



Chapter 12

A Methodology for Validating Entry Level Value versus Career Value of Courses in an MIS Program

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The purpose of this study was to determine which entry-level course evaluations are drivers of an attitude of approval toward an MIS program, which career-level course evaluations are drivers of an attitude of approval toward an MIS program and whether alumni evaluations coincide with the beliefs of faculty who designed the curriculum. Alumni were asked to indicate the value of the content of each required course of the program during their first year on the job, then in their current position and then asked to evaluate the entire MIS program yielding a factor score for one's overall attitude toward the MIS program. The resulting factor score for each alumnus was related to the scores for the value of courses during one's first year on the job and the scores for the value of courses in one's current position. The plans of the faculty who designed the MIS curriculum as to what point in time, entry-level position, later in one's career, or a combination of the two, each course would be of value is reviewed. The perceptions of the alumni are compared to the beliefs of the faculty.

Previously Published in *Managing Information Technology in a Global Economy* edited by Mehdi Khosrow-Pour, Copyright © 2001, Idea Group Publishing.

This chapter appears in the book, *Information Technology Education in the New Millennium* by Mohammad Dadashzadeh, Al Saber and Sherry Saber.

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BACKGROUND

When the faculty of an MIS area design a curriculum they consider providing their students with courses that provide entry-level skills and knowledge and courses that provide skills and knowledge that will be more applicable at points later in their careers.

There are various methods of determining the extent to which the courses in an MIS program are providing students with an education that is valuable both initially and at a later time in one's MIS career. One method would be to survey firms recruiting graduates of an Information Systems program as to how well graduates are performing, as suggested by Van Auken (1991). Still another method of assessing the effectiveness of an educational program is to have the program evaluated by the graduate, another approach mentioned by Van Auken (1991). A survey approach used by Gasen et al. (1991-92) asked students to evaluate various aspects of an MIS program. This study focused only on the satisfaction students perceived with the entire MIS program and not the content value of individual courses. A questionnaire proposed by Hanchey (1995-96) asks the graduate to indicate the value of specific MIS topics in addition to the quality of preparation in several areas such as analytical skills, values and ethics, etc. rather than specific course content.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this research were to determine:

- The perceived content value of each required course in an MIS program during a graduate's first year on the job;
- The perceived content value of each required course in an MIS program in a graduate's current position;
- A graduate's overall satisfaction index with an MIS curriculum;
- The relationship between one's overall satisfaction index score and one's evaluation of each of the curriculum's required courses during the first year on the job and in one's current position;
- The differences between the relationships between one's overall satisfaction index scores and course evaluation scores in the two frames of reference in number 4 above; and
- Whether the differences found are consistent with the objectives of the faculty when they designed the required courses.

METHODOLOGY

- Course Evaluations

A questionnaire asked the respondent to evaluate the content value of each required course using a six-point Likert scale.

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