

UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM AND
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

By

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Abstract

This study investigated whether graduates, because of their HR masters level coursework, felt prepared to perform the key competencies needed by HR professionals. Graduates of two curriculum types, externalist, represented by a MBA with HR specialization (MBAHR), and internalist, represented by a Masters Degree in Human Resource Management (MHRM), were compared to see if there was any difference between the groups in perception of personal preparedness. The study used a questionnaire developed based on the competencies identified in the Human Resource Competency Study (HRSC), strategic contribution, personal credibility, HR delivery, business knowledge, and HR technology. Demographic questions about gender, age, industry, company size, job role, and grade point were asked to see if there were differences between the two groups. The questionnaire was distributed to members of the Society for Human Resource Management.

Results of the study suggest that graduates from MBAHR programs felt more prepared to perform the competencies of strategic contribution, business knowledge, and HR technology than MHRM graduates. Within these three competency domains, strategic decision-making, market-driven connectivity, value chain knowledge, value proposition knowledge, and strategic HR technology were key factors contributing to the difference between groups. No difference between groups existed in the competency domains of HR delivery and personal credibility.

There were no significant differences between the two groups relative to five of the six demographic factors, age, gender, industry, company size, and job role indicating

no degree preference based on these factors. The demographic factor grade point average did show a significant difference between the two groups with the MHRM graduates having a higher grade point average than the MBAHR students.

This study has implications for potential students, university faculty and employers. Universities should review their curriculum to incorporate factors associated with the strategic contribution, business knowledge, and HR technology domains. Specific competency areas that are suggested for inclusion are strategic decision making, market driven connectivity, strategic HR technology, HR measurement, value proposition knowledge and value chain knowledge. Potential students and employers should consider the results when selecting degree programs and recruiting for HR employees.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, in its many flavors. First, to my parents who have always supported the educational pursuits of their children. You instilled in all of us the importance of learning and have been a constant pillar of support for me in all my endeavors. To my siblings and their families who frequently dealt with, and heard about, my unavailability due to classes and papers. To my daughters, Kelly and Colleen, who have been enthusiastic supporters throughout the process. My thanks to all of you.

Most importantly, I dedicate this to my husband, Tim, who patiently stood by me throughout the journey and endured many evenings and weekends alone while I was in my “hole” working. You helped me reach a goal I have wanted for many years!

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) is taking on greater importance within organizations as accumulation of physical assets no longer represents the sole engine for organizational growth. Financial analysts increasingly look to intangible assets to create value for companies. One intangible asset, human capital, represents an asset with infinite potential to create value through development of human resource (HR) strategies that allow organizations to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Porter, 1996; Ulrich, 1987; van Marrewijk & Timmers, 2003). Management demands that human resource professionals lead efforts to develop those human resource strategies and processes that alter the performance and behavior of employees, align human resources with organizational strategy and deliver improved organizational capability (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003; Cabrera & Cabrera, 2003; Schoonover, 2003; van Marrewijk & Timmers, 2003).

Within this context, HR professionals who can build and deliver critical human resource strategies, architecture and practices are uniquely positioned to make significant contributions to the strategic and competitive capability of their organization (Shonhiwa & Gilmore, 1996). However, new organizational demands require different skills from HR professionals than those required previously. Much work has been done to define the new competencies necessary for HR professionals to perform as effective strategic partners, but no consensus has been reached among researchers regarding one finite competency model. Research has identified the one competency that distinguishes high performing HR professionals from their less effective peers and that is an individual's knowledge of the external environment and how that environment affects their own organization. Those HR professionals who fulfill the role of strategic partner

most effectively utilize this knowledge to create linkages between external demands and key internal requirements and capabilities to develop an overall human capital system that strategically addresses organizational needs. Business leaders opine that to be a truly effective strategic partner, HR leaders need to approach HR work from a business perspective, rather than from an HR perspective (Walker & Reif, 1999). The challenge for current and future HR professionals is how to develop the appropriate skills and competencies to meet these demands.

Universities have long been tasked with developing the skills and capabilities that current and future employees need to succeed within organizations. Program curricula follow organizational trends as academics maintain courses that are relevant and appropriate to support organizational needs. The human resource profession has seen an increase in the number of Universities that offer programs to develop human resource professionals with necessary competencies to support organizations' changing human capital needs. Historically, two types of academic curriculums emerged to support the HR profession. The first curriculum developed from a theoretical knowledge base of economics, history, law and macro sociology and focused on competitive, legal and societal forces outside the firm. This curriculum has been labeled externalist (Kaufman, 1999). Alternatively, an internalist HR curriculum emerged from the growth of human relations theories, human and organizational behavior, and industrial/organizational psychology to support traditional HR disciplines such as compensation, benefits, training, and staffing (Kaufman, 1999). Both types of curricula exist within University programs today, but no consensus has been reached among either academics or HR professionals regarding accepted standards for either curriculum. A lack of agreement regarding appropriate content for an HR curriculum has resulted in universities that graduate students with differing

programs of study. This disparity leads one to question whether one type of curriculum better prepares HR professionals with the competencies needed to succeed within organizations.

Purpose of the Study

There are two purposes for this study. The first purpose is to determine whether graduates of advanced HR curriculums feel personally prepared to perform the competencies required of HR professionals. The second purpose of the study is to compare responses from graduates of these HR curriculums to see if there is any difference in perception of personal preparedness based on type of HR curriculum studied by the graduate. For purposes of this study, the competencies identified in the Human Resource Competency Study (HRSC) will be used to assess preparedness of HR competencies.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- 1) Determine whether graduates feel their university curriculum adequately prepared them for HR work relative to the five competency domains identified in the Human Resource Competency Study (HRCS).
- 2) Compare perceptions of graduates from different university HR curriculums relative to preparedness within the five competency domains identified in the Human Resource Competency Study.

Implications of the Study

This research study has implications for potential students, faculty, university administrators and employers. Outcomes from this study may assist potential learners to make a

decision about which type of curriculum would better prepare them for a career in HR. Faculty and university administrators may utilize findings from the study to tailor their curriculum(s) to better address the competencies required for HR work. Finally, outcomes from the study may assist employers in focusing organizational recruiting efforts on those universities that utilize the curriculum type that best prepares graduates to address the work of HR within their organization.

Definition of Terms

Competence. Competence is defined as the state or quality of being adequately or well qualified, a specific range of skill, knowledge, or ability (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2000).

Competencies. Competencies are behaviors that distinguish effective performers from ineffective ones, result in performance excellence or strategic advantage, and can be applied to both individual and organizational performance (Rothwell & Lindholm, 1999).

Curriculum. Curriculum is defined as a fixed series of studies required for graduation or qualification in a major field of study (*Websters New World Dictionary*, 1982).

Personal preparedness. Preparedness is a response indicating the extent that a professional practitioner perceives themselves as competent in the area surveyed (Davis, 2001).

Society for Human Resource Management. An organization of over 200,000 HR professionals whose purpose is to advance the human resource profession and develop the capabilities of HR professionals to ensure HR is an essential and effective partner in developing and executing organizational strategy (www.shrm.org).

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

For purposes of this study, the following assumptions are made:

1. A Masters in Business (MBA) degree with an HR specialization is equivalent to the externalist curriculum/perspective and a Masters Degree in Human Resources Management is equivalent to the internalist, traditional curriculum/perspective.
2. Program curricula associated with externalist programs will be essentially similar to each other.
3. Program curricula associated with internalist programs will be essentially similar to each other.
4. HR graduates will be able to discern to what extent their degree program affected their competency development.
5. HR graduates will respond honestly to the questionnaire.
6. The competencies needed by HR professionals are those identified in the Human Resource Competency Study.
7. Graduates within three years of graduation will be able to assess their preparedness relative to the HRCS competencies.

Limitations

The design of this study is limited by the following:

1. No effort is made to account for differences in teaching style or effectiveness of university faculty.

2. No effort is made to account for differences in student ability, background or experiences.
3. Locating graduates will be difficult.
4. All graduates may not be currently employed and/or employed outside of the HR profession.
5. The population used for the university programs is the list of graduate programs on the SHRM website but not all programs may have registered with the Association.
6. The HR graduate program may not be the factor that contributes to the graduate's preparedness, in that graduate students will have had a variety of undergraduate degrees and work experiences. The graduate may not be able to distinguish the role of their university curriculum in contributing to their preparedness.
7. The research will be conducted utilizing an on-line tool, which may cause a failure to respond by participants with little computer knowledge and/or access.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Twenty-first century organizations are dealing with increasing amounts of change as a result of globalization, international alliances supported by the rapid growth and development of technology, an increase in the service economy coupled with a subsequent decline in the manufacturing economy, the accelerated pace of change, increasing legal and regulatory complexity, and employees with differing values and expectations from prior generations. The impact of these changes are further complicated by demographic factors such as aging populations, rising costs of medical and welfare benefits, a shortage of younger workers, and increasing numbers of women and minorities in the workforce who hold different values about work/life balance than previous generations. These factors are amplified by a changing psychological contract between employee and employer (Saint-Onge, 2001) and younger workers who are unwilling to dedicate themselves to any company after seeing the impact to family and friends of corporate layoffs and downsizing.

For organizations to compete amid this complexity, they must successfully improve the strength and depth of their leadership capability, increase global thinking among employees, incorporate speed and flexibility into organizational processes, improve both their organizational learning capacity and employees' competence, and deal with critical issues of approaching talent wars. Techniques, structures and practices previously used to deal with industrial age issues no longer adequately address the new workplace with its complex demands and interests. Within this evolving organizational context, the role of the Human Resource (HR) professional is becoming increasingly demanding and complex (B. E. Becker, Huselid, & Ulrich, 2001; Gorsline, 1996; Lawler & Mohrman, 2003; Lawler III & Mohrman, 2003; Ulrich, 1987, 1998;

Ulrich, Brockbank, Yeung, & Lake, 1995). For HR professionals to be successful, they must navigate this changing landscape and identify strategies that create the most value for their organization.

Intangible Assets and Organizational Value Creation

Organizations continually look for ways to create value for their stakeholders.

Traditionally, companies created value by growing revenues, decreasing costs, or using their assets more efficiently. Industrial age organizations typically created value by building physical assets and allocating scarce resources to activities with the highest yield. As society progressively moved from an industrial economy into the knowledge age, organizations looked for opportunities to apply the financial capital they had created and began to focus on more effectively using their intangible assets.

In the knowledge age, organizations, analysts, and investors are finding traditional valuation methodologies increasingly irrelevant in defining the value of today's organizations and it is estimated that up to 70% of a company's value may now lie in its intangible assets. Table 1 identifies the top ten non-financial variables considered by financial analysts in assessing a company's value. Seven of the top ten non-financial variables considered in company valuation are affected by a firm's human resource system and arguably all ten are affected by a firm's human capital.

Because of the impact of intangible assets on Business, many leaders would benefit from the ability to quantify these assets, particularly human capital. The Corporate Leadership Council

identified the abilities of improving decisions relative to human capital and connecting the human resources strategy to organizational strategy through clear measurements as two of the

Table 1. Top Ten Non-financial Variables Considered by Analysts

Top Ten Non-Financial Variables Considered by Financial Analysts

Execution of corporate strategy	1
Management credibility	2
Quality of corporate strategy	3
Innovation	4
Ability to attract and retain talented people	5
Market share	6
Management expertise	7
Alignment of compensation with shareholders' interests	8
Research leadership	9
Quality of major business processes	10

Note: Becker, Huselid & Ulrich, *The HR Scorecard: Linking people, strategy and performance* (Boston: Harvard Business School)

most important goals for Human Resources. (*State of the membership: Primary goals, challenges and effectiveness of HR metrics systems.*) Models that characterize strategies for this strategic linkage describe common elements that are critical for human capital including the purposeful linkage of HR practices to organizational outcomes, differentiation between types and

levels of HR practices, relationships and interaction of human capital with other key intangible company assets, and the importance of measuring HR practices.

Strategic Human Resources and Organizational Value Creation

At its most basic level, human capital can be defined as the combined value of the organization's workforce's skills, knowledge, experience and attitudes, yet its true meaning is far more complicated. By itself, human capital does not create value. Organizational value is created by human capital's interaction with other organizational assets such as organizational culture, customer and business relationships, licensing agreements, and management philosophy, practices, and infrastructure (Weatherly, 2003). It is now widely recognized that human capital, including both the capabilities of the employees who implement organizational strategy and the human resource management (HRM) system that supports and sustains those employees, is a key component of value creation for organizations and provides an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage over rivals (G. S. Becker, 1993; Lepak & Snell, 1999; McWilliams, Van Fleet, & Wright, 2001; Ulrich, 1987; van Marrewijk & Timmers, 2003; Weatherly, 2003).

Organizations create value by investing in human capital through the design and development of strategic HR architecture, systems, and practices that link employees to organizational strategy. Those strategic HR practices that deliver the greatest value are those that extend an organization's capability beyond the individuals employed by the organization to encompass the systems, processes and practices that define the HR system (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2004a; Huselid & Barnes, 2003; Lepak & Snell, 1999; Ulrich, 1987; van Marrewijk & Timmers, 2003). Business leaders look to increase organizational capability by developing an

organizational culture that supports effective teaming, increased problem-solving capability, and greater flexibility and rely on HR to provide innovative designs that allow the organization to differentiate itself from its competitors. Because strategic human resource management practices are used to create organizational capability, HR professionals who build and deliver these practices are uniquely positioned to make a significant contribution to the strategic and competitive capability of the organization by affecting those behavioral changes (Shonhiwa & Gilmore, 1996) that increase the competency levels of the workforce and link employees to organizational strategy. As academics have come to understand the strategic relevance of the HRM system, research has been done to describe the linkage and develop methodologies that connect employees to organizational strategy. This ability to create a strategic linkage between an organization's HR practices and the firm's performance has been identified as a factor in increasing a firm's market value (B. Becker & Huselid, 2003; Huselid & Barnes, 2003).

Evolution of the Human Resources Profession

History of Workplace Regulation

The evolution of the human resources profession reflects the changing nature of the importance of people as critical organizational assets. In the past, management did not always view employees as either necessary or important to organizational success. This view led to conflict between managers and employees within the workplace. Three separate approaches historically defined efforts to regulate workplace conflict, an employer/management approach, an employee approach and a community/societal approach. Each approach supports a different focus in dealing with management's interaction with, and expectations of, employees in the

workplace. The employees' solution to workplace conflict developed into the formation of unions which were intended to assist employees in their bargaining position with management. Society's concern that management was not policing itself within the workplace manifested in external regulation of worker-management relations through employment legislation and social insurance programs (McKee, 1997). Finally, the employers' own solution to workplace conflict came from a realization, by management itself, that much of the cause of employee/employer problems lay within the organization itself and how management implemented its own policies and practices. The human resource management profession developed, in large part, because of managements' need for solutions to address organizational challenges associated with employees within the context of each of these workplace approaches.

The approaches to regulating workplace conflict emanate from two alternative views of organizations. An internalist view/perspective focuses on the organization itself and the employer as the creator and solution of its own problems. Alternatively, an externalist view/perspective acknowledges that societal, geopolitical and economic forces outside the firm contribute to employment and organizational issues and offer solutions to organizational challenges (Kaufman, 1999, 2002). Over time, responding to these different approaches to workplace regulation became an important part of the work of Human Resource professionals.

Evolution of Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management developed from Personnel Management through Human Resource Management (HRM) to the beginnings of what we know today as Human Capital Management. Distinctive evolutionary phases underscore the transformation of the profession from its beginnings, largely focused on administrative record keeping, through the process

efficiency emphasis of the 80s, to management's current recognition that the strategic nature of an organization's human resource management system is a critical asset. Beginning in the early 1900s with the inception of the Employment Manager's Association, human resource professionals within organizations have supported challenges of workplace issues by focusing on eliminating the variableness within management practices.

In the early 1900s, the Industrial Age fundamentally changed the nature of work. Instead of working as independent producers, farmers, and artisans, individuals began to work for other individuals. Classic Personnel Management resulted from the rise of industrialization, bureaucracies, increasing governmental regulation, and growing administrative transactions associated with organizations employing people. Managers quickly realized a need to manage the ever-growing bureaucracy associated with employment issues and Personnel Departments were created for dealing with this administrative burden. During this era, Taylor's scientific management method, which called for centralized administration/processes, standardization, and increased organizational efficiency, became a focus for managers looking to improve the financial position of their organization through improved efficiency techniques. Taylor's scientific management principles also called for management to address work design and the selection and placement of individuals as keys to improving organizational efficiency. Organizations, including the Government, began to apply findings of organizational psychologists' research to practical applications within the work environment. Selection and motivation of employees were key areas of experimentation and it was during this time that early psychologists developed seminal theories of motivation, selection and morale. In addition to a focus on the administrative tasks associated with employing people, HR professionals worked to

integrate early psychologists' findings and theories into workplace practices to increase efficiency.

Described by McKee (1997) as the mechanistic period, the business climate of the 1940s and 1950s was associated with commoditization of labor, growth of unions, and the beginning of Labor law and regulation. Management became increasingly concerned with its own response to problems caused by organized Labor and the focus of Personnel Departments became the tasks necessary to handle or control employees of the firm. Personnel Departments became known as Industrial Relations and focused on the administration of union contracts and company bargaining positions. Management's belief that the source of organizational labor problems lay in forces outside the firm was supported by the institutional labor economics view taught in HR curriculums at educational institutions. A substantial body of theory from industrial psychologists including Herzberg, McClelland, Skinner, Maslow, Lewin, McGregor, and Vroom developed around theories of individual and group behavior, leadership achievement, motivation, and goal setting. Yet, organizational management paid seemingly little attention to using these theories to develop the skills of their managers and employees.

During the 1970s, as industrialization waned and knowledge-intensive industries grew, the importance of employees as a significant organizational resource became apparent and the focus of Industrial Relations departments changed. Society's approach to workplace regulation matured and the focus of HR moved to the functional expertise and compliance necessary to deal with the multitude of workplace legislation emanating from the federal and state governments. Within the context of society increasing its regulation of the workplace, shifts in both technology and demographics increased employers concern about the growing scarcity of people resources.

Organizations began to recognize the contributions of the behavioral and organizational research that emphasized human relations theories and management looked inward for the cause of, and response to, employees' concerns. Practices that addressed employees' careers, development, and organizational contribution were implemented but management continued to operate within the basic industrial age premise that control could be exerted over employees through authority, contract, or temptation (Kaufman, 2002; McKee, 1997).

The 1980s has been described as a period when significant change occurred in corporate America. Employee loyalty eroded amid heightened competition, globalization, and deregulation and organizations remained competitive through significant numbers of mergers and acquisitions. Socio-technical work systems became important and a growth in organizational development interventions, such as total quality management, became popular. Behavior based research offered employers solutions that focused on human relations and organizational behavior as an alternative to solutions based on the traditional economics-based theories of the past (Kaufman, 2002). The Resource Based View of the Firm was popularized as an organizational theory and professed that human capital provides a competitive advantage for organizations by providing employees with capabilities that are rare, valuable, nonimitable and nontransferable (Lepak & Snell, 1999). Through this emerging theoretical framework, a focus on talent management and the ability to attract, develop and retain resources, became important to organizational management and placed increased pressure on human resource organizations to operate more strategically regarding the staffing and development of their organizations. In parallel with these organizational changes, the human resources profession grew and its role become more global, strategic, and bottom-line focused.

The Role of Strategic Partner within Organizations

As a profession, Human Resources moved through evolutionary phases focused on administrative HR practices, serving internal customers with cost and process efficiency, aligning the organizational and human resource strategies, and, finally, to the use of human capital as a critical organizational tool (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2003). As management's expectations of the nature of the HRM system within the organization changed from one that was operational to that which is strategic in nature, HR professionals found their organizational role, and the expectations of that role, changing as well. Managements' understanding of the human capital system's impact on organizational performance led to increasing demands that HR professionals function as strategic partners who design and deliver an important, strategic asset. At the same time management requests HR to perform this expanded and strategic role, they rely on HR professionals to perform routine administrative and transactional functions. The reality is that HR professionals serve a variety of concurrent roles, both operational and strategic (Brockbank, 1999; Cabrera & Cabrera, 2003; Ulrich, 1987, 1998; Weatherly, 2003). Both the functions and levels of human resource management systems and the roles that HR professionals fill within the organization (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003; Cabrera & Cabrera, 2003; Schoonover, 2003(Weatherly, 2003) have been described through various types of strategic models. These models recognize the HR professional with concurrent roles, serving to create new organizational structures and work systems while also coaching employees in development and change processes (van Marrewijk & Timmers, 2003). In addition, while this duality of roles is apparent, and administrative functions are necessary, the most compelling role that HR professionals must successfully perform for their organization is one that is strategic.

Conceptual agreement can be found regarding the purpose of a strategic partner, but differing definitions of this critical role reside within evolving HR competency models. Brockbank & Ulrich (2003) define a strategic partner as one who contributes to culture management, fast change, strategic decision-making, and market driven connectivity. Lawler & Mohrman (2003) describe the strategic partner role as encompassing areas of organizational design and development, employee development, and recruitment and selection, and Cabrera discusses the role of strategic partner as a continual evaluation of alignment between current HR practices and the business objectives of the firm, especially noting the effort to design policies and practices that maximize this alignment (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2003). To evolve as a profession, HR must develop professionals who deliver critical competencies and effectively serve their organization as a strategic partner. It is of greater concern to most academics and professionals that the skills identified as necessary to function as a strategic partner such as strategic planning, change management, and organizational design, are those where the most skill is needed (Lipiec, 2001), yet there is the lowest satisfaction with current HR professionals' ability to deliver the skill (Lawler, 2003).

HR Competencies and Competency Models

Competence, competencies, and competency models have their theoretical beginnings in behavioral psychology and the search to understand what is necessary to ensure an individual successfully performs a job (Rothwell & Lindholm, 1999). Competence is defined as the state or quality of being adequately or well qualified, a specific range of skill, knowledge, or ability (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2000). Competencies are behaviors that

distinguish effective performers from ineffective ones and result in performance excellence or strategic advantage ((Rothwell & Lindholm, 1999). As defined, competencies can be applied to both individual and organizational performance (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003; Dalton, 1997; Rowe, 1995). Rowe (1995) defined competencies as skills or standards of performance whose basis of measurement is present focused, simply pass or fail, and individuals are found to be competent or not; there is no continuum or scale. Competency models are schematics of the skills and attributes a person must successfully perform in a specific role or position (Dalton, 1997). Different from competencies, competency models are future focused and support continuing skill development toward attainment of excellent performance, not just minimum standards (Rowe, 1995). Many organizations create competency models to describe motives, traits, skills, and abilities that effective performers consistently display. Once established, competency models are used by organizations to drive recruiting and development activity and provide a methodology to support growing legal requirements that call for organizational selection criteria to be job related.

Prahalad and Hamel introduced the concept of competencies as a phenomenon with application for organizations as well as individuals (Rothwell & Lindholm, 1999) and the term core competency has become synonymous with the strengths of an organization and how it achieves competitive advantage. Competency models have been studied as predictors for the improvement of organizational human resource management (HRM) systems and Ulrich ultimately defined the link between organizational competencies and organizational capability defining "competency-based HRM as the keystone in the bridge between individual career development and organizational strategy" (Rothwell & Lindholm, 1999). While much debate

continues on theoretical issues associated with competencies, competency models, and organizational capability, competency models have become a technique of choice for organizations to provide a linkage between individual employees and organizational strategy (Rothwell & Lindholm, 1999; Ulrich, 1987). Yet, while these models provide a useful tool(s), organizations continue to struggle with development of competencies and competency models and some researchers and practitioners express concern over the appropriate application of these models speculating they may actually perpetuate the status quo rather than provide movement toward improved capability (Dalton, 1997).

Within an organization's human resource management system, competency models are used to connect individuals with organizational strategy, and for this reason, HR professionals must be knowledgeable about these competency models and their application. Organizationally, HR professionals must understand development of strategic competency models that improve organizational capability by linking individuals with organizational strategy. Personally and professionally, HR professionals must understand models that define the necessary competencies of their chosen profession and develop the identified competencies that improve both their personal performance and that of their HR colleagues.

HR Competencies

Human resource management has moved from transactional work to that which is more strategically relevant. To support this change, many organizations have defined or adapted competency models to guide development of HR professionals in new skill sets; however, little change has been seen in effectively moving HR professionals to their new strategic role (Lawler III & Mohrman, 2003) and there is rising concern between both organizational management and

HR professionals that competency levels of HR professionals have not kept pace with the changing requirements of organizational management. Management's unhappiness with the performance of HR professionals has been reflected in a disturbing increase in the percentage of organizations placing an individual with little or no HR experience as the top HR leader of the organization (Lawler III & Mohrman, 2000; Schoonover, 2003). Arguably, some movement has been made in improving competency levels of HR professionals but skill gaps continue to exist in areas of strategic assessment, organizational design, development and learning, strategic staffing, and envisioning the future (Lawler III & Mohrman, 2003; Walker & Reif, 1999). And, while HR practitioners profess to be focused on developing strategic competencies, most efforts have actually been on developing competencies necessary to fulfill the current technical and regulatory requirements of the profession (B. E. Becker, Huselid, Pickus, & Spratt, 1997). It is currently speculated that only 10-35 percent of HR professionals possess the competencies required for the 21st century (Yeung, Woolcock, & Sullivan, 1996).

While any number of competencies for HR professionals have been identified, the key competency between high and low performing HR professionals has been found to be an understanding of an organization's external environment and the ability to develop a connection between that environment and the internal HR practices that create organizational capability. Developing models that adequately define the strategic behaviors and skills necessary to achieve this critical competency is essential to address rising concerns of both management and HR professionals (Walker & Reif, 1999).

HR Competency Models

Two general types of competency models have emerged from research conducted on the changing role of the HR professional. The first type of competency model identifies overall competencies for HR professionals and theorizes that there exists a single set of competencies for HR professionals (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003; Carrillo, 2002; Eichinger & Ulrich, 1995; Gorsline, 1996; Lawson & Limbrick, 1996; Sternberger, 2002; Ulrich et al., 1995; Walker & Reif, 1999; Yeung et al., 1996). The second type of competency model recognizes a distinction between competencies needed by HR professionals in different roles and levels, such as differences between functions within the HR profession, generalist, specialist, and business partner, and levels of HR professionals, executive management and individual contributors (Moghaddam, Walker, & Harre, 2003; Schoonover, 2003; Yeung et al., 1996). By far, the majority of research has resulted in competency models focused on a set of overall competencies for HR professionals. A review of research on HR competencies will inform readers of those skills and attributes identified as critical for HR professionals to succeed in the 21st Century.

Human Resource Competency Study. The Human Resource Competency Study (HRSC) was completed by Wayne Brockbank and Dave Ulrich in cooperation with the Society for Human Resource Management, University of Michigan Business School, and the Global Consulting Alliance. The HRSC is a longitudinal study that began in 1987 and completed four sequential phases, the most recent in 2002. The intent of the study was to identify the HR competencies necessary for HR professionals to be successful. With each phase of the study, the audience and intent was refined and expanded resulting in the most recent study whose assumptions were:

1. Business performance can be differentiated by the HR competencies deployed within the firm,
2. An organization's adoption of HR competencies is more effective than wholesale adoption,
3. The competencies of the entire HR department are made up of the sum of the competencies of each of its members, and
4. The HR practices and competencies needed by an organization will change over time.

Beginning with the results of their first study, themes of business knowledge, HR delivery and change management have consistently been identified as necessary competencies for HR professionals. In 1997, two additional themes of personal credibility and culture management were added and the latest survey, the most extensive conducted relative to responses from non-HR and global customers, clearly delineated five key competency domains that human resource professionals must master to be strategically relevant for their organizations. The five competency domains identified in the research are strategic contribution, business knowledge, personal credibility, HR delivery and HR technology (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003). Within these five domains, 17 competency factors describe behaviors necessary for success within the domain. The HRSC domains and competencies are delineated in Appendix A. The model that resulted from the Human Resource Competency Study supports one set of competencies for all HR professionals, does not distinguish between levels or specific roles and/or functions and has been utilized by SHRM in developing its professional HR programs.

Human Resource Planning Society study. The Human Resource Planning Society Board commissioned a study in 1994 whose purpose was to look into the future roles of HR (Eichinger & Ulrich, 1995). The study consisted of interviews with thought leaders in both North America

and Europe and found seven essential skills necessary for HR professionals to effectively function in their current role(s). In priority order, these competencies were a) business savvy/acumen, b) leading organizational change, c) knowledge of basic HR technologies, d) global strategic thinking, e) change management, f) problem-solving, and g) financial.

The study also looked at competencies thought leaders believed would be necessary for future success as HR professionals. In priority order, future competencies identified were a) global operations, b) business and financial savvy, c) problem solving, d) information technology, e) HR technology, f) change management, and g) organization effectiveness.

Bank of Montreal competency model. While academics have long supported competency research and model development, competency modeling has also been accomplished by private enterprises. Organizational realignment activity within The Bank of Montreal forced the structure of the HR department to change to meet the newly aligned organization's business requirements. In its own organizational change activity, the HR department identified three roles for HR professionals, experts who provide consulting advice, individuals who provide support services and conduct transactions, and the key role of Relationship Manager (Gorsline, 1996). The role of relationship manager is analogous to present day requirements for a strategic business partner and it was around this role that the Bank's HR organization focused its competency initiative. The organization defined two types of competencies necessary for success as a relationship manager, personal competencies and technical competencies. The personal competencies consisted of:

1. Understands the future
 - a. Conceptual thinking
 - b. Information Seeking
2. Focuses on the client
 - a. Listening, understanding and responding
 - b. Customer service focus
3. Influences-makes it happen
 - a. Impact and influence
 - b. Use of expertise
 - c. Flexibility
4. Seizes the initiative
 - a. Achievement motivation
 - b. Initiative

These personal competencies were supported by three technical competencies:

1. Business linkage
2. Generalist human resources services support and problem solving
3. Consulting and supporting change

Competencies for top HR executives. The Society for Human Resource Management commissioned a competency initiative in 1996 to create an overview of organizational trends in business, characterize the evolving role of HR, and describe competencies instrumental to the success of HR leaders (Lawson & Limbrick, 1996). This study found factors that were key to the development and validation of competency models. The two factors critical for competency models are its tie to the organization's strategy and core competencies and its ability to differentiate between average and superior performers. Competencies for HR leaders identified in the study were:

1. Goal and action management
2. Functional and organizational management
3. Influence management
4. Business knowledge

5. HR technical proficiency
6. Business linkage
7. Generalist human resources services support and problem solving

This competency study led to development of several initiatives by SHRM including educational programs, certification requirements, and development of the current SHRM learning system.

Study on HR competencies for the future. In their study, *Identifying and Developing HR Competencies for the Future: Keys to Sustaining the Transformation of HR Functions*, Yeung, Woolcock, and Sullivan (1996) propose a four-domain competency model that identifies critical core competencies for senior HR generalists, HR specialists in shared service centers, and HR experts in centers of expertise. The proposed model differentiates critical competencies from desirable competencies within four HR roles. The four competency domains identified by the study are:

1. Core competencies
 - a. Business knowledge/acumen
 - b. Customer orientation
 - c. Effective communication
 - d. Credibility and integrity
 - e. Systematic perspective
 - f. Negotiation and conflict resolution
2. Leadership Competencies
 - a. Leadership skills and capability
 - b. Leadership attributes
 - c. Change advocacy
3. HR Expertise
 - a. Knowledge of best in class HR practices
 - b. Design and deliver HR services effectively
 - c. Apply technology to HR
 - d. Measure the effectiveness of HR practices

4. Consultation Skills
 - a. Influencing skills
 - b. Consulting skills (diagnosis, problem solving, contracting)
 - c. Change facilitation and implementation (OD and OE skills)
 - d. Collaboration and team building

A key finding of this research was that competencies necessary for HR professionals to be successful were found to be relevant and existent across a wide spectrum of industries.

Human Resource leaders: capability strengths and gaps. James Walker and William Reif (1999) found that HR leaders must fill a broader role within the management team than traditionally thought, including contributing more of their leadership capability. Two capabilities were documented as critical for effective performance as HR leaders.

1. Core Capabilities
 - a. Business knowledge
 - b. HR functional knowledge
 - c. Mindset
 - d. Interacting with others
 - e. Individual performance
2. Leadership Capabilities
 - a. Shaping business strategy
 - b. Developing HR strategy
 - c. Leading change
 - d. Aligning HR processes
 - e. Achieving results

The key finding from the Walker and Reif study was that HR professionals need to approach their work more from a business perspective than an HR perspective.

Changing role of the HR profession. A dissertation written by William Sternberger in 2002 looked at perceived importance ratings and proficiency levels of HR professionals in an

attempt to detect gaps in competency areas. The four competencies identified as critical by Sternberger were:

1. Management/Leadership skills
2. Strategic management perspective
3. HR technical skills
4. Internal consulting skills
 - a. Developing corporate culture to enhance strategy and organization development
 - b. Aligning education and development programs to business requirements
 - c. Designing incentive plans to motivate employees
 - d. Providing creative solutions for business manager

Sternberger found that the importance of HR competencies is consistent among industries regardless of size and functional responsibilities.

Human Resource Competencies for the New Century (HRCNC). In 1988, Dr. Stephen Schoonover, in conjunction with the Society for Human Resource Management, released the study, *Human Resource Competencies for the Year 2000*. The study was a result of organizational research, benchmarking interviews, literature reviews and discussions with HR leaders that occurred from 1991-1997. Like the HRSC, the HRCNC was a longitudinal study recently updated in 2003 to reflect the changing nature of the HR profession.

Schoonover's (2003) latest research validated three key human resource roles, HR product/service specialist, HR generalist, and HR strategist, all supported by an HR competency framework comprised of personal attributes, leadership and management competencies, HR core competencies, and HR role-specific competencies. (See Appendix C) The HRCNC competencies are arranged in building blocks so individuals may select competencies necessary for current

performance as well as those needed for development of an individual's career path. Both personal attributes and HR core competencies are identified as building blocks necessary for all HR professionals in every role. Two building blocks, Leadership & Management Competencies and Role-Specific Competencies, are associated with behaviors necessary for specific positions or roles. A critical aspect of the HRCNC model is the addition of leadership and management requirements that focus on the aspects of leading people, when necessary, and performing tasks, or administrative competencies, as needed. The HRCNC competencies represent the compilation of competencies necessary for performance of the entire HR team and, as such, in larger organizations these competencies may be distributed throughout the HR organization.

Comparison of Competency Models

The review of HR competency models reflects commonalities around the competencies of strategic contribution, delivery of technical HR competencies, personal skills, HR technology, and business acumen. Expertise in the technical delivery of HR functions such as compensation and benefits, selection and placement, training and development, employee and labor relations, and HR technology should be assumed to be a minimum requirement for HR professionals, and is reflected in each competency model. Additionally, all competency models reflect a strategic contribution by HR professionals, though this competency is identified in a variety of forms between models characterizing it as organizational development, change advocacy and management, culture development and management, and connectivity to the external environment. Of particular importance in the strategic contribution competency is an HR professional's orientation to change management. It is important that HR professionals are effective in using change management techniques and activities, but also that they are able to

increase the capability of the organization to implement change faster. Finally, all models mention the need for HR professionals to execute the business of HR and deliver results. It is important to note that within these competency models a significant number of competencies needed by HR professionals lie outside of the traditional disciplines of HR (Kaufmann, 1999). While HR professionals may achieve competence within any identified area of the model, the true test of HR's ability to create value for their organization is whether or not HR professionals can translate these competencies into activities and finally into organizational results (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003; Ulrich).

The research on HR competencies clearly points to important tenets for HR professionals. First, the competencies necessary to be successful as an HR professional can, and have been, identified. These competencies are relevant regardless of business size, industry, job titles, hierarchical level, or functional responsibilities (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003; Lawson & Limbrick, 1996; Schoonover, 2003; Sternberger, 2002; Walker & Reif, 1999; Walker & Stopper, 2000; Yeung et al., 1996). The key for HR professionals is to understand the importance of the strategic nature of their job and to clearly tie the HR system to the organizational strategy. To do this effectively, HR professionals must learn to approach their work from a business perspective, not solely from the perspective of HR.

There is a continuing need for HR professionals to develop the competencies necessary to be effective within their organizations and while a number of educational alternatives are available, there is no clear-cut standard for a course of study (Langbert, 2005). One key opportunity to develop HR competencies is through a university education, either formal degree programs or individual courses. However, the ability of university programs to deliver the

required competencies for HR professionals has been a growing concern of academics and practitioners alike (Kaufman, 1999; Thacker, 2002; Van Eynde & Tucker, 1997)

HR Education

The modern university has many purposes, one being the preparation of adults for the workplace (DiConti, 2004). Continuing educational opportunities, including graduate programs, develop working adults to continue to refine their current work skills and/or change professional careers. As the HR discipline evolved, universities and colleges developed, and continuously improved, programs and HR curriculums to support the changing needs of multiple types of organizations (Brockbank, 1999; Thacker, 2002; Way, 1999). While there is consensus that the HR profession has a significant body of knowledge, there is inconsistency in the content of university and college HR curriculums resulting in tremendous variability from program to program (Symposium, 2004). Universities have approached HR curriculums from two different perspectives resulting in two types of HR curriculums. The first type of curriculum focuses on the organization's external environment as catalyst for problems and challenges, while the second approach focuses internally, citing the source of organizational problems as resident within the organization itself. Understanding the historical beginnings of these two types of HR curriculums contributes to understanding the state of current academic programs.

University HR Curriculums

Organizational theory during the Industrial Age focused on transactional cost economics and scientific management principles as organizations attempted to create the most efficient form of organizing employees (Lepak & Snell, 1999). With the high incidence of unionism prevalent

at the time, organizations' Personnel Departments functioned largely as administrators of labor contracts, bargaining issues and the bureaucracy of employing people. One university recognized a need to support skill development of HR professionals who dealt with these types of organizational issues, and in 1915 Dartmouth established the first course on employment management. Subsequent University HR programs focused on economic models that described the impact of Labor on a firm's financials, and Industrial Relations subjects remained at the forefront of HR curriculums. These early curriculums supported an applied economics approach rather than current neoclassical economics taught in Business schools today (Kaufman, 2002). The applied economics approach informed an externalist perspective of the organization and emphasized the three basic approaches to workplace regulation, employees, employers and community. During these early years of HR curriculums, courses were taught in Business schools and economics departments, and this placement of the HR curriculum remained prevalent through the 1950s.

During the 1960s and 1970s, an increase in societal pressure to transform the workplace led to increased employment legislation and forced HR professionals into roles of compliance, requiring them to increase their functional knowledge of key HR disciplines and laws. As society increased regulation of the workplace, a growth of behavioral science research pointed to improving management behaviors and developing employees as key factors in improving organizational effectiveness. Unionism was on the decline and the human relations movement offered employers solutions that focused on human relations and organizational behavior theory as an alternative to the economics-based theories of the past (Kaufman, 2002). In addition to compliance responsibilities, HR departments now found themselves as the advocate and voice of

employees within the organization. A significant number of universities began offering HR degrees that supported fundamental HR disciplines such as staffing, training & development, employment law, and compensation and benefits, reflecting a shift from an external perspective of the firm to an internal one (Kaufman, 2002).

Heightened competition, globalization and deregulation of the 1980s resulted in a business community with an overcapacity in manufacturing and desperately working to fundamentally change the way it operated. Organizations moved quickly through mergers and acquisitions causing the workplace to erupt into chaos, yet organizations continued to call for cost cutting, which led to redeployment, downsizing, and benefit redesign. HR professionals became concerned with work/family issues and diversity, while being held accountable for delivering cost reductions to the business. The psychological contract between employer and employee eroded as long-service employees were let go in efforts to reduce costs. Changes in business focus and an increase in both the number and type of organizational challenges supported a need for advanced study in HR work design and resulted in a growing number of universities offering masters programs (Way, 1999). These advanced programs remained focused on human relations theory and aligned with traditional HR disciplines.

Most recently, changes in the work required of human resources organizations led to an increase in calls for HR professionals to be strategic and knowledgeable about business. As organizations better understand the increasing scarcity of employee resources, they are investing more heavily in talent management, specifically identifying those individuals who possess key competencies for their organization (Lepak & Snell, 1999). HR's focus has become effectively managing change and performing as a better business partner to the organization. Human Capital

theory emphasizes the need for organizations to focus on the return on investment (ROI) made in human capital and HR professionals are expected to translate human resource issues into the quantifiable language of business. These changes have increased calls for HR professionals with the appropriate skills, yet requests for universities to respond with appropriate HR curriculum changes have largely gone unanswered (Kaufman, 1996, 1999; Van Eynde & Tucker, 1997). Gaps continue to exist between the skills and competencies currently provided through university programs and those desired by organizational management (Hansen et al., 1996; Kaufman, 1994; Langbert, 2005; Thacker, 2002; Van Eynde & Tucker, 1997).

Curriculums for Human Resource Management programs are, indeed, vastly different. An extract of HR graduate programs taken in August 2005 from the website for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), found 149 programs offering programs in the Human Resource space. Universities voluntarily list their programs on the SHRM website at no charge by responding to a 10-page survey that requests specific information regarding the university's program. SHRM summarizes program information provided by the university and offers potential students information on location, degree, university overview/program description, degree requirements, tuition, program delivery, faculty, students, program resources, curriculum, career services, points of excellence, contact information, and admission deadlines (<http://shrm.org/foundation/directory>). Because there is a wide variety of programs offered within the human resources field, SHRM has qualified programs into seven categories based on program emphasis, Business Administration, Human Resource Development, Human Resource Management, Industrial Relations/Labor Relations, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Management, and Organizational Development/Organizational Behavior. A description of these

program categories is included in Appendix B. Table 2 identifies the categorization of the 149 programs listed on the SHRM website in August 2005.

Table 2 HR Graduate Programs by Type as Listed on the SHRM Website

Program Type	Number of Programs
Business Administration	28
Human Resource Management	55
Human Resource Development	10
Industrial Relations/Labor Relations	15
Industrial/Organizational Psychology	19
Management	10
Organizational Development/Organizational Behavior	7
Other	5

Of the 55 Universities offering Human Resource Management (HRM) degrees, a wide variation existed in the types of fundamental HR courses required to achieve the HRM degree. Using the six fundamental courses identified by the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) as a guideline for the HR body of knowledge, courses within these 55 HR curriculums were reviewed. A wide variation existed between the number of required courses for an HRM degree from a low of zero to a high of six foundational HR courses. Additionally, while it is known that today's HR professionals require a keen knowledge of business principles and concepts, a wide variation occurred in the number and type of business courses that were required by these same programs, ranging from zero to five business classes. Likewise, Business Administration curriculums that offered Human Resource specializations were reviewed and the same variation was found in number and types of required coursework in fundamental HR topics

ranging from zero to nine HR classes (Gordon & Williams, 2006). These same universities had little agreement, too, on the number of foundational courses necessary to achieve a specialization in HR. It is clear that standards do not exist to direct the program of study that is Human Resources.

Future of HR Education

The topic of University HR curriculums was addressed at a recent symposium conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management on the future of HR education. Participants at the conference concluded that:

1. There is no clarity or agreement on who represents the optimal target for structuring the HR curriculum.
2. Today's HR education is seen as covering the basics for a traditional HR role, but lacks in equipping students for the more strategic HR roles of the future.
3. The academic participants are generally frustrated by lack of student interest, identifiable career paths and internships.
4. Practitioners are less interested in HR degrees than in well-qualified business generalists.
5. The goal of HR education should be to equip graduating students with a minimum set of general HR knowledge.

(The SHRM symposium on the future of HR education, 2004)

These conclusions support concerns from academics and professionals about the ability of universities to deliver adequately trained HR professionals, at all levels. Because there is no defined course of study for HR, there continues to be significant differences between universities in the courses of study offered in the Human Resources space (Langbert, 2005) with a continuing mix of both externalist and internalist perspectives. HR professionals have not provided clarity

on this topic, either, finding themselves divided on what curriculum would best deliver professionals with the necessary HR competencies. Studies found that HR professionals were supportive of current HR curriculums opining they are best at preparing HR professionals, while also voicing concerns that none of the current specialized curriculums support appropriate competency levels needed by HR professionals (Van Eynde & Tucker, 1997). Specialized programs that develop technical HR experts often lack the business acumen foundation that is critical to supporting today's organizations. As an alternative to specialized HR programs, Adler & Lawler (1999) argue that MBA programs provide a better foundation for HR professionals than traditional HRM programs because they are more rigorous in their discussion and knowledge of the business world (Adler & Lawler, 1999; *The SHRM symposium on the future of HR education*, 2004), an argument many HR professionals seem to agree with (*The SHRM symposium on the future of HR education*, 2004). MBA programs, however, often lack fundamental coursework in HR functions necessary to serve as technical experts to the business. Many critics opine that the HR profession is too complex to expect any university program to adequately cover appropriate topics and competencies (Langbert, 2002, 2005).

Research released in 2004 by the Society for Human Resource Management regarding HR education resulted in development of curriculum templates to guide university HR programs. Key to these templates is a standardized body of HR knowledge. The templates focus on application of Human Resources practices within a business context with special emphasis on the strategic linkage between HR and the organization's strategies (*The SHRM symposium on the future of HR education*, 2004). Yet, while SHRM specifically identifies the need for critical knowledge of the key business areas of financial analysis and project management, the

curriculum templates, as designed, focus on traditional HR content areas without specifically calling for required study in quantitative courses such as finance, accounting or statistics.

Teaching HR content within a business context may or may not be the same as requiring learners to take classes that teach the core fundamentals of quantitative analysis that is necessary for a thorough knowledge of business. So, while competency research fundamentally agrees on the HR body of knowledge that is HR, there is no agreement on whether a specialized HR curriculum or a business curriculum is the appropriate one to prepare HR professionals (Kaufman, 1994, 1996; Langbert, 2005; Van Eynde & Tucker, 1997).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes a research experiment that tested hypotheses about the preparedness of recent graduates of master's level HR programs to perform the competencies identified by the Human Resource Competency Study (HRCS). The chapter includes a description of the hypotheses, research design, subjects, data collection procedures, data treatments, and analytic procedures that will be used in the study.

Research Questions

The evolution of human resource management as a profession has seen expectations of its organizational role move from transactional to strategic. Much work has been done to define or adapt competency models to guide development of HR professionals yet little change has been seen in effectively moving them to this new strategic role (Lawler III & Mohrman, 2003) and there is rising concern among both organizational management and HR professionals that competency levels have not kept pace with strategic requirements of organizations. While progress has been made to improve competency levels of HR professionals, skill gaps continue to exist in areas of strategic assessment, organizational design, development and learning, strategic staffing, and envisioning the future (Lawler III & Mohrman, 2003; Walker & Reif, 1999). Management's unhappiness with the performance of HR professionals has been reflected in an increasing trend in the percentage of organizations who employ an individual with little or no HR experience as the top HR leader of the organization (Lawler III & Mohrman, 2000; Schoonover, 2003). One of the most recent studies on HR competencies conducted by Brockbank & Ulrich identified five categories of competencies that HR professionals must

master to succeed in the world of Business, strategic contribution, business knowledge, HR delivery, HR technology, and personal credibility. The concern facing students, university faculty, employers and HR professionals is how to best prepare individuals to fulfill these competencies. While there are many ways HR professionals may improve competency levels, one avenue that historically has been used for development of HR professionals is University HR programs. Critics of current HR education programs, however, find them inadequate in developing necessary competencies for HR professionals (Kaufman, 1994, 1999; Thacker, 2002; Van Eynde & Tucker, 1997).

The research questions for this study were:

1. Do masters level graduates from University HR curriculums feel adequately prepared to perform the work of HR, as defined by the competencies in the Human Resource Competency Study?
2. Is there a difference in graduates' perception of competency preparedness based on the type of HR curriculum studied by the graduate?
3. Is there a difference in demographics of HR graduates based on the type of HR curriculum they studied?

For purposes of this study, the competencies identified in the Human Resource Competency Study were used to assess preparation of HR competencies. A Masters Degree in Human Resource Management is equal to an externalist curriculum and a MBA with HR specialization/concentration is equal to an internalist curriculum.

Hypotheses

Ha₁: There is a significant difference between externalist (MBAHR) and internalist (MHRM) masters level graduates regarding self-perception of preparedness in the five competency domains of the Human Resource Competency Study?

H₁: There is no significant difference between externalist (MBAHR) and internalist (MHRM) masters level graduates regarding self-perception of preparedness in the five competency domains of the Human Resource Competency study.

Ha₂: There is a significant difference between the current professional role of masters level HR graduates from externalist (MBAHR) and internalist (MHRM) curriculums.

H₂: There is no significant difference between the current professional role of masters level HR graduates from externalist and internalist curriculums.

Ha₃: There is a significant difference in the type of industry that employs masters level HR graduates from externalist or internalist curriculums.

H₃: There is no significant difference in the type of industry that employs masters level HR graduates from externalist or internalist curriculums.

Ha₄: There is a significant difference in the gender of masters level HR graduates from externalist or internalist curriculums.

H₄: There is no significant difference in the gender of masters level HR graduates from externalist or internalist curriculums.

Ha₅: There is a significant difference in the company size that employs masters level HR graduates from externalist or internalist curriculums.

H₅: There is no significant difference in the company size that employs masters level HR graduates from externalist or internalist curriculums.

Ha₆: There is a significant difference in the age of masters level HR graduates from externalist or internalist curriculums.

H₆: There is no significant difference in the age of masters level HR graduates from externalist or internalist curriculums.

Ha₇: There is a significant difference in the grade point of masters level HR graduates from externalist or internalist curriculums.

H₇: There is no significant difference in the grade point of masters level HR graduates from externalist or internalist curriculums.

Research Design

The study used a causal comparative research design because it is often used to determine cause-effect relationships between two or more groups and an independent variable (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The independent variable in the research design was the HR graduate's curriculum of study and the dependent variable was the HR graduate's perception of their personal preparedness to perform the HR competencies as indicated by ratings provided by the graduate. This quantitative methodology was used to verify the stated hypotheses and allowed testing of the cause-effect relationship between university curriculum(s) and preparation of HR graduates (Robson, 2002; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Subjects

The relevant population was graduates of masters level HR programs. The original sampling frame was graduates from years 2001-2003, inclusive, from university programs as identified on the website of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). The study years of 2001-2003, inclusive, were used because it was thought that these graduates would have been employed for approximately three years thereby allowing time for them to assess their capabilities relative to the HR competencies.

An extract of HR graduate programs was obtained in August 2005 from the website for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). At that time, 149 graduate programs in Human Resources were listed on the SHRM website. Based on SHRM program categorization, the two graduate program curriculums deemed appropriate for this research study were Business Administration and Human Resource Management. Fundamentally, MBA programs with HR

specializations, which offer foundational business classes, represented externalist program curriculums. Internalist curriculums were represented by Human Resource Management degrees that offer traditional disciplines such as training, staffing, compensation/benefits, recruiting and retention, and Employment Law.

In order to identify whether or not a difference exists between types of university curriculums, the sample population for the research must use curriculums that are disparate in coursework. In other words, a MBA with an HR specialization that requires a high number of HR courses could be essentially the same curriculum as an HRM program that requires a high number of business courses. For both Business Administration (w/HR specialization) programs and Human Resource Management programs listed on the website, the curriculums were analyzed based on individual courses required to obtain the program's degree. HRM curriculums were reviewed based on whether courses were required in five core business areas, accounting, finance, management, marketing, and business functional areas. Fifty-five Human Resource Management programs were reviewed and the summary of this analysis is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of HRM Programs by Required Business Courses

# of required business courses	# of HRM programs
5	9
4	10
3	5
2	9
1	12
0	10
	55

In a similar manner, 28 MBA programs were reviewed to ascertain the number of HR courses required to earn the MBA with HR specialization. Courses in the six core areas of the HR body of knowledge as identified by HRCI (www.hrci.org) were used for this review. Core coursework was identified as compensation/benefits, development/training, employee relations, employment law, recruiting/retention, and labor relations. A summary of these programs is provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Number of MBA programs by Required HR Core Courses

# of required HR courses	# of Business programs
6	6
5	6
4	3
3	4
2	2
1	3
0	4
	28

To obtain a sample population that fulfilled the requirement for disparate curriculums, HRM programs with three or more business courses, and MBA programs with four or more basic HR courses were removed from the sample population. By omitting these programs, 13 MBA programs and 31 HRM programs remained that fit the established criteria and were deemed disparate in curriculum.

All 44 of the Universities that fit the criteria were sent a letter requesting information on appropriate graduates. The following information was requested from the universities for graduates from years 2001-2003 (inclusive):

1. Graduates' names (2001 – 2003, inclusive)
2. Permanent addresses (or mailing addresses)
3. E-mail
4. List of employers who have hired your graduates

A list of employers who hire graduates from relevant programs was also requested for future research opportunities. Due to privacy policies established at the individual universities, none of the Universities who responded indicated a willingness to provide the requested graduate information. For this reason, an alternative methodology to obtain information was necessary.

The approved alternative method of obtaining participants was to send an e-mail to each SHRM State Council President asking that they either put the request for research study participation in a statewide SHRM newsletter or provide the invitation to appropriate local Chapter Presidents to include in a local member newsletter. Fifty-three contacts, 50 State Councils plus the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico, were provided research study information. A copy of the e-mail to these contacts and the proposed e-mail for participants is attached in Appendix C.

While the original sampling frame was graduates from years 2001-2003, inclusive, from university programs as identified on the website of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the revised sampling frame was all SHRM member graduates of masters level HR programs from any year, which may include individuals who are graduates from Universities not listed on the SHRM website but would preclude graduates who are not members of SHRM but graduated from a University listed on the SHRM website. This change allowed a wider sampling frame to be used and potentially provided a broader participation level. The change in sampling frame required only minor changes to the demographic section of the survey

instrument. Since no changes were made to the competency section of the survey instrument, it was not necessary to redo the reliability testing.

Survey Instrument

The research study used a quantitative methodology with a survey instrument developed based on the five competency domains and 17 competency factors identified in the Human Resource Competency Study (HRSC) (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003). To improve statistical reliability, the HR technology domain was divided into two competency factors, one that was operational and one that was strategic. This resulted in 18 competency factors that resided within the five competency domains. A Likert scale was used on the questionnaire with the following ratings, 1-Not prepared, 2-Partially prepared, 3-Prepared, and 4-Greatly prepared. The graduate was asked the following question on the survey, “based on the courses you studied to obtain your graduate degree, please select the number that most closely represents your assessment of whether or not you feel personally prepared to perform each competency factor”. A statement describing each competency factor was listed on the questionnaire.

Demographic questions were asked to understand whether there was a difference between graduate groups relative to the factors of size of company, type of industry, job role, gender, age and grade point average and the curriculum studied. For example, was there a relationship between a graduate’s perception of personal preparedness and company size or industry? Was there a relationship between graduate’s perception of personal preparedness and age, gender, or job role? Did grade point average have any correlation to an HR graduates’ perception of their

personal preparedness to perform the HR competencies? See Appendix D for the survey instrument.

Validity and Reliability

To establish content validity, the survey was provided to a small group of SPHR certified professionals to determine whether the survey was clear, understandable and measured the appropriate content. Feedback provided by this group of individuals indicated that no changes were necessary to the wording or format of the survey. To establish reliability, the questionnaire was given to three classes of HR students at Wichita State University, one section of HRM 666–Human Resource Selection, one section of HRM 669–Training and Development, and one section of HRM 668–Compensation and Benefits, for a total population of 46 participants. The questionnaire provided to students for reliability testing and the informed consent form used for reliability testing are attached as Appendix E.

Questionnaire responses were checked for reliability using the split-half technique with the Spearman-Brown correction formula to adjust for the effect of test length. The survey was reliable when the Spearman-Brown formula yielded a number of .7629. Minor adjustments were made to the wording for the fast change competency factor because two individuals failed to answer that question and there was some concern that there was confusion with the definition.

Data Collection

Once the survey instrument was deemed valid and reliable, it was sent to the list of 53 SHRM contacts for dissemination to their membership. To facilitate ease of participation, the surveys were conducted using an on-line survey instrument,

SurveyMonkey(www.surveymonkey.com). SurveyMonkey allowed a consent form to be included in the survey so the participant must respond affirmatively to the consent form before accessing the survey. Once the surveys were sent to the list of individuals, feedback was received from some individuals requesting an extension of the response period because they had newsletters that only went to their membership on a monthly basis. The response period was extended based on these requests. An e-mail was sent to the 53 SHRM contacts informing them of the survey extension.

Data Analysis

All data from respondents was downloaded from SurveyMonkey into Excel worksheets and stored for analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Ninety-three participants accessed the survey site and agreed to participate; however, only 66 actually completed the survey. After reviewing the survey responses, one survey was excluded from the final group because the respondent failed to answer appropriately to several. This resulted in 65 surveys to be used for data analysis.

Means, percentage, rankings, and standard deviations were calculated to describe the survey data. Descriptive statistical summaries were developed to provide analysis of responses by frequency and percentage to allow better understanding of the summary characteristics of the respondents (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). Ranking of the means was used to determine which competencies the two groups felt most prepared to perform within the five competency domains. These rankings allowed comparisons to be made both within and between the two groups.

All hypotheses were tested using statistical significance between groups methodology. Hypothesis 1 looked at whether any difference existed between the two groups in their perception of personal preparedness. Since the study examined the relationship between two variables, the null hypothesis was tested using a t-test for independent means (Salkind, 2004) with an alpha level of .05. Effect size was determined by using *Cohen's d*. Hypotheses 2-7 postulated a difference between the two groups of graduates based on six demographic factors. These hypotheses were tested using chi-square since it is an established procedure for analysis of non-parametric data (Robson, 2002), also with an alpha level of .05.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter presents results of the survey data. The relevant population for this research was graduates of masters level HR programs including either externalist programs represented by MBA programs with HR specializations (MBAHR), or internalist programs, represented by a Masters in Human Resource Management (MHRM) degree. A request for graduates of masters programs to participate in the research study was sent to 50 SHRM State Council Chairs and Council Chairs in the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico, who were asked to forward the communication to their membership. Potential respondents were directed to a site to access the survey instrument. Utilizing a Likert Scale where 1=Not Prepared, 2=Partially Prepared, 3=Prepared, and 4=Greatly Prepared, graduates were asked to evaluate their perception of their preparedness, as a result of their graduate degree, to perform the HR competencies as identified in the Human Resource Competency Study. Demographic questions were asked to obtain information regarding potential relationships between factors such as size of company, type of industry, position, age, gender, job role and grade point average and the type of degree the graduate received. Sixty-five valid surveys were completed and used for data analysis. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

Demographics of Respondents

Survey responses were separated into groups based on the respondent's graduate degree. Thirty-four respondents (52 percent) were graduates of MHRM programs, externalist curriculum, and 31 respondents (48 percent) were graduates of MBA programs with HR specialization or

concentration, internalist curriculum. Responses for all demographic questions are reported relative to these two groups. Table 5 displays demographic data for job role, age, and gender.

Table 5. Job Role, Age and Gender of MHRM and MBAHR Graduates

	Frequency		Total	Percentage of total
	MHRM ^a	MBAHR ^b		
Role				
Specialist	3	3	6	9%
Generalist	25	24	49	76%
Academia	1	1	2	3%
Consultant	5	3	8	12%
N = 64				
Age				
Under 25	0	0	0	0%
25-34	8	10	18	28%
35-44	7	10	17	26%
45-54	13	8	21	32%
>54	6	3	9	14%
N = 65				
Gender				
Female	26	24	50	77%
Male	8	7	15	23%
N = 65				
^a n = 34. ^b n = 31.				

Job Role

Of the 65 respondents, 64 were currently working in the HR field. The only respondent not working in the field of Human Resources was a MBA graduate. Regarding their current role

in Human Resources, 6 graduates (9 percent) listed their role as specialist, 49 (76 percent) as generalist, 2 (3 percent) as academia and 8 (12 percent) of the graduates identified their job role as consulting. The two groups of graduates had a similar distribution with regard to job roles. Although one participant identified him or herself as not working in HR, the participant responded affirmatively to the job role question because of their current employment in academia. This explained the disparity between number of respondents who answered the question of whether or not he or she currently worked in HR (n = 64) and the number of respondents who answered the question about their current professional role (n = 65).

Age and Gender

None of the survey participants was under the age of 25. Eighteen graduates (28 percent) age 25–34, 17 (26 percent) were age 35–44, 21 (32 percent) were age 45–54, and 21 of the graduates (14 percent) were over the age of 54. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were female and 23 percent were male. As in job role, the two groups of graduates were distributed similarly across both age and gender demographics.

Industry and Company Size

Table 6 displays demographic information about type of industry and company size for survey respondents. Seven graduates (11 percent) worked in companies with less than 50 employees, 8 (12 percent) worked in companies employing 51 to 100 employees, 23 (35 percent) worked in companies employing 101–500 employees, 5 (8 percent) worked in companies employing 501-1,000 employees and 22 graduates (34 percent) worked in companies that employ over 1,000 employees. The majority of graduates (58 percent) worked in companies with 500 employees or less. The industry that employed the largest number of graduates was Services

where 41 percent of graduates worked. General manufacturing, which employed 18 percent, and Public Administration, which employed 11 percent, were the next highest industries with employment for the remainder of the graduates spread throughout other industries. As noted in demographic questions regarding job role, age and gender, the graduate groups were distributed similarly regarding industry and company size.

Universities

Survey respondents represented 48 universities in 20 states. Fourteen respondents graduated from universities that exist in multiple locations so a specific site was not determined. One respondent was a graduate from a university in the United Kingdom. A list of universities as identified by the graduates is provided in Appendix F.

Year of graduation

Respondents graduated between years 1978 and 2007 as displayed in Table 7. Two respondents (3 percent) graduated before 1980, 13 respondents (20 percent) graduated between 1980 and 1989, 15 respondents (24 percent) graduated between 1990 and 1999 and 35 respondents (53 percent) graduated between 2000 and 2007. One individual failed to provide his or her year of graduation. Again, respondents were similar distributed across both graduate groups.

Table 6. Industry and Company Size of MHRM and MBAHR Graduates

	Frequency			Percentage of total
	MHRM ^a	MBAHR ^b	Total ^c	
Industry				
Agriculture	1	0	1	1%
Petroleum and mining	1	0	1	2%
Chemicals, allied products, pharmac	0	3	3	5%
General manufacturing	6	6	12	18%
Automotive	0	0	0	0%
Communications, high tech	1	1	2	3%
Retail and wholesale	1	3	4	6%
Financial Services	2	3	5	8%
Services	14	13	27	41%
Utilities	3	0	3	5%
Public Administration	5	2	7	11%
Number of employees in Company				
<50	4	3	7	11%
51 - 100	4	4	8	12%
101 - 500	11	12	23	35%
501 - 1000	4	1	5	8%
>1000	11	11	22	34%

^an = 34. ^bn = 31. ^cn = 65

Table 7. Graduation Year of MHRM and MBAHR Graduates

Year of Graduation	Degree		Total ^c	Percentage of total
	MHRM ^a	MBAHR ^b		
Pre 1980	2	0	2	3%
1980 - 1989	8	5	13	20%
1990 - 1999	7	8	15	24%
2000 - 2007	17	17	34	53%
Total	34	30	64	

^an = 34. ^bn = 30. ^cn = 64

Ranking of the Means

Competency Domains

The MHRM and MBAHR graduates' mean scores for each competency domain were calculated using SPSS Student Version 11.0 for Windows. The competency domains were ranked using the calculated mean score for each group. On a scale of 1-4, the higher the mean score the more prepared the graduate felt to perform the identified competency. The mean scores for both MHRM and MBAHR graduates are displayed in Table 8. Of the five competency domains, both MBAHR and MHRM graduates perceived their personal preparation for the competency of personal credibility to be the highest (M[MHRM] = 3.26, SD=.729, M[MBAHR] = 3.34, SD=.580), and preparation for the competency of HR technology (M[MHRM] = 2.01, SD=.89, M[MBAHR],SD=.83), to be the lowest.

Table 8. Rank Order of Means of Competency Domains for MHRM and MBAHR Graduates

Competency Domain	MHRM ^a			MBAHR ^b		
	M	SD	Rank	M	SD	Rank
Strategic Contribution	2.26	0.73	3	2.72	0.58	4
Personal Credibility	3.26	0.73	1	3.34	0.61	1
HR Delivery	2.72	0.69	2	2.81	0.58	3
Business Knowledge	2.18	0.76	4	2.86	0.70	2
HR Technology	2.01	0.89	5	2.51	0.83	5

^an = 34. ^bn = 31.

Competency Factors

Mean scores were also calculated for individual competency factors within each of the competency domains as displayed in Table 9. Within the domain of strategic contribution, both groups ranked their preparation for the competency factors of strategic decision-making as number one (M[MHRM]=2.50, SD=1.108, M[MBAHR]=2.97, SD=.752) and fast change (M[MHRM]=2.38, SD=.985, M[MBAHR]=2.71, SD=.864) as number two.

Competency factors associated with the domain of personal credibility were ranked the same by each graduate group with personal communications ranked first (M[MHRM]=3.35, SD=.812, M[MBAHR]=3.39, SD=.615), achieving results ranked second (M[MHRM]=3.24, SD=.781, M[MBAHR]=3.32, SD=.791), and effective relationships ranked third (M[MHRM]=.18, SD=.904, M[MBAHR]=3.18, SD=.791).

The domain of HR delivery includes the competency factors of staffing, human resource development, legal compliance, performance management, organization structure and HR

measurement. Both groups identified legal compliance as the competency factor for which they felt most prepared ($M[MHRM]=3.18$, $SD=1.029$, $M[MBAHR]=3.13$, $SD=.846$), but all other competency factors had mixed rankings between the two groups. It is noteworthy that HR measurement ranked at the low end of the rankings for both groups ($M[MHRM]=2.38$, $SD=.888$, $M[MBAHR]=3.13$, $SD=.938$) with the MBAHR graduates ranking their preparedness to perform this competency as fifth out of six competencies and the MHRM graduates ranking their preparation for this competency as sixth out of six.

No similarity existed between the two groups regarding their rankings for the domain of business knowledge, which includes value chain knowledge, value proposition knowledge, and labor knowledge. Finally, within the HR technology domain, both groups of graduates ranked each competency factor the same with preparation to deliver HR services ranked first ($M[MHRM]=2.15$, $SD=.925$, $M[MBAHR]=2.55$, $SD=.925$) and preparation for strategic technology ranked second ($M[MHRM]=1.88$, $SD=.946$, $M[MBAHR]=2.48$, $SD=.962$).

Overall, only four competency factors, personal communications ($M[MHRM]=3.35$, $SD=.812$, $M[MBAHR]=3.39$, $SD=.615$), achieving results ($M[MHRM]=3.24$, $SD=.781$, $M[MBAHR]=3.32$, $SD=.791$), effective relationships ($M[MHRM]=3.18$, $SD=.904$, $M[MBAHR]=3.18$, $SD=.791$) and legal compliance ($M[MHRM]=3.18$, $SD=1.029$, $M[MBAHR]=3.13$, $SD=.846$), received a mean score of 3.0 or higher by both groups of graduates indicating they felt prepared to perform the competency. Only MHRM graduates had competency factors that received less than 2.0 indicating they felt less than partially prepared to perform the competencies.

Table 9. Rank Order of Means of Competency Factors for MBAHR and MHRM Graduates

Competency Factors	MHRM ^a			MBAHR ^b			t
	M	SD	Rank	M	SD	Rank	
Strategic Contribution							
Culture Management	2.21	0.81	3	2.52	0.72	4	-1.62
Fast Change	2.38	0.99	2	2.71	0.86	2	-1.42
Strategic Decision-Making	2.50	1.11	1	2.97	0.75	1	-1.97
Market Driven Connectivity	1.94	0.85	4	2.68	0.98	3	-3.24
Personal Credibility							
Achieving Results	3.24	0.78	2	3.32	0.79	2	-0.45
Effective Relationships	3.18	0.90	3	3.18	0.90	3	-0.69
Personal Communications	3.35	0.81	1	3.39	0.62	1	-0.19
HR Delivery							
Staffing	2.68	0.91	4	2.74	0.96	4	-0.28
Human Resource Development	2.74	0.93	3	3.00	0.73	2	-1.27
Organization Structure	2.53	0.93	5	2.81	0.87	3	-1.24
HR Measurement	2.38	0.89	6	2.71	0.94	5	-1.45
Legal Compliance	3.18	1.03	1	3.13	0.85	1	0.20
Performance Management	2.79	0.88	2	2.48	0.77	6	1.51
Business Knowledge							
Value Chain Knowledge	2.00	0.95	2	2.94	0.96	2	-3.93
Value Proposition Knowledge	1.85	0.89	3	3.06	0.85	1	-5.58
Labor Knowledge	2.68	1.22	1	2.58	1.02	3	-0.34
HR Technology							
Use of technology to deliver HR services	2.15	0.93	1	2.55	0.92	1	-1.75
Strategic Technology	1.88	0.95	2	2.48	0.96	2	-2.54

^an = 34. ^bn = 31.

Competency factors that received less than 2.0 were market-driven connectivity (M=1.94, SD=.085), strategic technology (M=1.88, SD=0.95) and value proposition knowledge (M=1.85, SD=0.89).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one stated there was a significant difference between externalist (MBAHR) and internalist (MHRM) masters level graduates regarding self-perception of preparedness in the five competency domains of the Human Resource Competency Study. A t-test for independent samples was conducted for the five competency domains as well as each competency factor within the respective domain to see if any difference existed between the externalist (MBAHR) and internalist (MHRM) graduates. An alpha level of .05 was used for these tests. Table 10 displays the findings for the five competency domains.

The domains of personal credibility with a $t(63) = -0.053, p = 0.597$ and HR delivery with a $t(63) = -0.605, p = 0.547$ were not significant indicating there was no difference between the two groups of graduates relative to these two competency domains. However, three competency domains, strategic contribution with a $t(63) = -2.79, p = 0.007$, business knowledge with a $t(63) = -3.76, p < 0.00$, and HR technology with a $t(63) = -2.34, p = 0.023$, all yielded a significant difference between the groups of graduates. Of the five competency domains identified by the HRCS, there was a significant difference between the groups in three of the domains resulting in rejection of the null hypothesis that there is no difference in perception of preparedness between graduates of externalist (MBAHR) and internalist (MHRM) curriculums. There is a statistically significant difference between graduates of externalist (MBAHR)

programs and graduates of internalist (MHRM) programs with graduates of MBAHR programs felt more prepared in the competencies of strategic contribution, business knowledge and HR technology.

Table 10. T-test for Independent Samples on Perception of Preparedness of HR Competency Domains of MHRM and MBA Graduates

Strategic Contribution	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
MHRM	34	2.26	0.73	2.798*	0.007	0.698 ^b
MBAHR	31	2.72	0.58			
<hr/>						
Personal Credibility	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
MHRM	34	3.26	0.73	-0.531	0.597	0.133 ^a
MBAHR	31	3.34	0.61			
<hr/>						
HR Delivery	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
MHRM	34	2.72	0.69	-0.605	0.547	0.151 ^a
MBAHR	31	2.81	0.58			
<hr/>						
Business Knowledge	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
MHRM	34	2.18	0.76	-3.76*	0.00	0.935 ^c
MBAHR	31	2.86	0.7			
<hr/>						
HR Technology	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
MHRM	34	2.01	0.89	-2.34*	0.023	0.582 ^b
MBAHR	31	2.51	0.83			

* significant at $p < 0.05$

a = small

b = medium

c = large

Effect size. To understand whether or not the statistical difference between the two groups in the three competency domains was meaningful (Salkind, 2004), the effect size for the competency domains of strategic contribution, business knowledge and HR technology were calculated using Cohen's *d*. Results for this test are shown in Table 10. Guidelines suggest that a

Cohen's d value of 0.2 is small, 0.5 is medium, and 0.8 is large (Robson, 2002). Based on these guidelines, the graduates' degree program had a medium effect for both strategic delivery and HR technology although the effect size of strategic contribution was at the higher end of the medium range. The competency domain of business knowledge with an effect size of .935 showed that the degree program had a large impact on the graduates preparedness for the competencies within this domain.

To understand which competency factors contributed to the statistical difference between graduate groups, t-tests were performed on each competency factor within the competency domain. T-test results for the competency factors associated with the three competency domains found to be statistically different are displayed in Table 11. T-test results for all competency domains are listed in Appendix G. Only the competency factors associated with the competency domains found to have a statistically significant difference will be discussed.

Strategic contribution. Within the strategic contribution competency domain, there are four competency factors, culture management, fast change, strategic decision-making, and market driven change. A t-test for independent samples performed on these factors yielded a $t(63) = -3.24, p = 0.002$ for market driven change. The t-test for independent samples yielded t-values that were not significant for strategic decision making, $t(63) = -1.97, p = 0.053$), culture management, $t(63) = -1.62, p = .109$), and fast change, $t(63) = -1.42, p = 0.16$, indicating no significant difference between the two graduate groups relative to these three competency factors. Therefore, the competency factor within the strategic contribution competency domain that is most significant relative to the difference between the graduate groups was market driven change. The competency factor of strategic decision making, however, with a $p = 0.053$, which is

very close to the significance level of $p = 0.05$, could also be considered a factor within the strategic competency domain that contributed to the group's difference.

Business knowledge. Three competency factors, value chain knowledge, value chain proposition, and labor knowledge, comprise the competency domain of business knowledge. A t-test of independent samples for the competency factor of labor knowledge resulted in a $t(63) = -0.340$, $p = 0.735$, which was not significant. However, the two competency factors of value chain knowledge with a $t(63) = -3.93$, $p < 0.000$ and value proposition knowledge with a $t(63) = -3.93$, $p < 0.000$, were both significant. Therefore, both of these competency factors contributed to the statistically significant difference between the graduate groups within the business knowledge domain in that MBAHR graduates felt more prepared than MHRM graduates.

HR technology. The competency factors within the HR technology domain are preparedness to use technology to deliver HR services and strategic HR technology. T-tests for independent samples conducted on these competency factors showed no difference at $p < 0.05$ between the two groups relative to the use of technology to deliver HR services, $t(63) = -1.74$, $p = 0.086$. A significant difference did exist between the two groups for the competency factor of strategic HR technology, which yielded a $t(63) = -2.54$, $p = 0.014$. Within the HR technology domain, then, MBAHR graduates felt more prepared relative to the competency factor of strategic HR technology than the MHRM graduates.

Hypotheses Two through Seven

Hypotheses 2 through 7 looked at demographic information to see whether differences existed between the two groups of graduates relative to six different types of demographics, job role, age, gender, industry type, size of company and grade point average. Because this data is

non-parametric, a Pearson Chi-Square test was used to test whether or not there was a relationship between the two factors that would be unlikely to be explained by chance (Robson, 2002). If the chi-square is statistically significant, there is a relationship between the two factors (Robson, 2002).

Hypothesis 2 through 6 postulated there was no significant difference between graduates of externalist (MBAHR) and internalist (MHRM) curriculums relative to five demographic factors, job role, age, gender, industry type, and size of company. Data provided in Table 12 shows results of the chi-square test for these demographic types. For the demographic factors of gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 65) = 0.008, p = 0.928$, age, $\chi^2(3, N = 65) = 2.81, p = 0.422$, company size, $\chi^2(4, N = 65) = 1.852, p = 0.763$, and industry, $\chi^2(9, N = 65) = 10.406, p = 0.319$, the chi-square analysis found no significance, therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted that there was no difference between the groups relative to these demographic factors.

Hypothesis seven stated there was no significant difference in grade point between graduates from externalist (MBAHR) or internalist (MHRM) curriculums. The Pearson chi-square test resulted in $\chi^2(3, N = 65) = 8.536, p = 0.014$, which was significant and resulted in rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that a significant difference did exist between the two graduate groups relative to their grade point average. MHRM graduates had a significantly higher grade point average than MBAHR graduates.

Table 11. T-Test of Independent Means for Competency Factors within Strategic Contribution, Business Knowledge, and HR Technology Domains

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Strategic Contribution					
Culture Management					
MHRM	34	2.21	0.808	-1.624	0.109
MBAHR	31	2.52	0.724		
Fast Change					
MHRM	34	2.38	0.985	-1.418	0.161
MBAHR	31	2.71	0.864		
Strategic Decision-Making					
MHRM	34	2.5	1.11	-1.972	0.053
MBAHR	31	2.97	0.752		
Market Driven Change					
MHRM	34	1.94	0.851	-3.243*	0.002
MBAHR	31	2.68	0.979		
Business Knowledge					
Value Chain Knowledge					
MHRM	34	2.00	0.953	-3.93	< 0.000
MBAHR	31	2.94	0.964		
Value Chain Proposition					
MHRM	34	1.85	0.892	-5.581*	< 0.000
MBAHR	31	3.06	0.854		
Labor Knowledge					
MHRM	34	2.68	1.224	-0.34	0.735
MBAHR	31	2.58	1.025		
HR Technology					
Use of tech to deliver HR Services					
MHRM	34	2.15	0.925	-1.75	0.086
MBAHR	31	2.55	0.925		
Strategic HR Technology					
MHRM	34	1.88	0.946	-2.54*	0.014
MBAHR	31	2.48	0.962		

*significant at $p < .05$

Summary of the Findings

The present study showed, using t-test for independent means and ranking of means, that graduates of MBAHR programs rated themselves statistically higher than MHRM graduates in personal preparedness to perform the HR competencies of strategic contribution, business knowledge and HR technology. There was no difference between the two groups of graduates relative to the competency domains of HR delivery and personal credibility. Additionally, the study showed a large effect of the graduate's degree on preparedness for the competency domain of business knowledge, a medium effect of the graduate's degree on the competency domains of HR technology and strategic contribution, and a small effect of the graduate's degree on the competency domains of HR delivery and personal credibility.

Table 12. Pearson Chi-Square Analysis for Degree and Demographics of MHRM and MBAHR Graduates

Demographic	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Grade point average	8.536	3	0.014
Age	2.81	3	0.422
Gender	0.008	1	0.928
Size of company	1.852	4	0.763
Industry	10.406	9	0.319
N =	65		

Regarding competency factors within the respective competency domains, the study suggest that specific competency factors contributed to the differences between the two groups. Within the competency domain of strategic contribution, the competency factor that contributed to the difference between the two groups was market driven change. The competency factors that contributed to the difference in the competency domain of business knowledge were value chain knowledge and value proposition knowledge and the competency factor that determined the difference in the competency domain of HR technology was strategic HR technology. In all these domains, the MBAHR graduates rated themselves higher than the MBAHR graduates relative to their preparedness to perform these competencies did.

Using chi-square testing, no significant differences were found between the two groups of graduates relative to the demographic factors of age, gender, company size, industry or job role. A significant difference did exist between the two groups relative to grade point average with MHRM graduates having grade point averages that were statistically higher than MBAHR graduates.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizations widely recognize that human capital is a key component of value creation and demand that human resource professionals lead efforts to develop the human resource strategies and processes that alter the performance and behavior of employees, align human resources with organizational strategy and deliver improved organizational capability (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003; Cabrera & Cabrera, 2003; Schoonover, 2003; van Marrewijk & Timmers, 2003). To successfully address these demands, HR professionals must be prepared with the appropriate competencies. These competencies have been identified by researchers and they are relevant regardless of business size, industry, job titles, hierarchical level, or functional responsibilities (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003; Lawson & Limbrick, 1996; Schoonover, 2003; Sternberger, 2002; Walker & Reif, 1999; Walker & Stopper, 2000; Yeung et al., 1996). One way for HR professionals to obtain competencies is through formal degree programs and two types of curriculums, externalist and internalist, have defined University efforts to address the needs of HR professionals. Both types of curricula exist within University HR programs today, but concerns exist about the ability of universities to deliver adequately trained HR professionals and there is continuing debate about whether a specialized HR curriculum or a business curriculum is more appropriate to prepare HR professionals (Kaufman, 1994, 1996; Langbert, 2005; Van Eynde & Tucker, 1997).

Restatement of Purpose

This research study had two purposes. First, the study was conducted to determine whether graduates of identified HR curriculums felt personally prepared to perform the competencies required of HR professionals and, second, to compare responses from graduates of

different HR curriculums to see if there was any difference in perception of personal preparedness based on type of HR curriculum studied by the graduate. For purposes of this study, an internalist curriculum was represented by a Masters in Human Resource Management and an externalist curriculum was represented by a MBA with an HR specialization or concentration. The competencies identified in the Human Resource Competency Study (HRCS), strategic contribution, personal credibility, HR delivery, business knowledge, and HR technology, were used to assess preparation of HR competencies.

The research study was conducted using a causal comparative design with a survey instrument developed based on the five HRSC competency domains. The questionnaire used a Likert scale and requested participants to rate their perception of personal preparedness relative to the competency factors identified within each of the five competency domains. The survey scale responses were 1 – not prepared, 2 – partially prepared, 3 – prepared, and 4 – greatly prepared. Content validity was established by providing the questionnaire to a small group of SPHR certified professionals. Reliability was established by providing the questionnaire to three classes of HR students at Wichita State University, and deemed reliable using the split-half technique with the Spearman-Brown correction formula. The survey instrument contained demographic questions to increase understanding about relationships between factors such as size of company, type of industry, position, gender, age and grade point and degree type.

The relevant population for this research was graduates of masters' level HR programs. The original sampling frame was graduates from years 2001-2003 (inclusive) from university programs as identified on the website of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Due to privacy policies, none of the Universities contacted chose to provide requested

information for graduates. The approved alternative method of obtaining participants was to provide the research study information to 53 individuals, 50 SHRM State Councils Chairs and Chairs in the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico, who were requested to forward the information to their membership. The study request directed participants to a site on SurveyMonkey where they could complete the survey instrument.

Sixty-five valid surveys were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to characterize graduates from the two sample groups representing different HR curriculums. Ranking of means was used to determine which competencies each group of graduates felt better prepared to perform. T-tests for independent means were used to determine whether a difference existed between graduates of externalist (MBAHR) and internalist (MHRM) curriculums in preparedness to perform the HR competencies. Chi-square tests were performed to see if any relationship existed between the type of curriculum the graduate studied and six demographic factors, age, gender, job role, industry, company size and grade point average.

Limitations

The design of this study was mainly limited by the fact that no effort was made to account for differences in teaching style or effectiveness of university faculty nor student ability, background or experiences. The study relied on graduates' perception of their preparedness to perform the HR competencies and required the graduate to distinguish the role of their university curriculum in contributing to their preparedness, which may have been difficult for them to do. Finally, the HR graduate program may have been the factor that contributed to the graduate's preparedness to perform the HR competencies.

Discussion

The results of the study suggest that externalist (MBAHR) curriculums may be better than internalist (MHRM) curriculums in preparing HR professionals to perform the competencies required by their profession as identified in the Human Resource Competency Study (HRCS). The study found a statistically significant difference between graduates from externalist (MBAHR) curriculums and internalist (MHRM) curriculums relative to their perception of preparedness to perform three of the five HR competencies identified in the HRCS, strategic contribution, business knowledge, and HR technology. No significant difference was found between the two groups relative to the remaining competencies of HR delivery and personal credibility. The study found no relationship between a graduate's degree and five of the demographic factors, age, gender, company size, industry and job role; however, a difference did exist regarding the graduate's degree and grade point average. Graduates from MHRM curriculums had significantly higher grade point averages than graduates of MBAHR curriculums.

Ranking of the Means

Competency domains. The study ranked the means of the five competency domains of the HRSC and found that both groups of graduates felt most prepared to perform the competencies associated with personal credibility and least prepared to perform competencies within the HR technology domain. It was not surprising that personal credibility was the highest ranked domain for both groups of graduates because the number one reason individuals choose HR as a career is their desire to work with people (Crail, 2007). It could follow, then, that relationship and communication skills would be strengths for individuals who chose this career.

Competency factors. Eighteen competency factors were used to conduct this study and the means of the competency factors were ranked within each of the five domains. Competency factors associated with personal credibility are achieving results, effective relationships and personal communication. Both groups ranked these factors the same with personal communications being the factor each group felt most prepared to perform. The personal communications factor is concerned with verbal and written communication, skills that should have been used extensively in obtaining their advanced degree.

Four competency factors comprise the strategic contribution domain, culture management, fast change, strategic decision-making and market-driven connectivity. Within this domain, both groups identified strategic decision-making as the competency they felt most prepared to perform. Strategic decision-making involves participation in decisions involving the direction of the business, asking difficult questions, and bringing to bear personal visions about the future of the business (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003), all competencies that involve significant use of personal communications, which graduates ranked as the number one competency within personal credibility. The competency factor of market-driven connectivity is defined as the process of leveraging market information to help navigate the organization through changing external customer and shareholder requirements (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003). The MHRM graduates ranked this competency fourth out of four competencies and the MBAHR graduates ranked it third out of four. This finding may be troublesome since the competency that distinguishes top performing HR professionals from their peers is the ability to develop a connection between the external environment and organizational HR practices. Therefore, the

ability of HR professionals to increase their skill level within the competency of market-driven connectivity would be important for their future success.

The HR delivery domain includes the traditional functions of staffing, development, legal compliance, performance management, and HR measurement. Rankings for competency factors in this domain were mixed for the two groups. However, it is noteworthy that both groups ranked HR measurement as sixth out of six factors, suggesting a need to improve the competency level of graduates in this area. Corporations recognize they must become more accountable for human and intellectual capital (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2004b) and the ability of HR professionals to deliver appropriate measurements to support this effort will be paramount to their success.

Value chain knowledge, value proposition knowledge and labor knowledge are the three factors that comprise the business knowledge domain. Again, rankings for these competencies were mixed between the groups. Acquisition of the competency factors associated with the business knowledge domain will be critical for HR professionals since it supports their ability to approach the work of HR from a business perspective rather than solely an HR perspective, a requirement levied on them by organizational management. However, more important than understanding business knowledge will be how effectively HR professionals can apply that knowledge to contribute strategically to the business (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003).

Finally, the HR technology domain consists of two competencies, using technology to deliver HR services and leveraging the strategic use of technology to build effective HR strategies and practices. Both groups of students ranked these competency factors the same with administration of HR services ranked first and strategic technology ranked second.

An observation made by looking at all 18 competency factors is that only four of the competency factors achieved means of 3.0 or greater indicating the graduates, as a group, felt prepared to perform those competencies. All three competencies in the personal credibility domain, as well as legal compliance within the HR delivery domain, received mean scores of 3.0 or higher. MHRM graduates were the only ones to have competencies whose mean score was below 2.0 indicating they were less than partially prepared to perform the competencies. Within this graduate group, the competencies that scored less than 2.0 were market-driven connectivity, value proposition knowledge and strategic technology.

Summary of the Hypotheses Tests

The study found a statistically significant difference in three of the five competency domains, strategic contribution, business knowledge, and HR technology, relative to graduates' perception of their preparedness to perform the competencies. MBAHR graduates felt they were better prepared than MHRM graduates relative to these three competency domains. There was no significant difference between the remaining two groups in the domains of personal credibility and HR delivery.

There were no significant differences between the two groups relative to five of the six demographic factors, age, gender, industry, company size, and job role and the graduate's degree. This indicates there is no degree preference based on size of company, type of industry, career job role, age or gender. In fact, distributions for these demographic factors were surprisingly similar between the two groups. One demographic factor, grade point average, did show a significant difference between the two groups with the MHRM graduates having a higher

grade point average than the MBAHR students. This may not be a surprising finding given the amount of quantitative coursework involved with an MBA curriculum.

Implications

The results of the present study suggest that graduates from MBAHR programs are better prepared than MHRM graduates to perform the competencies required of the HR profession. This may have implications for potential students, colleges and universities, and employers.

Implications for potential students

This study may have implications for individuals considering an advanced degree in human resources. The study suggests that the MBAHR would better prepare individuals with certain competencies, however, the study did not take into account the respondent's undergraduate degree. To make a decision regarding the type of curriculum to study, a potential student could take into account his or her undergraduate course of study. For example, an individual with an undergraduate degree in business may select the MHRM program while an individual with an undergraduate degree in human resources may opt for the MBAHR degree. Additionally, an individual's work experience could also become a factor in selection of the appropriate curriculum.

Implications for Universities

The study suggests that Colleges and Universities should consider the study results in reviewing and designing their program's curricula. MHRM programs should consider how to incorporate more of the competency factors associated with strategic contribution and business

knowledge into their existing curriculums. Increasing a graduate's knowledge of how Business operates would be important in improving competency levels in these two domains.

Both MHRM and MBAHR programs should consider curriculum changes that would better prepare graduates to address strategic HR technology issues within organizations. Graduates were more comfortable with the actual delivery of services than the strategy of integrating that service technology into the business. As the knowledge age advances, systems architecture within organizations will become increasingly strategic, proprietary and relevant and may contribute to the competitive advantage that companies seek. Integrating HR delivery systems into the overall organizational architecture will be pivotal to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization's human capital.

While there was no significant difference between the two groups within the competency domain of HR delivery, it was noted that both graduate groups ranked HR measurement as the competency factor they were least prepared to perform. With the increased call from management to provide data to drive and support HR decisions, a key competency for HR professionals is an understanding of HR measurement. Both types of programs should consider ways to integrate HR measurement more fully into their curricula.

Implications for Employers

The findings of the present study may have implications for employers who are looking for knowledgeable, business-savvy HR professionals. As the study results suggest, a MBA with an HR specialization may better prepare HR professionals to support employers with their human resources needs.

Future Research Opportunities

While this study found a difference in the two graduate groups relative to the HR competencies, the study should be conducted on a larger sample size.

Twenty-seven individuals, or thirty percent, of initial respondents failed to complete the survey. This is an area for further study as qualitative research methods may determine why individuals failed to complete the survey.

In reviewing the data on the age of graduates, a small increase in the number of younger graduates who select the MBAHR curriculum was noted. Although this difference was not statistically significant when tested, it may indicate an evolving trend that should be explored in future studies.

The current study did not request information on the undergraduate degree for either of the sample groups. This has implications for future research in two areas. First, the undergraduate degree could have been a contributing factor in how respondents answered the current survey. Second, the type of undergraduate degree held by the HR professional could have influenced their choice of curriculum for the advanced degree. Additional research on type of undergraduate degree held by advanced HR degree graduates may yield information regarding both of these areas.

For the current study, the researcher did not review requirements for either the internalist or externalist curriculums; however, the area of curriculum requirements for both degree types is an area for additional research.

While this study looked at the graduate's perception of their preparedness to perform the HR competencies, an additional factor to consider is the employer's perception of how well the

graduate actually performs relative to those competencies. A follow on study to request employer's feedback may assist in understanding whether or not the graduate's curriculum is an indicator of future performance.

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APPENDIX A. HUMAN RESOURCE COMPETENCY STUDY DOMAINS AND
COMPETENCY FACTORS

Strategic Contribution	Personal Credibility	HR Delivery	Business Knowledge	HR Technology
Culture management	Achieving results	Staffing	Value chain knowledge	HR technology
Fast change	Effective relationships	Development	Value proposition knowledge	
Strategic decision-making	Personal communication	Organization structure	Labor knowledge	
Market-driven connectivity		HR measurement		
		Legal compliance		
		Performance management		

Brockbank, W., & Ulrich, D. (2003). *Competencies for the New HR*: Society for Human Resource Management, University of Michigan Business School, Global Consulting Alliance.

APPENDIX B. DESCRIPTIONS OF GRADUATE HR PROGRAMS FROM THE SHRM WEBSITE

Business Administration (MBA, MBA/HRM, MBA/HR, MBA/HRIS).

An MBA degree is highly respected in the business world. It demonstrates that graduates have a solid understanding of how a business operates and how HR fits into the big picture. An MBA program provides a broad overview of all business functions, including accounting, finance, marketing, strategy and human resources. This degree offers flexibility in future career options, as it will prepare you to move into other areas of business in addition to human resources. However, if you are seeking in-depth technical HR knowledge, than an MBA might not be the best choice for you. In most MBA programs, students take only a few HR courses. Obtaining professional HR certification in addition to an MBA is a good way to supplement a student's technical HR knowledge.

Human Resource Development (MSHRD, MAHRD).

Traditionally, these programs place a strong emphasis on training and development and have a more narrow scope than a general business degree. Many HRD programs are very similar to the master's in human resources degree, as they provide in-depth technical knowledge of the HR function. Career paths include HR generalist, training specialist and consultant. These degree programs are often housed in the education or business school.

Human Resource Management (MSHRM, MSHR, MA/HRM, MHRM, MAHR, MAHRM, MHR).

These programs provide a thorough base of knowledge in all aspects of human resource management and the employment relationship. Such a degree is a good choice for someone changing careers and entering human resources from another field or for someone interested in advancing within the HR profession. This program is also good preparation for achieving professional certification. Graduates may work as generalists or specialists in large organizations or as generalists in small to medium-size companies. Those who receive this degree are perceived as experts in human resources; however, they may or may not have acquired a broad understanding of general business concepts such as finance, marketing and accounting. To be credible in today's organizations, an individual must understand how the HR function fits into the overall mission of the organization and how HR adds value. If your HR master's program does not cover general business subject, consider adding these as electives.

Industrial Relations/Labor Relations (MSILR, MILR, MAILR, MSIR, MIR, MALER; combined with HR: MHRIR, MA/HRIR, MLRHR, MLHR, MHRLR).

Most industrial/labor relations programs were developed in the 1940s and 1950s in response to the growth of American labor unions. Though the names of these degrees have not changed, the curriculum has. In addition to the tradition focus on labor relations and collective bargaining, these programs now cover the full breadth of HR knowledge. For students interested in working in labor-management relations, this degree is the natural choice. It generally covers issues from both a management and an employee perspective giving graduates a thorough understanding of the employment relationship. Graduates work as HR generalists or as specialists in occupations such as labor relations, union representative or researcher, mediator or arbitrator. This can be a good compliment to a law degree for people interested in working in labor and employment law.

Industrial/Organizational Psychology (MAP, MAOP, MA-I/O, MSIO, MAIOP, MSIOP, MAP-I/O, MSP-I/O).

These programs focus on assessment, measurement and evaluation of human behavior in organizations. In “I/O psych” programs, courses like motivation, learning and cognition, and behavior modification help students to understand human behavior in the “real world.” A “scientist/practitioner model” is developed, which helps the student understand the employee or person. Psychology students focus on data-based problem solving, and they rely on hard data to help avoid bias. Students develop strong data analysis skills in statistics and research and they learn to approach their work in a systematic and scientific way. The content area of I/O psychology covers a combination of HR, organizational behavior and some organizational theory, but I/O programs do not cover other areas of business such as accounting, marketing or economics. Education in HR topics is extensive, deep and technical. Career options include test validation, personnel assessment, selection, research and employment. Programs focus on assessment, measurement and evaluation of human behavior in organizations. Content areas include combination of HR, organizational behavior and some organizational theory but do not cover areas of business such as accounting, marketing or economics.

Management (MSM, MSOLE, MSM/HR/CM).

These programs tend to focus on management and organizational behavior. They can be found in both business and arts schools. They are broader in scope than an HR master’s degree; however, students will take fewer HR courses. Career paths include management positions in public or private organizations.

Organizational Development/Organizational Behavior (MAOD, MOD, MSODA, MSHROD, MSOB).

These degrees combine both organizational behavior and HR development, with an accent on organizational change. The programs are designed to provide theoretical, analytical, diagnostic and change agent skills. Courses focus on applied behavioral science areas such as leadership, motivation, planned change and research. This is a popular degree for those interested in consulting work.

APPENDIX C. RESEARCH INFORMATION PROVIDED TO SHRM CONTACTS

Subject Line: RESEARCH ON HR COMPETENCIES AND UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

This e-mail is being sent to you in your capacity as Chair of your State SHRM Council. My name is Kim Scanlan and I am a SHRM member in Kansas. I am also a doctoral student at Capella University pursuing a PhD in Organization and Management with an emphasis in Human Resource Management. To meet the requirements for my degree, I am conducting a research study entitled "University Human Resource Management Curriculums and Human Resource Competencies: A Comparative Study." The purpose of the research study is to determine whether graduates of HR related masters programs feel the courses taken in their university program prepared them to perform the competencies required of HR professionals. All appropriate University approvals have been obtained for the research study. I am looking for individuals who have obtained either a Masters in Human Resource Management or a MBA with HR specialization/concentration and need your assistance to locate these individuals.

For this research study, I am requesting your assistance by either:

1. Putting the attached e-mail in your state-wide SHRM newsletter, or
2. Providing the attached e-mail to your local Chapter Presidents for inclusion in their newsletter to local members.

This research is important to identify the type of HR curriculum that best prepares graduates to perform the work of HR within organizations. We all have a vested stake in ensuring that future HR professionals have the appropriate competencies to assist organizations in achieving their maximum effectiveness. I ask that you assist this research by forwarding this request to your members by one of the identified methods.

If you have questions or concerns, I may be contacted at 316-218-7339 or tscanlank@cox.net.

Thank you, in advance, for your assistance with this.

Kim Scanlan

POTENTIAL E-MAIL FOR PARTICIPANTS

OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH ON HR COMPETENCIES AND UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

My name is Kim Scanlan and I am a doctoral student at Capella University pursuing a PhD in Organization and Management with an emphasis in Human Resource Management. To meet the requirements for my degree, I am conducting a research study entitled "University Human

Resource Management Curriculums and Human Resource Competencies: A Comparative Study.” The purpose of the research study is to determine whether graduates of HR related masters programs feel the courses taken in their university program prepared them to perform the competencies required of HR professionals. All appropriate approvals have been obtained for the research study. I am looking for individuals who have obtained either a Masters in Human Resource Management or a MBA with HR specialization/concentration. If you are a graduate of either of these types of programs, I would like to invite you to participate in the study.

If you choose to participate, you will complete an online survey that should take 10-15 minutes of your time. The survey will ask your thoughts about how prepared you feel to perform the competencies required of HR professionals, as well as additional demographic information. Your participation is voluntary and all information supplied will remain strictly confidential. No individually identifiable information will be disclosed or published, and all results will be presented as aggregate. If you are willing to participate, please click on the link below and you will be directed to the survey instrument to complete the survey. The survey will be open from XXXXX – XXXXX, 2007.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I hope you choose to participate in this important study. If you have questions, I may be reached at tscanlank@cox.net.

Kim Scanlan

LINK TO RESEARCH STUDY ON HR COMPETENCIES

APPENDIX D. COMPETENCY SURVEY AS IT APPEARED ON SURVEY SITE

Page 1 – Welcome

Welcome to the research study entitled:

University Human Resource Management Curriculums and Human Resource Competencies: A Comparative Study

Page 2 - Introduction

As a graduate of an HR related masters program, you are being invited to participate in a research study concerning the competencies required of HR professionals. The title of the research study is ‘University Human Resource Management Curriculums and Human Resource Competencies: A Comparative Study’ and the purpose of the study is to determine whether graduates of HR related programs feel the courses taken in their university program prepared them to perform the competencies required of HR professionals.

This research study uses a survey that is quick and easy and should take no more than 10 minutes of your time. Once you have submitted your final survey answers, you will be prevented from entering additional responses. However, if you return to an incomplete survey, you will be taken to the point where you left off.

Page 3 – Consent and Release

Participation in this research study requires that you read this information and agree to participate in the study.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to complete a survey that should take 10 minutes of your time. There are no known risks to participating in the survey and you will receive no compensation for participating. There are no known benefits to participating in the survey except contributing to additional knowledge regarding competencies for HR professionals.

The records of this study will be kept private. Any publication of survey results will be presented as aggregate and no individually identifiable information will be disclosed or published. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from participation at any time with no consequences to you.

If you would like to ask questions before agreeing to participate in the survey, you may direct your questions to Kim Scanlan at tscanlank@cox.net. Alternatively, the following contacts are provided for your information:

Supervisor - Dr. Jean Gordon, jean.gordon@faculty.capella.edu

Capella University, IRB Reviewer's contact info

Capella University, 225 South 6th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55402

At the end of the survey you will be provided an opportunity to receive results of the survey, once it is complete.

I would appreciate you taking the time to complete the survey. With less than 10 minutes of your time, you will be providing important information for both the research study and the development of HR professionals.

Clicking on the Agree box indicates that you have read and understand the consent and release information and have decided to participate in this research project.

1. I have read the consent and release information and agree to participate in this research study.

Agree

Page 3 – Human Resource Competency Study

The Human Resource Competency Study (HRCS) conducted by Brockbank and Ulrich identified five competency domains critical for HR professionals:

- 1) Strategic contribution
- 2) Personal credibility
- 3) HR delivery
- 4) Business knowledge
- 5) HR technology

Within each of the five competency domains, specific competency factors are identified that support the competency domain.

The purpose of this survey is to understand how well you feel the courses you studied in your masters degree program prepared you to perform the competencies identified by the Human Resource Competency Study (HRSC). You will be asked to select the number that most closely represents your assessment of how personally prepared you feel to perform the specific competency factors that support each competency domain.

Page 4 – Strategic Contribution

Based on the courses you studied to obtain your graduate degree, please select the number that most closely represents your assessment of whether or not you feel personally prepared to perform each competency factor. A statement describing the competency factor is listed below each one.

	Not prepared (1)	Partially prepared (2)	Prepared (3)	Greatly prepared (4)
<u>Strategic Contribution</u>				

Culture management	1	2	3	4
<i>Able to identify and implement organizational cultures that help firms win the marketplace and successfully implement business strategies.</i>				
Fast change	1	2	3	4
<i>Able to facilitate change management processes and adapt learnings to new change initiatives; work with key individuals to ensure decisions are made quickly; ensure resources are aligned with desired changes.</i>				
Strategic decision-making	1	2	3	4
<i>Participates in decisions involving the direction of the business, ask difficult questions, and bring to bear personal visions about the future of the business</i>				
Market-driven connectivity	1	2	3	4
<i>Understands the process of leveraging market information to help navigate the organization through changing external customer and shareholder requirements</i>				

Page 5 – Personal Credibility

Personal credibility	Not prepared (1)	Partially prepared (2)	Prepared (3)	Greatly prepared (4)
Achieving results	1	2	3	4
<i>Has track record of results, meets commitments (say what you will do, do what you say), achieve results with integrity</i>				
Effective relationships	1	2	3	4
<i>Works well with colleagues, line executives, and management teams. Develops good relationships based on trust that result in ability to work together effectively</i>				
Personal communication	1	2	3	4
<i>Able to effectively use both written and verbal communication skills using both formal and informal communication channels; able to communicate effectively to large numbers of people in shorter time periods.</i>				

Page 6 – HR Delivery

	Not prepared (1)	Partially prepared (2)	Prepared (3)	Greatly prepared (4)
HR Delivery				
Staffing	1	2	3	4
<i>Able to develop and deliver a comprehensive staffing system including an integrated plan for recruiting, promoting, transferring, and exiting; able to deliver staffing services at all organizational levels</i>				
HR Development	1	2	3	4
<i>Able to provide both individual and organizational development activities including traditional training and development experiences and career planning services; develop and implement large-scale organizational interventions and change efforts that influence the organization as a whole</i>				
Organization structure	1	2	3	4
<i>Able to assist in the design of effective organization structures and processes</i>				
HR measurement	1	2	3	4
<i>Able to measure the value of HR activities by understanding the concept of the full HR value chain by understanding what HR does (activities), what HR contributes (competent people and organizational capabilities), and what HR impacts (business results)</i>				
Legal compliance	1	2	3	4
<i>Possess knowledge of employment and labor law and ensure organization complies with local and national laws</i>				
Performance management	1	2	3	4
<i>Design performance measurement systems that distinguish high-performing individuals from low-performing individuals and translate these measurements into performance-based compensation systems</i>				

Page 7 – Business Knowledge

	Not prepared (1)	Partially prepared (2)	Prepared (3)	Greatly prepared (4)
Business Knowledge				
Value chain knowledge	1	2	3	4
<i>Understand the flow of business from suppliers to the company to the customers (includes knowledge of customers, competitors, suppliers, production processes, financial management, e-commerce and information systems)</i>				
Value proposition knowledge	1	2	3	4
<i>Knowledge of the firm's value proposition, i.e. clear understanding of how the firm makes money or creates value (knowledge of shareholders' requirements, capital markets, portfolio logic and management, and major work processes)</i>				
Labor knowledge	1	2	3	4
<i>Knowledge of labor legislation and union relations specifically related to union infrastructure, union-free environments, collective bargaining, and labor contracts</i>				

Page 8 – HR Technology

HR technology	Not prepared (1)	Partially prepared (2)	Prepared (3)	Greatly prepared (4)
Use of technology to deliver HR services <i>Able to leverage technology to deliver value to the customer by providing faster services; reduce costs per transaction; provide centralized services and information</i>	1	2	3	4
Strategic HR technology <i>Able to work with senior IT management to understand the organization's overall IT strategy and issues; understands trends in technology and their application to HR practices</i>	1	2	3	4

Page 9 – Demographics

1. What year did you graduate?
2. Which best describes your graduate degree program?
 - a. Masters in Human Resource Management
 - b. MBA with specialization/concentration in Human Resource Management
3. Are you currently working in a paid job in Human Resources?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If no, why not?

4. How would you classify your present professional role in HR?
 - a. Specialist
 - b. Generalist
 - c. Academia
 - d. Consultant
 - e. Not working in HR

5. Your current/final GPA:
- a. Less than 2.5
 - b. 2.5 – 2.75
 - c. 2.76 – 3.00
 - d. 3.01 – 3.25
 - e. 3.26 – 3.5
 - f. 3.51 – 3.75
 - g. 3.76 – 4.0
6. Age:
- a. Less than 25 years
 - b. 25 – 34 years
 - c. 35 – 44 years
 - d. 45 – 54 years
 - e. More than 54 years
7. Your gender:
- a. Male
 - b. Female
8. Number of employees in organization?
- a. Less than 50
 - b. 51 – 100
 - c. 101 – 500
 - d. 501 – 1000
 - e. Over 1000
9. What industry best describes your company?
- a. Agriculture
 - b. Petroleum and mining
 - c. Chemicals, allied products, pharmaceuticals
 - d. General manufacturing
 - e. Automotive
 - f. Communications, high tech
 - g. Retail and wholesale
 - h. Financial services
 - i. Services
 - j. Utilities
 - k. Public Administration

APPENDIX E. RELIABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE AND CONSENT

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to be in a research study about preparation of individuals to perform the competencies necessary to be successful as an HR professional. Participation in this research study requires that you read this information and agree to participate in the study. The study is being conducted by Kim Scanlan, Capella University, to fulfill requirements for a doctoral degree in Organization and Management, with a specialization in Human Resources.

The purpose of the study is to see whether graduates of HR programs feel personally prepared to perform the competencies identified in the Human Resource Competency Study conducted by Brockbank & Ulrich. This study identified five competency domains, strategic contribution, business knowledge, HR delivery, HR technology, and personal credibility, with specific factors associated with each competency domain.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to complete a survey that should take 10-15 minutes of your time. There are no known risks to participating in the survey and you will receive no compensation for participating. There are no known benefits to participating in the survey except contributing to additional knowledge regarding competencies for HR professionals.

The records of this study will be kept private, stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Any publication of survey results will be presented as aggregate and no individually identifiable information will be disclosed or published. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from participation at any time with no consequences to you.

If you would like to ask questions before agreeing to participate in the survey, you may direct your questions to Kim Scanlan at tscanlank@cox.net. Alternatively, the following contacts are provided for your information:

Supervisor - Dr. Jean Gordon, jean.gordon@faculty.capella.edu
Capella University, IRB Reviewer's contact info
Capella University, 225 South 6th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55402

You may request a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have asked questions and received answers, as necessary. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Human Resource Competency Research Study

The Human Resource Competency Study identified five competency domains critical for HR professionals. Based on the courses you studied in your graduate degree, please circle the number that most closely represents your assessment of whether or not you feel personally prepared to perform each competency factors associated with each competency domain. A statement describing the competency factor is listed below each one.

	Not prepared (1)	Partially prepared (2)	Prepared (3)	Greatly prepared (4)
Strategic Contribution				
Culture management	1	2	3	4
<i>Able to identify and implement organizational cultures that help firms win the marketplace and successfully implement business strategies.</i>				
Fast change	1	2	3	4
<i>Able to facilitate change processes and adapt learnings about change to new change initiatives; utilize change tools and processes with a focus on speed.</i>				
Strategic decision-making	1	2	3	4
<i>Participate in decisions involving the direction of the business, ask difficult questions, and bring to bear personal visions about the future of the business.</i>				
Market-driven connectivity	1	2	3	4
<i>Understand the process of leveraging market information to help navigate the organization through changing external customer and shareholder requirements.</i>				
Personal credibility				
Achieving results	1	2	3	4
<i>Has track record of results, meets commitments (do what you say, say what you will do), achieve results with integrity.</i>				
Effective relationships	1	2	3	4
<i>Works well with colleagues, line executives, and management teams. Develops good relationships based on trust that result in the ability to work together effectively.</i>				
Personal communication	1	2	3	4
<i>Able to effectively use both written and verbal communication skills using both formal and informal communication channels; able to communicate effectively to large numbers of people in shorter time periods.</i>				
Business Knowledge				
Value chain knowledge	1	2	3	4
<i>Understand the flow of business from suppliers to the company to the customers (includes knowledge of customers, competitors, suppliers, production processes, financial management, e-commerce and information systems).</i>				

	Not prepared (1)	Partially prepared (2)	Prepared (3)	Greatly prepared (4)
Business Knowledge				
Value proposition knowledge	1	2	3	4

Knowledge of the firm's value proposition, i.e. clear understanding of how the firm makes money or creates value (knowledge of shareholders' requirements, capital markets, portfolio logic and management, and major work processes).

Labor knowledge	1	2	3	4
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Knowledge of labor legislation and union relations specifically related to union infrastructure, union-free environments, collective bargaining, and labor contracts.

	Not prepared (1)	Partially prepared (2)	Prepared (3)	Greatly prepared (4)
HR Delivery				
Staffing	1	2	3	4

Able to develop and deliver a comprehensive staffing system including an integrated plan for recruiting, promoting, transferring, and exiting; able to deliver staffing services at all levels of the organization.

HR Development	1	2	3	4
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Able to provide both individual and organizational development activities including traditional training and development experiences and career planning services; develop and implement large-scale organizational interventions and change efforts that influence the organization as a whole.

Organization structure	1	2	3	4
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Able to assist in the design of effective organization structures and processes.

HR measurement	1	2	3	4
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Able to measure the value of HR activities by understanding the concept of the full HR value chain by understanding what HR does (activities), what HR contributes (competent people and organizational capabilities), and what HR impacts (business results).

Legal compliance	1	2	3	4
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Possess knowledge of employment and labor law and ensure organization complies with local and national laws.

Performance management	1	2	3	4
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Design performance measurement systems that distinguish high-performing individuals from low-performing individuals and translate these measurements into performance-based compensation systems.

HR Technology	Not prepared (1)	Partially prepared (2)	Prepared (3)	Greatly prepared (4)
Use of technology to deliver HR services <i>Able to leverage technology to deliver value to the customer by providing faster services; reduce costs per transaction; provide centralized services and information.</i>	1	2	3	4
Strategic HR technology <i>Able to work with senior IT management to understand the organization's overall IT strategy and issues; understands trends in technology and their application to HR practices.</i>	1	2	3	4

Thank you for participating in this survey!

APPENDIX F. UNIVERSITIES AS IDENTIFIED BY MHRM AND MBAHR GRADUATES

Alabama	Missouri
Troy University	Lindenwood University
California	Maryville University
Chapman University	NE Missouri State University
University of Southern California	William Woods University
Colorado	New York
University of Colorado	Cornell
District of Columbia	State University of New York
American University	North Dakota
Indiana	North Dakota State University
Indiana State University	Ohio
University of Indiana	Case Western University
Illinois	Pennsylvania
DePaul University	Pennsylvania State University
DeVry University	St. Francis University
Dominican University	Texas
Lake Forest Graduate School	Texas Tech University
Lewis University	Virginia
Loyola University	Averett University
National-Louis University	James Madison University
Northern Illinois University	Lynchburg College
Western Illinois University	Radford University
Kansas	Wisconsin
Friends University	University of Wisconsin
Ottawa University	Wyoming
Wichita State University	Kennedy Western University
Maryland	Multiple Sites
University of Maryland	Webster
Massachusetts	University of Phoenix
Lesley University	Antioch
Michigan	Concordia
Central Michigan University	Edinburgh, UK
Michigan State University	
University of Michigan	
Minnesota	
University of Minnesota	

APPENDIX G. T-TEST FOR INDEPENDENT SAMPLES ON PERCEPTION OF
PREPAREDNESS OF HR COMPETENCY FACTORS OF
MHRM AND MBAHR GRADUATES

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Strategic Contribution					
Culture Management					
MHRM	34	2.21	0.808	-1.624	0.109
MBAHR	31	2.52	0.724		
Fast Change					
MHRM	34	2.38	0.985	-1.418	0.161
MBAHR	31	2.71	0.864		
Strategic Decision-Making					
MHRM	34	2.5	1.11	-1.972	0.053
MBAHR	31	2.97	0.752		
Market Driven Connectivity					
MHRM	34	1.94	0.851	-3.243*	0.002
MBAHR	31	2.68	0.979		
Business Knowledge					
Value Chain Knowledge					
MHRM	34	2	0.953	-3.93*	< 0.000
MBAHR	31	2.94	0.964		
Value Chain Proposition					
MHRM	34	1.85	0.892	-5.581*	< 0.0000
MBAHR	31	3.06	0.854		
Labor Knowledge					
MHRM	34	2.68	1.224	-0.34	0.735
MBAHR	31	2.58	1.025		
HR Technology					
Use of tech to deliver HR Services					
MHRM	34	2.15	0.925	-1.75	0.086
MBAHR	31	2.55	0.925		
Strategic HR Technology					
MHRM	34	1.88	0.946	-2.54*	0.014
MBAHR	31	2.48	0.962		

* significant at $p < .05$

APPENDIX G. T-TEST FOR INDEPENDENT SAMPLES ON PERCEPTION OF
PREPAREDNESS OF HR COMPETENCY FACTORS OF
MHRM AND MBAHR GRADUATES (CONT.)

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Personal Credibility					
Achieving Results					
MHRM	34	3.24	0.781	-0.447	0.656
MBAHR	31	3.32	0.791		
Effective Relationships					
MHRM	34	3.18	0.904	-0.691	0.492
MBAHR	31	3.32	0.791		
Personal Communications					
MHRM	34	3.35	0.812	-0.19	0.85
MBAHR	31	3.39	0.615		
HR Delivery					
Staffing					
MHRM	34	2.68	0.912	-0.281	0.779
MBAHR	31	2.74	0.965		
Human Resource Development					
MHRM	34	2.74	0.931	-1.267	0.21
MBAHR	31	3	0.73		
Organization Structure					
MHRM	34	2.53	0.929	-1.236	0.221
MBAHR	31	2.81	0.873		
HR Measurement					
MHRM	34	2.38	0.888	-1.445	0.153
MBAHR	31	2.71	0.938		
Legal Compliance					
MHRM	34	3.18	1.029	0.202	0.841
MBAHR	31	3.13	0.846		
Performance Management					
MHRM	34	2.79	0.88	1.507	0.137
MBAHR	31	2.48	0.769		

* significant at $p < .05$