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A Case Study of a Business-Education Partnership through Internships

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A Case Study of a Business-Education Partnership through Internships

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Approval Page

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In memory of my parents Clayton and Patricia Blue.

Abstract

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Economic and demographic shifts are disturbed due to high school and collegiate dropout rates as well as discrepancies in scholastic achievement. This shift in the labor market has caused policymakers, educators, and employers to seek answers for how the knowledge and training of scholars can boost their skills to make them college, career, and life ready.

Internships are resurfacing as an extra educational appeal that might bridge the gap between the knowledge and work, once these are aligned with the values and expectations of the major key players (scholars, employers, and educators) with the substantive support of policymakers.

The purpose of this study was to engage the stakeholders (scholars, educators, and employers) who are involved in the internship program to gain a better understanding of how each stakeholder involved works together to prepare scholars with the relevant college, career, and life readiness skills. The contributors included businesses, interns, and educators who were included in the internship process and the program.

The primary research questions supporting this study were "What are the experiences of the stakeholders in the program," and "How are internships used to prepare high school scholars to be college and career ready?"

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A common emphasis of schools in the United States has focused on preparing all scholars to be college, career, and life ready by equipping students with academic, technical, and employability skills by the time they graduate high school (Hein, Smerdon, Lebow & Agus, 2012; Stone & Lewis, 2012). The skills gap between what employers seek and what scholars or future labor market candidates possess has raised concerns about how the educational system prepares the local high school scholars to become college, career, and life ready and to meet the needs of the labor market (Stone & Lewis, 2012). Many teens will continue to be underprepared for the job market while employers react by grieving the existence of a competencies gap among labor market candidates (Halpern, 2009; Stone & Lewis, 2012). If schools are not providing the academic, technical, and employability skills that will help American teens transition smoothly into careers, college, and life, a golden opportunity to help scholars obtain these skills is lost.

Lerman (2008) agreed that state policymakers have made attempts to address the competencies and workplace changes, primarily due to changes of the global labor market, by boosting educational attainment through initiatives that increase scholastic requirements. Lerman (2008) consequently cited that more knowledge does not make a person more successful in careers. Correspondingly, Cappelli (2008) stated that knowledge is the right choice element for success; having scholars take more demanding academic courses will not assure that they will become prepared for the labor market, and this should be a cause for distress. Cappelli (2008) further alleged that there is a problem with competency discrepancies, which eventually exist in scholar work-based skills. While academic skills are considerable, employers are concerned with how scholars can convert their knowledge into beneficial practices in the workplace.

Existing federal initiatives to spur reforms in American education, such as the programs that are found in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) and the Race to the Top (American Recovery Act and Reinvestment Act, 2009), sought to make American teens competitive in the global economy. Since the competency gap in the United States has not decreased (Cappelli, 2008; Christman, 2012; Lerman, 2012), a conflict exists between the competencies employers required in the labor market and the skills scholars possess. The scholars and businesses have anxieties with the local high school dropout rates and a competencies gap in the labor market. Due to the dropout rates, it has generated interest in what is the best way to engage scholars (Alfeld, Charner, Johnson, & Watts, 2013; Darche, Nayar, & Bracco, 2009; Guy, Sitlington, Larsen, & Frank, 2009; Lerman, 2012; Stone & Lewis, 2012). Because of the approach in making American teens competitive in the global economy, it has caused policymakers, educators, and employers to seek more options for the education of scholars that will enhance their abilities to meet business needs. Directives have been made by federal initiatives for educators to provide several career pathways for American teens and to provide work-based learning activities that promote practical, scholastic learning (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011).

Research proves that despite reforms to raise academic achievement among high school scholars, approximately 40% of American teens will not attend or complete college (Lerman, 2009). As a result, American teens will often enter the labor market inadequately prepared (Stone & Lewis, 2012). The focus is getting more teens into college, despite the evidence that a vast majority of scholars do not complete their degrees or get jobs in their fields. Society and the American educational system are placing students at risk by creating scholars who neglect their vocational futures since

their choices may lack a clear connection to their goals (Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006).

Symonds et al. (2011) stated that identifying alternative career pathways is essential to preparing scholars. The traditional scholastic classroom-based method is not suitable for the majority of American teens (Stone & Lewis, 2012). It often causes such scholars to disengage from learning and graduate from high school without the competencies to succeed in careers or higher education. In that regard, when scholars are well prepared for careers or education, high levels of unemployment are reduced (Hamilton, 1990). In return, scholars will have a sense of purpose and direction, and the time spent helplessly after high school can be reduced (Hamilton, 1990; Taylor & Watt-Malcolm, 2007). Focusing on college, career, and life readiness means that all scholars at the high school level can be engaged in relevant learning experiences that meet their needs and learning styles and ultimately the needs of the labor market (Stone & Lewis, 2012).

A scholar's commitment is typically measured by total achievement and school involvement. Commitment is an expectation for all scholars in high school regardless of their socioeconomic background. Disengagement is considered a higher order factor comprised of associating factors occurring over a regular period (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007). Scholars may experience a shortfall of academic incentives which can lead to a disconnection from school and its requirements while causing a declining effort and reduction in classroom participation. The penalties of detachment can vary within the different socioeconomic backgrounds. The scholars who are mostly affected are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, living in high poverty, and attending urban high schools. These are the scholars who are less likely to graduate and have fewer occasions

for second chances and future successes (National Academy of Sciences, 2003).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to engage the stakeholders (scholars, educators, and employers) who are involved in the internship program to gain a better understanding of how each stakeholder involved works together to prepare scholars with the relevant college, career, and life readiness skills.

Background and Significance of the Problem

Educational initiatives such as NCLB were created to increase the scholastic achievement and the competitive advantage of American high school scholars. Despite the well-placed intentions of these initiatives, concern still exists that American educational institutions are not adequately preparing students with the competencies needed to become successful in their college and career. Effects of these reforms have been modest (Stone & Lewis, 2012). The educational policy that emphasizes high-stakes testing and advancing the number of scholars entering science, technology, engineering, and math fields is powerless (Stone & Lewis, 2012). Although promoting schools is necessary, there is not a sufficient response to changes in the labor market, global economy, and technology. Scholars need to have opportunities to pursue other career paths that help them succeed as they transition into adulthood (Stone & Lewis, 2012).

Notably, while internships are used in abundance in other developed countries such as England, North Ireland, Scotland and Wales, little research has been conducted in recent years on adolescent internships in the United States. Research on internships has typically focused on adult internships examining the experiences of individuals in their mid to late 20s. As a result of this deficit in the study of teen experiences, this study sought to address the discrepancies in the literature on the internship programs targeted at

teens in the United States and examine the experiences of scholars, employers, and educators engaged in the internships.

Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of the stakeholders in the program?
2. How are internships used to prepare high school scholars to be college and career ready?

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this dissertation and defined here for clarification.

Scholastic competencies. Academic competencies entail the fundamental theories and concepts of core scholastic standards such as math, reading, science, and technology (core content) that scholars need to graduate from high school (Hein et al., 2012; Stone & Lewis, 2012).

College, career and life ready. Requires that scholars possess three basic sets of competencies, namely scholastic, employability, and technical skills after graduating high school (Stone & Lewis, 2012).

Career and technical education (CTE). Provides students of all ages with the academic and technical skills, knowledge, and training necessary to succeed in future careers and to become lifelong learners.

Carl Perkins legislation. The primary funding source and legislation for CTE programs.

Employability (soft skills). Employability competencies refer to the soft skills such as critical thinking, interpersonal competencies, problem-solving expertise, and time management skills that scholars must possess to function in the workplace.

Performance indicators. CTE standards mandated by Perkins funding. These measures include scholastic attainment of English and algebra competencies, CTE skill proficiencies, graduation, placement, nontraditional participation, nontraditional completion, and enrollment.

Skill proficiency. A measure to show that CTE completers are proficient in the area where they were trained.

Twenty-first century skills. Three broad categories: cognitive, interpersonal, intrapersonal (Sparks, 2012).

Work-based learning. The pedagogical method that combines classroom instruction with workplace activities and offers a means of advancing scholar engagement and preparing them for the labor force (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature relating to experiences of the stakeholders in internships. The review of the literature highlights several aspects of the public-school system, federal legislation, CTE programs, and work-based learning. To understand what CTE programs entail, the history of CTE and how it evolved is considered.

From Vocational Education to CTE

Vocational education as a movement had formulated by 1910 with the influence of leaders in business, government, unions, and education (Cuban, 2001). From a system of apprenticeship arrangements in colonial times, the evolutionary process of CTE has been influenced by economic, educational, and societal issues (Gordon, 2003).

Grub and Lazerson (2005) reported that changes in high schools around 1900 began the shift from the emphasis on civic education to the creation of vocational tracks. Those changes were believed to be in response to the decline in apprenticeships as a way of preparing young people for work. Formal schooling was viewed as a way of correcting the outdated apprenticeship system. Classic vocational offerings in schools are historically geared towards immediate admittance into the job market within specific offerings (Gordon, 2003). Those traditional vocational offerings were in areas such as welding, agriculture, and home economics (Stone & Lewis, 2012).

House (1921) described two schools of thought on vocational education. The first was intended to fit the child to the job and accept the present economic system with little criticism. The second is based on John Dewey's influence which proposed that all scholars study the vocations, hence introducing scholars into the life of work. Carnevale (2008) reported that in the early 1970s, the United States' mass production competitive edge over the rest of the world shifted. People began to demand more than mass-

produced standardized goods. The influence of accelerating technologies combined to make knowledge and the availability of high qualities and advanced goods and services more accessible. As the demands of the global marketplace forced the United States to become more competitive, vocational education began a transition. According to Too Narrow, Too Soon? (CEA Institute, 2010), vocational education is criticized in such a way that the advocates have resorted to giving it a new name: "career and technical education."

CTE purpose. A purpose of CTE is to prepare scholars for high demand, skilled, waged occupations in current or emerging professions (Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act, 2006). During the past 20 years, federal legislation has sought to integrate CTE and academic subjects in order to provide pathways to postsecondary education in addition to employment (Plank, DeLuca, & Estacion, 2008).

Lewis and Cheng (2006) referred to the "new vocationalism" within the last 2 decades which has deliberately drawn closer to the academic mainstream. The authors further pointed out that the new vocationalism reflected the ideals of John Dewey in 1916 (Lewis & Cheng, 2006). The philosophy of the new vocationalism provides structure for scholars and connects them with the actual workplace as well as technical colleges and community colleges. Martinez (2007) discussed John Dewey's influence on the contemporary practices of CTE. Dewey promoted the philosophy of Democratic Humanism which stressed that vocational education is needed for all scholars. He believed that the objective was to teach scholars through the vocations rather than explicitly teach only the vocation or trade. Dewey believed in the integration of academics and vocational curricula and emphasized problem solving, global perspectives,

and understandings of the role of work in everyday life.

Goal of CTE. The goal of CTE is preparing scholars for careers after graduation from high school or college (Gentry, Peters, & Mann, 2007). Martinez (2007) discussed what he saw as the one clear trend in CTE, which was that it was becoming more expansive and inclusive. Contemporary CTE programs have reduced the boundaries between college preparation and career development (Vail, 2007). In their research, Grub and Lazerson (2005) commented on the "vocationalized" second tier regional universities and the trend towards occupational drift of academic majors such as business, health occupations, engineering, and information technology. Grub and Lazerson also included that community colleges have become increasingly focused on preparation for professions.

Since this change in educational reform occurred, a shortage of labor force ready individuals along with decreased confidence in the viability of CTE programming exists (Bray, 2011; Gray, 2002). Further, high schools are forced to offer more rigorous, scholastic-focused courses to meet standards and high-stakes testing requirements, causing schools to sacrifice and forego what has been an historically considered part of secondary education (Siegel, 2009). Such focus on standards and raising the threshold for test scores has resulted in insufficient time for hands-on activities and cooperative learning.

CTE impacts the labor market. The United States is experiencing a shortage in labor force ready high school graduates due, in part, to the change in curricular offerings in high schools across the country (McNamara, 2009). Employers have determined that teens entering the labor force lack necessary soft competencies such as teamwork, interpersonal communication, and organizational skills. McNamara's (2009) findings

reported that over 80% of employers were concerned about soft skill deficiencies among workers.

On the technical side, secondary indicators for academic success included industry standards (Gordon, 2008). The increased funding on a local level has strengthened technical competencies of scholars through integration and provided experiences in all aspects of an industry (Gordon, 2008). In addition to integration of curriculum and a broad program of study, the Perkins Act sought to improve, expand, and modernize accounting, early childhood education, business technology, culinary arts, sales distribution, and marketing, among other CTE programs. The funding provided for modernization of current CTE programs has been given to provide activities to prepare scholars for more skills, higher wages, and higher demanding occupations that lead to self-sufficiency (Gordon, 2008).

Throughout the last 2 decades, there has been a renewed belief that CTE can impact the scholastic performance of scholars. Daggett (2013) suggested that scholars need both scholastic and CTE competencies. Daggett stated,

> If CTE is to continue to be a viable program in secondary schools, it is essential that CTE leaders and educators be able to explain the relationship. CTE is conducive to not just the applied workplace competency demands of business, but also to the academic proficiencies of its served scholar populations on state scholastic tests. (p. 192)

In the PBS documentary, "Making Schools Work," Joyce Phillips, principal of Corbin High Schools in Kentucky, shared that nearly 80% of all high school scholars need a "hook" – something that makes them want to come to school and have a desire to learn. She considered programs that are integrating high scholastic standards and rigor,

and a comprehensive program. CTE focusing on certification and skill development is the answer to hooking that 80% of high school scholars (Gibbs, 2006).

CTE has rigor. Integrating competences-based technical education with academic rigor in the traditional curriculum such as reading, writing, math, and science can give scholars an opportunity in a variety of areas following completion of high school. Hiring trainable employees is becoming increasingly difficult because most scholars seeking employment have little work history, limited educational credentials, and a brief résumé (Ausman, 2009). Current programs and curriculum in CTE are aware of this alarming statistic and the need to provide scholars with competencies and training in the industry besides academic preparation for college and beyond (Ausman, 2009).

Although CTE of the past has been thought of like a track for scholars who would not need the academic rigor and demands of the college preparatory curriculum, the research shows that CTE persuades scholars. It does so by giving students real-world opportunities and challenges that enhance and provide connection to their education (Harris & Wakelyn, 2007). Recently, employers have communicated with educators to tell schools what competencies are needed; and these collaborative achievements often include the academic rigor necessary to prepare for schooling beyond high school (Ausman, 2009).

Mei, Newmeyer, and Wei (2008) conducted a study on the factors that influenced scholar career choices by considering the relationships among experiences, career interests, and career opportunities. Mei et al. found that interventions were needed to provide scholars with a "comprehensive career development program that helps scholars develop self-efficacy in their desired careers through practical learning activities" (p. 93). In a study to understand the factors that influence enrollment in CTE programs at an

industrial center, Gene (2010) examined the human and other factors while exploring the most effective communication strategies that accurately present the advantages of CTE. Gene found the "factors that influenced scholars to enroll had a high school career plan, earning credits toward high school graduation, and a job shadowing someone in the field where they were fascinated" (p. 87). McComb-Beverage (2012) found that self-efficacy can be a substantial component of an adolescent's career planning process.

CTE history. Educators and administration typically have a negative image of the CTE programs, based on an original perception of vocational education which legislation further established as CTE (Wonacott, 2000). A negative perception or stereotype of CTE includes "Voced is for dummies and misfits" (Wonacott, 2000, p. 106). According to Elliott and Deimler (2007), vocational education has been viewed as the dumping ground for scholars who did not fit elsewhere, or it is the equivalent of special education. The perceptions of CTE programs have existed since the inception of CTE in 1917 under the Smith-Hughes Act. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 allowed for new assets to support residential, vocational programs (Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski, 2004). Future amendments (1968 and 1976) to the Vocational Act of 1963 enabled the federal funding for more vocational services and shifted the focus of duty to people rather than professions. The amendments repositioned the funding formulas and specified that capital could be used for high school and postsecondary scholars, scholars with disabilities or socioeconomic challenges, labor market retraining, and vocational guidance; allowing the door for many community colleges or universities to offer courses that are categorized under a CTE career pathway allowing scholars to receive college credit (Gordon, 2008).

Lynch (2000) stated that education for and about work began at the beginning of

civilization with the creation or evolution of humankind, and parents passed their knowledge and skill to their children. CTE started in the early 1900s; however, there are some CTEs that can be traced as far back as 250 years ago (Gordon, 2002). Gordon (2002) stated that European influences in CTE were starting in the 1700s in Switzerland with Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. Rousseau (1969) advocated the manual arts, consequently paving the way for CTE in his novel *Emile*. Pestalozzi thought children should not only think but also do, and this idea about the importance of a career and technical component in the education of children spread across Europe and into the United States.

American educational leaders who had a significant influence on CTE were John Dewey, Booker T. Washington, David Snedden, and Charles Prosser. Although they had different views of how the curriculum should be constructed, they all felt scholars should learn career technical training. Dewey (1964) stated that scholars introduced to various forms of current occupations develop social power and insight while freed from economic stress. Scholars gain better technical skill along with firsthand experience, which brings them into contact with realities as they learn career and technical competencies. Hyslop-Marigison (1999) agreed with Dewey's full democratic method to CTE rather than small competencies-based programs. Gordon (2002) stated that the Industrial Revolution brought with it new manufacturing technology, which required a new education. There was a demand for engineers, designers, and managers needing training in both scientific theory and practical applications of the theory. This application created the working class of people. This newly created class of people wanted new educational opportunities to get and keep the new jobs. The Industrial Revolution not only created production line jobs but also the need to learn how to operate

technologically advanced equipment, as is still the case today. As technology advances in the workplace, the need for employees able to operate and maintain this technology continued to exist.

Hyslop-Marigison (1999) stated that one of the largest peacetime appropriations for funding CTE was in 1961, despite the recommendation of President Eisenhower to cut the funds. In 1963, President Johnson signed the Vocational Education Act into law. This act, later known as the Perkins Act, provided career and technical programs for individuals in high school (American Vocational Association, 2002). The changes in industry and science during this time created a need for the labor force to have a more technical background.

Twenty-First Century Abilities

The 21st century abilities process has been seen by some as a fad, while others view 21st century as a movement toward integrating core scholastics and career competencies for better education and preparation for scholar success in the workplace and college. The term "21st century skills" refers to a set of competencies. For the sake of consistency in this context, the National Research Council defines 21st century skills as abilities necessary for the 21st century workplace; skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, and resiliency fall into three categories: cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal (Sparks, 2012).

Relevant and rigorous curriculum often involves a relationship to 21st century skills. Activities or applications of this idea appear in both CTE and core scholastic courses to include college preparatory concepts. Schools ordinarily have such curriculum in a variety of avenues such as service learning, internships, advanced placement scholastic courses, dual credit courses, and problem-based projects and grading to name a

few. The relevant and rigorous curriculum encourages the development of critical

thinking and problem-solving competencies along with real-world connections so

scholars can understand why learning specific concepts are necessary for their life outside

of their school environment (Stone, Alfeld, & Pearson, 2008; Tews, 2011). Studies

revealed that only when educators who were teamed together focused on instruction and

scholarly work were gains made in academic performance (Corcoran & Silander, 2009).

   College, career, and life ready. The national dialogue on reforms and policies of

getting each scholar to graduate from traditional high school college, career, and life

ready bears the high schools as an important focus for economic revival and success. In

the state of North Carolina, there are certain benchmarks that scholars needed to reach to

be college, career, and life ready. For scholars to be deemed college ready, they have to

attain a score of 18 points on the American College Test (ACT) in reading, math, and

English or pass other state assessments that test scholars' reading, writing, or math

ability. Scholars who fail one or more measures on the ACT but pass the similar test on

one of the placement tests are college ready. To be career ready, scholars must have

some industry certification and pass an assessment equivalent to the ACT such as the

Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery tests (ASVAB), the ACT Work-Keys, or

other industry certifications. A career-ready scholar is one who has completed two

credits and was enrolled in a third credit for a CTE credential, had received either an

approved industry certification or state certification related to his or her career major, and

had met the benchmark on ACT Work Keys or the ASVAB. A college, career, and life

active scholar would get an industry certificate and be college ready based on the above

definitions. In the current case study, scholars in the internships are also enrolled in CTE

classes at their high school. The interns graduated high school with the ACT or an

industry equivalent.

Theoretical and conceptual framework. To appreciate the potential of internships, a discussion of theories and relevant concepts such as constructivist theory, Dewey's theory of pragmatism, adolescent development theory, and signaling theory that lend support to work-based learning and specifically internships are presented in the upcoming subsections.

The constructivist theory suggests that experiences develop when scholars come into contact with existing knowledge. John Dewey, one of the early constructivists, "considered children's curiosity, interests, and activities led them to experimentation. Curious about their environment, children are eager to explore it" (as cited in Gutek, 2011, p. 360). Dewey (1938) also believed that observing the interests and abilities of children could help adults to understand what the scholar was ready for, therefore aligning curricula and work that the child could be fruitful in accomplishing. CTE programs provide real-world applications that engage scholars in hands-on activities, expanding their curiosity, and building upon their interests while successfully integrating academic core areas. These programs also present scholars with accurate mental constructions of reality that coincide with the thoughts of cognitive constructivists (Doolittle & Camp, 1999).

The constructivist learning theory is critical to education because educators help scholars understand the content of the curriculum through experiences. In a constructivist learning environment, scholars are engaged in an activity to solve a problem where the instructor facilitates learning by providing the problem (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2003). CTE classrooms are excellent illustrations of a constructivist-learning environment where scholars are engaged in authentic real-world

projects along with project-based learning.

     Dewey's pragmatism theory. Dewey's ideas of coordinating academic and practical knowledge offer a philosophy to work-based learning and how it can contribute positively to the scholar's primary learning experience (Kelleher & Leonall, 2011; Thogersen & Jorgensen, 2010). Dewey (1938) attested that traditional education programs were compliant and stationary and did not incorporate enough experiential learning which he believed was imperative to helping scholars process what they had learned. He attested that education should reflect the realities of life and not be focused on overrunning scholars with information that was detached from real-life experiences. He considered that knowledge could aid in passing on skills and information to help scholars build on problem-solving skills and reflection. It is the responsibility of teachers to provide a thoughtful and meaningful experience. They also provide practical, hands-on experiences. Scholars could relate the academic content to real-world activities in tandem to acquiring their learning.

     Learning occurs when scholars can put their thoughts into action. Dewey also expounded that experience and knowledge are ingrained in the culture and social contexts and that high-quality experiences that were interactive and engaging helped scholars reflect on their experience as they learned from others. Dewey's notion of the importance of learning through experience works to promote overall learning. From the perspective of learning and expertise, learning that happens in mind could not be separated from the active, experiential learning.

     It is meaningful to note that Dewey did not support vocational education. He considered that it was wrong to separate children and train scholars for civic duty while training others for an industry. In his view, training scholars for the industry was just a

form of producing a channel of skilled labor for employers at the expense of the public.

Separating vocational education from general education would "leave public school with

all its vices and its remoteness from the urgent realities on contemporary life untouched"

(Dewey, 1913, p. 145). Dewey's theory of philosophy can lend support to work-based

learning, particularly internships where scholars are placed in real work environments

and given the support and resources necessary as they learn relevant academic, technical,

and nontechnical skills that can help them transition to college or career.

Human capital theory. Work-based learning can be framed in the human capital

theory; it provides an understanding of the investment made in education. The first

doctrine of human capital theory is when investments are made in scholar education and

training, it yields absolute returns in the individual, organization, and community

(Becker, 1975). Similarly, Mincer (1989) expounded that "human capacity is mostly

attained and developed through formal and informal education at home, school, training,

experiences, and mobility in the labor market" (p. 27). These activities have direct and

indirect costs to both the individuals and the organizations, and the advantages are

usually realized. Mincer also highlighted that human capital plays an entire part in the

process of economic growth since the stock of human capital rises with economic

development. He further certified that with advances in technology, organizations and

schools need to play "catch up" by investing in human capital and other segments of the

labor force to ensure a channel of skills and work. The human capital theory explains

how and why investment in education and skills training are made by individuals and

organizations and the economic advantages that can be derived from the investment

(Sweetland, 1996).

In internships, the human capital theory explains the investment that businesses

make when they provide learning opportunities and resources for scholars to work and obtain the employability skills needed to be productive in their future careers within an organization. Correspondingly, scholars invest their time and talents into work-based programs, particularly long-term programs such as youth internships, hoping their education and training gave them a competitive advantage and the credentials in the labor market, consequently increasing their chances of getting jobs.

The application of human capital theory in educational programs has been criticized by Fitzsimons (1999) for focusing solely on economic advantages and neglecting the influence of political and cultural values suggesting the need to consider other theories that add value to the education and development of adolescents. While human capital theory explains the investment in training from the supply side of the labor market, it does not explain the demand side, i.e., how scholars' skills and certifications are rewarded in the labor market and how adolescents mature and develop as part of their education and training. The following section describes how other theories such as signaling theory and adolescent development theory can further enhance the value of internships.

Signaling theory. Employers are unsure of the productive capabilities of a prospective employee, and this uncertainty causes them to attach value to certifications based on specific indicators and professional expectancies. Due to the difficulties in defining skills, proxies such as certifications, degrees, and other qualifications are used and are gained through some education (Castellano, Stone, & Stringfield, 2005). According to these researchers, official certification signals employers in the labor market as it affirms the competencies held by the certificate holder. The certification also indicates to potential employers that the holder has the skills, knowledge, and attitude

relevant to an organization. Some evidence shows that in the absence of strong labor market signals, employers turn to traditional college degrees as a proxy of credential for industry certification for occupations that typically may not require a bachelor's degree.

Scholars who engage in high quality and intensive work-based learning programs such as internships graduate from high school with degrees and certifications in their relevant occupational fields that are recognized by industry (Castellano et al., 2005). For many scholars, possessing certifications in technical areas increases their chances of finding meaningful jobs after graduation. As wage and occupation trends show, several career opportunities exist for those who do not pursue higher education but gain these alternative certifications (Stone & Lewis, 2012). The diversity in training can prove challenging in assessing skills and competencies. Certifications hold value to employers in the labor market. In internships, scholars who graduate with certifications have a competitive advantage over those who graduate with just high school certifications.

Adolescent development theory. Whereas human capital theory and signaling theory underlie the value of work-based learning from an economic and career perspective, adolescent development theory is a framework for work-based learning because of the involvement in programs such as internships. They offer teens a chance to develop their identities and provides them with a sense of purpose as they develop personally and professionally and transition into adulthood (Halpern, 2009; Hamilton, 1990).

Erikson (1950) noted that the primary task during the adolescent period is identity development where individuals go through several phases and are influenced by sociocultural factors as they establish their identities. The adolescent period has been described as a time where people explore their characteristics to determine where they fit

in society (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). This process begins during early adolescence, typically around the age of puberty, and ends in the late teens as individuals emerge as adults (Arnett, 2000).

These employment opportunities can provide scholars with valuable workplace skills. Interaction with peers and other adults in the workplace can foster a sense of identity and help to develop cognitive skills that can enhance scholar success in the workplace. It must be noted that the impact of work on adolescents has remained controversial. Some researchers contend that exposing teenagers to the workplace has a positive impact on their social and cognitive development of soft skills such as critical thinking, time management, and interpersonal skills (Stone & Mortimer, 1998; Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006).

Career theory. Career theories have provided a framework to help guide the career development process in achievements to understand an individual's career process over time (Super, Osborne, Walsh, Brown, & Niles, 1992). Super et al. has contributed more than any other theorist concerning vocational psychology and the 38 developments of career patterns (as cited in Savickas, 2001). To support Super et al.'s self-concept in career theory, Ochs and Roessler (2004) explained that adults can face difficulty when transitioning into their career role when they have failed to complete the tasks needed for career development during their adolescence.

Experiential learning theory. Experiential learning suggests that individuals learn from doing or from partaking in a direct experience with the activity. The experiential learning theory applies theory to practice through CTE programs (Haltinner, 2012). All CTE programs represent the experiential learning theory since scholars are involved in project-based learning activities and work-based learning to include school-

based enterprises and internships that provide the hands-on method to learning by doing.

Career Technical Programs and Secondary Education

In North Carolina, the state offers the Career and College Promise program that provides a clear pathway to postsecondary education through dual enrollment at the community college that increases opportunities to CTE scholars to take part in a program of study (North Carolina Community Colleges, 2014).

Due to the rigorous nature of the program of study, the potential to increase scholar opportunities in gaining the college, career, and life ready competencies needed in the 21st century workplace exists. Castellano, Sundell, Overman, and Aliaga (2012) found that in "program of study classrooms, scholars were building wind tunnels, determining the course schedule in real time by responding to online surveys, constructing computers and networks, isolating DNA samples, and analyzing fingerprints to solve crimes" (p. 57). CTE programs that are of high quality present scholars with real-world challenges relevant to today's labor force and align with the nation's college, career, and life ready standards (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2012).

Educational programs. CTE courses are often overlooked because of the competitiveness to go to college, which decreases scholar enrollment in the CTE program. Schools that offer CTE courses at a separate school rather than the scholar's home school can inhibit scholar enrollment (Lewis, Stipanovic, & Stringfield, 2012).

Scholastic integration. The Carl D. Perkins Act of 2006 mandates that schools link career and technical courses and academic core curriculum. This adds meaning and relevance to scholar academic studies. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are to provide comprehensive staff development for CTE educators in collaboration with scholastics

educators so a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction takes place.

Although CTE is a federally funded and supported program, participation in the program at the secondary and postsecondary level is voluntary. While there have been concentrated achievements to increase the involvement including the integration of career and technical studies with scholastics, individual school systems have the option whether to implement a scholastic and program of study combination.

To strengthen the integration of academic core curriculum and to ensure scholars are college, career, and life ready, an ongoing focus on a program of study in CTE programs continues to be necessary. CTE requires scholars to have advanced scholastic competencies as they prepare the scholar for college and growing careers. Daggett (2013) found in a study conducted by Meta Metrics that some of the highest Lexile reading levels are necessary for CTE textbooks in high school. Entry-level occupations were found to have the highest Lexile reading levels (Daggett, 2013), confirming that teaching literacy in CTE courses is a critical component of the program. Pellock and Threeton (2010) found while examining the relationship between SkillsUSA scholar contest preparation and scholastics that reading is a primary component to understanding the safety guidelines regarding SkillsUSA competitions. Braley and Handy (2012) found that many of the participants agreed that blended learning is needed, but that there is not enough time to work together to provide for this mode of learning. There is a need for more curricular support because of the lack of competencies on how to integrate scholastics and CTE courses (Meeder & Suddreth, 2012). Anderson and Anderson (2012) found when researching the integration of mathematics within the agricultural education curriculum that educators showed that while they teach the skill or principle before linking to the Standards of Learning (SOL) standards, to integrate math into the

curriculum, additional resources are needed. The collaboration between scholastics and the program of study in CTE can help educators create competencies and plan activities within classroom instruction that aid in scholar mastery of key concepts (Lewis, Kosine, & Overman, 2008). Allen (2010) suggested that abundance strategies and practices implemented by CTE educators could be used by core teachers and applied in academic courses to increase scholarly engagement. Scholastic and CTE teachers need time to work together in achievements to begin the integration process (Braley & Handy, 2012).

    Inclusion. CTE programs are available to provide all scholars an opportunity to enhance their competencies towards their future goals. A CTE program of study, while rigorous, can also serve the needs of scholars within an inclusion setting. As with CTE and scholastic integration, CTE and special education educators must also collaborate to ensure the success of scholars. Casale-Giannola (2012) found scholar performance is higher when teachers develop a respectful and positive rapport with their scholars. Many of the changes that are taking place in CTE programs may limit scholars who receive special education services. While CTE can support the needs of exceptional children, the growing demands of the labor force, high-stakes testing, and increase performance objectives may inhibit scholar membership from being abundant in CTE programs. Therefore, a collaboration between scholastic and CTE teachers to include co-teaching strategies could help to support inclusion in CTE programs. Foundational competencies in math, reading, and science are critical in CTE programs, which further validates the importance of CTE and academic integration to ensure scholars with disabilities are abundant.

    Internships. From an economic perspective, investing in the schooling and training of human capital is important in changing the world of work since the capacities

of the labor force to increase their knowledge and use modern technology are seen as leaders of economic development both at the regional levels skills (Cappelli, 2012). Investment in people, as opposed to other forms of expenditure, underscores the importance of competencies and skills in the current knowledge economy. Notwithstanding, Cappelli (2012) alleged that recent labor market conditions and the changes in expectations of employers and employees have caused organizations to invest less in workforce training.

In internships, human capital explains the investment that businesses make when they provide learning opportunities and resources for scholars to work and gain the technical and employability competencies needed to be abundant in their future careers within an organization. LEAs across the country are entertaining the implementation of experiential learning experiences during the senior year of high school "to stimulate scholars' critical intellectual engagement with their world" (Darder, 2002, p. 84). Detailed research has been completed in the senior year of high school and has identified severe problems with the scholastic achievement of scholars and the lack of their connection to the real world; however, researchers have shown that this is an institutionalized problem due to the disconnection between secondary and postsecondary institutions. "High school seniors who take a break from strict scholastic courses are reacting rationally to a K-12 system and a college admissions process that provide few incentives for scholars to work hard during their senior year" (Kirst & Venezia, 2004, p. 302). Therefore, a need exists to look at implementing programs that not only mandate academic rigor but also provide graduating seniors with a strong background to cope with moving from a high school scholar to a college scholar. Advocates of experiential learning programs strongly contend that their programs assisted in this important

transition.

Educators who support only traditional education and who may be critical of innovative programs including experiential learning opportunities may view philosophers who support nontraditional educational practices as extremists. The fast movement within the United States to mandate testing of children's learning in public schools could well discourage activities that foster thinking. State assessment programs are already detractors from those activities as educators are understandably led to prepare scholars for tests. And those tests focus largely on learned facts, a far cry from measuring quality education, with its emphasis on thinking and problem solving and knowledge (Schwebel, 2003).

The philosophy of Paulo Freire acknowledged this circumstance: The theory wrote about fear of freedom that afflicts us, a fear based on prescriptive relationships between those that rule (state, educators) and those who are believed to follow (teachers, scholars). Is it possible that the traditional education that is offered in public schools, within those four walls, does not provide our children with a foundation to be interdependent and to be abundant in the transitions of their adult life, the first of which is the transition to higher education (Stem, 2001)?

Educational leaders need to reflect and ask challenging questions regarding the creativity of their educational organizations. Educational leaders become so driven by mandates and regulations that creativity is overlooked. One of the noticeable changes in pedagogical practice from secondary to postsecondary education is the increase in scholar autonomy and the requirement that scholars work independently. The scholars who take part in these school-based programs are provided with an opportunity to be autonomous and responsible for their time management and to work independently to meet deadlines.

A goal of internship programs is to develop positive working relationships between scholars and a mentor or adults involved in the program. The detrimental effect of the adolescent society that has evolved in schools discussed and a departure from that environment for a portion of a scholar's high school experience may have a positive effect on the scholar's ability to be abundant in the transition to college. The trend is to provide these opportunities to seniors in high school. The October 19, 2005 edition of *Education Week* reported,

> Seniors are young adults, not children. By January, they are ready to do something different and find out what adult life has in store for them. Send these good kids out into career-related internships or community service projects they choose. Faculty members could shift from hectoring the catatonic to advising the eager on where they should intern. (Teare, 2005, p. 32)

Any form of innovation in education produces detractors among those individuals who are inclined to look at the glass as half empty. One criticism of internships and mentoring programs is that there is a lack of academic rigor due to the assessment strategies. This criticism is not a new circumstance. Darder (2002) noted,

> It is ironic that so many traditional educators malign critical forms of education that are based on Freire's work as impractical or lacking academic rigor. Nothing could be further from the truth, a living practice composed of relevant pedagogical actions within schools and communities that stimulate scholars' critical intellectual engagement with their world.
> (p. 84)

Advocates of experiential learning programs well know of this criticism and emphasize

that academic rigor must be a priority. "Why not make that taste of college more real by offering less classroom contact time and more material to master? Then we could see if these seniors are ready for college's pace" (Teare, 2005, p. 32).

Dewey reminded us of the importance of offering scholars unique learning experiences when he stated the scholar's need for the "genuine situation of experience" and scholarly interest, consequently supporting the fundamental tenets of the mentoring and internship movement (Dewey, 1944, p. 163). One of the greatest intellects of modern time, Albert Einstein, spoke of the need for more freedom to learn.

Possessing determination. A relatively new concept that can lend support for long-term, work-based learning such as internships is grit. Courage is defined as passion and perseverance over the long term, which can be a good predictor of success in life and school as compared to one's intelligence quotient (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). As a noncognitive trait, grit is essential to achieving long-term goals and favorable outcomes. Relating grit to work-based learning such as internships that have the potential to last for up to 2 years in high school, scholars must show a high level of commitment–or grit–in developing and teaching the relevant skills and certifications needed to enter the labor force or advance to higher education successfully. This concept is crucial to academic achievement and engagement, particularly among the scholars who are detached from the high school curriculum and are labeled as "at risk." From a psychological perspective, Duckworth et al. (2007) suggested that understanding what motivates scholars and their commitment to achievement and success can help educators develop programs and interventions that meet their needs.

CTE has evolved over the centuries from agriculture and industrial arts to advanced manufacturing, engineering, and technology. CTE programs are required to

adjust curricula and develop new programs that met the needs of the current workforce. Quality programs provide scholars with a set of employable and transferable competencies essential to ensure scholars can thrive in the labor force (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2012). With less than 50% of the high school scholars who graduate completing a CTE concentration, examining those experiences of completers provided insight into CTE programs of study and how participation links to future success.

Accountability is a necessary means that the educational system must be held to as a way to ensure the success of scholars while also continuing to receive federal, state, and local funding. Schools are measured based on the quantitative data derived from national and local assessments as a measurement of success; however, Bonaiuto and Johnson (2009) suggested that accountability must stem from the local context with "roots in what the community values" (p. 27).

CTE programs are centered on the needs data from labor data at the state level. CTE course offerings and pathways at individual schools and communities are based primarily on the needs of the local labor market; therefore, scholars gain academic and technical competencies necessary to be successful in their future career within their community. Friedman (2007) conceded that those cultures that embrace change would have a greater advantage at success in this world.

Guidance and counseling are critical components to a scholar's overall high school experience. Alfeid and Bhattacharya (2012) found that many school counselors are not knowledgeable in understanding the elements of a program of study, which has substantially limited their ability to guide scholars in selecting appropriate courses. Examining the experiences of researchers who took part in a CTE program could

enlighten educators on how to educate scholars to be abundant and productive citizens within the context of their communities while focusing on the social, mental, scholastic, and vocational development.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter identifies and describes the research design used in conducting this study. This study showed whether or not an internship program enhances college, career, and life readiness among scholars. Developing a rich description of the structure and organization of the program established provided insight into the challenges and opportunities of those engaged in the program. This research used a qualitative case study method (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009) to explore internships and to guide the data collection, analysis, and the reporting of the study.

Qualitative studies provide richness and comprehensiveness to the analysis of the circumstance under study (Miles & Huberman, 1994); and since such studies occur in natural settings, researchers can examine a situation within its context. A qualitative method enables the researcher to understand the meaning and purpose that individuals ascribe to their activities (Creswell, 2013) by finding out intangible factors and contextualizing participant experiences. Also, qualitative research affords the researcher an opportunity to understand an issue or circumstance that cannot be easily quantified (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative method is suited for exploring the situation of internships within the context of the program geared towards equipping adolescents with core competencies and addressing employer skills needs. Conducting a case study on internships within the framework of a local organization and examining this intersection of businesses, scholars, and educators enabled the researcher to gain a holistic understanding of their experiences. It also allowed the researcher to explore the complications and cleverness of the circumstance and provide an opportunity to explore policy, knowledge, and practice as they relate to internship programs.

It is beneficial for consumers of research to understand the philosophical

assumptions of the researcher about reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology) and the values that underpin the research process (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Beliefs about the world and what reality is (ontology) is influenced by factors such as a worldview that determines the kinds of questions and why answers are sought. These factors determine what is being reality (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011).

The researcher's ontological belief is that truth known through the researcher's participation with the different participants in the internship program as each contributor would present multiple realities based on their views, experiences, worldviews, and contexts. When studying individuals, it is considerable to understand that reality is subjective as seen through many views, and the intent as the researcher should be to report the multiple views of participants as presented. Creswell (2013) expounded that epistemological beliefs help the researcher determine what counts as knowledge. This knowledge is gained by getting close to the participants to understand their views and experiences. The researcher's epistemological stance required that the researcher conduct the research in the participants' environments to gain a holistic understanding of internship and how the participants' contexts and experiences bore upon the circumstance. By getting close to the contributors and listening to them with an open mind, the researcher understands their knowledge claims. The researcher's choice of research method made it possible to study an internship within the context of an organization to understand the experiences and perceptions of the participants.

From an axiological standpoint, qualitative research is value laden as researchers bring their values and biases to bear on a study and how findings are interpreted (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011). It is considerable that the researcher suspends

assumptions and is open to learning from participants and does not make any assumptions about what the participants knew or did. Through the researcher's extensive review and experiences with the concept of internships, the researcher monitored any assumptions and biases and separated them from the data being presented by the participants. The researcher had to be cognizant of how the researcher's previous knowledge about internships could influence the interpretation of the data. To prevent this from happening, the researcher endeavored to jot down feelings and perceptions about the information the researcher received. Besides gaining more insight into the circumstance, adopting an open stance enabled the researcher to identify dissenting views and report such evidence in this study, enriching the study with information that could be beneficial to the different stakeholders.

The social constructivist or interpretive framework (Creswell, 2013) guided the interpretation of this study. Through this viewpoint, the researcher attempted to construct the meaning of the world where the participants lived and worked. Given the different factors that influence the success of internships, it is considerable to uncover the complexity of views that each of the participants held: Their views would be informed by the context in which they worked; the resources available to them; and the cultural, economic, and political environments in which participants found themselves. It is through the researcher's interaction with the members that the researcher could explore and describe the purpose of internships in promoting college and career readiness competencies and to address employee competencies needs. As a result, the researcher gained knowledge and co-created findings with the participants. Due to the value-laden nature of research, the researcher's background and values potentially influenced the interpretations the researcher made throughout the study.

Population and Setting

The LEA examined in this case study is located in the piedmont area of North Carolina. There are three separate LEAs within the county. The LEA participating in this study is the largest district within the county it resides.

This LEA's 28 schools ranged from prekindergarten to twelfth grade. This consists of six elementary schools (Grades K-6), 10 prekindergarten through sixth grade schools, five middle schools (Grades 7-8), five traditional high schools (Grades 9-12), an Early College High School on the campus of the local community college, and a separate public school for scholars served in the Exceptional Children's Program whose Individual Education Program calls for a separate continuum.

The LEA served a population of 17,370 scholars as of the 2016-2017 school year. The scholar gender ratio was 51% male to 49% female. The demographic group makeup was Black, 6%; White, 72%; Hispanic, 12%; Asian/Pacific Islander, 7%; and Native American, 0% (two or more races, 4%). For the same school year, 48.41% of the scholars received free and reduced-cost lunches.

The CTE department in this district offers courses such as apparel, robotics/tech ed., furniture/cabinetmaking, accounting, health science, agriculture, culinary, marketing, and business.

K-12 Career Connection is an initiative by this LEA CTE department to connect scholars and parents to educational opportunities that lead to local high-wage, high-skilled careers around the county.

Industry-recognized credentials is one increasingly popular way of ensuring scholars are entering the workforce with appropriate skills through industry-recognized credentials. Credentials can be used to signal that an individual has acquired the

knowledge, skills, and abilities required in a specific occupation or industry, giving employers confidence in their new hires. As of 2015-2016, this LEA issued 2,440 credentials.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was selected for this single case study. When using purposeful sampling, the "researcher selects individuals and a site to study because they can purposefully inform the understanding of the research problem and central circumstance" (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). This study was conducted as a single instrumental and embedded case study and focused on a high school internship program in a local LEA in the piedmont area of North Carolina during the 2016-2017 scholastic year.

There were several participants included in this study. The participants in the study took part on the condition that their identities would be protected. Pseudonyms were assigned to each to maintain confidentiality.

Data Collection Procedures

In this study, the data were collected through interviews with participants and document review. Interviewing members is an ideal and considerable tool since it allows the researcher to gain insight into the feelings and thoughts that are not readily observed and are usually an essential tool in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Interview Protocol for School Personnel (Appendix A), Scholars (Appendix B), and Internship Sponsors (Appendix C) were developed using semi-structured interviews to aid in organizing ideas and ensuring that vital issues were not missed. Focus group, individual, face-to-face meetings, and more information was gathered through emails and phone conversations. Prior to completing the interviews, participants completed a

Subject Informed Consent Document (Appendix D). Student participants submitted a

signed Parental Consent form (Appendix E) and Subject Assent Form (Appendix F).

Before any interviews were completed, both the School System and County Review

Board provided permission for the author to conduct research in the district and county

via the Permission to Conduct Research Study (Appendix G) and Permission County

Review Board (Appendix H). After receiving approval from the instrument owners

(Appendix I), the participants were interviewed at different times and in different

locations.

      The interviews with the interns occurred in their school instead of the worksite.

With the consent of the principal and the interns, the interviews with the interns were

scheduled during a school period when they had elective classes as to not interfere with

their core courses. The interview questions (Appendix B) to the interns focused on their

experiences as interns, lessons learned, and their plans for the program. The interns

provided insight into their perceptions of the program and the advantages and challenges

involved.

      Interviews with the educators were conducted at their respective schools. The

interview questions that were posed to the educators provided insight into the challenges

and opportunities of the partnership program with the employer organization.

      Interviews with participants from the business group were conducted at their

establishment or over the phone. Interview questions (Appendix C) focused on the

reasons for starting the program; their experiences, challenges, and opportunities in

developing and implementing the program; and overall goals of the program.

      At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the

study and the interview, reiterated how long the meetings would take, and expounded to

participants their rights (Appendix D). The interviews were structured to last less than 1

hour. Creswell (2013) suggested that a researcher use "open-ended, general and focused

questions that are aimed at understanding the central circumstance of a study" (p. 116).

Most of the interview questions were open-ended to generate rich information from

participants. Probing statements and questions such as "Tell me more," "Can you explain

further," "You had mentioned that," and "Can you elaborate on that" were used elicit

further information or clarify points made by participants. Each of the interviews were

recorded, transcribed, and stored on a password-protected computer and an external hard

drive. Creswell (2013) noted that the use of multiple sources of data is helpful in

providing "corroborative evidence for validating the accuracy of a study" (p. 116).

Further data were collected through documents such as training manuals, internship

handbooks, and other materials analyzed to uncover more insight that would supplement

interview data. The researcher used field notes and journals to record ideas and feelings

useful in helping to understand and interpret the researcher's findings.

A considerable part of the data collection process involved developing a timeline

so the process would run smoothly. After identifying gatekeepers at the research site, the

researcher met with them to explain the purpose of the study and sought their approval to

use their organizations as the study site. Parental consent (Appendix E) was sought from

parents of the scholars who were under 18 years of age.

Due to the new design of a qualitative study, the researcher remained flexible and

adaptable to changing the method. Sales and Folkman (2000) expounded that "flexibility

and tolerance are considerable attributes at the planning stage"; therefore, when

researchers are "inflexibly wedded to a particular design" that can hinder them from

developing a plan that is scientifically and ethically sound; "it can cause major ethical

violations as researchers" (p. 180). This principle of flexibility was applied when adjustments were needed to accommodate the schedules of participants and when the inclusion of other members was suggested.

Once the interviews were completed, the data were transcribed and folders were created for each of the participants and labeled. A contact summary form reflected each interview and summarized the key points and trends identified in each interview.

Data Analysis

The informal data analysis began immediately after each interview through the recording of personal reflections about the interviews. The recorded reflections were generally completed during the drive from an interview to home or back to work (Glesne, 2011). The field memos include the researcher's thoughts about the participants and their experiences.

The data were described and interpreted by forming categories that best represented the data. Creswell (2013) noted that this critical phase involves building detailed descriptions by describing what is seen and interpreting the data in light of the views or the perspectives in the literature. Coding the data required condensing the text and providing codes based on evidence from the database, a process that required appropriately describing the information collected. After identifying the themes in the data, the next step involved interpreting the data by "abstracting the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data" (Creswell, 2013, p. 293). During the translation process, meanings had to be attributed to the themes by grouping the information and relating those groups to the study questions and linking them to literature.

Formal data analysis began after completing the interviews with the educators. Audio recordings were converted into written transcripts in Microsoft Word. All field

memos were included in the coding process as a guide to begin identifying the commonalities shared across participants. Patton (2002) noted that at the end of formal data collection, primary sources of analysis come from interview questions and the analytic insights emerging from the data.

Glesne (2011) noted that analytic files are organized by generic categories such as interview questions, people, places, subjects, titles, and quotations to help researchers begin to store and organize their own thoughts and the thoughts of others.

The researcher read completely through each set of transcripts individually; each interview question was taken separately with each set of responses to each question from each participant in a simultaneous fashion to highlight common phrases, words, and quotes from the responses. While reading each question and highlighting responses, similar pieces of transcription data and reflection data were sorted and categorized into organized groups and identified under initial codes. Data broken down into initial codes and subcodes were organized into themes.

Research Design

Case studies are appropriate when one is considering a contemporary, real-life situation bounded in time and location (Creswell, 2013; Yin 2009). Yin (2009) noted that a single case study design permitted the researcher to interview the contributors of the case study (in this case, internship program). Case studies include rich, contextual descriptions that allow the researchers to explore internal and external factors that influence a circumstance. Although case studies are typically not generalizable, the value of case studies is that they provide a deeper and richer understanding of a situation, suggest complexities for further investigations or refine theory, and help establish the limits of generalizability (Yin, 2009). When done well, the case study can provide a

vicarious experience that can support an action for a circumstance (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). By using a case study method, this study was intended to provide detailed information on how internships can be developed and advanced as a pedagogical method that enhances the competencies needed by adolescents as they transition into adulthood and meet employer skills needs.

Qualitative studies produce volumes of data; and to avoid getting lost in a sea of data, the data collection and data analysis process should be interwoven. Allowing the researcher to manage the data provides opportunities to identify discrepancies in the data collection (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Once the interviews were completed, the data were transcribed, and folders for each of the participants were created and labeled. A contact summary form reflected and summarized the key points and trends identified in a particular interview. The next step in the analysis process involved a review of the data to get a sense of them. Yin (2009) referred to this process as "playing with your data" (p. 107). The goal here was to immerse the researcher in the data to understand what was going on before proceeding to the next steps. This enabled the researcher to review pertinent information and to understand how each participant's answers provided information to the research question. After exploring the database to get a grasp on the data, the researcher inscribed and interpreted the data by forming categories that best represented the data. Creswell (2013) noted that this critical phase involves building detailed descriptions by describing what is seen and interpreting the data in light of the views or the perspectives in the literature.

The next step involved coding the data by condensing the text and providing codes based on evidence from the data. Coding is an essential step in the analysis as it helps the researcher identify the major themes in the data and allows the emergent nature

of qualitative research to evolve (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). During this process, the researcher chose codes that appropriately described the information gleaned. After identifying the themes in the data, the next step involved interpreting the data by "abstracting the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data" (Creswell, 2013). The researcher attributed meanings to the themes by grouping the information and relating those groups to the study questions and linking them to literature during the interpretation process.

Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that using interpretive and material sources in qualitative research makes the world visible to readers by "turning the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews and memorandums to self" (p. 168). Direct quotes from the participants were incorporated into the final report to reflect their views.

To show how this procedure was organized, an example from one of the questions from interview transcripts and the coding that occurred related to this question has been included. Table 1 shows the highlighted responses from the educators, the initial coding categories and subcodes assigned, and the concentrated code that decided the themes.

Table 1

Example of Coding Method

Question: In your view to what extent does the youth internship program provide rigorous and experiences to make the student's' college and career ready?		
Highlighted Responses	Initial Codes/Subcodes	Focused Codes
R. Builds social skills on the job	Soft skills	Concerns for skills
R. Learn collaboration and teamwork	21st century skills	
R. Build on their digital literacy skills		
R. Increase social & cross-cultural skills		
R. Creates more productive & accountable interns		
R. Encourages to make decisions independently		
R. Mimic behaviors like an adult		
R. Build social responsibility and ethics		
R. Become better thinkers	Employment, Academics, and Lifelong Learning	Concerns for Future
R. Prepare for college or career, their choice		
R. Test their knowledge at internship		
R. Begin to take initiative & self-direction		
R. Prepare students for working after high school		
R. Exposing interns to real life at work		
R. Increase their civic literacy and citizenship		

Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of the stakeholders in the program?

2. How are internships used to prepare high school scholars to be college and

   career ready?

Instrumentation and Procedures

Multiple case studies are deemed preferable to single case studies because comparison from other examples provides valuable knowledge to the audience and is perceived to be more rigorous. However, Yin (2009) affirmed that a single case study is an appropriate design when the aim of the researcher is to describe an unusual case "that deviates from everyday occurrences. The findings may reveal insights about a process or a program and provide value for a large number of people beyond those impacted by the particular case" (p. 53). Yin expounded that focusing on a single case offers readers and the researcher the opportunity to draw out the uniqueness of the situation. It provided a comprehensive understanding of all stakeholders impacted by the circumstance.

Regarding the current study, the study of a single internship program enabled the researcher to uncover the complexities of the program and understand how each of the stakeholders contributed to the goals of the study. In a similar vein, Stake (1995) alleged that when researchers focus on comparisons of multiple cases, "uniqueness and complexities can be glossed over. When readers are presented with other cases to compare with they often focus on one instance as readers and rarely learn much from other examined cases" (p. 444). Yin (2009) recommended that subunits can be incorporated into the unit of analysis to create a single case study design or to enhance the rigor of a single case study design. In the current study, the internship program within the using organization is identified as the unit of analysis. Embedded within the case are part high school interns, employers, and district instructional personnel. Although integrated design can add richness and rigor, it is not without pitfalls. Yin noted that to ensure integrated design's trustworthiness, the researcher needed to tie the results of each of the subunits to the internship program, so the first circumstance of

interest (in this case, the internship program) remains the target of the study.

Methods for Verifications

      This section outlines steps that were taken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Once the case was identified, the researcher connected with gatekeepers of the organizations involved to explain the purpose of the study and to gain access to the participants for the study. Before collecting data, approval was sought from Gardner-Webb University. Approval was also sought from the educational district office since the study included scholars from the community who are considered a protected group. To gain approval to begin the study, the researcher developed a consent form for participants and an assent form for the parents of interns under the age of 18. The form described the purpose of the study, its advantages to the participants, how much time would be spent collecting data, and how the findings would be used. Participants were notified of their rights to end their involvement in the study and measures that would be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Due to the researcher's obligation as a researcher to protect the anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were used.

      To gain an in-depth understanding of internships, their structure, and organization and the experiences of those living the circumstance, it was important to spend a substantial amount of time in the field interviewing interns. While this was a necessary step, the researcher had to be respectful of the participants' time and make sure meetings or interactions were completed at their convenience so as not to disrupt their lives. The prolonged engagement in the field was necessary to build trust with the study participants and to understand the nuances of the circumstance. It helped to identify issues salient to the study.

      To corroborate the findings and to ensure that researchers gain comprehensive

information, Yin (2009) advised that researchers use several data gathering tools such as interview, archival records, and physical evidence where available. The process of triangulation is an ethical expectation that enables the researcher to illuminate a theme or perspective while ensuring the rigor and validity of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Since the dissertation process is a solo process, it is considerable that the researcher has debriefings and review sessions with the researcher's dissertation chair and peers who could provide an aim perspective and reveal any blind spots by asking questions about the conclusions and assumptions. The researcher scheduled meetings with the chair to provide progress updates and to seek feedback.

Data collected were stored on a password-protected computer and an external hard drive. The researcher ensured that the information received from interviews was not shared with others without the consent of the participants. Although this kind of research posed no considerable risk to participants due to the researcher's questions and the characteristics of participants, the researcher realized that no research study is void of risks, and it is considerable to respect the research sites. Also, the participants' time was respected not to inconvenience stakeholders.

Significance of the Study

Findings from this study may offer interns an opportunity to develop technical skills critical to their field. It may also assist the scholars in developing soft skills such as teamwork, reliability, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and time management skills. These are essential for success in the workplace, all while developing the academic skills at schools.

This research may interest some employers looking to partner with educators to provide rigorous work-based learning opportunities for youth. Educators and

policymakers may use findings from this study to offer learning opportunities for high school scholars, particularly those enrolled in CTE. The educators and policymakers may seek to provide multiple pathways for scholars and to develop efficient processes that enhance the implementation of internship programs.

By providing an understanding of youth internship programs through a qualitative single case study, policymakers and practitioners could gain an understanding of how to engage businesses and the educational community to achieve successful outcomes for scholars enrolled in youth internship programs. The findings from this study could support and interest policymakers in youth internship programs to enhance the scholars' learning experiences and offer an alternative pathway to develop the skills of young people in an ever-changing work environment.

By focusing on one case, the structure, organization, and experiences of those involved in the program can be understood. Yin (2009) expounded that an emphasis on a single case offers readers and the researcher the opportunity to draw out the uniqueness of the situation by providing a comprehensive understanding of all stakeholders impacted by the phenomenon. Information gleaned from the case could offer other schools and employers with information needed to develop an efficient youth internship program.

Finally, the study of internships to enhance college and career readiness can contribute to the increasing amount of literature ensuring the education system is preparing high school scholars to transition into adulthood by entering the job market upon graduating from high school or pursuing higher education, which ultimately will lead them to the workforce.

Limitations

Limitations to this study must be considered. This case study provides an in-

depth description of one LEA internship program. Because the study focuses on one LEA, this could be perceived as a limitation. The case study may also be limited to the identified stakeholders who were directly involved in the program. The results only apply to this participating scholar population and cannot necessarily be generalized to represent other areas.

    While the interns, educators, and employers potentially provided insight into parental involvement and support, parents were not invited to be contributors. Questions posed to scholars involved their parents' perceptions of the program.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to engage the stakeholders (scholars, educators, and employers) who are involved in the internship program to gain a better understanding of how each stakeholder involved works together to prepare scholars with the relevant college, career, and life readiness skills.

Five high schools were examined to provide stakeholder experiences. Evidence used to form this case study came from interviews to investigate the impact of internships on college and career readiness.

The LEA examined in this case study is located in the piedmont area of North Carolina. There are three separate LEAs within the county. The LEA participating in this study is the largest LEA within the county and is referred to as LEA-X. Although the county commissioners have frequently examined a public-school merger, no formal action to join the three LEAs is currently in long-range planning discussions.

LEA-X consists of six elementary schools (Grades K-6), 10 prekindergarten through Grade 6 schools, five middle schools, and five traditional high schools. This LEA also has an Early College and a separate public school.

During March, April, and May of 2017, the researcher visited five local high schools and conducted interviews with 14 business leaders, 73 interns, and 12 educators. The following describes the five schools participating in this research study.

School A

School A feeder area in the northwestern part of the county consists of one middle school and four elementary schools. School A has a student population of 1,275 scholars. School A's demographics breakdown is Asian 4%, African-American 7%, Caucasian 65%, Hispanic 20%, and Multiracial 4%. Approximately 48% of the scholars are

classified as economically disadvantaged.

School B

School B feeder area in the southeastern end part of the county consists of one middle school and three elementary schools. School B has a student population of 1,024 scholars. School B's demographics breakdown is Asian 8%, African-American 2%, Caucasian 81%, Hispanic 4%, and Multiracial 5%. Approximately 27% of the scholars are economically disadvantaged.

School C

School C feeder area in the southern part of the county consists of one middle school and three elementary schools. This high school's scholar population is 880. School C's demographics breakdown is Asian 7%, African-American 6%, Caucasian 73%, Hispanic 9%, and Multiracial 5%. Approximately 36% of the scholars are economically disadvantaged. School C prides itself as an active member of the community and places great emphasis on scholar service to the community.

School D

School D feeder area in the southeastern part of the county consists of one middle school and three elementary schools. This high school's scholar population is 838. School D's demographics breakdown is Native American .6%, Asian 2.2%, African-American 3%, Caucasian 86.8%, Hispanic 4.3%, Multiracial 3.3%, and Hawaiian .2%. The school is situated in a rural community.

School E

This high school feeder area in the northwestern part of the county consists of one middle school and three elementary schools. This high school's scholar population is 931. School E's demographics breakdown is Asian 11%, African-American 6%,

Caucasian 65%, Hispanic 15%, and Multiracial 3%. Approximately 44% of the scholars are economically disadvantaged.

CTE Program

The programs and services in CTE supported by state and federal funding are offered in the five high schools and five middle schools in this case study.

LEA-X has four Career Development Coordinators (CDC) who provide scholars the opportunity to participate in internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing experiences. The CDCs are assigned to a high school, and one is assigned to two high schools.

The CTE department in LEA-X has a goal of 100 interns or applications per semester and 700 applications for the year. In 2016, they met the goal of 700 applications for the year and 376 were in the summer. In May 2017, they received 476 applications, and the goal was 500. This program provides scholars with hands-on training at several local businesses. At the time of this research, the internship program had been in existence since 1990. Over the past 4 years, the internships have increased substantially from 123 interns to now 735 interns. LEA-X's primary goal for setting the goals for interns is to reach as many scholars as possible.

Research Question 1 Results

What are the experiences of the stakeholders in the program?

Business Leader Experiences

The following section describes the experiences of the businesses participating in the internship program.

Themes from Business Leader Interview Data

There are three themes identified in this section from the interview data collected,

and the themes are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes Found in Business Leader Data

Business Experience Themes	Summary of Findings
Working with Youth	Businesses experienced positive relationships with youth
Soft Skills	Businesses expressed a variety of skills, behavior, and abilities
Career Options	Business expressed opportunity of career options

Theme 1: Working with youth. The business leaders expressed satisfaction with working with scholars and seeing them grow and mature over time. Business Leader 1 stated that the scholars were "A great bunch of kids" who came to the program with "great attitudes, wanting to learn," thereby "putting effort" into learning. Since the interns were high school juniors and seniors, Business Leader 4 mentioned the need to "treat scholars as adults and not baby them too much" as they have done with scholars from the previous year. By that, the business leader meant that while recognizing that the interns were young, they were required to adhere to the same rules and regulations as other educators and demonstrate maturity in their work and relationships with others. Another Business Leader 13 mentioned the importance of regarding the interns as "Mature scholars who are looking for a profession and had to learn to ask for help and build relationships with other educators during their time in the program to help them adjust to the demands of the workplace."

Business Leader 14 stated that the "intrinsic value" personally derived from teaching and mentoring the interns and other educators reflected appreciation of Business Leader 14's company for reaching out to youth in order to develop them as the next generation of workforce. Business Leader 14 shared how other educators complemented

the leadership on the adoption of the program and how they expressed pride in the company taking the lead in developing youth. Additionally, Business Leader 14 mentioned their satisfaction with "giving back to the next generation" and how others were proud to see scholar enthusiasm and pride in understanding the work process.

As a result of the interviews with the interns, it was discovered that the interns had different aspirations. Their ambitions included nursing, firefighting, engineering, teaching, daycare, dentistry, and veterinary; and some were still undecided. There are a lot of scholars interested at the schools to participate in the program. Given the selection criteria and the emphasis on attendance and discipline, some scholars who could be genuinely interested may not have had a chance to participate in the program.

The current interns express a desire to figure out which area to pursue for their future as a means for taking part in the program; however, it seemed the expectations of scholars and business leaders were not aligned. According to Educator 6, finding the right scholars who have a passion for interning and knew what they wanted to do after graduation would be a challenge for all the stakeholders. Such passion has to be nurtured and developed. Business Leader 11 referred to the misalignment as a disadvantage, saying,

> One of the negatives is that I am taking time away from getting the job done to spending time with an intern. I am okay with this as long as the intern is serious about what they are doing. I do not care if they return for a position here as long as they are a different person when they finish.

Business Leader 11 compared the educational system and the labor market structure of the United States to that of Germany, saying that in Germany, "The whole of society supports the internship programs." However, in the United States, although there is much

debate and praise for the German internship system and its ability to channel skilled workers, he noted, "Nothing in our system supports this." He shared his frustration about the lack of enthusiasm from other businesses to join in the efforts to train our youth:

> I am depressed about how few businesses are doing what we are doing. I mean they are just not signing up for it. In Germany, when we talk about internship programs, the entire society understands what we are talking about. The scholars come prepared, and they fight for it, I mean they are competitive about it. But here in the United States, they look at us like we have three eyes. They do not understand what an internship program is at all.

In the point of view of Business Leader 11, the internship system, particularly for the youth, was not well understood and not well aligned with our education system and cultural environment. He believed there needed to be more community awareness and education on how our youth could be trained and also how to get more parents to be interested in internships.

Business Leader 12 commented on the enthusiastic response from the educational community, which perceived the program as an excellent opportunity to get scholars into the workforce and to learn in the real world. Business Leader 12 commented about the feedback he had received from the school system, saying, "With the schools and the LEA, the comments I got were nothing but positive and appreciative and complimentary, but I am not sure about the kids and their families." He noted that whereas the interns were happy to have the learning opportunity, he was concerned about what they thought about their experiences in the future and wondered if the interns saw the program as a better alternative to working at a fast food restaurant while still in school.

While Business Leader 12 complained about the lack of parental involvement in

the program, the educators, on the other hand, believed parents showed interest in the programs as demonstrated by the number parents who joined their children to attend an informational meeting about the programs at the school. They pointed to the fact that there was a growing interest in parents of an alternative career pathway for their children. According to Educator 9, with the rise of college tuition, parents were drawn to the idea of pursuing internships; and for most of the parents, the internship program was not a deterrent, as they believe in hard work for themselves and their children. However, their primary concern was educational and career progression for their children as they pursued an internship. Educator 9 noted,

> The parents are not concerned about the work; they want their children in line for good jobs, but they want to know about continuing education – about where this might lead them. Some of these families know they cannot afford the college experience for the children out-of-pocket and they are looking for alternative ways for that.

This is notable because, for that generation of parents, they had seen the consequences of not pursuing postsecondary education or educational skills in a fast-changing work environment and did not want their children to experience the same effects. Educator 5 also expressed glimpses of hope for more young people entering the skilled trades through internships and noted that "There are cultural issues to bridge (about internships) where many parents think this kind of education is a lesser type of education – and that it was a great thing for everybody's kids but mine." However, over the past couple years there has been an increase of internships in the district, which led the district to believe that people are grasping the idea of how society needed to change its perception of internships.

The businesses are aware of the impact of not recruiting qualified talent. Business Leader 5 explained that his motivation for participating in the internship program was first to provide an opportunity for the youth to learn about the real world and secondly to train future talent not only for his organization but also as a whole.

Business Leader 5 also shared that the widely held notion of "College as the only path to success was proving to be a myth to a lot of scholars pursuing college degrees and ending up with skills that were not relevant to the businesses and accumulating a ton of debt." Business Leader 5 believed that given the shortage of qualified talent in soft skills, scholars in internships could be more marketable as they would graduate with a high school diploma, credentials, and enhanced soft skills. Business Leader 5 believed focusing on adolescents would "Hopefully generate an excitement at the high school level and have scholars talking to other scholars explaining what a great opportunity the internship experience was."

Business Leader 12 believed that the educational system itself could not fill the skills gap challenge in any one industry. Therefore, it was imperative for the industry to partner with educators to help address the problems. Business Leader 12 pointed out,

> One of the reasons for the internship was that businesses needed to take a leadership role in this area and begin to help the education system. This is because the education system by itself is failing, so we need to be jumping in and doing our part to help.

Theme 2: Soft skills. For the businesses, part of their role is to develop essential employability and soft skills among the interns, since such skills have been found to be deficient among labor market entrants. A view of Business Leader 7 was that they were more than just developing technical skills. Thus, when asked about the kinds of skills

businesses wanted to see among the interns, they referred to the importance of soft skills like good work ethics, personal responsibility, critical thinking, and excellent communication skills.

Although technical skills were equally important, the Business Leader 9 knew that the interns could easily acquire such skills through the daily workplace in classroom training. However, it was the soft skills that rank high on the business's expectations of skills developed. Business Leader 9 noted that "We are looking for scholars who developed a maturity level over time and that includes good attendance, dependability, reliability in the spirit of teamwork –someone who comes to work with integrity and things like that." It is the soft skills that will set the scholar apart and make him/her successful in their field and enhance their careers. Business Leader 8 noted,

> The work we do here is hard, some things are important and critical and the skills
> we would like the interns to have are coming to work, knowing how to associate
> with your peer educators, knowing how to speak intelligently about what they are
> trying to do, knowing how to organize their lives and the work they're doing so
> that the work gets done.

In that regard, such skills were incorporated into intern training. For instance, Business Leader 7 explained that she developed thinking skills in the scholars by reminding them that they had to be able to understand how the equipment works and why it was used and be able to troubleshoot the equipment. She stressed the importance of communication skills to the interns by saying, "You have to be able to communicate to the next person what is going on with the patient and get the point across so that they understand it." Additionally, to help develop and enhance communication skills, the interns are regularly invited to share their experiences with scholars in their schools. Also, the interns

sometimes are given the opportunity to come up with solutions to a problem, i.e., brainstorm ideas on how to fix it and present their findings through a PowerPoint presentation to their business mentor.

Business Leader 9 tries to instill awareness for safety and confidentiality due to the environment. Training in safety procedures and confidentiality is emphasized throughout the intern's time at the workplace. Business Leader 9 stated that if the scholars could learn the importance of being aware of their surroundings when they are in a medical facility or a situation other than their home or school, it would be an invaluable lesson for them as they mature and enter the workforce. Furthermore, Business Leader 7 noted the importance of imparting critical skills that would serve them well in the future:

> You know they may never go on to do anything again in their life with it (dentistry), but the critical thinking, work ethics, and some basic machining skills – if we can get that across to them, then we have done all we could do with the time we have with them.

The development and use of soft skills in the work environment has become central in the 21st century workplace. According to the 2009 business roundtable survey, businesses reported that some of the most critical skills that were lacking among the workforce included personal accountability for work, strong work ethic, punctuality, professionalism, oral communication skills, teamwork, and critical thinking.

Theme 3: Career options. The uniqueness of this program was the willingness of the businesses to allow the interns to explore career options as they develop their soft skills. The businesses acknowledged that although the outcome in the beginning was not encouraging, they realize that high school scholar interns were young and still exploring what they wanted to do with their lives after graduation. Business Leader 6 captured that

notion when he commented, "It is important to understand that these scholars are 17 and 18 years old and they are not mature; they all have peculiar habits that come with 17 and 18 year olds that are trying to make their life." Similarly, this idea was captured in the following statement made by Business Leader 1:

> The 17 and 18-year-old kids think that this is what they want to do. If that is what they want to do, it is nice since we can give them a good picture of what an automotive shop looks like and the different opportunities so that they can decide whether this is something they want to do with their lives.

This district's idea of allowing scholars to explore career options was evident in the diverse background of scholars in different career areas. Each of the scholars is enrolled in various CTE classes such as robotics, business, marketing, welding, apparel, agriculture, culinary arts, allied health, construction, masonry, small engine repair, parenting, and interior design. They entered the internship program to learn about and explore careers in areas of their choosing and to develop the technical and soft skills needed for success in the workplace.

Business Leader 13 described the program as an "extension of the scholar high school experience" and providing training for the interns leads to broad learning experiences. The educators and businesses found creative ways to influence curriculum that was in line to the workplace. For instance, when a business complains about the lack of basic math skills among an intern, the school quickly responds to this concern by organizing tutoring for an intern to familiarize themselves with the kind of math that was required to function successfully in their internship thereby using content in the school's curriculum in response to business needs.

Internship Experiences

The interns selected for the study were at least 18 years of age. After interviewing the 73 interns, four central themes came out of the interviews. The first theme is titled Becoming an Intern, the second is titled Academic Skills, the third is titled Support, and the final theme is titled Time Management.

The following section focuses on intern experiences. This section will discuss intern perceptions of the program. Highlighting the intern's skills is important for several reasons. Firstly, the sustainability and success of the program are largely influenced by the scholar's interest. Second, they become better advocates for the internship program. Last, it provides valuable feedback to other stakeholders.

Themes from Intern Interview Data

There are four themes identified in this section from the interview data collected, and the themes are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Themes Found in Intern Interview Data

Intern Experiences Theme	Summary of Findings
Academic Skills	Interns expressed increase in their academic skills
Support	Interns expressed a lot of support from family, friends, community, and school
Time Management	Improvement in time management

Theme 1: Becoming an intern. The interns enrolled in the program for various reasons; the chief among them was the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge to enhance their chances of entering the workforce or postsecondary education after high school. Additionally, each intern enjoyed working with his/her hands and saw the program as a natural fit. For instance, Intern 8 commented, "I joined a program because

it just interests me and I like working with my hands." He further shared that since his brother was there, the program was a "perfect fit" and thus felt he was "excited that he got into the program." In the case of Intern 12, who is a senior in automotive at his school, he joined the program because he "needed work experience for the job." Educator 1 shared his insight about the increased confidence in one of the interns and how he saw a marked increase in the scholar's communication and leadership abilities since being in the program:

> I can speak for the scholar; I have witnessed him step into more of a leadership role in his area. You know for a 12th grader to be in front of an audience and talk about this program, and what it meant to him that is a big deal. I have watched him do what I don't think he would have been able to do a year ago.

Other essential skills that scholars mentioned included time management, problem solving, self-motivation, and adaptability. Intern 14 expressed that he had gotten better at enduring and accomplishing tasks and noted that self-motivation was one skill he had learned, because "sometimes I would quit doing something when it gets hard, but now I convince myself that I have to do it and learning to do so helps me out in the future." The scholars also reported learning to take the initiative; and in their abilities, they have become aware of the difference between working in the work environment and working in a school to the extent that as part of their training they had to work with any other educator. Intern 14 mentioned, "Over there you have to get stuff done. There are no educators in there. Everybody that you are working with has a job to do so you have to figure stuff out for yourself a lot more."

Theme 2: Academic skills. The majority of the interns believed they had an increase in their academic skills and, as a result, their daily work activities. Intern 19

stated, "I am a lot better at math than I was. Everything is just a breeze now." Intern 20

stated, "I have gotten better at doing math in my head just because the work activities are

real precise." Intern 4 described how his knowledge of internship impacted his academic

performance, saying, "For me, it motivated me to pass my classes," in addition to gaining

more academic skills. Intern 25 reported that although he was not in a CTE class at his

school, he gained a lot of experience and noted, "I was not prepared when I first went

there, but I learned everything that they learned, so I am pretty comfortable with that

now."

Overall, the educators indicated that scholars in the program did well

academically since that was the requirement for completing the internship program.

Furthermore, the scholars were imbued with messages from their business mentors as

well as their educators about keeping up their grades, maintaining good behavior, and

learning to manage their time while in the program.

The interns have begun to understand the importance of safety in their

environment and the importance of confidentiality. Some interns shared minor injuries at

their internship, which made them more aware of their surroundings. The interns agreed

that the environment is completely different than the high school. They agreed that the

process has made them more conscious of their surroundings and they pay attention to

details.   The interns agreed that they are more careful in all environments now. The

interns described how they have matured and felt more efficient over the course of the

internship.

As the interns looked to graduation and beyond (i.e., entering the workforce

directly or postsecondary education), they perceived their experiences regarding

transitioning into adulthood and experiencing the real world as adults. The interns shared

that they had matured as a result of their participation. The interns shared that it has taught them discipline and responsibility. They agreed that they have developed a whole lot when comparing to the time they first started the internship program. They shared that their parents, teachers, and friends have noticed how much they have grown up. The interns also shared that this program has given them a new look at work and the future. It has matured their thought process and has made them a better person. The interns acknowledged that their experiences are preparing them for real life regardless of their plans after graduation. Intern 26 described how he matured and felt more efficient over the course of the internship:

> When I first entered it was a shock; I had never been in a work environment like this before. I did not understand much of it, but over time I caught on. It was like learning a new culture or language.

Furthermore, the interns began to understand the importance of safety in their environment and the necessary confidentiality. For instance, Intern 12 who suffered an injury during his internship, commented that he was more aware of his environment after that incident: "The situation is different, you have got to be aware, so you do not get hurt, and you always have to pay attention. I have become more disciplined." Similarly, Intern 13 explained, "I have to be more careful now when you are there because you can get hurt. Yeah, I have grown up more, and I understand that stuff." As Intern 25 shared,

> Well, it taught me discipline and stuff. I have matured a whole lot since I started the internship program. Before, I did not take anything seriously. But then getting out in the workforce and stuff, it just taught me discipline. I think I have grown up a lot. I mean my parents my friends have noticed that I have grown up a whole lot just because I am always either at school, at home, or my internship. I

do not have time for anything else. It's like school and work and that's it. I have

just grown up for the minute I have grown up a lot going through it.

Intern 39 expressed a similar belief:

This gave me a new look on how it works, about how it is going to be in the

future every single day. It has just matured my thoughts in the work environment,

and I have grown as a person altogether.

The scholars acknowledged that their experiences were preparing them for real life

regardless of their plans after graduation. For instance, Intern 43 who was planning to

pursue a college degree, stated, "It was a good way of studying before a real-life meeting

after school. It was preparing me because I am planning to go to college and work at the

same time it's going to be the same."

Theme 3: Support. The novelty of high school internships within the LEA

entailed that scholars are given continued support and encouragement from their

community, such as family members and friends, to encourage them to pursue the

program. While some parents were initially reluctant to have their children participate in

the program, some of them changed their mind when they realized the potential benefits

for their children. The issue of parental support has been a key driver in the widespread

adoption of internships. Given the age of the interns, the educators and the businesses

realized that for the program to become embraced, they needed to involve parents every

step of the way. More than half of the interns reported varying support from their

families and friends. Intern 55 shared that both her parents are in medical field and had

an influence on her decision. Intern 55 noted, "My parents are both in the medical field,

they have a big impact on me. They think it is cool that I am going through this program

and they support me all the way." Similarly, Intern 15 mentioned that his parents thought

the program provided an excellent opportunity for him and were "supportive of it." On

the other hand, Intern 72 and Intern 68 provided a different perspective of their parents'

support. They indicated that their parents were initially unsure about the value of the

program until they explained to their parents the potential benefits of the program to their

future career plans. Intern 68 shared that he had to convince his mother of the advantages

of the program and noted,

> Well, first my mom, she thought it was a program where it supports me for
>
> college as a scholarship. I believe that you do get one at the end. But then she
>
> kept asking, "Why are you joining this if it does not relate to your field?" I told
>
> her that it was good knowledge because the worst thing you want to do is to be in
>
> a position and not understand how it feels to be in that environment. My mom
>
> was like "Okay, as long as you are doing whatever you believe is right you can go
>
> in and do it."

The experience of Intern 12 with his parents was different. He mentioned that his dad at

the beginning veered toward going to a 4-year college, "but he supports me now and he

thinks it was good that I am going through the internship program."

The experiences of the interns illustrate parent influences on scholar decisions to

pursue an internship. The cultural mythology of internships as an inferior form of

education persists in the country, as parents prefer the children to pursue a college degree.

Both of the educators and businesses mentioned the biggest challenge to the growth of

internships is the parent's perception as a lesser kind of education. Thus, throughout the

program, they work to get parents on board to share the experiences with their children.

They believe that parents and scholars would be the best advocates for the program when

they realize the benefits for the children.

The interns also reported support from their peers. When asked about what their friends thought about being in the program, Intern 24 mentioned, "my friends they were kind of jealous, to be honest. They thought it was pretty cool." Intern 32 stated,

> Yeah, all of them were like, go ahead, it was an opportunity, we all applied for the program. One of my close friends, he applied with me, but he did not make it. But I made it, and he was like go ahead and take my place.

All of the interns shared that they received substantial support from business mentors and what they needed to know. Intern 31 shared her experiences with other educators and noted,

> It was good. They treat me as an adult, but I mean they are still careful, they will be careful because I am still an Intern, not for a full-time worker, so they treat me like a scholar, but also as an adult at same time. If you do something wrong they will always correct you and teach you the right way to do it.

The sustainability of the program depends on factors such as the business's willingness to continue and the scholars' continued interest in the program. The interns could serve as advocates for the program. Intern 23 shared that he had opportunities to talk to scholars about the program and what they needed to do to be eligible to participate. He shared that he had encouraged other scholars to "just keep good grades, pay attention in class and have good behavior so they can get into the program in their junior or senior year." Intern 19 expressed surprise about some scholars who have been selected into the program but declined to participate. He commented that it "makes no sense to me. I have no idea what better experience they want to have; I guess they just did not want to stress."

Theme 4: Time management. Participation in an internship program while in

high school requires the scholars to meet academic and professional requirements such as grades, good behavior, and showing up for work every week. While the interns reported getting used to the routine, they shared that it could be challenging at times. Thus, it was important that they learn to manage their time wisely. For instance, Intern 31, who participated in afterschool activities, confirmed that it was challenging at times:

> Time wise it is a little tight because as soon as I get off my internship, I have to go to work, some days I go to club meetings and activities and then go home. I have about two hours to do my homework because when I get home sometimes its nine o'clock or so. Then, I have a couple of hours before I go to sleep, so it has been tight time wise. I try to do my homework when I get home or do it in the morning.

On the other hand, scholars like Intern 33 commented,

> Sometimes it might get a little hard, but it is not often. I mean it has been pretty easy to manage to go to school. When I get out of the internship – then I go home. I have plenty of time to do homework if I have to do any. Plus the days I do not have to complete my internship I can work on schoolwork.

Intern 33 did not participate in any afterschool programs and therefore had enough time to complete his homework. Intern 33 went on to share how he enjoyed working:

> I like it. I mean when I get out of school I look forward to going to my internship. This is because I like working. And I just think it's fun. A lot of people do not like working, but I do, and to me it's fun.

Notwithstanding the time constraints, each of the interns settled into a routine that would work for them. As high school scholars, they understand the sacrifices they made when they joined the program and believed that their learning outcomes were worth the

effort as they could get a leg up in the workforce after graduation.

Another challenge of enrolling in an internship program while in high school was the intern inability to participate in regular school activities due to their work schedule. Educator 10 noted,

> If an Intern started to do this, they are essentially leaving school and going to an internship. What they are giving up is the ability to participate in some school activities because they are leaving here and then driving over to their worksite. So, it essentially takes them out of after-school clubs and sports. So it is a sacrifice for kids in a way because they are coming out of the traditional school culture. If we have a pep rally here at the end of the day they are not going to be able to attend. If they have an afterschool thing that is going on, they might not be able to go to it either. It does not mean they cannot participate in something later on but the time makes it difficult.

Intern 40 who was a senior too commented that she was "missing out on a lot of the stuff that they should be able to do in her senior year."

The extent to which the interns believed their experiences enhanced their academic performance at the high school could be contributed to the program alignment to their future career and personal plans. Not all interns plan to enter the same field of study as their internship. Intern 44 who planned to pursue welding after high school noted, "You need some machines for welding. But I mean, if I wanted to pursue something in machining like the tool and die or something, then it would help me transition over to that." Nevertheless, Intern 44 indicated that if he ever found himself in machining, he could use his knowledge and skills. He shared, "I feel like eventually down the road if I ever need to use it I think I could." On the other hand, some of the

Interns who plan to stay in the field after graduation saw their participation program as part of their plans. For instance, Intern 48, a first-year intern, shared,

> I have been good. I have learned a lot, and I still have a lot more to learn. I am hoping I will be able to just get more knowledge in the field and be able to put it to work while I am there. I am going to try to get into a four-year university.

Intern 69, who was unsure of his plans, shared that he was open to staying with the business or pursuing something else. He admitted that he did not know what he wanted to accomplish career wise but had considered seeking a 2-year technical trade. "I do not know what I want to do career-wise. I want to be working and graduating from something with a certification."

The interns acknowledged that being in the program has exposed them to the workforce and also made them aware of areas in the field they preferred. It also helped them determine what careers they wanted to pursue in the future. As a researcher, it was quite disheartening to me to hear from some of them that they did not know what they wanted to do after graduating high school. A current program such as this was established to expose scholars to possible careers, and the business leader indicated during the interview that the company would offer a scholar employment and encouraged him/her to consider other career possibilities within the company at the end of the internship. The scholars were exposed to different types of work environment cultures.

Educator Experiences

Twelve school educators of this LEA were interviewed for this study, and each high school was represented.

Themes from Educator Interview Data

There are two themes identified in this section from the interview data collected,

and the themes are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Themes Found in Educator Interview Data

Educators Themes	Summary of Themes
Relationships	Educators expressed the importance of authentic relationships with interns, community and business leaders.
Preparing Scholars	Educators expressed their primary concerns are to prepare the interns for their future.

Theme 1: Relationships. The educators expressed the importance of taking a strategic approach to the partnership, whereby they work to develop the "kind of scholars who had the right skills needed by businesses." Educator 5 explained that given the school's programs and proximity to the businesses in the area, it was important to see which organizations would be happy to recruit. This was captured in her following statement:

> One of the benefits is that it provides a great opportunity for the scholars to get real world experience and if you look at the CTE programs in the district it helps promote the program. Also, it provides opportunities for scholars to realize that they go through this program and find employment and be successful in their careers.

It also provided an opportunity for the LEA to be able to showcase examples of how scholars apply their academic content to the real world and to be able to showcase their commitment to expanding learning opportunities for scholars.

With the vision of growing the talent of the future, Business Leader 11 reached out to other stakeholders in the community to help shape the ideal of having high school scholars in the workplace for an extended period. Educator 2 shared that over the years,

there has been a good relationship between the school system and the businesses. The timing is right for the stakeholders, particularly for the educators who were looking for opportunities to provide practical hands-on experiences for scholars.

The educators were optimistic about the program and believed that it could continue to grow and recruit more scholars from within the schools. The following statements from Educator 1 captured the educator's hope for the direction of the program:

What we want to do on a high school level is to have a classroom scholar – and businesses that represent the 16 career clusters and everybody contributes something to support the program, and then as the school system, we help recruit the scholars into it. This would then feed out into these workplaces as interns graduate.

Educator 1 also expressed glimpses of hope for more young people entering the workforce through internships and noted that there is a cultural issue to bridge (about internships) where many parents think this kind of education is a lesser type of education.

A partnership in its essence requires collaboration between the stakeholders. It requires a well-defined and mutually beneficial relationship between two or more organizations to achieve a common goal (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992). Furthermore, some elements such as trust, communication, environmental factors, favorable social and political climate, flexibility, and adaptability must be present for collaboration to be effective (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992). Educator 10 believed that maintaining trust and communication allow the stakeholders to overcome any roadblock involved in establishing and maintaining the program. When describing the nature of the relationship between the LEA and the business, Educator 8 noted,

I think the nature of our relationship is collaborative, where we are continuously

trying to figure out a way to make it better. This is because there are no

blueprints for us to say this is how it should work. And so just being

collaborative, talking about struggles and how we can improve and what we can

do better next year, has been a big part of our relationship.

An internship program can succeed only with the deep commitment of businesses. From

the human capital theory perspective (Becker, 1975), businesses that invest in the training

and education of interns will ensure that they have the skills and the competencies needed

to secure a competitive advantage in the market. Running an internship program involves

material, time, and human resources – that the business has to be willing to invest.

Educator 8 acknowledged that "even though the school had to make adjustments

regarding scheduling and to get some paper in order, the businesses took a big challenge

when it decided to participate."

Theme 2: Preparing scholars. Commitment from all stakeholders was required,

especially as each of them had to make tangible and intangible investments in the

program. From the standpoint of educators, it was imperative that they remove or at least

mitigate the obstacles to the efficient running of the program and to ensure that scholar's

schedules were not unnecessarily interrupted to impact their academic activities. The

staff worked to alter the scholar schedules with the help of school counselors and district

administrators so interns with internships would take core classes in the morning which

would free participants to leave school in the afternoon to work at a business. Also, the

educators committed to following up with scholars to check on their attendance and

progress at the workplace.

The educators expressed their appreciation that the businesses were willing to

discuss the possibilities of participating in the internship program. They welcomed the

partnership especially as they have been looking for ways to get scholars "out of the school building and into a workplace to increase scholar learning in their chosen field." They acknowledged that as much as they have tried to provide learning experience within the schools, the workplace afforded the scholar real-life experiences that could not be easily acquired in the classroom. Equally important to the educators was the fact that the internship would provide relevant work and not menial tasks as was common in working experiences of a typical high school scholar.

Given the age and educational level of the interns, the educators had a responsibility to ensure that the interns were able to fill their academic responsibilities. As Educator 4 explained, the primary concern was that the program would not "deviate from the norm" by causing scholars to alter the schedule. As a result, a major consideration for the educators was how the program could impact academic standards and high school graduation. This comment underscored the great importance high-stakes testing and accountability standards have in the state and the impact on a school's ratings as well as on the principals' careers. Educator 4 explained that to address those concerns, educators had detailed conversations with scholars to explain the school's expectations if they wanted to pursue the internship in addition to the responsibilities as scholars. Educator 2 stressed to scholars that once they commit to the program, they are going to be held accountable for that. Therefore, they had to be "responsible and mature and fulfill their obligations." Nevertheless, scholars were made to understand that if they had an actual problem such as a schedule conflict or they were struggling to keep up with their school work or even realized that internship program was not aligned to their interest, they had to complete the internship or take a failing grade. Educator 1 also stressed to the scholars the "value of endurance and perseverance" because that was what

they would "experience in the real world." Also to that, the educator communicated with the businesses to get feedback on the scholars to ensure that the schools were "doing what was necessary, so the company got the best quality scholars from the skill standpoint."

Educator 1 also expressed glimpses of hope for more young people entering the workforce through internships and noted that there is a cultural issue to bridge (about internships) where many parents think this kind of education is a lesser type of education.

Given the historical underpinnings of internships in the United States as well as the educational system and labor market, businesses working with high school scholars may have to adopt a broad social agenda in their efforts to make internships an attractive option for scholars. Businesses realized they had to embrace a broad social agenda that would allow scholars flexibility and choice in their career pursuits after graduation. As an innovative program, they accepted the fact that the trained interns may end up in other organizations. Business Leader 8 shed light on the idea of the broad social agenda:

> The whole point is to make an effort to address the skills needs in the workforce.
> I do not care where the scholars went after graduation. It does not matter so long
> as they pursue a career of their choice.

This view was similarly expressed by Educator 3 of the LEA. Employer 3 commented that since the company would like to retain the interns after the program, they did not want the scholars to feel obligated to stay in business: "We do not want scholars feeling an obligation; it would be a kind of trauma for the scholars." Inasmuch as the businesses believed in adopting the social agenda, Business Leader 10 was somewhat disappointed in the fact that other businesses were not eager to take and develop a high school internship program.

Research Question 2 Results

How do they influence the internship program?

There is a national dialogue on high school reforms and the policy of ensuring each graduate is college and career ready as high school is an important focus for successful economic revival. For scholars to be deemed college and career ready in the state of North Carolina, they must score at least 18 points on the ACT or score an average SAT composite of 930 of 1,600.

To be deemed career ready, scholars must have some industry certification and pass some form of testing that is equivalent to the ACT such as that ASVAB or the WorkKeys. A career-ready scholar is a scholar who has completed three credits and is a row in the fourth credit for a CTE pathway.

In the current case study, scholars who participated in the internship program were enrolled in CTE classes. The internship program allows scholars an opportunity to develop technical skills that were critical to their field of study and also develop soft skills such as teamwork, reliability, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and time management skills that are essential for success in the workplace, all while developing the academic skills at school.

This research focused on an LEA and business partnership. This program which provided scholars with real-life experiences at different businesses within the county was developed by an LEA with multi-purposes of introducing scholars to careers of their choice, addressing the skills needs of the workforce, and increasing community awareness of the role of businesses in partnering with LEAs to prepare a future pipeline of experienced workers. The internships in this LEA provide the scholars the opportunity to experience careers that match their personal interests. At the time of this research, the

internship program had been in existence for 27 years in this school system.

This LEA offers a variety of internship opportunities to scholars. Each program requires the scholar to complete an application and collect recommendation letters from two teachers and one from their counselor. The scholar must be in good standing at his/her school regarding attendance, tardies, grades, and discipline. The teaching internships allow scholars to experience working with children in an educational setting during the regular school year. This program also serves to provide extra assistance to the teaching interns for under- or low-achieving scholars, thus acting as a dropout prevention strategy. The career internship program gives scholars the opportunity to gain practical work experience/observation in the profession of their choice or explore potential careers in which they have a demonstrated interest. This would encourage scholars to become contributing adults within their communities; service internships allow scholars to volunteer their time to work in various roles. These internships provide scholars with opportunities designed to establish an appreciation for helping and caring for others.

Scholars are recruited for one academic semester. Typically, scholars attend classes at a school in the mornings and leave in the afternoon to complete their internship at the worksite. Some scholars complete their internship in the morning and attend school in the afternoon.

During the summer months, high school scholars in Grades 9-12 may apply to do summer internships. Rising juniors and seniors may apply to do career internships within the summer months.

Depending on which internship program a scholar selects will determine the number of required hours for the interns. If a scholar is completing a career internship,

they have an obligation to complete 135 hours for one high school credit. Career internships allow a scholar the opportunity to gain practical work experience in a job they are seriously considering. Scholars who are completing a teaching internship must complete 90 hours for one school credit. Teaching internships permit scholars to experience working with children in an educational setting. Service internships allow scholars to participate in opportunities designed to establish an appreciation for helping and caring for others in their communities. During the summer, scholars can choose between a career or service internship. The required hours are as follow for the summer internship: 35 hours for ¼ credit, 70 hours for ½ credit, or 135 for one credit.

Once accepted into the program, the interns are given a notebook with all necessary documents to be completed during the program. The interns are required to bring their notebook to their monthly meeting with their internship coordinator and turn in monthly timesheets, mentor evaluations, and a reflection paper. They are also required to complete a project that has been coordinated with their mentor and approved by their internship coordinator.

At each high school, the internship coordinator holds an informational meeting with the scholars and the parents. Educator 2 stressed the importance of impressing on the scholars that the program was "not a chance to get out of school early."

Listed are a few facts about the service internships: (a) All internships locations must be approved by the internship coordinator assigned to a school, if not on the current list; (b) Examples of appropriate sponsor locations may include nonprofit organizations, hospitals, assisted living/retirement centers, childcare centers, or other organizations where volunteers are frequently needed; (c) Scholars cannot earn money for the internship hours; (d) All hours must be served at one internship site. A scholar may

complete one internship per summer; (e) Once placed, interns must commit to and complete at least 35 hours of service (¼ school credit); (f) More hours and credits can be earned if all parties agree (70 hours =½ credit; 135 hours =1 credit); and (g) The hours count toward the 28 units of credit needed for high school graduation. The internship will be added to the high school transcript with grade P (pass) or F (fail). Once the scholars complete their service internship application, the determination normally takes approximately two months from the deadline. The scholar will then be contacted by phone or mail as to whether they are qualified for the program. If the scholar is qualified and approved by the business, the scholar will be given a placement appointment. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend. The internship coordinator will also attend as the advisor. At the placement appointment, a work schedule will be determined by the scholar and business; special requirements will be discussed and the scholar's responsibilities will be explained. Some of the service internship locations are child development centers, libraries, day camp programs, hospital volunteer programs, government institutions, nonprofit ministries and charities, community theaters, nonprofit healthcare facilities, art museums, history museums, nonprofit animal care facilities, and retirement/assisted living facilities.

Each high school has one CDC assigned to it. They serve as the immediate contact for the scholars. They hold the monthly informational meeting with the scholars. The educators stressed the importance of impressing on the scholars that the program was not just a chance to get out of school early. The educators also added that both the scholars and parents have to understand the commitments they will have to make. The educators also noted that the program was not set up to track scholars in one area but was designed so scholars could explore an area and try to determine what is right for them.

College and Career Readiness

The businesses believed that the program could enhance college and career readiness because of the concept. For that reason, the learning experiences provided to the scholars were to ensure that the interns graduate from high school with a diploma and a certification. Each stakeholder explained the concept of college and career ready differently. It was evident from the interviews that each of them understood the basics of college and career ready and work to achieve it from different perspectives. The educator is conformed to the state guidelines for college and career readiness, while the business receives the goal as providing relevant skills for the labor market.

Learning through practical hands-on activities enhances college readiness; the scholars could make academic content more relatable and relevant as they apply their knowledge to real-life content. For instance, Intern 9 shared, "I am a lot better in English than I was before." Intern 2 stated, "I am so much better in my anatomy class and I was before, it makes it so much easier with the terminology."

The educators and businesses believe that participating in an internship program has the potential to develop the relevant skills needed for college and career readiness. Educator 1 expressed optimism about the implications of the program and how each skill was developed:

> I think a lot of scholars leave school with the misconception. They leave with the academic skills, but they do not have the soft skills to be successful in the workforce. While they are doing their internship, they develop the skills.

Educator 9 believed that the internship program was geared toward career readiness more than college readiness in that it exposes the scholars to real-life work experiences. It also helps them make decisions on what they want to go forward with on their college and

career choice; however, the program is structured to provide many different work experiences for scholars in their junior and senior years. Throughout the interview, educators stressed the importance of the college and educational progression for the scholars and noted that scholars were told, "try another internship next semester." This view of college readiness deviated from the established understanding of college readiness from the standpoint of educational policy. It was evident that the interns are encouraged to pursue a college degree.

Educators adhered to the state guidelines; they understand the broader implications for college readiness. From their perspective, interns developed the necessary skills as they participated in the program as it offered them rigor and relevance in their internships. Educator 1 noted that their "first objective as part of the program was to prepare scholars for college and career readiness because they are trying to get the scholars ready for graduation." Educator 1 further explained that a certification status received in school enhances their career readiness. Educator 1 acknowledged that although the internship program is geared toward career readiness, the business encourages scholars to develop the skills needed to pursue a college degree. Educator 3 shared,

> In many cases, these scholars are trying to develop their skills to go to college. And so even though they may change their mind about their area they still have opportunities for different areas. They can continue to work their skills where they are.

The development of soft skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, communication skills, and interpersonal skills are also embedded in the training of interns. Educator 3 shared that the program provides "rigor and relevance." The scholars developed responsibility

and time management skills just by leaving school at a specific time each day and going to the worksite on time. Also, the scholars get to experience and understand what "people do on a daily basis to earn a living and the types of pressures that adults face in the working place as they juggle multiple roles." Educators focus on academic standards in fulfilling the elements of college and career readiness. The internship program's primary focus is on practical aspects of college and career readiness such as technical and soft skills needed for scholars to become ready for either college or career or both.

Learning through practical hands-on activities enhanced college readiness; the scholars could make academic content more relatable and relevant as they apply their knowledge to real-world content. For instance, Intern 19 shared, "I am a lot better in math than I was. Everything is just a breeze now." Intern 20 stated, "I have gotten better at doing math in my head, I have to use all kinds of math." The internship program was structured in a way that the scholars were exposed to soft skills as well as the social aspect of working in a different environment. For instance, Intern 12 shared that he was exposed to and was excited about the different things he could do with the different machines.

Educator 1 and Business Leader 3 believed that participating in the internship program had the potential to develop the relevant skills needed for college and career readiness. Educator 4 expressed optimism about the implications of the program and how such skills were developed:

> I think kids leave school with academic skills but do not have real world skills,
> such as soft skills. Things like working with colleagues, you know, identifying
> the problem and coming up with the solution, presenting findings to somebody. I
> think when scholars develop those skills it translates back to what they do in

school.

From a career readiness standpoint, the program was set up such that each scholar graduating from high school would have some internship experience. Business Leader 7 believed the program offered scholars the opportunity they needed to learn skills for a career and added,

> The good thing about it was these scholars go to high school to meet the
>
> requirements for their diploma and gain experience on the job site. If they do
>
> well, some interns are told they can have a job if they want it.

The findings in this chapter describe how the internship program was implemented and how it addressed college and career readiness among scholars and the business skills needs. It also discussed the experiences of the stakeholders and how that influenced the program. For instance, intern experiences as outlined in the chapter provided insights into the various aspects of the internship program. Whereas some experiences such as learning, growth, maturity, and the opportunity to be exposed to the field were of benefit to the scholars, other aspects such as balancing school and on-the-job responsibilities were a challenge to some of the scholars. Additionally, the support scholars received from family and friends and other adults was influential in their continued involvement in the program.

The business participation in the program was seen as a crucial step in reaching out to young people to provide them with opportunities to explore careers. It cannot be stated that the businesses took the lead in addressing the skills gap challenge in the workforce by working with educators to get more high school scholars interested in completing an internship. The businesses chose to focus on adolescents because of their beliefs that nurturing young talent has been successful. The business leaders work to

provide broad and authentic learning experiences for the scholars to develop workforce soft and technical skills.

The educators welcomed the partnership and worked to ensure that scholars had significant opportunities to succeed in the program and that they also provided businesses with well-prepared scholars. These findings described the businesses' experiences in implementing and running the internship program. The business was committed to developing skills among adolescents for the benefit of the company just as much as the industry.

Like any program, there are challenges that stakeholders tried to address as the program progressed to ensure that it functioned efficiently and was beneficial to all of them.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to engage the stakeholders (scholars, educators, and employers) who are involved in the internship program to gain a better understanding of how each stakeholder involved works together to prepare scholars with the relevant college, career, and life readiness skills. It also sought to understand the phenomenon of internships from the perspective of the stakeholders – interns, employers, and educators – to gain deeper insight into the experiences of each group as they engaged with the program. A review of the literature and the experiences of the participants in the study revealed the opportunities and challenges of promoting internships targeted at adolescents. As part of this study, the employer's perspectives provided insight into their expectations of and aspirations for the program as well as the nuanced complexities involved in targeting high school interns. Similarly, educator feedback revealed their challenges and their hopes of developing stronger partnerships with business leaders to help develop interns with desirable skill sets. Intern perspectives highlighted how the internships made meaning of their knowledge and how their experiences fit within their own personal and professional goals. This study was grounded in adolescent development theory, human capital theory, college and career readiness, and experiential learning.

The study answered the following research questions.

1. What are the experiences of the stakeholders in the program?

2. How do they influence the internship program?

The stakeholders discussed how the internship experience enhanced academic abilities. Transfer of learning provided the crucial link between academics and business. This lends support to Dewey's (1938) theory of pragmatism that expounded that interns

engaged in experiential learning were more able to retain academic content. According to Stone and Lewis (2012), college and career readiness involves the acquisition of academic, employability, and technical skills before graduating from high school. From the analysis, it was apparent that the interns were able to develop soft skills. For the interns in internship programs, soft skills and exposure were the ultimate goals; thus, integrating class-based and work-based learning strengthened intern knowledge and skills that prepared them for their future.

In addition to some academic skills the internships develop, soft skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, time management, and communication skills are developed as well. The use of soft skills in the work environment has become essential in the 21st century workplace. The widespread use of technology in most businesses provided interns the opportunity to develop and use higher order thinking, creativity, and technical expertise to attend to their job tasks. These skills have also been identified as crucial to the 21st century workplace which is driven by knowledge and technology (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

Traditionally, employers have been critical of educators for not preparing interns with the necessary skills needed in the workplace. On the other hand, educators have complained about the lack of adequate resources and assistance from businesses to help them provide learning opportunities for interns. Consequently, society has been left with two factions, each distrustful of the other, who, in reality, have shared goals and must work in tandem to complement each other's efforts to develop the future workforce. Nevertheless, in recent times, employers are partnering with educational institutions at all levels to address the skills gaps. Thus, there seems to be a shift in thinking in the past few years of both educators and employers as both factions work to meet each other's

needs.

This study showed that some employers are willing to work with educators to address the training and learning needs of interns as the employers in this study partnered with this LEA and the local high schools. From the educators' points of view, the partnership was a welcome addition to their efforts to develop interns with college and career readiness skills and to prepare interns to meet the challenges of the future.

This study also highlighted the need for a multi-dimensional approach to addressing the skill needs of the industry and the career aspirations of the youth. As the findings revealed, rearranging interns' academic schedules to free them up in the afternoons or mornings was necessary to focus on working at the internship site. Also, the employers would need to reorient employees and their schedules to enable them to work in close collaboration with the internships, all of whom had never been exposed to real-world internships.

While nurturing young talent has positive, long-term benefits, the analysis also revealed the challenges of focusing on internship programs among high school interns. This study showed the employer's struggle to retain interns after the program. As stated in the previous chapter, some interns are undecided or realize they are no longer interested in the current field. While this was not the outcome the stakeholders had hoped for, it revealed how each of the interns made meaning of the program and aligned it to their personal goals. Nevertheless, one must use caution in interpreting this as a negative outcome as each intern had plans to pursue advancement in their fields.

Another challenge that emerged was the recruitment of interns into the program. Despite the increased interest of interns, as demonstrated by attendance at informational sessions at the high schools, the employer and educators realized that internships for

adolescents are not common. Thus, it was unrealistic to expect to find a large number of interns who were passionate about it. In essence, there seemed to be a misalignment of expectations. While some of the employers expected that some or all of the interns would stay with the company after their training, either by continuing to work while attending postsecondary education or by working full time, the study revealed that each of the interns had different aspirations. Some of the interns saw the program as a "job" that was not linked to their plans. This seemed counterintuitive to the goals of the internship program. The educators contended that there were other interns who were eager to participate in the program, but who were unable to do so due to requirements. It may be safe to say that some interns with a real passion for their future may have been excluded in the selection process. Nevertheless, one educator admitted that recruitment of a higher caliber intern who would be interested is a challenge.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, the appeal of this internship program was the flexibility and the potential for higher education and career progression. This is counter to the widespread notion of youth internships lacking rigor and stifling opportunities for interns to pursue higher education, as such has plagued internship possibilities in the past. The diverse backgrounds and career interests of each of the internships revealed how the program allowed each intern to pursue his or her interests and the opportunities available, both for those who would enter the workforce directly and for those who would pursue postsecondary education. The exposure gained in the program was intended to open doors to different career fields in the community. On the other hand, for those interns who wished to pursue higher education and continue to work would have experience and exposure after graduation.

The interns reported an awareness of their personal growth and development as

they engaged with the program over time. Consistent with adolescent development theory (Arnett, 2000; Steinberg & Morris, 2001), the period of adolescence offers opportunities for adolescents to explore the world and society to find where they fit. The study additionally revealed the intern's perceptions of his/her maturity as a result of being in the program. For them, the exposure to an adult working environment provided insight into the demands of daily work as well as the socio-cultural norms that exist in the workplace.

Furthermore, as interns experimented with new roles, they were able to determine their interests and abilities in a safe environment. This finding was consistent with Halpern (2009) who argued that an internship program that allowed for experimentations and explorations of talents and interests helped in the identity development of adolescents. Another avenue for growth and development was evident in the interns' demonstration of perseverance as they balanced school, work, and life in high school. Even though some reported that it was a challenge at times balancing school and work, they understood the need to stick with the program to achieve their personal goals in the future. This ability to persist in the program demonstrated grit – the passion and perseverance over the long term which can be a good predictor of success in life and school compared to one's intelligence quotient (Duckworth et al., 2007). Thus, for an internship program where interns were required to be present even when they have reached the required number of hours, it highlights the interns' commitment to staying in the program and developing the relevant skills for future success. From the interns' perspective, the ability to delay gratification and persevere in the program helped individuals appreciate and recognize his/her growing process.

Being in an adult working environment gave the interns the opportunity to make

mistakes and learn from them within a safe environment. The interns understood and appreciated what their adult coworkers did on a daily basis to earn a living. Each of the interns mentioned the significance of the program to their growth and development and explained that they would recommend the program for other interns. This suggests that those who participated in the program could potentially become advocates for internships in the future. More career-focused services are needed for interns. In essence, the internship program should be more than "an opportunity to get out of school" for those who participate in the program; it should be aligned with interns' passions and career interests. To be college and career ready requires a high school diploma, passing academic tests, and career ready examinations. Since this is the main requirement for graduating from high school, educators need to make employers aware of the role that an internship plays to help interns meet their academic requirements while meeting employer needs as well. There are distinct challenges with the current system when working with interns; however, if there is alignment between academic and business needs, the program can be structured to provide mutual benefits to all stakeholders.

Additionally, educators need to embark on a rigorous community awareness program to promote the benefits of internships to high school interns. The researcher believes that when interns and their communities understand the expectations of employers who invest in internships and the benefits of the program, more interns whose career goals are aligned with the business goals will pursue internships in their desired career fields. Moreover, interns who complete internship programs can serve as advocates for the program and help reach out to other potential interns. Equally important, enlightening communities about internships provides an opportunity for educators to showcase how interns can apply their learning to real-world practices. It

also showcases career opportunities that exist for small- to medium-sized businesses.

Efforts at connecting school to work for American youth are usually compared to internship programs in countries such as Germany, which has a highly defined internship program that is part of most adolescents' experiences. While the United States cannot wholly adopt what has worked in other countries, America can steer its youth in certain directions by exposing them to new fields and making the allowance for exploration to assess what fits better with American educational values. This requires a concerted effort from society, particularly from educators who are charged with providing career counseling to interns.

Employers are wary of investing in training youth due to concerns such as immaturity and high turnover (Rosenbaum, 1992). While this may be a valid concern, most employers will participate in internships when they see a potential financial and human capital benefit. To that end, small- to mid-sized companies can partner with other employers with similar interests and form a coalition of employers who can take on small numbers of interns individually and develop a pool of workers.

Furthermore, employers must understand that young people appreciate an opportunity to learn from other working adults, especially those young people entering the workforce after high school. They see the internship programs as a means for self-development and maturity. Moreover, the adults who train and invest in the youth report a sense of fulfillment at a chance to prepare the future generation. Thus, with proper resources and assistance, the high school scholar of today has the potential to be the well-trained employee of tomorrow. Additionally, policymakers should offer incentives to employers who offer internship programs to high school interns.

At the end, when other companies see how internship programs can be developed

even on a small basis, they can be encouraged to grow their employees. It is from those little steps that internships can become an attractive option for interns and employers.

From a human capital theory perspective (Becker, 1975), employers invest in training and educational programs in the hopes of improving human capital by developing skilled employees who can contribute to the organization's goals. This research demonstrated the businesses' willingness to invest in the education and training of the workforce with the hope of developing a pipeline of skilled employees. Given the employers' expectations of training and developing a channel of skilled employees for the community, the outcomes of the internship program were encouraging to them at the time of this study. The businesses' commitment to nurturing the youth was encouraging, and the effort was appreciated by both educators and the community.

With respect to adolescent development theory (Erikson, 1950), this study provided an understanding of how young people mature and develop their identity over time as well as how their interactions with adults in a real-world environment can help shape their character as they transition into adulthood. With the focus of internships on youth, this study provides further insights into different issues that youth have to contend with as they make personal and professional choices about their futures. Thus, an understanding of adolescent development theory provides insight into how the developmental needs of adolescents can be met and how workplace activities can be structured to enhance positive adolescent development. Viewing internships through this lens can help broaden its appeal to society.

In a fast-changing workplace where the demand for skills is getting increasingly complex, Dewey's theory of pragmatism can lend support to high school internship programs whereby interns can become engaged with academic content as they apply it to

practical hands-on activities. This is particularly important in the technological workplace as learning can be adapted to meet the changing needs of the workplace, thereby keeping pace with technological advances.

Signaling theory can offer insight into how certifications enhance the marketability of the certificate holder in the labor market. Interns who graduate with a certification have a competitive advantage over those who graduate with just a high school certification.

Furthermore, this study provides an understanding of how internships can enhance college and career readiness. This is significant in that the driving educational framework of the current period focuses on preparing each intern with academic, technical, and employability skills by the time they graduate from high school. To that end, business-educational partnerships that address stakeholder needs can help shape conversations on how to address skills gaps.

Limitations

The boundaries in this research primarily center on the researcher's role as a doctoral candidate conducting phenomenological research for the first time. The researcher felt more than capable of connecting with people and forming a trusting relationship that would enable the interviewees to share their experiences; however, what the researcher was not prepared for was all the moving parts of conducting the interviews (locations, schedule, distance). This case study provided an in-depth description of one LEA internship program. The fact that the study focused on one program could be perceived as a limitation. As a qualitative study, it is not generalizable. This case study was also limited to the identified stakeholders who were directly involved in the program. While the interns, educators, and employers provided insight into parental involvement

and support, parents were not invited to be participants as the interns were seen as mature adolescents.

Recommendations

This study focused on the experiences of the stakeholders (interns, educators, employers) in the program and how they influenced the internship program. Assessing intern skills is important in evaluating how they affect the program. Further recommendations are to

- Conduct a comparative case study involving two or more districts to provide further insights and processes that may produce similar or different outcomes.
- Implement exit interviews of participants.

This dissertation explored how an LEA internship program could enhance the college and career readiness of interns and address employer skills needs. Through this lens, the challenges and opportunities for interns, educators, and employers involved in the program were uncovered. The research revealed that if there is to be an increase in youth internships, there need to be committed leaders who believe in the value of developing youth. Additionally, there need to be incentives from local and federal governments that create a conducive environment for business-education partnerships. The educational system by itself cannot fully meet the needs of employers as it has to focus on the educational and career progression of interns based on state accountability standards for high schools. Furthermore, efforts targeted at high school interns present unique challenges since interns are still developing and figuring out what their personal and professional options could be. Given the nationwide focus on pursuing postsecondary education despite conflicting evidence of the wisdom of this approach as well as the

reality of the current adult-focused internship system, focusing on high schools has a potential to provide early alternative career pathways for all interns. In the final analysis, it is known that there is a way forward and a potential for high school internships to expose young interns to several careers. What needs to be sorted out is how to get the right interns into the program and also manage the expectation of employers as they work with the youth. If American youth are not given the opportunities to explore internship programs such as the one presented in the study, society runs the risks of perpetuating the problem of inadequate preparation of the future workforce as the future workforce misses out on opportunities to develop technical, academic, and soft skills at an early age.

Findings from this study may be used to improve the quality of high school and business partnerships in internships. Specifically, this research may be of interest to businesses looking to partner with educators to provide rigorous work-based learning opportunities for youth. Additionally, educators and policymakers may use findings from this study to offer learning opportunities for high school scholars, particularly those enrolled in CTE, as they seek to provide multiple pathways for interns and develop efficient processes that enhance the implementation of internship programs.

Without the restrictions of the high school environment in the form of compliance with accountability testing and child labor laws, the businesses can focus on meeting their organization skills needs. While this turn of events may better suit the employer's needs, and it is fair that businesses make strategic decisions to meet their organizational goals, the downside for interns is that they will miss out on opportunities to be exposed to careers. From the educators' perspectives, they are once again left with the question of how best to prepare interns to be college and career ready by connecting interns to meaningful work-based learning opportunities before they graduate.

Despite the rise in formal education, changes in educational policies aimed towards a better-educated workforce to meet the needs of the 21st century labor market do not show how the perceptual competencies gap among labor market candidates can be adequately addressed. Concerns expressed by employers are that a large proportion of American students graduating from high school enter the labor market with no knowledge of relevant competences – scholastic, technical, or career related – to succeed in the workforce (Stone & Lewis, 2012). As stakeholders seek to address the problem of competency discrepancies, internship programs have reemerged as a possible career pathway, despite their controversial implementations in the past which had resulted in varying degrees of success or failure. The problem with the internship system in the United States is that programs are arbitrary and discrete, with the average internship participant age being approximately 27 years when they enter the programs. Also, many young adults stumble into internships as a last resort, only to find out that those internships offered a stable and consistent career through the acquisition of industry-relevant competences.

This topic is considerable because in the communities where the researcher has lived, many kids were left behind when they failed to pursue the traditional scholastic route. The researcher also believes such programs, when well thought out and coordinated, may offer a possible way out and a means to advancement in people's lives.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol for School Personnel

Interview Protocol for School Personnel

Date:
Time:
Interviewee:
Thank participant for agreeing to meet
Explain my interest in program
Describe Interview Outline
Reiterate participants rights and receive consent to begin interview/recording

1. What is the nature of the relationship between the high school and the business?
2. What support/resistance did you encounter in developing this partnership?

College, Career and Life Ready

3. In your view to what extent does the youth internship program provide rigorous and experiences to make the scholar's' college and career ready?
4. What are some skills that scholars must demonstrate in the program to be college and career ready?
5. How does the setting at the school and workplace help scholars handle frustration, failure/success?
6. Do you see evidence of cognitive growth and development in as a result of participating in the program.

Benefits/Challenges to School

7. In your opinion what are some benefits and opportunities for the school?
8. What challenges have you encountered in the program?

Note. From "Developing the future workforce through apprenticeships: a case study of an industry-education partnership," by Nana K. Arthur-Mensah, 2015, Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Copyright Holders. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol for Scholars

Interview Protocol for Interns

Date:
Time:
Interviewee:
Thank participant for agreeing to meet
Explain my interest in program
Describe outline
Reiterate participants rights and receive consent to begin interview/recording

1. Tell me about your experience in this program.
2. What motivated you to join this program?
3. What does being an intern mean to you?
4. What did your friends and family think about you joining this program?
5. What is your relationship with your colleagues like?
6. What was it like being in an adult work environment?
7. What is your relationship with your supervisor/mentors like?
8. How did your education prepare you for this program?
9. How has being in this program helped you with your academic studies?
10. Do you have any plans of continuing your education in this field?
11. What skills have you acquired you believe will help you transition to either college or the workforce?
12. How does the school setting and the workplace environment facilitate or enhance your learning?
13. What do you like/not like about this program?
14. What are some challenges you face as a scholar in the program?
15. What resources were made available to you to help you as an intern?
16. How do you believe you have grown due to being in the program?
17. What do you hope to get from this program and what are your plans after leaving this program?

Note.   From "Developing the future workforce through apprenticeships: a case study of an industry-education partnership," by Nana K. Arthur-Mensah, 2015, Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Copyright Holders. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol for internship Sponsor (Employer)

Interview Protocol for internship Sponsor (Employer)

Date:
Time:
Interviewee:
Thank participant for agreeing to meet
Explain my interest in program
Describe Interview Outline
Reiterate participants rights and receive consent to begin interview/recording

1. I am interested in knowing how this program came about.
2. What is the nature of the relationship between the employer and the high school?
3. Is this program an extension of scholar's high school experience?

College, Career and Life Ready
4. To what extent does the youth internship program provide rigorous and integrated education and work-based educational experiences?
5. What skills do you hope scholars will graduate with?
6. Do you see evidence of cognitive growth and development in scholars as result of participating in the program?
7. How are scholars' learning assessed in the program?

Benefits to Company
8. What challenges have you encountered in the program?
9. How would you change that in the future? Are there any concerns about viability and sustainability of the program?

Note. From "Developing the future workforce through apprenticeships: a case study of an industry-education partnership," by Nana K. Arthur-Mensah, 2015, Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Copyright Holders. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix D

Subject Informed Consent Document

Gardner-Webb University IRB
Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: A case study of a business-education partnership through internships

Researcher: Dana Blue Chavis, Researcher, Education Department

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to engage the stakeholders (scholars, educators, and employers) that are involved in the internship program to gain a better understanding of how each stakeholder involved works together to prepare scholars with the relevant college, career and life readiness skills.

This study will show whether or not an internship program enhances college, career, and life readiness among scholars. Developing a rich description of the structure and organization of the program established may provide insight into the challenges and opportunities of those engaged in the program. This study will engage the stakeholders; scholars, educators, administrators, and employers, that are involved in the internship program to gain a better understanding of how each stakeholder involved works together to prepare scholars with the relevant college, career and life readiness skills.

Procedure: In this study, the data will be collected primarily through interviews with participants and document review. An interview protocol will be developed using semi-structured interviews to aid in organizing ideas and ensuring that vital issues were not missed. Focus group, individual, face-to-face meetings and more information shall be gathered through emails and phone conversations. The participants will be interviewed at different times and in different locations. The interviews with the interns will occur in their school instead of the worksite. With the consent of the principal and the interns, the interviews with the interns will be scheduled during school period when they have elective classes, not interfere with their core courses. The interview questions to the interns will focus on their experiences as interns; lessons learned and their plans for the program. The interns will provide insight into their perceptions of the program and the advantages and challenges involved. Interviews with the educators will be conducted at their respective schools. The interview questions that will be posed to the educators will provide insights into the challenges and opportunities of the partnership program with the employer organization. Interviews with participants from the business group will be conducted at their establishment or over the phone. Interview questions will focus on the reasons for starting the program, their experiences, challenges, and opportunities in developing and implementing the program and overall goals of the program.

Time Required: It is anticipated that the study will require about 30 minutes/hours of your time.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed

unless it is in a de-identified state.

Confidentiality: Several participants will be included in this study. The participants in the study will take part on the condition that their identities would be protected. Pseudonyms will be assigned to each of them to help maintain confidentiality

Anonymous Data: The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your data will be anonymous which means that your name will not be collected or linked to the data.

Confidentiality Cannot be Guaranteed: In some cases it may not be possible to guarantee confidentiality (e.g., an interview of a prominent person, a focus group interview). Because of the nature of the data, I cannot guarantee your data will be confidential and it may be possible that others will know what you have reported.

Risks: Although this kind of research posed no considerable risk to participants due to the researcher's questions and the characteristics of participants, the researcher realized that no research study is void of risks, and it is considerable to respect the research sites.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. The study may help us to understand (a) discovery of new information concerning high school internship programs (b) insights into experiences of stakeholders involved in the internship program and (c) possible best practices for unfolding a LEA internship program. The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw From the Study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to Withdraw From the Study: If you decide not to be in this study, or if you stop participating at any time, there is no penalty for withdrawing. If you would like to withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact Dana Blue Chavis at 910-733-2325

If you have questions about the study, contact the following individuals.
Dana Blue Chavis
Education Department
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
910-733-2325
dabchavis@gmail.com

Dr. Jeffery Isenhour
Education Department
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
828-446-7568
Isenhour1969@gmail.com

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Rogers
IRB Institutional Administrator
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
704-406-4724
jrogers3@gardner-webb.edu

Voluntary Consent by Participant
I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask any questions concerning this study and they have been answered for me.

_____ I agree to participate in the confidential survey.
_____ I do not agree to participate in the confidential survey.

_____ I agree to participate in the focus group.
_____ I do not agree to participate in the focus group.

_____ I agree to participate in the interview session(s). I understand that this interview may be *video/audio* recorded for purposes of accuracy. The *video/audio* recording will be

transcribed and destroyed.

_____ I do not agree to participate in the interview session(s).

Participant Printed Name   Date: _____

Participant Signature   Date: _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix E

Parental Consent Form

Parental Consent Form

LIST OF INVESTIGATORS

Dr. Jeffery Isenhour
Gardner-Webb University
110 S Main St
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
Phone: 704-406-4000
Email: jisenhour@gardner-webb.edu

Dana Blue Chavis
Gardner-Webb University
110 S. Main Street
P.O. Box 997
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
Phone: 910-733-2325
Email: dabchavis@gmail.com

The site(s) where the study is to be conducted:
Local LEA
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Employer:
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Phone number for subjects to call for questions: 910-733-2325

Dear Parent/Guardian,

You/your child are invited to participate in a research study. This study is being conducted by Dana Blue Chavis, a doctoral candidate and it is sponsored by Gardner-Webb University, Department of Education. The study will take place at the local LEA and approximately 10% of the scholars involved will be invited to participate.

Purpose - The primary objective of this study is to examine the experiences of scholars, employers, administrators, and educators engaged in the internships of this research. This study will show whether or not an internship program enhances college, career, and life readiness among scholars. Developing a rich description of the structure and organization of the program established may provide insight into the challenges and opportunities of those engaged in the program. This study will engage the stakeholders; scholars, educators, administrators, and employers, that are involved in the internship program to gain a better understanding of how each stakeholder involved works together to prepare

scholars with the relevant college, career and life readiness skills.

Procedure - In this study, your child will be asked to participate in no more than two interviews to share their experiences in the internship program. We will conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes. All interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes. The transcribed documents will be kept in a locked office and destroyed after transcriptions. Additionally, the researchers will be conducting an observation of your child performing their duties at the organization. Please note your child may decline to answer any questions that may make them uncomfortable.

Potential Risks - There are no foreseeable risks to those choosing to participate in the study although all studies may encounter unforeseen hazards.

Benefits - The possible advantages of this study include (a) discovery of new information concerning high school internship programs (b) insights into experiences of stakeholders involved in the internship program and (c) possible best practices for unfolding a LEA internship program (c) a contribution to the literature on benefits and challenges of stakeholders in an internship program. Although the information collected may not help you directly, the information learned in this study may be helpful to others.

Confidentiality - Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. You/your child's privacy will be protected to the extent permitted by law. If the results of this study are published, you/your child's name will not be made public. While unlikely, the following may look at the research records: Gardner-Webb University Institutional Review Board. Data collected for this study will be secured and kept on a password protected computer and kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office.

Voluntary Participation - Taking part in this study is voluntary. You/your child may choose not to participate at all. Should you decide to be in this study, you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.

Research Subject's Rights, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints - If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have some options. You may contact the researcher at 910-733-2325. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, questions, concerns or complaints, you may call the Gardner-Webb University Institutional Review Board. You may discuss any questions about your rights as an issue, in secret, with a member of the Institutional Review Board staff. The Institutional Review Board is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, a staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these organizations.

This paper tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature means this study has been discussed with you, that your questions have been answered, and that you will take part in the study. This informed consent document is not a contract. You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this informed consent

document. You will be given a signed copy of this paper to keep for your records.

_____   _____
Signature of Subject/Legal Representative   Date Signed

_____   _____
Signature of Person Explaining the Consent Form   Date Signed
(If other than the Investigator)

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date Signed

Note.   From "Developing the future workforce through apprenticeships: a case study of an industry-education partnership," by Nana K. Arthur-Mensah, 2015, Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Copyright Holders. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix F

Subject Assent Form

Subject Assent Form

I am invited to be in a research study being done by Dana Blue Chavis (Doctoral Candidate). When a person is in a research study, they are called a "subject." I am invited because I am enrolled in an internship program a local high school. I will be interviewed by the researcher to learn about my experiences as a scholar in the internship program. These risks are minimal and questions posed to me will be limited to my role as an internship participant.

This study will last approximately three months. However, my participation in the study will last approximately two weeks, where I will be asked to participate in no more than two interviews to share my experiences in the internship program. The benefit to me for taking part in this study is (a) discovery of new information concerning high school internship programs (2) insights into experiences of scholars enrolled in the internship program.

My family and the researcher, as well as my teachers and supervisors in my internship program, will know that I'm in the study. If anyone else is given information about me, they will not know my name. A number or initials will be used instead of my name.

I have been told about this study and know why it is being done and what I have to do. My parent(s) have agreed to let me be in the study. If I have any questions, I can ask Dana Blue Chavis, and she will answer my questions. If I do not want to be in this study or I want to quit after I am already in this study, I can tell the researchers, and they will discuss this with my parents.

_____

Printed Name of Subject   Signature of Subject   Date Signed

_____

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian   Signature of Parent/Guardian Date Signed

_____

Printed Name of Investigator Signature of Investigator   Date Signed

Note. From "Developing the future workforce through apprenticeships: a case study of an industry-education partnership," by Nana K. Arthur-Mensah, 2015, Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Copyright Holders. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix G

Permission to Conduct Research Study

Permission to Conduct Research Study

August 30, 2016

Assistant Superintendent of Operations

RE: Permission to Conduct Single Case Research Study

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at local LEA. I am currently enrolled in the Educational Leadership program at Gardner-Webb University, North Carolina, and I am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled, a case study of a business - education partnership through internships.

I hope you will allow me to recruit a few scholars from the internship program to anonymously complete some questions (copy enclosed). Along with any interested staff and employers, who volunteer to participate. Scholar will be given a consent form for their parent or guardian (copy enclosed) and returned to the primary researcher at the beginning of the survey process.

If approval is granted, scholar participants and staff will complete the interview/survey in a classroom or other quiet setting on the school site. The process should take no longer than 30 minutes. The survey results will be pooled for the dissertation project, and individual results of this study will remain confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only combined results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either your school/district or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. You may contact me at my email address dabchavis@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Dana Blue Chavis
Researcher, Gardner-Webb University

Appendix H

Permission by County Review Board

September 14, 2016

To: Dana Blue-Chavis
        Gardner Webb University

From:

        Institutional Review Board

Cc: , Interim Superintendent

Re: Application to Conduct Research in

Dear Ms. Blue-Chavis,

Your proposal to conduct research in   has been approved.
Your project, titled *Developing the Future Workforce through Internships: A Case Study
of an Industry Education Partnership,* has been reviewed and approved by our
Institutional Review Board. The following members agree to accept this proposal and
ask that you submit your findings for their consideration once the project has concluded.

_____
, Director of Accountability

_____
, ESL Coordinator

_____   _____
, Director of Federal Programs   9-14-16
                                                         Date

Appendix I

Permission to Use Existing Survey

PERMISSION: TO USE AN EXISTING SURVEY

January 7, 2017

Northern Kentucky University
Dr. Nana K. Arthur-Mensah
Assistant Professor of Organizational Leadership
100 Louie B Nunn Drive
Newport, KY 41099

Dear Dr. Nana K. Arthur-Mensah:

I am a doctoral student from Gardner Webb University writing my dissertation tentatively titled Unfolding the future workforce through internships: a case study of an industry-education partnership.

Unfolding the future workforce through internships: a case study of an industry-education partnership is under the direction of my dissertation committee chair Dr. Jeffery Isenhour.

I would like your permission to reproduce to use survey instrument in my research study. I would like to use and print your survey under the following conditions:
- I will use this survey only for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- I will include the copyright statement on all copies of the instrument.
- I will send my research study and one copy of reports, articles, and the like that make use of these survey data promptly to your attention.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by signing one copy of this letter and returning it to me either through postal mail or e-mail: 1325 Graham Road, Lumber Bridge, NC 28157 dabchavis@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Dana Blue-Chavis

Dana Blue-Chavis
Doctoral Candidate

Signature: _____
                    Dr. Nana K. Arthur-Mensah

Expected date of completion 05/25/2017