1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

TITLE: Assessing Student Outcomes at the Program Level: The RealTest Exercise

ABSTRACT: This session describes the "RealTest Exercise" (RTE), begun in 2007 and used annually to evaluate the knowledge, skills and abilities of graduating seniors in our management major. Undertaken with local alumni and business leaders, the event is also used as a career development opportunity. The RTE provides students with feedback about individual accomplishments and areas for improvement, and program-level feedback to the department for program evaluation and curriculum design. We describe the development of the RTE, involvement of alumni, organization of activities, and how the RTE is used as a basis for continuous improvement in our management & leadership program. (100 words)

KEYWORDS: Assessment Center, Program Outcomes, Student Outcomes, Alumni.

2) Format
  ___ Activity or exercise
  ___ Roundtable discussion (60 minute only)
  _X_ General discussion session

2a) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for
  ___ A traditional classroom
  ___ An online class
  ___ Either

2b) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for
  ___ Undergraduate students
  ___ Graduate students
  ___ Either

3) Time Requested:
  ___ 30 Minutes
  _X_ 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
  ___ 90 Minutes

4) Planning Details:
  NO additional equipment required.

5) Teaching Implications:

Increasing attention to evidence-based practices in education (Davies, 1999; Burke-Smalley, 2014) suggests that curriculum design and delivery can be improved through the use of outcomes assessment data. An evidence-based approach to curriculum design involves developing a clear link between program objectives, curriculum design, and learning outcomes. However, for management programs this relationship is complicated by the blend of content knowledge and process skills that make up the learning objectives of most undergraduate management majors.

An assessment center approach has been used as a basis for evaluating undergraduate business degree outcomes in which a variety of inventories and content-specific assessments were used in addition to video-taped mock interviews, oral presentations, and leaderless group discussions (Riggio, Mayes & Schleicher, 2003). The RTE was designed to extend this approach in 3 ways: (1) by using "live" events in front of professional managers so that students are fully engaged in "doing their best" for outside observers, (2) by designing activities that are directed toward a set of program-specific learning objectives, and (3) giving students individual developmental feedback about their performance. A full description of the RTE is provided at the end of this submission proposal.

The results of each RTE (begun in 2007) are reviewed each year by members of the department and are used as the basis for discussion about program curriculum and course design. Having program-level assessment has allowed the department to focus its attention on what is working, what isn't working, and how to continuously improve the student learning experience.

Burke-Smalley, L. A. (2014). Evidence-Based Management Education. *Journal of Management Education*, Vol. 38(5) 764–767.

Davies, P. (1999). What is evidence-based education? *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 47, 108-121.

Riggio, R. E., Mayes, B. T., & Schleicher, D. J. (2003). Using assessment center methods for measuring undergraduate business student outcomes. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 12(1), 68-78.

6) Session Description and Plan:

The session will be divided into four 15 minute segments as described below:

Segment I – Introduction
The session will begin with each participant introducing themselves and briefly identifying their interest in the topic. We will then introduce the RTE process and development over its nine year history.

Segment II – RTE Activities
In this segment the three activities currently being used will be introduced in detail. We will briefly discuss activities used in the past.

Segment III – Assessment
The data from the RTE has been very beneficial for assessment and program development. We will discuss how the data has been used and potential other uses.

Segment IV – Question and Answer
We will conclude the session by ensuring that there is plenty of time to answer any remaining participant questions. This time will also be utilized to all participants to explore how they might implement a similar process in their school.

7) Application to Conference theme ("United in Service"):

While the RTE is primarily an individual experience for students, they must work together to succeed. Students collaborate while preparing for the RTE and during the activities. Students work closely together in class during preparation for the RTE by providing feedback to one another to ensure that everyone reaches their full potential. Two of the three activities currently being used require students to work together during the activity, the leaderless group discussion and the problem solving presentation. As such, students unite and serve one another to ensure a successful RTE for each student.

The RTE is also an excellent opportunity to link students and the community in mutual service. Alumni and members of the local business community come together as coaches to support the event. Students benefit from the feedback provided by the coaches. While not a primary focus of the RTE, the experience provides a networking opportunity for students and coaches. It is not uncommon for students to receive employment from the networking opportunity. Coaches often come back annually to participate, and express the value it brings to them to stay connected to the University and graduating seniors.

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8) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

One author was a Skyped-in member of a panel at another conference and spoke briefly about RealTest. This presentation will be different in that it is designed for management educators as the primary focus of the discussion and will provide in-depth information about the process of using the RTE in other management programs.

Additional Information

The RealTest Exercise (RTE) is a day-long program of management-related assessment activities for our graduating seniors. The RTE, which began in 2007, is a required element of the capstone course taken by Management & Leadership majors and Arts & Entertainment Management majors. Although participation is required, results from the RTE are not part of the students' final course grade.

College of Business alumni and members of the local business community serve as "Coaches." All RTE Coaches attend a one-hour orientation session at the beginning of the day. At this orientation, each Coach receives information about the nature of the activity to which he/she is assigned, the assessment criteria, and the basis for providing both written and oral feedback to the students. Many of the Coaches participate annually. Oral and written feedback is provided to the students for their personal development, and written feedback is used by the Department for program assessment purposes.

Currently, the RTE involves three activities: a Mock Interview; a Leaderless Group Discussion, and a Problem Solving Presentation.

- For the Mock Interview, students indicate prior to the RTE areas of job interest and then choose from a range of actual job openings. Students then prepare a cover letter and design their resume to target the specific job opportunity. Students are encouraged but not required to conduct research on the specific organization offering the job. Coaches are provided with the job description and each student's cover letter and resume, and conduct the interaction as a simulated "real" job interview.
  Performance Criteria: appearance, eye contact, handshake, posture, knowledge of position, ability to speak to qualifications, tone/confidence, clear career goals.

- For the Leaderless Group Discussion, groups of five to six students are presented with a managerial problem solving case study and given twenty minutes to review the problem individually. Students then enter into a leaderless group discussion in an attempt to respond to the management problem presented. Each student has a Coach assigned to evaluate their individual participation.
  Performance Criteria: Demonstrate leadership, participate, make suggestions, be articulate, listen, support, provide constructive feedback, resolve disagreement, non-verbal communication, attentive.

- Problem Solving Presentations are conducted in teams of two students each. Students are provided with a management case two weeks in advance of the RTE. Students prepare an individual response to their assigned case study, which is evaluated by the course instructor and becomes part of the course grade. Then, students with the same case are placed into teams of two and tasked with aligning their individual responses for the RTE activity for which they use PowerPoint to present the case study and recommendations. All Presentations are delivered to 2-3 Coaches in conference room settings. Performance Criteria: Define problem, recognize cause, explain cause, apply theory, realistic solution, familiar with info, clarity, non-verbal communication, PowerPoint.

PROGRAM LEVEL USE OF REALTEST

Data from the 2012 RTE was used in our New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Management program review. An example is provided below.

Program Goal: Teams and Team Leadership
This program goal - to perform well on teams, provide leadership, contribute and collaborate to achieve team goals - was assessed using elements from the RealTest Exercise Leaderless Group Discussion (LGD), and a team project in MAN 433 (capstone course) that required students provide an assessment of their team leader following the conclusion of the project.

Leaderless Group Discussion

Competency Items	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Fails to Meet Expectations
Participate, make suggestions, provide constructive feedback, attentive	Average score of 3.4 or above on 4 point scale	Average score of 2.8 < 3.39 on 4 point scale	Average score below 2.8 on 4 point scale

Number of Students Exceeding Expectations (%)	Number of Students Meeting Expectations (%)	Number of Students Failing to Meet Expectations (%)
21 (78%)	5 (18%)	1 (4%)

MAN 433

Competency Item	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Fails to Meet Expectations
Demonstrates leadership, contribution, and	All team members rated leader performance at 9	All team members rated leader performance at 8	Fails to meet a minimum of 8 out of 10 from all team members

collaboration in accomplishment of team goals	out of 10	or better out of 10	

Number of Students Exceeding Expectations (%)	Number of Students Meeting Expectations (%)	Number of Students Failing to Meet Expectations (%)
13 (46%)	12 (42%)	3 (12%)

Comments/observations: With respect to team performance, 96% of students met or exceeded expectations for assessed elements in the RealTest Exercise Leaderless Group Discussion and 88% of students met or exceeded expectations for the MAN 433 assessment.

Expected change to be made as a result of assessment findings: None