Studies, Electrical Engineering, Health Management, Human Services, Sociology
1% / each	AA General Studies, Architecture, Automotive Technology, Business, Chemistry, Child Development Non Licensure, Computer Engineering, Economics, Economics/Mathematics, Education, Education Administration, Environmental Geology/Chemistry, Exercise And Health Science, Fine Art, Food And Nutrition, French, General Psychology, Government Major, Graphic Arts &, Visual Communication, Health Sciences, Healthcare Management, History, Human Services/Intl Affairs, Illustration, Information Technology, Lib Arts - Psych/Soc (Aa), Marine Biology, Mechanical Engineering, Pharmacy Technician, Philosophy

2.3 College Persistence by Cohorts and Years for Persistence

Since the data collected and used in this report is through the end of Fall 2017, the one-year persistence rate can be tracked up to Cohort 8 (2016-2017). If a student in cohort 8 persists into Fall 2017 enrollment, he/she is considered one-year persistence in college enrollment. Out

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of a total of 475 completers of B2S program from Cohorts 2009 to 2016, 423 have persisted into the following academic year enrollment after completing the B2S program, which makes an overall one-year persistence rate of 89.1% for B2S students across the eight cohorts.

Two-year persistence rate is calculated for Cohorts 1-7. A total of 330 out of 334 Cohorts 1-7 students persist into the third academic year enrollment, which makes an extremely high 98.8% two-year persistence rate for B2S program students. Future research needs to monitor closely this finding to determine if this is just an incidental finding or a persistent trend when more cohorts' two-year persistence data become available.

As shown in Table 7 below, B2S program students' persistence rates in college enrollment drop steadily over years. The biggest decrement in persistence rate is from 4-year (65.9%) to 5-year (29.8%), with a 37% huge drop in persistence into the fifth-year college enrollment. This finding is important to college administration, student support services, and parents – additional attention and extra supports should be put in place to push students who have persisted for four years in college to the fifth year of college enrollment.

Table 7. B2S Students Persistence Rates in College Enrollment, By Years

	1-year	2-year	3-year	4-year	5-year	6-year	7-year	8-year
Cohorts 1-8 2010-2017	89.1% 423/475							
Cohorts 1-7 2010-2016		98.8% 330/334						
Cohorts 1-6 2010-2015			83.6% 240/287					
Cohorts 1-5 2010-2014				6 5 . 9 % 151/229				
Cohorts 1-4 2010-2013					29.8% 61/205			
Cohorts 1-3 2010-2012						17.8% 27/152		
Cohorts 1-2 2010-2011							9.6% 9/94	
Cohorts 1 2010								4.9% 2/41

In addition to the impressive 1-year and 2-year persistence rates in college enrollment achieved by B2S students across all cohorts, B2S students' overall six-year persistence rate of 17.8% is also worth mentioning. With the availability of six-year college enrollment status of B2S comparable peers - BPS class of 2011's first year enrollees of two-year college, the following table displays and compares B2S cohort of 2011 and BPS class of 2011's first year enrollees of two-year college in six-year persistent rate in college enrollment. As Table 8 shows, B2S students exceed their peers by 6.6% points in six-year persistence rate in college enrollment.

Table 8. A Comparison of Six-Year College Persistence Rates for B2S Cohort of 2011 and BPS Class of 2011's First Year Enrollees of Two-Year College

	B2S Cohort of 2011	BPS Class of 2011's 1st-Year Enrollees of 2-Year College *
6-year Persistence Rate	19.4%	12.8%

* Data source for BPS Class of 2011's 1st-year enrollees of 2-year college: See McLaughlin, & Van Eaton (2018).[11] Staying the course: Six-year college enrollment and completion experiences of BPS class of 2011 graduates. Chart 6, page 25. Available online at https://www.tbf.org/-/media/tbf/reports-and-covers/2018/success-boston-april3.pdf

2.4 College Persistence by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and College Type

This section will analyze B2S students' persistence outcomes in comparison with students from Boston Public Schools and Success Boston Coaching program. The persistence analysis in this section is, therefore, purposively limited to one-year and two-year so as to compare with the persistence rates of Boston Public Schools and Success Boston Coaching program currently available for the year of 2008 and 2009.

As Table 9 displays, the B2S cohort 1 (2009) students' one-year persistence rate is significantly high (90%), with only four (out of 41) B2S program completers who stopped out of their second-year college enrollment. In comparison with other two groups, B2S program was nearly 10% points higher than Boston Public Schools and 3% points higher than Success Boston Coaching program. Similarly, B2S Cohort 1 (2009) students' two-year persistence rate ranks the highest among the three comparison groups, exceeding Success Boston Coaching program by 4% points, and exceeding Boston Public Schools by 3% points.

Among gender and racial-ethnic groups, the one-year college persistence rates of B2S program male participants were 3% points lower than Success Boston Coaching peers, but 11% points higher than their female peers in Success Boston Coaching program. B2S Black students trail 5% points behind their Success Boston Coaching peers in one-year persistence, but its Hispanic/Latino students exceed Success Boston Coaching peers by 6% points. B2S cohort of 2009's two-year persistence rate exceeds Success Boston Coaching 2009's in all subgroups of gender and race/ethnicity groups.

Similar to the finding on college graduation of B2S program students' gender groups, the gender disparity between male and female B2S program students is also evidenced in college persistence rates. For example, female students in B2S cohort of 2009 exceed their male

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peers by 9% points in one-year persistence rate and nearly 14% points in two-year persistence rate.

Table 9. Comparisons of One-Year and Two-Year College Persistence Rates for B2S Cohort of 2009, Boston Public Schools Class of 2009, and Success Boston Class of 2009

Group Persistence	B2S Cohort 2009	BPS Class 2009 *	SBC Class 2009 **
One-Year Persistence			
All	90%	80.5%	86.7%
Male	81%	Not available	84.0%
Female	100%	Not available	88.5%
Black	86.4%	Not available	91.4%
Hispanic/Latino	88.9%	Not available	83.2%
Total	41	Not available	211
Two-Year Persistence			
All	78%	74.8%	73.9%
Male	71.4%	Not available	67.9%
Female	85%	Not available	77.7%
Black	77.3%	Not available	77.1%
Hispanic/Latino	77.8%	Not available	68.3%
Total	41	Not available	211

* BPS Class of 2009 Data Source: See McLaughlin, & Eaton (2018).[11] Staying the Course: Six-year college enrollment and completion experiences of BPS class of 2011 graduates (pp. 43-44). Available online at https://www.tbf.org/-/media/tbf/reports-and-covers/2018/success-boston-april3.pdf

** SBC Class 2009 Data Source: See Sum et al. (2013).[21] Getting closer to the finish line: The college enrollment and completion experiences of graduates of the Boston Public Schools (p. 83, Table 23). Available online at https://www.bostonpic.org/assets/resources/Research_Postsecondary_Getting-Closer-to-the-Finish-LIne.pdf

Table 10 compares B2S cohort of 2009 students' one-year and two-year persistence rates by college type (two-year vs. four-year) with their peers from Boston Public School class of 2009 and Success Boston Coaching class of 2009. As Table 13 shows, B2S cohort of 2009 students exceed peers from Boston Public Schools in both one-year and two-year persistence rates at two-year colleges, but trail behind Success Boston Coaching peers in one-year persistence rates at both two-year and four-year colleges. In general, B2S cohort of 2009 students attending four-year colleges exceed their peers attending two-year colleges in one-year persistence by 5.5% points and two-year persistence by 5.1% points.

Table 10. Comparison of One-year and Two-year College Persistence Rates for B2S Cohort of 2009, BPS Class of 2009, and Success Boston Class of 2009, by Type of College

Types of College	B2S Cohort 2009	BPS Class 2009*	SBC Class 2009**
One-Year Persistence			
Two-Year	74.6%	62.8%	77.1%
Four-Year	80.3%	85.9%	91%
Two-Year Persistence			
Two-Year	68.3%	44.0%	Not available
Four-Year	73.4%	77.8%	Not available

*Data Source for BPS Class 2009's one-year and two-year persistence rates by college type (two-year vs. four-year): See Sum et al. (2013).[21] Getting closer to the finish line: The college enrollment and completion experiences of graduates of the Boston Public Schools (p. 79, Table 18). Available online at https://www.bostonpic.org/assets/resources/Research_Postsecondary_ Getting-Closer-to-the-Finish-LIne.pdf

**Data Source for SBC Class 2009's one-year persistence rates by college type (two-year vs. four-year): See Sum et al. (2010).[20] The college success of Boston Public School graduates from the classes of 2000-2008: Findings from a post-secondary longitudinal tracking study and the early outcomes of the Success Boston college completion initiative (pp. 19-20, Chart 9 and Chart 10). Available online at https://www.bostonpic.org/assets/resources/Research_ Postsecondary_College-Success-Findings-CLMS.pdf

2.5 Summary of Outcome Analysis

Since launching its first cohort in Fall 2009, EU University's B2S program has enrolled 475 students who have successfully completed the B2S program. These B2S students are predominantly Black and Latino/Hispanic students from Boston public traditional schools who are at risk academically and are less likely to access, persist, and graduate from college. The quantitative analysis of B2S program students' graduation and persistence rates reveals encouraging positive results and indicate that Excel University's B2SProgram is working effectively to help this group of District Public School graduates to succeed in college.

As the analysis and comparison of the 6-year college graduation rates reveal, B2S program's very first cohort, cohort of 2009, achieves 44% of 6-year college graduation rate, which closely matches with Success Boston Coaching program's 6-year college graduation rate of 44.3% with its very first class of 2009. B2S program female students' 6-year college graduation rate of 75% has surpassed the goal of 52% for 6-year college graduation rate, set in 2008 by the city of Boston for Boston Public School class of 2009. However, it should be noted that the gender and race/ethnicity disparities in college graduation among B2S cohort of 2009 students are substantial, with B2S program having the largest disparity gaps among the three comparison groups. Future research efforts are needed to look into if the widening gender and race/ethnicity disparities are a persistent pattern in the B2S program in other cohorts.

Similarly, the analysis of persistence rates in college enrollment of B2S program students and comparison

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with Boston Public Schools 2009 graduates and Success Boston Coaching program's 2009 peers have also shown encouraging results, with B2S cohort of 2009 students' one-year and two-year persistence rates exceed both Boston Public Schools and Success Boston Coaching program, and B2S program's one-year and two-year persistence rates are higher than Boston Public Schools at both two-year and four-year colleges. It should be noted that gender disparity, again, has been evidenced in the college persistence rates, with male students in the B2S program trailing behind their female peers in both one-year and two-year persistence rates. It should also be noted that, as discussed in the persistence analysis as well, the biggest decrement in persistence rate is from 4-year (65.9%) to 5-year (29.8%). Future research and efforts are needed to help B2S students to persist into the fifth year of college enrollment so as to reach the finish line of their college completion.

3.Process Analysis: Results and Discussion

Process analysis results will be presented from the data from focus group interview, including faculty, administration team, advisors, writing center, students, and alumni.

3.1 Findings from Focus Group Interview with Faculty

The four B2S program faculty members in attendance at the focus group were asked to describe how students were supported academically and with student support services in order to be successful in the first year of college and beyond. Three themes emerged from the conversation, which will be discussed in detail below.

B2S Students: Resilient with high personal expectations but challenged by college content, skills, and environment. Faculty described B2S students as resilient with personal challenges and academic challenges in the college environment. The faculty also believed that many students in the program had a strong desire to be an EU Day student, which is feasible for some, but not all B2S students, creating an additional challenge.

"Holistic" faculty role: Going beyond content delivery. The faculty described their role as "holistic": going beyond the bounds of what is traditionally required for a faculty member. They described unique approaches that they incorporated into their classroom such as integration of technology, more regular and intensive communication with students and increased use of formative assessment. Faculty identified an increased responsiveness to student interest as a useful technique. More specifically, faculty tried to make content relevant and interesting to students' lives. In order to make content interesting and useful to students, at times they had to go outside of the traditional classroom to get experiences with potential majors and professions.

Faculty described the balance, between meeting students' needs and holding them to high expectations so they would be prepared for the next year of college and beyond, as creating tension within their roles. One particular concern faculty had was about student performance in mathematics and they suggested extra efforts be put in to improve B2S students' math achievement.

Faculty recognized the critical role of collaboration with advisors and services outside of the classroom in ensuring that students had basic needs met so that they could focus on academics. Finally, faculty described how their relationship with each other was different than traditional faculty collaboration. B2S faculty met with each other regularly and with the advisors to discuss student performance and how to best support their learning, similar to a professional learning community model (DuFour, 2004). [7]

Isolation of B2S students. Faculty described B2S students as isolated or segregated within the university. The segregation is visible to faculty and students because the B2S courses are predominantly students of color and the rest of the university courses are typically predominantly white. Some faculty seemed to think this mattered for student success because students were not always aware of the academic and cultural expectations of the broader university. For example, some B2S students have been known to have their heads on the desk in class and to play with technology. However, another faculty member disagreed and pointed out that students in other programs are also distracted with technology and not perfect students.

3.2 Findings from Focus Group with Administrative Team

The Director and Interim Director of B2S as well as the Assistant Director participated in the Administrative Team Focus Group. They described how the program was designed to support students academically and with other support services in the original planning of the program as well as in the current iteration of the program, throughout the comprehensive support year and even as students matriculate at other schools. The following four themes emerged from the focus group.

Inception of program. When the program director was hired, a basic structure of B2S had already been planned; however, she led the design of the curriculum and faculty role. She also hired all of the faculty. Advising, including The College Experience class, individual advising of

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students related to academics and socio-emotional issues, and support with the transfer process also was part of the initial program design.

Student challenges and the need for additional support. B2S Students have major personal challenges. As the Director put it, B2S students face "significant traumas." Students also have academic challenges. The advisors strategize about balancing the need for student success in courses, maintaining an acceptable GPA, and earning enough credits for transfer as they manage student schedules.

Key parts of the model throughout the program. There are several aspects of B2S that occur throughout the program including small group and individual intervention in academic subjects, getting social and academic support from B2S alumni, and support from faculty and advisors. Support from advisors include guiding students; having high expectations while helping students navigate challenges; and having a holistic, collaborative approach to teaching and advising.

Transfer period. The B2S program helps students with the transfer process to a 2 or 4-year degree program and after the students begin their new degree programs even though it is beyond the scope of their work responsibilities. For example, B2S advisors help students troubleshoot problems as they come up in their new schools and programs. The B2S advisors have formed relationships at schools where many B2S students attend to help students find the resources they need.

3.3 Findings from Focus Group with Advisors

Two B2S advisors, in attendance at the focus group, were asked to describe how were students supported academically and with student support services in order to be successful in the first year of college and beyond. The advisors summed up their work as supporting students based on their needs. More specifically, an advisor said,

> It's a wide-ranging role in that we can do different things depending on the student's need. I would say that I take my cue from where the student is. It is definitely academic support plans and social support and emotional support, and sometimes thinking through 'life stuff', which is stuff that comes up for students outside of their education. It could be a number of different things on any given day depending on what the student needs at that given moment, and just working with them to put stuff in place that would benefit them and their goals.

Two themes emerged from the focus group with advisors: A description of B2S students' needs and methods the advisors use to support those needs.

B2S student needs. The advisors described the B2Sstudents as entering into the program with several needs, including academic, social/emotional, "life stuff" and financial, that the advisors help meet in order to support student success the program and beyond. Related to "life stuff," students struggle with getting access to food, medical care, and mental health supports. Students are challenged academically, by not fully understanding the system of college and how to negotiate relationships with faculty and others. Many students also come in with gaps in their academic content knowledge which creates challenges. Students also largely come from low-income backgrounds and have to work long hours to make ends meet for themselves and family members. Students also struggle with personal and family pressures to be successful in college and to get into Excel or a different university after completion of B2S. Advisors work to help students manage these needs so they can be successful in college.

Methods of meeting B2S student needs. The advisors have multiple methods of working to help students manage their diverse array of needs so they can be successful academically in B2S and beyond B2S. More specifically, each student has a personalized learning plan and regularly scheduled, as well as impromptu meetings with their advisor. All students are required to attend orientation and a class about the college experience. Advisors also intentionally build community, encourage social supports for students and explicitly teach students to advocate for themselves. Because of the high-levels of interaction with B2S students, advisors have relationships with students and use their knowledge of students in regular meetings with faculty to help support student academic progress.

3.4 Findings from Focus Group with Writing Center

During the focus group, writing specialists were asked to describe how they support the academic success of B2S students. The writing specialists described the structure of the Writing Center, the purpose of writing support, the structure of tutoring sessions, integration with the B2S program, writing assessment, and building rapport with students. The focus group summarized these ideas, supported with comments from the writing specialists.

Structure of the Writing Center. One of the writing specialists described the structure of the B2S Writing Center:

> Currently, the Writing Center acts as a lab that is attached to the English class. [Students have] two required 30 minute meeting with us [per term]… As the lead writing specialist, I get all of… the student schedules at the start of the semester. And then [I] find

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space in their schedules for two, half-hour meetings. And so they are paired with that writing tutor for the entire year, typically.

Purpose of writing support. The writing specialists described writing as being linked to thinking and the process of thinking. Writing is important for college students because it helps them understand their own ideas, other people's ideas, and writing is used in all subject areas and different professions, in multiple ways. The writing specialists described their work as helping to support "far learning." B2S students can't learn everything that they need to learn in one year, but they can learn habits and skills that will help them as they continue in their learning journey.

Structure of tutoring. The writing specialists also described how they support students with their writing beginning with helping the students reflect and complete a self-assessment. During the tutoring session they also help the students with writing strategies.

Integration with the B2S program. The writing specialists indicated that the Writing Center's work is integrated with the B2S program through participating in B2S team meetings and through the writing specialists using the B2S curriculum throughout their tutoring sessions.

Rapport with students. The writing specialists both indicated that they develop "a rapport" with students during the year which they use to further support and help the students. More specifically, one writing specialist said, "We definitely develop a rapport with all of our students over the course of the semester or the course of a year." The rapport with students, helps writing specialists work with students in a more intimate way on their writing. The trust that the writing specialists build with students also enables them to support the students and the advisors with topics beyond writing such as helping to manage student crises.

Writing assessment (pre- & post-test). One of the writing specialists described the pre- and post-writing assessment that B2S and the Writing Center uses. The students write a blue book essay before entering the B2S program and at the end of the program. This assessment is used to measure growth.

3.5 Findings from Focus Group with Students

During the focus group, current B2S students were asked to describe how the B2S program supports their success in college. The students described their own background and college plans, support within B2S, and challenges they experienced. The following summarizes these ideas, supported with comments from the students.

Student background information. Student One is interested in sociology, racial discrimination, and sexism. At the time of the focus group, she was unsure of an exact major. Student Two was interested in the following as possible majors: Electrical engineering, micro-technology engineering, economics or American Sign Language. Student Three wanted to go to law school after college. As he put it, "I want to make a more positive change in my own community. Especially for my home, coming from a lower-class family living in the hood. You don't realize how day to day life is and just the struggles people in my community constantly face. I'm just tired of seeing that negative path kind of like repeating itself with people over and over and over again. Just want to fight against that." Student Four planned to major in cultural anthropology and wants to minor in education and possibly become a teacher. She also wants to go to law school "to make a difference in the Boston area because there's a lot that can be improved." Student Five planned to major in finance or business management and has plans to go to graduate school to pursue an MBA. Student Six planned to major in theatre or performing arts and is not sure of her plans after college. Four of the six students want to continue at Excel for their sophomore year. The other two were undecided.

Support within B2S. All focus group participants agreed that the program supports were really helpful for them. Supports included in the program as a whole and the program in its entirely as being a support. All of the students described the faculty as supportive. For example, faculty in the B2S program help students by building relationships with students, close and frequent communication with students, and being accommodating with coursework. Participants also agreed that faculty were holding them to high expectations and preparing them for the next year of college; however, students felt like faculty could be even more accommodating regarding late work and excused absences.

The students also described the advisors as being a great support system by helping them get through the current academic year while at the same time preparing them for the next academic year. More specifically the advisors helped three of the students wake up in the morning. One student said that the advisor let them borrow some money. Another student indicated that the advisor helped students with getting connected to the Disability Resource Center. Students also described the advisors as motivating and encouraging.

Student challenges. Students indicated that one of their challenges within the program are course scheduling

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and course choices. Two students said that they wanted more flexibility regarding the time of day courses are taking because they interfere with other aspects of their lives including helping at home, work, and childcare. Two students indicated that they wanted more choice in selecting classes. More specifically, they wanted to be able to have a broader choice of electives so that they could have more exposure to potential majors.

Five of the six students agreed that they wanted to be more integrated with the broader campus, but the level of integration depended on student needs. For examples two students wanted to live on campus, but the others didn't feel like living on campus was feasible based on their other responsibilities. Even if students didn't live on campus, they still wanted to be able to be aware of and take advantage of on-campus events.

Four of six students, the same students that didn't want to live on campus, believed that transportation was a challenge. Barriers included the time it takes to get to campus, limited transportation options, and the cost of transportation.

The students also described challenges that they had with their classes. All of the challenges they described were with academic habits such as turning in coursework on time, motivation, or procrastination. No one mentioned challenges with academic skills or content.

3.6 Findings from the Interview with Program Alum at University of Massachusetts - Boston

At the time of the interview, the participant, an alum of B2S(B2S), was a junior at a local public university, majoring in exercise science. The alum described getting connected with the program and his personal interest, support from advisors, transitioning to his new university, tutoring support, personal, peer, family, and university support as well as program faculty.

Getting connected with B2S and interests. The alum decided to apply for the B2S program because of financial reasons and because of the resources offered by the program. The alum always had an interest in the human body and athletics, although he wasn't sure when he began B2S about his specific major and career. After college, the alum would like to go to graduate school and eventually become a chiropractor.

Support from advisors. The alum described the advisors as being instrumental in his success. He described them as being multipurpose helpers. More specifically, he said they could help with life, academics, financial aid, and they were persistent in following up. He also believed they were "loving and open." The advisors also helped with the transfer process including deciding, applying, and helping to navigate the school once admitted.

Transition to a local public university. The alum believed that he was well prepared for the transition to a local public university from B2S for his sophomore year. More specifically, he believed that learning how to advocate for yourself, feel comfortable sharing his opinion, and finding resources were key to his success. He believed that B2S helped him become more professional. His biggest challenge was adjusting to the science classes because he didn't take any science classes during B2S.

Tutoring support. The alum believed that his writing tutor was a big key to his success in B2S and now at his present university. His tutor has helped him express his idea in multiple formats including writing. He also indicated that being in conversation with her helps to reduce his stress levels. During the B2S program, he was scheduled to meet with her once a week, but he usually met with her at least twice a week. His writing tutor also helped him with sentence structure and grammar.

Personal, peer, family, and university support. The alum said that support from himself, peers, family, and others outside of the B2S program have helped him be successful. He believed that in order to be successful you have to be motivated as an individual. He indicated that friends are helpful because they're going through the same thing and they can relate to each other. He was also able to get support through a mentoring relationship with a man of color at Excel University that he met through B2S. Finally, he believed family, specifically, his mother was helpful. More specifically, his mom went to the same university, graduating in 1999 and had a health-related major. Even though, he is a second-generation college student, the alum believed that going to college wasn't a given for him especially because his dad and older brother didn't go.

Faculty. The alum contrasted the faculty in the B2S program with the faculty in more traditional settings. He believed that the faculty in B2S were more interactive and encouraged students to share their voice. He also seemed to indicate that the content of the courses was different, specifically mentioning studying racism. He also indicated that he was able to learn in B2S because the professors were "very good" instructors.

3.7 Findings from Interview with Program Alum at Excel University

At the time of the interview, the participant, an alum of B2S, was a sophomore at EU majoring in business administration. The alum described his experiences at EU during B2S and his sophomore year, and the academic support he received as an B2S student. The focus interview identifies the following themes.

Getting connected with college and B2S. This alum

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learned about B2S through guidance counselor. The alum decided to apply for B2S because it was, as he said, "the best opportunity, and financially, it was the cheapest option." The alum's second option, if he didn't get into B2S was to go to a different local university. The alum decided to major in business administration because of his desire to be in corporate law

Experiences at EU as a student: Building on a strong foundation. The alum's favorite thing about B2S was the faculty support. Regarding faculty support, the alum felt like the classes were interesting and relevant to alum interest. The alum described his current EU classes, as a sophomore, as being less engaging and relevant. The least favorite part of B2S was the commute to and from campus. He said,

> It was really inconvenient to have to wake up earlier than most students and have to get to early morning classes, when I had to take the bus and the train. [Now,] I don't live on campus, but I have an off-campus apartment, which is like a 15-minute walk, so it's a lot better.

The alum works as a student employee at EU beginning during the comprehensive support program. He applied for a job at career fair and made a personal connection with a department that was hiring.

Academic support at EU as a B2S student. At the time of the interview, the alum was doing well as an Excel student; however, he did have to make adjustments after being an B2S student. The alum indicated that he was doing well and that B2S had prepared him for his sophomore year at EU. The alum also believed advising had enabled him to be successful with personal matters and academics. Also, as a former B2S student at EU, he has access to another advisor from the African-American Institute who is helpful, especially in preparing for next steps after graduation. Tutoring during the B2S program helped enable his success and he still continues to utilize B2S tutors even though he is now out of the program. Finally, he described peers as being an important support system for him during B2S and now.

3.8 Summary of Process Analysis

1. ***Academic and student support services are integrated throughout the program.*** This study began with the assumption that there were two distinct components, (academic support and other student support services) of the program that helped students finish the program, enroll in a two or four-year degree program and graduate. However, it became evident that the distinction between academic support and student support services is artificial. With the collaborative work between the advisors, tutors, and faculty, the learning opportunities for students, whether academic, personal, social, and emotional are integrated throughout the program.

2. ***Advising allows students to be known so that their personal, academic, and socio-emotional needs can be supported.*** From the time that students are accepted into the program, advisors begin learning about what the students' academic, personal, and socio-emotional needs. Based on that understanding of where students are coming from, advisors put a personalized learning plan in place for students. The personalized learning plan includes academics, but it also includes ensuring that students have the resources needed so that they can attend to their academics. As such, the advisors address and find resources for issues such as food insecurity, housing, transportation, and healthcare. The students and alumni all indicated that advising was key to their success throughout the B2S program. The alumni indicated that contact with advisors continued to help them be successful in college even once they finished the program.

3. ***Supportive faculty and relevant coursework helps students stay engaged.*** Faculty described themselves as being responsive to students' academic needs. Faculty also indicated that they tried to make their courses relevant, interactive, and engaging for students. They also said that they tried to be communicative with students and hold them to high expectations while helping to support students through challenges. The students indicated that faculty were responsive and courses were relevant. The students were also aware that in their next year of college faculty would not be as engaging, relevant, or supportive. Both alumni indicated that it was a transition, taking classes with faculty who were not as supportive; however, they had been able to make that transition by using skills they learned in B2S such as getting tutoring or asking for help.

4. ***Recruitment and application begin the support structures needed for student success.*** Information collected in the recruitment and application process is used once students begin to begin getting students the resources needed to be successful. The B2S administrative team indicated that they had a "good" sense of what characteristics are needed in order to succeed in the program.

5. ***Advisors and tutors continue to support students through challenges even though they are no longer a part of B2S.*** The original design of B2S included MOUs to help ensure that students would have the resources and supports needed to be successful upon transfer to a two or four-year degree program. However, the MOUs are not in place and there are no formal relationships with any two or four-year programs. As such, the advisors help support

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former B2S students as they reach out, on an individual basis. Both alumni interviewed said that they were still utilizing the services of B2S advisors and/or tutors. However, with the program's current student body, plus the growing number of alumni, this is beyond the scope of their responsibilities. Nonetheless, it is important to them. Both alumni indicated that they had reached out to their advisors from the B2S program for support.

6. ***The B2S program prioritizes community building and relationships amongst the B2S students and alumni indicated that peer relationships are an important part of their success.*** Community build activities are built into B2S programming. Alumni indicated that they have maintained relationships from the B2S program and that this was an important part of their success. Literature on college-success supports the importance of students' peer group during the first year (Astin, 1993)[1] and beyond.

7. ***Alumni indicated that B2S had prepared them to get help and find resources needed to be successful, and they described human-support (i.e. friends, family, mentors, advisors, tutors) as being one of those key resources.*** Both alumni talked about the importance of other people in helping them to be successful. They both mentioned friends, advising, and tutoring connected with B2S that they were still utilizing. Beyond B2S, both of the alumni mentioned their mothers as being important to their success.

8. ***The program has three distinct phases of support for students: Recruitment and Application, Support during the "B2S Year," and Application, Enrollment, Transition, and Graduation.*** There are several activities and benchmarks within the B2S program that can be monitored and assessed to have a better understanding of student success while in the B2S program and beyond.

4.Implications of the Results from Outcome and Process Analyses

The outcome analysis of the B2Sprogram has revealed positive, promising results and identified a few concerns at the same time. Both promises and challenges identified in the college graduation and persistence analysis shed light on directions for B2Sprogram improvement and future research studies.

As discussed in the outcome evaluation analysis section, while the 6-year college graduation rate of 44% for B2S's first cohort is very encouraging, signaling a promising start of the B2S program, the second cohort of 2010-2011's 6-year graduation rate drops significantly to 34%, 10% points decrease across the two cohorts. Such a huge variation across cohorts warrants further research investigation of the B2S program at the cohort level. Future studies could look into each cohort participants' demographics composition, the ratio of GED and high school diploma, modification in curriculum and course design or support services, along with the effectiveness of course instructors, advisors, and supporting staff; a statistical testing of a model involving all these factors could help identify B2S the significant factors that may have contributed to the variation in college graduation and persistence rates across cohorts. Similar to the variation in graduation rates across cohorts, B2S program students' persistence rates in college enrollment also vary over the years. As identified in the overall trend of persistence rates of B2S students, the biggest decrement in persistence rate is from 4-year (65.9%) to 5-year (29.8%), with a 37% huge drop in persistence into the five-year college enrollment. This finding has important implications to stakeholders of higher education, including college administration, student support services, and parents – when a college student is not able to achieve the four-year completion goal, extra attention and supports are needed in this critical time to push the college student to persist into the fifth year of college enrollment so as to reach the finish line of college graduation.

The gender and race/ethnicity disparities in college graduation and persistence rates are alarming. More specifically, male students and Black students have the lowest 6-year college graduation rates among the B2S cohort of 2009 students. It is imperative that further research look into these two groups of students in B2S program to examine if such a pattern has presented and persisted in other cohorts when the 6-year college graduation rates become available. In addition to gender and race/ethnicity disparities in college graduation and persistence measures, it is important to point out that only fifteen percent (15%) of the college graduates from the B2S program have pursued STEM majors. Given the huge demand for college graduates from STEM-related job market, the B2S program may want to update the foundation course offerings and advising in student's potential field of study so as to better prepare the students for a fruitful career.

The process evaluation helped reveal the logic of the program and how programmatic activities currently support or could be modified to further support outcomes. Given that B2S academics and student support services are integrated throughout the program, a more accurate description of the program logic, than what was determined at the outset of this study, would be linear, describing the phases of support that students get throughout the program: Recruitment and admissions, time in the program, and then the transfer period. Each of these periods of time have potential benchmarks that

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could be monitored and short-term outcomes that could be measured. This information could help the program understand the extent to which students are moving through the phases and what additional supports, if any, are needed. Creating an updated logic model and theory of change are recommended next steps. This type of document would detail the key activities, outcomes, and data that are already being collected or could be collected to monitor progress and measure outcomes. B2S could then determine what are priority areas for ongoing, internal monitoring and assessment of the program and/or determine needs for external evaluation. For example, are the students with the lowest persistence and graduation rates struggling throughout the comprehensive support year or do they begin to struggle only after transfer into a 2 or 4-year degree program? In order to facilitate further program evaluation, it will be important to have continued programmatic conversations about FERPA and what data usage is allowable for the purposes of research and evaluation and how to ensure protection of that data.

The process evaluation in this report, described how the program supports students from the beginning of the program throughout their time in two or four-year programs. However, it is evident that most of the support for students, comes during their comprehensive support year and that formal support quickly diminishes after students complete the program. Initially in the program design, MOUs (memorandum of understanding) with local universities and colleges were intended to ensure that B2S students had the support needed, but this has not been a part of the program. As such, advisors do provide support if students reach out. However, the ability to persist and graduate seems to be largely dependent on the student using what they learned in B2S and finding as well as using their own resources (including people) in order to be successful. The two alumni that the evaluators spoke with indicated that they were doing well in college and on track for graduation. However, the evaluators only interviewed two alumni out of 475. Additional interviews with alumni who haven't persisted or graduated would be important in order to understand what were the issues that led to dropping out of college. Also, additional interviews with alumni or an alumni survey would be helpful in order to understand a more holistic perspective of B2S alumni experiences.

In many ways, the study has raised more questions than it has answered. Future research can be designed to investigate the questions and address the concerns as discussed above. Furthermore, the study is not without limitations and delimitations. As discussed previously, experimental design was impossible due to the ethical and practical constraints; the comparison data used for the outcome analysis thus was from comparable groups, instead of comparison groups. Caution is needed when interpreting the results.

5.Conclusion

American higher education is lagging behind its international peers in the proportion of college graduated population. In 1992, the U.S. ranked "No. 1" in the percentage of population with a college degree; its ranking dropped to "No. 6" in 2017 (OECD, 2018).[16] At the same time, the percentage of minority students on U.S. campuses has been increasing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).[14] However, the graduation and persistence rates of minority students, especially male Latino and Black, remain problematic. The traditional retention models and strategies, based on Tinto's theories of college student development, do not seem sufficient in addressing the changing demographics of college students and supporting the success of students who are academically and socio-economically disadvantaged. To address this challenge and respond to the city of Boston's College Completion initiative, universities in this area have joined forces to explore new, innovative academic models aiming to level the playing field for disadvantaged students and support them to reach the finish line of college graduation.

While the traditional learning community and remedial courses have positive effects on retention and academic success of students in general, it should be noted that underrepresented students have higher need for one-to-one relationship, coaching and mentoring in both academic and non-academic areas, and the intensity and length of coaching are important. Consistently intensive coaching plays a significant role in helping students acquire good habits and gradually develop the competencies needed to succeed and to be an independent learner. Also, continued connection and extended mentoring from faculty and staff that go beyond the comprehensive support year is equally important to this group of students. The process analysis of the study, once again, confirms that "faculty rigor" matters - a finding that concurs with the literature on this topic (see for example, Astin, 1993; Chickering & Gamson, 1987).[1][5] Faculty's behaviors, attitudes, and quality of interaction and instruction affect students profoundly. High expectations typically result in high performances. The quality of the classroom experience (real or virtual) can make or break students' overall college experience, particularly to this set of students who cannot afford on-campus living, and need to work full time and learn part time.

The battle flighting against the racial disparity in

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college graduation and persistence has come a long way and still has a long way to go. It is an obligation, an imperative for the nation to achieve equity and equality in education for all. This should be done and can be done.

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ARTICLE

Sono4Students – A student Sonography Project

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ABSTRACT

Clinical sonography is of high significance in the daily medical practice. This field is growing more and more important and larger in clinical daily routine and is used numerously in today's medicine. Clinical sonography is a useful tool, which burdens the patients less than other investigation technologies, by quickly confirming suspected diagnoses or excluding differential diagnoses. Therefore, sonography should be a part of early student education at universities. In spite of the immense importance of ultrasonic testing in clinical daily routine, only few universities make an effort to integrate a broad and organized ultrasound education in the curriculum.

At the University of Bonn students frequently asked for ultrasonic courses, but only a few medical subject areas offered detached ultrasonic courses, which cover only a fraction of the demand.

Because of the missing anchoring of this field in the curriculum of the medical faculty of Bonn, "Sono4Students" a student managed ultrasonic course was found in the beginning of 2010.

Today, Sono4Studens is the biggest student initiative in Germany, in the scope of peer-teaching sonography. Since the beginning 189 courses with around 700 participants were held. The course offers a structured and standardized concept for participants, which focuses on topics relevant for the final exam and the clinical daily routine.

1. Introduction

By now, sonography has found its way into numerous subject areas. Moreover, it is an important tool in the medical education for students[1-15]. In spite of the immense importance of ultrasonic testing in clinical daily routine, only few universities make an effort to integrate a broad and organized ultrasound education in the curriculum. Particularly, several analyses could show that students in small groups develop effective improvement of their motor and interpretative skills, in the field of focused sonography [3,6,8,11,12,15]. Especially sonography is a tool, which relies mostly on the abilities and knowledge or rather experience of the operator. That is why the most important factor is an early education in this field.

At the University of Bonn students frequently asked for ultrasonic courses, but only a few medical subject areas offered detached ultrasonic courses, which cover only a fraction of the demand. Because of the missing anchoring of this field in the curriculum of the medical faculty of

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Bonn, a student managed ultrasonic course "Sono4Students" was found in the beginning of the winter semester 2010/2011, which did develop further with each semester, in its contents and quality. This is how the project "Sono-4Students" was found by the students themselves.

2. Sono4Students

The ultrasonic courses by "Sono4students" are affiliated with the Bonn "Skills-Lab" and contain the bellow-mentioned courses, regarding the following topics:

- Emergency ultrasound: FAST-Plus
- Ultrasound of the thyroid and throat
- Ultrasound of the internal upper abdomen with anatomic cover separated into four different parts
  - Abdomen I: standard sections
  - Abdomen II: organ screening
  - Abdomen III: organ biometrics
  - Abdomen IV: Duplex sonography
- Ultrasound of the revulsive urinary paths (kidney and bladder)
- Ultrasound of the liver(cirrhosis)
- Ultrasound of acute appendicitis
- Ultrasound of the lungs with focus on pneumothorax diagnostics
- Ultrasound with deep vein thrombosis/embolism of the lung artery
- "Sono meets Prometheus": applied anatomy for the pre-clinic
- Emergency ultrasound: FEEL-concept

Fig. 1

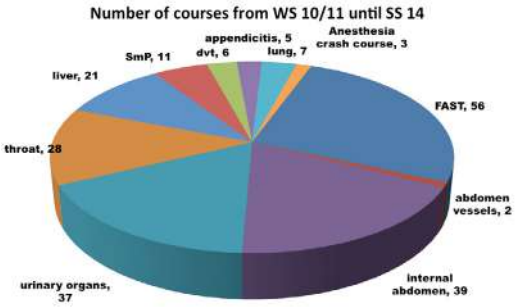

Fig. 1: Diagram of the Different Ultrasound Courses and the Number of Given Courses in 2010-2014

Moreover, occasionally full-time courses (about 8 hours) are offered on weekends, where participants work with multiple ultrasonic equipments, and in addition the teaching material of the Bonn "SkillsLab" can be used. For example, full-time emergency courses and sonographic crash courses with an internal focus are offered.

The courses orientate themselves on the concept of "peer-to-peer-learning". They address beginners, as well as advanced students, and students in their practical year with and without experience in the field of sonography. Every course has a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part consists of an interactive presentation, where participants are supposed to collaborate actively. At first, the main features of the physical fundamentals of sonography are explained, followed by a repetition of anatomy and, if necessary physiology of the organ systems relevant to the specific course. After that, a structured examination process will be performed on one of the course participants.

Afterwards, the practical part follows, in which students can practice sonographic examinations by hands-on training, under guidance and supervision of student tutors. A rotation principle is applied. At the beginning, each participant learns to adjust the right screen perspective, followed by the display of the standard section planes (rotation of participants each 5 minutes).

Afterwards the representation of the standard sections follows.

At the end, each student repeats one whole examination process. Whereat, experienced students help students with less experience. To finish, typical pathological findings are discussed, in the form of clinical presentations of cases. The learn process is supported by repetition and connection with existing knowledge. Participants receive handouts, which give them a red thread through the course. They also receive pocket cards, created by "Sono4Students", which can be used to keep studying self-handedly in the clinical daily routine. Until now, there are cards regarding FAST-examination and abdomen sonography. Also, students have the opportunity to retain their knowledge at home with the help of case examples, which are given on the interactive learning platform at www.sono4students.uni-bonn.de

3. Methodology

The training of student tutors is based on a multi-level concept in combination with a contract of generations, which enables a substantiated training and advanced training.

Fig. 2

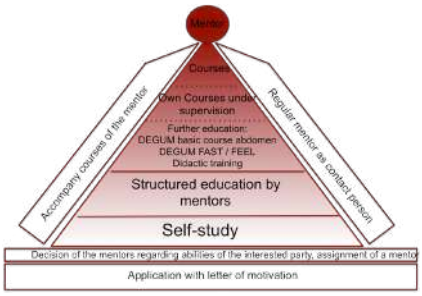

Fig. 2: Standardised Multi-level Concept as a Training Model for the Student Ultrasonic Tutor

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At the beginning, the interested party applies for the position at "Sono4Students" and has to be considered suitable by the already trained mentors. After that, a mentor is assigned to the newcomer, who accompanies the training and is always available for questions. This is followed by a training program, see figure 2. The Newcomer prepares himself by previous self-study for the structured training by the experienced mentor. Moreover, newcomers, who are not working single-handed or are not 100% interested, are separated. Afterwards, they deal with one ultrasonic topic each, over several weeks, beginning with handling and instrument adjustment, to the individual course contents and examinations processes. At the same time the new tutors accompany their mentors in their courses and take over individual parts of the course with assistance by the mentor. Several times a year, participants have the opportunity to take part in DEGUM-certified courses and one didactics training. In this way, a gradual integration into the task as a tutor takes place. This facilitates the beginning as a tutor, but also offers the opportunity that assistance with regards to content and didactics can be given, by experienced team members at any time. Either ensures maintenance of a specific standard of tutor education, and with that also the quality of the courses. Regular tutor meetings function as a means to ensure quality. In the meetings potential problems are discussed, requests brought up, improvements and updates of the individual courses discussed, and further development and structuring of the courses, and of the accompanied offers (e.g. internet platform) planed and implemented.

Since the beginning of 2013, every tutor has the opportunity to actively participate in the DEGUM courses of the working group SonoABCD, to continuously develop themselves for the own Sono4Students courses. Since last summer, there is also the opportunity to take part in a DEGUM-certified abdomen basic course with Prof Stunk, from the University of Bonn. To ensure that every tutor has basic didactic knowledge, all of them need to participate in an didactic training "Dot.Med" of the medical faculty, on the issue of medical didactics. Moreover, there are tutors, who took actively part in the train-the-trainer training and therefore give valuable tips to the other tutors and mentors. The greatest charm of this form of teachings is the high own initiative of the students, offering a wide array of development opportunities and by doing so laying the ground for consistent motivation.

4. Results

Since the beginning in winter semester of 2010 219 courses with around 800 participants were held, of whom 739 participated in the evaluation. The course participants evaluated the application procedure (1) the meeting of expectations (2) the increase of knowledge (3) the improvement of practical abilities (4) if the course was worth it (5) if they would recommended the course to other people (6) and the appearance of the tutors (7) using school grades from 1 to 6.

The results of the evaluation show the high satisfaction of the participants with the course concept. With a total grade of 1.15 of all courses and a very low standard deviation of 0.13 the "Sono4Students" courses belong to the most popular courses in the medical faculty.

Fig. 3

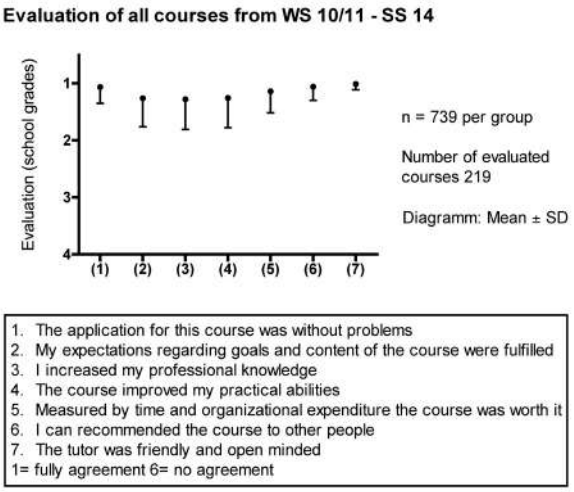

Fig. 3: Overview of the Results of the Evaluation of the Courses in 2010-2014

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Ultrasonic examination is a simple and not invasive procedure, with a high diagnostic importance, which is assumed to be well-known in the clinical practice nowadays, but not taught sufficient at universities. Therefore, "Sono4Students" sets out to offer practical trainings of sonography as an integral part of education in Bonn.

Students, who have studied the basics of sonography autodidacticlly, are prepared well for the final exams, as well as for their future medical activity. To ensure the future existing of this course, it is based on the concept of "peer-to-peer-learning" so that experienced tutors constantly educate new tutors.

The given evaluations and grades confirm this estimation. Because of the education from students for students an informal and intense exchange of knowledge is possible.

Moreover, a network with other student sonography projects from Germany and Austria was founded, which campaigns students interests regarding sonography. In this way, competence is concentrated, and a platform for

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exchange of teaching experience develops.

This course concept from "Sono4Students" is innovative, future-orientated and can be transferred to curricula of all Skills Labs, which exist in the medical education and is optimally eligible for peer – to – peer teaching.

As with any other medical training, the use of ultrasound devices requires dedicated education and practical training. Educational programs need to be designed to facilitate the general medical practitioner learning at any level of experience, starting at the medical student level and continuing with more focus on specialty- related issues. Some models of US education have been developed. One offers graduated levels of exposure and imaging experience for medical students during third-year clerkships (Harvard Medical School, Boston, USA). The second model is more compact, organized as a dedicated 3-day program (Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Philadelphia, USA). With the current wide variability in clinical clerkship requirements, it is conceivable that a student could complete a medical school curriculum without ever directly scanning a patient with ultrasound. Some authors predict that increasing numbers of clinicians and students will have such ''echoscopes'' in their white coats, instead of, or in addition to, a ''stethoscope''[16].

Although integration of ultrasound training offers opportunities to provide instruction in the use of novel educational and clinical practice tools, efforts to integrate ultrasound technologies into undergraduate medical education are limited. To date, graduate medical education (GME) programs have served as pioneers in ultrasound training. In fact, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education has specific curriculum requirements for ultrasound education in specialties such as emergency medicine, internal medicine, radiology, and obstetrics–gynecology[17-20]. A central issue in training students in ultrasonography lies in locating the time and funding for training programs. Early analyses demonstrated that in small cohorts, medical students were able to develop the psychomotor and interpretative skills required for effective focused ultrasonography. For example, a study at Wayne State University showed that first-year medical students were able to successfully utilize portable ultrasound to differentiate sonographic objects following six 90-min sessions covering abdominal, cardiovascular, genitourinary, and musculoskeletal applications[21]. Additional efforts have demonstrated that focused ultrasonography may be useful as an educational aid in teaching anatomy to medical students[22-25]. A study from the Mayo Clinic demonstrated that fourth-year medical students who used focused echocardiography to aid in the understanding of cardiovascular anatomy had high satisfaction rates[26]. Further, the use of focused ultrasonography among medical school students has been shown to potentially aid in the development of physical examination skill acquisition[27]. In a study from the University of Chicago, fourth-year medical students used focused echocardiography in cardiac evaluation with subsequent improved detection of cardiac conditions and higher accuracy in cardiac auscultation skills[28].

In 2006, the University of South Carolina, School of Medicine introduced an integrated ultrasound curriculum (iUSC) across all 4 years of medical school[29]. The curriculum was based on a point-of-care ''focused'' ultrasound program that was developed for emergency medicine physicians and trainees[30].

The faculty of Muenster (Germany) established an ultrasound curriculum allowing each student of the medical school to gain individually skills in imaging various human organs and its pathologies, creating an individual foundation for further medical practice, according to DEGUM sonographic guidelines for undergraduate medical students[31].

Although there are already some innovative ultrasound curricula in medical schools around the world, there is a need for the development of national standards to facilitate widespread adoption of ultrasound education in medical school curricula since.

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ARTICLE

Strangers in a New Land: Rural School Personnel's Perceptions of the Implementation of an International Student Program

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ABSTRACT

Many high schools in the northeastern United States have suffered from declining enrollment due to a declining population of school-age children in the region. Administrators, counselors and teachers perceive many impacts of the implementation of an international student program at a rural high school. This qualitative case study reveals that the rural high school's unique nature impacts international student programs, international students influence both school culture and programming, and international students suffer from isolation. School leaders would benefit from considerations in the form of professional development both prior to implementation of an international student program and ongoing throughout its duration. It is important for schools to find ways to respectfully honor student cultures and optimize learning experiences. School leaders would be wise to determine desired size of international student programs and make efforts accordingly to achieve that size for optimal effectiveness for the benefit of both host and international students. Implications and recommendations for future research include further exploration of the perceived experiences of European and Chinese international students, understanding the unique nature of rural high schools and international student experiences, and examination of school practices.

1. Introduction

Many high schools in New England of the United States, including New Hampshire, have suffered from declining enrollment due to a declining population of school-age children in the region (Barrick, 2015;[2] Brooks, 2015;[10] Feely, 2015;[18] Francese, 2016).[19] Specifically, the State of New Hampshire shows a total of 203,359 students in public school in 2003, while 2012 reports a total of 181,900 (N.H. Dept. of Ed., 2014).[31] This is a significant decrease statewide that has caused school reductions in force, closures of small schools, and the consolidation of districts.

Due to the concern over enrollment issues, multiple rural schools have looked to supplement their tuition revenue by turning to a unique strategy: implementation of an international student program. However, a key problem facing school leaders is the lack of information available to schools concerning the perceptions of key personnel regarding the process of implementing an international program in the high school setting to ensure positive

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transition experiences for both local and international students (Jesness, 2004;[24] McCall-Perez, 2000;[29] Roessingh, 2006).[34] There is a scarcity of information about international minors transitioning to American high schools, while several rural New Hampshire high schools have implemented an international student program as part of a response to declining enrollment and reduced tuition revenue (Bishop Brady High School, 2017;[6] Bow High School, 2017;[8] Coe-Brown, 2017).[15] It is of critical import that high schools that undertake this endeavor do so with adequate knowledge for the appropriate implementation of an international student program for the benefit of both host and international students.

While many studies have examined transition experiences of college students, few studies exist that examine these programs at rural high schools. Little valid and reliable information concerning perceptions of key personnel of the implementation of an international student program is available to schools to use as guidance in implementing a new program. Significant research exists concerning adjustment and best practices for international students at the college level (Arenas, 2009;[1] Brisset, et al., 2010;[9] Cemalcilar, 2008;[13] Chen, 1999;[14] Dogan, 2012;[16] Duffy et al., 2003;[17] Kilinc & Granello, 2003),[26] but equal consideration should be given by researchers about the high-school aged international student. Lack of knowledge about the implementation process is notably concerning when initiating a new program that has the potential to impact both host and international students significantly. The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of the process of implementing an international program at a rural high school and to reveal practices based on a study of faculty, counselors, administration, and English as a Second Language (ESL) personnel working with new international students at a rural high school.

2. Background

The implementation of an international student program in a rural school poses a significant potential change to school culture, classroom expectations, and administrative support structure. Howley et al. (2014)[21] discuss that school leaders must build on community culture in order to address issues of social class, race, and culture for the benefit of all students. Li (2004)[27] determined there were many programming changes high schools should have implemented, but did not. Ishimura and Bartlett (2014)[23] affirm that schools need to implement specific strategies in order to better their international student programs; specifically, staff training highlighting cross-cultural training and cultural sensitivity training is recommended. Too often, little changes about school programming with the implementation of the international student program.

Hwang et al. (2014)[22] examines the use of school counseling services by international students and determined there were four presenting concerns: relationships, anxiety, mood, and adjustment/learning issues. Zhang and Goodson (2011)[40] concur, by stressing that school counselors should focus on stress, social interactions with Americans, and perceived discrimination by international students. These factors, and school counselors' responses to those factors, have a key influence on psychosocial adjustment of international students (Zhang & Goodson, 2011).[40] Chen (1999)[14] encourages school counselors to seek out international students, rather than waiting for those students to appear at their office door. Chen (1999)[14] affirms that school counselors must concentrate on coaching and modeling effective behaviors for international students.

The role of host families also plays a significant part in social connections for international students. Spenader (2011)[37] affirms that a poor match between students and host communities can severely impede cultural adaptation and language learning. In addition, Hendrickson et al. (2011)[20] share that international students with national friendships reported that they are significantly more satisfied and feel more socially connected than their counterparts. It is recommended that international students be housed with local students rather than grouped together as it provides an immediate social relationship with local students, although it might be weak to start (Hendrickson et al., 2011).[20] This first social connection of a host family and student has the potential for significant impact on social connectedness.

A literature review of the state of rural schools, program design considerations, and transition experiences of international students reveals clear indications for school leaders such as administrators, teachers, counselors, and ESL tutors. School leaders must be mindful of the potential issues discussed above in their preparedness procedures. However, even with all these key contributions of information, the literature reveals many more questions that yet need to be answered. Specifically, what direction can be given to rural school leaders looking to implement this type of program for the benefit of the school community? While each of these studies reveal important aspects of rural schools, international student transitions, and international student program design, there is too little information yet to establish a wide-ranging set of best practices.

Current literature has verified the importance of the integration process for both groups of students: local and international. Supporting the concept of a complex,

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multi-layered transition process, Casto, Steinhauer, and Pollack (2012)[12] note the social challenges that developed between local and international students. Both local students and international students would benefit from careful consideration of appropriate support systems and programmatic changes necessary for the effective implementation of an international student program. Li (2004)[27] emphasizes that a lack of specific programming preparation is felt keenly and directly by international students; therefore, school leaders are remiss if careful consideration is not given to these issues. With limited research on high school age international students, studies completed in this area, such as this one, will begin to fill in the large gap that exists.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Site & Data Collection

The research site chosen for this study was a high school in rural New Hampshire that had recently implemented an international student program starting with one student and expanded to five students. It is important to note that New Hampshire is a small state in New England that has a primarily white population (see Table 1) which had significant relevance to this study.

Table 1. State Comparisons of Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity

State	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Isl.
1. Vermont	94%	1%	1%	N/A	N/A	N/A
2. West Virginia	93%	3%	1%	N/A	N/A	<1%
3. Maine	92%	1%	2%	N/A	N/A	N/A
3. New Hampshire	92%	1%	3%	2%	N/A	N/A
5. Montana	89%	1%	3%	1%	N/A	N/A
6. Iowa	86%	3%	6%	2%	N/A	N/A
6. Wyoming	85%	1%	9%	N/A	N/A	N/A
8. North Dakota	84%	3%	4%	N/A	4%	N/A

In 2016, the Census Bureau's March Current Population Survey collected data which is adapted here from KFF.org (2016).[25] Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity[https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-by-raceethnicity.

As Table 1 shows, New Hampshire is tied with Maine for the state with the third densest white population. This was an important factor to note in this research study concerning international students. A total of six participants were selected through purposeful sampling who provided a range of perspectives of school personnel at the rural New Hampshire high school. In order to ensure a variety of perspectives, participants included two administrators, two school counselors, and two teachers (one ESL, one regular). Purposeful sampling ensured basic tenets of the case study design were met and that all participants had a shared phenomenon.

A variety of key personnel in a rural school are crucial to the implementation of an international student program. This includes administrators who are integral to the establishment of the program, admission standards, and student acceptance, counselors who are the first line of contact for student class placement, intermediaries between home and school, and troubleshooters for a variety of issues, and faculty, both ESL and regular who spend the most academic time with students. Their perceptions of an international program provide a great deal of valuable insight into the process of implementation. This qualitative case study, therefore, was to examine how faculty, school counselors, administration, and ESL personnel working with new international students at a rural high school perceive the process of implementing an international student program.

To guide the use of semi-structured interview questions in this case study, the researcher applied the Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) theoretical framework presented by Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, and Senecal (1997)[7] which is one of several theories that has extended from Berry's (1980, 1984, 1997)[3][4][5] acculturation model. The IAM theoretical framework, along with two other theories, shifts the role of the host society to a prime, central focus rather than having only an outlying role in the acculturation process for international students. The IAM framework is based on Berry's (1980, 1984, 1997) [3][4][5] much used and applied acculturation model that remains a significant theory often utilized in studies with international students. The IAM serves to integrate several components of immigrant and host community relations into a common theoretical framework. The ultimate goal of IAM, stated by Bourhis et al. (1997)[7] is to "present a non-determinist, more dynamic account of immigrant and host community acculturation in multicultural settings" (p. 379).

3.2 Data Analysis

Analysis of the case study began by conducting document reviews of all publications and documents related to the research question. This included a review of all international student program documents, the program of study, the faculty manual, and the student handbook. In addition to the document review, multiple field observations, including a typical school day, a Friday Assembly, and an ESL tutoring session, were conducted which provided supplemental information supporting the document review and guided and shaped participant

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interviews. Lastly, six interviews were conducted. Responses from participants in the interview process resulting in emerging trends. The interview questions explored three primary sections, but the semi-structured format allowed for guided discussions with spontaneous and flexible dialogue, resulting in valuable data (Merriam, 1998).[30] Focused coding, as Saldana (2016)[35] described, revealed the most frequent or significant categories supported by collected data, as shown in Table 2 below. Data triangulation was achieved by using all three sources of information and the resulting themes, reflecting the shared experiences of the case study participants, providing insight to the research question.

Table 2. Interview Coding

Parent Code	Code	Sample
Assimilation into Host Culture	Involvement in school community	"Especially with international students as opposed to exchange students because they become really a part of the school community."
	Blending in with host students	"You wouldn't even know necessarily that they're one of the international students because they fit right in and quietly become a part of our community."
	Social groups	"Other kids, they just fit right in and they are part of the group, part of gang."
	Treated the same	"We are so interested in treating them the same and we look at them the same and expect them just to be like everyone else, like an American student."
Non-Assimilation into Host Culture	Missing home	"He really wanted to be home and he really was not happy here."
	Language barriers	"I think the language made it really difficult for him to connect with the students."
	Course placement	"It was quite a while before we actually had him in semi appropriate classes."
	Self-isolation	"They were never isolated, but they isolated themselves."
	Physical appearance	"Sometimes I think it depends a bit on their physical look as well, Chinese versus other cultures. The way they look can dictate how they blend in, if the kids can tell or not."
International Students Changing Host School Culture	Cultural diversity for host students	"It provides an opportunity for our kids to learn about the world and open their eyes."
	Sharing aspects of culture	"He had a classroom full of our students that attended after school, and he brought in food and just talked about his cultural and gave some education."
	Classroom experiences	"The faculty tries to bring some of that culture and have them do some education to the class about where they're from, their culture, their family."
Rural NH Culture	Isolation	"The kids too are really shocked at what rural means. On the map, we're really close to Boston, but in reality…"
	Lack of evening activities	"They had a hard time with nothing to do, because they were also from larger cities."
	Lack of transportation	"They're used to hustle and bustle and riding trains and subways and public transportation and just kind of getting everywhere ..."
Importance of Homestay Culture	Communication & Advocacy	"I don't think that any of them are as strong an advocate as they could have been."
	Providing opportunities	"The first host family, there was not a lot of, there was good intention, but not a lot of things going on in the family."

The parent codes revealed from this study tightly aligned with the IAM framework (see Figure 1) as each code pertained directly to a key component of the framework. Data concerning the rural New Hampshire culture, the school community, and the homestay culture all served to further understand Bourhis' "host group" in terms of this research study. Parent codes discussing the assimilation experiences of international students were in direct correlation with the IAM framework.

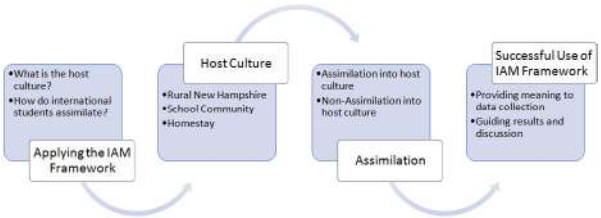

Figure 1. Parent Codes and IAM Framework

4. Results

Several major themes and patterns emerged from the analysis of the interview data which addressed the research question of how faculty, school counselors, administration, and ESL personnel working with new international students at a rural high school perceived the process of implementing an international student program. These five major themes were identified from analysis of the interview transcripts and supported by data triangulation (see Table 3).

Table 3. Data Triangulation

General Themes	Supported in Interviews	Supported in Field Observations	Supported in Document Review
International students are often treated just as domestic students, and are expected to culturally blend in seamlessly.	X	X	X
International students are often isolated from domestic students.	X	X	X
Sharing of culture by international students has a profound impact on the school community.	X	X	
The rural nature of NH culture has a significant effect on international students.	X	X	X
The homestay culture contributes to the assimilation and happiness of international students.	X		X

Theme 1: International students are often treated just as domestic students, and are expected to blend in seamlessly. This theme was prominent across all data sources, all types of school personnel, and carried repeatedly throughout the case study research process. From the very beginning of data collection with the document review, it was evident that there was little specific programming, coursework, or formal support established for international students. Field observations also supported this theme as international students were not a visibly separate entity and were absorbed into the school culture. The interview data supported this theme most strongly. As Administrator 1 noted, "they are just another student in the crowd. Which, maybe it is a positive thing, too, that, you know, everybody's alike in

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some ways. They are just another face in the crowd."

Theme 2: International students are often culturally isolated from domestic students. A common thread between all interviews was the perceived isolation of international students. This carried through from home life to school life and often was noted that the isolation might have been self-imposed. Isolation was easily seen in social situations such as the lunchroom at school, as Teacher 2 pointed out:

> They were never isolated, but they isolated themselves. They would go to lunch and they would just sit on their phone and not interact. I would have to push them and say 'Go sit with your friends. Don't sit with me at lunch. Get out of your comfort zone.'

This was observed by other participants as well, with Teacher 1 sadly reflecting on the discomfort that seemed to be felt by some international students, sharing that "Yan didn't go to the lunch room for a really, really long time, and Chen didn't eat or do anything… He always sat with an adult, because he just didn't know. He was not comfortable." Interview data, specifically by those working closest with international students, revealed the perception that some international students experienced cultural isolation that made it difficult for them to assimilate into the school culture.

Theme 3: Sharing of culture by international students has a profound impact on the school community. School personnel felt strongly that the international student program had a significant impact on the school community and culture, affecting students and staff alike. This was supported in field observations, but was highly evident in hearing the many, varied stories of interview participants. While it was noted that international students might blend into the overall school culture, it was apparent that these students had a substantial impact in the classroom. Teacher 1 spoke enthusiastically of the experience, sharing that it was highly beneficial for all involved:

> We should have way more kids coming from other countries, because it was eye-opening for these kids and she did a presentation, and all of a sudden, she was like this… 'Oh, my gosh, Yan, you're amazing!' and the kids were giving her all this support and saw her as a kid just like them.

Teacher 1 was notably taken by the differences between cultures and stated that, "I guess I didn't know how different their educational system was and not even that, but how their culture, obviously their culture is different, but I didn't know how different." Teacher 2 felt keenly that the sharing of culture was very much needed in the school community. He said, "It's like there's so much misunderstanding between ourselves and other countries, not just China, so it was good that they're able to get that kind of grasp of how things really are." The international students shared their culture in many impactful ways.

Theme 4: The rural nature of NH culture has a significant effect on international students. The rural nature of the school had a notable impact on the cultural assimilation of international students. Field observations generally supported this theme as the highly rural nature of the school, campus, and activities were immediately evident and visual. Participants noted the unique aspects of the rural town of the school and reflected that many international students were coming from very large urban areas. Several participants discussed the lack of racial diversity in rural New Hampshire and its possible effect on experiences of international students. Administrator 1, who oversees the student body, reflected that:

> This is a very rural, northern New Hampshire community. Pretty much white bred kind of community… I would still say we are 95% white. In the period of time that I have been here we have had faculty pretty much the same. I think we have had one African American and maybe one Hispanic [faculty]. In terms of diversity, we are never going to change our local community.

Teacher 1 discussed further how this lack of diversity might have affected the experiences of international students, saying "I think they thought it was going to be more diverse. I think they were surprised that they were surrounded by, really, very white people." Administrator 2 also questioned the impact of being non-white in rural New Hampshire:

> It highlights how white we are here in rural New Hampshire. Other schools are so diverse, but here we have a few black kids, one Hispanic family. It's a matter of being or looking different causes kids to not approach them.

There are many cultural aspects of rural New Hampshire that impact international students. The lack of transportation, largely white population, emphasis on outdoor living, and lack of social opportunities all were perceived to impact their experiences.

Theme 5: The homestay culture contributes to the assimilation and happiness of international students. Interview participants spoke in varying degrees about the homestay families and the impact they had on international students. Teacher 2 reflected on the powerful impact the homestay culture had on creating a true sense of family for international students:

> Really establishing communication with the student and include, not just making them feel special in the

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house, but making them actually feel like they are one of the house, like family. Because that way, they'll actually feel like they belong there and they feel comfortable there.

He further expanded by saying:

> I know it's a lot easier said than done, but establishing a kind of open communication and kind of family atmosphere is really, really important. I see homestay families just kind of crumble because these students will go home and they won't talk to anybody. They would go to their rooms, and that's when they start… to feel more isolated, they start to feel more depressed.

Other participants noted the importance of homestay families making efforts to share their culture with international students and to coordinate rewarding cultural experiences for them. Administrator 1 spoke of Chen's first homestay experience, saying, "I think in the first host family, there was not a lot of, there was good intention, but not a lot of things going on in the family." Participants acknowledged that the homestay experiences varied and seem to improve as the program continued, but shared their concern at providing better homestay experiences.

5. Discussion

Results of this case study research project provided significant insight to answer the research question. Validation and reinforcement of the findings can be found in triangulation of data (see Table 4) which presents the findings in the lens of each data collection method. The resulting triangulation of data provided an understanding of the unique phenomenon of international students attending a rural New Hampshire high school and produced three findings: a rural high school's unique nature impacts international student programs, international students influence school culture, and school personnel perceive that international students suffer from isolation. As Table 4 shows, each finding was supported in different ways by each method, with the semi-structured interviews providing the most significant contribution.

Table 4. Findings and Triangulation of Data

Findings	Semi-structured Interviews	Field Observations	Document Review
A rural high school's unique nature impacts international student programs.	A wide variety of attributes of being located in a rural area was perceived to have a significant impact on international students.	All observations embodied the rural nature of the high school including a typical school day.	The program of studies, faculty manual, and student handbook identify the rural nature of the high school.
International students influence school culture and programming.	All participants noted the significant impact the international student program had on many aspects of the school culture.	Observations of the Friday Assembly, the typical school day, and the ESL tutoring session demonstrated school culture.	The faculty manual, program of studies, and student handbook revealed aspects of the school culture.
School personnel perceive that international students suffer from isolation.	Participants noted that isolation was at times self-imposed and was a result of language barriers, physical appearance, and more.	Observations of a typical school day revealed international students in isolation.	The international student program documents and faculty manual address expectations for students.

The three major findings of this research study: a rural high school's unique nature impacts international student programs, international students influence school culture, and school personnel perceive that international students suffer from isolation were supported by all methods of data collection and encompassed all five major themes that emerged from the coding process.

Finding 1: A rural high school's unique nature impacts international student programs. This finding was a combination of the last two themes and was pervasive throughout much of the data collection process. In fact, this finding, since it acknowledges a very basic attribute of the research site, underlined all aspects of the research study. Much of the school culture was affected by the school size, close-knit community, and long-standing tradition as a local high school. However, this finding moves further beyond, acknowledging that the very nature of a rural high school had a clear impact on the international student program. All participants discussed some key attributes that made a substantial difference, notably the lack of diversity, lack of transportation, lack of cultural activities, and focus on nature and outdoor living. Each of these presented challenges to the program and it was perceived to have affected the adjustment experience and assimilation process for international students.

Homestay culture was an important part of the rural experience. Due to the lack of transportation, the homestay family is key to ensuring that international students are exposed to a variety of experiences that benefit assimilation. Placement into homes and families that will serve international students well is of utmost importance. However, ideal placement did not always occur at homestays at this research site. As Administrator 2 noted:

> I think we had some families who that was not their expectations or not their ability [to expose student to places and events] or their interest, where others I think have done a lot with their kids and taking them around… and we have no control over that because we don't know who the host families will be and who would be a good host family or not. So, a lot of… issues… may have come up.

The homestay culture had a significant impact on the student experience. Spenader (2011)[37] affirms that a poor match between students and host communities can severely impede cultural adaptation and language learning. In addition, Hendrickson et al. (2011)[20] share

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that international students with varying and many host national friendships report that they are significantly more satisfied and feel more socially connected than their counterparts.

In particular, the lack of diversity in rural New Hampshire was noted to cause non-European students to stand out much more than European international students. Several participants questioned the extent to which this created different experiences for those students. However, this lack of diversity was also perceived as being a prime reason for implementation of the international program, noting that that impetus was, as Administrator 2 stated, to "add to our diversity, add to our amenities and the services we offer, not only to those students, but to just our own population, and how enriching it is for the kids who live here anyway. It's kind of like a win-win on both sides." Alternately, it was also implemented, as stated by Administrator 1, to address the enrollment concerns that occur in rural areas:

> Well, we were looking at the diversity issue and we were looking at enrollment issues. Those were probably the two big drivers to the program. We haven't crashed in terms of population like it looked like we could for a while. But, that is still something that always could happen.

Putnam (2000)[32] offers strong support for the small, rural school and found great benefit of small schools in rural communities. Reynolds (1999),[33] in a research study in Iowa, found that rural school closings in that area were an appalling failure. There is a great deal of evidence in the literature for the continued existence of small rural schools, but enrollment is a constant concern. School leaders strive to ensure steady enrollment streams, as demonstrated by the participants in this study. It was perceived that the addition of international students was a significant anomaly in the largely white population of the school and in the community; benefits to domestic students seemed clear, but participants shared concern about the isolation experienced by international students.

It was clear that the rural nature of the school was perceived by school personnel to be an important factor. The international student program was important and effective in impacting the rural nature of the school and residing town. Counselor 1 noted the effectiveness:

> Especially being such a rural community, I think it is especially great for our students who don't get a lot of exposure, you know, to different cultures and to different countries, to be able to meet these students and connect with them and learn about their culture and community.

Participants felt that the rural community and student body was lacking diversity and greatly benefited from exposure to international students. Aspects of the rural nature of the school were acknowledged to present some difficulties to international students, enough so that school personnel were concerned about isolation experienced by international students. Therefore, the process of implementing an international student program in this rural high school was considered to have both positive and negative implications for the school.

Finding 2: International students influence school culture and programming.

Most exciting in analyzing the research data for this study was the intense enthusiasm participants held for the international student program. Participants felt strongly that they, as school personnel, domestic students, and the school culture overall was greatly enhanced by enrolling international students. Howley et al. (2014)[21] discuss that school leaders must build on community culture in order to address issues of social class, race, and culture for the benefit of all students. The third theme was embodied this finding and was expanded on in a multitude of ways throughout the research project. Participants gave examples of how students, teachers, and school culture were impacted.

Participants discussed the challenges they faced by working with newly enrolled international students, which was considered to be very important work. Spenader (2011)[37] finds that language learning and adaption to the new culture occurred best in the classroom. Some of them spent significant time working with them and struggled with issues involving academia and communication. Individual classroom teachers also struggled at times as Teacher 1 noted:

> I think it was good that I had Chen as the first student because it is such an immense challenge, learning how to actually just communicate to him. The first couple of weeks it was all just conversations to google translate and that's spotty at best. So, it was good, but initially I felt like I was out-turned pockets, like, 'What the heck am I supposed to do with these kids?'

Administrator 1 agreed, noting that, the education portion of their experience was a difficulty for some, saying, "academically, some of them are pretty much strangers in a strange land." Brunton and Jeffrey (2014)[11] stress the importance of teachers having greater cultural awareness as well as greater appreciation of the educational needs of international students in the classroom, in order to make it more inclusive.

However, all participants, including those who recognized the difficulties they had with international

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students, noted the intense personal benefits achieved by having those students in the school population. They shared that their world view had changed, they were exposed to a greater number of cultures, and they felt a great deal of personal satisfaction. Teacher 1 stated:

> I felt very strongly about the program being a good program… I dove right in and I volunteered to do whatever I could to help these kids, because I didn't want to see them fumble and I didn't want to see it be unsuccessful, because I would have hated to see it disappear. Because I felt that it was an incredible opportunity for a school.

The expansion of world view was thought to have been experienced by students who were in close proximity to the international students, such as those in classes or on teams with international students. Participants felt that domestic students benefited from exposure to cultures they would have no opportunity to know otherwise. Straffon (2003)[38] found that the longer the time a student is in contact with students from other cultures, the more sensitive those students were to those other cultures. It was frequently noted that the school community was homogeneous in its white population and suffered from a lack of diversity. Establishment of the program was thought to have been a response to lack of diversity and students were thought to have been enriched by international peers.

Participants were especially thrilled with the Chinese Club that was started by some international students. Hendrickson et al. (2011)[20] found a significant, positive relationship between the feelings of international students of being socially connected with the feelings of satisfaction and contentment. The enthusiasm expressed by the participants was due to the fact that many domestic students attended the club meetings and showed excitement for cultural exploration, respect for differences in culture, and a shared cultural experience with international students at the center. As Teacher 2 noted, the cultural exchange was beneficial to both students as he said, "I think it is funny how one of the benefits for our students was the same as for them!" The implementation of the international student program was perceived to have many benefits for the school community as a whole and was a positive programming change. Hendrickson et al. (2011)[20] share that international students with varying and many host national friendships reported that they are significantly more satisfied and feel more socially connected than their counterparts. This was clearly evidenced in this research study.

While other findings of the study noted some of the difficult aspects of implementing an international student program in a rural school, this finding reveals some of the most exciting aspects and benefits to the participants in the study. Participants were largely enthusiastic about the incorporation of these students in their school and highly positive about the benefits to school culture and programming. In fact, many stressed the desire to increase and intensify the program, even after noting some of the other difficulties (addressed in Findings 1 and 3). Said Counselor 1:

> If it could be bigger and broader as we get more student in, I think it would be great. Anytime you can expose students and the overall community with these students coming in from a different place with different things they can share with us, yeah, I think that is great; that would be great to have an impact of even more.

An important answer to the research question is that participants perceived that the international students provided a world view that the host group would never have experienced without those students. Many participants not only saw the benefit for host students, but also perceived an intense benefit themselves.

Finding 3: School personnel perceive that international students suffer from isolation.

The third finding of this research study combines the first two themes that resulted from the coding process. Participants in the study often commented on the perceived isolation experienced by international students, which was seen to be a result of both self-isolation and a bi-product of the school's expectation that international students blend seamlessly into the school culture. This was an important finding as it reflected the participants' perceptions of the acculturation experiences of international students, but also addressed aspects of programming that were perceived to contribute to this experience. Participants noted international students often sitting by themselves; however, it was observed that much of this time, those students spent thoroughly absorbed in their phones rather than reaching out to connect with others. Administrator 1 noted:

> He was a challenging student, not in a negative way, but because he just wasn't really here. He was putting in his time kind of thing. Maybe, I don't know if this program was his idea or his family's idea or why he was here. But, any free minute, he was on his device communicating with home, or his girlfriend at home, and eventually that led to him leaving us before the program was finished.

This was a comment that was supported by all other participants as well. Counselor 1 noted, "the Chinese students were apart because they were so, couldn't speak the language, they culturally were from these big cities

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in China and I think they just had a really hard time connecting with our students because of the differences." These observations about adjustment of international students are supported by a great deal of literature. Chen (1999)[14] affirms the common stressor experienced by international students of social isolation. It is also noted that there is a tendency for the international students to group themselves together, as seen in this research study, creating an additional level of isolation, even while integrated with American students (Casto et al., 2012).[12] Sherry et al. (2010)[36] concur with that assertion, stressing that the lack of friendships with American students was common and impactful to international students, leading to feelings of isolation and dissatisfaction. This finding supports prior research in this field.

Participants also observed that there may have been aspects of school programming that contributed to international students' sense of isolation. Many comments were made about expectations of international students to adapt to the school culture and to blend in. Administrator 1 said, "they are just another face in the crowd." The overall consensus was that international students were expected to simply adapt to what was already in place at the school. It was also noted that there was a lack of school-wide effort to particularly highlight international students at the school. Teacher 1 proposed a change in programming:

> But if they come in saying, we have an international club and you guys are the core of it. How do we want to get everybody else to be a part of this? We make food. We make dinners, like that kind of thing. Invite it, make it fun, educational, slides, whatever. This is where I'm from. They are the stars. They shine. They know, more than anybody else. That's what I would like to see, if we continue to do something like this.

At that same time, however, she also doubted whether they would truly want that, asking, "Would they like to be pointed out as different? I don't know that would be something to ask them. You know, to see, would that be best for you?" The literature supports evidence of tendencies of international students to be culture-free and to blend in and the need for school programming to be specific. Using the lens of racial formation theory (Winant, 1994),[39] which addresses the shifting meanings and power relationships accompanying the concept of race, Marinari found that international students tend to adopt a neutral racial project, an environment that works to present as culture free, avoiding issues and discussions of diversity (Marinari, 2005).[28] These international students downplay the traits of their birth culture and work to adopt all attributes of their new culture, as was seen in this research study. Ishimura and Bartlett (2014)[23] affirm that schools need to implement specific strategies in order to better their international student programs. Li's (2004)[27] study finds that the lack of programming changes negatively affects the international students' performance and transition processes. This third finding is well-supported by previous work of researchers in this field of study.

It was perceived by participants that there were many contributing factors to the resulting isolation. Participants noted that some isolation might be self-imposed, by international students failing to reach out to become a part of the community, or might be a result of a significant language barrier. However, participants also noted that there were aspects of school programming and culture that may have also increased this perception. Participants shared concerns about this isolation and reflected on ways the school could change for the better.

6. Implications

The description of research findings provided great insight to the research question. The research study served to demonstrate the value of applying the IAM theoretical framework as a lens to view the perceptions of the implementation of an international student program in a rural high school. Several exciting considerations for improvements in this field resulted from this research study as participants gave perceptions of their shared experience. These included considerations in the form of professional development, support for international student transitions, honoring student cultures, and striving for effective size of the international student program.

Professional development/preparing faculty & staff. An important implication for practice as schools undertake the implementation of an international student program is the need for carefully planned and ongoing professional development tailored to specific needs. Experiences at this research site reflected the lack of guidance received in implementation as Administrator 1 noted, "we've only been doing this for a couple of years and there's no handbook for this kind of thing for a school our size. You kind of have to stumble around in the dark and hope you find the right combinations that work." This shows, from administration, that there was little guidance for rural schools and a lack of information about what to be expected or how to prepare the school for the start of the program. Specifically, classroom teachers were noted to have a lack of understanding of expectations for grading, differentiation, and amount of support to give international students. As Teacher 1 noted:

> I think that those teachers, maybe, needed somebody to do some training with them as well... What are

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> the expectations of the administration, as far as, are we expecting them to do what all the other students are doing, or are we going to treat them more as an identified student, who maybe needs accommodation initially?... People like to know what's expected.

Teachers would benefit from clearly established expectations for having international students enrolled in their classes. Specifically, limitations of language could have significant impact on the curriculum expectations of a course for a student. Careful procedures and/or policies in place prior to student acceptance would be helpful. Administrator 1 in this study reflected this by conceding that, "Probably we could have done more, but, at the time, we didn't know enough to know what we needed." The study revealed the many benefits of having international students in the mainstream classroom, but administrative guidance on expectations for those students would be helpful to teachers.

Transition support. An important guidance for schools that came from this study is the need for established support for international students as they transition into a rural American high school. The transition experience is important for the positive integration into the school community and this research study found that lacking in their experiences. Teacher 1 shared:

> I think it would have been really helpful for them to have some sort of adjustment, orientation period, that was just for them so they could understand the basics of waiting in line, how you behave in a class… And so I think that would have been really helpful; I think any kids coming in should have some kind of orientation program on what America's like.

This was perceived to have been something that should have started even prior to the students' arrival. In addition, this study affirmed the importance of the school counselor in the process of transitioning. As the primary contact between school and home, counselors have an important, central role in an international student's experience. Administrator 2 felt that:

> We need to do a better job at the very beginning, of really looking at. You know we get their records, the counselors fit them into classes they want… Then I think, maybe, we drop the ball a little bit there. Probably as counselors we probably should be a little more proactive with these kids…. I think sometimes we assume kids are just fitting right in and doing well and [we're] not really getting to know them.

Schools looking to implement an international students program would benefit from thinking critically about personnel in their schools, determining who could best meet the inevitable needs of international students, and communicating expectations clearly.

Carefully choosing homestay families. The research study clearly emphasized the importance of the homestay family placement. Not only do international students need safe and healthy housing, but they also need to become part of the family dynamic. As participants noted, international students in their school sometimes failed to make connections with their host families, saying that they were sometimes isolated, lonely, or "trapped" as some homestay families did not make efforts to travel with them and expose them to events and activities. Teacher 1 agreed that the importance of the homestay warranted greater scrutiny, saying that:

> I think the placement in the families has got to be more careful. Not that the people were mean, there was nothing like that that happened, but I think that there should be students living in the home and it should be a home that understands that their job is to try to make them a part of the school community.

School leaders whose job it is to place students in homes and who are charged with the task of monitoring their wellbeing would be wise to carefully consider homestay placement as a significant priority. Vetting homestay families should be a key task prior to accepting international students and a clear procedure should be established for check-ins with international students, regular and frequent home visits with the families, and ongoing support for a successful relationship.

Honoring student cultures. It was evident that it is important for a school to proactively acknowledge what kind of learning community is desired and to determine what role an international program will play. As the document review of this study showed, it was important to the school to develop students who are a part of a "global society" and to promote learning outcomes that "reflect and meet the needs of students in a multi-cultural society." However, it was perceived that it was expected that international students blend into the school culture, rather than highlight their individual cultures. As schools consider how to do this, it is important to determine the extent that international students even want to stand out and the appropriate balance between sharing cultures and putting students on display. Administrator 2 asserted that, "they need to maintain their own identity and so I think that it's important that they have opportunity to be able to relate to other kids." Teacher 1 agreed with the importance of international students retaining their own culture and felt it worthwhile to honor and share that culture:

> I honestly don't think they should ever give up their culture, that's what they're here for. They're here to share it and become part of us, but to somehow find a

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way to do both, to try the different things that we have, and make some decisions.

Participants noted that some international students were happy to represent their culture, with Teacher 1 stating, "Chen and Sun, I think, were proud to be different... I think they knew coming here that they were going to be different." Efforts made to honor and acknowledge cultures would assist in creating a learning community that truly encompasses all students in the school and would also provide the means for students to provide support for each other.

Striving for effective program size. Without exception, all participants commented on the desire to grow the international student program at the research site. It was perceived that greater numbers of international students would be beneficial in many ways including increased support amongst international students for each other, greater exposure to more culture for domestic students, and better continuity of the international student program. Teacher 1 said:

> I think to have more than ... So what do we have six right now? If we had ... so, let's say we had at least a dozen kids. Then they have a stronger support system with each other, even though they're not from the same countries.

Having only a few international students seemed to be perceived as a difficulty. It was thought that greater numbers of international students could assist in creating a stronger community that would provide support and a sense of belonging. It is recommended that school leaders determine the desired balance for their school population in order to maximize experiences for both international and host students.

7. Future Research

This study uncovered opportunities for research that would advance understanding on the phenomenon of international student programs in rural schools. The study revealed that there are many aspects of rural schools that create a unique experience for international students and host groups. The lack of information available supports the need for further research to be completed to create a robust body of knowledge to be used by school leaders. The use of the IAM framework was effective in guiding this study and warrants additional application to research studies in the future.

In addition, there were many fascinating aspects of rural international student programs that came to light through this study that deserve further exploration at this research site and others. It was noted many times that participants perceived the experiences of European international students to be different than Chinese international students. Further studies examining the experiences of each geographic group separately in rural areas would be interesting and beneficial. Another important aspect in need of more study is the interaction between international student and high school curriculum. A fascinating topic for research would be curriculum prejudices confronting international students in their American high school experience. This information would serve to guide culturally responsive teaching in the classroom, which is of great importance to school leaders focusing on global citizenship and responsibility.

The importance of the homestay family cannot be overstated. The life outside of the school day is highly significant to international students and there is much to be learned about effective homestay families. Further, the efforts made to connect to international students and strategies recommended in order to help them become an active member of the homestay family is vital information that would be useful to many. Finally, this research study combined the perceptions of a variety of professionals: administrators, counselors, and teachers. Much was found to be common in their experiences of the phenomenon. However, it would be worthwhile to complete this study again, focusing on one particular professional role in the school. The research questions could be tailored specifically to that role, providing additional depths of information. For example, a study with participants of administrators could focus on goals of the program and policies, while a study including teachers could focus on classroom accommodations, differentiation of instruction, curriculum biases, etc. Additional research of this nature would undoubtedly be beneficial.

8. Conclusion

This study explored how administrators, counselors and teachers perceived the implementation of an international study program. Three major findings resulted from five emerging themes. First, a rural high school's unique nature impacts international student programs. The study revealed that the lack of diversity, lack of transportation, lack of cultural activities, and focus on nature and outdoor living all presented challenges to adjustment and assimilation of international students. Second, international students influence both school culture and programming. The research study found that school personnel, domestic students, and the school culture overall was greatly enhanced by enrolled international students. Third, school personnel perceived that international students suffer from isolation. Participants often perceived isolation experienced by international students, which was seen to be a result of both self-isolation and a bi-product of the school's expectation that

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international students blend seamlessly into the school culture. This reflected the participants' perceptions of the acculturation experiences of international students, but also addressed aspects of programming that were perceived to contribute to this experience.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations were made. School leaders would benefit from considerations in the form of professional development and preparing faculty and staff both prior to implementation of an international student program and ongoing throughout its duration. The transition experience of international students required greater support than was available at this research site; established procedures and expectations for personnel would be beneficial to international students. Placement of students into homestay families deserves thoughtful deliberation and consistent monitoring as it is important to the health and success of international students. One of the perceived benefits of an international student program is the sharing of their home cultures. It is important for schools to find ways to respectfully honor student cultures and optimize learning experiences. Lastly, school leaders would be wise to determine desired size of international student programs and make efforts accordingly to achieve that size for optimal effectiveness for the benefit of both host and international students.

Rural schools are unique in many ways and the implementation of an international student program in rural schools warrants careful consideration and planning. As the world grows more connected with easier means of communication, exploration, and access to knowledge, it becomes even more important to find ways to connect with those from many cultures. Unfortunately, the greater access of the modern world has not brought us greater understanding of each other, and opportunities such as international student programs provide an important means for schools to begin to address the gap in acceptance and tolerance of others that our world sadly lacks. Efforts to continue to improve effectiveness of these programs and to increase culturally responsive learning in schools are well worthwhile with unforeseen benefits to us all.

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ARTICLE

Athletic Participation and Academic Achievement of High School Students: A Longitudinal Study of Athletic and Non-Athletic Participants

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ABSTRACT

The majority of extant research studies have established that high school students' athletic participation is positively associated with several educational outcomes, including academic performance. However, the effect of long-term athletic participation on academic performance remains unclear. Using a longitudinal data of 220 students from a high school in eastern Massachusetts of the United States, this study has revealed that athletic participants in this school started with a statistically significant higher GPA than non-participants in the first year of study, and have continued to be higher in the following two years, lag behind significantly, however, in academic achievement growth from their non-participation counterparts. The results of the study call for thoughtful decision-making regarding sports programs and athletic policies, proper guidance and adequate support for athletes and an optimal sport-academic culture in American high schools.

1. Introduction

Athletic participation is an important part of high school students' life in the United Stated and the number of participants has increased for 26 consecutive years. The most recent *High School Athletics Participation Survey*, conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHSA), indicated the number of participants of high school sports in 2014-2015 has topped the 7.8 million mark for the first time, an increase of 11,389 from the previous year (NFHSA, 2015).[17] It is a deep belief of the U.S. society that high school sports contribute to the overall education of adolescents, which "support academic achievement, good citizenship and equitable opportunities" (NFHSA, n.d.).[18]

At the same time, U. S. students' academic performance has continued to stand in the middle of the pack in major academic subjects, compared to their international peers. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, from 2012, revealed that the United States 15-year-old students are ranked 27th in mathematics, 20th in science, and 17th in reading, among the 34 OECD (2012)[19] countries. Conceivably, there is intense and sobering concern in the U.S. society over the mediocrity of U. S. high school students' global competitiveness in academic competencies. Viewing U.S. education as "stagnating," the U. S. Department of Education is advocating educational innovation and reforms, including new, higher academic standards, high-stake assessments, and strong teachers in every classroom initiative and strengthened teacher

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preparation regulation (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).[26] Exacerbated by the current major reductions in state and local education funding across the country, school districts are forced to identify areas for budget reduction and sports programs, being viewed as having less academic legitimacy, have become an obvious and convenient area to cut. Many public schools are forced to cut athletics budgets significantly, and many sports programs are being eliminated (Up2us, n.d.).[25]

Similarly, the debate over whether athletic participation enhances or impedes academic achievement of high school students has resurfaced. Some educational researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers have started to speculate the nation's sports-saturated culture and the escalating pursuit of sports activities in high school and college settings. In "The Case Against High School Sports," the cover story in the 2013 issue of *The Atlantic Magazine*, Ripley (2013)[20] contrasted the American high schools sports culture and sports spending to that of high performing countries in PISA and wondered " … if Americans transferred our obsessive intensity about high-school sports -- the rankings, the trophies, the ceremonies, the pride -- to high-school academics. We would look not so different from South Korea, or Japan, or any of a handful of Asian countries whose hypercompetitive, pressure-cooker approach to academics in many ways mirrors the American approach to sports" (p. 78).

2. Theoretical Perspectives and Literature Review

Do athletic pursuit and commitment divert adolescents from academic pursuit and success? Does there exist a definite and direct relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement? This topic is not new. Since the 1960s, researchers from varied fields have looked into the connection. A half-century's inquiry into this topic has yielded conflicting results.

There are currently two opposing theoretical perspectives regarding the impact of participation in athletics on academic achievement – that participation diverts attention from academic goals or has a positive effect on academic achievement. In *The Adolescent Society: The Social Life of the Teenager and Its Impact on Education*, one of the earliest works exploring the U.S. high school issues, Coleman (1961)[6] contended that an emphasis on extracurricular activities subverts the academic goals of education. Derived from the work of Coleman (1961),[6] the zero-sum perspective posits that a commitment to academic, social, or athletic pursuits necessitates a reduction in commitment to the other two. Because sports are both athletic and social in nature, participation is said to detract from academics. Some early studies on this topic have revealed results that are in line with the zero-sum perspective. For example, in replicating Coleman's findings, Hauser and Lueptow (1978)[10] examined five high schools in a midwestern city and found that while athletes had higher GPAs when graduating than they did when starting high school, they did not gain as much as non-athletes, which is a relative decline in achievement. Their findings were consistent with the idea that any gains by athletes over non-athletes could be attributed to initial differences between the two (Stevenson, 1975).[24]

In contrast to the zero-sum perspective, the developmental perspective views athletic participation as an essential element to aiding students' overall development, including academic. Much of the rationale behind the developmental perspective is found in the work of Bandura (1995, 1997)[1][2] on self-efficacy and motivation. When students feel good about themselves because of athletic participation, there is a snowball effect, which results in improved academics. Feelings of self-worth affect how much effort individuals are willing to put forth and how they persevere in the face of obstacles or failures (Bandura, 1997).[2] Numerous longitudinal studies have supported the positive effect of athletic participation on high school students' academic achievement (Broh, 2002;[4] Carlson, Scott, Planty, & Thompson, 2005;[5] Eide & Ronan, 2001;[8] Fejgin, 1994;[9] Jordan, 1999,[12] Videon, 2002;[27] Whitley, 1999).[28] In a six-year longitudinal study with a large, nationally representative sample, Marsh and Kleitman (2003)[16] found that athletic participation positively impacted student grades, along with many other positive outcomes including educational and occupational aspirations and attainment. More recently, Bowen and Greene (2012)[3] looked into all public high schools in Ohio and examined the data on schools' sports winning percentages, students' athletic participation rates, graduation rates, and standardized test scores over a five-year period, and found that a high school's level of athletic commitment is positively and significantly related to academic success (i.e., higher test scores, lower dropout rates).

While some studies seemed to confirm Coleman's (1961)[6] findings regarding a negative relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement while many others instead declared that the relationship is positive, still others continue to question both sides. Early in 1964, Lueptow and Kayser (1973)[13] conducted a longitudinal study involving 1750 male seniors in twenty public high schools in a midwestern state and found no significant differences in grades between athletes and non-athletes during the high school years. Some later studies

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also failed to detect any significant correlation between athletic participation and academic achievement, including Crosnoe's (2001)[7] study, in which data were collected over 1987 and 1990 from nine California and Wisconsin schools, and Stencel's (2005)[23] study, involving 507 students from ten high schools in Tennessee.

Fifty years' empirical studies on this subject have revealed mixed results. Clearly, further empirical studies using longitudinal data and looking into the change in academic performance between athletic participants and non-participants are needed for a better understanding of the long-term effect of athletic participation on academic achievement of high school students. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the impact of athletic participation on high school students' academic performance by looking into the GPA data of both athletic participants and non-participants in a three-year span, with an aim to provide additional evidence and contribution to the extant literature on this topic.

3. Methods

The site of this study is a large high school in eastern Massachusetts, with an enrollment of 2,053 students for the 2013–2014 school year. The student body is dominantly white (84.5%), with 31% classified as low income, receiving free or reduced lunch. Each year, just over half of the seniors go on to attend a two or four-year college. The subjects included in this study consist of 110 athletic participants and 110 non-participants for the school years 2010–2011, 2011–2012, and 2012–2013. A subject's participation and non-participation status is based on three years' data. This categorization (i.e., athletic participation or non-participation of at least one sport three years in a row) eliminated a substantial group of students from the study who participated only one or two years. The 110 athletic participants consist of 62 males and 48 females. To match the number and gender composition of athletic participation group, a randomizer program was utilized to select 62 males and 48 females from 192 non-participants three years in a row from the student population.

Early studies in this area claiming a positive relationship between athletics and academics has been criticized for being cross-sectional in nature, as well as not controlling for pre-existing differences (Holland & Andre, 1987).[11] Even with a longitudinal study that looks at achievement over two or three years, factors other than athletics, such as socioeconomic status and parental involvement, could be contributing to the higher achievement of the athletic participant group (Marsh, 1988).[15] In order to address these criticisms and account for preexisting subject characteristics, this study is not concerned primarily with the overall means of the two groups, but rather with the growth, either negative or positive, in student GPA over the three years when students were either participating or not participating in athletics. For any claim of a positive relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement to be made, the GPAs of athletes must increase at a higher rate during the years of participation than those of non-participants at the same school, in the same grades, and with the same gender makeup, during the same time period, and this positive academic performance change must be statistically significant. By concentrating on GPA growth rate, this study has focused on the effects of participation alone. If there are other variables helping students of either sample group, whether they be socioeconomic status, intrinsic motivation, or parental involvement, these students will have a higher starting GPA than those without such advantages, and the purpose of this study is to negate the starting advantage by focusing solely on the growth of GPA over the course of the study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 GPA Difference Between Athletic Participants and Non-participants in Each School Year: Cross-sectional Data Analysis

This study first looked into the GPA difference between athletic participants and non-participants for the school years 2010–2011, 2011–2012, and 2012–2013, respectively. Normality and homogeneity were checked against 220 subjects' GPA scores in each year before performing the significance tests. To check the normality of the data set, Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk tests were run for each year utilizing the participant / non-participant grouping in the factor field. As noted in Table 1, the assumption of normality of distribution was met for both the athletic participants and non-participants GPA in 2012 and 2013 (GPA 2012 athletic participants: $D(110) = .059$, $p \geq .05$; GPA 2012 non-participants: $D(110) = .081$, $p \geq .05$; GPA 2013 athletic participants: $D(110) = .067$, $p \geq .05$; GPA 2013 non-participants: $D(110) = .077$, $p \geq .05$;). While the athletic participants GPA in 2011 met the normality assumption ($D(110) = .074$, $p \geq .05$), the non-participants GPA in 2011 was significantly non-normal in distribution ($D(110) = .089$, $p \leq .05$). Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test was run as the significance test for the 2011 GPA data.

Table 1. Test of Normality - Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk Tests for All Three Study Years Grouped by Participant / Non-Participant Variable

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
GPA 2011 Athletic Participant	.074	110	.182	.980	110	.096

GPA 2011 Non-participant	.089	110	.032	.975	110	.039
GPA 2012 Athletic Participant	.059	110	.200	.985	110	.238
GPA 2012 Non-participant	.081	110	.072	.986	110	.318
GPA 2013 Athletic Participant	.067	110	.200	.986	110	.288
GPA 2013 Non-participant	.077	110	.111	.987	110	.381

In addition to the normality checking, Levene's test was run to check the homogeneity of variance of the data sets for both athletic participants and non-participants. As listed in Table 2, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met for all three years' GPA data (GPA 2011: $F = 1.88$, $p \geq .05$; GPA 2012: $F = .350$, $p \geq .05$; GPA 2013: $F = .290$, $p \geq .05$).

Table 2. Test of Homogeneity - Levene's Test: Equal Variances Assumed

Variable	F	Sig.
GPA 2011	1.884	.171
GPA 2012	.350	.554
GPA 2013	.290	.591

A Mann-Whitney U test (for 2011 GPA) and two independent t-tests (for 2012 and 2013 GPAs) were run to identify if any statistically significant difference exists between athletic participants and non-participants in GPA in each of the three academic years. As shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5, for 2011, on average, athletic participants had higher GPAs ($M = 2.88$, $SE = .059$) than non-participants ($M = 2.67$, $SE = .068$). This difference was statistically significant ($U = 5023$, $Z = -2.18$, $p \leq .05$); however, it represented a small-sized effect ($r = -.15$). For 2012 and 2013, athletic participants continued to remain higher GPAs on average than the non-participants (GPA 2012 athletic participants: $M = 2.78$, $SE = .060$; GPA 2012 non-participants: $M = 2.62$, $SE = .064$; GPA 2013 athletic participants: $M = 2.75$, $SE = .057$; GPA 2013 non-participants: $M = 2.69$, $SE = .060$); the group difference, however, was not statistically significant (2012 GPA: $t(218) = 1.79$, $p = \geq .05$.; 2013 GPA: $t(218) = .77$, $p \geq .05$).

Table 3. GPA Summary Statistics for 2011, 2012, and 2013

Variable	N	Mean	St. Deviation	St. Error Mean
GPA 2011 Ath. Participant	110	2.88	.617	.059
GPA 2011 Non-participant	110	2.67	.717	.068
GPA 2012 Ath. Participant	110	2.78	.630	.060
GPA 2012 Non-participant	110	2.62	.676	.064
GPA 2013 Ath. Participant	110	2.75	.601	.057
GPA 2013 Non-participant	110	2.69	.626	.060

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Test Results for 2011

Test Statistics:	U	Z	Sig.
	5023	-2.18	.030
Variable	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
GPA 2011 Athletic Participant	110	119.84	13182
GPA 2011 Non-participant	110	101.16	11128

Table 5. Independent Samples t-test Results for 2012, and 2013: Equal Variances Assumed

Variable	t	Sig.	Mean Differ.	St. Error Differ.
GPA 2012	1.79	.075	.157	.088
GPA 2013	.766	.445	.063	.083

As the above group difference test results show, the GPA difference for 2011 was statistically significant, and, even though athletes lost part of their advantage during the second and third years of the study, they still outperformed non-participants. As discussed previously, a number of previous studies have cited this type of data as proof that athletic participants achieve higher academically than non-participants (Marsh, 1988).[15] However, the positive, significant gains by athletes over non-athletes could be attributed to initial differences between the two (Stevenson, 1975),[24] if the potential pre-existing differences were not identified and accounted for. For example, as described by Spreitzer and Pugh (1973),[22] highly motivated and disciplined students are naturally drawn to the competition, achievement, and goal orientation that are inherent in athletics. Are better outcomes due to athletics, or do athletics simply attract more motivated and capable students? Manlove's (2013)[14] mixed-methods study is a great example of the issues in this area. The quantitative data show a positive relationship between athletics and academic performance, while the qualitative data point to other factors affecting academic performance such as emotional support and intrinsic drive. In order to better isolate the effect of athletic participation, this study's main focus is on the change in GPA from year one to year three, what has been referred to as the growth rate. If athletic participation results in higher academic achievement, the GPAs of athletes should grow at a statistically significant higher rate than that of non-participants.

4.2 GPA Change Over A Three-Year Span: Longitudinal Data Analysis

To determine the change for the GPAs of the two groups over three years of the study, a growth rate formula was used to calculate the GPA change. As shown in the following equations, during the years of participation, the change in GPA for athletic participants was negative two percent. For non-participants, the growth rate was zero, meaning that there was no change in average GPA over the three years of the study.

Athletic participants group's growth rate = $(2.75/2.88)^{1/3} - 1 = (.95)^{1/3} - 1 = .98 - 1 = - .02$; As a percentage = -2%

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Non-participants group's growth rate = $(2.69/2.67)^{1/3}$ - 1 = $(1.01)^{1/3}$ - 1 = 1 – 1 = 0; As a percentage = 0%

To determine if there is a statistical significant difference between athletic participants and non-participants in their academic performance change, an additional variable ("academic performance change") was calculated by applying the growth rate formula utilized above (i.e., growth rate = (present/ past) $^{1/n}$ -1) to each of the 220 subjects in the two sample groups. Since the normality assumption was not met in the "academic performance change" data set (see Table 6 below for details), the Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to check for the significance.

Table 6. Kolmogorov-Smirnova & Shapiro-Wilk Tests for Acad. Performance Change

Variable	Participation Status	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Academic Performance Change	Athletic Participant	.169	110	.000	.892	110	.000
Academic Performance Change	Non-Participant	.171	110	.000	.877	110	.000

As noted below in Table 7, non-participants had a higher mean rank and summary of ranks (athletic participants' mean rank of 99.30 vs. non-athletic participants' mean rank of 121.70; athletic participants' sum of ranks of 10922.50 vs. non-athletic participants' sum of ranks of 13387.50), and this difference was statistically significant (U = 4817.50, Z = -2.62, $p \leq .05$), with a small effect size (r = .20).

Table 7. Mann-Whitney U Results for Academic Performance Change

Test Statistics:	U	Z	Sig.
	4817.50	-2.62	.009

Variable	Participation Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Academic Performance Change	Athletic Participant	110	99.30	10922.50
Academic Performance Change	Non-Participant	110	121.70	13387.50

While in year one of the study athletes had a statistically significant higher GPA than non-participants, this advantage could be the result of pre-existing differences between the two groups, and, while athletes continued to have higher GPAs in years two and three, these differences were not statistically significant and in fact the GPAs of the athlete group actually went down. The -2% growth rate for athletes compared to the steady academic performance of non-participants, as well as the statistically significant advantage of non-participants in regards to academic performance change must lead us to question the developmental perspective and take a closer look at the zero-sum perspective proposed over half a century ago (Coleman, 1961).[6] From the view of the developmental perspective, athletic participation leads to increased interest in school, a heightened sense of self-worth, more attention from adults such as teachers and coaches, membership in elite peer groups, a desire to meet eligibility requirements, as well as aspirations to compete in college (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1990).[21] While all of this may still be true, there is no evidence in this study to suggest that any of these factors leads to improved academic performance. Coleman (1961)[6] would definitely interpret "membership in elite peer groups" to mean "popularity" and see this factor as a negative in relation to academic achievement. In fact, if any or all of these advantages result from athletic participation and athletes are still experiencing negative GPA growth, it is possible that the earliest negative theories regarding athletic participation and academic achievement are the ones that are correct.

After analyzing the results of this study, it is apparent that renewed attention should be paid to the zero-sum perspective. Perhaps the athletic and social aspects of high school sports are not leaving enough time or energy for academic pursuits. Whether it be the pressure to win that results in a requirement to be on time for practice every day and leaves little time to make up school work or get extra help, or long bus rides for away games, or the fact that practice and games can leave competitors both physically and mentally exhausted, student-athletes may not have enough time or energy to improve their academic performance. Sport-related concussions also put adolescent athletes at risk for decline in academic achievement due to significant loss of instructional time as a result of the prolonged recovery. While the above possibilities may all be factors that are detrimental to student-athlete academic performance, they are ultimately similar to what Coleman concluded back in 1961, that athletic participation diverts attention from athletic goals.

5. Implications and Future Research

The debate since the 1960s over the relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement of adolescents, accompanied by controversial and inconclusive results, has become an even more relevant and urgent issue at present given the increasing budget constraints in our nation's schools. Many policy makers and education leaders are facing the dilemma of athletic budget cuts. The results of the study, based on the data from a large high school in eastern Massachusetts, have revealed that athletic participants in this high school

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started with a statistically significant higher GPA than non-participants in the first year of study, and have continued to be higher in the following two years, lag behind, however, in academic achievement growth from their non-participation counterparts. While the difference in academic achievement growth is statistically significant ($p<.05$), the effect size (i.e., the practical significance) is small (ES=.20). By considering both the statistical and practical significances, school leaders and stake holders should make prudent and wise decisions regarding the allocation of funding or other decisions related to athletic policy, taking into consideration the measures of benefits of athletic participation to the overall development of adolescents and the intensity of sports programs in the schools. Regular assessment of sports programs and school-home support system should be put in place to ensure that athletes are getting proper and adequate guidance, supervision, and support to achieve the right balance between academics and athletics.

While athletic participation can still be considered an important part of the overall education of students, helping to develop teamwork, leadership, diligence and perseverance, these benefits may not automatically translate to the classroom. Any future arguments for the preservation of the funding of athletic programs should be made based on these factors, as well the recreational benefits of athletics, but not based on a relationship to increased academic performance. Playing sports in high school is a great experience for many students and funding should continue, but not at the expense of other programs that are directly related to academic achievement. Coaches should be encouraged to allow students to be late for practice if receiving extra help or making up academic work, and practice and game schedules should be created with consideration given to the need of students to have time for homework and studying. Activities such as pep rallies for sporting events perhaps should be kept to a minimum if they interfere with the normal academic school schedule. The argument held by many that athletic funding should be cut to avoid budget shortfalls has more credence as a result of this study if the alternatives are laying off teachers or increasing class size.

Future studies should determine if participants differ significantly in academic performance growth based on the rate of participation, be it one sport, two, three, or even more. It is possible that participation rate was an intervening variable to the results of this study but its effects are unknown at this point. If there is any validity to the zero-sum perspective, students who participate in two or more sports for three years might experience negative academic growth while playing just one sport might be the right amount for participation to have a positive impact. A study comparing one-sport participation to two or more would help answer this question.

Another interesting group not analyzed in this study are students who were athletes for a year or two but then ended their participation. It is important to investigate why this occurs and to analyze the academic results for these students. It seemed to the researchers, while gathering sample data for this study, that some students ended participation due to low GPAs that did not meet the minimum requirement to participate, but others were doing well academically. Did they stop participating because they were not good athletes, or did they find, as Coleman (1961)[6] theorized, that the time spent participating was taking away from their academic pursuits? If students who participate in athletics often have pre-existing advantages such as intrinsic motivation, involved parents, and leadership qualities, and if students who have these advantages and then stop participating have higher GPA growth rates than those who continue to participate, then a strong case could be made in support of the zero-sum perspective.

If the preceding recommendations are implemented and the results are the same for both groups as in this study, then the bigger question that needs to be asked is why students, both athletes and non-participants, do not experience growth in their GPAs throughout their high school careers? If, as students grow older, they are accumulating new knowledge and skills, why is their performance static? Are the athletic participants taking harder courses as they get older, resulting in a lack of perceived growth results, or are there other variables involved? Future studies should attempt to determine if additional course rigor is impacting achievement by utilizing a weighted GPA rather than the simple GPA used here. Do teachers grade harder as students get older? It would seem that as students mature, they should become more concerned about the future, whether it be attempting to get into college or preparing for the workplace, and an increase in focus on the future would result in improved academic performance, but this is not the case.

6. Conclusion

In the midst of current tightening of education budget nationwide, school leaders and the whole education community are facing a greater challenge than ever before, in allocating budget and making decisions on the fate of athletic programs. Given the current mediocrity of U.S. students' academic performance in reading, science and mathematics, it is indeed a critical time to reflect on the sport-saturated culture in U.S. educational institutions and its potential diverting effect on students' time and energy

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on academics. However, athletic participation is essential to adolescent growth and development, physically, cognitively, and socially, and it has great potential to contribute to the overall development of adolescents, including the development of positive personal character traits, sportsmanship and citizenship, attributes that will benefit adolescents for the rest of their lives. For some students, athletic participation is a significant factor that motivates them to stay in school, succeed academically, and opens doors to college education. Instead of deep-cuts of athletic budget and eliminating athletic programs in schools, educational leaders and policy makers should consider both the benefits of athletic participation to the overall development of adolescents as well as its potential diverting effect on students' academic performance when proper guidance and adequate support are lacking from school and home. It is imperative that school leaders, involving all stakeholders of the education community, work out specific and well thought-out policies and identify and recommend best practices in athletic participation to create a balanced and optimal sport-academic culture that benefits all students in American schools.

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ARTICLE

Implementing the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: A Case Study of the Vhembe West District, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was undertaken to investigate how district officials implemented *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* in the Vhembe West District in South Africa. Interview data were collected and used for themes identification. The study identified the following challenges that the district officials experienced as they performed their duties: insufficient resources, lack of finances to buy learning and teaching support materials, infrastructure failures, the district's inadequate support to schools, shortage of district officials in certain disciplines, unclear roles, lack of collaboration, unavailability of follow-up visits, the shortage of computers for the district officials and teacher support materials, bribery and corruption of selling principalship posts, slow filling of district officials posts, and inappropriate skills for school management and leadership. The study concluded that qualified district officials should be appointed, ongoing support from the Department of Basic Education and provision of resources in ensuring smooth curriculum implementation is needed, and bribery and corruption should be stopped when school principal appointments are made. This study also concludes that the district officials should be continuously capacitated so that they should be able to meet curriculum challenges, and the Department of Basic Education should speed up the curriculum delivery by ensuring that the vacancies are filled up.

1. Introduction

Curriculum change has a poor record of implementation in South Africa. It is an arguable fact that implementing a curriculum is not a smooth-sailing journey. Curriculum implementation is a very complex process (Guro & Weber, 2010).[17] Countries worldwide have experienced changes to their curriculum and this has had an intense impact on the way in which it has been conceptualised and implemented (Horsthemke, Siyakwazi, Walton, & Wolhuter, 2013).[19] In South Africa, educational reforms were in response to inequalities and imbalances in the education system, which were created by apartheid government in South Africa. This called for curriculum changes in South Africa to address the education system which was characterised by racism, discrimination and inequalities. The district officials were introduced by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to assist the previously disadvantaged schools by ensuring that the education served as the tool to transform society. They mainly focus on the provision of common

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curriculum framework for curriculum management and effective implementation for all schools. District officials are the link between the Provincial Education Department, the schools and public at large. Teachers and school principals who are involved in curriculum change process should be prepared and supported in their endeavours. Jacobs, Vakalisa, and Gawe (2011)[20] note that teachers need support to implement the curriculum.

Challenges such as neglect of district officials, undefined roles, education policies, capacity of district officials, and lack of collaboration are indication why the districts do not thrive in their endeavour to support curriculum at schools and they are still not properly addressed. The roles of district officials are unclear and lead to subjective decisions on how curriculum should be supported. This is evidenced by Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2010)[9] as it did not mention the specific roles to be played by the district officials. Lack of professional development for district officials leaves the quality of support to the ability of district officials which may not match the curriculum needs at that time such as supporting only on what they know or are comfortable with. The roles of district officials are meant to improve curriculum delivery at schools, whether the support is directly or indirectly linked to subjects because learning in holistic. Taole (2015)[49] indicates that district officials should be the intermediaries between curriculum policy and implementation in the classroom.

It is so imperative that the district officials have a greater understanding of their roles in transforming education so that it can meet national goals and objectives. It appears the district officials do not understand the legislation that is pertinent to education so that they can help teachers to implement new policies that will assist them to be effective school managers that are proactive, visionary and goal-orientated but also work with all stakeholders. Follow-up visits after training are crucial to ensure that the curriculum is properly implemented. Visiting schools regularly is the mandate of district officials to see if what teachers have learnt during training can be implemented in the classroom. It can be pointed out that after workshops, no district official cares about what teachers are doing. District officials do not come to schools but they are only seen during training. There is a need for empowering district officials to make follow up visits after the training to ensure that the anticipated actions are effected. Although district officials conduct teacher development workshops, school principals also mentioned that there was no follow up visit to determine the impact the training had on the classroom performance (Nasser, Kidd, Burns, & Campbell, 2013).[38] District officials are supposed to monitor, support and implement curriculum change but they are not capacitated to be more qualified and acquire knowledge of subject in order to give enough support to teachers and learners. It appears that the district does not increase its support services to train district officials in order to help teachers to implement curriculum change.

Curriculum transformation in South Africa has become the topic of much debate within the past 25 years. "The neglect of curriculum change process and stakeholders is the cause of many failed educational reform projects" (Sahlberg, 2012, p. 1).[46] "Curriculum change requires the input of different stakeholders such as teachers, school heads, parents, community members, students, district administrators and school boards" (Lumadi, 2015, p. 29).[25] As an educator in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase of the school system and in Vhembe West District in particular, the author has noticed that district officials are not trained adequately in curriculum change which impacts on learners and the economy at large and district officials are unable to demonstrate sound knowledge of subject content and various principles, strategies and resources appropriate to teaching in a South African context. Again, it is a well-known fact that there is no provision of necessary specialised and adapted materials for effective implementation of the curriculum in South African schools. These are major problems throughout South Africa where very little has been done to resolve the problems since political independence in 1994. In light of the foregoing, this study investigates how district officials are empowered to implement *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* effectively in the Vhembe West District in South Africa.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defining Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation is defined as the process of putting into practice a new curriculum and checking if it makes a difference or change (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014).[43] This definition suggests that the whole aim of implementing a curriculum is to make a difference. Guro and Weber (2010)[17] define curriculum implementation as a continuous, negotiated, contested, unpredictable process with policy adaptations resulting in unexpected outcomes. This definition suggests that curriculum implementation is a complex process, which needs thorough planning by the designers and in most cases curriculum implementation is not given the attention it deserves. Curriculum implementation is one of the most critical elements of the curriculum process yet it is the most neglected (Yang, 2013).[56]

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2.2 The Role of District Officials in Implementing CAPS

The Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025 (Department of Basic Education, 2010) [9] is the Department of Basic Education's strategy to strengthen weak areas in the education system that has been identified as needing support. Goal 27 "highlights the importance of improving the frequency and quality of monitoring and support services provided by district offices to schools". But it did not mention the specific roles to be played by the district officials. It is a challenge to learn that the roles and responsibilities of district officials in the "guidelines for organisation, roles and responsibilities of education districts" 2011 are vague. The roles of district officials are to manage curriculum delivery and to train teachers to implement curriculum change but curriculum implementation has been affected by the shortage of subject specialists to support teachers in schools. According to Diko, Haupt and Molefe (2011),[11] roles of district officials are not only limited to manage curriculum delivery, but stretched to internal assessment and examination processes. Many teachers described the current role of the district officials demanded unnecessary administrative tasks and 'box ticking' by teachers. Teachers considered the role and job description of the district officials to be mainly centred on their immediate teaching needs (Adendorff & Moodley, 2014).[1]

The training that teachers received from the district officials is not satisfactory. Lumadi (2014)[26] indicates that the training the teachers received from the workshops was insufficient as it was conducted haphazardly. Similarly, Fomunyam (2013)[14] emphasises that teachers have reported that the necessary teacher-training and support to assist them in their new tasks have not been adequate to bring about the needed changes in the schools. Troudi and Alwan (2010)[51] suggest that "training and support should be of great help in reducing the stressful effects of change during implementation" (p. 117). One cannot also lose sight of the fact that poor provision of teacher training by unskilled district officials assigned by concerning the perceived implementation of *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* (CAPS) might de-skill and limit learners' potential. Furthermore, training is not enough because the teachers were given 2–5 days workshop. Teachers were trained and maximum was about five days, so nothing can be achieved in such a short period of time (Taole, 2015). [49] It is a well-known fact that teachers have been trained to become teachers for 3–4 years and they were doing core curriculum. Fullan (2007)[16] indicates that such one-shot workshops are ineffective, as topics for training are selected by other people than those receiving training and that follow-up support for implementation is rare. The workshops were too short and insubstantial to equip staff to deal effectively with the changes that they needed to make in class and to improve learner performance. The teachers experienced none of the envisaged external supervision, monitoring or support from the district officials in implementing the curriculum change required.

The support school principals received from district officials is not satisfactory. Bantwini (2015)[3] indicates that in the South African context, the general lack of support to schools by districts has been emphasised by researchers. Similarly, school principals and teachers note that the district only came once a year to check how far they were with the curriculum because they do not have the means or resources to come to schools (Mc Lennan, Muller, Orkin, & Robertson, 2017).[31] Evidence confirms that district leadership matters when it comes to driving curriculum reforms, as well as improving schools and student learning (Fullan, 2016).[15] The teachers are often frustrated by curriculum changes due to the lack of technical expertise to carry out teaching responsibilities, and the lack theoretical knowledge and familiarity with principles informing the implementation of curriculum change (Maharaj, Mkhize, & Nkosi, 2016).[28]

2.3 Challenges Faced by District Officials in Implementing CAPS

The implementation of curriculum is dependent on many factors such as resources that the schools have. Mohapi (2014)[33] argues that resources influence the quality of teaching and learning and the degree to which the curriculum can be managed and implemented (p. 1224). Resources are often insufficient in schools and in the Vhembe West District. This is evidenced by Musetha (2013),[35] who emphasises that there is a shortage of classrooms and that Grade 12 pupils are taught in empty rooms without furniture. It is difficult to find a school with well-equipped laboratory, enough classes and adequate learner support materials. Moorosi and Bantwini (2016)[34] assert that many districts in South Africa lack the resources and capability to provide professional curriculum management support. Veriava (2013)[53] revealed that Swobani High School in Vhembe District, near Musina, had received no supplies of textbooks at the start of 2012. A recent study by Makeleni and Sethusa (2014)[29] points out that the countries such as Brazil, Ghana, Guinea and the Philippines had shown improvement in learner performance due to sufficient supply of textbooks (p.105). It can be emphasised that curriculum cannot be relevant when appropriate resources are not supplied. Resources have always been a problem and they are still a problem and the government does

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not provide enough resources to all schools equally. It would be a grossly unfair to expect teachers to implement the curriculum if they have not been properly prepared to do so, or if they do not have sufficient Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM). Availability of resources plays a critical role in the efficient delivery of the curriculum. Lunenburg (2010),[24] argues that teachers need to have access to curriculum guides, textbooks or training connected to the school curriculum. "Curriculum change is a process of using resources effectively in order to improve curriculum" (Yasmin, Rafiq, & Ashraf, 2013, p.1).[57] It is the mandate of the district to ensure that the resources are timeously provided to schools.

Inappropriate skills for school management and leadership exist in South African schools. School principals do not have appropriate management skills to manage their schools effectively. This is evidenced by Naidoo (2014, p.1)[37] who points out that school principals need to be properly trained and skilled in school management but they are faced with a challenge to motivate the staff to accept the envisaged change. The duties of the school principals are hampered by lack of skills and by the fact that district officials fail to execute their mandate satisfactorily. District officials need to be capacitated to make sure that school principals attend workshops in order to acquire skills in the management and implementation of curriculum change. It appears that the workshops that are conducted by district officials to school principals come to nothing as they are ineffective.

There is increasing bribery and corruption at the provincial and district levels when school principal appointments are made. This tendency impacts negatively on the implementation of CAPS in the district. Heystek (2015)[18] argues that at the school level, school principal effectiveness may also be limited by the overt control of unions on the school environment. According to Tandwa (2015),[48] school principals' posts were being sold for more than R30 000 each and also in exchange for sex (p.1). These activities of selling teaching posts and capturing the state weaken the implementation of CAPS. Bribery and corruption affects district officials as they are afraid to go to schools that are run by unions and they have no say when school principals fail to implement curriculum change. It can be pointed out that the school principal who might be appointed through bribery and corruption would not be able to implement curriculum change at school. The school principal might also lack the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude to lead and manage school effectively and efficiently. Again, it can be noted that the union-run schools in the district result in poor performance by learners, ill-disciplined teachers, mismanagement of schools and failure to execute the implementation of CAPS.

District officials are expected to visit schools and support teachers directly in their classrooms, but this is quite unrealistic, given the large numbers of schools allocated to each district officials. The moment district officials visit schools; they perform classroom observation, which many teachers do not like. If classroom observations are to be effectively used for professional development of teachers, the basic step should be the establishment of a relationship between district officials and teachers, as observation must be built on a foundation of trust (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011).[21] Fielding (2012) [13] indicates that one of the most important factors which affect the effectiveness of supervision is the unclassified, ambivalent relationship of teachers and supervisors. Orenaiya, Adenowo, Aroyeun and Odusoga (2014) [42] suggest that co-operative attitudes and behaviours must be established between the teachers and education supervisors for achieving positive results whether by an individual, group or organization. Furthermore, the heads of the school and staff members alike prefer working with someone who has a positive attitude (Tesema, 2014).[50]

There is a lack of collaboration among district officials in supporting schools. Mavuso (2013)[30] found that district officials tend to work in isolation and make input in the process of quality management at school and classroom level and their input is more directed at school than at classroom level. Bantwini and Diko (2011)[4] were also concerned about the knowledge gap regarding how district officials collaborate. There is no direct link between what is happening at classroom level and district officials. For effective functionality of schools, there has to be collaboration between district officials and school principals as well as teachers. Collaboration has been identified as a powerful tool to improve outcomes for all learners (Louw & Wium, 2015).[23] Altun and Yildiz (2011) [2] indicate that school improvement includes collaborative activities that are aimed to develop teachers, staff, school environment and physical conditions in addition to student achievement. However, Naicker and Mestry (2015) [36] found that collaboration between school principals collectively and district officials was lacking.

A challenge to district officials is inadequate supervision. Inadequate supervision results in teachers' inability to demonstrate adequate knowledge and understanding of the structure, function and development of their disciplines (Ololube, 2014).[41] Ololube (2013) [40] found that in Nigeria the present system of education is control-oriented rather than service-oriented and tends to focus on maintaining the status quo by regulating

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institutional functions and by ensuring that bureaucratic rules and regulations are adhered to. Most district officials use their office title to create fear in the minds of teachers through their actions, thus they are more occupied with the office and title of district officials than with effective supervision. In South Africa, Dilotsothle, Smit, and Vreken, (2001)[12] found that the education system is largely about compliance with departmental regulations rather than engaging with educators about their work. Their research findings support other research done outside South Africa that the focus of the curriculum advisory service (CAS) is on management rather than on curriculum issues related to subject content, teaching or learning. De Clercq and Shalem, (2012)[6] also established that follow-up district work was ineffectual as it was more about monitoring teachers for compliance rather than to support them.

There is a lack of feedback to teachers from district officials. Productive feedback and follow-up initiatives are lacking in supporting teachers. There is thus little opportunity for discussing findings such as the need for more in-service training of teachers and whether new initiatives satisfy the identified need. Given this lack of follow-up, there is no way to ensure that supervision will contribute to school development in a cost effective way. The lack of feedback from district officials frustrates teachers and their efforts to improve. The World Bank (2010)[55] indicates that in many education systems worldwide, schools are required to submit information on which they receive virtually no feedback. This does not help schools since underperformance and poor teaching practices may continue. If feedback is provided, then the system can improve.

Teachers and school principals are in charge of curriculum change at school level and they need to be supported in a variety of ways. The teachers are not supported well by district officials as they still use out-dated methodology and strategies of lesson delivery for CAPS implementation. This is evidenced by Limpopo DBE (2011)[8] which confirms that teachers teach the new curriculum using their own methodology and have difficulty in interpreting certain aspects of the official curriculum documents. It appears the district officials do not do their work effectively as teachers are not competent enough in CAPS implementation. Wallace and Fleit (2005) [54] cite factors affecting the success of curriculum reform makers to accurately diagnose the systemic problems or correctly evaluate programmes before implementation, as factors leading to successful reform in one situation may not necessarily apply to another.

2.4 Strategies Used to Empower Implementation of CAPS

There have been attempts by the department to ensure that teachers are kept informed about the curriculum demands of the curriculum change. However, De Clercq (2008)[7] indicates that the capacity of the South African education system to provide appropriate professional support to schools has a poor track record. Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to successfully implement curriculum change. It is a well-known fact that overcrowded classrooms have been an issue for years. The DBE (2009)[10] confirms that the issue of overcrowding requires further investigation. The reduction of teacher-learner ratio could bring relief to overworked and overloaded teachers. This will in turn reduce paper-work, which, most teachers lamented, hinders their effective implementation of curriculum change. It is not easy to teach CAPS and therefore it is difficult to implement as teachers are not adequately supported by district officials. District officials lack knowledge about CAPS and they impart wrong knowledge and information to the teachers. So, the department needs to empower district officials in order for them to train teachers properly. Ngubane (2014) [39] stated that the DBE is tasked with leadership, policy-making and the monitoring responsibility of improving the quality of learning and ensuring quality sustained education, but fails to do it properly.

School principals should be aware of the importance of the pillars of implementation and management in order to implement CAPS successfully. The government officials at the meso-level, as well as the secondary school principals at the micro-level are supposed to adhere to these principles. This process will help the district officials and the school principals to manage, co-ordinate and implement the new curriculum properly. Planning includes training of the staff, teaching materials, human resources and encouraging the school community to participate (Magongoa, 2011).[27] In-service training in CAPS implementation is vital as it will familiarise school principals and teachers with innovations of the curriculum implementation. Magongoa (2011)[27] argues that the DBE should train and retrain school principals to become effective in managing the new curriculum. This training should be extensive and not a once-off five-day workshop. Relevant intensive training to school principals need to be provided by district authorities and short programmes that address specific issues regarding curriculum change should also be provided. Such training may include aspects like identification of relevant learning teaching materials. Attendance at seminars and workshops on managing curriculum change implementation and sharing best practices with peers from other provinces should

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be encouraged and maintained. This, in turn, will help schools to be professionally managed and provided with the necessary administrative skills. Again, training before the implementation of curriculum change is a prerequisite for meaningful and successful implementation of change.

Theories in change management have been used as frame for this study. Change denotes making or becoming distinctly different and implies a radical transformation of character or replacement with something else. Applied to empowering district officials to implement *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* effectively in the Vhembe West District in South Africa, change is the process of transforming the schools' organisational practices into new behaviours that support a shared vision of achieving the institutions' goals. The basic framework followed in this study to examine this change process was Lewin's (1951)[22] Force Field Model to embrace change and achieve organisational goals (Robbins & Judge, 2010). [45] According to Senior (2002),[47] Lewin's Force Field Model states that "organisations are held in equilibrium by equal and opposing, driving and resisting forces" (p. 308). The driving forces may include competitive pressures, legislative mandates, new technology, and environmental factors while resisting forces include fear of change and negative attitudes, among others. Kurt Lewin's Force Field Model comprises three stages:

• *Unfreezing: In this stage district officials have to reflect on their current practices before they adapt new behaviours.*

• *Moving or changing: District officials consider making changes that will most likely contribute to achieving the organisational goals of schools.*

• *Refreezing: Once changes are effected, new behaviours become apparent through what is observed within the organisation.*

(QueenMary & Mtapuri, 2014, p. 3)[44]

In the case of this study, it is evident that the government's legislative mandates are the driving force in organisational changes at public schools. Resisting forces include established customs and practices, teacher union agreements and the organisation's culture. Senior (2002) [47] argues that the main focus of the "unfreezing stage is centred on changing the district officials' habitual modes of thinking" as a result of new legislation, diversity in school population and technological advancement, to heighten awareness of the need to change (p. 308). Thus, there is a definite need to move away from established behaviours to create new behaviours. Once the district officials have chosen a course of action, they have to share insights about the problem, its probable causes, and the identified solutions with school management teams, teachers, school governing bodies and other stakeholders of the organisation.

Moving (change) is the second stage of the process that essentially makes the actual changes. School principals embark on managing the implementation of CAPS programmes that will move the district officials to new types of behaviour. Van der Westhuizen (2002)[52] agrees that movement involves the development of new norms, values, attitudes, and behaviour through the identification of changes in the structure. In the refreezing stage, the district officials' behaviours become apparent where a "shared vision" could inspire the participation to attain the desired future goals of the institution (Mestry, 2017).[32]

The objectives of this study are: To find ways on how district officials are empowered in CAPS implementation in the Vhembe West District in South Africa, to identify the challenges faced by Vhembe West District in implementing CAPS in schools, to examine the kind of support that Vhembe West District provides to facilitate CAPS implementation, to identify strategies used by Vhembe West District to empower CAPS implementation and to identify the role of Vhembe West District in CAPS implementation. The rationale behind these questions was to investigate how district officials are empowered to implement *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* in the Vhembe West District in South Africa.

3. Methodology

Interpretivism was adopted as the underpinning philosophy for the study. A qualitative phenomenological design was used and produced a large amount of data that had to be analysed. The population in this study comprised all school principals and officials from the Vhembe West District in South Africa. Purposive sampling was used to select five school principals as they are curriculum managers and five officials from the district as monitors and managers of curriculum change implementation. The samples were chosen because of their professional roles, expertise, experience and knowledge that made them information-rich participants. School principals were purposively sampled as their schools are performing well in the district. District officials were selected on the ground of their long service in curriculum department. Participants were capable of making informed, independent decisions to participate or not.

This study used individual interviews which were conducted at the convenience of interviewees. The semi-structured interview was found to be suitable for this study because it allowed the participants to express their viewpoints about empowering district officials to implement *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* in the Vhembe West District in South Africa. This rich

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and in-depth information-gathering was made possible by helping respondents relax by asking them general questions related to empowering district officials to implement *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* in schools in the Vhembe West District in South Africa. The semi-structured interviews were recorded using an audio-recorder with the permission of the participants. Questions which were not clear to the participants were rephrased and follow up questions were asked to assist participants answer the questions. The questions were linked to the literature review. With a semi-structured interview, I have a specific number of questions to put to the interviewees, but there was room for me to probe emergent themes raised by the interviewees. I did not limit the discussion of issues or ideas raised by the respondents on empowering district officials to implement *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* in the Vhembe West District in South Africa. The discussions were recorded and transcribed. Individual interviews were conducted with five school principals (participants) from five schools and five district officials. Interviews for all participants took 30 minutes. Initial contact was made through written communication, (letter of invitation to participate in the study) and then through email and face-to-face contact.

This study used a thematic data analysis technique. This study followed the six steps of Braun and Clarke (2013).[5] These include transcription, coding, searching themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing a report. The transcriptions were carefully and attentively read and re-read in order to be familiarised with the content thereof. Notes were taken, sorted, and organised according to objectives of the study in order to identify important themes that emerged. Based on this initial reading, clarification system for major topics and issues was developed. To protect the identity of the participants and their schools and for ethical reasons, codes were used. In order to code the data, I looked for small and large chunks of data that potentially addressed the research question of the study. I generated an initial list of ideas about the data. The data was coded and categorised so that repeated themes emerged. The initial codes were derived from the interview guides and school principals are referred to as SP whereas district officials are referred to as DO. The searching-for-themes stage begins after all the data have been coded and collated and a list of different codes has been identified across the data set. I analysed the data by forming categories or themes that were used to describe the meaning of similarity coded data. The established themes were in line with common ideas given by the participants. I conducted a review of themes by going back to the coded and collated data, and by going back to the whole data set in order to review themes and determine the ones that were appropriate. The themes were reviewed by double-checking the coded data and making sure that data were used. I wrote the report that involved choosing examples of transcribing to illustrate elements of the themes. These extracts clearly identified issues within the theme and presented lucid examples of the point being made. The more frequently a concept occurred in the text, the more likely it would be regarded as a theme.

4. Findings and Discussion

The study used theories in change management to investigate how district officials are empowered to implement CAPS in the Vhembe West District in South Africa. On the basis of these theories, themes were developed in answering the research objectives. The discussions were summarised in five themes for the study. The five themes are the following: The role of the district in CAPS implementation; challenges in CAPS implementation; insufficient support from the district; inadequate training received from the district; and strategies used to enhance effective implementation of curriculum.

Theme 1: The Role of the District in CAPS Implementation

From the interviews I had with the participants, the study revealed that the role of district officials is vague. This is evidenced by Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2010)[9] as it did not mention the specific roles to be played by the district officials. Participants do not exactly know what is expected of them in CAPS implementation. The findings of this study suggest that the curriculum in the district was fairly well implemented. It emerged from then study that district officials know their roles and responsibilities in theory but to but the practicality of it is challenging. The study indicated availability of district officials in schools, managing curriculum by school principals, staff development efforts by a number of the district officials, availability of well-developed curricula which were clear on the goals, objectives and content to be taught as evidence that the district officials know CAPS implementation. In support of the above responses the following comments serve the purpose:

"The district supports schools concerning curriculum change. The district officials are trained for the curriculum so that it will be easy for them to monitor the curriculum that they know". [DO1] "The district makes sure that the relevant information concerning CAPS reaches schools urgently. School principals are consulted for the new development in the district. Almost every week we send

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circulars to circuits so that they reach schools urgently. These circulars are helpful and informative to teachers as they will implement and manage curriculum". [DO2] "The district is a source of inspiration to schools and it makes sure circulars are sent to schools immediately. District officials are always available in schools although they are not sure of their roles. Our roles are written in the document but they are difficult to follow". [DO3] "The district officials are deployed to help schools". [DO4] "Policy documents are usually provided by district office. The district plays a major role to ensure that all learners have access to quality education although there are challenges faced by district officials". [DO5]

Evidence from participants suggests that the district officials know their role. It appears that the district office is dedicated to help in curriculum change. The visibility of district officials in schools is an indication that they are ready to execute their role although their roles are not clear. The district is seen as doing its part by consulting schools principals and making sure relevant information concerning CAPS reaches schools. This is supported by DBE (2011)[8] by indicating that teachers are provided with policy documents which guide them as to how they can prepare their lessons. (p.5). The findings revealed that the comments from the participants are in contrary with the department as there are challenges facing the district officials. Circulars are distributed to schools but reading these circulars cannot replace workshops from the district. The district has a nice document on the roles of the district officials but to put the theory into practice is difficult. Ngubane (2014)[39] confirms that the DBE is tasked with leadership, policy-making and the monitoring responsibility of improving the quality of learning and ensuring quality sustained education, but fails to do it properly.

Theme 2: Challenges in CAPS Implementation

All the participants agreed that there are challenges in CAPS implementation. It emerged from the study that there is increasing bribery and corruption when school principal appointments are made. This study found that school principals are promoted provided one produces money or accepts the position in exchange of sex. Findings indicated that teacher support materials remain the challenges in the district and school principals are also receiving inadequate training. Participants raised a concern that CAPS implementation is compromised by the lack of resources, most particularly the shortage of textbooks. The study differs from a recent study by Makeleni and Sethusha (2014)[29] who indicated that countries such as Brazil, Ghana, Guinea and the Philippines had shown improvement in learner performance due to sufficient supply of textbooks. The views of the participants were encapsulated in the following statements:

"We don't have enough textbooks in our school. The big challenges we encounter in implementing the CAPS, are that we are poorly resourced". [SP1]. "Teaching cannot take place if the Department of Basic Education did not supply enough textbooks for learners". [SP2]. The participant raised a valid concern in that learners did not have textbooks, so they had to share the few available textbooks. The lack of resources in a developing country like South Africa is unusual. The focus on resources places the responsibility for implementation at the door of the district.

"Another pressing challenge to district officials is inadequate supervision." [SP3]. Musetha (2013)[35] affirms that there is a shortage of classrooms and that Grade 12 pupils are taught in empty rooms without furniture. (p. 1). "Workshops are not impressive and we are not doing enough in training for the curriculum because there are no materials to be used by district officials and the government does not have funds for workshops". [SP4].

DO1 commented in this way: "Teachers complained that the CAPS needed resources but most schools were under resourced. There is a problem of infrastructure failures". DO2 said: "Teachers are requested to exchange promotional positions with money and sex. Teacher unions are running the district". DO3 confirmed: "There is inadequate follow-up support for school principals after training. We lack resources like computers and vehicles to use when we go to workshops that are scheduled for us. There are also burning challenges of teacher support materials which are used for workshops and the materials that are to be used in the classroom, slow filling of district officials posts, and inappropriate skills for school management and leadership.". DO4 proudly stated: "There is a lack of collaboration among district officials in supporting schools". This can be evidenced by Mavuso (2013)[30] who indicated that the district officials tend to work in isolation and make input in the process of quality management at school and classroom level and their input is more directed at school than at classroom level. DO5 had the following to express: "I think we should stop copying other country's curriculum, burdening our country or our kids with things that are not suitable for the conditions that we are in overcrowded classes, under-resourced schools. Feedback to teachers from district officials remains the challenge".

The preceding responses are an indication that there are many challenges faced by both district officials in CAPS implementation. While it is valid that not having a textbook is a serious limitation, the position that the

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participants have taken is not how they can overcome such limitations. It is a well-known fact and widely accepted that any curriculum extends well beyond a textbook, but it is arguable that the available textbook provided some form of basic curriculum guidance. It seems as if the district officials and school principals use insufficient resources as an explanation for inadequate implementation, and that they have not found creative ways to overcome such shortages. Furthermore, the fact that learners have textbooks is a good place to start, but teachers did not take that view. What became evident was that teachers and school principals seemed to place the responsibility for curriculum implementation outside of themselves, and often seemed to be teaching just because they had to. Bribery and corruption indicates that quality education in the district is non-existent. It appears that the failure of curriculum implementation in schools is a result of the curriculum that is not researched and this leads to copying curriculum change from other countries. Heystek (2015)[18] confirms that at the school level, school principal effectiveness may also be limited by the overt control of unions on the school environment.

Theme 3: Insufficient Support from the District

It emerged from the study that there is a lack of finances in the district to buy Learning and Teaching Support Materials. It was found that the district officials were not doing enough to support schools to implement curriculum change. This is supported by McLennan, Muller, Orkin and Robertson (2017, p.6),[31] who assert that school principals and teachers note that the district only came once a year to check how far they were with the curriculum because they do not have the means or resources to come to schools. The study indicated that monitoring and support in schools is not that much possible. The study revealed that there was no adequate support concerning workshops. This is in line with the following responses:

SP1 stated: "The level of monitoring and supporting curriculum change by the department at school level is not satisfactory. The district officials sometimes come to visit schools on development purposes. Teachers are not professionally well developed". SP2 had to say the following: The district has got financial constraints and it fails to support district officials to go for workshops". I had never attended workshops on CAPS that are adequate". SP3 responded as follows: "The district does not support the schools adequately. Yes, we were trained on CAPS, but the training session on CAPS lasted for a short time. After training I was not ready to implement the CAPS. I relied on the knowledge of other teachers who attended the training. The workshops that were conducted by the district officials are a waste of time because they just read manuals which the teachers can read for themselves". SP4 said: "Challenges facing school principals are not amicably resolved. There are no enough policy documents in our schools". SP5 confirmed: "Teachers are not professionally developed. In-service training and programs to update teachers are non-existent".

From the above interviews and quotes, it is clear that the support schools received from the district was inadequate. It appears that the department conducted workshops without the budget thereof. Thus school principals were invited to attend the workshops in order to be exposed to curriculum changes but workshops seem to be insufficient. It is indicated that the district officials rarely come to schools in order to develop teachers professionally. This may be argued that the workshops which were conducted by the department were not useful to some teachers as the district officials read manual for teachers. It appears that schools cannot function smoothly without the supply of resources. The department must ensure that the resources are timeously provided to schools. This is supported by Bantwini (2015)[3] who confirms that in South African context, the general lack of support to schools by districts has been emphasised by researchers. Jacobs, Vakalisa, and Gawe (2011)[20] note that teachers need support to implement the curriculum.

Theme 4: Inadequate Training Received from the District

It emerged from the study that school principals were insufficiently trained to manage CAPS implementation. All participants indicated that school principals felt threatened by knowledge and expertise of teachers as they received more training opportunities than school principals. The study found that the district conducted workshops and teacher training for the CAPS although they were not up to standard. The study revealed that school principals are ill-informed about curriculum change. It was pointed out that the district officials are not qualified to train schools. To validate the above assertion, the following participants reported that:

"The district organises workshops on an on-going basis. Workshops are organised during the holidays and even on Saturdays and Sundays. [DO1]. "We did our part and school principals should do the rest". [DO2]. "The district has provided policy documents to schools and it is the turn of school principals to read and interpret them". On the contrary SP3 responded in this fashion: "District officials were incompetent to conduct curriculum change workshops. Workshops should also be conducted by experts who know their stuff." [SP3]. SP4 confirmed: "The

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training schools received from the district is not enough. Training received by school principals to manage their schools is considered as time wasting".

The preceding responses and quotes are an indication that the district fails to train schools satisfactorily. This implies that district officials do not have the expertise when facilitating curriculum change. Thus, the district officials should be retrained in order to know their stuff. It appears that the district officials did not get enough training or there was no training at all. It might be shameful to see district officials struggling in the presence of school principals. It can be arguable that the quality of training workshops was poor and questionable and that schools are mismanaged on account of inadequate training school principals received from the district. This implies that incompetency is common in schools. Lumadi (2014)[26] confirms that the training the teachers received from the workshops was insufficient as it was conducted haphazardly. (p.177). One may question the competence of school principals as they were trained as teachers for three years. The experience gained by the school principals in managing CAPS and school can be challenged. They mustn't rely on district officials to implement curriculum change. School principals' comments reveal that they received common training before the implementation of CAPS. The kinds of training received by school principals included district workshops, in-service trainings and cluster workshops. The school principals' responses revealed that workshops and in-service training were of low quality due to the incompetency of district officials.

Theme 5: Strategies Used to Enhance Effective Implementation of CAPS

From the interactions I had with the participants, it was evident that the retraining of district officials can make a difference in CAPS implementation. It emerged from the study that district officials are not trained adequately. Findings indicated that consistent monitoring should be done through classroom observations, class visit, moderating tests and examinations and looking at learners' work. Participants' comments are listed below:

"Retraining in the implementation of the curriculum change is necessary. Again, competence and qualifications of district officials need to be considered". [DO1]. "Monitoring of the curriculum implementation at school level should be regularly done. District officials need to be equipped in order to help school principals and teachers with ease". [DO2]. "The district conducted workshops in order to involve, train and keep teachers up to date with the curriculum changes. Teachers were grouped in clusters for the performing schools and the non-performing schools. The district should communicate the CAPS through meetings, seminars and pamphlets". [DO3]. "School principals should have a week for workshop in order to be conversant with the curriculum change. District officials should train school principals and teachers before the implementation of any curriculum change and after the launch of curriculum change". [DO4]

On the other hand SP2 responded in this way: "Teachers should be trained to have knowledge about curriculum change. I attended workshops offered before CAPS implementation, in-service training, and other workshops organised by the district together with district officials". Collaboration between, teachers, school principals and district officials should be emphasised". SP3 confirmed: "The district should create enough time for the advocacy of the new curriculum before proper training can take place. District officials from the Department of Basic Education should embark on curriculum change awareness campaign through meetings, seminars and pamphlets so that teachers can accept the changes in the curriculum before they go for training".

SP4 responded in this fashion: "Some implementation strategies to avert the challenges of curriculum change should be initiated. We are not fully involved in curriculum change, we are just being told that this is a new curriculum and this is how it works. So district officials need to come back to us. Involve teachers as to what should be done, what's best for our learners, so they must stop taking curriculum from other countries. They will formulate something that will work". On the contrary SP5 said: "The district officials are office based and they use theory to manage the implementation of CAPS. School principals and teachers are the ones faced with the challenges on a daily basis and they are the ones interacting with learners. Teachers could formulate the best policy based on the CAPS, because they already know that assessment must be outcome based".

From the above responses it is evident that there are strategies that can be used by the district office to enhance effective implementation of curriculum change. The above responses support the fact that the district conducted workshops inadequately. Retraining of district officials can change the standard of curriculum change. The strategies announced by the participants should be looked into as they are helpful to the implementation of curriculum change and they cannot be considered as business as usual. It is a well-known fact that district officials rarely come to schools and this make them to use theory for the implementation of curriculum change. The implication is that regular school visit will help the district to know and understand the challenges schools are facing concerning CAPS. The above responses is supported by

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Fomunyam (2013)[14] who emphasises that teachers have reported that the necessary teacher-training and support to assist them in their new tasks have not been adequate to bring about the needed changes in the schools.

5. Recommendations

Based on the results discussed in the previous sections, the following recommendations are made to help enhance the implementation of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement in the Vhembe West District, South Africa:

(1) Retraining of district officials should be done. It emerged from the study that district officials are not trained adequately. These district officials should be capacitated to implement curriculum change in order to address the challenges of curriculum change implementation.

(2) Provision of funds should be considered when curriculum change is launched. It emerged from the study that the district has got financial constraints and it lacks funds to buy Learning and Teaching Support Materials.

(3) Research should be done before the launch of curriculum change. The study indicated that curriculum change has been copied from other countries and it is difficult to implement CAPS in South African schools. Research should also help district officials with skills to implement curriculum change effectively.

(4) Capacity building workshops should be provided to teachers, school principals and district officials. The study found that the district officials should be capacitated to implement curriculum change in order to address the challenges of curriculum change implementation. The district should identify and prepare potential school principals before appointments are made.

(5) Promoting district officials competence should be of priority. It emerged from the study that competence and qualifications of the district officials should be given preferences. The study revealed that incompetency is ripe in schools due to the training school principals received from district officials who do not know their stuff. Thus district officials should be qualified to train schools better. The appointment of qualified officials to assist in the implementation of the CAPS should make a difference.

6. Limitations of the Study

This research study took place in Vhembe West District in South Africa whereby five school principals and five district officials were sampled and participated to gather data. As such, other school principals and district officials were not involved in the interview. A further research will be required to involve district officials and school principals in curriculum change from all districts in South Africa. A further limitation was that the 10 participants interviewed were too few and that all the participants were from same education district. Their experiences with the phenomenon of CAPS were therefore similar. A further study may interview other districts and many participants in CAPS implementation to yield different results from what this study would suggest. This research study is qualitative in design and, as a result, its findings cannot be generalised to the population of this study; instead, they can be transferred to other schools and districts with similar contexts and/or experiences. A further research will be required to involve school principals and district officials in CAPS implementation from all districts in South Africa. A larger number of participants from more schools and districts might have contributed to the variety of responses thus enriching the findings.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, results have shown that there are many impediments faced by district officials in curriculum change implementation. The implementation of CAPS has brought many challenges in schools and that proper training of district officials should be done before the implementation of curriculum change. This study concludes that ongoing support from the Department of Basic Education and the provision of resources in ensuring smooth curriculum implementation is needed. The repetition of similar answers by different participants proved to me that the instrument I used was valid for the purpose of this study. The instrument I used to interview participants did not disappoint me – it was suitable and reliable. In conclusion, during interviews, this study produced similar results from different participants; therefore, this study is valid and reliable.

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ARTICLE

Is Shared Governance Feasible in Public Higher Education Institutions of China?

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ABSTRACT

Economic development and rapid changes in technology have considerable impact on higher education in China. To prepare skilled highly-educated workforce and meet the demand for research development and productivity, higher education institutions in China are under a great pressure of adapting and implementing organizational change (Li et al., 2012).[20] This paper starts with an overview of the higher educational transformations in China in the past decades. Then the author assesses the shared governance practice in the U.S. and discusses the potential and limitations for China to adopt shared governance in the near future.

1. Introduction

Since the transformation from a planned economy to a market-oriented economy under the open-door policy in the 1980s, the Chinese higher education system has shifted from a completely top-down centralized system to a more locally control system after several governance reforms, including the Decision on the Reform of the Educational System in 1985 and the Outline for Education Reform and Development in 1993. In 1998, the Chinese government issued the Higher Education Law which stipulated the legal status of higher education institutions. The university president held more accountable for the institutional policy making and strategic planning. Higher education institutions (HEIs) were authorized with considerably more governance autonomy, including proposing enrollment plan, making changes in program offerings and curricula design, conducting research, personnel recruitment and selection, performance evaluation and rewards of faculty and staff, facilities management, and allocation of government funds and donations.

Meanwhile, HEIs doesn't receive 100 percent of funding from the Ministry of Education any longer. Parts of the funding come from national and local provinces; others from donations from alumni and society, student tuition and fees, research contracts, etc. As research contracts share more percentages in the source of institutional funding and faculty research and their products become more representative of an institution's reputation, the status of faculty has increased. There's need for increasing faculty voice in institutional governance to guide the healthy growth of institutions.

Rapid economic development and technology change the demands in the labor market which creates new

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challenges to prepare students for success and increases accountability of HEIs in China. Faced with international competition, some observers argued that governance reform in HEIs, including decentralization and increasing faculty's involvement and academic freedom is the key for escalating higher education quality.

The launch of the South University of Science and Technology of China (SUSTC) in 2007 is an important pilot of the governance reform in HEIs for decentralization and shared governance in China. The institution was funded by the municipal of Shenzhen, a special economic zone city in southern China, in hopes of performing institutional administrative affairs independently. SUSTC involved faculty to implement its own college admission process in which students can choose not to take the national college entrance examination. The institution issued its own diploma and had the autonomy to develop and execute its own strategic plan and university policy. Faculty in SUSTC enjoy autonomy in areas such as the choice of teaching language, curriculum design and student admission. However, SUSTC was blocked from accreditation and considered illegitimate as payback for the autonomy.

Under great external pressure, SUSTC reached a compromise with the Ministry of Education to count national entrance exam for 60 percent. In 2013, one year after it was accredited by the Ministry of Education, the University Party Committee was established in SUSTC. Later, a new president stepped up and changed some of the university policies, including financial aid plan to be aligned with the central government's rules and regulations. However, the failure of governance reform of SUSTC didn't stop the exploration of restructuring university systems. Wide-raging discussions have taken place about faculty involvement and the exercise of academic power, reflecting the HEIs' impulse for change.

There are four types of systematic governance modes in higher education proposed by Capano (2011)[5]:

Hierarchical mode: The government imposes goals and methods on higher education institutions leaving little procedural or substantial autonomy—substantial determination of student admission numbers and national academic level; direct regulation on teaching and research outcomes, earmarked funding, direct budget assignation.

Procedural mode: The government exerts strict national rules with substantial institutional autonomy – detailed national regulation of personnel recruitment and student admission process; control in curricula design; specific rules in budget assignation; strict regulation on internal governance.

Steering-at-a-distance mode: The government focuses on setting collective objectives and implementing strategies with incentives to encourage compliance but leaves stakeholders freedom to choose methods to reach the goals—the government provides clear systematic goals, financial incentives and constraints, soft rules and comparative evaluation to influence stakeholders in institutions. Institutions enjoy the autonomy to consider options and determine their own development strategies. It's assumed that government and individual institutions can both demonstrate accountability and act rationally.

Self-governance mode: Government leaves complete freedom to policy making in higher education institutions but reserves the right to intervene when necessary. The operation of institutions is market-driven and influenced by the institutionalization of relations between participants.

In a long term, higher education system in China was a good example of hierarchical governance, characterized by strictly top-down management practices and limited procedural or substantial autonomy. For example, in the early years, the central government imposed its goals of increasing higher education participation. Funding was assigned to institutions based on systematic national missions determined by the government with little connection to quality assessment. Then the governance reform in the late 90s shifted the hierarchical mode to the other traditional governance mode—procedural governance. Institutions have some freedom to choose their own goals and make substantial decisions though they are required to follow the rigid procedural regulations issued by the Ministry of Education.

In the past decade, China has undergone rapid economic growth in a catch-up mode. Public expenditure on Research and Development (R&D) has increased dramatically and higher education institutions have been playing a critical role in the country's capability of expanding innovation. Technology has great influence on the speed of change in the society, including higher education. To keep up the pace in a considerably competitive environment, a shift in higher education system governance becomes necessary. According to Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983),[7] organizations respond and adapt to pressures in their environment towards isomorphism so that they will appear legitimate. Increasing globalization results in rapid exchange of information, interaction of values and confluence of culture which allow international comparisons and imitation of education system. The U.S. higher education system which develops a large

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number of prestigious universities has been leading the global competition. Private universities in the U.S. are self-governing bodies that enjoy complete freedom in determining their own institutional goals and means. Most public universities are impacted by the policy priorities set by the state central government though they preserve the freedom of choosing method for reaching them. Decision making of internal authorities in colleges and universities can be steered through financial incentives and negotiated contracts provided by the central government. Though the private institutions and public institutions differ in the level of governmental specification of the goals to be achieved, as classified by Capano (2011),[5] they typically share the same "best practice", called shared governance. The majority of the colleges and universities in the U.S. honor the process of shared governance, which collaboratively engage faculty and other internal and external stakeholders in institution decision-making and priority setting. After the massive expansion, HEIs in China set the goal of building world-class universities and scaling up research and innovation activities. There has been a tendency to emulate top universities in the U.S. as a convenient source of practice. Faculty at the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. enjoyed a larger role in institutional governance than those at less respected institutions (Gerber, 2014).[10] Many scholars see shared governance as a breakthrough to HEI governance reform. How likely HEIs in China can resemble the HE system in the U.S. to implement shared governance?

2. Shared Governance in the U.S.

The first colleges in the U.S. were founded by religious communities in the colonies to train ministers and leaders in other professions. After the Revolutionary War, those colonial colleges received direct support from the states but enjoyed great independence. The Supreme Court's Dartmouth decision in 1819 limits the intervention power from the new federal government on private institutions.

The enactment of the Morrill Act of 1862, which gave each state public land to foster higher education (Lingenfelter et.al, 2004),[21] resulted in over seventy land grant colleges and universities. The states also established publicly owned "flagship universities" all across the country. With the resources from the federal government, state colleges and universities were expected to provide practical education mainly on agriculture and engineering along with classical subjects. Though not granted with constitutional autonomy, public institutions still operated with substantial independence from state control, governed by boards (Berdahl, 2014).[2] It allowed public institutions to compete with private colleges to attract and serve students by implementing different innovative strategies promptly.

In the early history of both public and private higher education institutions, legal authority, which is the basis for the role of trustees and administration, was generally recognized. Presidents and administrative leaders were selected and supported by boards of trustees to exercise control over all levels of institutional issues (Hofstadter & Metzger, 1955).[12] Faculty's involvement in institutional governance is limited to academic issues, such as the authority in teaching methods and curriculum design (Brinbaum, 2000).[3] As the professionalism of the faculty is escalating in the early 20th century, in 1920, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)'s Committee on College and University Governance emphasized the importance of faculty's voice in academic governance in its first statement. After World War II, the academic revolution resulted in faculty's stronger need of participation in overall institutional governance, including institutional strategic planning, budgeting, personnel selection etc. (Brinbaum, 2000).[3] The 1966 Joint Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, formulated by the AAUP, the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), formally called for shared governance. The statement legitimated the faculty's role in institutional governance for the first time. Since then, many U.S. colleges and universities accepted "shared governance" and gradually developed a set of practices under which both administrators and faculty participate in primary institutional operation decisions. The core rationale of shared governance is that integrating diverse values and beliefs can achieve quality decision.

Higher educational institutions in the U.S. are loosely coupled bureaucratic organizations (Weick, 1976).[33] The professional nature of faculty creates the professional bureaucracy (Hardy, 1990) in which, faculty are assumed to enjoy a greater degree of control over their work and be capable to influence on institutional governance in a decentralized structure.

In the practice of shared governance, research revealed that the areas where faculty have influence in institutional governance varies. McCormick and Meiners (1988)[25] "found that faculty control ranged from as high as of 97% for decisions concerning academic performance and as low as of 7% for decisions concerning long term budgetary planning. Other studies suggested that faculty have the most influence on curriculum (Brown, 2001;[4] Kater & Levin, 2004;[17] Kaplan, 2005; Tierney & Minor, 2003[31],[16] standards for promotion and tenure (Tierney & Minor, 2003),[31] faculty evaluation (Kater & Levin,

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2004; Tierney & Minor, 2003[31]),[17] faculty appointment (Kaplan, 2005),[16] and degree offerings (Kaplan, 2005),[16] as well as student admissions and graduation (Benjamin & Carroll, 1996).[1] However, faculty played the least important role in budgeting and resource allocation (Dimond, 1991;[8] Brown, 2001;[4] Kissler, 1997;[18] Tierney & Minor, 2003),[31] and evaluation of organizational leaders (Tierney & Minor, 2003).

Faculty's attitudes towards shared governance play a critical role in the applicability and effectiveness of the dual control model. William et al. (1987)[34] collected faculty's attitudes towards shared governance in HEIs of US. He found that most faculty considered governance was one critical part of their job responsibilities. In the US, there's always strong faculty support for faculty's involvement in institutional governance (e.g., Miller, 2002;[27] McKnight et al., 2007;[24] Minor, 2003).[28] Tierney and Minor (2003)[31] conducted a national study with over 3800 participants from more than 750 colleges and universities. They found that more than 80 percent of faculty believe shared governance is important to an institution's values and identity. However, Minor (2003)[28] found that more than 75 percent of faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) didn't view faculty governance as a critical part to their institution's value and identity. Their commitment to teaching and students may negatively affect the ability and desire to involve in institutional governance (Jones, 2011).[15]

During the past several decades of practices, administrators and faculty have been struggling to understand what shared governance is, how it works and whether it actually works. Tierney and Minor (2003) [31] revealed that without a formal shared governance structure to involve faculty in decision making, even though the faculty were told that their opinions were valued, their voice were seldom reflected or considered in actual decision making process. When the faculty's voice and concerns were ignored in decision making, it creates a climate of us-versus-them dynamics in HEIs that may result in conflicts and institutional dysfunction (Redmond, 2007).[29]

Cunningham (2008)[6] examined the impact of share governance on the institution financial performance by investigating the relationship between the overall strength of faculty governance measured by the 1971 AAUP data and institution's endowment per students. The findings showed that shared governance had a positive impact on institutional financial performance. Brown (2001)[4] investigated the relationship between faculty participation in institutional decision and institution performance and suggested that whether the impact of faculty participation is good or bad depended on the decision-making types. He utilized three measures as the indicators for institutional performance: the SAT scores of incoming students, institution's average faculty salary, and the institution overall quality measured on Gourman index. His findings indicated that greater faculty participation in decision regarding appointment and tenure had a positive influence on all three performance indicators. Faculty's participation in general administrative decisions such as facilities management, selection of president had a negative impact on all three indicators of institutional performance. Faculty participation in curriculum decision had no impact on institutional performance.

Some researchers claimed that to make shared governance effective, there must be sufficiently high levels of trust and communication between administrators and faculty (Jones, 2011; Miller, 2002[27])[15] and adequate rewards and incentives for faculty who participate in shared governance (Williams et al., 1987).[34]

Recently, shared governance has been facing with criticisms. Faculty involvement in governance is criticized for slowing down the decision-making process. The key stakeholders in the academic governance—administration and faculty have different priority and see the issues from distinct perspectives. Administration focuses more on the efficiency while faculty are more concerned with academic values. The shared responsibility typically resulting in lengthy discussions between the two parties may lead to unresponsiveness. The institutions may not be able to react to the rapid changes in the external environment promptly.

Shared governance in the higher education of US is "eroded by universities' rapidly increasingly organizational complexity and entrepreneurialism (Meyer, 2015, p.1)[26]" which leads to intensified conflicts between faculty and administrators and centralization of authority and decision-making. Some institutions revise governance systems to corporate governance that excludes faculty voice to respond more quickly to market needs. They adopt practices that value the entrepreneurial character and make strategic plans linked to markets and society. Leadership and leadership style become critical to governance effectiveness (Schuster et al., 1994).[30]

3. Can China Replicate the U.S. Shared Governance Model?

According to the structural contingency theory, there's no single, effective structure for all organizations (Donaldson, 1999).[9] HEIs must take many factors into consideration when adapting to a new environment; such factors include political environment, original structure, local rules and regulations, social and culture values,

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as well as the characteristics of administrators, faculty and staff. The governing structure in HEIs of China is composed of binary governing bodies – the Communist Party of China University Committee and the University Administration Committee with dual leaderships. The organizational structure of Chinese colleges and universities begins at the top with the two parallel executive chief officers, President and Party Secretary who are both government officials, usually appointed by the Mistry of Education and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The boundaries of the decision making authority between the political body and the academic administration body is vaguely defined (Wang, 2010).[32] The President is the chief executive officer for academics under the leadership of the University Party Committee. The Party Secretary has the responsibilities to ensure that the institution follows the Party Committee's guidelines and to deliver political education to faculty, administrators, staffs and students. The Party Secretary leads a Standing Party Committee of which the members hold the key administrative leadership positions in the HEIs (Han, 1993).[11] At each academic unit of the hierarchical structure, a Party Branch Secretary is placed parallel to Dean/Department Chair who has a supervisory role at school or department levels (Wang, 2010).[32] Usually, the dean or the chair has more power than the Party Branch Secretary in the decision making (Jiang & Wei, 2011).[13]

Under the highly centralized system with dual leadership, governance in HEIs of China is more complex than any institutions in the US. The two countries have totally distinct higher education governance systems. If shared governance is adopted in China, the institutional governance will be the divided responsibility among administration, faculty and political body for decision making. Like the faculty in public institutions in the U.S., the faculty in China typically hold values that are not necessarily well aligned with those required by the central government or institutional administration. For example, the faculty may value academic freedom and independence while the Communist Party of China University Committee has the accountability to steer overall direction to ensure the operations are in accordance to regulations and laws. It may not be easy for faculty to learn how to find their appropriate places in the dual governance system to share the governing responsibilities. Competing interests and conflicts are likely to result in controversial disputes and endless debates.

Another possible situation is that there is no debate at all – the political body exercises influence over the decision-making process centrally. Although the HEIs today enjoy more autonomy of academic and administrative control, the Ministry of Education provides specific guidelines on missions and goals, strategic planning, admissions, enrollment, research, curriculum design and campus activities. The political body, typically empowered with stronger authority, are critical part of HEIs to make sure administration and faculty follow the procedural rules. When SUSTC was first funded, there was no CCP played a role in the governance. The governance structure was composed of the Board of Trustees, Administrative Committee and Academic Committee in which administrators and faculty both enjoyed relatively high autonomy. There was plenty of room for bottom-up decision-making. After CCP joined the SUSTC in 2014, a number of rules, policies and strategies were overwritten. The institutional governance of SUSTC shifted towards greater centralization.

One of the critical factors for the prevalence of shared governance in the US is that the academic organizations are loosely coupled which allows sub-system breakdown without damaging the entire organization (Weick, 1976)[33] when an inaccurate decision is made and executed. Administrators and faculty who are involved in the decision making probably have less accountability pressure. Whereas administrators and faculty in HEIs of China who work in a centralized system have to be more cautious to make any change to prevent any element misfiring and spreading across subcomponents. The centralized system exerts a pressure to hold administrators and faculty accountable in the institutional governance.

Faculty overwork is also an important factor that prevents the prevalence of shared governance (Leach, 2008).[19] After the governance reform in 1998, accompanied by increased autonomy in academic areas, faculty and academic staff in HEIs of China are overwhelmed with curriculum design, course preparation, research activities (OECD). In the context of competitive research funding and tenure positions, faculty have been too overloaded to involve in institutional governance.

In fact, shared governance was not a new concept to HEIs in China. Shared governance was introduced to China as early as the late 1910s when Yuanpei Cai became the president of Peking University. Following the Chinese Civil War and the founding of the People's Republic of China, HEIs in China gradually abandoned the model of shared governance, replacing with "the President Responsibility System under the Leadership of Party Committees in Universities and Colleges" (Liu, 2015).[22] Today, centralized system in HEI governance in China has deeply influenced organizational culture

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in the form of organizational structure (hierarchy) and power structure (who makes the decisions and how widely spread is power) identified by Gerry Johnson (1988).[14] Administrators and faculty are accustomed to and dependent on central planning, central funding and central policymaking, the outcomes of which, in general, are positive so far. Change to shared governance will be difficult because the organizational cultures and the centralized structure often reflect the "imprint" of a particular time in history persistently despite subsequent environment changes (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013).[23]

4. Conclusion

Shared governance caught a lot of attention in higher education in the past decade. It seems to be a fad borrowed from the US higher education world as "quick-fix" to the escalated problems resulted from highly centralized education system. Brinbaum (2000)[3] pointed out that when a management fad is introduced and advocated, success stories are highlighted. "The narrative focuses on claimed benefits; little attention is given to potential costs" (p.6). That is exactly what happened in HEIs in China these days. While shared governance has been practiced in the US for a long time it has some significant limitations as discussed above. Given the unique organizational structure, culture and academic climate of higher education system in China as well as the weakness of shared governance practice, there's small likelihood that shared governance will be executed in China.

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