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AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE UAE JOB MARKET EXPECTATIONS FROM BUSINESS EDUCATION

Key Words

Indicators of Business Knowledge and Skills, Measurement Model, Validity and Reliability, Latent Variables (Constructs), Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Multiple-Group LISREL Model, Market-Driven Education Plans.

Abstract

The job market in the UAE was surveyed, through a stratified random sample, to collect data reflecting the level of importance of several indicators of business knowledge and skills. A measurement model was fit to the market survey data to establish the validity and reliability of the selected indicators. A confirmatory factor analysis revealed that a model involving three factors, namely, minor and major business knowledge as well as personal and behavioral skills, is necessary to describe the business organizations' perceptions of business education. Further, the statistical analysis indicated that the private sector assigns more importance to the major business knowledge than the public sector, and that the service organizations value the language skills more than the industrial organizations. The findings indicated also that business organizations are concerned with business graduates' skills and knowledge, and that they give a higher value to certain behavioral and personal skills compared to knowledge. The implications of such results on business education are discussed.

Introduction

Privatization, globalization, World Trade Organization, Information Technology, and knowledge era are some of the major characteristics of the upcoming twenty first century. An era is approaching in which knowledge, but not physical resources, is the key to success. The twenty-first century clearly requires that business organizations

improve their competitive edges in order to survive the new realities (Bloom, 1994; Aveni & Richard, 1995). It is essential for businesses to understand and take advantage of the dynamic motion of global markets and technological breakthroughs. Moreover, a fundamental shift in thinking is necessary for coping with these changes.

To face the challenges of the twenty-first century, business organizations should im-

prove their competitive advantage through people (Pfeffer, 1994; Stewart, 1997). Traditional sources of success can still provide competitive leverage, but to a lesser degree now than in the past. Organizational capabilities, derived from how people are managed, will be comparatively more vital in achieving competitive success. After all, things do not happen, people make things happen. Achieving competitive success through people entails seeing the work force as a source of strategic advantage, not just as a cost to be minimized or avoided (Pfeffer *et al.*, 1995). With that in mind, business organizations are now striving to recruit the best business graduates who are capable of achieving sustainable competitive edge.

Most of the business schools, on the other hand, have struggled to improve the quality of their education process over the past three decades. However, business education has been subject to a substantial amount of criticism for failing to prepare business graduates adequately for the complex competitive environment in which they must work (Porter and McKibbin, 1991; Arben, 1997; Karns & Franz, 1997).

Meanwhile, the business environment in the UAE has changed dramatically over the past two decades. The UAE economy is becoming increasingly internationalized, the work force is becoming more diversified, and the market is becoming more competitive. Virtually, all of the previous environmental forces affected the orientation and the academic plans of the educational institutions in the UAE, including the UAE University itself. Consequently, the College of Business and Economics (CBE) initiated its strategic plan in order to gain a better understanding of

the UAE business market's trends and needs, and to develop market-driven education plans.

Research Objectives

This study is designed to explore the business organizations' expectations from business education, to formulate a model representing such expectations, and discuss their implications. In the sequel, we use data from a job market survey to furnish answers to the following questions:

- * What are the changes that business schools should adopt in order to provide business organizations with qualified business graduates?
- * What are the types of skills and knowledge that business graduates should possess?
- * How important are those skills and knowledge for different segments of the business market?

Literature Review

Over the past three decades, business education has been subject to a great deal of criticisms. Surprisingly enough, there is not always a high degree of agreement on such criticisms from one observer to another (Porter and McKibbin, 1991: 11). What may be seen like a vital weakness to one critic is sometimes given only minor consideration or is even omitted by another. In addition, those criticisms are not concentrated in just one or two areas but instead constitute a fairly diverse and a broad list (Byrt, 1989: 211). Most of the criticisms of business education are directed at business schools' mission, vision, curricula, teaching methods, and

education quality (i.e., graduates' knowledge and skills).

In her review, Khalili (1990) indicated that: "The courses that business schools were teaching were either irrelevant or were of little importance in the business world" (Khalili, 1990: 24). Apparently, business schools do not plan their education process thoroughly in order to provide students with modern knowledge and competency (Dagget and Branigan, 1987; Porter and McKibbin, 1991). "The educational system developed in response to the needs of the industrial nation, but society now is entering an age of technology that is creating social, economic, and demographic changes" concluded Dagget and Branigan (1987).

Generally speaking, the literature review reveals three general types of criticisms: (a) insufficient emphasis on developing behavioral skills, (b) insufficient attention toward developing major business knowledge, and (c) over-emphasis on minor business knowledge (Cheit, 1980; Hunger and Wheelen, 1980; Khalili, 1990; Porter and McKibbin, 1991; Arben, 1997). The first criticism implies that many business schools' graduates are not good communicators, either orally or verbally. Based on that, many authors concluded that business schools' curricula did not provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop their communication skills. The inability of business schools to develop those skills stem partially from course design and teaching methods. Most of the business courses are not designed to enhance students' ability to communicate with others, nor to encourage them to build communication networks. Nevertheless, current business courses are viewed as one of the chief barriers responsible for this state of affairs.

As far as the second criticism is concerned, critics concluded that business graduates lack basic knowledge in many functional areas such as management, marketing, and accounting. This criticism implies that business schools' curricula did not emphasize the integration across functional areas (Porter and McKibbin, 1991; Green, 1996; Arben, 1997). The insufficient emphasis on integration across functional areas, also, highlights the business students' need for capstone courses. Many business schools are relying on one single capstone course (i.e., strategic management or business policy) to handle most of the complicated facts of business life. The above mentioned criticism also highlights the fact that due to the complexity of the business environment, business students must understand more than a narrow discipline or functional area such as finance, economic, marketing, or accounting (Porter and McKibbin, 1991; Watson and Marwick, 1993).

The final criticism recognizes the complexity of the business environment that requires graduates to be equipped with modern quantitative analytical tools (statistics, computers, and economic analysis). Critics, on one hand, agree that it may be useful for students to learn many of the sophisticated analytical tools. On the other hand, critics claim that the amount of time spent on these tools is too much compared to what would be spent on other more related areas of business knowledge.

Recently, the status of business education in the Arab countries drew substantial attention. In fact, three regional conferences devoted to this subject were held in the last few years. The first two were organized by the UAE University in October 1995 and March 1996 at Al-Ain, UAE, while the third was organized by the Arab

Administrative Development Organization in November 1997 at Cairo, Egypt. These conferences concluded that the most effective way to fulfill the potential knowledge and skill gaps between business organizations' needs and business graduates' qualifications is to develop and maintain market-driven business schools. Another conference, organized by King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals, is held in March 1998 at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

Methodology

Population and Sample

Within the framework of the strategic planning process initiated by the CBE, a business community survey was conducted near the end of 1995 to gain a better understanding of the job market in the UAE. An updated list of all governmental and local organizations; and all private companies with more than ten employees, has been prepared to form the sample frame. The necessary information was obtained from the ministry of planning, local authorities and chambers of commerce. A stratified random sample of size 150 was selected to represent all three types of organizations.

One hundred and twenty-one organizations responded positively when asked to participate in the study. However, when contacted for appointment, twelve of those organizations withdrew either for lack of interest or for non availability of senior managers to meet with interviewers. The non-response rate was slightly higher in the government. However, it took more efforts to set appointments with senior managers in the private sector.

Two hundred and forty - nine interviews were successfully completed with senior managers in one hundred and nine organizations. Most of the

organizations are located in either Dubai (48%) or Abu Dhabi (37%). More than 55% of those questionnaires were filled by senior managers working in the private sector, 32% by senior managers working in local authorities and 13% by senior managers working in the government. A large portion of the local authorities are either industrial or commercial organizations.

The sample covered a wide range of economic activities. Aside from governmental and local services (education, health, social services, ... etc.), the sample included industrial organizations (29.8%), commercial organizations (39.8%), banks (16%), hotels (6.1%), ports and airports (8.3%). Oil organizations were included within the industrial sector. About 51% of the responders are nationals and 95% are males. The average work experience was 9.7 years. The average span of supervision was 65 employees, and it varied among sectors: 26 employees in the government, 103 in the local authorities and 52 in the private sector. One eighth of those employees were nationals, however the ratio varied by sector with a higher portion of nationals in the government.

Data Collection and Measurement

Data were collected throughout a direct interview method. In order to reduce the bias resulting from interviewing a single senior manager in each company, and to assure that the data reflect opinions of different departments, organizations were requested to nominate three senior managers. A separate interview session was conducted with each one of them. The target three interviews per company was not fully achieved due to refusal of some organizations to nominate more than one senior manager. An average of 2.3 interviews per company were successfully completed.

A pre-coded questionnaire was designed to measure senior managers' perceptions of the relative importance of the following indicators to their organizations:

- * Twenty-five indicators of knowledge that are usually taught to the CBE students covering the areas of Accounting, Marketing, Management, Economics and Statistics.
- * Nineteen indicators of personal and behavioral skills covering the areas of Computer, Language, dealing with Customers, Teamwork, and Communication.

The questionnaire also included general information on both the organization and the respondent.

The CBE academic departments were asked to review the above mentioned indicators for completeness and accuracy. A pre-test has been conducted in three organizations and the questionnaire was slightly modified according to the pre-test feedback. The final version of the questionnaire was translated into English, since the senior managers in several private organizations are non Arabic speakers. Twelve interviewers were enrolled in a two-day training session covering the objectives and logistics of the survey with emphasis on interviewing skills.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Using a 5-point scale, senior managers were asked to indicate the level of importance of each item in the list of 25 indicators of knowledge. The scale included the following degrees of importance: Very important, Important, Moderately Important, Not Important, Not important at all. A scale of 5 reflects the highest level of importance. The results indicated that the average level of importance for all knowledge indicators ranged from 2.89 to 4.45. The most important six indicators were:

- * Define goals.

- * Write reports.
- * Distribute workload / tasks and responsibilities.
- * Plan job activity.
- * Recognize and define problems.
- * Present results.

Data were also grouped into five categories: Accounting, Marketing, Management, Economics and Statistics. Management turned out to be the highest rated group of knowledge (4.3) followed by Statistics (4.2). Accounting and Marketing were close with an average of (3.6) followed by Economics (3.3).

This pattern was confirmed when data were stratified according to sector (government, private and local authorities). With regard to the other three groups of knowledge, Accounting was third, followed by Economics then Marketing in both governmental and local organizations. In the private sector Marketing was third followed by Accounting.

When data were stratified according to economic activity (industrial, commercial, banks, ports/airports, and hotels), Management and Statistics were also rated the highest. Marketing was third in all subgroups except for industrial organizations where Accounting was the third important area of knowledge.

Similarly, senior managers were asked to rate each item in a list of 19 indicators of skills according to its level of importance. The average level of importance for all skills ranged from 3.02 to 4.75. The most important six items were:

- * Co-operate with others.
- * Work within a group.
- * Benefit from the experience of senior employees.
- * Co-operate with other employees.
- * Converse in English.
- * Ability to persuade.

Data were also grouped into five categories: Computer, Language, dealing with Customers, Teamwork, and Communication. Teamwork turned out to be the highest rated group of skills (4.7), followed by Communication (4.4), then dealing with Customers (4.3). The same pattern was found within each sector. With regard to the other two skills, Computer was fourth followed by Language in both governmental and local organizations. In the private sector the order of Computer and Language was reversed. It should be noted that one of the language skills (converse in other language than

English) got a low average score which reduced the overall rating of the group of language skills.

Validity and Reliability

To test the adequacy of the selected indicators as a measurement instrument for the different domains of knowledge and skills used in the survey, a measurement model was fit to the data. The results are given in Table 1 where most of the indicators are seen to have rather high validity and reliability.

Table 1
Estimated Validity and Reliability for Indicators of Business Knowledge and Skills *

Variable		Indicator	Validity	Reliability
Accounting				
ACC1	Prepare financial statements		.921	.849
ACC2	Perform book keeping		.935	.874
ACC3	Evaluate financial reports		.902	.814
ACC4	Calculate cost of goods & services		.719	.517
Marketing				
MARK1	Study entire local market		.743	.551
MARK2	Finish contracts with customers		.855	.731
MARK3	Provide adequate service to customers (agents)		.790	.624
MARK4	Attract customers		.949	.901
MARK5	Analyze competitive situations		.807	.651
Management				
MANG1	Plan job activities		.805	.649
MANG2	Define goals		.913	.834
MANG3	Distribute workload/tasks & responsibilities		.883	.781
MANG4	Study & analyze workload		.862	.742
MANG5	Prepare administrative reports		.699	.489
MANG6	Recognize & define problems		.607	.369
Economics				
ECON1	Carry out a feasibility study		.745	.555
ECON2	Analyze competitive prices		.896	.802

* The most valid and reliable indicator is shaded in each group.

Table 1 (Continued)*

Variable	Indicator	Validity	Reliability
Economics			
ECON3	Analyze supply & demand curves	.910	.827
ECON4	Motivate investment	.728	.531
ECON5	Forecast	.722	.521
Statistics			
STAT1	Collect information from its source (origin)	.680	.462
STAT2	Present data tables & charts	.817	.668
STAT3	Use modern technology to analyze data	.893	.798
STAT4	Present results	.869	.755
STAT5	Write reports	.694	.481
Computer			
COMP1	Use word processors	.839	.704
COMP2	Use databases	.896	.803
COMP3	Use spreadsheets	.740	.547
COMP4	Use statistical packages to analyze data	.623	.388
COMP5	Program (write/run programs)	.482	.233
Language			
LANG1	Write in English	.561	.315
LANG2	Converse in English	.965	.931
LANG3	Converse in another language	.436	.190
Customers			
CUST1	Listen to customer complaints	.957	.916
CUST2	Handle customers of different types	.989	.978
CUST3	Give good impression to customers	.915	.837
Teamwork			
TEAM1	Cooperate with others	.898	.807
TEAM2	Work within a group (section/department)	.872	.761
TEAM3	Benefit from the experience of senior employees	.799	.639
TEAM4	Cooperate with other employees (relay experience)	.911	.829
Communication			
COMM1	Present ideas (thoughts) to others	.729	.532
COMM2	Clearly discuss administrative matters	.854	.729
COMM3	Order thoughts adequately	.966	.933
COMM4	Ability to persuade	.807	.651

* The most valid and reliable indicator is shaded in each group.

The Model

Model I

We started the analysis by postulating that there are three constructs, or latent variables, namely, Major business knowledge, Minor business knowledge and personal and behavioral Skills underlying the ten domains of knowledge and skills used in the study. Specifically, it was assumed that:

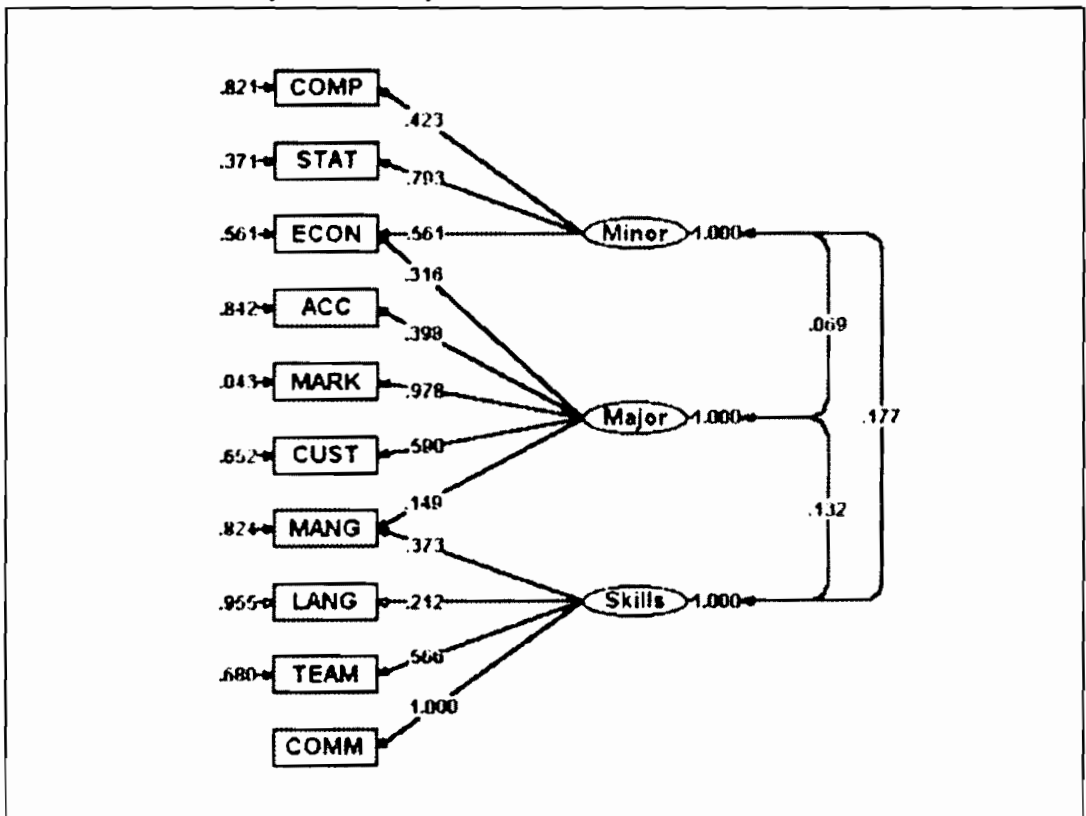
- * Accounting, Marketing and Management are pure measures of Major.
- * Economics, Statistics and Computer are pure measures of Minor.
- * Language, Customers, Teamwork and Communication are pure measures of Skills.

A confirmatory factor analysis revealed the inadequacy of this model. Chi-square with 32 degrees of freedom = 129.832 corresponding to a p-value < .001. The test of close fit (RMSEA < .05) is highly significant and most of the goodness of fit indices are low.

Model II

A modification index (Sorbom, 1989) measures how much chi-square is expected to decrease if a constrained parameter is set free and the model is re-estimated. The largest modification index shows the parameter that improves the fit most when set free. Hence, using the modification indices, provided by LISREL 8, we were led to the following modified model (Figure 1) where:

Figure 1
A Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model for Ten Business Education Variables*



* The numbers at the left are the error variances, those at the middle are the factor loadings, while those at the right are the factor correlations.

Table 2
Goodness of Fit Measures for Model II

Measure	Value
CHI-SQUARE WITH 31 DEGREES OF FREEDOM	43.370 (p = 0.0691)
ESTIMATED NON-CENTRALITY PARAMETER (NCP)	12.370
90 PERCENT CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR NCP	(0.0 ; 33.854)
POPULATION DISCREPANCY FUNCTION VALUE (F0)	0.0778
90 PERCENT CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR F0	(0.0 ; 0.213)
ROOT MEAN SQUARE ERROR OF APPROXIMATION (RMSEA)	0.0501
90 PERCENT CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR RMSEA	(0.0 ; 0.0829)
P-VALUE FOR TEST OF CLOSE FIT (RMSEA < 0.05)	0.467
EXPECTED CROSS-VALIDATION INDEX (ECVI)	0.575
90 PERCENT CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR ECVI	(0.497 ; 0.710)
ECVI FOR SATURATED MODEL	0.692
ECVI FOR INDEPENDENCE MODEL	2.149
GOODNESS OF FIT INDEX (GFI)	0.950
ADJUSTED GOODNESS OF FIT INDEX (AGFI)	0.911
PARSIMONY GOODNESS OF FIT INDEX (PGFI)	0.535
NORMED FIT INDEX (NFI)	0.865
NON-NORMED FIT INDEX (NNFI)	0.935
PARSIMONY NORMED FIT INDEX (PNFI)	0.596
COMPARATIVE FIT INDEX (CFI)	0.955
INCREMENTAL FIT INDEX (IFI)	0.957
RELATIVE FIT INDEX (RFI)	0.804

- * Economics is a composite measure of both Minor and Major.
- * Management is a composite measure of both Major and Skills.
- * The rest of the factors are pure measures. However, since Customers turned out to correlate more significantly with Major, and less significantly with Skills, it is considered now to be a pure measure of Major business knowledge.

The correlation between Major and Minor is small and non-significant ($r = .069$, $t = .693$). The same holds true for Major and Skills ($r = .132$, $t = 1.651$). As for Minor and Skills, the correlation is still small but on the borderline of significance ($r = .177$, $t = 1.914$). These small correlations establish the need for all three factors to describe the business organizations' expectations of business education and that it is not feasible to reduce the model into a smaller dimension.

Upon examining the factor loadings, it turned out that Statistics has the highest correlation (.793) among the measures of Minor, Marketing has the highest correlation (.978) among the measures of Major, and Communication has the highest correlation among the measures of Skills. In fact, since the error variance of Communication was negatively estimated, it was fixed at zero, so that the loading was fixed at 1. As for the composite measures, Economics loaded higher on Minor than Major, while Management loaded higher on Skills than Major.

The goodness of fit measures for the modified model are given in Table 2.

It is readily seen that most of the goodness of fit indices are rather high (above 0.90). Further, chi-square with 31 degrees of freedom = 43.370 corresponding to a p-value = 0.0691, which indicates a good fit. Moreover, the population discrepancy function = 0.0778 with a 90% confidence interval of (0.0, 0.213), indicating a small degree of approximation in the population (McDonald, 1989). Moreover, RMSEA = 0.0501 with a 90% confidence interval of (0.0, 0.0829) and the p-value for the test of close

fit = 0.467, indicating that the model fits well and represents a reasonably close approximation in the population (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Another indication that the model fits well is that the ECVI for the model (0.575) is less than the ECVI for the full model (0.692). In fact, the confidence interval for ECVI is (0.497, 0.710). On the other hand, examination of fitted and standardized residuals did not reveal any lack of fit.

Comparing Public and Private Sectors

To estimate the mean difference in Minor, Major and Skills between the public and private sectors, we used a model similar to that in Figure 1, but in addition to factor loading, factor variances and covariances, and error variances, we also estimated intercept terms in the measurement relationships and means of the factors.

We defined a common scale by assuming that the means of the three factors are zero in the public sector and that the intercepts, loadings and error variances are invariant over sectors, with Statistics, Marketing and Communication being reference variables for Minor, Major and Skills, respectively (their loadings are therefore fixed at 1). The results are given in Table 3.

Table 3
Factor Loadings Standardized to Common Metric
(Public vs. Private Sectors)

Factor	Minor	Major	Skills	Error Variance	Intercept
Computer	0.692			10.907	18.392
Statistics	1.000			2.479	21.014
Economics	1.259	0.329		14.623	16.127
Accounting		0.371		17.640	13.843
Marketing		1.000		3.126	16.820
Customers		0.323		4.568	12.688
Management		0.107	0.647	10.322	25.882
Language			0.184	2.949	12.382
Teamwork			0.471	1.942	18.670
Communication			1.000	0.0	17.814

The factor covariance matrices, for both sectors, are given in Table 4. Since fewer organizations were sampled in the public sector, the standard errors are higher there than for the private sector. Nonetheless, the factor covariances are non-significant for both sectors (only the covariance between Major and Skills is on the borderline of

significance, $c = 3.369$, $t = 1.99$, for the public sector).

The differences of factor means are given in Table 5 where it is seen that the only significant difference is that for Major, with the private sector giving far more emphasis on major business knowledge than the public sector.

Table 4
Factor Covariance Matrices (The Standard Errors in Parentheses)

Public	Minor	Major	Skills
Minor	6.233 (2.206)		
Major	4.476 (2.619)	29.664 (8.003)	
Skills	1.080 (0.821)	3.369 (1.691)	3.346 (0.730)
Private			
Minor	4.251 (1.359)		
Major	-0.768 (1.189)	22.854 (4.883)	
Skills	0.662 (0.485)	0.749 (0.989)	4.403 (0.578)

Table 5
Differences of Factor Means (Private - Public)

	Minor	Major	Skills
Difference	0.384	2.443	0.083
Standard Error	0.495	0.998	0.343
t-test	0.775	2.448 *	0.242

* Significant at the .01 level.

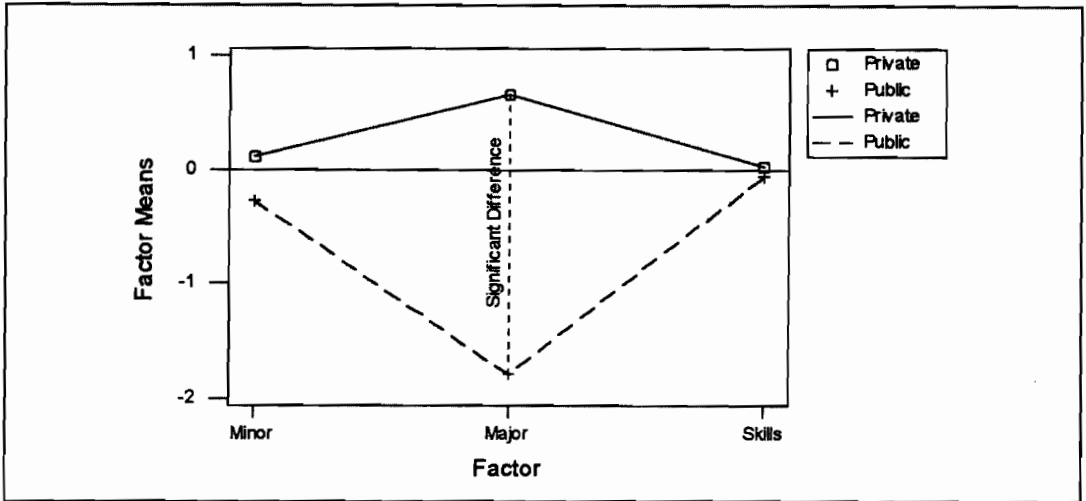
To visualize the differences in factor means between the public and private sectors, scaled factor means have been computed such that the weighted mean (weighted by

sample size) over the two sectors is zero for each factor. These scaled factor means are given in Table 6 and the mean profiles are shown in Figure 2.

Table 6
Scaled Factor Means

	Minor	Major	Skills
Public	-0.281	-1.786	-0.061
Private	0.103	0.657	0.022

Figure 2
Factor Means Profiles



Comparing Industrial and Service Sectors

To estimate the mean difference in Minor, Major and Skills between the industrial and service sectors, we assumed that the means of the three factors are zero in the industrial sector and that the intercepts, loadings and error variances are invariant over sectors, with Statis-

tics, Marketing and Communication being again reference variables for Minor, Major and Skills, respectively. The factor loadings, the factor covariance matrices (for both sectors) and the differences of factors means are given in Tables 7, 8 and 9, respectively.

Table 7
Factor Loadings Standardized to Common Metric
(Industrial vs. Service Sectors)

Factor	Minor	Major	Skills	Error Variance	Intercept
Computer	0.629			10.773	18.658
Statistics	1.000			2.545	21.235
Economics	1.316	0.320		14.216	16.857
Accounting		0.377		18.464	14.190
Marketing		1.000		1.532	17.959
Customers		0.292		4.674	13.075
Management		0.0873	0.654	9.078	26.138
Language			0.156	3.198	12.098
Teamwork			0.480	2.074	18.591
Communication			1.000	0.0	17.746

Table 8
Factor Covariance Matrices (The Standard Errors in Parentheses)

Industrial	Minor	Major	Skills
Minor	5.835 (1.777)		
Major	1.446 (1.820)	26.293 (5.970)	
Skills	1.049 (0.690)	3.009 (1.336)	3.920 (0.682)
Service			
Minor	4.729 (1.279)		
Major	0.719 (1.119)	27.280 (5.715)	
Skills	0.771 (0.418)	1.417 (0.868)	4.097 (0.460)

Table 9
Differences of Factor Means (Industrial - Service)

	Minor	Major	Skills
Difference	0.035	0.646	0.129
Standard Error	0.040	0.775	0.292
t-test	0.089	0.833	0.442

The differences in factor means between the industrial and service sectors are not significant. However, a modification index indicated that using different intercepts for Language would improve the fit significantly (chi-square is reduced by 12.4 with one degree of freedom). The modified language loadings are given in Table 10.

Discussion and Recommendations

It is obvious that business schools are no longer working in a placid environment, and that they are not the sole providers of business education. The business environment became

highly turbulent and some other management training institutions partially provide business education too. Meanwhile, business education has been recently subject to sharp criticisms from both the academic and business organizations. Generally speaking, those criticisms entail that business schools do not provide business organization with qualified graduates. On the other hand, most business schools claim that they are engaged in preparing their students to manage change and to adapt to changing environmental pressures and opportunities (Khalili, 1990).

Table 10
Modified Language Loadings

Factor	Minor	Major	Skills	Error Variance	Intercept
Industrial			0.150	3.023	11.448
Service			0.150	3.023	12.369

The job market survey data supported a model where three factors (namely, Minor, Major and Skills) are necessary to describe the business organizations' perceptions of business education. In particular, it is found that Computer, Statistics and Economics are measures of Minor business knowledge; Economics, Accounting, Marketing, Customers and Management are measures of Major business knowledge; while Management, Language, Teamwork and Communication are measures of personal and behavioral Skills. Thus, both Economics and Management are composite measures of Major, on one hand, and of Minor and Skills, respectively, on the other hand.

It is very important to emphasize the fact that all Minor and Major business knowledge as well as personal and behavioral Skills are inseparable. They can melt in an integrated body of business knowledge. The heed for such an integrative vision has been translated into the AACSB Standards as one of the required Common Body of Knowledge areas (AACSB, 1994). Unfortunately, for today's business school graduates, the business environment is not very accommodating; it does not present problems and decisions neatly packaged and defined exclusively with marketing, finance, accounting, or some other single functional areas (Arben, 1997). We, therefore, strongly recommend that business schools should give special attention to the cross-functional integration courses. The cross-functional (capstone) courses in strategic management and business policy should be designed to show how knowledge from the various functional areas could be combined in addressing real-world business problems.

The findings of this research indicated also that business schools can serve more than one segment of the job market. Upon comparing the public and private sectors, it turned out that the factor means are higher for the private sector. However, the only significant difference occurred for the major business knowledge. This difference points out the

importance of the major business knowledge for business organizations during the upcoming technology and knowledge century. On the other hand, no significant differences were detected between the industrial and service sectors, although the factor means are slightly higher for the industrial organizations. Nonetheless, the service sector seems to value the language skills more than the industrial sector.

Moreover, it is evident that business organizations are concerned with business graduates' skills and knowledge. Thereby, more emphasis should be placed on developing those skills and knowledge having high validity and reliability in Table 1. Hence, for accounting courses, attention should be paid, not only to performing book keeping, but also to preparing and evaluating financial statements and reports. It is also recommended that marketing courses discuss such aspects as dealing, attracting, providing service and finishing contracts with customers as well as analyzing competitive situations. On the other hand, defining goals, planning job activities and studying, analyzing and distributing workloads, tasks and responsibilities should be essential components of management courses. Economics courses should emphasize the analysis of supply & demand curves and competitive prices as well as conducting feasibility studies. As for computer courses, the students' abilities to handle databases, word processors and spreadsheets should be developed and enhanced. Statistics courses should be designed to use statistical packages in data analysis and to develop the students' statistical presentation skills. The other skills, such as teamwork, communication and language (especially converse in English), should be developed and enhanced, not only through special courses,

but also throughout the entire curriculum. These aspects should be taken into consideration in course design and in determining objectives and teaching methods.

In addition, it is found that business organizations give a higher value to certain behavioral and personal skills compared to knowledge. The most needed skills are teamwork and Communication. The results indicated that "Co-operation with colleagues", "Benefit from the expertise of senior employees" and "Verbal communication in English" are on the top of the list of skills required for new business graduates. The results indicated also that "Define goals", "Write reports", and "Distribute workload and responsibilities" are perceived by senior managers as the most important indicators of knowledge. These findings imply that business schools should adopt a core curriculum which strengthens the required business knowledge; incorporates the needed skills; and gives an understanding of the political, ethical, and technological environment in which those skills are applied.

Evidently, the above discussion indicates that business schools will experience several radical changes over the next decades which will affect their missions, curricula, faculty and teaching philosophies. To survive those changes, business schools should re-orient themselves to become market-driven schools, and to achieve this objective, they are required to revise their current missions. Virtually, all stakeholders (businesses, government, faculty, students, alumni and administration) should be involved in formulating a mission which reflects the new business realities (Davies, 1985; Bloom, 1994; Servanci, 1996; Arben, 1997). That is, busi-

ness schools ought to clearly articulate their missions and objectives, engage in assessment processes which measure the achievement of those objectives, and make strategic responses for those assessments (Karns and Franz, 1997).

Finally, we believe that more research efforts should be directed at exploring the challenges and opportunities that business schools may face in the near future. The following research areas are suggested for future investigations. Firstly, the rapid growth in the business education programs should be accompanied by adequate concern for quality and effectiveness of these programs. A research effort could be devoted to quantify and measure the Total Quality Schools (Fusco, 1994). If business schools want to be effective, they must keep a continuous process of evaluation and adaptation of their services and to the needs of the business community. Secondly, as a result of the development of the global economy and the knowledge area, business graduates of the twenty first century will compete internationally. Consequently, there is a need to explore and assess the current trend toward the "International Business Education" (May, 1994; Kowk, et. al., 1994) especially with regard to overcoming the cultural and financial barriers. Finally, we suggest that some research effort may be directed at examining the current faculty development strategies adopted by different business schools. The role of the faculty, as an intellectual capital, is becoming increasingly important (Pfeffer, 1994; Pfeffer et . al., 1995; Stewart, 1997). The human capital will definitely be the major competitive edge of the business school during the next century.

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الملخص

دراسة تطبيقية لتوقعات سوق العمل بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة من التعليم الإداري

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لاستكشاف توقعات سوق العمل بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة من التعليم الإداري ، تم سحب عينة عشوائية طبقية من منظمات الأعمال لجمع بيانات عن درجة أهمية العديد من مؤشرات المعارف والمهارات الإدارية. وقد تم توفير نموذج قياسي لبيانات المسح الميداني لإظهار مدى ثبات وصدق المؤشرات التي وقع عليها الاختيار. ومن جهة أخرى أوضح التحليل العاملي التأكيدي ضرورة استخدام نموذج يتضمن ثلاثة عوامل هي: المعرفة الرئيسية ، المعرفة المساندة ، المهارات الشخصية والسلوكية ، لوصف إدراك منظمات الأعمال للتعليم الإداري. كما اتضح من التحليل الإحصائي أن القطاع الخاص يضع أهمية بالمعرفة الرئيسية أكبر من القطاع العام ، بينما تحظى مهارات اللغة بأهمية أكبر في المنظمات الخدمية عنها في المنظمات الصناعية. وقد تبين أيضا من نتائج البحث اهتمام منظمات الأعمال بمستوى معارف ومهارات الخريجين ، وأن الاهتمام ببعض المهارات الشخصية والسلوكية فاق الاهتمام بالمعارف الإدارية. وقد تمت مناقشة تأثير هذه النتائج على التعليم الإداري.

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مجلة فصلية محكمة

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رئيس التحرير :

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مجلة علمية فصلية محكمة تصدر أربعة أعداد في السنة ، بالإضافة إلى إصدارات خاصة في المناسبات .

● صدر العدد الأول منها في يناير ١٩٧٥ .

● تعنى المجلة بنشر :

- البحوث والدراسات المتعلقة بشئون منطقة الخليج والجزيرة العربية السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية والثقافية والعلمية . . . الخ .

● مراجعات الكتب العربية والأجنبية المهتمة بمنطقة الخليج والجزيرة العربية .

- تقارير عن أهم الندوات التي تعقد في داخل الكويت وخارجها بالإضافة إلى البيبلوجرافيا بالعربية والانجليزية .

● صدر عن المجلة :

أ - مجموعة من المنشورات المتخصصة .

ب - مجموعة من الإصدارات الخاصة المتعلقة بمنطقة الخليج والجزيرة العربية .

ج - سلسلة كتب وثائق الخليج والجزيرة العربية من ١٩٧٥ - ١٩٨٢ .

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