

GRADUATES, EMPLOYERS AND THE ACADEMY:  
PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUALITY AND UTILITY OF EXTERNAL DEGREES  
OVER TWENTY FIVE YEARS

by

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of the requirements for the degree

of

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## ABSTRACT

In 1975 the Bureau of Social Science Research (BSSR) commissioned a study to examine the education- and work-related experiences of graduates from external degree programs to gather information “on how well such degrees served their holders, especially with respect to their usefulness in the world of work and the extent to which they provide access to higher-level programs.” The study findings published in 1978 revealed that many of the perceptions of the “quality and validity” of external degrees held by graduates, employers, and educators in 1976-77 are similar to those reported in contemporary educational and professional literature.

The 1978 BSSR report found 54,000 students enrolled in 134 public 2-year and 4-year institutions offering 244 undergraduate external degree programs meeting their study criteria. In 1998 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported for similar criteria approximately 1.1 million students enrolled in over 500 institutions offering 1,190 undergraduate distance degree programs. An analysis of the literature published during the intervening years was conducted to identify and track changes in the perceptions of graduates, employers and educators (the academy).

The literature reviewed was selected using search terms similar to those employed in the BSSR study. The period 1979-2003 was chosen for convenience and to provide coverage of the literature from the date of publication of the BSSR report to the present. Dissertation abstracts and online databases of scholarly and professional journals were searched for articles for review. The results of the analysis of the body of 312 studies and articles identified for the period are reported in graphic and narrative form.

The analysis of the literature revealed that the perceptions of graduates and employers have changed little over 25 years. Graduates continue to enroll for personal achievement and for access to employment and higher education, and report a high degree of satisfaction with their educational experience. Employers accept external degrees, but favor degrees offered by traditional institutions over those offered by for-profit providers. The Academy remains polarized, with “traditional” faculty distrustful of credentials earned through nontraditional study and faculty proponents of distance education equally strong in support.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Distance education has a long history in American higher education, dating from Colonial times to the present. Verduin and Clark (1991) briefly chronicled the evolution of American distance education beginning with a reference to Battenberg (1971) who wrote of a 1728 advertisement in the Boston Gazette for shorthand lessons by mail. Anna Elliott Ticknor, “the mother of American correspondence study,” (p. 16) founded the Society to Encourage Home Study in 1873. From 1874 to 1910, Illinois Wesleyan University offered both graduate and undergraduate degrees that could be pursued in absentia. In 1878 John Vincent, one of the founders of the Chautauqua movement, created a home reading circle for adults which Moore (1990) called “the first significant distance education effort in America” (p. 223). Chautauqua evolved into an accredited university in New York state where, as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts William Raney Harper, began to emphasize distance study techniques. It was Harper who in 1882, as the president of the of the University of Chicago, began offering correspondence studies to summer term students and later founded the first university-level correspondence division in America (Verduin & Clark, 1991).

In 1906 the University of Wisconsin-Extension was founded and in 1919 faculty there started an amateur wireless station that became the first federally licensed radio station devoted to educational broadcasting. Educational television broadcasting began

at the University of Iowa around 1932 (Verduin & Clark, 1991). Birzhan Nasseh of Ball State University in A Brief History of Distance Education (1997) described the further development of distance education noting that in the years between the World Wars the federal government granted radio broadcasting licenses to 202 colleges, universities and school boards, although correspondence remained the primary means of communication between student and educator.

After World War II television was considered another means of delivery in correspondence education. During the 1960s and 1970s other alternatives to traditional resident higher education opened to the public in the United States. Nasseh (1997) cites Gerrity (1976) in describing the first American open university, Empire State College (NYSES) in Saratoga Springs, New York which opened in 1971 and, roughly modeled on Britain's Open University, provided much of the early developmental work on distance education theory and practice. The main purpose of NYSES was to make higher education degrees more accessible to learners unable to attend traditional, campus-based programs.

In 1967 the Corporation for Public Broadcasting was created to promote non-commercial use of television, and the Sunrise Seminar was one of the earliest educational programs provided by this medium. The mid-1970s saw the introduction of The University of Mid-America, a consortium of nine Midwestern universities formed to produce and deliver courses via video, and in 1976 the for-profit educational institution University of Phoenix opened its doors. In the late 1970s and 1980s innovations such as cable and satellite television came into use as delivery mediums for distance education courses. In the mid-1980s innovations appeared such educational organizations as the

National Technological University which offered videotape and satellite graduate engineering course, Connected Education which offered online graduate courses taught by professors at the New School for Social Research, and Glenn Jones' Mind Extension University which began offering via cable network broadcasting courses and degree programs developed by community colleges and universities (Nasseh, 1997).

In the early 1990s the widespread economical use of personal computers, the Internet and specifically the World Wide Web made online instruction a practical reality. The University of Phoenix started its online programs in 1989, the Graduate School of America (an online, for-profit institution) was launched in 1994, and several major universities such as the University of Nebraska, Cornell University, Stanford University, and Duke University began offering online masters and doctoral degree programs. In 1996 the online Western Governors University was formed and a year later the California Virtual University, a consortium of nearly 100 California colleges and universities began offering over 1500 courses online (Nasseh, 1997). By the year 2000 over 60% of all American colleges and universities were offering online degree programs, and by 2003, the latest date for which reliable information is available, this number had climbed to approximately 81% of colleges and universities serving some 2.6 million students of all ages of the 17.5 million enrolled in all institutions of higher education in the United States (Sloan-C, 2005). In this light it is interesting that Watkins (1991) cites John Vincent (1885) who wrote,

“the day is coming when the work done by correspondence will be greater in amount than that done in the classrooms of our academic and colleges; when the students who shall recite by correspondence will far outnumber those who make oral recitations.” (p. 4)

### Problem

Throughout the history first of correspondence study, then external studies and now distance education, the research in the field appears focused on factors such as learner outcomes, programmatic issues concerning design and delivery, and best practices in instruction and administration. Berge and Mrozowski (2001) found this to be evident in their limited review of distance education literature from 1990 through 1999 and cite similar findings in reviews by Schlosser and Anderson (1994) and Holmberg (1987). Despite evident changes in student demographics, the dramatic increase in numbers of participants, the substantial increase in the number of providers (both traditional and for-profit), developments in instructional theory and pedagogy and the introduction of new technologies over time, there has been little investigation of the attitudes and beliefs or “perceptions” of the persons actually engaged in distance education—specifically the students, employers and higher education faculty and administrators (the academy) concerning the quality and usefulness of an academic degree obtained through distance education. The research extant appears largely anecdotal and periodical, and is limited to self-reported satisfaction or dissatisfaction with individual distance learning courses or degree programs and the success or lack of success in using the credential thus acquired to gain access to higher education or employment. There has been no systematic study found that addresses this aspect of distance education over time.

The problem investigated in this study was the absence of empirical research concerning the perceptions of the quality and utility of academic credentials obtained

through external or distance academic degree programs as reported by graduates, employers and the academy in scholarly and professional print media during the 25-year period, 1979- 2003.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive study was to describe and track the perceptions of the quality and utility of external academic degrees by graduates, employers and the academy over a 25-year period. The literature from 1979 to 2003 was analyzed to identify trends in the perceptions of the three groups and suggest future implications for the field of distance education.

### Theoretical Framework for the Study

Thirty years ago the Bureau of Social Science Research (BSSR), supported by the American Council on Education (ACE) and sponsored by the National Institute of Education (NIE), commissioned a study to examine the education- and work-related experience of graduates from external degree programs (now distance degree programs) to gather information “on how well such degrees served their holders, especially with respect to their usefulness in the world of work and the extent to which they provide access to higher-level programs” (Sharp & Sosdian, 1978, p. 14). Their description of the perceptions held by graduates, educators, and employers surveyed in 1977-78 are similar to those reported in the literature today.

Sharp and Sosdian (1978) employed a phenomenological approach in the BSSR study wherein the researchers sought to describe and explain a particular phenomenon at

a single point in time without attempting to demonstrate a cause-effect relationship (Creswell, 1994). The purpose of this descriptive study also was to track and describe the perceptions of external degree holders, their employers and the academy. However, in this case the period of the study covers a 25-year period from 1978 through 2003. Where Sharp and Sosdian gathered data for analysis from individual graduates, employers, educators and educational institutions via targeted surveys, in this study similar data was gathered from targeted scholarly and professional literature published during the period 1979-2003.

An element of the original BSSR study was a description of the environment at the time the data were collected, i.e., the demographic characteristics of the degree holders, the educational institutions from which they obtained their academic credentials, and the characteristics of their external degree programs. In this study only the perceptions of the three groups of interest (graduates, employers, the academy) were described, leaving environmental characteristics such as changing demographics, the introduction of new technologies and the development of instructional pedagogy and their possible effects on the data as avenues for further study.

Consistent with a qualitative research paradigm and descriptive research in general, this study did not test a priori a theory. Instead, the phenomenon that was studied—the perceptions of the three groups over time—was developed as the data was collected and analyzed. The key findings of the study suggest a relevant theory, or simply indicate where more specific research is warranted to explain apparent incongruencies in publication trends.

### Research Question

What is the nature and degree of change of the perceptions of the quality and utility of external (distance) degrees by graduates, employers and the academy over a period of 25 years (1979-2003) as presented in scholarly and professional literature, and what are the implications in the field of distance education?

### Significance of the Study

In 1978 the (Sosdian & Sharp) NIE study found 54,000 students enrolled in 134 public 2-year and 4-year institutions offering 244 undergraduate external degree programs meeting their study criteria. In 1998 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported (for similar criteria) approximately 1.1 million students enrolled in over 500 institutions offering 1,190 undergraduate distance degree programs (NCES, 2001).

In 2004 in the publication Entering the Mainstream: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2003-2004 the Sloan Consortium, a consortium of institutions and organizations committed to quality online education, reported that over 1.6 million students in over 1,100 colleges and universities were studying online in the Fall of 2002. The number studying online in the Fall of 2003 exceeded 1.9 million. This represents a growth of nearly 20% in a single year and, according to the survey results in the report, this growth is expected to continue to over 2.6 million students by Fall 2004—a further growth of 24.8% (p. 1).

Beyond enrollment data the Sloan report also speaks to student satisfaction with online learning, indicating that “just two-fifths (40.6 percent) of the survey respondents strongly agree that “students are at least as satisfied with an online course” as compared to a “traditional course” and, while “roughly half (50.6 percent) of the Sloan-C respondents seem to feel that learning outcomes in online education are “about the same” as in traditional face-to-face courses...Almost two-fifths (38.5 percent) believe current online offerings are inferior to traditional courses” (Green, K. C., *Digital Tweed: Mapping the terrain of Online Education*; Campus Technology. Campus Technology April 21 2005).

For much of the life of higher education in the United States, attainment of an academic degree, whether associate, baccalaureate, graduate, or professional, has been accomplished via traditional, resident matriculation at public or private institutions of higher learning. Traditionally, the relative socioeconomic elite have been the predominant beneficiary of higher education. Only since the mid-twentieth century has the American socioeconomic “middle class” had general access to, and made significant use of, higher education institutions to obtain baccalaureate, graduate and professional academic degrees to improve their marketability in an expanding and increasingly diversified and complex national economy (Freeland, 1997; Thelin, 1996).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, four-year baccalaureate degree and graduate and professional degrees remain the dominant paradigm (NCES, 1997). However, since the mid 1970s there has been a rapidly growing movement to make higher education both more accessible and more affordable than the traditional resident model. The practice of “distance education,” while hardly a new concept, has

mushroomed from simple correspondence, radio and television courses into a multi-billion dollar higher education industry, encompassing over half of U.S. public and private colleges and universities, and dozens of for-profit education companies (NCES, 2000). Enrollment in distance education courses across all post-secondary degree-granting institutions nearly doubled just in the period 1995-1998 (NCES, 2000).

Characterized by strong initiatives from traditional institutions and consortia and additionally by for-profit educational corporations, distance education has evolved from secondary, preparatory, adult and continuing education into full academic programs offering associate, baccalaureate, master's and even doctoral degrees (NCES, 1999a). Many of these distance degree programs can be completed with minimal direct contact with educators and little time "on campus." Some may be completed without ever meeting face-to-face with a professor, with matriculation entirely on-line. Even graduation ceremonies can be conducted at a distance (Chronicle of Higher Education, 5/22/98).

This proliferation of distance education degree programs has led to substantial criticism by the academy (AFT, 2000). The quality, sufficiency, and academic rigor of distance education degree programs has been questioned, particularly those offerings by the many for-profit companies. There may be no institutional mechanism for course or program assessment and evaluation, although this aspect of instructional accountability is rapidly changing as institutions become more practiced in online instruction. Many for-profit education providers are not accredited by a recognized accrediting body, and some educators argue that accreditation of on-line institutions generally diminishes higher education (Chronicle of Higher Education, 10/29/99).

Admissions requirements may be few or nonexistent, leaving students under-prepared at the outset. Many for-profit education companies do not employ professional educators, using “subject matter experts” instead. This may have an adverse affect on course preparation, delivery of materials, and student assessment. Student services, including advising and counseling, may be few or absent, except for financial aid (Benedict, 1996). The most unscrupulous for-profits are so lacking in academic rigor as to earn the appellation “Diploma Mills” (NCES, 1999b; Noble, 1997).

The quality of the “student development” aspect of the online higher education experience has been questioned (Pascarella & Croy, 1998). The absence of the “college experience”—the socializing and maturing effects on students associated with traditional resident matriculation—is regularly lamented among distance education’s detractors. One of the chief or most often repeated concerns of traditional educators is that absent personal contact, student interaction with other students and the instructors is so limited that development of interpersonal and communications skills may be degraded. And, as traditional educators attempt to accommodate new technologies in the delivery of distance education, the quality of student learning has also been questioned (AFT, 2000; AAUP, 1999).

In opposition to these concerns, champions of distance learning have argued that interaction among students and faculty are actually enhanced by a) the (usually) asynchronous nature of distance learning interactions, which allows students to craft more reflective responses; b) the absence of the time constraints imposed by a fifty or ninety-minute traditional classroom instructional period; and c) by the relative “anonymity” of student electronic interactions, which facilitates the individual exchange

of ideas and comments that the face-to-face classroom environment may stifle (Chute et al., 1998).

As for the quality of the learning experience, cognitive and otherwise, proponents argue that there is “no significant difference” (Russell, 2001), qualitatively and quantitatively, when traditional, resident student learning is compared with distance-delivered instruction. This argument has met with strong opposition from other members of the academy who contend that the supporting research is largely anecdotal and therefore unscientific (Merisotis & Phipps, 1999). The question that remains is, given the preceding, what material effect do these concerns have on the preparation for the employment, advancement or promotion within employment, and/or future matriculation of graduates of distance education degree programs compared to graduates of traditional, resident degree programs?

The providers of distance, or non-traditional, academic degree programs represent their programs and the resulting academic degree to be the equivalent of degree programs and credentials obtained in residence at traditional higher education institutions. If potential employers perceive that the distance degree programs/degrees are not equivalent, then students who enroll in those programs will be disadvantaged when seeking employment after graduation, or in seeking to use their degree to secure advancement in employment. This has significant implications for graduates who will face a negative bias in the job market.

Again, the data supporting this supposition is largely anecdotal, but examples abound, i.e., “The value on an E-degree ‘would absolutely depend on what school it’s from,’ says Stan Adams, who has worked as a human resources manager for

manufacturing companies for 25 years. ‘I would like to know if it’s an e-MBA versus a straight MBA, but I’m prepared to accept the e-MBA if there’s enough interaction’ (Lankford, 2001, p. 84) and “A growing number of well-respected universities offer online degrees. However, a traditional program still carries more weight with most employers. ‘While the value of any education-online or in class is indisputable, don’t be surprised if a significant number of institutions fail to wow your would-be employers,’ says Mary Jane Range, president of recruiting firm BTS Search” (Kiralla, 2001).

The same rationale applies for graduates of distance degree programs who seek further higher education or certification, for example, graduate or first-professional degrees. If the educational institution to which the individual applies does not recognize the quality and/or validity of the graduate’s degree, the applicant is disadvantaged in the process of obtaining further higher education or certification.

In this respect, Sharp and Sosdian (1979) asked the defining question, “...would these graduates have been better off if they had invested their effort and tuition money in a more traditional program?” (p. 617). An element of the purpose of this study was to describe the reactions of graduates, employers, the academy and the public to that question.

### Definition of Terms

For the current timeframe the definitions of terms were taken from the U.S. Department of Education publications 1997 Directory of Postsecondary Institutions, Volume 1: Degree Granting Institutions and from the National Center for Education Statistics Distance Education at Postsecondary Education Institutions: 1997-98 (1999b).

For the period 1976-77 the definitions of terms are those used by Sosdian and Sharp in their study.

“External degree” (Sharp & Sosdian) refers to a conventional associate’s or bachelor’s degree obtained from an accredited degree-granting institution through a degree program which is primarily non-residential and non-classroom in nature. The term remains in use in the current literature, although largely supplanted by the term “distance degree” and is generally applied to any postsecondary academic degree obtained as described.

“External degree program” (Sharp & Sosdian) refers only to those academic programs that did not require more than 24% of the student’s total degree work in the form of campus-based classroom instruction and conferred sometimes substantial credit toward completion for experiential learning among other conditions. The term remains in use by some public and private two and four year post-secondary institutions to describe degree programs that may be completed either wholly or in part without on-campus classroom instruction. The comparable and more commonly encountered term “distance degree program” often connotes programs that may be completed wholly at a distance, as at a remote instructional site or via electronic media such as web-based instruction.

For the purpose of the study, “distance education” refers to academic courses and degree programs that are delivered other than at a traditional educational institution campus, in a classroom, lecture hall or laboratory by a teaching professional who is physically present. This includes delivery by correspondence, by electronic means (television, videotape, Internet) and on-site delivery at some distance from the learning

institution or business headquarters (learning center, corporate training facility, and leased space). Instruction may be real-time or asynchronous.

For the purpose of the study, “resident students” includes those who reside on campus and those who live off campus and commute to classes on campus.

A “degree” is a bachelor’s or master’s degree in an academic discipline, such as a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in History or a Master of Business Administration (MBA). An equivalent traditional bachelor’s degree normally requires at least four years of formal study. This includes cooperative programs, which provide for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry or government. A master’s degree requires the successful completion of a program of study of at least full-time equivalent of one but not more than two academic years of work beyond the bachelor’s degree. The Sharp and Sosdian study included only associate’s and bachelor’s degrees, while this study will consider only bachelor’s, masters, first professional and doctoral degrees

For the purpose of the study, an “accredited” college or university refers to a U.S. Department of Education or Council for Higher Education recognized academic accrediting body, such as the Northwestern Association of Colleges and Universities and the Distance Education and Training Council.

For the purpose of the study, a “for-profit” education organization or company is one that offers courses for academic credit programs resulting in academic degrees for a fee. A for-profit educational company may or may not be accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

“Free-standing” is the term used by Sharp and Sosdian (1978) to describe institutions founded expressly for the purpose of hosting external degree programs. Such

institutions may or may not be for-profit organizations. Current examples of for-profit “free-standing” educational organizations include the University of Phoenix and Capella University. Examples of “free-standing” academic institutions include The Open University of the United Kingdom and the American Open University of the University of Maryland.

An “affiliated” academic institution is one which is a campus-based two or four-year public or private institution which offers external (distance) degree programs in addition to traditional classroom-based programs. Examples of “affiliated” academic institutions include Montana State University and Union College (Schenectady, NY).

For the purpose of the study the “quality” of an academic degree is a self-reported, subjective evaluation by graduates influenced by factors such as individual educational and professional goals, the learning experience, the success of employment or educational application of the degree; by employers, business and industry usually from the occupational skills and knowledge of graduates, and the reputation of the educational institution or organization providing the degree program; by the academy in terms of professional acknowledgment of the comprehensiveness and academic rigor of degree programs; and by the public, usually reflected in media articles, polls and surveys of “the best” or “most popular” schools or programs, often influenced by institutional reputation.

For the purpose of the study the “utility” (“acceptability” and “negotiability” in Sharp and Sosdian) or value of an academic degree refers to the credentialing aspect of the degree in two regards: first, as an academic credential, especially for the purpose of transferability and acceptability for entry into next/higher level education (Masters, first

professional programs) and to obtain or enhance employment (including internal promotion and advancement).

For the purpose of the study “graduates” are persons who have successfully completed degree program requirements and have been awarded the degree or diploma appropriate to the level of matriculation (Bachelor of Arts or Master of Business Administration) by the academic institution or organization authorized to make such awards.

For the purpose of the study “employers” are persons, businesses or organizations that employ academic degree holders, and for whom academic attainment is a factor in hiring, advancement or promotion in the business or organization.

“The academy” is defined in The American Heritage Dictionary as “The academic environment, community or world; A place in which instruction is given to students; A scholar, especially a pedant.” For the purpose of the study “the academy” refers to academic institutions (currently “Institutions of Higher Education, or IHE), college and university faculty and academic administrators, and professional organizations specific to higher (postsecondary) education.

### Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

#### Assumptions

An assumption is any important “fact” presumed to be true but not actually verified (Gay, 1996). The study involved the review and analysis of scholarly and professional literature regarding the perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy of the quality and utility (“credentialing effect”) of academic degrees obtained

through external or distance degree programs provided by institutions of higher education (IHE) and for-profit educational organizations. The fundamental assumptions for the study were that the literature was available for review and that the three groups' perceptions of the quality and utility of external/distance degrees, or academic credentials can be determined by reviewing the literature.

### Limitations

A limitation is some aspect of the study that the researcher knows may negatively affect the results or generalizability of the results but over which he or she probably has no control (Gay, 1996). The principle limitation for this study was that the general literature on distance education which includes the perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy is anecdotal, not empirically based.

### Delimitations

A delimitation is some aspect of a study which may negatively affect the results or generalizability of the results, but over which the researcher has some measure of control (Gay, 1996). The delimitations of the study were the timeframe for the study, the researcher's choice of the indexes and databases that were used to search the literature, and the subjective nature of the researcher's judgment in assigning positive and negative values to the articles selected.

### Plan of the Study

The purpose of the study was to describe the perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy of the quality and utility of academic degrees obtained through

participation in external or distance degree programs over a 25-year period from 1979 through 2003 as provided in scholarly and professional publications, and to suggest implications for the field of distance education. Analysis of the data returned might also indicate further research to determine the effects of environmental changes on the nature and degree of change in the groups' perceptions over the 25-year period.

#### Data Collection Method

Articles were selected from the universe of literature based on criteria related to the purpose of the study. The articles selected were compiled by source (dissertation, journal), group (graduate, employer, academy) and category (quality, utility). A positive or negative value was assigned to each article selected for review. The compiled articles (the data) were then analyzed to produce a result consistent with the purpose of the study. From these results conclusions and implications for practice were proposed.

The literature reviewed is comprised of articles selected from (1) dissertation abstracts and (2) scholarly and professional journals and conference proceedings in higher education and specifically distance education.

#### Criteria for Selection of Articles

Articles selected for review (1) were published between and including 1979 through 2003, (2) relate to distance or external academic achievement and jobs or employment, (4) describe perceptions of quality or satisfaction with distance education academic programs or degrees, or (6) labor or industry relationship to educational attainment.

### Data Analysis Method

The collected data (articles) were archived and tabled. The purpose of archiving the articles was to permit the researcher to review and confirm the accuracy of the data and to permit verification (Creswell's [1994] "authenticity") of the research results. A peer audit of a sample of the collected articles was conducted for this purpose. The collected articles were tabled by year of publication, source (dissertation, journal), group (graduates, employers, academy), category (quality, utility) and perception (positive, negative). The analysis produced a chronological representation of the perceptions of the four groups over 25 years from 1979 through 2003. As a further check on authenticity and trustworthiness, a second audit was conducted by an experienced researcher following the analysis, and corrections made as necessary prior to reporting the results of the study.

### Timeframe for the Study

Preparation, submission and approval of the research proposal	23 May 05
Data collection complete	15 Jun 05
Data analysis and results complete	30 Jun 05
Draft research report complete	31 Jul 05
Research defense complete	15 Aug 05
Research report complete and accepted by College of Graduate Studies	31 Aug 05

### Chapter Summary

The problem investigated in the study was the absence of empirical research concerning the perceptions of the quality and utility of academic credentials obtained through external or distance academic degree programs as reported by graduates, employers and the academy in scholarly and professional print media during the 25-year period 1979-2003. The purpose of this descriptive study was to review and analyze the literature during the specified period to identify trends and suggest implications for the field of higher education.

The study was limited by the time available to complete the study and access to the literature. The study reflects researcher bias in the criteria used to select the literature included in the study and assignment of positive and negative values to individual articles, which negates generalizability. However, this is consistent with the descriptive nature of the study and the choice of method of analysis. Reliability and validity were assured through a peer audit of the collected data and a third party audit of the analysis of the data.

The following chapter provides a synthesis and evaluation not of the universe of the literature, which is itself the subject of the study, but the general literature of distance (external) education and the rationale for selection of the body of literature that was analyzed and reported in the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the synthesis of the literature pertinent to the study is presented, including the criteria for selecting the literature. A restatement of the problem and the purpose of the study is followed by a discussion of the context and current understanding of the problem. A review of the previous research, findings and opinions is provided and a review of methodologies concludes the synthesis of the literature.

After a brief summary, the literature is evaluated in terms of overall strengths and weaknesses. Gaps and saturation points in the literature are discussed and avenues for future inquiry are proposed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature review.

#### Problem and Purpose of the Study

The problem investigated in the study is the absence of empirical research concerning the perceptions of the quality and utility of academic credentials obtained through external or distance academic degree programs as reported by graduates, employers and the academy in scholarly and professional print media during the 25-year period 1979-2003. The purpose of this descriptive study was to describe and explain the perceptions of the quality and utility of external academic degrees by graduates, employers and the academy over a 25-year period, from 1979 to 2003, as described in

scholarly and professional print media, and through analysis of the literature to identify trends and implications for the field of distance education.

### Outline of the Chapter

Because the study itself is a review of the literature concerning the perceptions of the quality and utility of academic credentials obtained through external or distance degree programs, the chapter is comprised of an introduction and general overview of external or distance education followed by a brief synthesis of the literature exemplifying the perceptions of the four populations which are the subject of the study. A discussion of the context and current understanding of the problem is followed by a review of the previous research and methodologies.

### History of External Studies or Distance Education

External studies or more currently distance education has a long history in American education and in fact worldwide. Correspondence courses were first offered in the U.S. as early as 1728 when Boston teacher Caleb Phillips advertised weekly shorthand lessons by mail (Mood, 1995). The Lyceum Association, a 19th-century American association for popular instruction of adults by lectures, concerts, and other methods was founded in 1826. By 1835 there were over 3,000 Lyceum halls in 15 states in the U.S. By the 1870s, correspondence courses were offered by mail and by the early 1900s correspondence study was flourishing (Willis, 1993). In 1873 Anna Eliot Ticknor, “the mother of American correspondence study” of Boston, organized the Society to Encourage Studies at Home for women which arranged the exchange of comments as well as grades with students (Aggasiz, 1971).

The Chatauqua movement of the early 1800s offered a four-year program of reading and study by which participants could earn certificates. In 1874 at Illinois Wesleyan University, both undergraduate and graduate degrees could be pursued in absentia (Rumble, 1986). William Raney Harper in 1882 began a correspondence school study program for resident summer school students, continued on to lead the College of Liberal Arts in New York which emphasized distance study techniques, then in 1892 as president of the University of Chicago founded the first university-level correspondence study division in America (Verduin & Clark, 1991).

The term “Distance Education” was reputedly coined in the U.S. in the University of Wisconsin catalog in 1896 (Willis, 1993). Baccalaureate degree correspondence offerings by universities actually were first offered in the U.S. in the 1820s, although there were few additional degree opportunities until the late 1890s. By 1965 there were over 3 million persons in the United States involved in correspondence study (MacKenzie et al., 1968).

Outside the United States by 1928, the British Broadcasting Association was offering non-credit, non-degree adult education by radio. Australia has long used its Radio School of the Air to teach school children on remote cattle and sheep stations (Mood, 1995). Television entered the American distance education scene in the 1950s with the Sunrise Semester (1957). The Open University of the United Kingdom was proposed, under the name of University of the Air, in 1963 and was fully operational under a Royal Charter by 1971.

Canada's Athabasca University, an institution expressly created to research and provide distance learning opportunities through the combined use of technology and home-study techniques, was founded in the early 1970s. This initiative was followed shortly thereafter by the Open Learning Institute of British Columbia, the BC Knowledge Network, the Alberta Educational Communications Corporation, and the University of Quebec. In 1972 the University of Queensland Australia began delivering higher education by distance means (Willis, 1993).

The United States, while extremely active in correspondence study, has been slower to progress in distance education by means of technology, although American colleges and universities were using radio to deliver coursework primarily in agriculture, engineering, science, art and current events (Witherspoon, 1996). In 1959 Midwest Program for Airborne Television Instruction operated two aircraft from Purdue University to deliver televised instruction to portions of six Midwestern states (Witherspoon, 1996). Closed circuit television was in use by colleges and universities and some corporate training institutions for education and vocational training by the mid 1950s.

The first for-profit education companies like National Technological University, Nova University and the University of Phoenix began using video and television to present instruction at a distance in the early 1970s. In 1981 the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) began broadcasting non-credit educational programs nation-wide (Miller & Schlossberg, 1997). Enrollment in PBS telecourses has grown from 55,000 in 1981 to about 400,000 in 1996 (Lewis et al., 1997). In 2004 the University of Phoenix billed itself as "the nation's largest accredited university; with over 17,000 highly qualified

instructors, 170 campuses, and Internet delivery worldwide,” reported enrollments in excess of 100,000 “working adult students” and claimed “since 1976, more than 171,600 working professionals have earned their degree from University of Phoenix” (University of Phoenix Online, 2004).

Indicative of the shift from a focus on correspondence study to technologically enhanced distance education is the change in name of the National Home Study Council, which was established in 1926 as an association of correspondence schools, to the Distance Education and Training Council in 1994. This was done mainly to reflect how its members were delivering instruction and communicating with their students (Spille et al., 1997). The 1989 publication of Linking for Learning: A New Course for Education by the U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, marked the official realization that distance education initiatives were becoming widespread throughout the United States (Willis, 1993).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 1999b) published its first report on distance education in the United States in the 1999 Distance Education at Postsecondary Institutions: 1997-1998. This was concurrent with Distance Learning in Higher Education (1999a), produced by the Institute for Higher Learning (for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation) and Competence Without Credentials, a report produced by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1999, March). All of these served to describe the current status of enrollments, course offerings, degrees, student demographics, student competencies, instruction, accreditation and other issues concerning distance education (including those of quality, acceptability and negotiability as defined in this study).

The most dramatic increase in the number of higher education distance education organizations and program offerings in the U.S. has occurred over the past two decades. In 1964 there were just 128 accredited learning organizations and academic institutions that offered distance education programs resulting in associate and baccalaureate degrees. The 1977 National Institute for Education/American Council on Education study reported 134 accredited or approved organizations sponsoring among them 244 external degree programs (p. vii). In 1985 there were 460 such institutions and organizations, and in 1995 over half of U.S. colleges and universities offered off-site courses, principally at the undergraduate and graduate level. About a third of those institutions offering distance education programs offered an associate's, bachelor's or master's degree by distance means (NCES, 1997). A few traditional and for-profit institutions also offered doctoral degrees. The 2003 NCES report Distance Education at Degree-Granting Post-Secondary Institutions stated that in 2000-2001 an estimated 2,810 college-level degree programs were offered by two- and four-year public institutions that were designed to be completed entirely through distance education (p. 10). The 2004 Sloan Consortium survey of over 1,100 two- and four-year degree-granting institutions reported that 81% offered off-campus or distance degree programs, most of which led to the award of a degree or diploma.

In 1993, Peterson's College Guide listed 93 cyberschools (not all degree or certificate granting). The 1998 Peterson's Distance Learning Guide lists 792, including 393 bachelor degree programs in 93 fields, 450 master's degree programs in 87 fields, and 45 doctoral degree programs in 26 fields (Peterson's, 1998). The 1997 edition of The Adult Learner's Guide to Alternative and External Degree Programs (Spille et al.,

1997) lists 140 accredited academic degree programs. The 1997 NCES publication Distance Education in Higher Education Institutions lists for Fall 1995 690 degrees that could be received by taking distance education courses exclusively.

States are forming distance education consortia both interstate, i.e., the Western Governors University (18 member states), and intrastate, i.e., the California Virtual University (87 member institutions) dedicated to providing higher education distance education opportunities to persons who are not able to attend a traditional education institution. The Southern Regional Education Board recently voted to expand its distance learning consortium, known as the Southern Regional Electronic Campus, from 40 member schools to 150.

For-profit higher education companies are among the fastest growing and most profitable education and training ventures in the field (Spille et al., 1997). The University of Phoenix, for example, opened in 1976 with eight students. It graduated its first six Master of Business Administration students in 1992. In 1992 its revenues were \$82 million and its enrollment was 21,163 students. In 1996 revenues reached \$215 million and it served nearly 47,000 students (Chronicle of Higher Education, 7/30/00). Nova Southeastern University, which opened its doors in 1964, has offered a computer-assisted Doctor of Education degree since 1972 and in 1997 served over 21,000 students nation-wide. National Technical University, founded in 1984, offers 16 master's degrees in various engineering fields. Mind Extension University, which opened in 1987 and was affiliated at that time with one university, now is affiliated with 18 colleges and universities and offers bachelor's and master's degrees in management. The 2004 Sloan-C report Entering the Mainstream: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the

United States, 2003-2004 reported that the overall growth rate of enrollments in online courses alone was predicted to approach 25% or approximately 2.6 million students in 2004, while for-profit institutions expected enrollment growth rates greater than 40% (p. 18).

With regard to employment, a postsecondary academic degree has long been acknowledged to have significant economic benefits, both private and public (Pascarella & Terrenzini, 1991). There is substantial research to document that academic achievement is positively correlated with earnings (Blaug, 1972; Psacharopoulos, 1973, 1985) and with employment in higher status jobs (Bowles, 1972; Campbell & Laughlin, 1987). Among postsecondary degrees the baccalaureate is the benchmark, conferring a significant advantage in earnings over the course of time, with factors such as gender, race, socioeconomic background, and age held constant, compared with a high school diploma (Jencks et al., 1979). A baccalaureate degree is required for entrance into professional degree programs such as law and medicine which are usually more remunerative. A baccalaureate degree is also generally a prerequisite for entrance into graduate degree programs in most academic disciplines.

The difference in economic benefit between completion of a two-year associate's degree and a baccalaureate degree is not as great as between a high school diploma and a baccalaureate, but higher educational attainment continues to indicate higher earnings and job status. Much of this difference may be attributed to the two-year college focus on technical skills training and education and subsequent employment, and student preparation for entry into a four-year institution.

Academic degree attainment beyond the baccalaureate seems to confer a lesser, but still demonstrable, positive economic benefit (Koerner, 1998). Studies indicate that graduate degrees are often required for employment in higher paying managerial and technical positions (Goodman, 1979; Hecker, 1996). A master's degree is nearly always the minimum level of educational attainment required for entry-level teaching positions in higher education, and then usually only at two-year colleges. An earned doctorate is the nearly universal requirement for employment in four-year institutions (NCES, 2001).

Sharp and Sosdian, in their article External Degrees: How Well do They Serve Their holders? (Journal of Higher Education, 1979) remarked on the then-innovative and “controversial...so-called external degree programs.” The controversy centered on issues such as the targeting of populations of older and/or presumably less intrinsically motivated or capable learners, removal of “control over content and quality of programs from full-time faculties and traditional academic administrators,” “consumer protection and accountability,” and “student rip-offs and ‘diploma mills’” (p. 615). The researchers asked:

Did the students who enrolled in these programs actually obtain a valid credential, acceptable in places where educational credentials are important, namely, in institutions of higher education and in many employment settings? Or are externally earned credentials inferior, second-rate degrees providing limited access either to reputable programs at the bachelor's, master's, doctoral, or professional level or to jobs for which a college degree constitutes a prerequisite or confers an advantage? (p. 617).

In recent literature these questions are repeatedly encountered in the most cursory review of articles in the educational and popular media reveals titles and subject matter, such as:

“Is a Degree Earned via Technology Equal to One Earned on Campus”

(The Distance Learner’s Guide, Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, 1999).

“...there is only a crisis (in education) for the losers, and the ‘new’ solution for the losers is to provide them an education for losers, and that is a distance learning education...” (Planke & Edgerton, 1998).

“Credentials are also an indicator of status, and are differently valued in the market place...Credentials are not granted by providers of computer-based education in either schools or industry...many of the institutions with computer-based distance education programs are perceived to have lower educational quality and less prestige” (Bechky, 1999).

“Off the record, many business schools disparage (Canadian university provider of distance education degrees) MBA saying that the admission standards aren’t as high or the material as rigorous as in a traditional program” (Carpenter, 1998), and

“The American Federation of Teachers passed a resolution last week that opposes undergraduate degrees that are earned entirely online...Passed without objection the resolution states that an undergraduate degree entirely from a distance is not of the same quality as a degree that was earned in a classroom...it’s not a real undergraduate degree if it doesn’t include people getting together...” (Chronicle of Higher Education, 7/30/00).

Online higher education and nontraditional graduate study programs are even lampooned in such nationally syndicated cartoons as “Doonesbury” (5/10/98)

and “Dilbert” (25/10/2001, 26/10/2001,27/10/2001), and “Beetle Bailey” (10/22/05) as “unsatisfying” and lacking academic rigor (Appendix D).

Investigating these issues in their time, Sharp and Sosdian (1978) found the research “longer on rhetoric than on data” (p. 2). Previous studies were few, and focused mostly on program types and characteristics. They found there were “no standard or uniform guidelines defining the boundaries between traditional, nontraditional, part-time, extended adult, and external programs” (p. 5). They found no data on the size and composition of the student and graduate populations of external degree programs, and no current program inventories. There was little available research on the students and graduates themselves. “Why did they select these programs and how did they judge their usefulness? How good a credential was the external degree, and did it provide the kind of payoffs the students had looked for when they enrolled?” (p. 7). There was little research on graduate schools’ acceptance of external degrees, i.e. “one doctoral dissertation dealing with the receptivity of graduate schools to applications from students from nontraditional programs” (p.3), and little more on employers’ attitudes and behaviors with respect to assessment of formal educational credentials and the extent to which the nature of the credentials affects recruitment or promotion policies. Sosdian and Sharp designed the BSSR study to answer questions such as these.

### Synthesis of the Literature

The literature pertinent to the problem encompasses higher education generally and the field of distance education specifically and public and private sector business, labor and industry generally and the field of human resources (employment) specifically.

Such an extremely broad and diverse frame of reference necessitates the application of narrowly defined selection criteria for the articles considered for inclusion in the study.

#### Criteria for Selection of the Literature

The criteria for selection of articles in the literature are: the article title or abstract must indicate specificity to (1) distance or external education program or degree, (2) distance or external academic degree or program quality or satisfaction, (3) educational attainment and jobs or employment, or (4) labor or industry relationship to educational attainment. The rationale for the selection is that the criteria encompass the range of themes investigated in the 1976-1977 BSSR study with regard to the quality, acceptability and negotiability of external or distance acquired academic credentials among graduates, employers, and the academy.

The sources for the articles selected include (1) graduate dissertations related to the subject of this study and (2) scholarly and professional publications (principally journals, papers, proceedings) in higher education (specifically distance education). A preliminary review of the literature and consultation with university faculty with experience in the corresponding academic disciplines suggested this selection of relevant source material.

#### Context of the Problem

The baseline for this study was a two-year (1976-1977), two-phase study performed by the Bureau for Social Science Research (BSSR) sponsored by the American Council on Education (ACE), and commissioned by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare National Institute of Education (NIE), reported by Sharp and

Sosdian in their paper “External Degrees; How Well do they Serve Their Holders?” (Journal of Higher Education, 1979). In phase one the researchers sought to describe “external degree programs” (now more commonly termed “distance degree programs”) in the United States. The result was a 1977 report, ostensibly the first of its kind, entitled External Degree Programs in the United States, which provided an inventory and description of the characteristics of all the external degree programs that could be identified under the criteria of the study. External degree programs were defined as formalized and structured non-classroom, non-residential academic programs leading to an Associate’s or Bachelors degree (p. 10).

The second phase of the BSSR study resulted in the 1978 report External Degrees: Program and Student Characteristics. In the report the researchers examined the enrollment and offerings of external degree programs in both traditional institutions and institutions which sponsor only external degree programs and the characteristics of the persons enrolled in such programs including age, sex, occupation, prior education, educational and employment goals, satisfaction with the program, and other demographic information. Finally, in the third report entitled The External Degree as a Credential: Graduates’ Experiences in Employment and Further Study (1978), the researchers examined the experiences of a sample of over 3,000 graduates from external degree programs with respect to jobs or careers and as they continued their education. The report included the results of a small-scale survey of employers reporting on the relationship between hiring or promotion policies and external degrees.

It was the synthesis of the results of the three NIE reports that Sharp and Sosdian used to produce their paper and which established the temporal baseline and foundation for this study, specifically their findings on “acceptability” and “negotiability.” In the original study the researchers acknowledged “the growing concerns regarding the marketability of external degrees in the world of ‘traditional’ education,” (p. 69), and focused on the degree as “an acceptable credential for gaining access to higher education” (p. 70). Generally they found that in 1976-1977 the external degree was an acceptable credential for this purpose, although affected somewhat by institutional selectivity.

Negotiability, “or what might be thought of as its career or occupation-oriented ‘market power,’” (p. 37) was a central theme of the research. The graduates’ self-reported success in acquiring jobs or securing advancement or promotion was tenuously positive depending on position, while employers were less positive. In fact, employers were largely unresponsive to the survey, and results may have been influenced by generally only those with positive views responding to the survey. One significant finding was that employers who knew that their employee was engaged in external studies were strongly (85%) approving and supportive.

The study describes, over a period of 25 years since the original BSSR study, given that (1) the numbers of enrollments have increased and participant demographics may have shifted (2) the number and variety of external/distance degree course offerings and degree programs have proliferated, and (3) as technological advancements in the delivery of external studies have been introduced and assimilated, the degree and nature of change in the perceptions of the quality and utility of external degrees by graduates, employers and the academy as reported in scholarly and professional literature, and to

suggest implications for the field of distance education.

Articles were selected based on one or more themes or terms appearing in the publication title or abstract and assigned to one of three categories corresponding to the three groups: graduates, employers and the academy. A value of positive or negative was assigned to each article to facilitate analysis of the resulting aggregate of articles.

Analysis of the data revealed trends and relationships relevant to the research question of the nature and degree of change in the perceptions of the three groups regarding the quality and utility of external or distance academic degrees over the period of the review.

#### Current Understanding of the Problem

The proliferation of distance education programs among educational institutions and for-profit education and training organizations has generated substantial concern about program quality and equity, and instructional effectiveness compared with traditional, resident higher education. For example, are distance programs the equal of traditional resident programs in scope and content? Are distance courses of equal academic rigor? Do distance students learn and retain as much as resident students? And are external degree graduates as well prepared on graduation to employ their new degree (their knowledge and skills) in the workplace as resident graduates of higher education institutions? (Sharp & Sosdian, 1979; Verduin & Clark, 1991; CHEA, 1999; NCES, 2001). These questions remain prominent in the current literature of distance education, and the answers are with few exceptions subjective rather than research-based and objective. Examples abound, as described in the following paragraphs.

The American Federation of Teachers, higher education's largest faculty union, in 1996 called on its members to oppose courses taught on the Internet, through videoconferencing, or with other technologies unless they met faculty member's standards of quality (Chronicle of Higher Education, 7/21/00). The union also urged its members to seek restrictions on the number of credits for distance education that students can receive, and to oppose programs that are taught entirely with technology. In contravention of the AFT's stated position, the 2000 National Education Association in A Survey of Traditional and Distance Learning Higher Education Members reported that its members largely believed that distance education was the same or better than traditional education in meeting many issues of course quality and student learning.

Articles published by educators and administrators in The Chronicle of Higher Education regularly question the academic rigor and quality of distance learning. Writers frequently suggest that in the rush to capitalize on the burgeoning interest in distance education, and the similar rush to adopt new technology and attract new students, that the quality and credibility of higher education is diminished. For example, in "Virtual Universities Could Produce Only Virtual Learning" (Chronicle of Higher Education, 9/6/96), Kenneth Ashworth attacks some educational providers for "selling easy credentials under the guise of their being non-traditional, modernized, technologically enhanced, customer oriented, and the same, or virtually the same, as the traditional credentials." The same article voices concerns over the effects of rewarding providers who find ways to offer credentials more cheaply and effectively, and wonders what kinds of educational deficiencies are likely to begin turning up in the next ten years.

Another Chronicle of Higher Education article questions the reluctance of policy makers and others to consider the drawbacks of information technologies as well as the benefits and the lack of carefully thought-out pedagogies that respects the developmental needs of students (Chronicle of Higher Education, 1/16/98). Numerous articles raise questions of accreditation, the quality of the learning experience, and the focus of distance education on competency, rather than knowledge-based instruction. An example is Russell N. Cassell's article published in the summer edition of Education titled "Faulty accreditation of distance learning programs threatens to destroy our present education system" (2002) in which the author cautions that "Accrediting agencies must take immediate steps to correct these problems or our traditional education program will be replaced with worthless credentials."

Responses to a Chronicle of Higher Education "Colloquy" question concerning education and technology range from "There is no pedagogical deficit, only gossip" (2/16/98) to "Anyone...can be taught to push a colored button, but better to teach someone the ethical foundations of button pushing..." (2/2/98). From "The time is overdue to reexamine the learning experience, its classroom connection, personal accountability, social responsibility, creativity, and curiosity" (2/19/98) to "While Dr. Dryfus and others contend that the student-teacher relationship is at education's core, I would contend that it is the student-meaning relationship that is at education's core..." And finally, "The overarching conceit of cyberphiles is the absurd notion that distance learning can adequately replace classroom learning" (2/21/98).

### Practical Considerations of the Problem

The practical aspect to the question of the quality of a distance education degree is how employers—academic institutions, business and industry, and public service organizations—regard academic degrees obtained through distance education, compared to traditional academic credentials. For example, where a requirement for higher education credentials or certification exists, is there an advantage in having obtained a degree or certificate from a traditional, resident educational institution, for example Montana State University, over a similar degree or certificate obtained through distance education from the University of Phoenix? Will a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree in Adult Education from the Western Governors University (which grants credit toward the degree for “life experience”) receive equal consideration in the hiring process for a college-level administrative position as the same degree obtained from the University of Washington?

Similarly, where a minimum requirement for a Bachelor’s degree is stated in a job announcement for a management position in a local government office (all things being equal) who will likely be hired—the applicant with a traditionally-acquired BA from the University of Montana or the applicant with a BA from Walden University, which offers online degree programs? And, where a corporation or business is seeking among its applicants qualifications “a minimum of an associate’s degree,” who will it regard most favorably—the applicant who holds a resident degree from the State College of Technology, or the applicant with a similar degree from the ICS Center for Degree Studies, a for-profit, primarily online education company? These are among the same genre of questions that the BSSR sought to answer in 1976-77.

### Previous Research and Findings

Review of the literature reveals numerous articles in educational journals and other publications championing—and questioning—the diversity and quality of distance education in the U.S., but little scientific research. The 1999 NCES report on distance education in postsecondary institutions indicates that among researchers there is greater interest in the effectiveness of distance education than the practical considerations of employment and preparation for further academic endeavors, i.e., “Like research on other educational interventions, the distance education literature is largely anecdotal (Hanson et al., 1997), contains a considerable amount of cross-referencing (where many of the papers and summaries cite similar research or reference each other), consists of only a rather small body of high-quality original research (Phipps and Merisotis, 1999), and—given the rapid evolution of distance education—is dated” (p. 6).

The literature of distance education is populated with writers who extol the virtues of distance education as the ultimate educational opportunity for all those who could not otherwise engage in higher education. These writers assert that, when distance programs are well designed and executed, they are of a quality that rivals traditional programs. An example of such is Thomas Russell’s book (2001) and website, at <http://www.nosignificantdifference.org/> on The No Significant Difference Phenomenon (1999) in which he lists and discusses in the book some 355 research articles that indicate that there is no significant difference in the quality of learning between distance-delivered education and traditional, classroom-based education. At the other extreme are those who question whether distance education programs are effective in actually increasing or improving the knowledge or competencies of students, are inferior to the traditional

resident collegiate experience, and are really not much more than “diploma mills” brokering inferior academic degrees to anyone with enough money to pay the (often exorbitant) fee. This position is exemplified in the American Federation of Teachers 1999 position paper insisting that no degree obtained entirely online is the equal in quality of a degree obtained via traditional, classroom-based instruction, and Phipps’ and Merisotis 1999 article published by the American Association of University Professors, which argues that the articles compiled by Russell are largely anecdotal and unsupported by empirical research.

The occasional scandal involving the selling of fake academic credentials, or credentials obtained from non-accredited institutions, further degrades the credibility of degrees obtained through distance education. For the above reasons employers who require academic credentials as a condition for employment may have reason to question the validity of job applicants’ academic credentials, if the employer recognizes the degree(s) as having been obtained through non-traditional study. A question to be answered is whether an academic degree obtained through distance education is as valuable as a degree obtained from a traditional resident educational program from the perspective of the potential employer or, for that matter, the Dean of Graduate Studies of a traditional institution of higher education.

The problem has implications for several important aspects of higher education. There are questions of equivalency of program quality in terms of curriculum content, delivery, and student learning and competencies. There are questions of maintenance of academic rigor within and among institutions. If there is, in fact, a bias in favor of traditional matriculation, then there are ethical questions concerning the representation of

the “value” of program offerings by distance education institutions and organizations. Should the college, university, or for-profit education organization represent to its prospective graduates that the degrees obtained through its program offerings are equal to or better than its contemporaries in the view of potential employers? Finally, there are questions of the learning value to the individual student. This aspect is neatly characterized by the September 20, 1996 article in the Chronicle of Higher Education by Dr. Edmund Jones entitled “Will Virtual Universities Produce Only Virtual Learning?” In his article, Dr. Jones questions whether the total learning experience for distance education students is as deep and transformative as that of traditional students, and is in sum as valuable both to the student and the eventual employer as learning through traditional means.

The “quality” of the educational experience and effectiveness in distance education courses compared to traditional, resident coursework has been the subject of a number of studies over the past two decades. Most of the studies compare measures of student learning. As early as 1967, Chu and Schramm found in comparisons of over 400 studies of conventional and televised teaching conducted prior to 1966 that there was no significant difference in learning outcomes (Cyrs, 1997). Willis (1993) cites synthesis of research by Sponder (1990) and Moore & Thompson (1990) which explored such variables as student demographics, motivation, attrition, cognitive style, gender and achievement. These studies tended to portray distance education to be as effective as traditional higher education.

Holmberg favorably compared student learning by distance and by traditional methods in his 1995 Theory and Practice of Distance Education. Daniel Granger, in

“Reflections on Curriculum as Process” (Evans & Nation, 1993), described the transformational learning experience of distance students in the UK Open University and the Empire State College of the State University of New York in comparison with traditional learning paradigms.

Cyrs (1997) proposed that students learn as well and as much from television courses at distant locations as in a traditional classroom. He cited research by McLeary and Egan (1989), Moore and Thompson (1990), and Ritchie and Newby (1989) as demonstrating in general that students learning at a distance learn as well and as effectively as students in traditional face-to-face classrooms. Cyrs also cited the research of Clark and Verduin (1989) and Cookson (1989) of the effects of distance learning on adults in lifelong learning situations as indicators of the efficacy of distance education.

Even more recent studies continue to support these earlier findings. A 1996 study by the University of Michigan revealed that computer-based instruction produced higher than average scores in 81% of the cases examined (Vasarhelyi & Graham, 1997). In 1997 Professor Jerald Schutte of California State University at Northridge studied the performance of students in identical statistics taught on-line and in class, finding that the on-line class scored 20% higher on tests than the traditionally taught class (McCollum, 1997). Several recent studies have focused on distance students’ satisfaction with their distance education experience. Some of these studies asked students to compare their traditional and distance learning experience.

In “College Students’ Assessment of Teaching by Television” (1996), Samuel Hinton and Sam Oleka presented findings that favorably compare distance and traditional learning satisfaction. Hackman and Walker (1990) reported much the same student

reactions in “Perceptions of Proximate and Distant Learners Enrolled in University-Level Communication Courses: A Significant Nonsignificant Finding.” Thomas MacFarland of Nova Southeastern University reported in the 1996 “Students in the Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education Respond to a Satisfaction Survey: A Comparison Between On-Campus Students and Off-Campus Students” that the perception of the quality of Nova’s graduate level distance degree programs was high. Finally, the University of Montana at Missoula, Montana, reported success as perceived by students and faculty in a 1997 report, “A Degree of Distinction: A Collaborative Model for Degree Delivery via Distance Education” (Foster et al., 1997).

Other educators propose that just “learning” isn’t necessarily the most important aspect of higher education. Dr. Nancy S. Dye of Oberlin College wrote in “Vital Speeches of the Day” (October, 1997):

Students enter college for many reasons. Above all, students say they attend college to learn the arts that will serve them well in making a living. Liberal arts colleges believe that the best preparation for making a living comes through the learning the arts of writing clearly and persuasively, reading carefully, evaluating evidence effectively, reasoning quantitatively and analytically, doing research and thinking critically. Another essential goal of education is to nurture individual student’s intellectual and artistic creativity. Learning these arts seems to be inextricably tied to the messy, often ambiguous, always inexact and usually contentious relationships in the actual rather than the virtual university. (p. 762)

Harvard University ascribes to much the same sentiment as represented in an article entitled “I got my degree through E-mail,” by Lisa Gubernick and Ashlee Ebeling (Forbes, 1997). James Aisner, a spokesman for the Harvard Business School, said of the University of Phoenix MBA degree offering in collaboration with Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business, “It goes against what Harvard stands for in terms of the

learning process. Being together, talking to people in the dorms, or residence halls, is an essential part of the learning process here.”

In a May 1997 article in the journal Telephony Shira Levin argued that on-line education suits the clientele of The University of Phoenix very well, producing degreed mid-level managers and other professionals seeking professional advancement. Student satisfaction with academic courses and programs is high. Furthermore, students reported strong support from their employers for the on-line program. “However,” said Levin, “one education industry analyst wonders how much credibility an on-line degree really has in the marketplace.” “I would imagine there would be a bias against on-line degrees of any kind,” said Rick Hesel, principal at Art and Science Group. “Face-to-face contact with the faculty is considered to be a mark of quality, and because this program doesn’t have that, I think both employers and prospective students would be wary” (May 1997). Hessel said that the entry of big name universities into the distance education field could change employers and students perceptions.

The literature regarding employer perceptions of distance education credentials is scarce, largely anecdotal and frequently self-reported. The baseline 1978 BSSR study, The External Degree as a Credential: Graduates’ Experiences in Employment and Further Study, reported that in a survey of a small sample of employers “Education, whether defined in general terms or in the form of college study or degrees, emerged as an important element, but not a key criterion for recruitment or promotion” (p. 93). What analysis showed was that when employers were given the opportunity to state a preference for traditional academic credentials versus against external academic credentials, there was no congruence with employment policies or practices (p. 97). The researchers

proposed that a contributing factor to this result was that most of the employers surveyed were not familiar with external degree programs. Although where employers were aware of their employees' participation in external education, they were uniformly supportive.

A 1996 survey by the University of Phoenix showed that employers were supportive of employee educational efforts, and in many cases were paying all or much of the costs (Levin, 1997), as did the 1994 and 2001 DETC reports of graduates' and employers' satisfaction with distance degree credentials. Currently, a large number of industrial corporations operate their own corporate learning centers, either in collaboration with a for-profit education institution or with a traditional higher education institution. A study published in the Australian Accountant (July, 1997) indicates that graduates of the Master Professional Accounting Course offered by the University of Southern Queensland is a strong feeder to accountancy firms nationwide. Another article on the accounting field is published in Accountancy, a UK publication that shows that persons who complete an open-distance education MBA, more than two-thirds are promoted within a six-month period (May 1996).

The Distance Education and Training Council's 1994 study of ten institutions, Accredited Distance Study Degrees: Graduates and Employers Evaluate Their Worth, reported that 674 surveys returned a high degree of satisfaction among both students and employers with distance education credentials. Most (92%) employers surveyed who knew that their employees had obtained their degree via distance education, and 70% rated the employees distance degree "Just as Valuable" compared to resident school degrees in the same field. The 2001 DETC study of 21 accredited institutions (1,353 surveys returned) entitled DETC Degree Programs: Graduates and Employers Evaluate

Their Worth reported nearly identical results with 91% of supervisors who knew their employee had earned a degree by distance education, 69% rating the value of the degree earned by their employee compared to a resident school degree in the same field as “just as valuable” or “more valuable” (p. 9).

However, a 2004 survey of human resource professionals conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) indicated that the name of the educational institution backing the external degree was critical to learner acceptance and future success, and that fully half of those polled would select candidates graduating from a traditional school over a candidate from a non-traditional school. This finding is supported by a year-long survey of human resources professionals and chief executive officers conducted by the Online University Consortium (OUC, 2004), which reported “The number of companies preferring traditional universities is up 15% with 65% of respondents selecting traditional schools compared to 50% in 2003...Companies recognize a marked difference in competency and performance levels of individuals from for-profit verses traditional universities and now search for candidates with quality credentials from schools they value and trust.”

In contrast to some graduates’ experience in business and industry, more than one participant in a distance learning elementary education master’s degree program presented by a for-profit education company reported that departments of education and school boards favor degrees from traditional programs over distance programs when hiring for teaching and administrative positions. One correspondent to The Chronicle of Higher Education stated that he has been denied faculty positions at postsecondary education institutions because two of his five degrees were from “well-respected, unaccredited,

defunct institutions.”

One of the contributing factors to the still-suspect quality of distance education degrees is the continued existence of non-accredited degree programs and outright fraudulent distance education operations. A 1988 book, Diploma Mills: Degrees of Fraud (Stewart & Spille, 1988), was one of the first explorations of the diploma mill phenomenon. More recent information on the subject is available in the several guides to distance and web-based education (Peterson’s and Kaplan’s, for example). Sharp and Sosdian made mention of this negative stigma in 1978.

#### Review of Previous Research, Findings and Opinions

There is a plethora of scientific research on external/distance teaching and learning preferences, participant characteristics, program development and teaching strategies, best practices in developing and delivering—even marketing—courses and programs, and instructional technologies. There is also an entire universe of journal, magazine and newspaper articles, columns, opinion pieces, colloquies, and broadsides in favor of or against practically every aspect of external/distance study and any resultant credential. The examples of the literature provided in the preceding paragraphs of this chapter are a small, but representative sample of the approximately 600 such offerings reviewed in preparation of this study. All of the studies and articles relate in some respect to the perceived quality or utility of external/distance degree courses, programs or academic credentials. Of those publications of all types, fewer than a dozen that are specific to the purpose of this study involve scientific research providing results based on empirical data, and those are based on self-reported (survey) results (NIE 1978, 1979; NCES 1997,

1999c; DETC, 1994, 2001; ACE, 1999; Sloan-C, 2003, 2004).

Berg and Mrozowski (AJDE, 2001) conducted a review of previous distance education research ranging from a comprehensive review of distance learning literature (Moore & Thompson, 1997) to specific topics, such as faculty issues (Dillon & Walsh, 1992), distance learning studies in the U.S. military (Barry & Runyon, 1995), learner issues with hypermedia (Dillan & Gabbard, 1998), general trends in distance learning (Guri-Rozenblit, 1991), an examination of research trends in The American Journal of Distance Education, (Koble & Bunker, 1997), effectiveness of delivery methods (Zurkin & Sumler, 1995), and primary research issues in distance education (Schlosser & Anderson, 1994; Sherry, 1996). These examples of reviews of the literature of distance education demonstrate the paucity of research specific to the purpose of this study.

#### Review of Research Methodologies

The research methodologies found in the literature run the gamut of the six general types of research: historical, qualitative, descriptive, correlational, causal-comparative and experimental (Gay, 1992), with descriptive studies predominant. The 1976-77 BSSR baseline study is an example of descriptive research, as was this study. A number of articles, papers and monographs provided in the preceding paragraphs are examples of historical studies in external or distance education. Others reflect ethnographic (as in investigation of the motivations and learning styles of students) or case study approaches, especially with regard to student outcomes in individual courses or programs. This method is most often encountered in those studies seeking to show that external/distance instruction is “just as good, if not better than traditional, classroom-based instruction”

(Russell, 1999, p. 3).

Some of the examples above proposed to demonstrate causal relationships between student outcomes and the implementation of different instructional strategies or technologies. This method was often employed in studies involving comparisons of the effectiveness of distance education to traditional education, as in Russell's 1999 publication, The No Significant Difference Phenomenon, which compiled and analyzed 355 studies on distance education from 1928 to 1998. Students were compared on test scores, grades, or performance measures unique to the study, and also on student satisfaction. Consistently, based on statistical tests, no significant difference between the comparison groups was found. Although Russell's focus was on the effect of technology on individual student learning in higher education, the methodology remains generally representative of many studies in the field.

The methodology that most closely resembles the type chosen for this study is Berg and Mrozowski's 2001 Research in Distance Education, 1990 to 1999. Berg and Mrozowski chose to use Sherry's (1991) categorization of four main underlying issues and ten research issues as the basis for their review. They used two criteria to select the articles for review: (1) published between 1990 and 1999 in one of four peer-reviewed distance learning journals and Dissertation Abstract International and (2) includes a description of the research methodology. They used the key words "distance education" and "distance learning" when searching the dissertation abstracts. The researchers found 890 research articles and abstracts in 1,419 articles and dissertations over a ten-year period, of which approximately three-quarters were descriptive studies. Berg and Mrozowski's analysis was a simple tabulation of the results with an accompanying

description of the trends in research revealed by the tabulated data. It is interesting that they refer to Holmberg's (1987) eight categories of distance education research, noting that the principal focus of the research remains on the learner, the learning environment and instructional delivery, with little attention paid to the history of distance education over time, which is the nature of this research.

### Evaluation of the Literature

#### Summary of the Review

The universe of anecdotal literature pertinent to the problem is substantial. The universe of the literature of empirical research is small, and little pertains to the subject of this study which seeks to describe the perceptions of graduates, employers, the academy and the public of the quality and utility of external degrees. Articles in scholarly, professional and popular publications and print and broadcast media appear generally to reflect the extremes of opinion, either extolling or excoriating the various aspects of distance education. Preliminary review of a small sample of the literature seems to indicate that graduates, providers and business and industry hold favorable opinions of external academic credentials while the academy is polarized on the subject. Traditional academe expresses reservations about the quality of any educational experience where there is no face-to-face contact between faculty and student, and especially online-only education. Distance program faculty and academic administrators, although perhaps for different reasons, are far more supportive of distance education, including online-only study. Whether academic credentials obtained through external study are perceived by the academy as of equal quality with traditionally obtained credentials has not been the

subject of study. The public, as evidenced by coverage in the popular media appears undecided, although generally expressing a preference for traditional, campus-based education.

It appears that many of the scientific studies extant are narrowly focused on instructional technology, course and program best practices, and student learning outcomes, especially comparisons between technologically mediated and face-to-face versions of the same courses. The research found which relates to the purpose of this study was almost exclusively descriptive and anecdotal in nature. Other reviews of the literature of distance education also appear to focus on such aspects of distance education as individual student learning outcomes, best practices in instruction, and course and program design and management and were also predominantly descriptive rather than scientific in approach. This study, while not specifically historical research, will add to the genre by describing the perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy over a period of 25 years.

#### Overall Weaknesses and Strengths

Phipps and Merisotis' 1999 response to Russell's No Significant Difference papers is unexcelled in defining the strengths and weaknesses, gaps and saturation points and avenues for further study in the research on the effectiveness of distance learning. While it does not speak to external degrees, the subject of this study, it does provide the model for this element of the chapter.

The principal weakness throughout the universe of the literature is the general absence of scientific inquiry into the relationship of external studies or distance education

and access to advanced education or employment opportunities. Some studies (NIE, 1978; NCES, 1999c; DETC, 1994, 2001; Sloan-C, 2003, 2004) do provide survey data to this effect with regard to self-reported student and employer satisfaction with external/distance studies, programs and degrees and to self-reported success with regard to access to advanced educational opportunities, employment and advancement or promotion within current employment. There was no empirical data found that described a cause-effect relationship between source of academic credentials and access to higher education or jobs or promotion.

A further weakness is that the literature appears generally to reflect on individual learner outcomes, instructional technology, and best practices without regard to student success beyond program completion (graduation). With few exceptions, effects are reported only for success or satisfaction in the course or program, with no original or follow-up study on success factors after graduation. The baseline BSSR study is such an exception and is specific to external studies. The DETC (1994, 2001) and Sloan-C (2003, 2004) reports are exceptions specific to distance education. Probably the best single treatment of outcomes related to external/distance study is found in Competence Without Credentials, the report by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (March, 1999).

Other exceptions, although making no distinction as to source of degree, is Life After College: A Descriptive Summary of 1992-93 Bachelors Degree Recipients in 1997 (NCES, 1999c). The report is a follow-up to the NCES longitudinal study Baccalaureate and Beyond (1994). NCES continued its longitudinal study of college graduates with the 2002 study Baccalaureate and Beyond 2000/2001 of similar design and purpose—still

without regard to source of degree. This failure to consider the source of academic credentials constitutes a third weakness in the literature.

A strength of the literature is that in many reports it describes over time the characteristics of distance learners and providers. This illuminates the transformation of the population of learners and providers and serves to provide an environmental background for perceived changes in participation in and success after completion of an external degree. A related feature of much of the literature is a description of the proliferation of external programs and the technological evolution of distance education.

#### Gaps and Saturation Points

The significant gap in the research is that there are few studies that suggest any relationship between successful completion of the external or distance academic program or degree and access to higher study or employment (the exceptions are the same). Questions that arise from gaps in the literature include what is the quality of access to higher education. How does the academy view the quality of distance-acquired academic credentials when selecting for entry into masters, first professional and doctoral programs? How are employers' (business and industry) decisions to hire, advance, or promote affected by their knowledge that applicants are graduates of external degree programs? Does the public view distance education as a viable alternative or enhancement to traditional resident higher education and thereby continue to support its growth? Is distance education a solution to the "problem" of access to higher education?" The current anecdotal literature suggests that the response to these questions is in most respects positive, but there is little objective research to support this supposition.

A saturation point in the literature is in the dearth of anecdotal information on the individual elements of the subject of this study. Opinions abound in academe, in business and industry, and in the media, and few with substantive research to support them. The research focus on individual outcomes remains simpler to observe and measure individual performance in relationship to carefully controlled variables than to observe and attempt to measure entire populations of subjects who often behave in ways completely foreign to the understanding of the researcher. A second saturation point in the research is the effect of technology on the field of distance education. From Merisotis and Phipps (1999), “Research on distance learning has been driven by what many are calling ‘the information revolution.’ The rapid evolution and advances in technology offer both the general public and faculty a dizzying array of challenges that are unprecedented...Technology is having, and will continue to have, a profound effect on colleges and universities in America and around the globe. Distance learning, which was once a poor stepchild within the academic community, is becoming increasingly more visible as part of the higher education family” (p. 11).

#### Avenues for Further Inquiry

Environmental factors associated with any changes noted over the period of the study are not addressed. This illuminates the principal avenues for further study, especially (1) changes in population demographics of participants in distance education, (2) the effects of the introduction of new instructional technologies, (3) developments in business and industrial technologies and the requirement for specialized education and

training served by distance education, and (4) increased investment in distance education by “traditional” colleges and universities.

### Chapter Summary

Distance education has a long history in the United States. From its beginnings as postal correspondence courses, it has grown to encompass offerings from over 80% of the colleges and universities in the country, and into a multi-billion dollar for-profit industry. It has both critics and champions. Critics decry the loss of student-teacher contact, the lack of accreditation, and questionable program quality and learner outcomes, failure to adequately prepare graduates for employment and higher education, and outright fraud. Champions tout access, affordability, and specialization. Employers and students give mixed reviews. What little research exists on perceptions of the value of distance education indicates a favorable view on the part of both employers and students. More research is required.

There is ample evidence that academic attainment is significantly related to job status and economic benefit (Pascarella & Terrenzini, 1991; NCES, 2001). The greatest benefit accrues to those who obtain a baccalaureate degree, and especially to women. Lesser benefit accrues to holders of graduate degrees, particularly in administrative, managerial and technical positions. The current and future job market favors college graduates in these positions. While reported as a general characteristic in the early literature, recent surveys indicate that employers have begun to place a premium on critical thinking, teamwork, initiative and leadership, as well as knowledge and skills. Those in the academy who disfavor distance learning point out that the interpersonal

medium of traditional education and attendant personal and social development that occurs cannot be replaced by televisions and computers. Whether this observation has merit, given the demographics (age and work experience) of most distance education students, is worthy of further study.

Where academic attainment through external or distance study is examined as a credential for access to further education, for example master's, first professional, and doctoral programs, the research is less clear. The baseline 1976-77 BSSR study indicated that external academic credentials appeared to be no bar to access to most master's and first professional degree programs, although graduates were slightly more likely to be successful if they applied to the same institution that sponsored the external degree program. In other words, institutional selectivity was observed, but was not a significant factor in access according to the study. Whether such selectivity is more or less evident now is unclear, since there is little recent research on the subject in the current literature. The fact that most higher education institutions now offer at least some distance study programs, and many offer bachelor's and master's degrees, along with professional certifications, may have some effect on selectivity. The recent entry of several "name brand" universities (Harvard, Cornell, UCLA, Stanford, for example) into the field of external degree programs may affect selectivity as well.

It may be that the influence of technology is driving the research in higher education. It may be that this has resulted in a focus on the effects of technology on individual student learning to the detriment of the study of technology's effects on higher education in general and, in the context of this study, the effects on the perceptions of the quality, acceptance and negotiability of external academic credentials in business and

industry (employers), institutions of higher education (the academy), and the public. The following chapter will describe the research methodology of the study including the theoretical and conceptual framework, the research design, limitations, delimitations and assumptions and the timeframe for the study.

The theoretical and conceptual framework of the study as described in the following chapter includes a more detailed explanation of the method of selecting the research for review, considerations for validity and reliability (“trustworthiness” and “authenticity”) and enumeration of the research variables. The rationale for the research design is explained as are the included elements of invalidity and minimization, a description of the procedure that will be used and the strategy for analysis of the data. The chapter also provides a statement of the assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study and a proposed timeframe for completion of the research.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Following a brief restatement of the research problem, purpose and question to be answered, a synopsis of Chapters 1 and 2 is provided to establish the context for the methodology of the study. In the section titled “Theoretical/Conceptual Framework,” the method of selection of the literature to be reviewed is described followed by an explanation of issues of validity and reliability, then an enumeration and explanation of the variables identified in the research. Under the heading “Research Design” will be found the design rationale, a discussion of invalidity and minimization, the procedures used to collect the data and a description of the strategy for analyzing the data. Assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study are provided under a separate heading. Finally, following the general timeframe for the study is a chapter summary and reference to the following chapter.

#### Problem

The problem investigated in the study is the absence of empirical research concerning the perceptions of the quality and utility of academic credentials obtained through external or distance academic degree programs as reported by graduates, employers and the academy in scholarly and professional print media during the 25-year period 1979-2003.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive study was to describe and track the perceptions of the quality and utility of external academic degrees by graduates, employers and the academy over a 25-year period as described in scholarly and professional print media. The literature from 1979 to 2003 was analyzed to identify trends and further suggest future implications for the field of distance education.

### Research Question

The research question answered in the study was, what is the nature and degree of change of perceptions of the quality and utility of external (distance) degrees by graduates, employers and the academy over a period of 25 years (1979-2003) as presented in scholarly and professional literature, and what are the implications for the field of distance education.

### Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

#### Method of Selection of Literature for Review

From the available literature the perceptions of three groups were studied: (1) the graduates of external or distance degree programs, including undergraduate, master's and first professional degrees; (2) employers of graduates of external or distance degree programs, regardless of level of employee educational attainment; and (3) the academy as represented by college and university faculty and higher education administrators

The perceptions studied were of the quality and utility of external academic degrees, where quality is represented in terms of satisfaction with the degree as a learning experience or credential and where utility is represented in terms of the usefulness of the degree as credential for access to further education and employment (Sharp & Sosdian, 1978). Satisfaction in the literature is expressed in programmatic and instructional terms, for example learner satisfaction with course subject matter, organization, materials, instruction and evaluation, and is anecdotal in nature. A preliminary review of the literature suggested the scientific research on external and distance studies is focused on learning outcomes or technologies or instructional/methodological techniques compared to traditional in-class instruction, as noted in Chapter 2.

In academe the literature reflects a focus on programmatic and instructional quality, especially faculty qualifications and experience, academic rigor and student cognitive and personal development, best practices in course design and instruction, and issues of accreditation. The public expresses its satisfaction with the quality of higher education in general and external/distance education specifically in terms of enrollments and other market factors. Issues of quality in higher education including, and sometimes particularly distance education, is found in popular periodicals, newspapers and radio and television reports. Examples are provided in excerpts of journal articles in Chapter 2 of this study.

Usefulness often refers in the literature to graduates' reports of their success in using an external academic credential to obtain access to higher degree or certification programs, usually expressed in terms of their acceptance into the program of their choice. Where acceptance in the program or institution of choice is difficult or denied,

satisfaction with the credential is low, and vice versa. Usefulness is also expressed in the literature in terms of graduates' success in using the external credential to obtain new employment or advancement or promotion in existing employment. Where there is perceived success, graduates report satisfaction with the academic program and/or credential, and where perceived unsuccessful, satisfaction is low. Examples of these perceptions are provided in the previous chapter in the form of reports produced by the Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C, 2004), the Distance Education and Training Council (1994, 2001), and the National Center for Education Statistics (2003).

Employers' perceptions of graduates' (employees) academic achievement appears to be more often expressed in the literature in terms of support (financial, time, organizational/corporate recognition, approval) than satisfaction. Usefulness is also addressed in the literature in terms of employer acceptance of external academic credentials in evaluating applications for employment or internal promotion (Sloan-C, 2004; DETC, 2001). A preliminary review of the literature suggests that the degree of emphasis on the source of academic credentials may have changed over the period of the study as employers have become more familiar with external/distance programs and the organizations and institutions that sponsor them.

Given the preceding discussion, the factors influencing the selection of literature for review were: (1) must be published between and including 1979 and 2003, (2) may be a dissertation, a scholarly or professional journal article or report of a conference proceeding, and (3) must reflect in the title, subject, or abstract "distance education," "external education," or "non-traditional education," and (4) must reflect in the title, subject, or body "quality," "satisfaction," "employment" or "credential."

The universe of scholarly and professional journals and periodicals is manageable using the “Periodical Indexes and Databases” and search tools provided online at the Montana State University Libraries. Rather than limit the number of resources in each of the three categories (dissertations, journals, periodicals) by arbitrarily selecting sets of specific journals and periodicals for review, the index or database appropriate to each category was searched using the terms previously described. The use of this technique produced abstracts and articles from a wide variety of publications of the various types listed in each database or index. Unlike some other research, this unique technique sampled the diversity of literature that seems lacking in current distance education research and literature reviews.

The indexes and databases used to obtain the literature for the study include: (1) because the criteria for publication of dissertations is not necessarily the same as that for journals and other publications, the index Dissertation Abstracts International was used to search for articles in this body of the literature; (2) the index ERIC was used to search for articles specific to education, wherein the greatest concentration of articles in the field was expected to be found; and (3) the index Academic Search Premier was used to search for articles from scholarly and professional journals and conference proceedings. As previously stated, the broad search terms “external,” “non-traditional,” “distance” and “education” were employed to identify articles in the general field. The results were then refined by applying the search terms “quality,” “satisfaction,” and “employment.” Where there appeared to be a gap in the literature or where there were few articles returned when using the prescribed set of search terms, the index “Info Trac OneFile” was searched for additional material.

As articles were reviewed, a database was created to manage the collected information. The database includes the source of the article by title and type, the date of publication, the volume and issue, the page numbers when applicable and the author name(s). This methodology is modeled on Berg and Mrozowski's "Review of Research in Distance Education, 1990 to 1999" published in The American Journal of Distance Education (2001).

This method of collecting and managing articles facilitated the analysis of the collected data. The individual articles were collected and archived by year by a simple cut-and-paste process from the search index or database into a separate document. As the articles were reviewed in detail, they were tabled by year, source, group, and category. A schematic of the research methodology is provided in Figure 1. An example of the archive format is in Figure 2, and the format for tabulating the raw data is provided in Figure 3. Since the purpose of the study was to describe the perceptions of three groups (graduates, employers, academy) of the quality and utility of "external degrees" over time, the results are presented chronologically from 1979 through 2003. To this purpose, in Figure 4 the data are displayed by the number of articles published by year, group (graduate, employer, academy), category (quality, utility) and perception (positive, negative).

The data for the results of the study were tabled by (1) year of publication, (2) group, i.e., graduate, employer, and academy, (3) number of publications of all sources, (4) study category, i.e., quality or utility, and (5) positive or negative, where "positive" reflects a favorable perception of quality or utility expressed in the article and "negative"

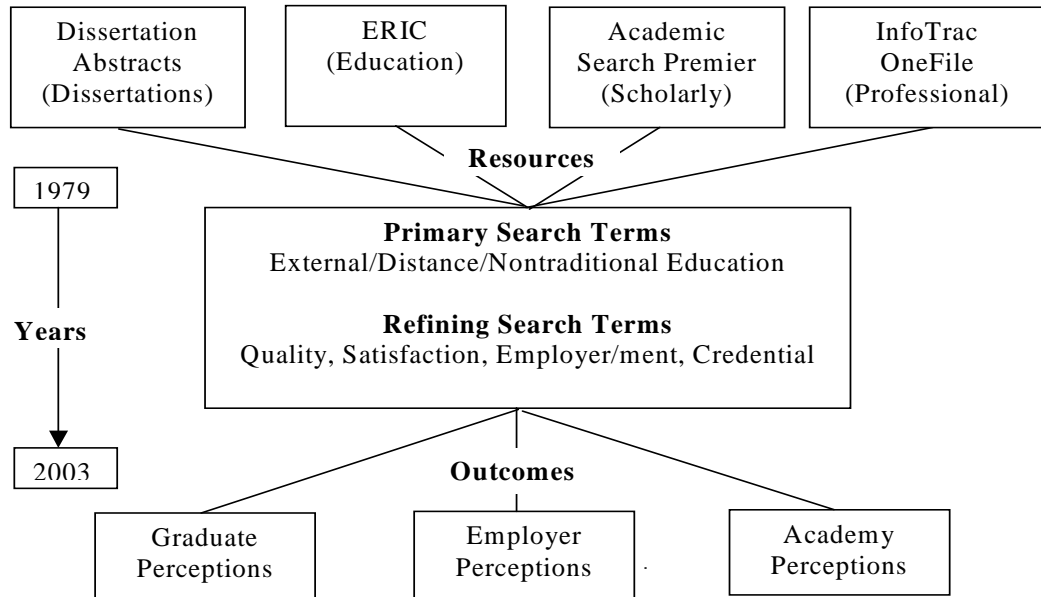
an unfavorable perception. An example of this display of the data is reflected in a brief test of the data collection methodology as follows:

A test search of Dissertation Abstracts International using the method described above resulted in an abstract titled A study of the graduates of the new college external degree program at the University of Alabama (Dice, 1982). The dissertation was published in 1982, and the abstract states, in part:

(4) Graduates were adequately prepared for graduate study and were successful in gaining admission to graduate and professional schools. (5) The degree as a credential did not pose barriers to career or employment opportunities. (6) The degree was considered to be as valuable as one obtained through a traditional program and graduates were satisfied with the curriculum, the program features, and the process through which they completed their undergraduate education.  
(abstract)

The article was entered in the research database as described above. The article was tabled in the study results under (1) year = 1982, (2) n = total number of articles for 1982, (3) source = DAI, (4) population = graduate, employer, academy, (5) category = quality, utility, and (6) perception = Graduate/Positive (G+) as proposed in Figure 4.

**Figure 1. Research Methodology Schematic**



**Figure 2. Example Archive Entry**

Title:	A STUDY OF THE GRADUATES OF THE NEW COLLEGE EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
Author(s):	DICE, PATRICIA ANNE CARTER
Degree:	PH.D.
Year:	1982
Pages:	00151
Institution:	THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA; 0004
Source:	DAI, 44, no. 02A, (1982): 0398

Figure 3. Example Individual Article Archive Table

Year	Source				Group			Category		Perception					
	DAI	ERIC	ASP	ITOF	Graduate	Employer	Academy	Quality	Utility	G+	G-	E+	E-	A+	A-
1982	1				1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	
		2			2			2	1	1	1				
			1				1	1							1

Figure 4. Example Cumulative Article Archive Table

Year	n	Source				Group			Category		Perception					
		DAI	ERIC	ASP	ITOF	Graduate	Employer	Academy	Quality	Utility	G+	G-	E+	E-	A+	A-
1982	4	1	2	1	0	3	1	2	4	2	2	1	1		1	1
1983																
1984																

### Validity and Reliability

The traditional quantifiable forms and tests of reliability are not appropriate to this descriptive (qualitative) research which seeks to describe through a review, compilation and analysis of the literature what are essentially the intangibles (attitudes, perceptions, observations) associated with the field of external or distance education. An approach more appropriate to validity and reliability in this descriptive study is provided by Creswell (1994) who suggested applying the concepts of “trustworthiness” and “authenticity” in addressing the concepts of validity and reliability. Drawing on others’ qualitative research, Creswell recommended describing “how the study will address the issue of internal validity, the accuracy of the information and whether it matches reality,” discussing “the limited generalizability of findings from the study—the external validity” and discussing the “limitations in replicating the study—the reliability issue” (Merriam, 1988). This is the concept that was used to address validity and reliability in the research.

Validity. The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy of the quality and utility of external degrees over a 25-year period (1979-2003) following the publication of the baseline study as presented in scholarly and professional literature. The elements or characteristics of quality and utility were defined in the original research, as is the context of academic achievement (external degrees). In order to identify the relevant literature that has been published over the 25-year period of the study, more current search terms were also required and the selection of those terms was a subjective decision on the part of the researcher.

Since the same search terms were applied to all three sources of articles (dissertations, journals, proceedings), there should result a sufficient range and diversity of publications (dissertations, scholarly, professional) to serve as a form of triangulation among the various sources and assure some measure of internal validity. The results of the study cannot reasonably be generalized to any population other than that for which the study was designed. However, it was expected that the method used to select, categorize and analyze the data would produce the result desired from the study, which was essentially a longitudinal description of the perceptions of the three groups (graduates, employers, academy) of the quality and utility of external or distance degrees as expressed in scholarly and professional literature over the period investigated. This provided a measure of external validity for the study.

Reliability. In this study the perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy of external or distance degrees was described in terms of satisfaction with the degree as an individual/personal accomplishment, as a credential to gain access to further/higher education, and as a credential to gain employment or for promotion or advancement in current employment. To determine satisfaction or dissatisfaction required that the researcher apply judgment in assessing an article author's stated or implied perception. In some cases, as in the baseline 1976-77 BSSR study, the perceptions or preferences are stated and quantified, for example "67 percent of graduates expressed satisfaction with their external degree as a credential for access to further education." In other cases the article reviewed was less clear in expressing any measure of favor or disfavor with the external degree, program or experience. While the criteria applied to selection of articles for review derives from terminology used in the

baseline 1976-77 BSSR study, in this study positive and negative values were assigned to the perceptions expressed in the articles. The assignment of positive and negative values to the perceptions expressed in the literature was subjective. In other words, did the article selected reflect a positive (favorable) perception on the part of the author or was the perception negative (unfavorable)?

Examples from a preliminary test of the methodology resulted in articles that were markedly positive, i.e., “Innovative new distance learning programs utilizing the amazing opportunities offered by the Internet offer an option for education. Fine universities have creatively built curriculum leading to Bachelors and Masters Degrees specifically in Clinical Research” (Reuter & Schwartzberg, 2004), and markedly negative, i.e., “...there is only a crisis for the losers, and the ‘new’ solution for the losers is to provide them an education for losers, and that is a distance learning education...” (Plank & Edgerton, 1998). While intuitively self-evident, assignment of positive or negative values to such statements/results is subjective and reflects the bias of the researcher.

### Variables

“All research ultimately has a qualitative grounding”  
- Donald Campbell

“There’s no such thing as qualitative data. Everything is either 1 or 0”  
- Fred Kerlinger

(From a table provided by Professor James Neill, University of New Hampshire, online at <http://www.wilderdom.com/research/QualitativeVersusQuantitativeResearch.html>, 2004.)

A fundamental difference between qualitative and quantitative research is that the former employs inductive reasoning to describe a phenomenon or environment, while the

latter employs deductive reasoning to prove or disprove an assertion or hypothesis. Gay (1996) described qualitative research thus: "...qualitative researchers are not just concerned with describing how things are, but also with gaining insights into how things got to be the way they are, how people feel about the way things are, what they believe, what meanings they attach to various activities, and so forth" (p. 13). In qualitative research there is generally no distinct theory, only an observation of an activity or process or environment that suggests a reason for investigation. An "explanation" develops over time as the data are collected and analyzed and the accuracy of the explanation is confirmed through verification.

A quantitative study, on the other hand "...is an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true" (Creswell, 1994, p. 2). In quantitative research there is an hypothesis which can be tested by manipulating variables and the results described mathematically. Gay (1996) summed up the differences succinctly: "A very real difference between qualitative approaches and quantitative approaches to research is the degree of intervention and control involved. Qualitative researchers do not want to intervene or control anything; they want to study phenomena as they are (or were), in natural settings. Quantitative researchers, on the other hand, often 'intervene' and attempt to control as many variables as possible" (p. 12).

The variables in a quantitative study are termed independent, mediating, and dependent, where independent variables are those known and controlled by the researcher, which inputs to the environment studied resulting in measurable outcomes or

changes to the expected outcome. The dependent variable is the outcome (of the test, study, change) that results from manipulation of the independent variable(s). A mediating variable is an independent variable which is known and controlled by the researcher that “mediates” the effects of other known independent variables on the dependent variable, or outcome (Creswell, 1994).

### Research Design

#### Rationale

The problem investigated in this study was that it is not known if the perceptions of degree holders (graduates), employers, and the academy of the quality and utility of external or distance academic degrees has changed over a period of 25 years, as reported in the scholarly and professional literature.

The purpose of this descriptive study was to describe and track the perceptions of the quality and utility of external academic degrees by graduates, employers, and the academy over a 25-year period, from 1979 to 2003 as described in scholarly and popular print media, and through analysis of the literature to identify trends and to suggest implications for the field of distance education.

The question answered in this study was what is the nature and degree of change, if any, of the perceptions of the quality and utility of external (distance) degrees by graduates, employers and the academy over a period of 25 years, and what are the implications for the field of distance education?

Considering the fundamental assumptions of qualitative research (Creswell, 1994), the study is particularly well suited to qualitative design, since the problem

concerns primarily process and meaning. That is, a description of how perceptions of the quality and usefulness of external academic credentials may have changed over time (process) among the groups to be studied (meaning). From the analysis of the results obtained from the review of the literature, we may be able to identify trends and issues from the data. What the study does not do is account for the environment in which any change may be taking place, for example, “internal” influences such as a shift in the demographics of the population (age, gender, employment status, education level, etc.) or “external” influences such as advancements in technology affecting program access, course delivery or content (personal computers, online and web-based instruction, virtual libraries, etc.). Where these factors exert a strong influence on process or meaning or both, the research may reflect a “spike” in the number of articles in one or more areas of the literature.

#### Invalidity and Minimization

Given the concepts of “trustworthiness” and “authenticity” (Creswell, 1994), the principal threats to the internal validity of the study include (1) inadequate or inaccurate selection of the literature databases to be searched, (2) improper/inadequate search terms, (3) researcher bias in selecting articles from the universe of the literature, (4) author or reporter bias in the selected articles themselves, and (5) researcher bias in assigning positive/negative values to the selected articles. These threats were minimized by (1) seeking the advice of subject matter experts and conducting a preliminary survey of many databases and indexes, (2) using search terms which are taken directly from the baseline study or are demonstrably the equivalent terms in current literature, i.e.,

“external education” precedes temporally, but is equally interchangeable with the now more common “distance education” while terms such as “credential” and “satisfaction” remain constant, (3) by consistently using keywords and phrases appearing in the abstract, title, subject or body of the article as the selection criteria and assigning positive and negative values to the selected articles, (4) by ensuring that any gaps or saturation points in the body of the searched literature are identified and investigated, (5) providing for a peer audit of a sample of the articles selected for review to confirm that the articles are consistent with the purpose of the study, and (6) providing for a scholarly audit of the preliminary results of the study to confirm that the research methodology produces results consistent with the research question asked.

### Procedure

The research was conducted in four distinct phases, with the second, third and fourth phases proceeding concurrently. The first phase involved establishing the parameters of the study, i.e., defining the purpose and research question(s), selecting the design of the study, reviewing the previous research literature, and refining the research design and plan. The second phase included defining and organizing the universe of the literature, selecting search terms that are consistent with identifying in the literature the articles that would yield the desired data (purposeful selection), and defining the plan for collecting the data and the plan for analyzing the data. The third phase began with a test of the data collection methodology including a preliminary search of the literature using the selected search terms for the purpose of confirming that the search terms and the databases and indexes searched would produce usable data. This phase continued with

the collection and organization of the data (articles selected for review) for analysis (by population, quality/utility, and positive/negative perception), then with the interpretation of the tabulated data. The fourth phase was the narrative writing of the research report, which is accomplished concurrently with the collection and interpretation (analysis) of the data. This procedure is generally modeled on Creswell (1994).

### Analysis Strategy

Continuing to draw from Creswell's (1994) example, the strategy for analysis of the data involved first the reduction of the volume of information (universe of literature—selected articles) to produce patterns or categories, then interpretation of the patterns and categories by means of some schema to achieve a coherent view of the total environment. Creswell (1994, p. 154) quoted Tesch to illustrate this process: “While much work of the analysis process consists of ‘taking apart’ (for instance, into smaller pieces) the final goal is the emergence of a larger, consolidated picture” (Tesch, 1990, p. 97). In this study the intent was to “take apart” the universe of the literature regarding external/distance education, employment, and access to further education, to form from the resulting body of literature categories relating to the perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy then finally to interpret the categories to form a “larger, consolidated picture” of how those perceptions have changed over the 25 years since the results of the baseline BSSR study was reported. To this end a database comprised of two parts, an archive of the selected articles and a table of the articles by year, source, group, category and perception (see Figures 2 and 3) was established to record the data as it was collected during the search of the literature. The archive of articles served to document the

selections and allow both confirmation of the tabulated data and facilitate further analysis.

The total universe of the literature encompasses all published dissertations and all articles published in journals, magazines and newspapers. The universe of the literature was first reduced by the selection of subsets of the total published literature to produce a body of relevant literature reflecting the themes (external, distance, non-traditional, education) of the study, then the resulting body of relevant literature was further reduced by the use of specific terms to search for individual articles which met the criteria specified for the data (satisfaction, quality, credential, employment).

The selected source materials (dissertations, journals, magazines, newspapers) are readily identifiable in the indexes and databases found online at the Montana State University Libraries. The following indexes and databases were used to obtain the material for the study: (1) because the criteria for publication of dissertations is not the same as that for journals and other publications, the index Dissertation Abstracts International was used to search for articles in this body of the literature, (2) the index ERIC was used to search for articles specific to education, (3) the index Academic Search Premier was used to search for journal and scholarly articles, and (4) the index LexisNexis Academic was used to search for newspaper and magazine articles.

The broad search terms “external,” “distance,” “non-traditional” and “education” were employed to identify articles in the general field. The results were then refined by applying the search terms “quality,” “satisfaction,” “credential” and “employment.” Where there appeared to be a gap in the literature or where there were few articles returned when using the prescribed set of search terms, the index “Info Trac OneFile”

was searched for additional material. As articles were reviewed, a database was created to manage the collected information. The database included the source of the article by title and type, the date of publication, the volume and issue, the page numbers when applicable and the author name(s). This method of organizing the data for analysis was modeled on Berg and Mrozowski's Review of Research in Distance Education, 1990 to 1999 published in 2001 in The American Journal of Distance Education (Vol. 15 No.3).

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter the theoretical/conceptual framework for the study was presented, including a discussion of the method of selection of research for review, considerations of “trustworthiness” and “authenticity” (in place of validity and reliability), and the variables (independent, mediating, dependent) in the study. The research design was described based on the eight elements suggested by Creswell (1994), including explanations of the purpose of the study (rationale), a detailed explanation of the procedures that were followed in the study, and the strategy for analyzing the data returned, and assumptions, limitations and delimitations were restated from Chapter 1.

The results of the search of the literature are provided in the following chapter, as well as an analysis of the data and a discussion of the meaning of the results. A statement of the relationship to previous research is followed by a description and explanation of both positive and negative findings, any uncontrolled factors influencing the outcome of the study, and any weaknesses in the data that are revealed by the analysis. The chapter includes a discussion of any contradictions, inconsistencies and

misleading elements that may be revealed in the findings and concludes with a summary of the results.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The research in distance or nontraditional education over time is replete with studies of participant characteristics and demographics, individual learning outcomes, and course and program design, delivery and management. The research is less exhaustive with regard to the practical outcomes (status, employment, access to higher education) of nontraditional degree programs, and where such studies exist the focus is often on the reported experience and/or perceptions of a single cohort of graduates.

The experience and the academic credential obtained through participation in a nontraditional or distance or external degree program has value when used for access to employment or higher education. That value is perceived differently by program graduates, by employers and potential employers of those graduates, and by the academy. The research in the field indicates that graduates value the external degree both for the personal satisfaction of obtaining it and for its usefulness in improving current employment or seeking new employment, where an academic degree is a condition of employment. The employer or prospective employer's perception of the quality of the credential is critical to the graduate's success in this endeavor. The same rationale applies when the external degree graduate seeks entry to advanced higher education. The perception of the quality of the external credential by the admitting faculty and administration is crucial to the graduates' access to advanced degree programs.

What appears to be missing from research in distance or nontraditional education are longitudinal studies regarding how externally obtained academic credentials have been perceived over time. Over some period of years, how have quality and usefulness or negotiability (utility) of external degrees been perceived by graduates, employers and the academy and what changes, if any, in those perceptions have occurred. This study of the perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy of the quality and utility of external degrees over a period of twenty-five years is intended to address these questions.

In this chapter the data collected using the methodology described in the preceding chapter are described and analyzed. Following a recapitulation of the collection protocol, the summary outcome of the data collection effort is provided. An explanation of the data audit conducted for the purpose of establishing internal validity precedes a narrative and visual analysis of the data.

The results are discussed in terms of practical significance and relationship to prior research in the field. The study findings are presented and uncontrolled factors that may have influenced the study outcome and other observations on the data are analyzed. Findings incidental to the planned study are presented prior to a summary of the results. The chapter concludes with a summary and introduction to the following chapter.

### Problem and Purpose

The problem investigated in this study is the absence of empirical research concerning the perceptions of the quality and utility of academic credentials obtained through external or distance academic degree programs as reported by graduates,

employers and the academy in scholarly and professional print media during the 25-year period 1979-2003.

The purpose of this descriptive study was to describe and track the perceptions of the quality and utility of external academic degrees by graduates, employers and the academy over a 25-year period as described in scholarly and professional print media. The literature from 1979 to 2003 was analyzed to identify trends in perceptions and to further suggest implications for the field of distance education.

### Data Collection

The source of data for the study was four electronic indexes available online, each specific to the type of material reviewed. Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI) was used to identify published dissertations in the area of investigation. Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) was selected to provide journal articles and reports specific to education. Academic Search Premier was used to provide articles from scholarly and professional journals and conference proceedings. Where there appeared to be a gap in the literature or where there were few articles returned when using the prescribed set of search terms, the index “InfoTrac OneFile” was searched for additional material. All of the indexes were accessed online at the Montana State University Libraries Periodical Indexes and Databases at <http://www.lib.montana.edu/epubs/indexes.html>.

Each index was individually searched for relevant articles by single year, beginning with the year 1979 and ending with the year 2003. Each index was searched in a consistent manner using the primary and refining search terms described previously. For example, the first search applied to each index was “external AND education,” which

was then refined by adding the refining term (limiter) “degree.” The list of titles produced by this combination of search terms was then scanned for titles relevant to the study. The terms next applied to the same index were “external AND education AND quality,” producing another set of titles which were scanned for relevance. With the exception of the index InfoTrac OneFile this procedure was followed for each primary search term in combination with each refining search term until all terms were exhausted for the four indexes for all 25 years.

The data in InfoTrac OneFile are organized into categories that could not effectively be searched using the protocol described. The term “Distance Education,” for example, does not appear as a discrete category in the index until 1983 and the term “external degree” did not appear among the articles listed in the index until 1992. In order to obtain results relevant to the study, the terms “higher education” and “academic degrees” were applied to the index for each year. The InfoTrac One File default list of subjects related to distance education was also reviewed including “correspondence schools and courses,” “educational broadcasting,” “university extension” and “home schooling.” This search protocol proved useful, producing material not found in the other three indexes or otherwise confirming by duplication the results returned by one or more of the remaining indexes.

From the list of titles produced by each combination of primary and refining search terms, titles that seemed relevant to the study were selected and the abstracts (if available) were individually reviewed. For example, where the title either specifically indicated the perception(s) of one or more groups, or included language that indicated further investigation might reveal such perceptions, the abstract (if available) was

reviewed. Where the abstract provided sufficient information to determine that the article met the criteria for inclusion in the study, the article citation and abstract were electronically copied and pasted into the Individual Article Archive. If on review the abstract lacked sufficient information to warrant inclusion in the study but indicated that investigation of the article body might be productive, the citation and abstract were electronically copied and pasted into a separate archive of “undetermined” articles. Review of these articles was considered to be a subject for investigation in a future study.

The number of titles returned for the primary search terms for all four indexes ranged from the least at 1,096 (1979) to the greatest at 4,330 (2001), totaling 50,675 returns. Employing the refining search terms reduced the total returns to 26,315. A detailed record of the individual titles viewed was not maintained across the study. However, since the search protocol was applied to each of the four indexes, many titles were scanned multiple times.

### Data Summary

The search protocol resulted in the selection of 108 articles which met the criteria for the study and 194 articles which appeared to be relevant, but provided insufficient information in the title, abstract or body to be included in the study. The data for the 108 articles selected for the study were entered in two Microsoft Excel tables, one as a sequential record by year of individual articles and another as a cumulative record by year of all articles across the 25-year continuum of the study. The individual articles included in the study were tabled by year of publication, index source (DAI, ERIC, ASP, ITOF), subject group (graduate, employer, academy), category (quality, utility), and

perception (positive, negative for each subject group). Each article was also separately archived by citation and abstract, providing a record of the articles selected and serving as a vehicle for a check on internal validity. A cumulative table of the results of the search by year was prepared in an Excel table in the same format as the table of individual articles, with the addition of a column displaying the total number (n) of articles selected by year. This table (Table 2) represents a 25-year continuum of articles by year.

#### Data Audit

The data were subjected to an audit by a retired tenured Montana State University faculty member. Twenty of 108 articles were randomly selected through the use of a research routine found online at <http://www.randomizer.org> (Urbaniak & Plous, 2005). The auditor was provided with a copy of the article archive and asked first to decide whether each article met the criteria for inclusion in the study. The auditor was then provided with a blank table and asked to review each of the 20 articles and record the group (graduates, employers, academy), the subject (quality, utility) and the perception(s) (positive or negative for each group). The auditor was then asked to compare his results with the results recorded by the researcher. The auditor determined that all 20 articles met the criteria for the study and found no discrepancies between his results and the researcher's.

Forty of 194 "undetermined" articles were randomly selected by the same method. The auditor was provided a copy of the "undetermined" article archive and asked to review each of the 40 articles and record whether the article met the criteria

specified for inclusion in the archive. The auditor determined that the 40 articles did meet the criteria for inclusion in the “undetermined” article archive.

### Results

Analysis of the 108 articles selected for inclusion in the study revealed the following data specific to the purpose and objective of the study, illustrated in figures 5 through 15:

- 1) 91 of the articles addressed perceptions of the quality of external degrees
- 2) 58 of the articles addressed perceptions of the utility of external degrees
- 3) 62 perceptions were expressed by graduates, of which 56 are positive and 6 are negative.
- 4) 30 perceptions were expressed by employers, of which 17 are positive and 13 are negative.
- 5) 46 perceptions were expressed by the academy, of which 21 are positive and 25 are negative.

The Microsoft Excel table representing the cumulative data is provided in Table 1, with subsequent figures 5 through 7 representing the breakout of the data by percent of the total for each major element.

Table 1  
Cumulative Search Results by Year

Year	n	Group														
		DAI	ERIC	ASP	ITOF	Graduate	Employer	Academy	Quality	Utility	G+	G-	E+	E-	A+	A-
1979	8	0	7	1		2	2	6	7	3	2	0	2	0	2	4
1980	7	5	1	1	0	5	0	4	5	1	4	0	0	0	4	0
1981	3	2	1	0	0	2	0	1	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	1
1982	5	2	3	0	0	3	0	2	4	4	3	0	0	0	1	1
1983	3	1	2	0	0	2	3	0	2	3	2	0	2	1	0	0
1984	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	1	1	0	0	1	2	2
1985	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
1986	4	3	1	0	0	2	1	1	4	3	2	0	1	1	1	0
1987	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
1988	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
1989	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
1990	3	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	0
1991	3	1	2	0	0	2	1	1	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	1
1992	4	1	1	0	2	3	0	1	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	1
1993	3	2	1	0	0	3	0	2	3	1	3	0	0	0	2	0

Table 1

Cumulative Search Results by Year (Cont'd)

1994	3	0	2	1	0	2	2	1	3	3	3	0	2	0	1	0
1995	4	1	1	0	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	0	0	2	0	1
1996	7	1	0	2	4	3	1	5	6	7	3	0	1	0	1	4
1997	6	1	4	1	0	2	1	4	5	2	2	0	0	0	2	2
1998	5	0	0	1	4	5	2	2	2	5	3	2	2	0	0	2
1999	7	2	0	2	3	5	2	2	7	1	4	0	2	0	1	1
2000	10	1	0	5	4	3	4	3	10	2	2	1	2	2	0	3
2001	7	0	0	4	3	4	4	2	7	4	1	3	1	3	1	1
2002	4	2	2	0	0	3	2	0	4	3	3	0	0	2	0	0
2003	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	1	0
Total	108	29	34	21	24	62	30	46	91	58	55	6	17	13	21	25

The following figures reflect the total number of perceptions expressed by all three groups in the 108 articles selected for review.

Figure 5 shows the proportion of the total perceptions of quality to perceptions of utility.

Figure 5

Quality and Utility - Total Perceptions

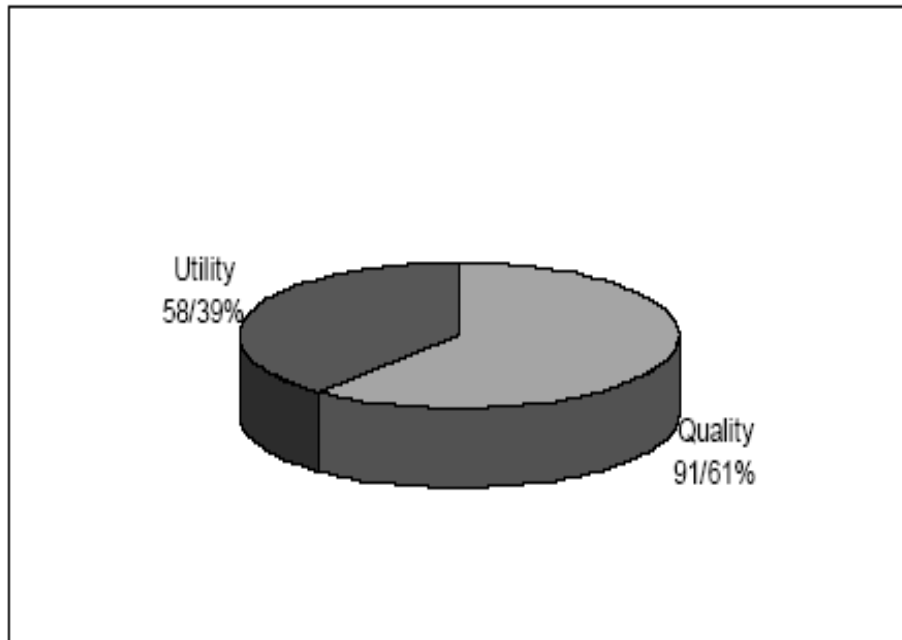


Figure 6 shows the proportion of the total perceptions expressed by graduates, employers and the academy.

Figure 6

Graduates, Employers, Academy Total Perceptions

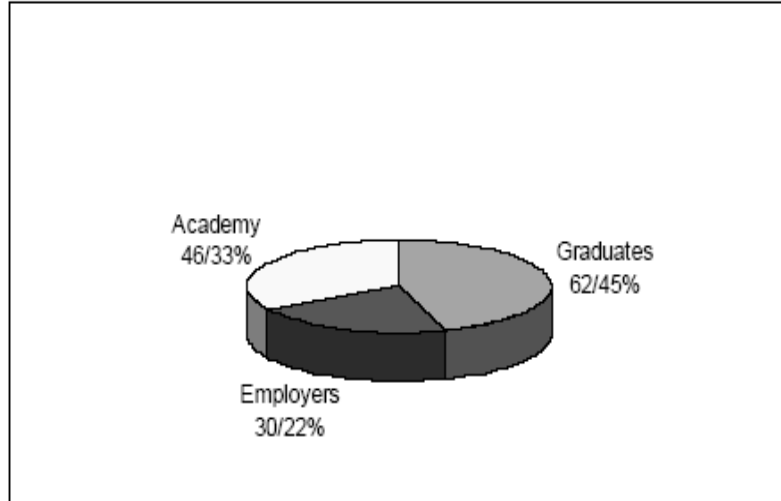
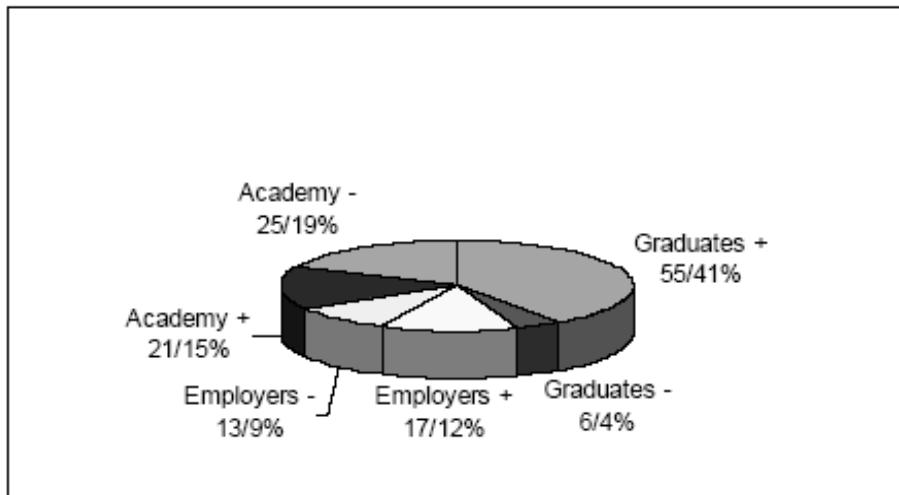


Figure 7 shows the proportion of positive and negative perceptions expressed by graduates, employers and the academy.

Figure 7

Graduates, Employers, Academy Positive vs. Negative Perceptions



Tracking the number of articles over time as displayed in Figure 8 appears to reflect an elevated level of activity at the commencement of the period of study (1979-1980) which diminished and then was maintained at a constant or slightly increasing level of activity for 15 years (1981-1995). The level of activity (number of articles) increased in 1996 and rose to a peak in 2000 before again declining to the pre-1996 level.

Figure 8

Number of Articles 1979-2001

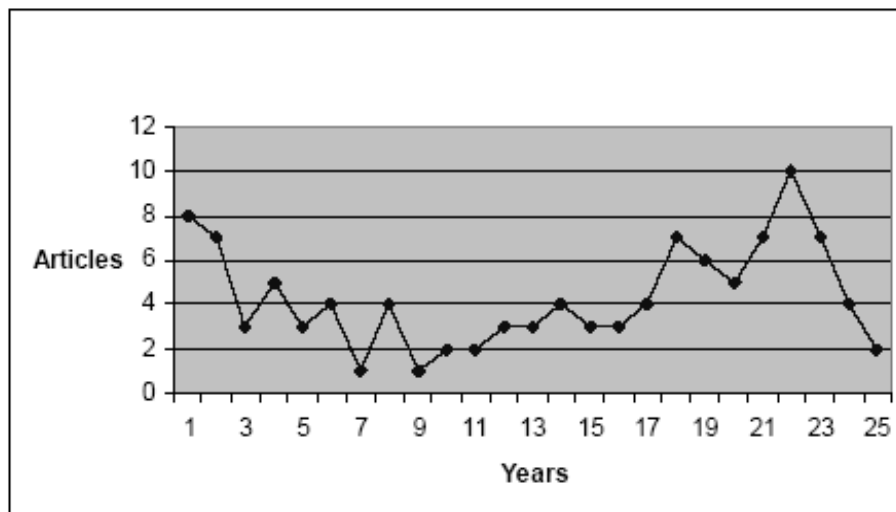
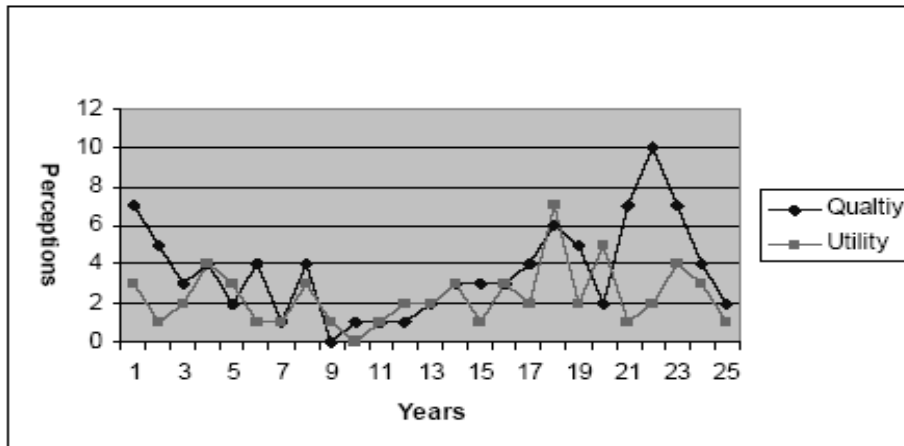


Figure 9 shows perceptions related to Quality and Utility over the period of the study.

Figure 9

## Quality and Utility 1979-2003

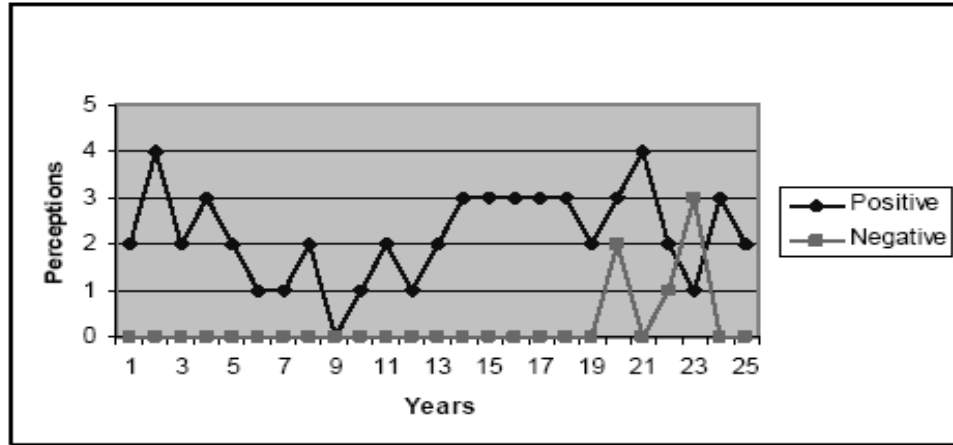


The data for quality and utility appear to be generally congruent over the period of the study declining equally from 1979 to 1988-1989, then rising until 1998 when perceptions of quality diverge sharply upward from utility reaching a peak at 2000 before falling in 2001 to resume congruence with utility in 2002-2003 (although deliberately excluded from this research, further investigation into environmental factors that might be related to this effect could be illuminating).

The perceptions, positive and negative, of graduates of external degree programs are displayed in Figure 10. The data do not distinguish between quality and utility, only positive and negative perceptions expressed in the articles selected each year. Note that the graph of positive perceptions is consistent with the data displayed in Figures 8 and 9, while the line of negative perceptions remains at zero for 19 years (1979-1997) before reflecting any deviation from that trend. Note that the trends are actually reversed during the period 1998-2002.

Figure 10

Graduates' Perceptions

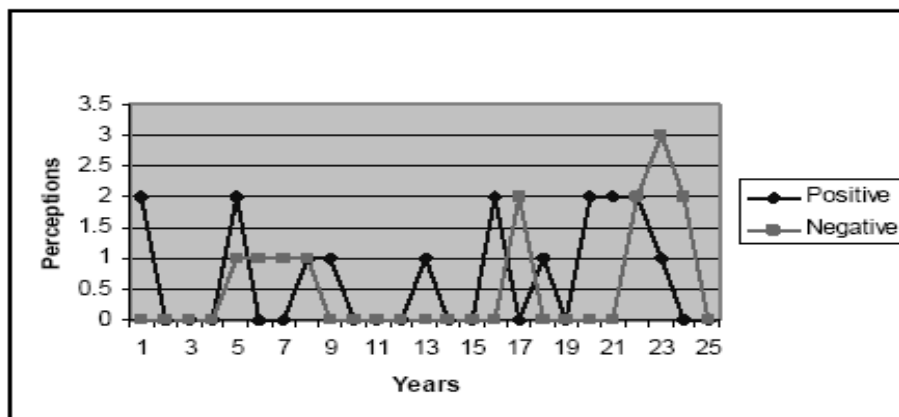


Employers' perceptions, positive and negative, are displayed in Figure 11.

Perceptions appear to be congruent over the period of the study with negative perceptions expressed less frequently than positive ones. Consistent with the graduates' data, there is an increase in negative perceptions in 1995 and 1999-2000 before declining in 2002-03.

Figure 11

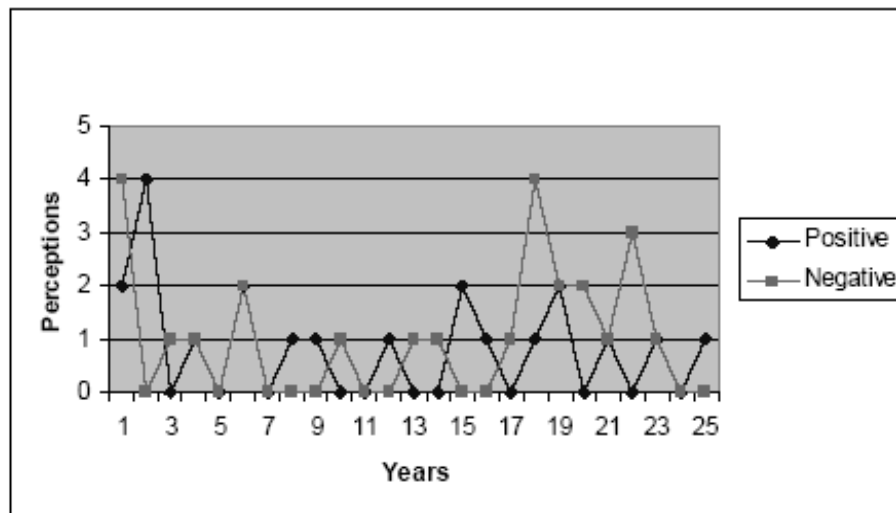
Employers' Perceptions



The perceptions, positive and negative, of the academy are displayed in Figure 12.

Figure 12

## Academy's Perceptions

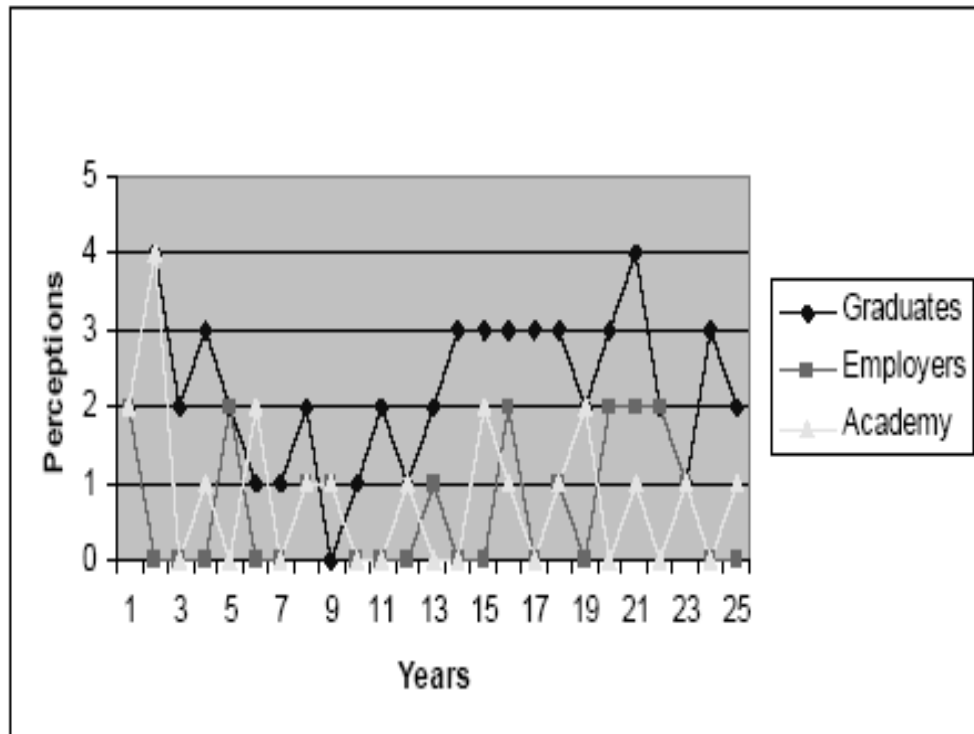


The graphed data indicate a balance of positive and negative perceptions for the first 15 years of the study, at which point activity increases for both positive and negative. In 1996 negative perceptions exceeded positive with the trend continuing although declining through 2001, at that point returning to parity with positive perceptions.

A comparison of positive perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy is displayed in Figure 13. The graphed data reflect the earlier observation that graduates value external degrees more highly than do employers or the academy. Except for a downward excursion in 1983-1985 and again in 1987, the data indicate that graduates' positive perceptions consistently exceed those of employers and the academy.

Figure 13

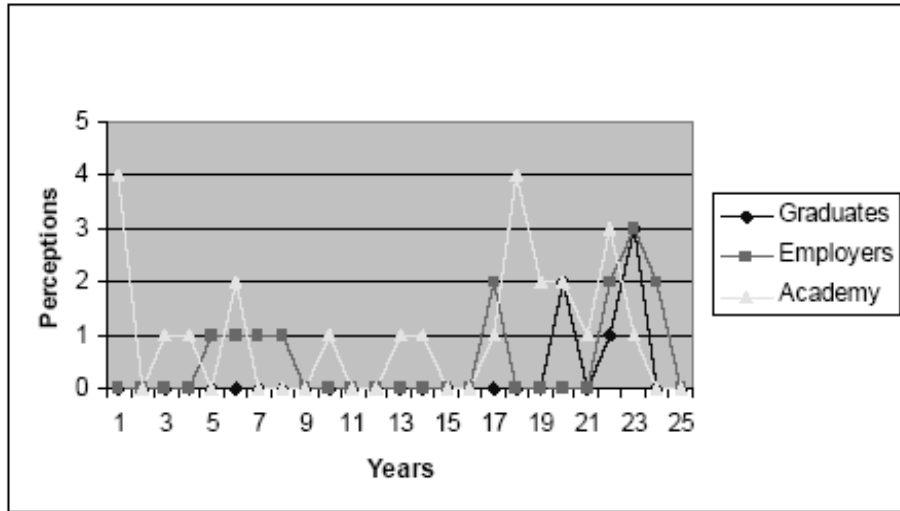
## Comparison of Positive Perceptions



Further confirmation of this trend is provided in Figure 14 which compares negative perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy. The data in this figure show that the academy expresses slightly more negative perceptions than employers, while graduates express almost no negative perceptions other than during the period 1998-2001. Possibly, this fluctuation may be the result of changing environmental factors.

Figure 14

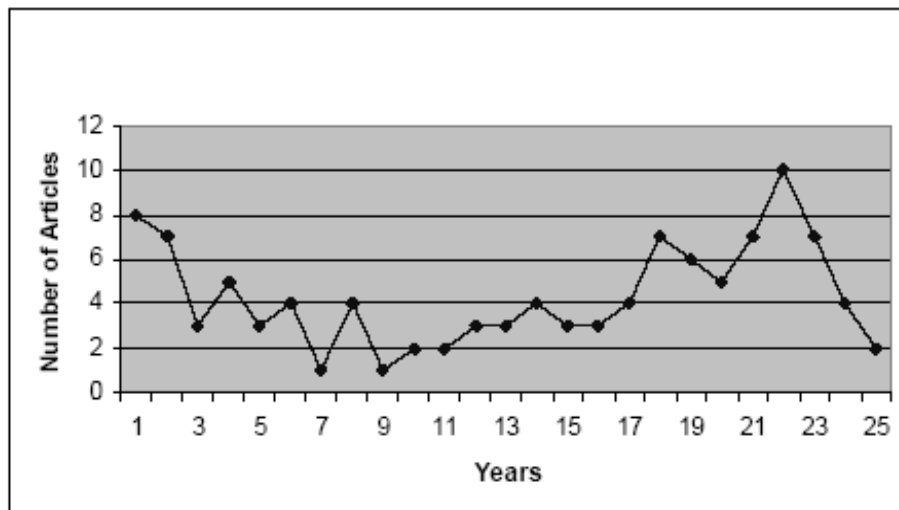
Comparison of Negative Perceptions



While not an objective of the study, the yearly frequency of articles published over time is helpful in interpreting the data presented in the preceding tables. These data are displayed in Figure 15.

Figure 15

Frequency of Articles by Year 1979-2003



## Discussion of the Meaning of the Results

### Statistical versus Practical Significance

There are too few articles in the 25-year span of the study to provide sufficient data for meaningful statistical analysis. Practically, given the descriptive nature of the study and the subjective assessment of the perceptions expressed by graduates, employers and the academy in the selected articles, the results are instructive in that they indicate that over the 25 years of the study (1) issues of degree quality outweigh issues of degree utility by a factor of slightly less than three to two, (2) graduates value external degrees more highly than do either employers or the academy, (3) employers perceive external degrees somewhat favorably, and (4) the academy perceives external degrees somewhat negatively. No distinction was made during the study as to the importance of quality and utility among the respective subject groups.

The data reflect elevated activity by all three subject groups during two periods, 1980-1988 and 1996-2002, otherwise remaining in a comparatively steady state in the intervening years. The frequency of articles published on the subject examined in the study reflect an early but declining interest from 1979 until 1989 followed by a gradual increase in articles until 1996, then increasing sharply from 1996-2000 before declining abruptly from 2000-2003.

Absent an examination of environmental factors at work during the periods of marked change, it is impossible to propose a rationale for the change. Careful examination of the title, abstract and text of the articles included in the search reveals little to explain the change, since the articles appear to be consistent over the span of the

study with respect to the perceptions expressed by the three subject groups, and do not address environmental factors.

### Trends

There is one trend that may be reflected in the data, better discerned in the cumulative result table (Table 1), which is that activity by the academy appears to precede activity by employers. Evident during the last ten years of the study, the number of articles in which the academy expressed positive and negative perceptions changed one to two years before changes among employers' perceptions (in some cases even similar degrees of change). This may indicate that the academy's (higher education) increased interest or attention to the subject of external degrees may generate a similar increase in interest and attention on the part of employers (business and industry), as reflected in the current literature.

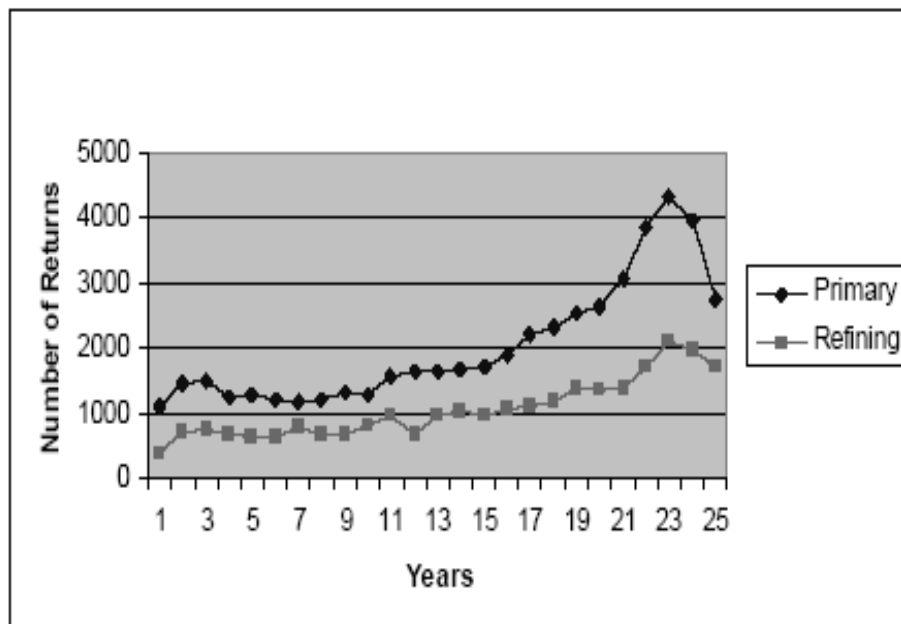
The similarity of the graphs of the number of articles selected (Figure 8) and the total returns from the search (Figure 15) suggests an expected relationship between the volume of publications, indicating scholarly and professional activity, and the number of articles published on the subject of the research. Both display an upward trend for ten to 12 years, with elevated activity followed by decline in the final five years of the span of the study. However, the initial high level of activity suggested by the number of selected articles during the first five years is not apparent in the total returns. A possible explanation is that the selected articles constitute a higher percentage of the total returns early in the study, and may strengthen the indication of greater interest in external degrees during the initial period of the study.

### Supplementary Analysis

It is possible that the trends reflected in the data for the 108 articles selected for the study reflect the expected change in the overall volume of articles published during the growth of distance education and of higher education in general over the period of the study. These trends are displayed in Figure 16. This figure depicts (1) the total number of returns for the primary search terms applied to the four databases and (2) the total number of returns after refining search terms were applied. Note that “returns” is not equivalent to “articles,” since the nature of the search was duplicative and repetitive. These results appear similar to the trends in perceptions for the three subject groups.

Figure 16

Total Search Returns 1979-2003



### Relationship to Prior Research

Examples of the prior research in the field can be found among the 108 articles included in the study. The previously described 1979 Sharp and Sosdian report (study conducted 1976-1977) is typical of the research in the perceptions of the quality and utility of external degrees. Other examples of studies which are similar in objectives to this research include Meg Benke's (1986) Ph.D. dissertation published at Ohio University where she studied Manufacturing Employers' Perception of External Degree Graduates (Adult Students) which examined the negotiability of external degrees for hiring and promotion. In her research Benke surveyed small and large employers in Ohio to determine whether there were differences in hiring and promotion procedures, and whether there was any difference in how traditional and external degree graduates' resumes were evaluated. Benke's findings were that (1) graduates highly value their external degrees, (2) employers generally value higher education, (3) traditional credentials are valued more highly than external credentials for hiring, but the difference diminishes for purposes of promotion, and (4) employers view traditional degrees and more rigorous than external degrees (abstract).

A similar study of Florida State University graduates and their employers was conducted by Elizabeth Black (1991). Entitled An evaluation of the impact of the Florida State University/University of West Florida Cooperative doctoral program as perceived by graduates and their employers (University of West Florida, Nontraditional Education), Black found that "The program positively impacted graduates' careers in the areas of promotion, salary supplement, and improved ability to perform job responsibilities, (5) the research studies proved beneficial for the employing organizations, (6) employers

perceived that the program positively impacted the graduates' job performances..." (abstract).

The value of distance learning MBA programs to employers and employees proposed "...to examine the perceived value of distance learning MBA degrees to employers and employees." In the study Nova Southeastern University Amy Koresdoski (2002) found that "graduates felt their distance learning degree programs were a viable alternative to conventional degrees and believed their DL degrees would be as valuable as degrees earned through traditional programs," but that "some human resource professionals would not see a difference between the two degree types and others would feel that DL degrees were inferior. In fact, some employers were skeptical of distance learning degree programs and did not hold them in the same light as traditional degree programs. Many employers did not care where an employee earned the degree as long as the expected performance was evident" (abstract).

The Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), on the other hand, found in its survey of more than 1,300 graduates and 80 employers DETC Degree Programs: Graduates and Employers Evaluate Their Worth (2001) "positive testimony to the rigor, depth and worth of accredited degrees" and that "DETC degrees are valuable, worthwhile credentials...particularly to the student and to his or her employer" (p. 3). These results, according to the DETC report, are consistent with the first such DETC survey in 1984 and the second in 1994.

Research in which the perceptions of the academy were expressed was more difficult to identify in the literature represented by the 108 articles included in the study. Such perceptions were more commonly found in scholarly and professional journal

articles and may also be indicated in the contents of published conference proceedings which were included among the 194 documents archived for this study as related but “inconclusive.” One example of scholarly research is a doctoral dissertation published at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale entitled Attitudinal Study of Graduate Deans Regarding External Graduate Degrees. The researcher, Eugene Haenni (1981), surveyed the graduate deans listed in The Council of Graduate Schools in the United States, Directory of Member Institutions, Institutional Representatives and Associates, 1979 for the purpose of determining the “attitudes of graduate deans concerning qualitative concerns related to the establishment, maintenance and expansion of external graduate degree programs.” Haenni’s finding was that “although graduate deans express negative attitudes related to external graduate degree programs, their posture as regards external graduate degree programs is not exceedingly negative (abstract).”

In an article published in The Journal of Higher Education titled “Faculty Receptivity to an Innovation: A Study of Attitudes toward External Degree Programs,” Lynn Johnson (1984) found that “A study of faculty attitudes toward external degrees at the University of Michigan reported a generally positive response” (abstract). In The Journal of Allied Health Craig Lehmann and others (1986) reported that when “various types of nontraditional programs” were examined for the purpose of assessing “their acceptance by deans of allied health programs based in academic health centers,” eight of the ten deans surveyed “stated that they would consider candidates with nontraditional doctorates for faculty appointment” (abstract).

In contrast to Johnson’s and Lehman’s positive research findings early in the period of this study are articles such as Kenneth H. Ashworth’s “Virtual universities

could produce only virtual learning” published in The Chronicle of Higher Education (Sept 6, 1996), wherein he lamented “Abhorrent as it may be to some politicians and business leaders to leave control of the content and quality of courses and degree programs in the hands of faculty members, encouraging new entities to offer credentials will only exacerbate the confusion that employers already face as they try to determine which institutions and degrees signify the level of learning or competence that they seek in their employees” (abstract) and, in The Chronicle of Higher Education (July 21, 2000), titled “Faculty Union opposes undergraduate degrees earned entirely through distance learning,” staff writer Dan Carnevale reported that “The American Federation of Teachers passed a resolution last week that opposes undergraduate degrees that are earned entirely online...Passed without objection, the resolution states that an undergraduate degree earned entirely from a distance is not of the same quality as a degree that was earned in a classroom” (abstract).

No longitudinal studies were identified among the publications selected for inclusion in the study. Such studies may appear among the 194 “undetermined” publications, or elsewhere in the literature not contained in the four databases searched for this study.

### Findings

Descriptive studies do not necessarily result in positive or negative findings, but rather describe a phenomenon or a set of phenomena at a point in time or over a period of time. In this study the perceptions of the quality and utility of external degrees expressed by the graduates of external degree programs, the employers of those graduates and the

academy were investigated by searching the literature published over 25 years for the purpose of identifying the perceptions (positive and negative) and tracking those perceptions over the period of the study. The findings are that (1) over 25 years (1979-2003) the quality and utility of external degrees have been a subject of interest to graduates, employers and the academy, (2) that the degree of interest of the three groups has varied over time as reflected in the number of studies and articles published in the literature reviewed for the study, and (3) each of the three groups appears to have held a different but generally consistent perception over time. It also appears from the data that over the 25-year period of the study (1) graduates' perceptions of their external degrees was strongly positive, (2) employers' perceptions of their employees' external degrees was somewhat positive, and (3) the academy's perceptions of external degrees was somewhat negative. While there are fluctuations in the degree of interest in the subject as reflected in the number of publications found in the literature, these findings seem consistent over time.

#### Uncontrolled Factors Affecting Outcomes

The principal uncontrolled factors in the study are (1) that all the data may not be available among the literature databases searched and (2) the quality of the data resulting from the search. In the first case it is true that publications that appear to contain the data sought for the study are not found in the four literature databases searched. In fact, an online Google search solely for the term "external degree" produces in excess of 53 million (53, 000,000) "hits" or returns. A cursory review of these returns reveals that some of the articles and publications which are included in this study also appear among

the Google returns, and many articles which are clearly pertinent to the study appear in Google but are not among the articles and publications in the four databases searched.

The second uncontrolled factor is the quality of the data. There was no attempt in the study to ascribe any element of quality to the literature included in the study. Where the data resulted from scholarly research as reported in a dissertation or scholarly or professional journal or paper, some measure of quality might be assumed. Where the data are simply a report or “opinion piece” in any publication that describes the perception(s) of one or more of the groups studied, no measure of quality can be assigned even though such data remain valid for the purpose of the study.

#### Observations on the Data

While there is no logical or statistical determinant for what constitutes “sufficient” data in a descriptive study, richer data would more clearly describe the phenomenon under investigation. The study methodology specifically required that the perceptions expressed in the research or article or other publication must be determined from the title or abstract, or text where available. Such was the case with the 108 articles included in the study. To enrich the data set, the researcher would be required to obtain and review each of the 194 “undetermined” articles, or search elsewhere online for the text in order to determine first whether it was relevant to the study and then to assess and record the perceptions expressed therein. The result of this process could alter the outcomes and thereby the findings previously described.

A weakness in the data may be the subjective attribution of perceptions to one or more of the subject groups (graduates, employers, academy) and the further subjective

assignment of positive or negative value to the perceptions. Another observer may reach different conclusions regarding these perceptions and report a different result. This issue was resolved for this study by the data audit performed by an experienced researcher and educator who reached conclusions nearly identical to those reported in the study.

### Incidental Findings

While not an element of the study, the search methodology incidentally illuminated themes or trends in the literature of distance education over the 25-year period of the study. The repetitive nature of the application of the search terms to the four databases resulted in multiple returns of multiple articles not meeting the criteria for inclusion in the study, but indicative of the events occurring in the field of distance education. Taken in sum, these events portray a 25-year chronology in the environment of distance education that enriches the study by providing context to the data.

The events or themes or trends were simply annotated as individual items of interest appeared, or as items seemed to recur as each year of the literature was subjected to the search methodology. The raw annotations are provided by year in Table 2.

Table 2

### Incidental Findings

Year	Notes
1979	Link between university and work...administration/delivery/evaluation of external degree programs...accreditation issues...diploma mills
1980	University curriculum/career linkage
1981	(No notes)
1982	Distance education for disabled..."cooperative education"...corporate education

Table 2

## Incidental Findings (Cont'd)

1983	Career education...corporate education...vocational ed...tuition assistance for external education...ASHE reports on distance learning...1 <sup>st</sup> guide to external degree programs..."distance education" appears in ITOF..."online education" appears
1984	Use of technology to teach at remote sites...making distance learning part of the overall methodology for higher education/certification
1985	Corporate education...continuing education
1986	1 <sup>st</sup> "employer-supported education"...Meg Benke PhD dissertation recommends more research on evaluation of external degrees...more articles on instructional technology ... emphasis on program characteristics and technologies...use of "microcomputers" for DE...teleconferencing...
1987	"Employer supported education" increases..."Executive MBA"....."Corporate College"...television and satellite communications...tuition costs and student loan debt...quality education...more diploma mills
1988	"University-community partnerships"..."corporate campus"...nontraditional teacher preparation...vocational education...Chronicle of Higher Education appears...more "distance education"..."microcomputers"...tech innovations..."teleconferencing"... computer conferencing
1989	New technologies...Distance learning effectiveness...programmatic issues in DL...Distance teaching...Microcomputer-based technologies...Council of Graduate Schools policy statement on DE
1990	"Distance Ed" replaces "Independent Study"...Corporate education and training...CCTV ...TV/Telecourses...employer-supported ed increased...Schumann dissertation on CMU from within CMU
1991	"Online education" appears in ITOF, Chronicle of Higher Education...10 articles on DE in Chronicle of Higher Education...satellite communications ...Channel One...Online education by 1-way and 2-way video...Edison State College
1992	University of Phoenix graduates 50 MBA...corporate/university partnerships...computer conferencing...comparisons of traditional and distance learning...1 <sup>st</sup> person in US to gain masters degree entirely online
1993	"Online education" increases..."Intellectual Property"...corporate learning centers... "typical college student no longer white male 18-22"
1994	"Distance ed" appears in Academic Search Premiere under newspapers...17 articles on DE in Chronicle of Higher Ed...THE (Technology in Higher Education) Journal online... videoconferencing...Peterson's Guide...guides to external and alternate degree programs ..."On-the-job" higher education
1995	18 "online ed" articles in ITOF, 17 in Chronicle of Higher Ed..."Virtual University" (re Western Governors University)..."Exporting" distance degree programs..."Virtual Online U."... Online library resources

Table 2

## Incidental Findings (Cont'd)

1996	35 articles on DE in Chronicle of Higher Ed... "Going the Distance" university/public TV collaboration... Educational TV... PBS (Public Broadcasting System)
1997	40 articles on DE in Chronicle of Higher Ed, 33 in ITOF... Bear's guide to external degrees... Elite universities entering distance education field... more diploma mills in Chronicle... Collaboration between telecom industry and IHE... community colleges and distance education
1998	86 articles on DE in Chronicle of Higher Ed... online courses for on-campus students... on-campus DE enrollments threat to small colleges... Federal alignment of Higher Education Act with DE... Online corporate MBA programs... Web-based instruction... Index of DE conferences... Legal action against diploma mills
1999	98 articles on DE in Chronicle of Higher Ed... Traditional universities creating for-profit DE programs... IHE creating "virtual high schools"... "virtual laboratories"... Jones International University accredited... "What's the Difference?"... Student loans approved for DE... "Virtual corporate university"... Globalization, "International U." for developing countries...
2000	201 DE articles in Chronicle of Higher Ed, 66 articles specific to online ed... 51 online ed articles in ITOF, 126 in ASP... Distance Education Training Council appears in ITOF... American Distance Education Consortium... Legislative questioning of quality of DE... Acceptance of American E-degrees by other countries
2001	162 DE articles in Chronicle of Higher Ed, 52 online ed articles... 126 online ed articles in ASP, 56 in ITOF... Harvard goes online... web-based DE... Ed Department permits career and COT accrediting agency to accredit online programs... For-profits vs. failed DE programs at traditional IHE... assessment of nontraditional and online degree programs... legislature eases restrictions on financial aid (12-credit rule)
2002	112 DE articles in Chronicle of Higher Ed, 45 online ed... 64 online articles in ASP, 74 in ITOF... Workforce development and employee training (NT adults)... failed (or abandoned) DE initiatives at IHE... corporate universities... HBC (Historically Black Colleges) and online education... "hybrid teaching"... "blended learning"
2003	52 DE, 20 online ed articles in Chronicle of Higher Ed... 474 online ed articles in ITOF, 66 in ASP... Legislation to prohibit diploma mills and fake degrees... business/corporate partnerships with traditional universities... "virtual high schools"... "hybrid education" programs... Ed Department expands financial aid for DE

The notes in the table do not reflect a directed attempt to describe the environment during the period of the study, or to relate these environmental factors to the data. However, examination of the data in light of these environmental factors does aid in interpretation of the results and strengthens the study findings. Possible implications of these incidental findings are presented in the following chapter.

### Summary of Results

One hundred and eight (108) articles were selected from the literature reviewed as conclusively meeting the criteria for the study. An additional 194 articles were identified as appearing to be relevant to the study, but providing insufficient information in the title, abstract or body to conclusively include or exclude the article.

Of the 108 articles selected for the study, 91 addressed perceptions of the quality of external degrees and 58 addressed perceptions of the utility of external degrees. Sixty-two (62) perceptions were expressed by graduates, of which 55 were positive and six were negative. Thirty perceptions were expressed by employers, of which 17 were positive and 13 were negative, and 46 perceptions were expressed by the academy, of which 21 were positive and 25 were negative.

The tabled and graphed data indicate that graduates' perceptions of external degrees were strongly positive, employers' perceptions of external degrees were somewhat positive, and the academy's perception of external degrees has been somewhat negative. The data also indicate that of the three groups the degree of importance or interest attached to external degrees was greatest for graduates and least for employers, with the academy displaying somewhat greater interest or importance than employers.

This was consistent with the number of perceptions expressed in the literature reviewed over the period of the study.

The number of publications or articles per year suggests that interest in the subject of external degrees has varied over the period of the study, beginning with comparatively high but declining activity for the first three to four years of the study (1979-1982) and continuing at a lower but slightly increasing level of activity until 1995-1996, then increasing until the year 2000 before declining to the last year of the study (2003). One notable observation from the data is that it appears that a change in the academy's activity preceded by one or two years a similar change in activity by employers. The reason for these changes in activity are the subject for future investigation. There does not appear to be a corresponding change in activity for graduates, although the degree of change for graduates appears to be higher than that of employers or the academy, especially during the last eight years of the study.

There is too little data to adequately describe the phenomenon under study. It is possible that analysis of the 194 articles identified as "undetermined" might remedy the lack of richness in the data.

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter the results of the data analysis were presented in text, graph and table format, followed by an interpretation of the results in terms of practical versus statistical significance. The relationship of the results to prior research in the field was described and the study findings were reported. Uncontrolled factors that may have influenced the outcomes of the data collection were addressed, as were the perceived

weaknesses in the data. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results and a brief introduction to Chapter 5.

In the following chapter the broader implications of the study are discussed including the theoretical and practical implications given the limitations of the study. The findings are summarized and the research question answered, followed by recommendations for further research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the research addressing procedural adjustments, issues concerning replication and suggesting new questions arising from the research.

## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSIONS

As described in the preceding chapters the learning outcomes of external or nontraditional or distance education programs have long been the subject of educational research, while the practical outcomes, i.e. the academic credentials (degrees) obtained through participation in external or nontraditional programs have received less attention. The perceived value of the credentials has substantial meaning for graduates of such programs, especially with regard to the negotiability of the credential to obtain or improve employment and for access to continuing higher education. Where the perceived quality of the credential is favorable, then the negotiability (utility) of the credential is enhanced.

The results of the data analyzed in this study suggested that graduates of external or nontraditional or distance degree programs have consistently over time highly valued their academic credential, while employers of these graduates have tended over the same period to value external degrees less highly, but still favorably. The academy (higher education) appears to have been consistently somewhat less approving over the twenty-five years of the study, although this may be in the process of changing as more traditional colleges and universities enter the external degree program market.

These results have meaning for graduates, employers and the academy in that as the number of persons making use of external degree programs increases, and as the

number of higher education institutions entering the external degree program market increases, the perceptions of the quality and utility (negotiability) of the academic credentials obtained gains in importance. Graduates will select programs that are viewed to be of value in gaining or improving employment and improving access to continuing higher education. Employers will likely continue to become more informed and discriminating of externally obtained credentials, as will the academy, for their individual purposes. And, both the academy and employers have a growing stake in providing for the educational needs of business and industry and accommodating the growing market for external degree programs.

In this chapter a review of the problem, research methodology and results is followed by a discussion of the broader implications of the research, including implications suggested by the incidental findings. The limitations of the study are revisited, then the study findings are summarized and the research question is answered. Recommendations for procedural adjustments, replication and further research are proposed. A brief summary concludes the chapter.

### Problem and Purpose

The problem investigated in this study is the absence of empirical research concerning the perceptions of the quality and utility of academic credentials obtained through external or distance academic degree programs as reported by graduates, employers and the academy in scholarly and professional print media during the 25-year period 1979-2003.

The purpose of this descriptive study was to describe and track the perceptions of the quality and utility of external academic degrees of graduates, employers and the academy over a 25-year period as described in scholarly and professional print media. The literature from 1979 to 2003 was analyzed to identify trends in the perceptions of the three groups and from this analysis to develop conclusions leading to implications for the field of distance education.

### Review of Methodology

The methodology employed was an electronic search of the literature from 1979 through 2003 by means of four online databases, each focused on a specific element of the literature. Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI) was searched for relevant dissertations, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) was searched for articles, papers and proceedings specific to the field of education, Academic Search Premiere (ASP) provided access to relevant electronically published academic and professional literature, and InfoTrac One File (ITOF) was used to fill apparent gaps in the academic and professional literature and to add a broader dimension to the overall search. All four databases were found and searched online at the Montana State University Libraries website.

A specific set of “primary” and “refining” search terms were used. The terms were determined from language in common use at the beginning of the 25-year period of the study combined with those more recently encountered in the literature. The primary search terms were applied first to all four databases, then each of the refining search term were applied to narrow the focus of the search. The primary search resulted in over

50,000 total “hits” or “returns” for all four databases, reduced to slightly over 25,000 returns after application of the refining search terms. It is important to note that the literature search was extremely repetitive and duplicative, meaning that the number of “returns” is not indicative of the number of discrete, individual publications/titles reviewed during the search. No attempt was made to determine this number.

The criteria for including publications (dissertations, academic and professional papers and journal/periodical articles, conference proceedings, etc.) in the study were that it (1) must be found online in one of the four databases searched, (2) that it must indicate in the title, abstract (if provided) and/or text (if available online) that it addresses the perceptions of graduates, employers and/or the academy of the quality and/or utility of external degrees. Where such perceptions were clearly discernable the citation (and abstract and text) were first archived, then tabled according to year of publication, database (DAI, ERIC, ASP, ITOF), group (graduate, employer, academy), subject (quality, utility) and perception (positive, negative). Where the title or abstract indicated relevance to the study, but was insufficiently clear as to warrant inclusion in the study the publication was separately archived as “inconclusive.” The intent of archiving these inconclusive publications was for the purpose of further investigation, should the result of the study warrant such interest.

### Summary of the Results

The literature search produced 108 publications that met the criteria for inclusion in the study. An additional 194 publications were identified as potentially meeting the criteria for the study and were archived separately. The 108 publications were tabled in

Microsoft Excel as previously described. One table lists each individual article by year for 25 years, i.e., a table of “individual results.” The second table lists the cumulative total of publications per year, or the “cumulative results” of the literature search. The cumulative results table was analyzed visually and graphically (in MS Excel) to produce the results of the study.

The results of the analysis reflected the following:

(1) perceptions of quality outweighed perceptions of utility by a factor of almost three to two consistently over time.

(2) graduates’ perceptions of the quality and utility of external degrees was almost exclusively positive, and consistently so over 25 years.

(3) employers’ perceptions were consistently somewhat positive, valuing external degrees less than graduates but more than the academy.

(4) the academy’s perception of external degrees was consistently somewhat negative over the course of the study.

The results of the analysis also suggested that interest in the subject of external degrees, as indicated by the number of articles published was not uniform across 25 years. Interest appeared to be high, but declining, during the early 1980s, then gradually increased until about 1996-1997 when the number of articles published increased sharply, only to fall off as sharply in 2002-2003. Graphing the total number of search returns (not discrete publications) over the period of the study suggested that there might have been a proportionally higher number of articles published during the first two years of the study, strengthening the observation that external degrees were a subject of attention in 1979-

1982. No attempt was made to determine the cause(s) of the perceived increase or decrease in interest.

### Discussion of Broader Implications

#### External Degrees and Outcomes

The principal implication is that there appears to be little empirical research focused on the outcomes of external degree programs, i.e., the quality and practical utility of the degree as defined in this study. The search of the literature found that there were innumerable dissertations and studies of degree programs and program participants. Among the topics of the research were participant demographics and characteristics such as purpose, motivation, persistence and learning outcomes, instructional methods, course and program design, management and support, and program administration and assessment. This observation is echoed in Berge and Mrozowski's 2001 ten-year (1990-1999) review of the literature of distance education on which this study is modeled. In their review the authors found that "design issues, interactivity and active learning, and learner characteristics dominated" the literature and that "The dearth of research in the area of policy and management issues reflects the field's focus on issues within the classroom and between the distance learner and the instructor" (pp. 13-14).

The bulk of the research reflective of the purpose and objectives of this study is more descriptive of participant characteristics and course and program design and management than of post-program graduate outcomes. A comparatively small number of empirical studies directly addressed employment and educational outcomes associated with obtaining an academic degree by external or nontraditional means. Much of the

relevant literature consists of descriptions of the perceived quality and utility of external degrees as voiced by graduates, employers and the academy in non-empirical articles, papers and “opinion pieces” or pseudo-empirical studies whose purpose appears to be promotional in nature. For example, among the 108 publications included in this study three are surveys of graduates and employers conducted at ten-year intervals by the Distance Education Training Council (1984, 1994, 2001), all based on self-reported results from member institutions.

Examples of empirical research include Haenni’s (1981) study of university graduate deans (the academy) regarding attitudes toward external degrees as credentials for access to graduate programs, Benke’s (1986) doctoral study of manufacturing employers’ (employers) perceptions of external degrees in terms of their negotiability for employment and advancement, and Thompson’s (2000) comparison of student outcomes for graduates (graduates) of a university’s residential and distance learning programs in terms of usefulness for employment and access to graduate study and licensure. In fact, a review of the 108 included articles suggests that empirical research in this particular area of the field of distance education was more active during the first fifteen years (1979-1996) of the study than in the following ten. This observation may be affected by the study limitation of searching only the literature found in four specific online databases. Evaluation of the literature found in other electronic databases may provide additional or different results.

The implication is that while there is a dearth of research on the demographic, programmatic and administrative issues associated with distance education there is a paucity of research on the practical “usefulness” of academic credentials (degrees)

obtained through non-traditional means. While the research in distance education focuses on the various individual elements of external degree programs the actual outcomes of those programs—the credentials obtained and used to improve personal status or to gain or improve employment or to gain access to higher education—receive comparatively little attention. Since the research extant does indicate that external degrees are sought by participants principally for the outcomes described, then one might conclude that this area of the field of distance education is underserved and merits increased attention.

#### External Degrees and Economics

A second practical implication may be one of economics associated with quality and utility. The research indicates that external degree programs serve populations of students that either cannot participate in or, to a lesser extent, choose not to participate in traditional, campus-based degree programs. Many of the 108 publications included in the study speak to “for-profit” educational institutions or organizations, particularly in the last ten years of the study (although, several articles appear in the 1979-1981 timeframe). In the baseline Sharp and Sosdian (1978) report these are termed “free-standing” institutions or enterprises designed and operated specifically for the purpose of providing access to the academic credentials sought by the non-traditional population they serve. These academic enterprises, unlike accredited institutions of higher education conceivably arose not from a sense of altruism to serve the academic interests of the non-traditional population, but to profit from selling an educational product to an underserved niche market. This generally negative perception remains associated with for-profit

higher education throughout the literature especially with regard to “diploma mills,” and with educational institutions and consortia that grant substantial academic credit for “life experience.” An early example of this perception appears in the baseline study for this research where Sharp and Sosdian caution prospective students about diploma mills in *External Degrees: How well do they serve their holders* (1979). “A more recent example is provided an article published in the May 5, 2004 edition of the Bozeman Daily Chronicle titled “Some teachers using bogus advanced degrees to get raises” in which the author writes “Around the country, the problem of diploma-mill degrees may be getting worse, since the Internet has made it easier for such businesses to operate...” In the same article the author quotes John Barth, director of postsecondary education for the U. S. Education Department, “This is an area of increasing concern on the federal level” and asserts that “Diploma mills have become increasingly savvy at posing as legitimate schools, creating impressive websites and providing fake transcripts for their ‘alumni’.”

These negative perceptions initially resulted in strong disapproval among the academy in particular both in terms of the basic purpose of the enterprise, i.e., the “business” as opposed to the “discipline” of higher education, and objections to the questionable quality of the educational experience of the external programs (and the credentials so obtained). Early examples of this disapproval are found in this study in Drake’s observations regarding the fledgling Nova University published in Change Magazine (May-June 1979) and the resulting exchange of opinions, both positive and negative, as reflected in articles by Ashworth, Vonk and Brown in Phi Delta Kappan (April 1979). Also, while probably in use well before 1979, the term “Diploma Mill” appears first in this study in Sharp and Sosdian’s 1979 report as a derogatory appellation

and a caution to potential participants in external degree programs offered by stand-alone or early for-profit educational enterprises. The term (and attitude) appears regularly throughout the body of literature searched for this study, is frequently found among the 108 publications included over the 25 years of the study and is commonly applied to many for-profit educational enterprises today. This issue of concern for the “quality” of external degrees is reflected in the articles included in the study indicated by the nearly three-to-two emphasis on quality over utility among graduates, employers and the academy.

At least partially in response to the success of for-profit institutions of higher education increased numbers of traditional institutions have begun offering comparable off-campus programs, although a number of traditional institutions have long offered non-traditional or external degree programs. Early examples of such institutions include The Michigan State University and the University of Minnesota, and more recently (in the 25-year period of the study) Central Michigan University, Webster College (now Webster University) and The University of Maryland which particularly marketed their external degree programs to the U.S. military on installations and in metropolitan centers nearby, both in the United States and overseas.

A major marketing factor for this and similar institutions was that the programs were offered by an accredited institutions of higher education, rather than a for-profit or other unaccredited or dubiously accredited institution or enterprise, and were of superior educational quality. The growth of such external degree programs among traditional institutions has been strong, from the 244 programs offered by 134 institutions (mostly since 1972) serving approximately 54,000 students reported by Sharp and Sosdian in

1976-77 (p. 15) to virtually all public institutions of higher education in the United States serving nearly two million students in 2003, nearly doubling in numbers solely during the period 2000-2003 (Sloan-C, 2004).

### External Degrees and Credentials

Despite the proliferation of external degree programs to serve the burgeoning distance learner market, the issue of the quality of the academic credential remains important, as evidenced in the literature. The issue is well described in the 1999 Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications The Distance Learner's Guide as follows:

*Is a Degree Earned via Technology Equal to One Earned on Campus?* You may be skeptical that a degree earned via technology at a distance will be valued as highly as one earned through on-campus study. You may be wondering whether such a degree might be judged to be inferior when you look for a job or apply to graduate school. The answer to this understandable concern is that both employers and graduate schools now generally consider degrees earned via technology at a distance equivalent to those earned on campus. Most colleges and universities are genuinely committed to ensuring that distance degrees represent the same overall quality as traditional degree programs. At some institutions, your transcript will look identical to that received through on-campus study.

In the past, there has been prejudice against many degrees earned from a distance rather than in the traditional way. Such prejudice still exists among some employers and some graduate schools. However, these attitudes are rapidly changing as colleges and universities strive to create excellent distance learning programs – and as former distance learners demonstrate their worth in the workplace and in top-notch graduate schools (p 17).

In contrast, note the American Federation of Teachers 2000 resolution that opposed undergraduate degrees earned from a distance as not of the same quality as a degree that was earned in a classroom (Carneval, 1999). Especially with regard to the academy's perception of the quality of external degrees obtained through nontraditional

programs as academic credentials for employment in higher education, read the remarks of program graduates and administrators of Nova Southeastern University and Capella University reported in Gabriela Montell's article in the August 6 2003 edition of The Chronicle of Higher Education entitled "Battling the Stigma of Nontraditional Credentials" (Chronicle of Higher Education, 9/3/2003). In the article Montell suggests that interviews with graduates, professors and administrators at traditional universities suggest that "academe has not yet fully embraced job candidates with nontraditional doctorates" and "While employers in industry seem receptive to job applicants with distance-education credentials...academic circles continue to be less welcoming." Montell goes on to say that "Even if a hiring committee has heard of the institution, the stigma associated with "distance" or "online" learning can still be a strike against a candidate...In fact, the stigma is so great that some administrators avoid using words like "online" to describe their nontraditional programs."

The practical implication of the continued questioning of the "quality" of external degree programs is that traditional colleges and universities must actively market programs on the basis of not only academic quality but the superior quality of outcomes, i.e., the usefulness or "utility" or negotiability of the degree for work and higher education, compared to their for-profit competitors. This has been a major marketing factor of for-profit educational enterprises such as The University of Phoenix, Nova University, Capella and Jones International University (all regionally accredited within the past ten years). This implication may have been affected by the entry into the external degree market over the past ten years of elite or highly recognizable "name brand" public and private higher education institutions such as Harvard, Cornell, Ohio State University,

Stanford,, Vanderbilt and Massachusetts Institute of Technology and such nationwide educational consortia as The Western Governors' University and the National Universities Degree Consortium. The entry of these name-brand institutions into the external degree market has enhanced the credibility and perception of academic integrity to distance education and the credentials obtained from participation in such programs (Chronicle of Higher Education, 6/20/97; Chronicle of Higher Education, 1/14/00). For example, a 2004 survey conducted of its members by the Society for Human Resource Management found that "The quality of an online degree program is defined by the name and reputation of the education provider. The name of the university providing the online degree program ranks high in importance" (SHRM, 7/20/2004).

A related implication is that marketing of external degrees as useful credentials suggests that such efforts should be made in cooperation with business and industry. Long a practice of community colleges and technical and vocational institutions, as well as some traditional institutions of higher education, in the analysis of the literature for this study it was found with increasing frequency from about 1997, reference to university/ corporate partnerships and "corporate colleges" sponsored in cooperation with traditional and for-profit institutions. The strong growth in this area of external or distance education reflects the growing trend toward industry workforce education, training and development in cooperation with traditional institutions of higher education, as well as for-profit educational organizations.

### Implications of Incidental Findings

Some implications for students, corporations and institutions are indicated by the incidental findings. For students the implications are that access to academic degrees by nontraditional means continues to improve, that the means to obtain their degrees are becoming more diverse and flexible and that the barriers to the financial resources needed to participate in external degree programs have been or are in the process of being removed. Furthermore, the entry into the external degree market of mainstream and elite traditional colleges and universities adds legitimacy to the academic credential obtained. This will in turn improve the negotiability of the degree with regard to employment and access to further higher education.

For corporations, i.e., business and industry, the growth of partnerships with traditional institutions of higher education facilitates workforce education and improvement, enhances access to higher education for employees and, again, lends legitimacy to the academic credentials obtained. The use of technology-enhanced corporate learning centers linked to the partnering institution(s) improves the efficiency and effectiveness of corporate education both locally and word-wide. Traditional institutions can now develop and deliver programs tailored specifically for the corporate “customer,” once the sole purview of for-profit educational enterprise.

For traditional institutions of higher education the implications suggested by the incidental findings include the economic benefit of access to an educational market previously served principally by the for-profits, while formal partnerships with business and industry foster the development and sharing of creative and entrepreneurial opportunities. The recent implementation of “blended learning” and “hybrid instruction”

offers faculty flexibility in instructional methodology and conceivably increases faculty time and opportunities for research and service, and provides educational program administrators like flexibility to design and produce programs tailored to the wants and needs of the widest range of students. The effects of governmental efforts to legitimize and provide greater access to distance education, and to assail fraudulent educational enterprises will enhance the credibility and desirability of traditional institutions' programs.

#### Limitations of the Study

The principal limitation of the study is that the literature sought to be reviewed must be accessible online, and specifically from one or more of four electronic databases: Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI), Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Academic Search Premiere (ASP) and InfoTrac One File (ITOF). The search of these four databases resulted in the identification of 312 publications, of which 108 conclusively met the criteria for inclusion in the study with the remaining 194 indicating potential, but not conclusive, relevance to the study. The 194 publications were archived separately for future review. A related issue was that the search terms employed were not useful when searching InfoTrac One File. The search routine for this database was significantly different from those for DAI, ERIC and ASP and necessitated the use of alternate terms to produce an effective search of the literature in this database.

### Summary of the Findings

#### Answer to the Research Question

The research question addressed in this study was: What is the nature and degree of change of the perceptions of the quality and utility of external (distance) degrees by graduates, employers and the academy over a period of 25 years (1979-2003) as presented in scholarly and professional literature, and what are the implications in the field of distance education? The data reveal that:

(a) the perceptions of the quality and utility of external degrees held by graduates appear to have been consistently positive over twenty-five years.

(b) the perceptions of the quality and utility of external degrees held by employers appear to have been somewhat positive over twenty-five years.

(c) the perceptions of the quality and utility of external degrees held by the academy appears to have been somewhat negative over twenty-five years.

Additionally, perceptions of quality (not distinguished by group) outweighed perceptions of utility by a ratio of three to two.

The implications for the study of distance education are:

(a) external degree program outcomes, especially with regard to the perceived quality and practical negotiability (utility) of the credentials obtained requires more study.

(b) that traditional universities seeking to compete in the market for external degree programs must demonstrate, especially in comparison with for-profit educational enterprises, the superior quality of their credential in terms of negotiability to the holder.

(c) that the academy's continued skepticism of the quality of distance learning in general and of distance or external or nontraditional academic credentials in particular remains a barrier to employment in traditional higher education.

Further implications indicated by the incidental findings are that:

(a) access to academic degrees by nontraditional means and the legitimacy and negotiability of external degrees appears to be improving.

(b) the growth of corporate/university partnerships enhances workforce education and improvement, and improves the efficiency and effectiveness of corporate education both locally and world-wide.

(c) traditional higher education institutions are enjoying the economic benefit of access to expanded educational markets and partnering with business and industry in creative and entrepreneurial opportunities.

(d) innovations in technology, design, delivery and administration of external degree programs are increasing instructional flexibility and efficiency resulting in programs tailored to the wants and needs of the widest range of students.

In concert with federal legislation to legitimize and support distance education and to debunk fraudulent educational enterprises, the increased participation of traditional institutions in external degree programs will enhance the credibility and negotiability of external degrees.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

While this study provided information regarding the perceptions of graduates, employers and the academy of the quality and utility of external degrees of the span of

twenty-five years, it also resulted in the identification of potential areas for other research, including the following:

(a) The exclusion of the 194 “inconclusive” publications potentially affected the result of this study, and should be investigated in order to more accurately describe the phenomenon.

(b) The study should also be continued beyond the year 2003, since the indications from the search were that activity in the field of distance education was in flux at the end of the 25-year period.

(c) A review of the literature for 2004-2005 may illuminate significant changes in the perceptions of one or more of the groups studied (graduates, employers, academy).

(d) Environmental factors were not investigated in this study. The external influences affecting the perceptions expressed in the literature by graduates, employers and the academy were not examined. While some environmental factors were expressed or implied, or could be inferred from the literature, this remains a rich field for future study. The overall review of the body of literature indicated a wide array of environmental factors and developing themes concerning external degree outcomes that merits scholarly investigation.

(e) Sources of data other than the four databases used for this study should be examined. For example, a simple Google search for “distance degree” resulted in 1.53 million hits.

(f) Studies should be conducted periodically for all three groups (graduates, employers, academy) and the public, to determine whether the perceptions recorded in this study continue to change or remain the same over time.

(g) A study to determine how the perceptions of any of the three groups change given a “name brand” institution associated with the academic credential obtained through participation in an external or distance degree program.

### Procedural Adjustments

The search methodology employed was repetitive and duplicative. This may have been appropriate to ensure a comprehensive search of the literature. The sheer volume of literature in the field requires that the source(s) selected must be limited. However, given the decision to search solely online, either selection of fewer but more extensive database(s) or a more effective search methodology may have proved more productive and less time-consuming. The number of articles consigned to the “undetermined” archive was sufficient to potentially alter the outcome of the study. A more effective search technique might have facilitated a more complete investigation of these articles. An opposing argument might be made that the search methodology repeatedly brought publications (titles, abstracts) to light that revealed developing themes in the literature thereby suggesting developing trends in the field and avenues for further research.

### Replication

Successful replication of the study is unlikely, or at least questionable. The databases used for the literature search are constantly under revision, and as such represent constantly changing data sets. Replication would be further complicated by a change in the online search format for InfoTrac One File, which originally required the use of different search terms than the other three databases, but now is similar to the online search format for Dissertation Abstracts International, Education Resources

Information Center and Academic Search Premiere.

A further complicating factor is the subjective nature of the assessment of the articles for relevance to the study, and the determination of whether the perceptions expressed by were positive or negative and, to a lesser extent, the source of the perceptions (graduate, employer, academy). Finally, the same subjective assessment would be required of the data auditor who, whether the same person or another, may not reach identical conclusions a second time. Therefore, while the study might with difficulty be replicated it is possible, even likely, that a different outcome would be obtained.

### Summary

The chapter was introduced with a recapitulation of the research purpose and methodology, followed by a synopsis of the data collected and the result of the data analysis. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data were described with respect to the practical implications of the study, and the study limitations were revisited with respect to the overall conduct of the study and the results obtained. The research question posed in Chapter 1 was answered and recommendations were made for adjusting research procedures and potentially replicating the study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INCLUDED ARTICLE ARCHIVE

Item	Year	Article
1	1979	<p>Author(s): Doyle, Richard J.</p> <p>Title: The Results of Graduate External Degree Programs: Some Emerging Patterns.</p> <p>Source: <i>Alternative Higher Education: The Journal of Nontraditional Studies</i> v4 n1 p48-60 Fall 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE511821</p> <p>Language: English</p>
2	1979	<p>Author(s): Drake, Christopher</p> <p>Title: Nova University: The Controversial Dream.</p> <p>Source: <i>Change</i> v11 n4 p16-18 May-Jun 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE511243</p> <p>Language: English</p>
3	1979	<p>Accession No: EJ197946</p> <p>Author(s): Ashworth, Kenneth H.</p> <p>Title: Why I Have Not Changed My Position.</p> <p>Source: <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> v60 n8 p574 Apr 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: EA511045</p> <p>Language: English</p>
4	1979	<p>Accession No: EJ197943</p> <p>Title: In Defense of the External Ed.D.</p> <p>Source: <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> v60 n8 p565-70 Apr 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: EA511042</p> <p>Language: English</p>

5	1979	<p>Accession No: EJ197944</p> <p>Author(s): Vonk, H. G. ; Brown, Robert G.</p> <p>Title: A Diller, A Dollar, A Saturday Scholar.</p> <p>Source: <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> v60 n8 p570-72 Apr 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: EA511043</p> <p>Language: English</p>
6	1979	<p>Author(s): Collins, Huntly</p> <p>Title: Corporate Campus: Learning Your Way to a Better Job.</p> <p>Source: <i>Change</i> v11 n5 p67-68 Jul-Aug 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE511581</p> <p>Language: English</p>
7	1979	<p>Accession No: EJ209718</p> <p>Author(s): Sharp, Laure M.; Sosdian, Carol P.</p> <p>Title: External Degrees: How Well Do They Serve Their Holders?</p> <p>Source: <i>Journal of Higher Education</i> v50 n5 p615-49 Sep-Oct 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE511743</p> <p>Language: English</p>
8	1979	<p>Title: A Historical and Philosophical Perspective on the External Degree.</p> <p>Authors: Boone, Edgar J.; Fox, Robert D.</p> <p>Source: <u>PJE. Peabody Journal of Education</u>; Apr79, Vol. 56 Issue 3, p159, 8p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DEGREES, Academic *EDUCATION, Higher United States</p> <p>Geographic Terms: UNITED States</p>

		ISSN: 0161-956X
9	1980	<p>Title: Traditional Versus Nontraditional Doctoral Programs: a Comparison of Selected Characteristics and an Analysis of Graduates' Perceptions of Processes and Outcomes.</p> <p>Author(s): Funk, Jacqueline Carr</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1980</p> <p>Pages: 00219</p> <p>Institution: University of Denver; 0061</p> <p>Source: DAI, 41, no. 08A, (1980): 3443</p>
10	1980	<p>Title: Students' Expectations of and Satisfaction with Institutional Goals in External and Conventional Degree Programs in a Community College.</p> <p>Author(s): Vinson, Kathleen Lee</p> <p>Degree: Ed.D.</p> <p>Year: 1980</p> <p>Pages: 00161</p> <p>Institution: University of Cincinnati; 0045</p> <p>Source: DAI, 41, no. 07A, (1980): 2886</p>
11	1980	<p>Title: Graduate Extension Degree: Is it Worth It?</p> <p>Author(s): McDougal, Larry Monroe</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1980</p> <p>Pages: 00209</p> <p>Institution: Saint Louis University; 0193</p> <p>Source: DAI, 41, no. 07A, (1980): 2883</p>

12	1980	<p>Title: An Evaluation of National University after Eight Years of Operation</p> <p>Author(s): Jacobsen, Adolf Marcelius Bergh</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1980</p> <p>Pages: 00151</p> <p>Institution: United States International University; 0239</p> <p>Source: DAI, 41, no. 03A, (1980): 0898</p>
13	1980	<p>Accession No: ED190004</p> <p>Title: Degrees of Diversity. Off-Campus Education in California.</p> <p>Corp Author(s): California State Postsecondary Education Commission, Sacramento.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; California; 1980-03-00</p> <p>Description: 205 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
14	1980	<p>Title: Malcolm Knowles On...</p> <p>Authors: Knowles, Malcolm S.</p> <p>Source: <u>Training &amp; Development Journal</u>; Apr80, Vol. 34 Issue 4, p40, 3p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *EMPLOYEE training personnel *OCCUPATIONAL training</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 6243 Vocational Rehabilitation Services</p> <p>ISSN: 0041-0861</p> <p>Accession Number: 9069687</p>

15	1980	<p>Title: A Descriptive Study of the George Peabody College for Teachers New Hampshire External Doctoral Degree Program in Program and Staff Development and of the Perceptions of its Participants</p> <p>Author(s): Smith, Linda Darwin</p> <p>Degree: Ed.D.</p> <p>Year: 1980</p> <p>Pages: 00234</p> <p>Institution: Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University; 0074</p> <p>Source: DAI, 42, no. 02A, (1980): 0535</p> <p>Subject(s):</p> <p>Descriptor: Education, Curriculum and Instruction</p> <p>Accession No: AAG8116049</p>
16	1981	<p>Title: Attitudinal Study of Graduate Deans Regarding External Graduate Degrees</p> <p>Author(s): Haenni, Eugene John</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1981</p> <p>Pages: 00269</p> <p>Institution: Southern Illinois University at Carbondale; 0209</p> <p>Source: DAI, 42, no. 10A, (1981): 4251</p>
17	1981	<p>Title: Educational Significance of a University Undergraduate, Nontraditional, External Degree Program</p> <p>Author(s): Newton, Michael Duff</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1981</p> <p>Pages: 00207</p> <p>Institution: Laurence University (California); 0567</p> <p>Source: DAI, 42, no. 07A, (1981): 2971</p>

18	1981	<p>Author(s): Brown, Lawrence A., Jr.</p> <p>Corp Author(s): University of Mid-America, Lincoln, NE.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Nebraska; 1981-04-00</p> <p>Description: 66 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p> <p>Report No: UMA-TR-5</p>
19	1982	<p>Title: A Study of the Graduates of the New College External Degree Program at the University of Alabama</p> <p>Author(s): Dice, Patricia Anne Carter</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1982</p> <p>Pages: 00151</p> <p>Institution: the University of Alabama; 0004</p> <p>Source: DAI, 44, no. 02A, (1982): 0398</p>
20	1982	<p>Title: An Alumni Evaluation of the External and Traditional Degree Programs at Northwood Institute</p> <p>Author(s): Firenze, Louis John</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1982</p> <p>Pages: 00139</p> <p>Institution: Michigan State University; 0128</p> <p>Source: DAI, 43, no. 05A, (1982): 1440</p>
21	1982	<p>Accession No: ED221085</p> <p>Title: Educational Significance of a University Undergraduate, Non-Traditional, External Degree Program.</p> <p>Author(s): Newton, Michael D.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; California; 1982-00-00</p>

		<p>Description: 207 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
22	1982	<p>Accession No: ED223894</p> <p>Title: A Full Partnership in Higher Education. AICS Special Report.</p> <p>Author(s): Talley, M. Gary</p> <p>Corp Author(s): Association of Independent Colleges and Schools, Washington, DC.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; District of Columbia; 1982-00-00</p> <p>Description: 24 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
23	1982	<p>Accession No: EJ261524</p> <p>Author(s): Arnstein, George</p> <p>Title: Credentialism: Why We Have Diploma Mills.</p> <p>Source: <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> v63 n8 p550-52 Apr 1982</p> <p>Clearinghouse: EA515238</p> <p>Language: English</p>
24	1983	<p>Title: Doctoral Study: an Examination of Selected Doctoral Programs Through Graduates' Perceptions</p> <p>Author(s): Lasley, Robert C.</p> <p>Degree: Ed.D.</p> <p>Year: 1983</p> <p>Pages: 00147</p> <p>Institution: University of La Verne; 0476</p> <p>Source: DAI, 44, no. 10A, (1983): 2992</p>

25	1983	<p>Accession No: ED244066</p> <p>Title: Accredited Home Study Degrees. Graduates and Employers Evaluate Their Worth.</p> <p>Corp Author(s): National Home Study Council, Washington, DC.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; District of Columbia; 1983-12-00</p> <p>Description: 48 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
26	1983	<p>Accession No: ED230715</p> <p>Title: Adult and Continuing Education in the Armed Services.</p> <p>Author(s): Miller, Harry</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Illinois; 1983-06-00</p> <p>Description: 37 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
27	1984	<p>Title: History of the Non-residential Degree Program at Illinois Wesleyan University, 1873-1910: a Study of a Pioneer External Degree Program in the United States</p> <p>Author(s): Allan, Henry Christopher, Jr.</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1984</p> <p>Pages: 00001</p> <p>Institution: The University of Chicago; 0330</p> <p>Source: DAI, 45, no. 01A, (1984): 0099</p>
28	1984	<p>Accession No: EJ302978</p> <p>Author(s): Johnson, Lynn G.</p> <p>Title: Faculty Receptivity to an Innovation: A Study of Attitudes toward External Degree Programs.</p> <p>Source: <i>Journal of Higher Education</i> v55 n4 p481-99 Jul-Aug 1984</p>

		<p>Clearinghouse: HE518315</p> <p>Language: English</p>
29	1984	<p>Title: Feasible of an Extended MPH Degree Program for Fully Employed Practicing Health Professionals.</p> <p>Authors: Wainwright, Robert B.<sup>1</sup>; Peterson, Malcom L.<sup>1</sup>; Farrier, Janis M.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Source: <u>American Journal of Public Health</u>; Nov84, Vol. 74 Issue 11, p1258, 5p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DEGREES, Academic *HUMAN services *MEDICAL education *MEDICINE -- Study &amp; teaching *PUBLIC health UNIVERSITY of Washington (Seattle, Wash.). -- School of Public Health &amp; Community Medicine Study &amp; teaching</p> <p>Geographic Terms: SEATTLE (Wash.) UNITED States WASHINGTON (State)</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 81331 Social Advocacy Organizations; 62 Health Care and Social Assistance</p>
30	1984	<p><i>Forbes</i>, Nov 19, 1984 v134 p316(6) The M.B.A. mills. (are MBA degrees useful?) (column) <i>John A. Byrne</i>.</p>
31	1985	<p>Title: An Appraisal of Two Programs Leading to the Master of Education Degree</p> <p>Author(s): Gold, David Jack</p> <p>Degree: Ed.D.</p> <p>Year: 1985</p> <p>Pages: 00131</p> <p>Institution: University of Virginia; 0246</p> <p>Source: DAI, 48, no. 10A, (1985): 2551</p>

32	1986	<p>Title: Manufacturing Employers' Perception of External Degree Graduates (Adult Students)</p> <p>Author(s): Benke, Meg</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1986</p> <p>Pages: 00125</p> <p>Institution: Ohio University; 0167</p> <p>Source: DAI, 47, no. 09A, (1986): 3279</p>
33	1986	<p>Title: Assessment of an Off-campus Bachelor of Arts in Management Program (California)</p> <p>Author(s): Michalski, Walter Josef</p> <p>Degree: Ed.D.</p> <p>Year: 1986</p> <p>Pages: 00369</p> <p>Institution: Pepperdine University; 6009</p> <p>Source: DAI, 47, no. 11A, (1986): 3945</p>
34	1986	<p>Accession No: EJ335489</p> <p>Author(s): Lehmann, Craig A. ; And Others</p> <p>Title: Allied Health and the Dilemma of Nontraditional Doctorates.</p> <p>Source: <i>Journal of Allied Health</i> v15 n2 p107-14 May 1986</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE516904</p> <p>Language: English</p>
35	1986	<p>Title: An Evaluation of the East Texas State University Industry and Technology Program at Carswell Air Force Base, Texas (Military)</p> <p>Author(s): Zagrocki, Richard Chester</p> <p>Degree: Ed.D.</p>

		<p>Year: 1986</p> <p>Pages: 00310</p> <p>Institution: East Texas State University; 0103</p> <p>Source: DAI, 47, no. 10A, (1986): 3685</p>
36	1987	<p>Accession No: ED290961</p> <p>Title: Effectiveness of Home Study.</p> <p>Author(s): Diehl, Grover E. ; And Others</p> <p>Corp Author(s): Air Univ., Gunter AFS, Ala. Extension Course Inst.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Alabama; 1987-05-00</p> <p>Description: 40 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
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102	2001	<p><u>The Chronicle of Higher Education</u>  <i>Information Technology</i>  From the issue dated November 23, 2001</p> <p><a href="http://chronicle.com/weekly/v48/i13/13a02902.htm">http://chronicle.com/weekly/v48/i13/13a02902.htm</a></p> <p><b>Texas Fines Distance-Learning Institution as Diploma Mill</b>  By Andrea L. Foster</p> <p>Copyright © 2005 by <u>The Chronicle of Higher Education</u></p>
103	2002	<p>Title:               The value of distance learning MBA programs to employers and employees</p> <p>Author(s):       Koresdoski, Amy Elizabeth</p> <p>Degree:           Ph.D.</p> <p>Year:              2002</p> <p>Pages:            00143</p> <p>Institution:       Nova Southeastern University; 1191</p> <p>Advisor:          Gertrude W. Abramson</p> <p>Source:           DAI, 64, no. 02A (2002): p. 369</p>
104	2002	<p>Title:               Pharmaceutical employers' perceptions of employees or applicants with e-degrees or online coursework</p> <p>Author(s):       Chaney, Elizabeth Griffin</p> <p>Degree:           Ph.D.</p> <p>Year:              2002</p> <p>Pages:            00100</p> <p>Institution:       Indiana State University; 0094</p> <p>Advisor:          Susan M. Powers</p> <p>Source:           DAI, 63, no. 08A (2002): p. 2778</p> <p>Standard No:     ISBN: 0-493-77454-8</p>

105	2002	<p>Accession No: EJ658585</p> <p>Author(s): Swisher, Anne K. ; Mandich, MaryBeth</p> <p>Title: The Use of Distance Education for a Bachelor's Degree to Master's Degree Transition Program in Physical Therapy.</p> <p>Source: <i>Journal of Allied Health</i> v31 n4 p217-21 Win 2002</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 0090-7421</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE540505</p> <p>Language: English</p>
106	2002	<p>Accession No: EJ651666</p> <p>Author(s): Chairs, Mary J. ; McDonald, Barbara J. ; Shroyer, Peg ; Urbanski, Becky ; Vertin, Diane</p> <p>Title: Meeting the Graduate Education Needs of Minnesota Extension Educators.</p> <p>Source: <i>Journal of Extension</i> v40 n4 Aug 2002</p> <p>Supplier No: <a href="http://www.joe.org/joe/2002august/rb4.shtml">http://www.joe.org/joe/2002august/rb4.shtml</a></p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 1077-5315</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE539957</p> <p>Language: English</p>
107	2003	<p>Title: An Interdisciplinary MPH via Distance Learning: Meeting the Educational Needs of Practitioners.</p> <p>Authors: Umble, Karl E. Shay, Sandra Sollecito, William</p> <p>Source: <u><i>Journal of Public Health Management &amp; Practice</i></u>; Mar/Apr2003, Vol. 9 Issue 2, p123, 13p</p> <p>Document Type:Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DISTANCE education *PUBLIC health personnel *PUBLIC health Training of Study &amp; teaching</p>

		Geographic Terms: UNITED States NAICS/Industry Codes: 62 Health Care and Social Assistance ISSN: 1078-4659 Accession Number: 9178122
108	2003	<i>Hawaii Business</i> , March 2003 v48 i9 p39(3) Digital diplomas: welcome to the world of virtual classrooms, where learning is mandatory, but presence is optional. <i>Jacy L. Youn</i> .

APPENDIX B

UNDETERMINED ARTICLE ARCHIVE

## UNDETERMINED ARTICLE ARCHIVE

Item	Year	Publication
1	1979	<p>Author(s): Knox, Alan B.</p> <p>Title: What Difference Does It Make?</p> <p>Source: <i>New Directions for Continuing Education</i> n3 p1-28 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE510459</p> <p>Language: English</p>
2	1979	<p>Title: A History of the External Degree in Britain and the United States.</p> <p>Author(s): Hayden, Dale Louis</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1979</p> <p>Pages: 00128</p> <p>Institution: The University of Alabama; 0004</p> <p>Source: DAI, 40, no. 01A, (1979): 0131</p> <p>SUBJECT(S)</p> <p>Descriptor: Education, History Of</p> <p>Accession No: AAG7915013</p>
3	1979	<p>Accession No: EJ206713</p> <p>Author(s): Sharp, Laure M.</p> <p>Title: External Degrees: Myths and Realities.</p> <p>Source: <i>Change</i> v11 n5 piv-v,70 Jul-Aug 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE511582</p> <p>Language: English</p>

4	1979	<p>Accession No: ED187197</p> <p>Title: University Without Walls External Degree Program. Final Report.</p> <p>Author(s): Strauss, Marvin</p> <p>Corp Author(s): Cincinnati Univ., OH.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Ohio; 1979-00-00</p> <p>Description: 46 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p> <p>Report No: HRP-0902108</p>
5	1979	<p>Title: A Historical and Philosophical Perspective on the External Degree.</p> <p>Authors: Boone, Edgar J.; Fox, Robert D.</p> <p>Source: PJE. <u>Peabody Journal of Education</u>; Apr79, Vol. 56 Issue 3, p159, 8p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DEGREES, Academic *EDUCATION, Higher United States</p> <p>Geographic Terms: UNITED States</p> <p>ISSN: 0161-956X</p> <p>Accession Number: 7592811</p>

6	1979	<p>Author(s): Hughes, Andrew S. ; Sullivan, Keith C.</p> <p>Title: Rigor or Rigor Mortis: The Dilemma of the External Doctorate.</p> <p>Source: <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> v60 n8 p561-64 Apr 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: EA511041</p> <p>Language: English</p> <p>Abstract: Describes the Open Access Study plan, an external degree program, of the Atlantic Institute of Education. (IRT)</p>
7	1979	<p>Accession No: EJ197962</p> <p>Author(s): Mayall, Michael M.</p> <p>Title: Attitudes of Chief Administrators toward External Doctoral Degrees.</p> <p>Source: <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> v60 n8 p610 Apr 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: EA511061</p> <p>Language: English</p>
8	1979	<p>Accession No: EJ213160</p> <p>Author(s): Trowbridge, Leslie W. ; Dech, James H.</p> <p>Title: Alternative Graduate Program in Science Education.</p> <p>Source: <i>Science Education</i> v63 n5 p641-47 Oct 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: SE526037</p> <p>Language: English</p>

9	1979	<p>Accession No: EJ215545</p> <p>Author(s): Brower, H. Terri</p> <p>Title: The External Doctorate.</p> <p>Source: <i>Nursing Outlook</i> v27 n9 p594-99 Sep 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE509049</p> <p>Language: English</p>
10	1979	<p>Title: State Coordination and External Degree Programs.</p> <p>Authors: Ashworth, Kenneth H.</p> <p>Source: <u>PJE. Peabody Journal of Education</u>; Apr79, Vol. 56 Issue 3, p195, 6p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *ACCREDITATION (Education) *EDUCATION, Higher *NON-formal education United States</p> <p>Geographic Terms: UNITED States</p> <p>ISSN: 0161-956X</p> <p>Accession Number: 7592823</p>
11	1979	<p>Title: Nontraditional Academic Programs: Issues and Perspectives.</p> <p>Authors: Kirkman, Ralph E.</p> <p>Source: <u>PJE. Peabody Journal of Education</u>; Apr79, Vol. 56 Issue 3, p157, 2p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DEGREES, Academic *EDUCATION</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 61 Educational Services</p> <p>ISSN: 0161-956X</p>

12	1979	<p>Accession No: EJ236025</p> <p>Author(s): Harshman, Carl L.</p> <p>Title: The Impact of the Nontraditional Degree: A Case Study.</p> <p>Source: <i>New Directions for Continuing Education</i> n3 p55-61 1979</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE510463</p> <p>Language: English</p>
13	1979	<p>Title: External and Nontraditional Graduate Programs.</p> <p>Authors: Dressel, Paul L.</p> <p>Source: <u>PJE. Peabody Journal of Education</u>; Apr79, Vol. 56 Issue 3, p201, 11p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *CORRESPONDENCE schools &amp; courses *NON-formal education</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 61141 Business and Secretarial Schools</p> <p>ISSN: 0161-956X</p> <p>Accession Number: 7592826</p>
14	1980	<p>Title: The Nature and Extent of Industry Sponsored Education in Southern Indiana and its Implications for Educational Institutions</p> <p>Author(s): Kolb, William Lee</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1980</p> <p>Pages: 00203</p> <p>Institution: Southern Illinois University at Carbondale; 0209</p> <p>Source: DAI, 41, no. 08A, (1980): 3458</p>

15	1980	<p>Title: Exploring Outcomes of Non-traditional, Continuing Education</p> <p>Author(s): Totman, Judith Jenkins</p> <p>Degree: Ed.D.</p> <p>Year: 1980</p> <p>Pages: 00230</p> <p>Institution: Harvard University; 0084</p> <p>Source: DAI, 41, no. 07A, (1980): 2966</p>
16	1980	<p>Title: The Acceptability of Nontraditional Degrees: Illinois' Board of Governors Program as a Case Study.</p> <p>Source: <i>Alternative Higher Education: The Journal of Nontraditional Studies</i> v4 n3 p222-31 Spr 1980</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE512607</p> <p>Language: English</p>
17	1980	<p>Title: External Degrees: The Problem and a Resolution. A Resolution is Adopted. ACSA Special Report, Vol. 9, No. 6, June 1980.</p> <p>Author(s): Burnett, Lewie</p> <p>Corp Author(s): Association of California School Administrators.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; California; 1980-06-00</p> <p>Description: 10 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>

18	1980	<p>Accession No: EJ239990</p> <p>Author(s): Quinn, Robert P. ; Baldi de Mandilovitch, Martha S.</p> <p>Title: Education and Job Satisfaction, 1962-1977.</p> <p>Source: <i>Vocational Guidance Quarterly</i> v29 n2 p100-11 Dec 1980</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CG520107</p> <p>Language: English</p>
19	1980	<p><i>Center Magazine</i>, Jan-Feb 1980 v13 p34(2)  The Ph.D. degree - credential for work, or enrichment of life? <i>Donald R. Cressey; Bernard M. Oliver.</i></p>
20	1980	<p><i>Education Digest</i>, Sept 1980 v46 p6(4)  A dollars-and-sense look at the value of education. <i>Lee Ellis.</i></p>
21	1980	<p>Off-campus degree: its credits and debits. Dan Hulbert.  <i>The New York Times</i> Sept 7, 1980 v129 s12 pED1 col 5 (38 col in)</p>
22	1980	<p><i>Business Week</i>, August 4, 1980 p76(2)  Earning an undergraduate degree at the plant.</p>
23	1980	<p><i>Change</i>, Jan 1980 v12 p22(7)  The crisis of the nonprofits. <i>Waldmar A. Nielsen.</i></p>
24	1980	<p>Title: The University External Studies Program at the University of Pittsburgh: a Case Study</p> <p>Author(s): Farey, Dolores Ann Miles</p> <p>Degree: Ph.D.</p> <p>Year: 1980</p> <p>Pages: 00313</p> <p>Institution: University of Pittsburgh; 0178</p> <p>Source: DAI, 41, no. 02A, (1980): 0550</p>

25	1981	<p>Title: Faculty Perceptions at Weber State College of Off-campus Credit Courses, Adult Learners, and Andragogical Teaching Strategies</p> <p>Author(s): Brewster-Norman, Diane</p> <p>Degree: Ed.D.</p> <p>Year: 1981</p> <p>Pages: 00166</p> <p>Institution: University of Northern Colorado; 0161</p> <p>Source: DAI, 42, no. 10A, (1981): 4249</p>
26	1981	<p>Accession No: EJ254667</p> <p>Author(s): Zemke, Ron</p> <p>Title: The Promise and Peril of "External Degrees" for HRD Pros.</p> <p>Source: <i>Training</i> v18 n12 p24-29 Dec 1981</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE511525</p> <p>Language: English</p>
27	1981	<p>Author(s): Harder, Martha</p> <p>Title: The Off-Campus Intact Degree Program.</p> <p>Source: <i>Alternative Higher Education: The Journal of Nontraditional Studies</i> v5 n4 p242-50 Sum 1981</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE514707</p> <p>Language: English</p>

28	1981	<p>Author(s): Moore, Dorothy G.</p> <p>Title: Student Perceptions of Traditional vs. Non-Traditional Pursuit of Undergraduate Degrees.</p> <p>Source: <i>Journal of Negro Education</i> v50 n2 p182-90 Spr 1981</p> <p>Clearinghouse: UD508438</p> <p>Language: English</p>
29	1981	<p>Author(s): Maguire, M. J. ; Ashton, D. N.</p> <p>Title: Employers' Perceptions and Use of Educational Qualifications.</p> <p>Source: <i>Educational Analysis</i> v3 n2 p25-36 1981</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE511564</p> <p>Language: English</p>
30	1981	<p>Author(s): Bryan, William A. ; And Others</p> <p>Title: The Co-Curricular Transcript: What Do Employers Think? A National Survey.</p> <p>Source: <i>NASPA Journal</i> v19 n1 p29-36 Sum 1981</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CG521378</p> <p>Language: English</p>
31	1981	<p>Author(s): Hanson, Alan L.</p> <p>Title: External Degree: Mechanism for BS Practitioners to Earn a PharmD.</p> <p>Source: <i>American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education</i> v45 n3 p284-90 Aug 1981</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE514964</p> <p>Language: English</p>

32	1981	<p>Author(s): Kingston, Paul W.</p> <p>Title: The Credential Elite and the Credential Route to Success.</p> <p>Source: <i>Teachers College Record</i> v82 n4 p589-600 Sum 1981</p> <p>Clearinghouse: SP511020</p> <p>Language: English</p>
33	1981	<p><i>Training: the Magazine of Human Resources Development</i>, Dec 1981 v18 p36-41.</p> <p>The Nova Approach to External Degrees. <i>R. Zemke.</i></p>
34	1981	<p>Top of Form Bottom of Form</p> <p><i>Training: the Magazine of Human Resources Development</i>, Dec 1981 v18 p24-29.</p> <p>The Promise and Peril of 'External Degrees' for HRD Pros. <i>R. Zemke.</i></p>
35	1981	<p>Shortcut to a career. (New York State Regents External Degree Program) (letter) W.E. Lee. <u>The New York Times August 22</u>, 1981 v130 p18(N) p22(LC) col 6 (5 col in)</p>
36	1981	<p><i>Forbes</i>, May 25, 1981 v127 p155(2)</p> <p>Bogus degrees. (verifying academic background of employees) <i>William G. Flanagan.</i></p>
37	1982	<p>Accession No: ED227726</p> <p>Title: The Traditional Institution and Continuing Higher Education.</p> <p>Author(s): Levitt, Leon</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; California; 1982-00-00</p> <p>Description: 16 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>

38	1982	<p>Accession No: EJ263358</p> <p>Author(s): Kruh, Robert F.</p> <p>Title: Outlook for Graduate Education.</p> <p>Source: <i>New Directions for Experiential Learning</i> (Expanding the Missions of Graduate and Professional Education) n15 p89-97 Mar 1982</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE515697</p> <p>Language: English</p>
39	1982	<i>Business and Society Review</i> , Spring 1982 n41 p41-45 Corporations that grant degrees. <i>Jack Porter</i> .
40	1982	<i>Chemical &amp; Engineering News</i> , Sept 27, 1982 v60 p4(3) Study rates quality of graduate programs.
41	1982	<i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> , May 1982 v63 p579(1) Teachers accused of using false credentials to obtain pay raises.
42	1983	<p>Accession No: EJ298321</p> <p>Author(s): Firenze, Louis</p> <p>Title: Alumni from One External Degree Program: Profile, Perceptions, and Preference.</p> <p>Source: <i>Alternative Higher Education</i> v7 n2 p71-79 Spr-Sum 1983</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE517973</p> <p>Language: English</p>
43	1983	<p>Accession No: ED227749</p> <p>Title: Your College Degree: The External Degree Way.</p> <p>Author(s): Haponski, William C. ; And Others</p> <p>Corp Author(s): ETC Associates, Oneida, NY.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; New York; 1983-00-00</p> <p>Description: 37 p.</p>

		Language: English
44	1983	<p>Accession No: ED236948</p> <p>Title: Use Your Mailbox To Go Back to School.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; District of Columbia; 1983-09-00</p> <p>Description: 6 p.</p> <p>In: Changing Times v37 n9 p67-71 Sep 1983</p> <p>Language: English</p>
45	1983	<p>Author(s): Mishler, Carol J.</p> <p>Title: Adults' Perceptions of the Benefits of a College Degree.</p> <p>Source: <i>Research in Higher Education</i> v19 n2 p213-30 1983</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE517420</p> <p>Language: English</p>
46	1983	<p>Accession No: EJ290954</p> <p>Title: How to Get Credit for What You Know: Alternative Routes to Educational Credit.</p> <p>Source: <i>Occupational Outlook Quarterly</i> v27 n4 p15-17 Win 1983</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE513976</p> <p>Language: English</p>
47	1983	<p>Accession No: ED268940</p> <p>Title: Guide to External Degree Programs in the United States. Second Edition. American Council on Education/Macmillan Series in Higher Education.</p> <p>Author(s): Sullivan, Eugene, Ed.</p> <p>Corp Author(s): American Council on Education, Washington, DC.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; New York; 1983-00-00</p> <p>Description: 124 p.</p>

		Language: English Standard No: ISBN: 0-02-932350-9
48	1983	Author(s): McNeil, Donald R. ; Wall, Milan N. Title: The University of Mid-America: A Personal Postscript. Source: <i>Change</i> v15 n4 p48-52 May-Jun 1983 Clearinghouse: HE517097 Language: English
49	1983	Author(s): Trinkaus, John ; Greenberg, Murray Title: Nontraditional MBA Programs: An Industry Survey. Source: <i>Journal of Business Education</i> v58 n7 p270-72 Apr 1983 Clearinghouse: CE513371 Language: English
50	1983	Title: Business and Education: A LOGICAL PARTNERSHIP. Authors: Campanella, Anton Source: <u>Vital Speeches of the Day</u> ; 12/15/83, Vol. 50 Issue 5, p149, 4p Document Type: Speech Subject Terms: *BUSINESS *EDUCATION *EXECUTIVES *SPEECHES, addresses, etc. NAICS/Industry Codes: 61 Educational Services People: CAMPANELLA, Anton ISSN: 0042-742X Accession Number: 9918328

51	1983	<p>Title: Higher Education and the Adult Learner: A BUSINESSMAN RESPONDS.</p> <p>Authors: Cameron, C.C.</p> <p>Source: <u>Vital Speeches of the Day</u>; 12/15/83, Vol. 50 Issue 5, p137, 3p</p> <p>Document Type: Speech</p> <p>Subject Terms: *EDUCATION *EXECUTIVES *HIGHER education &amp; state *SPEECHES, addresses, etc.</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 61 Educational Services</p> <p>People: Cameron, C. C.</p> <p>ISSN: 0042-742X</p> <p>Accession Number: 9918313</p>
52	1983	<p><i>Monthly Labor Review</i>, Feb 1983 v106 n2 p39(3) Recent trends in higher education and labor force activity. <i>Anne McDougall Young</i>.</p>
53	1984	<p>Accession No: EJ307840</p> <p>Author(s): Meadors, Allen C.</p> <p>Title: Non-Traditional Education: A Slowly Developing Giant.</p> <p>Source: <i>Educational Research Quarterly</i> v9 n1 p5-9 1984</p> <p>Clearinghouse: TM510195</p> <p>Language: English</p>

54	1984	<p>Accession No: ED250498</p> <p>Title: Correspondence Education Moves toward the Year 2000: Proceedings of the National Invitational Forum on Correspondence Education (1st, Columbus, Ohio, June 12-15, 1984). Special Publication No. 47.</p> <p>Author(s): Campbell-Thrane, Lucille, Ed.</p> <p>Corp Author(s): Ohio State Univ., Columbus. National Center for Research in Vocational Education.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Ohio; 1984-00-00</p> <p>Description: 191 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
55	1984	<p>Accession No: ED252651</p> <p>Title: Credentials in Employment: Learning in the Workplace.</p> <p>Author(s): Malizio, Andrew G. ; And Others</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; District of Columbia; 1984-11-00</p> <p>Description: 35 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
56	1984	<p><i>TV Guide</i>, Nov 17, 1984 v321 p36(3) Turn on your TV - and aim for a diploma. (college courses offered through public television) <i>Neil Hickey</i>.</p>
57	1984	<p><i>Boston Magazine</i>, Oct 1984 v76 p170(5) Degree or not degree. (Whether to return or go to school to obtain a better job) <i>Kate Broughton</i>.</p>
58	1985	<p>Accession No: ED287427</p> <p>Title: Non-Traditional Graduate Education: A Frontier for the 1980's. Selected Papers from the Conference on Non-Traditional Interdisciplinary Programs (2nd, Arlington, Virginia, June 22-24, 1983).</p> <p>Author(s): Fonseca, James W., Ed.</p> <p>Corp Author(s): George Mason Univ., Fairfax, VA. Div. of Continuing Education.</p>

		<p>Publication: U.S.; Virginia; 1985-00-00</p> <p>Description: 48 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
59	1985	<p>Accession No: EJ321220</p> <p>Author(s): Spille, Henry A. ; Stewart, David W.</p> <p>Title: The New Breed of Diploma Mills: Numerous, Tough, and Aggressive.</p> <p>Source: <i>Educational Record</i> v66 n2 p16-22 Spr 1985</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE519647</p> <p>Language: English</p>
60	1985	<p>Accession No: ED264785</p> <p>Title: Corporate Classrooms: The Learning Business. A Carnegie Foundation Special Report.</p> <p>Author(s): Eurich, Nell P.</p> <p>Corp Author(s): Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Princeton, NJ.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; New Jersey; 1985-00-00</p> <p>Description: 172 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p> <p>Standard No: ISBN: 0-931050-25-1</p>
61	1985	<p>Title: Are 'cheap' degrees worth it?</p> <p>Source: <u>Christianity Today</u>; 2/1/85, Vol. 29 Issue 2, p38, 5p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *CORRESPONDENCE schools &amp; courses *RELIGION -- Study &amp; teaching</p> <p>Geographic Terms: UNITED States</p> <p>Company/Entity: INTERNATIONAL Bible Institute &amp; Seminar (Organization)</p>

		<p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 61141 Business and Secretarial Schools</p> <p>ISSN: 0009-5753</p> <p>Accession Number: 8500005929</p>
62	1985	<p><i>Science</i>'85, April 1985 v6 p50(7)</p> <p>My Ph.D. came postage due. (diploma fraud) <i>E. Patrick McQuaid</i>.</p>
63	1986	<p>Accession No: EJ361254</p> <p>Author(s): Teichler, Ulrich</p> <p>Title: The Information Value of Higher Education Diplomas and the Information Needed to Understand Them.</p> <p>Source: <i>Higher Education in Europe</i> v11 n4 p10-19 1986</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE523094</p> <p>Language: English</p>
64	1986	<p>Accession No: EJ336158</p> <p>Author(s): Keiffer, Elisabeth</p> <p>Title: Become a College Grad Without Leaving Home.</p> <p>Source: <i>Woman's Day</i> p96,98-101 Jun 17 1986</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE520851</p> <p>Language: English</p>
65	1986	<p>Title: A guide to armchair education.</p> <p>Authors: Brownson, Kenneth</p> <p>Source: Nursing; Feb97, Vol. 27 Issue 2, p70, 1p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DEGREES, Academic *NON-formal education *NURSING Congresses</p>

66	1986	<p>Title: Nontraditional Academic Programs: Issues and Perspectives.</p> <p>Authors: Kirkman, Ralph E.</p> <p>Source: <u>PJE. Peabody Journal of Education</u>; Apr79, Vol. 56 Issue 3, p157, 2p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DEGREES, Academic *EDUCATION</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 61 Educational Services</p>
67	1986	<p>Title: Evaluating External Degree Programs.</p> <p>Authors: Palola, Ernest G. Lehmann, Timothy</p> <p>Source: <u>PJE. Peabody Journal of Education</u>; Apr79, Vol. 56 Issue 3, p174, 12p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *ADULT education *EDUCATIONAL evaluation</p> <p>Geographic Terms: UNITED States</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 6116 Other Schools and Instruction</p> <p>ISSN: 0161-956X</p> <p>Accession Number: 7592816</p>
68	1986	<p>Title: Competency-Based Learning Packages--A Case Study.</p> <p>Authors: Murray, Norman J.M.</p> <p>Source: <u>Training &amp; Development Journal</u>; Sep76, Vol. 30 Issue 9, p3, 5p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *COMPETENCY based education *CONTINUING education</p> <p>Geographic Terms: MICHIGAN UNITED States</p>

		ISSN: 0041-0861 Accession Number: 7455213
69	1986	<i>Change</i> , Nov-Dec 1986 v18 p42(10) Ph.D. recipients; where did they go to college? <i>Carol H. Fuller.</i>
70	1986	<i>American Druggist</i> , August 1986 v194 p42(8) 'External' Pharm.D. programs sought by many RPhs holding only bachelor degrees. (part-time, off-campus programs) <i>Dan Kushner.</i>
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143	1996	<p><i>The Chronicle of Higher Education</i>, May 31, 1996 v42 n38 pA15(3)          Learning from afar; students and professors have mixed reactions to the Education Network of Maine. <i>Goldie Blumenstyk.</i></p>
144	1997	<p>Accession No: EJ539618</p> <p>Author(s): Manzo, Kathleen Kennedy</p> <p>Title: Lifestyle-Friendly Education: Non-Traditional Colleges and the Off-Campus Approach.</p>

		<p>Source: <i>Black Issues in Higher Education</i> v13 n26 p42-43 Feb 20 1997</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 0742-0277</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE536550</p> <p>Language: English</p>
145	1997	<p>Accession No: EJ567751</p> <p>Author(s): Strong, Robert W. ; Harmon, E. Glynn</p> <p>Title: Online Graduate Degrees: A Review of Three Internet-Based Master's Degree Offerings.</p> <p>Source: <i>American Journal of Distance Education</i> v11 n3 p58-70 1997</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 0892-3647</p> <p>Clearinghouse: IR537709</p> <p>Language: English</p>
146	1997	<p>Accession No:1 EJ562862</p> <p>Author(s): Gubernick, Lisa ; Ebeling, Ashlea</p> <p>Title: I Got My Degree Through E-Mail.</p> <p>Source: <i>Forbes</i> p84-86,88,90,92 Jun 16 1997</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 0015-6914</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE537980</p> <p>Language: English</p>
147	1997	<p>Accession No: EJ551566</p> <p>Author(s): Hettinger, James</p> <p>Title: Degree by E-Mail.</p> <p>Source: <i>Techniques: Making Education and Career Connections</i> v72 n7 p21-23 Oct 1997</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 1901-0131</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE531489</p>

		Language: English
148	1997	<p>Title: Cyber Ed?</p> <p>Authors: Halasz, Ida M.</p> <p>Source: Corrections Today; Aug97, Vol. 59 Issue 5, p92, 6p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *COMPUTER-assisted instruction *EDUCATION *INMATES of institutions</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 61 Educational Services</p> <p>Full Text Word Count: 2376</p> <p>ISSN: 0190-2563</p> <p>Accession Number: 9710092507</p>
149	1997	<p>Title: Cyberdegrees.</p> <p>Authors: Cox, Paul</p> <p>Source: <u>Wall Street Journal</u> - Eastern Edition; 11/17/97, Vol. 230 Issue 98, pR26, 1 chart</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DISTANCE education</p> <p>Geographic Terms: UNITED States</p> <p>ISSN: 0099-9660</p> <p>Accession Number: 9712011073</p>
150	1997	<p><i>Nursing Times</i>, April 16, 1997 v93 n16 p42(2) Better by degrees. (open learning for nurses) <i>Cathy Hull</i>.</p>
151	1997	<p><i>Industry Week</i>, July 21, 1997 v246 n14 p19(4) <a href="http://www.mba.degree">Http://www.mba.degree</a>. (online degree programs)(includes one program's course of study and a program guide) <i>John S. McClenahan</i>.</p>

152	1997	<i>The New Yorker</i> , Oct 20, 1997 v73 n32 p114(8) Drive-Thru U.: higher education for people who mean business. (The Next University) <i>James Traub</i> .
153	1998	<p>Accession No: EJ566513</p> <p>Author(s): Anderson, Sue</p> <p>Title: Distance Education for Paraprofessionals: Was It Worth It?</p> <p>Source: <i>Library Mosaics</i> v9 n2 p12-14 Mar-Apr 1998</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 1054-9676</p> <p>Clearinghouse: IR537440</p> <p>Language: English</p>
154	1998	<p>Accession No: ED420806</p> <p>Title: The Best Distance Learning Graduate Schools: Earning Your Degree without Leaving Home.</p> <p>Author(s): Phillips, Vicky ; Yager, Cindy</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; New York; 1998-00-00</p> <p>Description: 322 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p> <p>Standard No: ISBN: 0-679-76930-7</p>
155	1998	<p>Accession No: ED417894</p> <p>Title: A Horse of a Different Color: Distance Education; Making it Effective.</p> <p>Access ERIC: FullText</p> <p>Author(s): Jakupcak, Jo ; Fishbaugh, Mary Susan</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Montana; 1998-03-00</p> <p>Description: 10 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>

156	1998	<p>Accession No: ED442359</p> <p>Title: Distance Graduate Education: Opportunities and Challenges for the 21st Century. Policy Statement.</p> <p>Author(s): Hamblin, Jane A., Ed.</p> <p>Corp Author(s): Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, DC.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; District of Columbia; 1998-09-00</p> <p>Description: 48 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
157	1998	<p>Accession No: EJ575682</p> <p>Author(s): Neal, John E.</p> <p>Title: Quality Assurance in the Entrepreneurial University.</p> <p>Source: <i>New Directions for Institutional Research</i> v25 n3 p69-85 Fall 1998</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 0271-0579</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE538777</p> <p>Language: English</p>
158	1998	<p><i>ENR</i>, Nov 9, 1998 p10  'Virtual' courses are real dilemma. (distance education on the Internet) <i>Stephen Daniels; Debra K. Rubin.</i></p>
159	1998	<p><i>Charter</i>, August 1998 v69 n7 p77(1)  Doing it from a distance. (acquiring a Master of Business Administration degree)(A CAs Guide to MBAs)</p>
160	1998	<p><i>The Financial Times</i>, Nov 30, 1998 p14(1)  Big Blue's MBAs go the distance. (Master of Business Administration degree; distance learning by managers of International Business Machines) <i>Della Bradshaw.</i></p>
161	1998	<p><i>Technology in Society</i>, August 1998 v20 i3 p317(10)  Distance education, individualization, and the demise of the university. <i>M.J. Croy.</i></p>

162	1999	<p>Accession No: ED432253</p> <p>Title: Rewards and Regrets: An On-line Technology in Education Master's Degree Program.</p> <p>Access ERIC: FullText</p> <p>Author(s): Thormann, Joan</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Massachusetts; 1999-03-00</p> <p>Description: 7 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
163	1999	<p>Accession No: EJ585221</p> <p>Author(s): Geer, Beverly</p> <p>Title: Diploma Mills in the Cyberage.</p> <p>Source: <i>Training</i> v36 n6 p48-53 Jun 1999</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 0095-5892</p> <p>Clearinghouse: CE534595</p> <p>Language: English</p>
164	1999	<p>Author(s): Mangan, Katherine S.</p> <p>Title: Top Business Schools Seek To Ride a Bull Market in On-Line M.B.A.'s.</p> <p>Source: <i>Chronicle of Higher Education</i> v45 n19 pA27-A28 Jan 15 1999</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 0009-5982</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE538963</p> <p>Language: English</p>

165	1999	<p>Accession No: EJ625395</p> <p>Author(s): Jordan, LuAnn ; Spooner, Fred ; Calhoun, Mary Lynne ; Beattie, John ; Algozzine, Bob ; Galloway, Tara</p> <p>Title: Life beyond the Large City: A Distance Education Program in Learning Disabilities at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.</p> <p>Source: <i>Rural Special Education Quarterly</i> v18 n3-4 p44-57 Sum-Fall 1999</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 8756-8705</p> <p>Clearinghouse: RC514585</p> <p>Language: English</p>
166	1999	<p>Author(s): Maloney, Wendi A.</p> <p>Title: Brick and Mortar Campuses Go Online.</p> <p>Source: <i>Academe</i> v85 n5 p18-24 Sep-Oct 1999</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 0190-2946</p> <p>Clearinghouse: HE539977</p> <p>Language: English</p>
167	1999	<p><i>The Kansas City Business Journal</i>, Jan 15, 1999 v17 i19 p15(1)  Degrees online: more universities and colleges offer courses, degrees to students far away. (Focus on Higher Education) <i>Heather Kirkwood</i>.  Full Text: COPYRIGHT 1999 <a href="#">Kansas City Business Journal</a></p>
168	2000	<p>Title: An age of opportunity: Education and employment in cyberspace</p> <p>Author(s): Friedman, Rachel Beth</p> <p>Degree: M.A.</p> <p>Year: 2000</p> <p>Pages: 00069</p> <p>Institution: University of Nevada, Las Vegas; 0506</p> <p>Advisor: Chair Lawrence Mullen</p>

		<p>Source: MAI, 38, no. 06 (2000): p. 1405</p> <p>Standard No: ISBN: 0-599-79398-8</p>
169	1999	<p>Accession No: EJ639526</p> <p>Author(s): Miller, Inabeth</p> <p>Title: Distance Learning--A Personal History.</p> <p>Source: <i>Internet and Higher Education</i> v3 n1-2 p7-21 2000</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 1096-7516</p> <p>Clearinghouse: IR544979</p> <p>Language: English</p>
170	2000	<p>Accession No: EJ616794</p> <p>Author(s): Watkins, Ryan</p> <p>Title: How Distance Education is Changing Workforce Development.</p> <p>Source: <i>Quarterly Review of Distance Education</i> v1 n3 p241-46 Fall 2000</p> <p>Standard No: ISSN: 1528-3518</p> <p>Clearinghouse: IR543167</p> <p>Language: English</p>
171	2000	<p>Accession No: ED454196</p> <p>Title: Earned and Unearned Degrees, Earned and Unearned Teaching Certificates: Implications for Education.</p> <p>Access ERIC: FullText</p> <p>Author(s): Shaughnessy, Michael F. ; Gaedke, Billy</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; New Mexico; 2000-00-00</p> <p>Description: 10 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>

172	2000	<p>Accession No: ED446724</p> <p>Title: Higher Education outside of the Academy. ERIC Digest.</p> <p>Access ERIC: FullText</p> <p>Author(s): Cantor, Jeffery A.</p> <p>Corp Author(s): George Washington Univ., Washington, DC. Graduate School of Education and Human Development. ; ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, Washington, DC.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; District of Columbia; 2000-00-00</p> <p>Description: 4 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p> <p>Report No: EDO-HE-2000-6</p>
173	2000	<p>Accession No: ED437554</p> <p>Title: Virtual Learning: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. Trends and Issues Alert No. 12.</p> <p>Access ERIC: FullText</p> <p>Author(s): Kerka, Sandra</p> <p>Corp Author(s): ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Ohio; 2000-00-00</p> <p>Description: 4 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
174	2000	<p>Title: Online University Participates In NCA Improvement Project.</p> <p>Source: Quality Progress; Dec2000, Vol. 33 Issue 12, p25, 1/3p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DISTANCE education *TELECOMMUNICATION in education</p> <p>Company/Entity: NORTH Central Association of Colleges &amp; Schools DUNS Number: 052328309</p>

		ISSN: 0033-524X Accession Number: 3923984
175	2000	Title: The Virtual University: Legitimized at Century's End: Future Uncertain for the New Millennium. Authors: Stallings, Dees Source: <u>Journal of Academic Librarianship</u> ; Jan2000, Vol. 26 Issue 1, p3, 12p Document Type: Article Subject Terms: *DISTANCE education *EDUCATION -- United States *TELECOMMUNICATION in education Geographic Terms: UNITED States NAICS/Industry Codes: 61 Educational Services Full Text Word Count: 11203 ISSN: 0099-1333 Accession Number: 2895259
176	2000	Title: Watchdogs Question an Online College Offering Credit for Experience , By: Carr, Sarah, <u>Chronicle of Higher Education</u> , 00095982, 12/1/2000, Vol. 47, Issue 14 Database: Academic Search Premier
177	2000	<i>Quest</i> , August 2000 v7 i4 p12(4) Education anytime, anywhere: college on the Internet opens new gateway to degrees. ("E-learning" or "distance-education") <i>Tara Wood</i> .
178	2000	<i>Quest</i> , August 2000 v7 i4 p18(1) Studying at Fake U.: protect yourself from schools that don't exist.
179	2000	<i>FOCUS: Journal for Respiratory Care Managers and Educators</i> , Wntr 2000 p32 Earn Your Masters Degree. (Brief Article)
180	2000	Title: Assessing the effectiveness of online education Author(s): Lim-Fernandes, Mercedita Abaniel

		<p>Degree: D.P.A.</p> <p>Year: 2001</p> <p>Pages: 00187</p> <p>Institution: Golden Gate University; 0452</p> <p>Advisor: Adviser William Buhl</p> <p>Source: DAI, 61, no. 11A (2001): p. 4307</p> <p>Standard No: ISBN: 0-493-04059-5</p>
181	2001	<p>Accession No: ED456689</p> <p>Title: Meeting Needs and Making Profits: The Rise of For-Profit Degree-Granting Institutions. ECS Issue Paper.</p> <p>Access ERIC: FullText</p> <p>Author(s): Kelly, Kathleen F.</p> <p>Corp Author(s): Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Colorado; 2001-07-00</p> <p>Description: 34 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
182	2001	<p>Accession No: ED453408</p> <p>Title: Integrating University and Corporate Learning with Work. Symposium 2. [AHRD Conference, 2001].</p> <p>Access ERIC: FullText</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Louisiana; 2001-00-00</p> <p>Description: 24 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
183	2001	<p><i>Journal of Teacher Education</i>, Sept 2001 v52 i4 p300</p> <p>The Growth of For-Profit Higher Education. <i>Ann Morey</i>.</p> <p>Author's Abstract: CopyrightT 2001 Corwin Press, Inc.</p> <p>Full Text: Copyright 2001 Corwin Press, Inc.</p>

184	2001	<i>Healthcare Review</i> , August 6, 2001 v14 i7 p7 RN-to-BSN Online Degree Program. (offered by Jacksonville University <www.RNtoBSN.com/hr>) <i>Steve Valley</i> .
185	2002	<p>Title: The quality of distance education is equal to traditional classroom education: How organizations, administrators, educators, and students view the quality of distance education</p> <p>Author(s): Bordley, Andrew R.</p> <p>Degree: M.S.</p> <p>Year: 2002</p> <p>Pages: 00070</p> <p>Institution: California State University, Dominguez Hills; 0582</p> <p>Advisor: Chair E. Watson</p> <p>Source: MAI, 40, no. 05 (2002): p. 1105</p> <p>Standard No: ISBN: 0-493-56168-4</p>
186	2002	<p>Accession No: ED471207</p> <p>Title: Distance Learning, 2002: Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning (18th, Madison, Wisconsin, August 14-16, 2002).</p> <p>Access ERIC: FullText</p> <p>Corp Author(s): Wisconsin Univ. System, Madison.</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; Wisconsin; 2002-08-00</p> <p>Description: 468 p.</p> <p>Language: English</p>
187	2002	<p>Accession No: ED479430</p> <p>Title: Verifying Success in Distance Education.</p> <p>Author(s): Barber, William D. ; Clark, Heather M. ; McIntyre, M. Elaine</p> <p>Publication: U.S.; North Carolina; 2002-10-00</p>

		Description: 7 p. Language: English
188	2002	<i>The Vermont Business Magazine</i> , April 2002 v30 i4 p42(2) An External Degree Program--a perfect educational alternative. <i>Dawn Kellogg</i> . Text not reproducible due to publisher restrictions
189	2002	<i>ABA Journal</i> , Dec 2002 v88 p27(1) Virtual lawyers: online law school produces its first graduating class. (Concord Law School) <i>Martha Neil</i> .
190	2003	Title: The accreditation of degree-granting institutions and its role in the utility of college degrees in the workplace Author(s): Douglas, Richard Coleman Degree: Ph.D. Year: 2003 Pages: 00150 Institution: Union Institute and University; 1414 Advisor: Adviser Chris Hables Gray Source: DAI, 64, no. 06A (2003): p. 1993
191	2003	Accession No: EJ668019 Author(s): Milshtein, Amy Title: What Makes For-Profits So Successful? Source: <i>College Planning &amp; Management</i> v6 n4 p24-25 Apr 2003 Standard No: ISSN: 1523-0910 Clearinghouse: EF503315 Language: English
192	2003	Title: Harvard Online. Authors: DiSalvio, Philip Source: <i>University Business</i> ; Jun2003, Vol. 6 Issue 6, p72, 1p, 1c

		<p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DISTANCE education *LEARNING *UNIVERSITIES &amp; colleges *ONLINE instruction HARVARD University (Cambridge, Mass.)</p> <p>Geographic Terms: CAMBRIDGE (Mass.) MASSACHUSETTS UNITED States</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 6113 Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools</p>
193	2003	<p>Title: RN to BSN Program: Transition From Traditional to Online Delivery.</p> <p>Authors: Gayle W. Bentley Pamela P. Cook Kwanghee Davis Marguerite J. Murphy Christine B. Berding</p> <p>Source: Nurse Educator; May/Jun2003, Vol. 28 Issue 3, p121, 6p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *DISTANCE education *EDUCATION *NURSES *NURSING -- Study &amp; teaching *ONLINE instruction</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 61 Educational Services</p> <p>ISSN: 0363-3624</p> <p>Accession Number: 10105739</p>

194	2003	<p>Title: Distance learning degree: practice nurses' experiences.</p> <p>Authors: Taylor, Ruth<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Source: Primary Health Care; Nov2003, Vol. 13 Issue 9, p35, 4p</p> <p>Document Type: Article</p> <p>Subject Terms: *EXPERIENTIAL learning *MEDICAL personnel *NURSES *RESEARCH</p> <p>NAICS/Industry Codes: 621399 Offices of All Other Miscellaneous Health Practitioners 5417 Scientific Research and Development Services</p> <p>Author Affiliations: <sup>1</sup>Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen</p> <p>ISSN: 0264-5033</p> <p>Accession Number: 11338189</p>
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APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL SEARCH RESULTS BY YEAR

Year	Item	DAI	Source			Group			Category		Perception					
			ERIC	ASP	ITOF	Graduate	Employer	Academy	Quality	Utility	G+	G-	E+	E-	A+	A-
1979	1		1			1			1	1	1					
	2		1					1	1							1
	3		1					1	1							1
	4		1					1	1					1		
	5		1					1	1							1
	6		1					1	1	1		1				
	7		1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			1
	8				1				1		1					1
1980	9	1				1			1						1	
	10	1				1			1		1					
	11	1				1				1	1					
	12	1				1		1	1		1			1		
	13		1					1	1					1		
	14				1			1	1					1		
	15	1				1		1			1					
1981	16	1						1	1							1
	17	1				1			1	1	1					
	18		1			1			1	1	1					
1982	19	1				1			1	1	1					
	20	1				1			1	1	1					
	21		1			1			1	1	1					
	22		1					1	1	1				1		
	23		1					1	1							1
1983	24	1				1	1		1	1	1			1		
	25		1			1	1		1	1	1		1			
	26		1				1			1			1			

Year	Item	DAI	Source				Group		Category			Perception					
			ERIC	ASP	ITOF	Graduate	Employer	Academy	Quality	Utility	G+	G-	E+	E-	A+	A-	
1984	27	1							1	1						1	
	28		1						1	1						1	
	29			1					1	1							
	30				1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1		
1985	31	1				1	1			1	1			1			
1986	32	1					1			1	1		1	1			
	33	1				1				1		1					
	34		1						1	1	1				1		
	35	1				1				1	1	1					
1987	36		1					1	1		1		1		1		
1988	37		1					1		1		1					
	38		1						1	1						1	
1989	39		1			1					1	1					
	40		1			1				1		1					
1990	41	1				1					1	1					
	42	1				1					1	1					
	43			1					1	1					1		
1991	44	1				1	1			1	1		1				
	45		1			1					1	1					
	46		1						1	1						1	
1992	47	1				1					1	1					
	48		1			1				1	1	1					
	49				1	1				1	1	1					
	50				1				1	1						1	
1993	51	1			1		1			1	1	1			1		
	52	1				1				1	1	1					
	53		1			1			1	1	1	1			1		

Year	Item	Source				Group		Category			Perception				
		DAI	ERIC	ASP	ITOF	Graduate	Employer	Academy	Quality	Utility	G+	G-	E+	E-	A+
1994	54		1				1	1	1	1	1		1		1
	55		1			1	1		1	1	1		1		
	56			1		1			1	1	1				
1995	57	1				1	1		1	1	1			1	
	58		1			1			1		1				
	59				1			1	1					1	
	60				1	1			1	1	1				
1996	61	1				1			1		1				
	62				1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1
	63			1				1	1						1
	64			1				1	1						1
	65				1			1	1						1
	66				1	1		1	1		1				
	67				1			1	1						1
1997	68	1				1		1	1		1				
	69		1				1	1	1						1
	70		1					1	1						1
	71		1					1	1						1
	72		1			1			1	1	1				
	73			1				1	1						1
1998	74			1		1		1	1			1			1
	75				1	1			1	1		1			
	76				1	1	1		1	1	1		1		
	77				1	1		1	1		1				1
	78				1	1	1		1	1	1		1		
1999	79	1				1			1		1				
	80	1				1			1		1				
	81			1		1			1						1
	82			1				1	1						1

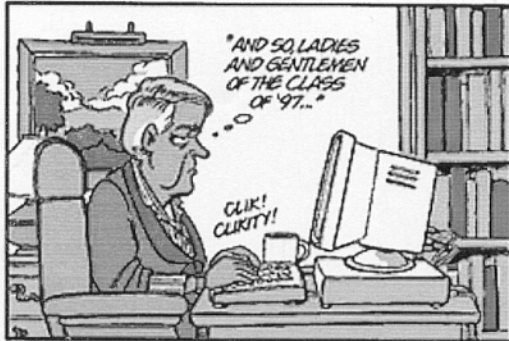
Year	Item	Source				Group		Category		Perception						
		DAI	ERIC	ASP	ITOF	Graduate	Employer	Academy	Quality	Utility	G+	G-	E+	E-	A+	A-
2000	83				1	1	1		1	1	1		1			
	84				1		1		1				1			
	85				1	1			1		1					
	86	1				1			1		1					
	87			1		1			1	1		1				
	88			1					1							1
	89			1					1							1
	90				1			1		1				1		
	91				1		1			1	1					
	92					1		1		1				1		
93					1		1		1				1			
94					1			1	1						1	
95					1		1		1				1			
2001	96			1		1	1		1	1	1			1		
	97			1			1	1	1	1				1	1	
	98			1		1	1		1			1	1			
	99			1		1			1	1		1				
	100				1	1			1	1		1				
	101				1		1		1					1		
2002	102				1			1	1						1	
	103	1				1	1		1	1	1			1		
	104	1					1		1					1		
	105		1			1			1	1	1					
	106		1			1			1	1	1					
2003	107			1		1			1	1	1					
	108				1	1		1	1		1				1	

APPENDIX D

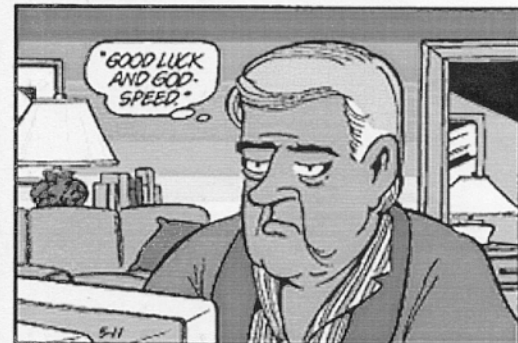
SYNDICATED CARTOONS

DOONESBURY, MAY 1997

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DILBERT, AUGUST 2000

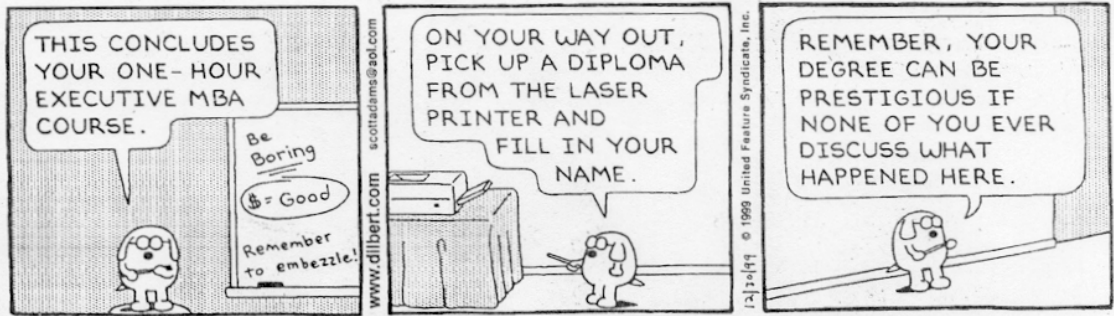
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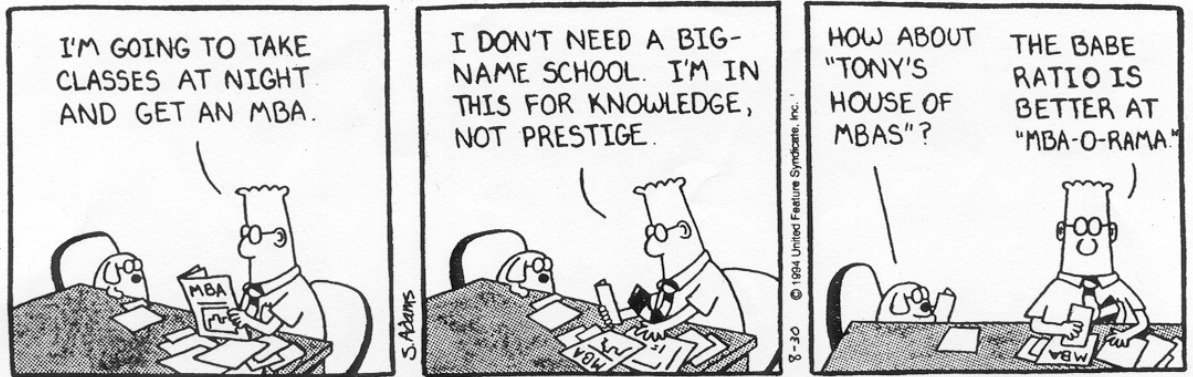
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