

# **Assimilating Project Management Institute's Project Management Professional Certification Objectives into a Graduate Course Curriculum: The Encounters of Teaching Theory and Certification Objectives**

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## Abstract

Interestingly research shows a trending toward industry-based certifications (Shackelford, 2005). As such IT certification training has mushroomed into a multi-billion dollar business (Cosgrove, 2004). And as job advertisements continue to indicate preference for industry certifications along with or in some instances above a bachelor's degree as a condition for employment IT certification growth is projected to continue with demand for information system technology workers (Nelson, 2001). According to Forbes.com (Clark, 2007) between 2004 and 2014, technology jobs are growing rapidly. Software engineers and network systems analysts make the top 10 overall. Moreover some college graduates are finding an IT certification is a requisite employment criterion and without specific experience or skills many employers may be reluctant to hire them (Cosgrove, 2004).

With well over 300 discrete industry certifications doubling over the past two decades (Adelman, 2000.) Alderman (2000) describes this development as the "parallel postsecondary universe". Alderman, a Senior Research Analyst for the Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, compiled a listing of IT certification metrics in a 2000 study, what follows is an abridge assortment of popular IT certifications:

- Over 300,000 PMP certifications
- Over 900,000 Project + certifications
- Over 60,000 CISA (Certified Information System Auditor )
- Over 500,000 MCP (Microsoft Certified Professional)
- Over 370,000 CNA (Certified Novell Administrator )
- Over 279,000 MCSE (Microsoft Certified System Engineer)
- Over 35,000 CISSP (Certified Information System Security Professional )

Yet this IT employment trend presents a paradoxical pedagogical issue when creating an IT course curriculum for which an industry certification exist. At the heart of this issue is the challenges of balancing course objectives to accommodate an academic (liberal arts) based curriculum along with the objectives of a professional or technical specialization. Some academicians' view industry certification training as product or vendor specific skills preparation, as opposed to academic courses which are part of a program that provides an education which develops a student's intellectual capacity to explore ideas, think analytically, reason, and arrive at some independent conclusion.

This paper structures the discussion of these challenges by examining the opposing views of academic education versus certification training by integrating Comptia's Project+ (project management concepts) certification objectives into an academic course curriculum. The challenges of teaching theory and certification objectives are examined in an effort to advance the discourse in academia and perhaps establish complementary areas of intersection.

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