

Business administration postgraduates' authentic task performance in the transition from university to work

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The current two studies expand previous expertise research in the domain of business administration by investigating whether different types of business curricula affect postgraduates' authentic task performance in different ways, and how authentic task performance develops during the transition from university to work. Seventy-nine business administration postgraduates, who had attended either a competency-based, a mixed, or a conventional curriculum, participated in a quasi-experiment in which they had to summarize, analyze and solve one of two randomly assigned authentic business cases. Postgraduates' worked out assignments were coded with four coding systems: grounded theory; proposition analysis; the use of concepts and inferences, and the structure of the observed learning outcome (SOLO). The assigned SOLO scores for the summaries, analyses and advices were modeled in the Rasch rating scale model, resulting in an invariant authentic task performance (ATP) measure. The results of study 1 indicate that correct inferences in the summaries, analyses, and advices are powerful positive predictors of ATP, mediated by concepts, whereas correct high critical and correct *information process* propositions show a positive trend in the prediction of ATP, simultaneously explaining seventy percent of the ATP variance. The competency-based curriculum seems to support authentic task performance to a higher degree than the other two curriculum types, in which women tend to perform worse than men. The curricula do not significantly differ in ATP. Fifty-two percent of the postgraduates also participated in the longitudinal study. Study 2 revealed that postgraduates' authentic task performance after graduation is weakly but positively related to monthly wages. ATP, however, showed a declining trend in the first one year and a half after graduation. The studies indicate that business schools, curricula, postgraduates, and employers *can* do a better job in improving authentic task performance in the transition from university to work.