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Charter School Management: MO Interaction with Educational Inputs and Outcomes

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Charter School Management: MO Interaction with Educational Inputs and Outcomes

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
A Brief History of American Public Education	1
Education Reform	1
Reform Initiatives	1
Charter Schools.....	2
Extant Literature Regarding Charter Schools	3
Management Structures	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Question	6
Methodology	8
Variables	8
School Grade.....	9
Socioeconomic Status	9
Students with Disabilities	10
Student Attrition/Mobility and Discipline	10
Highly Qualified Teachers.....	11
English Language Learners.....	11
Quantitative Methods.....	12
Definition of Terms.....	12
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	15
Introduction to Neoliberal Thought	16
Neoliberalism in Education.....	17
Neoliberalism: A Form of Accountability?	19
Neoliberal Educational Reform	21
School Choice through Vouchers	21
National Charter School Inception and Theoretical Underpinnings	23
Proponents of Charter Schools.....	24
Charter School Critiques.....	25
Florida’s Charter School History	26
Florida Charter School Policy.....	27

Florida’s Governing Statutes	28
Policy Implications	33
Utilization of Management Companies and Corporations.....	34
Implications.....	36
Literature on Independent Variables.....	37
School Grade.....	37
Socioeconomic Status	38
Students with Disabilities	39
Student Attrition/Mobility and Discipline	39
Highly Qualified Teachers.....	40
English Language Learners.....	43
Similarities in Other Fields	43
Hospitals	43
Prisons.....	45
Literature Summary	46
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	47
Epistemology	47
Rationale	48
Purpose.....	48
Research Questions	48
Data Sources and Collection.....	49
Data Analysis	50
Operationalizing the Variables	51
MO School or Non-MO School.....	51
MANOVA Variables and Data Sources	52
Socio-Economic Status	53
School Grade.....	53
Students with Disabilities	53
Student Attrition/Mobility	54
Student Discipline.....	54
Highly Qualified Teachers.....	54
English Language Learners.....	55
SAS Coding Procedure	55
Population Statistics.....	56
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....	59
Research Question	59
Description of the Sample.....	60
Further Culling of the Data Set.....	61
MANOVA Outcomes	63
Dependent Variable Outcomes	65
Socio Economic Status	65
School Grade.....	66
English Language Learners.....	66
Students with Disabilities	67

Not Highly Qualified Teacher Rate	67
Stability Rate.....	68
Summary	68
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	69
Summary of the Results	69
Discussion of the Results	70
SES.....	70
School Grade.....	70
ELL	71
SWD.....	71
NHQT	72
Stability Rate.....	72
Discussion & Implications of Incomplete Data	73
Limitations and Recommendations.....	78
Neoliberalism Moving Forward.....	82
Policy Implications	82
Conclusion	83
REFERENCES	85

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: MANOVA Variables and Data Sources	52
Table 2: Florida’s Charter School Demographics 2018-2019	56
Table 3: Florida’s Charter School Grades 2018-2019	57
Table 4: Number of Observations by Charter School Type	61
Table 5: Change in Group Mean & Observations MO Charter Schools	62
Table 6 : Change in Group Mean & Observations Non-MO Charter Schools	62
Table 7: MANOVA Output: MO Effect.....	64
Table 8: Dependent Variable analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order	65
Table 9: Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: SES.....	65
Table 10: Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: Grade	66
Table 11: Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: ELL	66
Table 12: Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: SWD.....	67
Table 13: Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: NHQT.....	67
Table 14: Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: Stability Rate.....	68

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Students Enrolled in Charter School Over Time..... 58

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to understand if the utilization of a management company has any interaction with the socioeconomic status (SES) of students served, the school's academic performance, the percentage English Language Learners served, the percentage of highly qualified teachers per school site, the amount of student attrition/mobility, or the amount of disciplinary events. Ultimately this study seeks to determine the efficacy and utility of management organization utilization by studying inputs and outputs of Florida charter schools and disaggregating them based on utilization of Charter Management Organizations, Education Management Organizations, or their decision not to utilize a Management Organization. This study uses a post-positivist and quantitative approach utilizing a multivariate analysis of variance and separate univariate analysis of variances to analyze the data. Charter Schools using management organizations in Florida have a higher percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch, a higher percentage of English Language Learners, a lower percentage of students with disabilities, and a higher percentage of not highly qualified teachers. Differences in school grades and student mobility was found to be negligible. As charter schools and charter school accountability continues to evolve, ensuring equity of access for all students must remain a top priority.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A Brief History of American Public Education

Education Reform

Accountability and parental choice are cornerstones of the school reform movement. Proponents of reform claim public schools should be rewarded for exceptional student achievement and punished for failure to produce expected outcomes. Many of these same reformers promote school choice as a vehicle for allowing students at failing schools access to better educational opportunities. Education reform involving choice and accountability can ultimately be traced to economist Milton Friedman's (1955) *The Role of Education in America*. However, while Milton may have created the frameworks for educational commoditization, the 1983 work, *A Nation at Risk*, ultimately catalyzed the marketization of K-12 public education (Hermansen, 2014).

Reform Initiatives

Modern school choice initiatives are often represented in the form of charter schools, the supply side of the educational equation, or as vouchers, the demand side of the educational equation (Sweetland, 2014). By essentializing the relationship between market-based choice and school success, reform advocates have garnered significant bipartisan political support for the advancement of the choice paradigm (Kumashiro, 2008). Unfortunately, there are fundamental flaws with the core logic of school choice as it is currently designed. Since choice relies on the

principle of scarcity, there exists an assumption as to who should be competing for scarce resources. The choice rhetoric outlined above suggests schools must compete for students; however, such suppositions ignore the fact that scarcity cannot exist at the micro level because students cannot, by law, be denied an education. As a result, students must compete for the perceived advantage of enrolling in private school while private schools accepting vouchers may select only the students whom the school wishes to educate. The students who are not accepted or who are placed on waiting lists must return to their neighborhood schools or explore other educational options. Students and families are therefore left competing to get into schools instead of schools competing for students.

Choice advocates maintain competition is intended to promote student achievement within the public-school sector; however, “no support for the hopeful prediction that competition from charter schools will compel school district leaders to shift resources to achievement-oriented activities” has been seen thus far (Arsen & Yognmei, 2011, p. 5). Instead of spurring local districts to improve educational options for children, choice measures have hurt school districts financially as public schools must continue to fund fixed cost expenses such as facilities, staff, and insurance. Losing students results in reduced funding while fixed costs remain stable (Bettinger, 2005). Schools already operating under limited resources must therefore divert resources from programs, materials, or activities designed to help students in order to fund fixed cost expenses.

Charter Schools

The first American charter school laws were passed in Minnesota in 1991 with California following suit in 1992 (Charter school, 2017). Charter schools have seen a sustained level of growth over the past few decades with “more than 6,900 charter schools, enrolling an estimated

3.1 million students” during the 2016-17 school year (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2017, p. 1). Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) documents indicate Florida had 658 charter schools serving 313,000 students during the 2017-2018 school year (FLDOE, 2019). With the charter school movement enjoying sustained growth over the past 25+ years, research on charter schools has grown as well. Proponents of charter schools believe that the expanded freedom, relative to traditional public schools, makes their schools more innovative and accountable, while detractors often view charter schools as a less accountable, less diverse, and underperforming sequester of public funds for private gain.

A 2009 study by Center for Research and Educational Outcomes (CREDO) found that when comparing charter schools and traditional public schools (at the nationwide level) that charter schools were better 17% of the time, worse 37% of the time, and no different than public schools 46% of the time. Variations existed within states; although some charter schools outperform their public-school counterparts, some charter schools in the same states underperform relative to their public-school counterparts. In 2013, CREDO replicated their study and found much closer outcomes when comparing charter schools and their public-school counterparts. Some scholars attribute this to the newness of charter schools resulting in many difficulties to work out as they establish themselves while public schools tend to have a better understanding of their educational landscape from the beginning (Kelly & Loveless, 2012).

Extant Literature Regarding Charter Schools

Much of the current literature in the charter school realm compares charter schools to their public-school counterparts. Many comparative studies have examined the following variables: innovation (Lipinski, 2003; Preston, Goldring, Berends, & Cannata, 2012; Radoslovich, Roberts, & Plaza, 2014;); overall performance (Belfield & Levin, 2002; CREDO,

2009; CREDO, 2013); teacher turnover (Henrion, 2016; Radoslovich et al., 2014; Stuit & Smith, 2012); student turnover (Nichols-Barrer, Gleason, Gill, & Tuttle, 2016; Robelen, 2008; Zehr, 2011); diversity (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley & Wang, 2011; Garda, 2015; Henry & Dixon, 2016; Lacireno-Paquet, 2004; Miron, Urschel, Mathis, & Tornquist, 2011); among other empirical variables. A large percentage of the extant literature compares traditional public schools with charter schools. While this comparison is important, one must not view the charter school movement as a monolith. Understandably, one would not expect approximately 7,000 schools to behave, perform, address issues of equity, and serve similar students in the same manner.

As a result, a burgeoning outgrowth within the charter school literature compares charters with each other instead of with traditional public schools. One of the more nascent lines of study involves looking at the governance structure of charter schools and more specifically their utilization of management companies (Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002; Scott & DiMartino, 2010; Roch & Na, 2015; Miron et al., 2010; Ertas & Roch, 2014). Scholars studying these fields look at distinct data points and compare them across charter schools based upon a particular feature within their organizational structure.

Privatization of the education sector is neither new, nor is it unique to education as parallels exist in other fields of study. The literature review will overview how privatization has influenced other publicly funded fields such as hospital systems and prison systems and will draw parallels to the educational experience.

Management Structures

Charter schools will often use Management Organizations (MOs) to help them form, run, and support the school or schools in their network (Roch & Na, 2015). Proponents of MO

utilization believe that MOs can help replicate successful charter schools and can bring an economy of scale further improving efficiency, while detractors argue that MO utilization is fundamentally counterintuitive as charter schools are meant to be locally run and responsive to individual community needs (Scott & DiMartino, 2010).

While some charter schools use MOs, some charter schools are stand-alone and more organic in nature. Charter schools that utilize MOs fall under two categories: private education management organizations (EMOs), and nonprofit charter management organizations (CMOs) (Roch & Na, 2015). MOs can play a substantial role in shaping their charter school and can influence curriculum, pedagogy, and other aspects of the school (Finnigan, 2007).

EMO and CMO run charter schools do have different stresses as EMOs often have profit related pressures and may need to satisfy investors (De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans, & Jegers, 2011; Roch & Na, 2015). These important nuances within the overall charter movement can have a profound impact on educational outcomes. While little research has been done regarding this nuance (Miron et al., 2010), a further look into outcomes related to MOs is important.

Rationale for the Study

This study could help legislatures stay informed and act in the best interest of all students when guiding future laws that govern and hold charter schools accountable. After all, as support for charter school policy is primarily built on the belief of producing meaningful gains in student achievement through competition and resulting innovation, it is only fair to continue to rigorously analyze the data to understand how policy may be further adjusted to enhance student outcomes. Further proliferation of charter schools seems inevitable for the foreseeable future; holding all types of charter schools similarly accountable for both educational outcomes and

other social justice issues will help students, teachers, parents, and our education system as a whole.

In many ways, Florida is a microcosm of the United States with significant diversity and population. As this study includes all charter schools within the state of Florida this study would be useful to politicians, school board members, district administrators, and policy wonks both in Florida and more broadly in the United States.

Purpose of the Study

Since charter school growth seems inevitable, further study within the charter movement itself is necessary for policy makers, school boards, and the general public. Research based knowledge on charter schools would assist researchers, policy makers, school boards, charter school boards, and the public on factors that lead to a higher performing, more diverse, or more equitable charter school sector.

The purpose of the study is to examine whether utilization of a management organization has a statistically significant interaction with student population composition, student achievement, teacher quality, student attrition/mobility, and student discipline.

Research Question

The guiding research question of this study is: How does utilizing a management company interact with different measurable variables observed at charter schools?

In order to address the above research question, the following sub-questions will guide the study:

1. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the socioeconomic status (SES) of students served?

2. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with school performance?
3. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the percentage English Language Learners (ELL) students served?
4. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the percentage of students with disabilities (SWD) served?
5. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with percentage of highly qualified teachers as defined by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE)?
6. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with student attrition/mobility?
7. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with student discipline?

All of these individual factors have been studied while comparing traditional public schools with their charter school counterparts. This study seeks to examine the above discrete factors based upon utilization of an MO by charter schools compared to charter schools without management companies (maybe standalone charter schools or independent charter schools). As

charter schools continue to grow, understanding if there is a meaningful dichotomy within the movement, could impact policy makers if the organizational structure of schools is linked to underperformance, selectively serving more economically desirable students, higher rates of discipline, or teacher quality.

Methodology

This is a comparative study examining the inputs and outcomes of charter schools that utilize a management company with charter schools that do not use a management company. Quantitative methodology was utilized in this comparative study as the inputs and outputs are quantified per school site at the state level. The specific quantitative method utilized in this study was a Multilevel Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with follow up analysis of variance (ANOVA) F tests on the individual dependent variables. The data sets came from various reports and databases provided by Florida Department of Education (FLDOE). The MANOVA and subsequent ANOVA F tests were conducted on the data to determine if the MO charter schools differ from non-MO charter schools.

Variables

- Independent Variables: Charter Schools that utilize an MO, Charter Schools that do not utilize an MO.
- Dependent Variables: School Grade, Socioeconomic Status of Students Served (as measured by percent receiving free/reduced lunch, percent English Language Learner students being served, percent of students with disabilities being served, student attrition, disciplinary actions taken, percent of highly qualified teachers).

The variables being studied were intentionally selected as either a proxy for school success or as a direct measure of school success with an objective to identify the characteristics

of the students being served by the MO charter versus standalone charter schools. Below is a brief rationale for the variables being studied and how these variables relate to holding schools accountable. Data on whether or not a particular charter school uses a MO was found utilizing the Florida Department of Education's (FLDOE) charter school directory to locate each Florida charter school's 2019 audit report. According to the data, Florida has 326 schools that listed a management company and 317 schools that either listed no management company or selected "none".

School Grade

The school grade has become one of the most prevalent ways to assess a school's health, viability, and desirability. The FLDOE describes the school grade indicator as "an easily understandable metric to measure the performance of a school" (2017). Since the FLDOE has put into place this indicator of school performance for both charter and non-charter schools, it is included as a variable in this study as a metric of school performance levels.

Looking at FLDOE's *Student Achievement in Florida's Charter Schools* report, charter schools have a higher percentage of A and F schools than traditional public schools (FLDOE, 2017). If the data can be parsed out based on MO utilization, then policy makers would have a better idea of how to manage and incentivize charter school growth.

Socioeconomic Status

The socioeconomic status (SES) of a student is an important factor to study for multiple reasons. This study will utilize the free/reduced lunch rate as the determinant of whether or not a student is low SES or not. In 2020, a family of 4 making \$48,470 or less would be on reduced lunch and students whose family situation meets or falls within this criterion would be considered low SES (FL. Department of Agriculture, 2020). Traditional public schools have a

higher percentage of their overall student population fall into the low SES category than their charter school counterparts (FLDOE, 2018).

Low SES students can be more difficult and/or expensive to educate which may make them economically less desirable to enroll in school. Low SES is also correlated to lower performance on high-stakes standardized tests (Bellibaş, 2016; Gustafsson, Nilsen & Hansen, 2016; Jehangir, Glas & van den Berg, 2015; Sirin, 2005). As a result, many charter schools have been accused of creaming and cropping their student populations in order to have a more desirable student population (Ertas & Roch, 2014; Lacireno-Paquet, et al., 2002).

Students with Disabilities

Per FLDOE's *Student Achievement in Florida's Charter Schools* report, students with disabilities (SWD) make up a higher percentage of students in traditional public school than in charter schools (FLDOE, 2018). SWD are a subgroup of students that can be significantly more expensive to educate and could have an impact on the outcomes of standardized tests (Hebel, 2001; Picus & Miller, 1995; Smith & Douglas, 2014). Similar to low SES students, SWD have been excluded from certain schools who do not have the resources or facilities to educate them (Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002; Miron et al., 2010).

Student Attrition/Mobility and Discipline

Student attrition/mobility and discipline was studied. Some have accused particular charter school organizations of using extreme discipline practices to increase student attrition to create a student population that is easier to teach and more manageable (Nichols-Barrer, 2016; Robelen, 2008; Vasquez et al, 2011; Zehr, 2011). This study examined whether or not this appears to be happening and also tracked student mobility to determine if students are more

likely to enter/exit a charter school at particular times of the year such as right before/after FTE reporting periods, high stakes assessments, etc....

Highly Qualified Teachers

Teacher quality is an extremely important deterministic factor related to school and student achievement (Wong, 2018). MOs shape the educational environment and culture (Finnigan, 2007; Torres, 2016). Teacher turnover, which can have a substantial impact on the educational environment (Guin, 2004; Stuit & Smith, 2012,) which is higher at charter schools than public schools (Harris, 2007; Miron & Applegate, 2007; Renzulli, Parrott, & Beattie, 2011; Stuit & Smith, 2012) make it less likely that students will have effective teachers and can negatively affect learning outcomes (Johnson, 2006).

FLDOE has a precise definition about what makes a teacher highly qualified and as such the data is available. If utilizing (or not utilizing) an MO is more likely to attract and/or retain highly qualified teachers, then perhaps lawmakers may consider adding this to charter school accountability measures moving forward.

English Language Learners

English language learners (ELL) are another subgroup that this study investigated. Similarly to the SWD and SES subgroups, ELL students could be a more expensive subgroup to educate while they could negatively affect the results of end of course exams. Because of accountability implications, charter schools have been accused of cropping access to students who fit this description necessitating investigation to make sure ELLs are appropriately represented across in all charter school types (Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002).

Quantitative Methods

This study utilized a multilevel Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) (to analyze the data. MANOVAs were as the study compared the two groups with several dependent variables at the same time (Stevens, 1986). Further detail, context, and texture on the methods, methodology are provided in chapter 3.

Chapter 2 provides a bases for this study using extant literature. The literature review explores the neoliberal revolution in public education, the advent of charter schools, and the Florida state statutes that govern them. Then attention is given to the dichotomy between charter schools not using MOs compared to the ones that do by focusing on recent studies on this very dichotomy. In the final section of chapter 2, the literature explores other publicly funded institutions exploring the similarities and differences to public education.

Definition of Terms

A brief definition of terms per FDOE protocols is necessary to properly operationalize the variables being observed, Two independent variables and seven dependent variables will be studied.

All Florida charter schools will be placed into two groups, those who utilize an MO, and those who do not, The data set used to determine these groups comes from the FDOE website and specifically utilizes each individual school's 2019 accountability report where they list their management organization.

Management Organizations (MOs) provide the charter schools that they oversee with established protocols and procedures for launching and operating a school while often replicating academic philosophies and curricula to all of the schools that they manage (Roch & Na, 2018), MOs include both for-profit Education Management Organizations (EMOs), and non-profit

Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) (Roch & Na, 2018), Nationwide, approximately 57% of schools are independent (not utilizing an MO) while approximately 24% are managed by CMOs and 18% are managed by EMOs (David, 2016), According to the Florida Department of Education's charter school directory, 326 charter schools listed an MO and 317 schools did not list an MO. Per the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools "Nearly two-thirds of [charter schools] (65 percent) are freestanding and operate independently and apart from any management organization. The remaining 35 percent of charter schools belong to some type of management organization..." (David, 2016, p. 2). For this study, EMOs and CMOs are not disaggregated.

The first dependent variable being studied is school grade, The statute's governing school grade come from Florida Statute 1008.34 of the K-20 Education Code, This system based on student achievement and includes learning gains and student proficiency, Schools are ultimately assigned a grade (A-F) in a report card that is published annually.

The dependent variable of SES is operationalized by the state of Florida as 185% of the federal poverty guidelines, This means a family of 4 would need to make \$48,470 (plus/minus \$8,222 per person) years or less to qualify, The percentage of each school's population of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch will be used.

The dependent variable of Students With Disabilities, Florida Statute Section 1007.02 or the K-20 Education Code defines the limits for SWD participation, Per this statute SWD participation per school was analyzed.

The dependent variable of student attrition/mobility was operationalized by utilizing the *Stability Rate by School 2019-20 Final Surveys 2 and 3* report produced by the FDOE, This

report compares February 2020 membership vs October 2019 membership; schools who maintain the exact same number of students have a 100% stability rate.

The dependent variable of student discipline utilized the *Student Discipline Data by Race/Ethnicity and Gender School Level 2018-19, Final Survey 5* report from the FLDOE website was used to generate data for this variable, The total number of discipline incidences in this report per school was entered into the MANOVA.

The dependent variable of Highly Qualified Teacher is defined by the Florida Department of Education's *Information Database Requirements Volume 1* (FLDOE, 2014), a more extensive definition can be found in chapter 2, *The Total Number and Percent of Courses Taught by Not Highly Qualified Teachers 2015-16, Final Survey 4 and 2016-17, Final Surveys 1-3* report from the FLDOE website was be used to generate data for this variable.

The dependent variable of ELL population served was inputted based on percent of ELL students served at the particular school. Section 1003.56(2)(a) of the Florida Statutes specifies the parameters for an ELL student, The Florida PK-12 Education Information Portal (edstats.fldoe.org) was used to generate data for this dependent variable.

More specific definition of each of the above terms are provided in chapter 3 of the dissertation. Florida uses the above definitions in its databases and accountability reporting.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the inevitability of growth in charter schools in the state of Florida, in depth studies within the charter movement itself are necessary for policy makers, school boards, and the general public. Research based information on charter schools would aid policy makers, school boards, charter school boards, and the public on factors that lead to a higher performing, more diverse, or more equitable charter school sector. The purpose of the study is to examine whether utilization of a management organization has a statistically significant interaction with student population composition, student achievement, teacher quality, student attrition/mobility, and student discipline.

Given the above purpose, the literature review stands to support the rationale and understanding with the below research questions: How does utilizing a management company interact with different measurable variables observed at charter schools? In order to address the above research question, the following questions will guide the study:

1. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the socioeconomic status (SES) of students served?
2. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with school performance?

3. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the percentage English Language Learners (ELL) students served?
4. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the percentage of students with disabilities (SWD) served?
5. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with percentage of highly qualified teachers as defined by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE)?
6. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with student attrition/mobility?
7. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with student discipline?

In order to best understand why these questions are being asked, a brief understanding of neoliberal education policy is important.

Introduction to Neoliberal Thought

In an effort to appropriately contextualize neoliberalism within our 21st century milieu, appropriate efforts to properly deconstruct the word must be given to adequately situate its original intent in its appropriate historical context. “The liberal school of economics became famous in Europe when Adam Smith, a Scottish economist and philosopher, published a book in

1776 called *The Wealth of Nations*” (Martinez & Garcia, 1997, p. 1). Liberal economic thought prevailed in the 19th and early 20th; however, “during the 1930s, the standard narrative blamed the Great Depression on flaws in laissez-faire capitalism” (Sumner, 2015, p. 225). As a result of the Great Depression, economic thought turned away from the liberal economic approach for a number of years. More recently, globalization, technology, and a number of other factors has led to a new liberal (neoliberal) economic approach which has its roots in economic liberalism of centuries earlier. Conservative politicians often tend to favor liberal/neoliberal economic policy and almost exclusively favor using neoliberal structures as a foundation to fix or increase efficiency in government institutions such as education, entitlement programs, health-care, and even prisons.

Neoliberalism in Education

Neoliberal education reform policies represent a burgeoning educational phenomenon in the United States, often personified by charter schools (supply) and/or vouchers (demand) (Sweetland, 2014). When compared to their public-school counterparts, private schools and publicly funded charter schools are often afforded the luxury of increased curricular, pedagogical, and structural freedom. Neoliberal proponents of market-based educational reform believe that increased autonomy will ultimately foster and encourage private and charter schools to generate new and innovative educational methods that will improve outcomes for children – especially in comparison to their bureaucratic, government-run public school counterparts. Vouchers work as a catalyst to further this cause by using/diverting public funds directly to parents to increase the number of students who can attend nonpublic schools. Additionally, many neoliberal proponents emphasize that by expanding parental choice options, all schools will be forced to compete for resources (in the form of students and/or funding) which will, in turn,

increase the performance of all schools. As a result, neoliberal legislation and participation has increased dramatically over the past decade.

While contemporary 21st century neoliberal educational policy can track its immediate roots to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the idea of choice and vouchers first found prominence in Milton Friedman's (1955) work, *The Role of Government in Education*, where he asserts that by creating markets that utilize parental choice, healthy competition between schools is generated which improves the quality of available options. As Loeb, Valant, and Kasman (2011) point out, Friedman may have created this conceptual foundation resulting in "the American educational landscape [being] dotted with programs aimed at increasing parental discretion over how and where children are educated" (p. 142).

While economist Milton Friedman may have set much of the stage for the marketization of K-12 public education, many can trace the pro-privatization movement back to the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk* (Hermansen, 2014). While *A Nation at Risk* is neither law, nor policy, "its description of poorly performing American students as a danger to national security, its use of war metaphors, its appeal to nationalism and global competitiveness and its enactment of free-market ideology" has intimately shaped education reform (Hermansen, 2014, p. 517). The writing of *A Nation at Risk*, and its portrayal of a failing American K-12 public school system directly and indirectly led an increase in neoliberal education policy over the subsequent years as "President Reagan's rhetoric about the standards movement set the stage for the current education policy of NCLB and President Bush's rhetoric of accountability with federal funds" (Kuehl, 2012, p. 329).

Former Assistant Secretary of Education, Diane Ravitch (2011), suggests that the rapid growth of charter schools can be explained as a secondary effect of NCLB; an act born of the

market-driven approach to education. NCLB codified neoliberal accountability measures that ranked and/or punished failing schools, while it also provided parents with the ability to decide which educational approach was best for their children if they were attending a school identified as ‘failing’ (Leyva, 2009). Additionally, NCLB endorsed neoliberal privatization of many education services as the “for-profit education industry has experienced substantial growth not from individual consumers choosing education services but from government mandates that have directed more resources to the private-education sector” (Snell, 2005, p. 268).

Neoliberalism: A Form of Accountability?

Neoliberal educational accountability measures often involve a multi-pronged approach to overhauling educational structures by commoditizing either the supply side of the education (often through charter schools) and/or allowing parents/guardian choices on the demand side of education (often through vouchers and school choice). Very simply, these reform measures intend to ‘fix’ the American educational system by “introducing competition to the government monopoly on public schools” with the belief that this “will lead to higher academic performance” (Richards, 2017, p. 85). Competition and scarcity are vital to neoliberal education reform as competition is perceived to hold schools accountable, however, promoting innovation and competition cannot exist without some form of scarcity (Snell, 2005). Neoliberal educational reformers believe that increased competition will undoubtedly benefit all schools and students by generating novel and innovative educational methods which will noticeably increase student achievement. In this sense, neoliberal educational policies serve as a de facto accountability measure as schools with low ratings and/or attendance (whether public, charter, or private) will eventually suffer as a result of their poor performance (or perceived performance) and Adam Smith’s invisible hand will hold them directly accountable,

Neoliberal educational policies currently enjoy widespread bipartisan support and seem to exist as one of the few things on which both political parties can agree. With regards to George W. Bush and Barack Obama, “for all their differences on how to best stimulate economic growth, secure the national defense, and fix the health-care conundrum, the two presidents shared a surprisingly common approach to school reform” (Peterson, 2016, p. 23). During the third 2008 presidential debate, Barack Obama and John McCain utilized very similar educational rhetoric with Obama claiming, “I doubled the number of charter schools in Illinois despite some reservations from teachers’ unions. I think it is important to foster competition inside the public schools”. Similarly, the late Senator John McCain claimed that “choice and competition amongst schools is one of the key elements that’s already been proven in places...where we have charter schools, where we take good teachers and we reward them...” (Scott & Villavicencio, 2009, p. 227). Some educational policy researchers cheer on perceived academic improvements in New Orleans as a result of charter schools (Osborne, 2015); many educational policy scholars question the ‘New Orleans Miracle’ and point out many social justice issues (Henry & Dixon, 2016; Parvis, 2015; Buras, 2014). Politicians and proponents of neoliberal education reform continue to point to the Post-Katrina charter school takeover of New Orleans in a positive light and as a model that could be replicated throughout the country (Osborne, 2015).

This strong and unique bipartisan support may exist because these policies are politically defensible and allow politicians to deflect blame for failing schools on the free-market rather than their failed policies. Also, these approaches appear common sense and aligned with American ideals on freedom, choice, and competition. However, critics of these approaches cite many issues with this system.

While the rhetoric underpinning the neoliberal movement tends to make common sense, many critics of this system point to structural flaws and a surprising lack of equity caused by something as banal or even fundamental as school choice (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley & Wang, 2011; Garda, 2015). School choice, in its current form, relies heavily on the economic principal of scarcity. Scarcity, some argue, fundamentally cannot exist at the micro levels of education as students cannot generally be denied an education. As such, critics of neoliberal policy tend to argue that our current educational system cannot structurally and/or statutorily represent or masquerade an economic free market (Snell, 2005). Another tenant within the free-market paradigm is the notion that businesses may freely enter and exit the market regularly. Schools cannot enter or exit the market regularly at any given time, and charter schools, in particular, seem significantly more difficult to close than their public-school counterparts (CREDO, 2009; Snell, 2005; Vergari, 2007).

However, proponents of the neoliberal movement, realize that many challenges within educational reform exist including organized special interest groups and collective bargaining agreements and feel that “choice and competition are the most effective levers of reform that remain. Vouchers and tax credits are slowly broadening their legal footing and charter schools are growing in number...and [are] beginning to pose genuine competition to public schools...” (Peterson, 2016, p. 23).

Neoliberal Educational Reform

School Choice through Vouchers

Voucher programs are another attempt to create market forces by directly giving parents money to put their students in private schools using public funds. Proponents of this approach “argue that all the programs use tax dollars efficiently and disrupt the status quo by giving

parents the ultimate freedom: the ability to choose an educational program that best suits their children's needs" (Richards, 2017, p. 86). During the 2013-2014 school year, 308,560 students across almost 20 states were enrolled in school choice programs. This number represents a 240 percent increase over the 90,613 students enrolled just one decade earlier during the 2003-2004 school year (Frendeway, Sawatka, Marcavage, Carney, Martinez, & Dauphin, 2015). Many modern voucher systems utilize educational savings accounts which allow parents control of their student's educational experience and decide which schools get funding, ultimately deciding which schools stay open (Richards, 2017)

The oldest and most studied voucher program in America is the Milwaukee voucher program which was implemented in 1990 and gives private school vouchers for students with family income at or below 175% of the poverty line (Chakrabarti, 2013). The overall results and educational outcomes of this system are somewhat contentious and underwhelming. However, it is difficult to essentialize any one specific program as outcomes (intentional and unintentional) often vary widely across state and county lines. When looking at the background of students served by voucher systems, the research suggests that the Cleveland voucher program tends to have students with higher levels of mother's education and lower incomes than traditional public school students, New York voucher recipients tended to have higher income than their public school counterparts, while voucher recipients in Dayton were more likely to be in low-income situations (Belfield, 2005; Howell, Peterson, Wolf, & Campbell, 2002; Metcalf, West, Legan, & Boone, 2003; Peterson, Howell & Greene, 1999).

In Florida, multiple voucher programs exist for students with the McKay scholarship being the most well-known and funded. Florida passed the McKay scholarship in 1999 to provide funding for "students with disabilities to attend an eligible public or private school of

their choice” (Florida Department of Education, 2015). The McKay scholarship provides vouchers and choice options to more students with disabilities than any other choice program in the country (Frendeway et al., 2015). The McKay scholarship is based on Florida’s matrix of needs; the monetary value of the need is determined by the severity of the disability. During the 2012-2013 school year, over 26,000 students with Individual Education Plans and 504 plans obtained vouchers totaling \$168,890,916 in funds (Florida Department of Education, 2013). From the 2008-2012 school years, enrollment in the McKay scholarship has increased by almost 30% while Florida’s population has increased less than 6% during the same time period (Florida Department of Education, 2013; United States Census Bureau, n.d.). These figures not only represent a steady upswing in both enrollment and expenditure, but also a strengthening in Florida’s commitment to school choice as an educational policy.

National Charter School Inception and Theoretical Underpinnings

In 1991, the charter school movement officially began as Minnesota became the first state to officially pass charter school legislation (Yennie, 2004). The charter school movement was first initiated with the purpose of supporting “educators, parents, and members of the community” as they developed “independent and innovative schools that addressed local needs” (Roch & Na, 2015, p. 1380). Since their inception almost two decades ago, charter schools have become an increasingly popular neoliberal approach to school reform, attaining strong bipartisan political support. Some critics consider charter schools a simple hijacking of public funds for private gain (Harvey, 2007). However, many supporters of market-based educational reform like writer and director of *Waiting for Superman*, Davis Guggenheim (2010), take the neo-liberal approach arguing that charter school competition encourages innovative educational practices

while improving public schools as a whole while giving students and parents better educational options that are otherwise not available.

Proponents of Charter Schools

Current proponents of charter schools believe in a neo-liberal approach to educational reform. Current charter school success is based upon the assumption that once these (charter) schools are freed of bureaucratic red tape, they will be able to succeed while current public schools, held back by teachers' unions, bureaucracy, and low levels of innovation, continue to fail (Radoslovich et al., 2014). Charter school proponents claim that an increase in curricular, structural, and pedagogical freedoms at each individual school site will lead to increased student performance. Charter school advocates (and neo-liberal education supporters more generally) strongly believe in free-market accountability meaning that failing charter schools will close, while successful charter schools will increase competition with neighboring public schools having a positive synergistic effect on the entire system. Many charter school advocates also point to secondary advantage of charter schools, in that since they are afforded more educational freedom, they will be more able to develop new and innovative methods of instruction and school management thus again having the potential to stimulate positive effects on the entire system (Radoslovich, 2014).

As a result of these beliefs, federal contributions to charter schools increased from \$6 million in 1995 to \$200 million in 2002 (Yennie, 2004). As of the start of the 2014-2015 school year, over two decades after Minnesota opened its first charter school, more than 6,400 charter schools operate and educate over 2.5 million students across the nation (Ziebarth & Palmer, 2014). More recent enrollment numbers show the 2016-2017 school year approximately 6,900

charter schools and over 3 million students nationwide (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2017, p. 1).

Many major foundations support charter schools including the Walton Family Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Gap Foundation with multiple of its member serving on the board of KIPP charter schools (High Quality Education, N.D.; KIPP Board of Directors, N.D.; Walton Family Foundation, 2018). Other major entities such as the United Negro College Fund and the political action committee Democrats for Education Reform also proudly support charter school education and school choice measures more broadly (Our Impact, N.D.; Whitmire & Porterfield, 2017). Academics such as Paul Hill of the Center Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) and Chuck Finn from the Fordham Institute are school choice proponents who have a nuanced understanding of the charter movement (Finn, 2020; Hill, 2020). This is to say that charter school proponents exist on both sides of the political aisle, and are as diverse as the students they serve.

Charter School Critiques

While charter schools receive significant support from a broad base of individuals, a broad and diverse group of charter school critics also exists. Unfortunately, “charter schools were designed as a resource for traditional schools, but they’ve become a thorn in the side of school districts. They’ve siphoned off precious resources...” (Horvat & Baugh, 2014, p. 80). The less than stellar macro level achievement combined with wildly varied micro level achievement within charter schools suggests that either “education markets are not functioning as predicted, or public schools are not actually a marketplace” (Horvat & Baugh, 2014, p. 80). With very real neoliberal demands to educationally perform, some charter school critics accuse charter schools of creaming their student population; a practice where charter schools will remove or force out

particular students as they are educationally or economically undesirable to educate (Lacireno-Paquet, et al., 2002). This practice may happen after a lottery is instituted to determine which students are admitted. Cropping of services is another neoliberal strategy designed to save money; cropping is when a school limits their services to exclusively serve certain populations which are often more economically and pragmatically more desirable students to educate (Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002). However, not all charter schools have the same educational pressures and their structural need for profit often dictates their area served (Ertas & Roch, 2014), As Florida's charter school laws are almost 20 years old, Florida has significant experience within the charter school realm. As my study will ultimately involve Florida's charter schools, a brief look at Florida's history within the movement and a broad overview of the laws governing the movement will help contextualize this specific approach to charter schooling.

Florida's Charter School History

A brief historical perspective of charter schools within the state of Florida will help to put the charter school debate into its correct scope and context. As my dissertation will undoubtedly utilize data mined or generated within Florida, it seems appropriate to understand and contextualize Florida's charter school experiences, statutes, and results. Florida's first charter school legislation passed on July 1, 1996. During their inaugural year, all 5 brand new charter schools taught a combined 350 children across 5 districts (FLDOE, 2006). Over the subsequent few decades, the number of students attending Florida's charter schools increased considerably as the 2005/2006 school year had over 92,000 students enrolled in charter schools. Much like voucher growth, charter school growth continues in the state of Florida as the 2013/2014 school year had over 229,000 students attending charter schools within the state of Florida (FLDOE, 2014). As of the 2017/2018 school year, 658 charter schools now educate over 313,000 students

in the state of Florida (FLDOE, 2019). This impressive rise cannot come as a surprise given that all governors and presidents since Florida's charter school law's inception (in 1996) have been in favor of charter schools and other neoliberal educational reform policies. Even though Florida's first charter schools opened their doors in 1996, charter school statutes for governing, accountability, and determining charter school success were not established until 2003. These statutes provide an interesting perspective into the minds of the legislatures and their view on education reform. From these statutes, much can be gleaned about how the goals, aims, and successes within charter schools are measured.

Florida Charter School Policy

According to the Florida's Department of Education (DOE), charter schools are "public schools created through an agreement or charter. This agreement gives the charter school a measure of expanded freedom relative to traditional public schools in return for a commitment to higher standards of accountability" (FLDOE, 2016). Florida's charter school policy has well intentioned, if not somewhat lofty, goals. Much of Florida's statute revolves around neoliberal efficiency, market-based accountability, and the notion that the innovative existence of charter schools will "encourage the use of innovative learning methods" (Charter Schools, 2014). Florida's charter schools are given the difficult task to "Provide rigorous competition within the public-school district to stimulate continual improvement in all public schools" and "Expand the capacity of the public-school system" (Charter Schools, 2014).

Interestingly, within the charter school legislation is the deliberate and surprisingly intentional charge to narrow curricular focus when it comes to measuring student achievement. Accountability is central to the neoliberal notions and when the charter school statutes are

compared with the school grade accountability statutes that all public schools are assessed by, an interesting trend of narrowing the curricular focus of charter schools seems to exist.

Florida's Governing Statutes

Florida Statute 1008.34 is the statute that public schools and public-school districts are measured by in reference to both school and district grades. This statute mentions English/language arts (ELA) 7 times, mathematics 6 times, and science and social studies being mentioned twice each. This roughly follows the same curricular focus within the state mandated high-stakes tests for each school that affects its overall school and/or school district grade. Put differently, it's expected that science and social studies are mentioned less than ELA and math as ELA and math count more for the school grade as they are subsequently tested more often. Since charter schools are also publicly funded, they take the same high-stakes assessments and are under roughly the same educational pressure to perform; some charter proponents argue this defeats the purpose of the alleged increased curricular freedoms.

However, the additional charter school code provides interesting additional insight into the expected curricular focus of charter schools within the state of Florida. Florida statute 1002.33 (the statute that specifically governs charter schools) mentions reading 11 times while mentioning math, science, and social studies a combined zero times. A meaningful debate in the curriculum world exist over the heightened standardized focus on math and ELA, however, the laws governing Florida's charter schools have an even narrower curricular focus than traditional public schools. Given charter schools' focus on efficiency and accountability combined with an extremely narrow set of curricular expectations (statutorily speaking), one would probably expect more consistency of educational outcomes when comparing charter schools across the state. Multiple studies attempting to quantitatively measure charter school achievement vis-à-vis

their public-school counterparts have been conducted with arguably the most thorough and comprehensive study coming out of Stanford's Center for Research on Educational Outcomes (CREDO).

Charter School Policy Results

CREDO has published multiple landmark studies that quantitatively compare the performance of charter schools with the performance of their traditional public-school counterparts. The first study, published in 2009, used quantitative data from 16 states (including Florida) and utilized a model that compared each charter school with a public school that serves the most similar demographic of students (a virtual twin). The study included variables such as race/ethnicity, Socioeconomic Status (SES), language proficiency, and others. As a result, this study did not measure overall achievement levels per se, but instead compared how the charter schools performed relative to its virtual traditional public-school twin. In short, the CREDO (2009) study found that charter schools outperformed public schools by 17 percent of the time, were statistically the same 46 percent of the time, and underperformed 37 percent of the time. The study also found that charter schools outperformed public schools in Arkansas, Colorado (specifically Denver), Illinois (Chicago), Louisiana, and Missouri (CREDO, 2009). Charter schools underperformed relative to public schools in including Ohio, Texas, New Mexico, Minnesota, Florida, and Arizona (CREDO, 2009). Charter schools were not statistically different than their public-school counterparts in California, Georgia, Washington D.C., and North Carolina (CREDO, 2009). This level of variation shows that schooling is local and trying to lump similarly labeled schools together for the sake of comparison can be difficult and often misleading.

Since 2009, much has evolved within the educational landscape; some charter and traditional public schools have closed while more charter schools and traditional public schools have since opened. Many states have expanded their charter school policy and in 2013, CREDO's next iteration of their study included 27 states and many more schools. For the sake of CREDO's 2013 study, schools studied in 2009 were classified as continuing schools while schools new to the educational landscape (opened after the 2009 study) were labeled new schools. This distinction is important as many charter school supporters believe the reasons their schools underperform is because they are new and have not yet worked out the kinks and data trends to partially support that notion (CREDO, 2013).

The 2013 data painted a slightly different picture for charter schools compared to 2009 and generally speaking showed a more similar level of achievement between the two school types. On a national level, the 2013 study found that in math, charter schools were similar 40% of the time, better 29% of the time and worse 31% of the time. National reading scores were no different 56% of the time, better 25% of the time and worse 19% of the time. State level data within Florida shows a slightly different picture. Figure 1 shows what the standard deviation between the two school types means in terms of educational days lost or gained. CREDO (2013) did find that new charter school very slightly lagged behind existing charter schools and that the charter schools as a whole performed very similarly to their traditional public school counterparts.

Not surprisingly, new charter schools (all less than 4 years old at the time of the study) scored noticeably lower than their established charter school and traditional public-school counterparts. However, these new schools only account for a small fraction of the total number of charter schools which results in Florida charter school students receiving an equivalent of 7

days less instruction (-.01 standard deviations) in reading and no statistical difference in math instruction compared with their public schooled counterparts. To be clear, CREDO (2013) maintains that all educational markets have charter schools that perform above, below, and in parity with their traditional public-school counterparts. According to the National Alliance for Charter Schools, charter schools in Florida serve 10% fewer students living below the poverty line than their public school counterparts, which is particularly troubling given that “on average, public charter school students exhibited lower academic growth when compared with traditional public school students in reading between 2007–08 and 2010–11 (seven fewer days) and the same academic growth in math” (Ziebarth & Palmer, 2014, p. 46).

According to the above data, Florida’s established charter schools (with their statutorily narrow curricular focus) are, on average, achieving at or slightly below their traditional public-school counterpart. Considering the dissimilar laws and intentions of charter schools, one might be surprised at the remarkable similarity in student achievement, however, the literature suggest a few reasons explaining this phenomenon.

While the structural governance and methods of operations of charter schools may differ greatly from their traditional public-school counterparts, the empirical educational outcomes of established charter schools in Florida tend to virtually mirror traditional public schools. When one compares the two school types, it should not surprise that new “[public] schools hit the ground running and maintain steady performance, while new charter schools begin to improve after their first year and slowly close the gap” (Kelly & Loveless, 2012, p. 427).

One study found that while charter schools may intend to inspire curricular and pedagogical innovation, the only empirical difference between traditional public schools’ and charter schools’ innovation is that charter school teachers are significantly less likely to have

tenure (Preston, et al., 2012). While proponents may consider this a structural innovation, this minor difference would not necessarily lead to any meaningful curricular or pedagogical change. Another issue within the innovative notion of charter schools is the simple fact that teachers often replicate the way they were taught. Many teachers in both public and charter schools attended similar colleges of education and were trained under the same standards and expectations meaning that most pedagogical and curricular educational practices will tend to utilize similar sets of “best practices” (Linick & Lubienski, 2013; Lubienski, 2003).

Charter schools also exhibit significantly higher rates of teacher attrition than do their public-school counterparts (Stuit & Smith, 2010). One could assume that, among many other issues in the charter school model, this supposed innovation (lack of tenure) may, in fact, inhibit charter school performance as teacher experience is strongly tied to overall student performance when measured utilizing standardized tests (Henrion, 2016).

Traditional public and charter schools are both measured statewide and held accountable by using the same high stakes tests; faculty in both settings are under very similar stresses for their students to perform well on these high stakes standardized tests (Lubienski, 2003). As a result, pedagogy and site level curriculum (test prep focused) often gravitates toward what is comfortable, typical, or required to increase student achievement on standardized tests (Lubienski, 2003). As stated earlier, these different organizations, given slightly different structures, will perform similarly when held to the exact same standard and the same way of measuring successful student outcomes.

A 2014 report from the National Alliance for Charter Schools ranked Florida 11th out of 26 states in “Health of the Public Charter School Movement Rankings” (Ziebarth & Palmer 2014). States considered in this report met 2 criteria: their charter schools must serve at least 1%

of the population and they must have participated in the aforementioned CREDO study. This report identified 6 “innovative” practices and, among other things, states employing more of the innovative practices were ranked higher. A cursory glimpse at the innovative practices as described by this particular pro-charter school group shows some misunderstanding when it comes to what is innovative in education. Of the six innovative practices, the first three include extended day (minimum 30 minutes more than traditional public school), extended year (minimum 10 days more than traditional public school), and year-round calendar.

While these structural changes may or may not be improvements on the current school day, these innovations represent a very narrow structural scope from which to enact educational change and are not likely to incite any measurable differences in student performance. When the vehicle for educational change is this narrow, one cannot be surprised when the amount of educational change is similarly narrow.

Policy Implications

When policy makers create two structurally different types of schools with different theoretical underpinnings, expectations, and goals and are left with two types of schools that perform at almost exactly the same level, one must wonder if this type of structural educational policy matters. Charter school education in Florida has explicitly narrowed the curriculum to heavily focus on reading as possibly a means and an end to higher test scores because the “public charter school bargain is focused on giving schools more flexibility to innovate in exchange for a higher level of accountability” (Ziebarth & Palmer 2014, p. 5). As most high stakes tests that affect school grades and district grades are multiple choice reading tests, the focus on reading appears intentional and highly interconnected to results on standardized testing. Counterintuitively, the linkages between an increased focus on reading (curricular expectations)

and having a longer school day or a longer school year (structural expectations) seem weak at best and show where the rhetoric and praxis meet to form uninspiring policy with few meaningful outcomes on a macro level. However, meaningful distinctions within the charter school movement exist with one being the type (or lack of) management company that runs the charter school.

Utilization of Management Companies and Corporations

The comparison between charter and public schools makes many important and presumptuous assumptions. An assumption is made that all charter schools (and for that matter, traditional public schools) are very similar and can be lumped together for the sake of comparison. This is empirically not true as the newest CREDO (2013) report indicates that education is extremely localized. While appropriate comparisons cannot be made for all state voucher programs as their results are often varied and extremely localized, it would be foolish to make the same mistake within the charter school realm. One meaningful way to delineate between different types of charter schools is based on whether or not they use a management company. This phenomenon has not been heavily researched and as such, the literature around this phenomenon is less robust.

Management Organizations (MOs), which can administer one or multiple charter schools, help with forming, running, and supporting the schools within their organization (Roch & Na, 2015). Proponents of MOs will argue that they allow for the replication of successful charter schools, while their detractors may point out that MOs defeat the purpose of charter schools being locally run and responsive to individual place-based community needs (Scott & DiMartino, 2010). While obviously not all charter schools utilize MOs as many of them are stand-alone and more organic in nature, charter schools that utilize MOs will fall under one of

two categories; “private education management organizations (EMOs) and nonprofit charter management organizations (CMOs) managed 36 percent of all public charter schools within the U.S. charter marketplace during the 2011–2012 school year” (Roch & Na, 2015, pp. 1380-1381). The utilization of for-profit and non-profit management structures is not unique to education as analogies could be drawn between the two types of charter schools and many large hospital chains/organizations and post-secondary institutions alike.

MOs of either type can play an extremely profound role in shaping their charter school and can influence to what extent the charter school is able to take advantage of its curricular, pedagogical, and other structural freedoms (Finnigan, 2007). As a result, EMO-run charter school teachers tend to have lower levels of autonomy and compensation when compared with teachers of non-EMO charter schools (Rocha & Na, 2015).

EMOs and CMOs do, however, have very different pressures; EMOs have private pressures, are profit driven, and may need to satisfy investors (De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans, & Jegers, M., 2011; Roch & Na, 2015). As a result, “EMOs appear less likely to teach poorer students, who are more likely to require additional services” (Ertas & Roch, 2014 p. 570). Profiles of Education Management Organizations published by the Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU), Miron et al, (2010), found that EMO-operated schools tend to: be strongly racially segregated for both minority and majority students, even more strongly segregated for economically challenged students, and enroll lower proportions of special education students and English language learners. Roch & Na (2018) found that EMO and CMO schools experienced higher teacher turnover than their stand-alone charter school contemporaries.

Proponents of for-profit EMO-run charter schools, however, may point to a study where large EMOs were not significantly under-enrolling minority students, while critics would point out that smaller EMOs served significantly smaller percentage of minority students (Lacireno-Paquet, 2004). This again shows education to be highly localized education is while highlight the difficulties in essentializing large groups of similarly labeled schools or management organizations.

Implications

While clearly some research exists on the effect of management organizational structure on school makeup, “little systematic research has been done on how EMOs influence and impact the demographic composition of schools” (Miron et al., 2010, p. 1). Further, even less research seems to exist regarding educational outcomes, specifically of EMO/CMO approaches to management vs charter schools that do not utilize management companies. Most research has to do with demographic makeup including race, language, ability/disability, and socioeconomic status (SES); this is very important as the neoliberal programs are intended to help all students, particularly the most vulnerable. However, as is often the case, the wealthy, non-special needs, and white students appear most likely to benefit most from these programs. While demographic factors may be consistent within a given EMO’s or CMO’s set of charter schools, they may not be the determinant in student performance.

Further qualitative or mixed method research is needed to better understand the process that a new charter school board or governing body would go through to decide if the utilization of a management company would be in their best interest. Understanding the pulls, pressures, and expectations of a charter school governing board would give insight into the difficult

decisions and processes that ultimately play a significant role in the education of the students they intend to serve.

Literature on Independent Variables

This study will investigate different measurable variables between MO run charter schools and their non-MO counterparts. Each variable below will have a rationale of why that factor is being studied, a brief look at other studies regarding the variable, and how the factor will be investigated in the study.

School Grade

According to the FLDOE's *2017-2018 Guide to Calculating School and District Grades*, "school grades provide an easily understandable metric to measure the performance of a school" (FLDOE, August 2017). School grade calculation in the state of Florida was heavily revised during the 2014-2015 school year as new Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) were rolled out, and the 2016-2017 school year data uses the revised model. The FLDOE school grading system focuses on achievement, learning gains, graduation, acceleration success, and maintaining focus on students who need the most support. While the statutory language comes from Section 1008.34, of the, K-20 Education Code, the FLDOE interprets the statute and scales the scores (Florida Statutes, 2018). While the statute indicates that an A school would be a "schools making excellent progress", the FLDOE interpreted that to mean that during the 2016-2017 school year, schools receiving 62% or more of the possible points would get to call themselves an A school (Florida Statutes, 2018). Consequently, a C school which is a "schools making satisfactory progress" according to the statute were schools earning between 41% and 53% of the possible points. This study will utilize school grades in the way that the FLDOE intended and will use the school grades as one of many data points to understand the success of the school and ultimately

if MO charter schools are more successful than non-MO charter schools when taking school grade into account.

Socioeconomic Status

Another important measurable factor is the socioeconomic status (SES) of the students being served. According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, effective July 1, 2020 - June 1, 2021, in order to qualify for free lunch, a household of 4 must annual make less than \$34,060 per year with (add or subtract \$5,824 per household size different than 4). A household of 4 needing to make \$48,470 to qualify for reduced lunch (add or subtract \$8,228 per additional household member (FL Department of Agriculture, 2020).

With over 51% of charter school students qualifying for free or reduced lunch and over 60 percent of Florida students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, this population is big enough to warrant study on its own (Florida Department of Education, April 2018).

Another important reason to study this subset of students is the relationship between SES and student outcomes. While much research exists regarding SES and its effect on student achievement, the extant literature tends to indicate a positive trend when looking for correlations between student achievement and SES (Jehangir, Glas & van den Berg, 2015; Sirin, 2005) Researchers have found that gaps exist between students from the top 25 percentile and the lowest 25 percentile and that SES is the factor with the strongest correlation to achievement test scores (Bellibaş, 2016; Gustafsson, Nilsen & Hansen, 2016).

Given that SES is highly tied to student achievement, many charter schools have been accused of creaming their student population as to not serve low SES students (Ertas & Roch, 2014; Lacireno-Paquet, et al., 2002). If low SES students are significantly over or underrepresented in a particular subset of schools, then more research is warranted to both

understand why that is happening, and the effects being felt as a result of the over/under representation.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities (SWD) is another subset of students that will be monitored during this study. SWD represented ~9.4% of Florida's charter school students and ~13.8% of Florida's total school population. FLDOE has interpreted the school grade statute section 1008.34, F.S. as "maintaining focus on students who need the most support" (Florida Department of Education, August 2017). SWD are certainly students who need support and are a group of students who have special statutory protections. Much like with SES, SWD is a subgroup in need of study as SWD can be significantly more expensive to educate and may have a negative effect with regards to performance on standardized tests (Smith & Douglas, 2014). As a result, some charter schools have been accused of cropping services to students with disabilities or any set of students that may hurt test scores and/or be more economically disadvantageous to educate (Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002).

Student Attrition/Mobility and Discipline

Student attrition/mobility and student discipline are two separate reporting numbers that will be studied; however, they are related variables. As mentioned earlier, some charter schools have been accused of creaming or cropping their student populations to make sure their student population is the easiest, most economically efficient group of students to teach and potentially the highest achievers on high-stakes assessments. Additionally, a few charter schools brands in particular charters have been accused of shaping their student population through extreme discipline measures leading to high levels of student attrition (Nichols-Barrer, 2016; Robelen,

2008; Vasquez et al, 2011; Zehr, 2011). This study will seek to determine if this is actually happening and whether or not it is unique to schools who do/do not utilize an MO.

Discipline data will be gathered to determine if an unusually high percentage of students are receiving disciplinary action. Further, this study will look into the timing of student mobility/attrition to see if students are more likely to move/change schools right before or after major events such as FTE reporting periods, high-stakes assessments, or other dates.

Highly Qualified Teachers

Having a highly qualified teacher in front of students every day has proven to be an important factor in both short- and long-term educational success for students (Wong, 2018). The literature indicates that management organizations (MOs), including both EMOs and CMOs, affect the governance in place at many schools, while shaping and evolving the educational environments at schools (Finnigan, 2007). MOs shape the culture and may have different demands of their teachers that are related to the pursuit of the goals and mission of the school (Torres, 2016). The turnover of the educational staff at a school can have a significant effect on the educational environment (Guin, 2004; Stuit & Smith, 2012,) as high turnover rates make it less likely that students will be taught by effective teachers, negatively affecting student outcomes (Johnson, 2006). Teacher retention in charter schools is typically lower than in public schools (Harris, 2007; Miron & Applegate, 2007; Renzulli, Parrott, & Beattie, 2011; Stuit & Smith, 2012).

Teacher retention may be a proxy for teacher quality but being a highly qualified teacher is more germane to teacher quality and ultimately student success. For these reasons this study will investigate whether or not charter schools using an MO (CMO or EMO) have different rates of teachers being highly qualified than charter schools without an MO. All Florida schools must

report whether teachers have met Highly Qualified status to instruct in core academic classes. In order for FLDOE to deem a teacher highly qualified, the teacher must meet one or more of the following stated requirements as specified by the Highly Qualified Teacher Status document, in the Florida Department of Education's *Information Database Requirements Volume 1* (FLDOE, 2014):

1. All teachers who give instruction in the core academic subjects of Art-Visual Arts, Drama-Theatre, English, World Languages, Language Arts, Mathematics, Music, Reading, Science, and Social Studies (History, Economics, Political Science and Geography) at any level must meet the following criteria in order for a "yes" response to be provided:
 - hold an acceptable bachelor's or higher degree, and hold a valid Florida Temporary or Professional Certificate.
2. In addition: All (elementary, middle, and secondary) "not new" teachers of core academic subjects must meet one of the following criteria in order for a "yes" response to be provided:
 - hold a valid infield Temporary or Professional Certificate and have passed the appropriate subject area test in the subject area assigned
OR
 - have documented the 100 points for the High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) plan for the core academic subject area assigned (transferable from out of state using the out of state SAE verification form) OR

- for elementary teachers, have a valid Florida Professional Certificate appropriate for the grade level(s) assigned and verification from another state of passing an appropriate subject area exam for the grade level(s) assigned (transferable from out of state using the out of state SAE verification form).
- for middle and secondary teachers, only have a major, equivalent courses, or a passing score on the subject area exam in the subject area assigned as evidenced by a valid infield certificate. (FLDOE, 2014)

"New" elementary teachers, teachers with no teaching experience, must meet one of the following criteria in order for a "yes" response to be provided:

- hold a valid infield Temporary Certificate in the area assigned and have passed the appropriate subject area test in the subject area assigned OR
- hold a valid infield Professional Certificate in the area assigned.

“New” middle and secondary teachers, teachers with no teaching experience, must meet the following in order for a “yes” response to be provided:

- have a major, equivalent course, or a passing score on the subject area exam in the subject area assigned as evidenced by a valid infield certificate. (FLDOE, 2014)

The FLDOE language regarding the different routes that teachers can take to become highly qualified seems lengthy; however, they provide a comprehensive and exhaustive description. The language basically ensures that all teachers have passed the proper certification tests and are equipped for both the subject matter that they are teaching and the student population that they

are teaching. Understanding if different charter schools are more or less able to recruit and maintain highly qualified teachers is an important piece in understanding if the structure helps put the school in the best position to help its students and ultimately would affect the school grade.

English Language Learners

English language learners (ELL) are another subgroup that this study will investigate. ELL students make up ~10.2% of Florida's charter school students, and ~10.7% of Florida's students as a whole. Much like with the SWD and SES subgroups, ELL students may be a more expensive subgroup to educate and they may negatively affect the results of high stakes testing, as a result charter schools have been accused of cropping access to students who fit this description meaning attention must be given to ensure that ELLs are appropriately represented in all charter school types (Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002).

Similarities in Other Fields

Many fields of study encounter similar issues regarding for profit and non-profit entities fighting for similar public monies. Hospitals (or perhaps even healthcare more broadly) and prisons are two additional arenas where law, policy, and tax dollars often meet. Below is a brief overview of these two fields, healthcare and prison administration, as a useful heuristic of practice. This is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the literature, but rather as a guide to discussion of similar issues faced by public funded institutions.

Hospitals

Institutions that undergo some type of privatization (whether for profit, or non-profit) do so principally in the name of increased efficiency. This privatization has often been undertaken as policy makers "used neoliberal reform as a mechanism to make their public health care sectors

governable” (Thorup & Stone, 2015, p. 941). Using neoliberal reforms as a means of control is not a novel concept in educational reform; these reforms have become a part of the landscape of public sector control.

Education studies focus either on the major inputs of teachers and/or students served or outcome, achievement; similarly, many hospital studies focus on the inputs of workers and/or people served or their outcome of patient care provision. When studying the effects of privatization on hospital staffs, Heimeshoff, Schreyögg, and Tiemann (2014) found that for-profit privatizations resulted in significant reduction of overall staff; of interest, they did not noticeably reduce the number of physicians, but instead reduced non-clinical staff. Similarities within privatization in the realm of education are noticeable in that there has been a reduction of non-educational staff such as custodial, bus drivers, and security personnel (Ball, Thrupp, & Forsey, 2010). Barigozzi and Burani (2016) found that non-profit hospitals tend to provide a higher amount of care, to have more motivated workers, and to offer lower salaries than for-profit hospitals.

An article by Dr. Bhagwan Satiani (2008) compared specialty hospitals with general hospitals in terms of their outcomes. In this article, analogies could be made comparing charter schools to specialty hospitals (SHs), and public schools to general hospitals. While “General hospitals provide more care for the indigent ... general hospitals provide more uncompensated care when compared with SHs” (Satiani, 2008, p. 593). Similarly, public schools are more likely than their charter school counterparts to serve low socioeconomic status and minority students (CREDO, 2013). Charter schools are regularly accused of “cherry picking” or purposefully selecting enrollment from the most economically advantageous students (Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002). This characteristic may be seen as a similar practice of specialty hospitals in that they

“tend to treat more profitable patients that may not be as ill as those admitted to community hospitals” (Satiani, 2008, p. 592). This is due to the fact that community hospitals serve a “disproportionately higher number of Medicaid and uninsured patients in acute care general hospitals” (Satiani, 2008, p. 593). In like manner, students removed from charter schools, often at extremely high rates (Zehr, 2011), enroll in traditional public schools (FAPE).

Proponents of community hospitals claim that specialty hospitals force general hospitals to compete and innovate; however, according to Satiani’s (2008) study, no evidence was found that specialty hospitals contributed to any innovations in the field. At the same time specialty hospitals have had a detrimental impact on community hospitals: “A big concern has been the financial impact of SHs on community hospitals” (Satiani, 2008, p. 593). Many charter school proponents believe that competition will force public schools to innovate and improve; concomitantly, many public-school proponents believe that charter schools are siphoning off public funds for private gains (Horvat & Baugh, 2014; Richards, 2017).

Prisons

Another area of social and legislative discord regarding the use of public money to support privatization involves the utilization of for-profit prisons. Proponents of for-profit prison systems believe that a corporation can more efficiently run a prison and ultimately save the tax payers money; detractors often argue against this practice as it may incentivize imprisonment and may lead to even more negative outcomes for prisoners. Privatization ultimately depends on profit margins. The underlying contention is that individuals should not ultimately profit on the detention of others (Eisenberg, 2016).

Literature Summary

This study is grounded by the understandings from the above literature review, The logical and chronological steps from the accountability movement to school choice via neoliberal policies, especially charter schools, necessitates understanding the outcomes of the charter school movement with the utilization of MOs as one possible fault line, As has been seen in other fields, the effects of how institutions are individually and collectively managed can have an effect on individuals serving and being served by those institutions, Shining a light on this phenomenon and exploring it thoroughly, in an attempt to understand the affects and effects, are central to this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Epistemology

Post-positivism is the paradigm that philosophically guides, and pragmatically underpins this entire study; the research question, methodological design, and data analysis were/are all generated/viewed from a post-positivistic point of view. Effort was taken to adequately situate post-positivism within other epistemological frameworks with a brief history for contextualization. A rationale for why post-positivism is the best fit is provided before an explanation of the methodology and design.

As its name implies, post-positivism has its roots in the positivistic approach to research and knowledge generation meaning an understanding of positivism is crucial to properly situate post-positivism. The term positivism was coined by August Comte in 1822 (Waliaula, 2013). Comte's positivism generally believes that social reality can be explained through a scientific understanding utilizing controls and a methodical, replicable, and generalizable approach (Waliaula, 2013). Comte did not credit himself as the natural owner or positivism as ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Socrates expressed similar ideas philosophically utilizing realism where reality and human intervention are independent and through data and supporting evidence (scientifically) (Waliaula, 2013). As researches realized that positivism could not fully satisfy the requirements for research of the social sciences, researchers developed a paradigm that mixed positivism and interpretivism ultimately creating post-positivism (Deluca, Gallivan & Kock, 2008; Petter & Gallivan 2004). As a result, Post positivism balances both positivist and interpretivist approaches while focusing on the context and experience of the majority while

scientifically striving to explore phenomena while not relying exclusively on empiricism in contrast to a purely positivistic paradigm (Panhwar, Ansari & Shah, 2017)

Post-positivism is neither a new version of positivism nor is it a hyper positivistic approach, rather it is a position that developed post (after) positivism (Phillips, 2004). Just as science is no longer completely hyper-rationalist or based on extreme empiricism, the post-positivism that this study subscribes to is trying to get progressively closer to the truth while attempting to identify causal relationships in the human and social scientific world.

Rationale

Post-positivism is a rich paradigm for educational research, a field often dominated by constructivist, interpretivist, and post-modern approaches (Panhwar et al, 2017). Since the research question is utilizing the state of Florida's charter schools as a data set, and with the intention that the outcomes of this study be generalizable and inform policy, post-positivist approach is most appropriate.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to examine whether utilization of a management organization has a statistically significant interaction with student population composition, student achievement, teacher quality, student attrition/mobility, and student discipline,

Research Questions

1. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the socioeconomic status (SES) of students served?

2. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with school performance?
3. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the percentage English Language Learners (ELL) students served?
4. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), have any effect on the percentage of students with disabilities (SWD) served?
5. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the percentage of highly qualified teachers as defined by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE)?
6. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with student attrition/mobility?
7. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with student discipline?

Data Sources and Collection

The data used in this study came from many sources primarily the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) and the data utilized was from the 2018-2019 school year. MO status (meaning the utilization of either an EMO or CMO) was derived from the Florida Department of

Education’s charter school directory utilizing each individual school’s 2019 accountability report noting whether or not they listed a MO, 326 charter schools listed a management company while 317 schools either did not list a management company or wrote in “none” for that section, Descriptive statistics and general demographic information being provided by the FLDOE’s *Student Achievement in Charter Schools* annual report and *Florida’s Charter Schools Fact Sheet* from the Office of Independent Education & Parental Choice.

Data Analysis

- Independent Variables: Charter schools that utilize an MO, Charter schools that do not use an MO.
- Dependent Variables: School Grade, Socioeconomic Status of students served (as measured by percent receiving free/reduced lunch, percent of students with disabilities being served, student attrition (as measured by stability rate), disciplinary actions taken, percent of highly qualified teachers, percent of students who are classified as ELL (code LY).

Deciding on variables is crucially important and not taken lightly. Many investigators will “lump all the dependent variables in a single analysis this is not necessarily a good idea if several variables have been included without any strong rationale...” (Pituch & Stevens, 2016, p.144). As such, the rationale for the dependent variables has been extensively discussed in chapter 2.

Data was organized and analyzed utilizing a MANOVA. MANOVAs are ideal when “more than two groups of subjects are being compared on several dependent variables simultaneously (Stevens, 1986, p. 149). While multiple ANOVAs could be conducted on each dependent variable, “[t]he use of fragmented univariate tests leads to a greatly inflated overall type 1 error rate” (Pituch & Stevens, 2016, p. 143).

Should the MANOVA prove statistically significant, follow-up tests would include individual ANOVAs on each of the dependent variables. As mentioned earlier, using multiple fragmented univariate tests (ANOVAs) will increase the type 1 error rate. To keep the type 1 error rate tenable, the “one-way ANOVAs for each outcome [will utilize] a Bonferroni-adjusted alpha used for the univariate tests” (Pituch & Stevens, 2016, p. 184), An a priori alpha level of .05 will be set for the MANOVA, An a priori alpha level of .05 will also be utilized for ANOVA tests on each independent variable. Further, this MANOVA will utilize a Holm Adjusted Bonferroni Procedure to balance challenges with both Type 1 and Type 2 error rates.

Operationalizing the Variables

The operationalizing of variables in this study is based on Florida Department of Education since the study will use its database.

MO School or Non-MO School

As stated above, the independent variable of whether or not schools utilize an MO was determined by utilizing the Florida Department of Education’s charter school directory utilizing each individual school’s 2019 accountability report noting whether or not they listed a MO.

For this MANOVA all data was split into two groups; those that utilize an MO (group 1, and those that do not utilize an MO (group 2). Using SAS software, I set up the MANOVA with Charter School Utilization of an MO (dummy coded as 1 or 2) as the independent variable.

MANOVA Variables and Data Sources

Table 1

MANOVA Variables and Data Sources

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Data Sources
Schools utilizing management companies		FLDOE Website *2019 Accountability Report
Schools not utilizing management companies		FLDOE Website *2019 Accountability Report
	School Grade	FLDOE Website *2018-19 School Grades
	SES of students served	FLDOE Website *Lunch Status by LEA (for Federal Funding) 2019-20, Final Survey 3
	Percent of students with disabilities	FLDOE Website **Florida PK-12 Education Information Portal
	Student Attrition	FLDOE Website *Stability Rate by School 2019-20 Final Surveys 2 and 3
	Disciplinary action taken	FLDOE Website *Student Discipline Data by Race/Ethnicity and Gender 2018-19, Final Survey 5

*Name of report produced by FLDOE

**Database used to generate report

Socio-Economic Status

The dependent variable of SES was entered into the MANOVA using % of students that qualify for free lunch at that particular school. The state of Florida defines reduced lunch as 185% of the federal poverty guidelines meaning a family of 4 would need to make \$48,470 or less to qualify; adding or subtracting individuals from the family would change the threshold by \$8,288 per person (FL Department of Agriculture, 2020). The *Lunch Status by LEA (for Federal Funding) 2019-20, Final Survey 3* report from the FLDOE website will be used to generate data for this variable.

School Grade

The dependent variable of school performance was inputted utilizing most 2018-2019 school grades and was coded numerically where A=4, B=3, C=3, D=1, F=0. School grades “provide an easily understandable metric to measure the performance of a school” with the system focusing on achievement, learning gains, graduation, and acceleration success (FLDOE, 2017). The state statutes governing school grade are found in section 1008.34 of the K-20 Education Code, the FLDOE denotes an A school as “schools making excellent progress” and a C school as “schools making satisfactory progress”. The *2018-19 School Grades* report from the FLDOE website will be used to generate data for this variable.

Students with Disabilities

The dependent variable of SWD served was inputted as a percentage of SWD served at the particular school. The Florida PK-12 Education Information Portal (edstats.fldoe.org) will be used to generate data for this dependent variable. Section 1007.02 defines “student with a disability” as:

“a student who is documented as having an intellectual disability; a hearing impairment, including deafness; a speech or language impairment; a visual impairment, including blindness; an emotional or behavioral disability; an orthopedic or other health impairment; an autism spectrum disorder; a traumatic brain injury; or a specific learning disability, including, but not limited to, dyslexia, dyscalculia, or developmental aphasia.”

Student Attrition/Mobility

The dependent variable of attrition/mobility was inputted utilizing FLDOE’s stability rate by school. The *Stability Rate by School 2018-19 Final Surveys 2 and 3* report from the FLDOE website was used to generate data for this variable. This data will measure the change in enrollment from the February 2019 FTE reporting date, and the October 2018 reporting date. A school with the exact same number of students at each date would receive a stability rate of 100%.

Student Discipline

The dependent variable of student discipline utilized the *Student Discipline Data by Race/Ethnicity and Gender School Level 2018-19, Final Survey 5* report from the FLDOE website was used to generate data for this variable. The total number of discipline incidences such as referrals, suspensions, and expulsions in this report per school was entered into the MANOVA.

Highly Qualified Teachers

The dependent variable of highly qualified teachers was inputted as the percentage of highly qualified teachers per FLDOE (2017). The *Total Number and Percent of Courses Taught by Not Highly Qualified Teachers 2015-16, Final Survey 4 and 2016-17, Final Surveys 1-3* report from the FLDOE website was used to generate data for this variable. The 2016-2017

report is the most recent version of this data produced as the FLDOE no longer produces this information. The Florida Department of Education's *Information Database Requirements Volume 1* (FLDOE, 2014) has the precise ways a teacher can be labeled as highly qualified and a more extensive definition can be found in chapter 2.

English Language Learners

The dependent variable of ELL population served was inputted based on percent of ELL students served at the particular school. Section 1003.56(2)(a) of the Florida Statutes defines an ELL as:

an individual who was not born in the United States and whose native language is a language other than English; an individual who comes from a home environment where a language other than English is spoken in the home; or an individual who is an American Indian or Alaskan native and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on his or her level of English language proficiency; and who, by reason thereof, has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or listening to the English language to deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English.

The Florida PK-12 Education Information Portal (edstats.fldoe.org) will be used to generate data for this dependent variable.

SAS Coding Procedure

SAS coding without data was entered using the below procedure:

```
data project;  
input MO SES Grade ELL SWD HQT Stability Discipline;  
cards;
```

(This is where the data was placed)

```
Proc Sort; by MO;  
Proc Univariate Plot;  
Var SES Grade ELL SWD HQT Stability Discipline;
```

```

By MO;
proc glm;
class MO;
model SES Grade ELL SWD HQT Stability Discipline =MO;
manova h=MO / printh printe;
means MO;
Means MO / Tukey;
run;

```

Population Statistics

Florida’s charter school’s demographic breakdown can be seen below. Hispanic students make up the single largest percentage of students at 43% with white students making up 31% and black students representing about 20%. Just over half of the students served by charter schools receive free/reduced lunch and about 10% of students are identified as ELL and/or SWD. Charter school grades during this time have around half of schools in Florida receiving an A rating and nearly all schools receiving an A, B, or C rating. Charter school enrollment in Florida continues to grow year after year.

Table 2

*Florida’s Charter School Demographics 2018-2019**

Race/Ethnicity/Gender	N of Students	Percentage
White	96,711	31.00%
Black	61,848	19.80%
Hispanic	134,220	43.00%
Other	19,195	6.20%
Total	282,250	100.00%
Free/Reduced Lunch	164,660	52.80%
English Language Learners	30,636	9.80%
Students with Disabilities	30,950	9.90%

Table 3 shows the data compiled from 18-19 *Student Achievement in Florida’s Charter Schools: A Comparison of the Performance of Charter School Students with Traditional Public School Students*, Florida Department of Education, Improving K-12 Educational Choice Options, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice and the Bureau of Evaluation and Reporting in the Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement (September 2019, p. 2).

Table 3*Florida's Charter School Grades 2018-2019*

*Grade	N of Schools	Percentage
A	279	51%
B	125	23%
C	111	20%
D	28	5%
F	3	1%
Total	528	100%

**18-19 Student Achievement in Florida's Charter Schools: A Comparison of the Performance of Charter School Students with Traditional Public School Students, Florida Department of Education, Improving K-12 Educational Choice Options, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice and the Bureau of Evaluation and Reporting in the Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement (April 2018, page 3).*

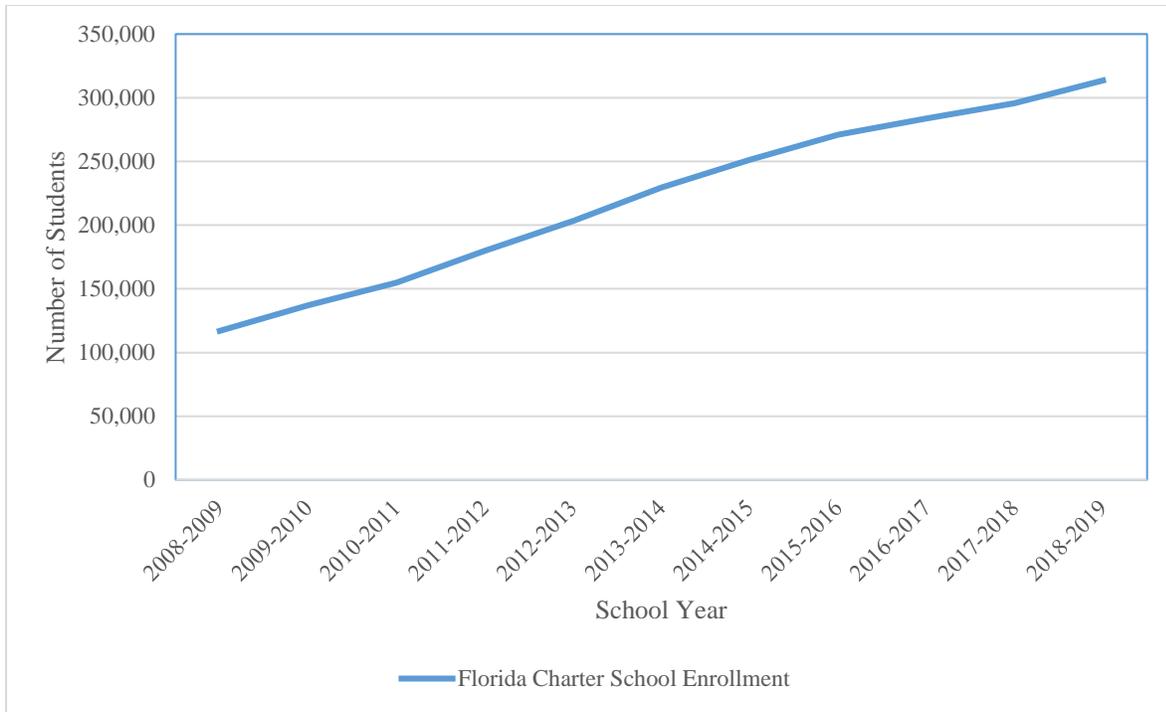


Figure 1

Students Enrolled in Charter School Over Time

Note. Data provided in the publication *Florida’s Charter Schools Fact Sheet* produced by the Office of Independent Education & Parental Choice, Florida Department of Education (September 2019).

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Since charter school growth seems inevitable, further study within the charter movement itself is necessary for policy makers, school boards, and the general public. Research based knowledge on charter schools would assist researchers, policy makers, school boards, charter school boards, and the public on factors that lead to a higher performing, more diverse, or more equitable charter school sector.

The purpose of the study is to examine whether utilization of a management organization has a statistically significant interaction with student population composition, student achievement, teacher quality, student attrition/mobility, and student discipline.

Research Question

The guiding research question of this study is: How does utilizing a management company interact with different measurable variables observed at charter schools?

In order to address the above research question, the following sub-questions will guide the study:

1. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the socioeconomic status (SES) of students served?
2. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with school performance?

3. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the percentage English Language Learners (ELL) students served?

4. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the percentage of students with disabilities (SWD) served?

5. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with percentage of highly qualified teachers as defined by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE)?

6. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with student attrition/mobility?

7. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with student discipline?

Description of the Sample

During the course of the data collection, it was found that Florida had 326 charter schools that listed a management company and 317 charter schools that either listed no management company or selected “none.” However, within the data, differing numbers of schools appeared on respective official reports from the state for each variable. Data points for ELL, SWD, HQT, and Discipline were turned into rates using school population to ensure that large and small schools were appropriately counted. Further, discipline incidences are only reported when data

for individual subgroups is greater than 10. As the number of discipline incidences reported was largely redacted to protect student privacy, and incomplete, a decision was made to not utilize discipline in the MANOVA as it would greatly alter the overall sample and would greatly reduce the power of the MANOVA. Further, an individual ANOVA of the available discipline data was run and the difference between the two groups was statistically insignificant.

Table 4

Number of Observations by Charter School Type

Dependent Variable	MO	Non-MO
SES	305	311
School Grade	249	248
ELL Rate	242	262
SWD Rate	238	243
NHQT Rate	234	270
Stability Rate	303	310
Discipline Rate	47	41

Further Culling of the Data Set

With the discipline rate removed, the next process in cleaning the data involved retaining only those schools with reported data for each variable in the analysis. For a variety of reasons, different schools were missing some or many pieces of data; since the MANOVA automatically throws out incomplete data, it is important to both remove that data beforehand to keep the univariate and descriptive statistics consistent with the MANOVA. It is also important to show how this has changed both the outcomes of the data set (group averages) as well as to show which parts of the data set were removed. The below tables show the changes in group means, and the number of observations removed from each dependent variable within each analysis group (MO=1 and MO=2 are displayed in Tables 5 and 6 respectively).

Overall, the change in group means was very small and largely negligible. The largest shift occurred at the SES level where MO Charter school’s percentage of Free/Reduced lunch recipients went up by less than 2% while non-MO Free/Reduced lunch recipients went down by less than 1 percent. All other changes were extremely minor and often shifting in the same direction.

Interestingly, while MO charter schools started out with a slightly lower N, they ultimately had a larger culling process than schools utilizing MOs. Perhaps the structure given by the MOs increased proper reporting or other factors may have come in to play. Given that MO schools have an N of 150 and non-MO charter schools have an N of 190, an adequate number of schools is left in both groups for this study.

Table 5

Change in Group Mean & Observations MO Charter Schools

Dependent Variable	Original N	New N	Δ N	Original Mean	New Mean	Δ Mean
SES	305	150	-155	59.53	61.51	1.98
School Grade	249	150	-99	3.17	3.22	0.05
ELL Rate	242	150	-92	0.134	0.14	0.006
SWD Rate	238	150	-88	0.089	0.076	-0.013
NHQT Rate	234	150	-93	0.271	0.276	0.005
Stability Rate	303	150	-153	0.934	0.962	0.028

Table 6

Change in Group Mean & Observations Non-MO Charter Schools

Dependent Variable	Original N	New N	Δ N	Original Mean	New Mean	Δ Mean
SES	311	190	-121	54.06	53.2	-0.86
School Grade	248	190	-58	3.27	3.26	-0.01
ELL Rate	262	190	-72	0.071	0.077	0.06
SWD Rate	243	190	-53	0.123	0.095	-0.028
NHQT Rate	270	190	-80	0.166	0.189	0.023
Stability Rate	310	190	-120	0.95	0.962	0.012

As a result of this change, the updated SAS coding can be found below.

```
data project;
input MO SES Grade ELL SWD HQT Stability;
if SES=. Then delete;
if grade=. Then delete;
if ELL=. Then delete;
if SWD=. Then delete;
if HQT=. Then delete;
if Stability=. Then delete;

cards;
(Data input here)

;
Proc Sort; by MO;
Proc Univariate Plot;
Var SES Grade ELL SWD HQT Stability;
By MO;
proc glm;
class MO;
model SES Grade ELL SWD HQT Stability =MO;
manova h=MO / printh printe;
means MO;
Means MO / Tukey;
run;
```

MANOVA Outcomes

With an A Priori Alpha level set at .05, the MANOVA was found to show significant multivariate effect with a P value <.0001. SAS outputs for the overall MANOVA are presented in Table 7.

Table 7*MANOVA Output: MO Effect*

Statistic	Value	F Value	Num DF	Den DF	Pr > F
Wilks' Lambda	0.89834853	6.28	6	333**	<.0001
Pillai's Trace	0.10165147	6.28	6	333	<.0001
Hotelling-Lawley Trace	0.11315372	6.28	6	333	<.0001
Roy's Greatest Root	0.11315372	6.28	6	333	<.0001

** $p < .001$

Given the significant multivariate effect, examination of the dependent variables becomes critically important. Table 8 below displays the univariate outcomes by dependent variable showing the Holm adjusted Bonferroni procedure to determine statistical significance in order from smallest to largest minimum P value. Ordering from smallest to largest minimum P value helps visualize the Holm Adjustment in the Bonferroni procedure. Further discussion on each dependent variable will take place below Table 8.

Table 8*Dependent Variable analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order*

Dependent Variable	P Value	Holm Adjusted Bonferroni Value	Statistically Significant
ELL	<.0001	.05/6 = .0083	Yes
SWD	0.0007	.05/5 = .01	Yes
NHQT	0.0042	.05/4 = .0125	Yes
SES	0.0145	.05/3 = .0167	Yes
School Grade	0.7191	.05/2 = .025	No
Stability Rate	0.9071	.05/1 = .05	No

Dependent Variable Outcomes**Socio Economic Status**

The output number for SES as operationalized in chapters 1-3 is the percentage of students at a school who received free/reduced lunch rate status. The group mean for students receiving free/reduced lunch status in charter schools utilizing a management organization (dummy coded MO=1) was found to be 61.5186667 while the group mean for charter schools not utilizing a management organization (dummy coded MO=2) was found to be 53.1973684. This means that schools utilizing MOs had on average 61.5% of their students receiving free/reduced lunch while Non-MO schools had only 53.2% of students receiving free/reduced lunch. With a P value of .0145 and the Holm Adjusted Bonferroni procedure determined that P values below .0167 to be significant, this difference between group means is statistically significant.

Table 9*Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: SES*

Dependent Variable	MO Mean	Non-MO Mean	P Value	Holm Adjusted Bonferroni	Significance Met
SES	61.5186667	53.1973684	0.0145	0.016666667	Yes

School Grade

School grade, operationalized in chapters 1-3 as A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0 found that schools utilizing an MO to average 3.22666667 and schools not utilizing an MO to average 3.26315789. With a P value of .7191 and the Holm Adjusted Bonferroni procedure determined that P values below .025 to be significant, the differences between the two group means is not significant.

Table 10

Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: School Grade

Dependent Variable	MO Mean	Non-MO Mean	P Value	Holm Adjusted Bonferroni	Significance Met
School Grade	3.22666667	3.26315789	0.7191	0.025	No

English Language Learners

English Language Learners operationalized in chapters 1-3 as the rate of ELL students per school population is put into the MANOVA. Schools utilizing an MO had an ELL rate of 0.14028674 while schools not utilizing an MO had an ELL rate of 0.07697981. MO utilizing schools had almost double the rate of ELL students as schools not utilizing an MO. With a P value of <.0001 and the Holm Adjusted Bonferroni procedure determining P values below .083 to be significant, the difference between the two group means is significant.

Table 11

Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: ELL

Dependent Variable	MO Mean	Non-MO Mean	P Value	Holm Adjusted Bonferroni	Significance Met
ELL	0.14028674	0.07697981	<.0001	0.083	Yes

Students with Disabilities

Students with Disabilities operationalized in chapters 1-3 as the rate of SWD students per school is put into the MANOVA, Schools utilizing an MO had an SWD rate of 0.07550578 while schools not utilizing an MO had an SWD rate of 0.09476065. Schools utilizing MOs had a lower rate of SWD than schools not utilizing an MO. With a P value of .0007 and the Holm Adjusted Bonferroni procedure determined that P values below .01 to be significant, the differences between the two group means is significant.

Table 12

Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: SWD

Dependent Variable	MO Mean	Non-MO Mean	P Value	Holm Adjusted Bonferroni	Significance Met
SWD	0.07550578	0.09476065	0.0007	0.01	Yes

Not Highly Qualified Teacher Rate

The rate at which schools employ not highly qualified teachers as operationalized in chapters 1-3 were put into the MANOVA. Schools utilizing an MO had an NHQT rate of 0.27634413 while schools not utilizing an MO had an NHQT rate of 0.18933437. With a P value of .0042 and the Holm Adjusted Bonferroni procedure determining P values below .0125 to be significant, the differences between the two group means is significant.

Table 13

Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: NHQT

Dependent Variable	MO Mean	Non-MO Mean	P Value	Holm Adjusted Bonferroni	Significance Met
NHQT	0.27634413	0.18933437	0.0042	0.0125	Yes

Stability Rate

The school's stability rate, operationalized in chapters 1-3 were put into the MANOVA, Schools utilizing an MO had a stability rate of 0.96188085 while schools not utilizing an MO had a stability rate of 0.96225875. With a P value of .9071 and the Holm Adjusted Bonferroni procedure determining P values below .05 to be significant, the differences between the two group means is not significant.

Table 14

Dependent Variable Analysis with Holm Adjusted Bonferroni in P Value Order: Stability Rate

Dependent Variable	MO Mean	Non-MO Mean	P Value	Holm Adjusted Bonferroni	Significance Met
Stability Rate	0.96188085	0.96225875	0.9071	0.05	No

Summary

The MANOVA found significant multivariate effect within the independent variable of MO utilization within Florida's charter schools. Follow-up tests utilizing a Holm adjusted Bonferroni procedure noticed statistical significance in the ELL rate, SWD rate, and SES of the students served. The rate of not highly qualified teachers was also statistically significant while variance in school grades and stability rate could not be attributed to the independent variable. Chapter 5 will further explore the meaning of these outcomes and will discuss limitations of the study and academic next steps.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I provide a brief summary of the findings. I then examine the results and relate them to the existing literature. Further, I explore the limitations of the study and propose possible recommendations for future research. Finally, I discuss possible policy implications.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect that management organizations have on charter schools in the state of Florida. Specifically, how the utilization of management organizations interacts with the socioeconomic status of the students served as measured by free/reduced lunch rate, the academic achievement as measured by school grade, the percentage of students who are identified as ELL, the percentage of students who are identified as SWD, the percentage of not highly qualified teachers, and the attrition/mobility of students as measured by stability rate.

Summary of the Results

This study was designed to examine if a significant difference in Florida charter school inputs and outputs could be detected. Upon completion of the MANOVA procedure, the null hypothesis that the utilization or non-utilization of management organization had no effect was rejected. Significant multivariate effect was found in the MANOVA with a P value of $<.001$. Since MANOVA was statistically significant at $P < .001$, individual univariate ANOVA F-Tests were performed in order to examine the individual dependent variables. A Holm Adjusted Bonferroni Procedure was performed to keep both type 1 and type 2 error rates tenable while analyzing the data. Significant differences between MO and Non-MO group means were found in four of the six dependent variables including: ELL Rate, SWD Rate, NHQT Rate, and SES. In

two of the six variables, there were no significant differences within the group means, including: School Grade and Stability Rate.

Discussion of the Results

This section provides an overview of the results per dependent variable with more context, explanation and nuance than chapter 4's simple test of significance

SES

1. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the socioeconomic status (SES) of students served?

Charter schools utilizing an MO (MO=1) had a free lunch rate of ~61.5% and charter schools not utilizing an MO (MO=2) had a free lunch rate of ~53.2%. Put differently, charter schools utilizing an MO in this study had on average ~61.5% of their students qualify for free/reduced lunch while charter schools not utilizing an MO had only ~53.2% of their students qualify for free/reduced lunch. On average, schools not utilizing an MO had fewer students qualify for free lunch based on income, and that difference was deemed statistically significant as the P value of .0145 is smaller than the Holm Adjusted Bonferroni of .016666666. According to this finding, non-MO charter schools serve a more economically affluent population than charter schools managed by management organizations.

School Grade

2. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with school performance?

According to the findings in this study, school grades are very similar between schools utilizing a management organization, and those not utilizing a management organization. School grades are given where A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=0 from the state. Given that the average from both schools is between 3.2 and 3.3, the group mean for both school types is a solid B and the high P value indicates that this very minor difference is not statistically significant.

ELL

3. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the percentage English Language Learners (ELL) students served?

The group mean for charter schools utilizing MOs is $\sim .14$ while the group mean for charter schools not utilizing MOs is $\sim .08$. Simply put, while approximately 14 percent of the students at charter schools utilizing MOs are ELL, less than 8% of students at Non-MO charter schools are ELL. This difference was found to be significant as the P Value of $<.0001$ is smaller than the Holm Adjusted Bonferroni of $.083$. Given that the percentage of ELL students enrolled is nearly double at MO schools (in this sample), it is unsurprising that this difference is statistically significant.

SWD

4. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with the percentage of students with disabilities (SWD) served?

According to the findings in this study, schools utilizing a management organization had a group mean where $\sim 7.6\%$ of their students were SWD. Schools not utilizing an MO had a group mean where $\sim 9.5\%$ of their students were SWD. This was also statistically significant and

shows that stand alone charter schools enroll a statistically significant larger number of students with disabilities than the schools run by management organizations.

NHQT

5. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with percentage of highly qualified teachers as defined by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE)?

The rate of Not Highly Qualified Teachers is $\sim .28$ at MO charter schools and $\sim .19$ at Non-MO charter schools. Put more simply within the sample, charter schools run by management organizations had a group mean of $\sim 28\%$ of their teachers were Not Highly Qualified while only $\sim 19\%$ of teachers at Non-MO charter schools were deemed Not Highly Qualified. This difference in group means of $\sim 9\%$ is significant as the P-Value of $.0042$ is less than the Holm Adjusted Bonferroni of $.0125$.

Stability Rate

6. Does the utilization or non-utilization of a management organization (MO), which can be an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or a Charter Management Organization (CMO), interact with student attrition/mobility?

Stability rate, as operationalized in Chapter 3, measures the change in student population at two points in the school year. For example, a school that had 100 students at the first measurement but only 95 students at the second measurement would have a stability rate of $.95$, while a school that had the same number at both periods in time would have a stability rate of 1 . In looking at the group mean of stability rates per both school types, they both have stability

rates of ~96% meaning the population of both school types is very similar which can be seen with the P Value of over .9. Any difference in stability rate is insignificant.

Discussion & Implications of Incomplete Data

The reported data of and by charter schools was particularly troubling and surprisingly incomplete. As a former traditional public school teacher and district level administrator, I was shocked at the lack of consistency with which data has been reported for charter schools compared with my experience reviewing traditional public school data. While I will discuss the inexcusable lack of data below, I will begin by discussing the lack of consistency with regards to school names. Perhaps because the data for charter schools is more self-reported, there was a surprising lack of consistency in how the same school appeared on different reports. In some situations, the first word in a school's name would be "Academy of...", while on a different report the name might start with "Acad of..." or some other short hand version of the school's name. Given that these reports do not have unique school numbers or identifiers, the process for reporting charter school data is wrought with human error, making the data cleansing process significantly more time consuming and cumbersome. This barrier to accessing and evaluating charter school data appropriately may work to discourage analysis and evaluation of charter school performance with the same level of rigor applied to their traditional public school counterparts.

Other issues of missing data were also extremely problematic, and would not be tolerated by the state for traditional public schools. In my experience, all traditional public schools have school grades and the school's leaders are acutely aware of those school grades, however, a significant number of charter schools did not have school grades. Of the 326 schools identified in the MO group, only 249 had a school grade meaning that 77 schools or nearly 1 in 4 did not

have a school grade. For the 317 non-MO schools, only 248 schools had a school grade which means 69 schools or more than 1 in 5 schools were missing school grades. This lack of accountability is surprisingly tolerated by the state, perhaps because the de facto accountability where parents vote with their feet is more powerful. Considering the differing standards applied to charter vs. traditional public schools' data reporting within the state of Florida, this inability to compare charter schools easily may not be the lack of oversight and underreporting, but instead a more insidious and intentional outcome.

Socio economic status and stability rate were by far the most reported data with over 300 observations for each of these metrics. This is not surprising as SES is fundamentally tied to funding particularly around Title 1 funding. Similarly, stability rate uses the fall and spring FTE reporting period dates which are the two dates that are critically important for per pupil funding.

With the reality that much of the current literature around charter schools revolves around the comparison to traditional public schools, I heuristically viewed non-MO schools or stand-alone schools as perhaps more similar to traditional public schools and MO charter schools as the traditional model for charter schools (Roch & Na, 2015; Scott & DiMartino, 2010).

When looking at SES, the literature is clear that lower SES can be correlated to lower test scores (Bellibaş, 2016; Gustafsson, Nilsen & Hansen, 2016; Jehangir, Glas & van den Berg, 2015; Sirin, 2005) and that charter schools often get accused of creaming/cropping their way to a more educationally conducive set of students to educate (Ertas & Roch, 2014; Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002). However, while school grades were virtually identical in this sample, the schools utilizing MOs had a significantly higher rate of students receiving free/reduced lunch and significantly higher rates of ELL students. One could expect these students could be either more expensive to educate or less educationally desirable however, they appeared in higher rates in

schools utilizing an MO. Further research in this area needs to be done to understand this specific variable and its relationship with management organizations. Given that SES is the most reported variable studied and intrinsically linked with significant federal funding, it would make sense that MO charter schools would attempt to find a way to attract and keep the most desirable low SES students while removing the least desirable. Research shows that MO schools serve a high number of lower SES and students of color, per Lacireno-Pacquet (2004) “Being managed by a large-EMO was positively but not significantly related to charter schools enrollment of low-income and minority students.” (p.26). This is further supported by Ertas & Roch (2014) who found that EMO’s seek out more black students.

While the effects of SES are known, the indicator used to identify SES is imperfect, simplistic, and was certainly not developed for education researchers to understand the hardships facing families every day. Free/Reduced lunch status is, by definition, an amalgamation of students receiving either free or reduced lunch costs based on their family’s income and size. This number is flawed and overly simplistic for many reasons, which will be discussed, but the fact that these numbers are combined does not properly show the nuance between students who receive a small amount of financial assistance and what Bryk (2010) would call the truly disadvantaged. Students at the least disadvantaged end of this spectrum are less likely to face the effects of extreme poverty which can include experiences like abuse and neglect (Bryk, 2010). Given that charter schools serve a smaller percentage of low SES students than traditional public school, more information on the low SES students served would be interesting and useful and will be discussed more in the limitations section.

When looking at SWD, it would be easy to assume a similar approach as to ELL and lower SES students as SWD can be significantly more expensive to educate while having a

possibly negative effect on high stakes testing and school grades (Miron et al., 2010; Smith & Douglas, 2014). Given that Non-MO charter schools educate SWD students at a higher rate, this typically seems congruent with the literature. It appears that MO charter schools might be cropping their services to SWD at a higher rate than stand-alone charter schools is supported by the literature (Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002; Miron et al., 2010). While the cropping of SWD students is supported by the literature, the considerable nuance within this subgroup of students necessitates a more nuanced look to further understand what is going on with some of our most vulnerable students.

To that end, simply identifying students as SWD or not implies a binary of students with disability that does not exist. Students with disabilities exist with varying levels of disability and this study did not look into this nuance. Being able to account for this nuance would give a significantly deeper understanding of the phenomenon. From a neoliberal perspective, schools would typically not crop access to students with some of the most minor disabilities and would perhaps benefit from a marketing perspective by serving gifted students. However, one would imagine that the cropping of services takes place somewhere just beyond the most minor disability.

In looking at the raw data, of the 17 schools with the highest percentage of SWD, only 3 were MO schools, however, only 3 had a school grade meaning they were not included in the MANOVA which can be problematized multiple ways. On the one hand, schools with a very high percentage of SWDs sway the results and make the SWD rate of charters appear much closer to their traditional public school counterparts. However, simultaneously, the difference in SWD students served between MO & non-MO schools is probably even bigger than was captured by the MANOVA. Considering the propensity for MO schools to underserve SWD

students, one might also consider the implications for their nearby traditional public school counterparts and the challenges associated with a student population more heavily weighted towards the neediest and most vulnerable.

The literature notes that charter schools, when compared to traditional public schools, are often accused of creaming their population through attrition (Nichols-Barrer, 2016; Robelen, 2008; Vasquez et al, 2011; Zehr, 2011). However, in this study, utilizing the similar stability rate this study did not show a significant difference when comparing MO vs non-MO schools. Given that little research has been done comparing stability rates between MO & non-MO, heuristically using traditional public schools and charter schools as a hasty comparison appears less useful than originally thought.

While it is statistically unsurprising that the difference in MO stability rate of ~96.19% and non-MO stability rate of ~96.23% is statistically insignificant, it does seem a bit odd that these schools are losing ~4% of their students from October to February. Where are ~4% of these charter school students going? Further, how many more students are these schools losing after the FTE reporting period, when these students no longer count against the school's funding? Given the large sample size, I find it very troubling that losing 4% of the student population from October to February is not being discussed by policy makers, charter school authorizers, and the like. A decline in student population is inconsistent with Florida's positive population growth. In my experience as a teacher in a traditional public school, I always finished the year with larger classes than I started with, perhaps this may begin to explain why.

Given that teacher turnover is higher at charter schools than traditional public schools (Harris, 2007; Miron & Applegate, 2007; Renzulli, Parrott, & Beattie, 2011; Stuit & Smith, 2012), it might not be surprising that the rate of Not Highly Qualified Teachers is significantly

higher in MO charter schools than in non-MO charter schools. Further, per Preston et al. (2012) one of the only distinguishably innovative practices that charter schools employ is a lack of teacher tenure which could explain why the highly qualified teachers are more represented at the non-MO charter schools. However, given the importance of teacher quality (Johnson, 2006; Wong, 2018), the lack of difference in school grade was a bit surprising. Given these challenges, charter schools have enacted “various innovative practices (i.e., extended day, extended year, year-round calendar...” (Ziebarth & Palmer, 2014, p. 184). Further, CREDO’s (2013) research indicates that in every educational market there are charter schools that perform below, above, and similarly to traditional public schools and perhaps this is being realized within Florida’s charter movement as well. Further, the it did not come as a big surprise that MO run schools had a higher percentage of not highly qualified teachers as the literature notes that for profit MO schools prefer younger and less experienced teachers to reduce personnel costs (Roch & Na, 2018).

Limitations and Recommendations

There are many limitations in this study and this section will explore those limitations and possible solutions. The first limitation in this study that was highlighted at the beginning of Chapter 4 is the inconsistent data at the state level. Having missing data points in the data required a culling of the data that could have an effect on generalizability. Fortunately, sample sizes remained quite large and minimally changed after the incomplete data was removed, however, having all of the data would certainly give this study considerably more power and generalizability. Another limitation to this study is that it is but a single snapshot in time and would be more meaningful if these same trends were found every year. By conducting this study over multiple years, trends could be identified and claims made would gain power from their

replicability. Also, this study was designed before the COVID-19 pandemic and data sets used were also from before the pandemic. As COVID-19 has fundamentally altered many aspects of our lives- including how schooling is done- moving forward, care must be given to understand these impacts as well and future studies must take this into account.

This study is also limited by the publicly available and state collected quantitative data. While there are certainly many extraneous variables that need to be accounted for, standardized data points remain simple snapshots in time. Further, in an effort to protect student privacy, much of the available data is too obscured to be quantitatively useful.

This study also only scratches the surface when looking at SWD, ELL, and to a lesser extent SES. The nuance within the SWD population is truly great and not adequately covered by a single, quantitatively useful yes/no number. Given that this study found meaningful differences between the two charter school types, a deeper dive into SWD students and their MO/non-MO participation is warranted. Understanding which SWD students may be excluded at a higher or lower rate would be particularly important and warranted moving forward. Also a deeper understanding of the MO & Non-MO schools and their specialization or exclusion of SWD students would also paint an interesting picture and needs more consideration.

Similarly, as stated above, the ELL population is more nuanced than a simple yes/no for ELL status and a deeper dive into that data could prove useful as well as explain the nuance within that population and their higher representation in MO run charter schools.

Further differentiation between EMO & CMO schools could also prove useful and could be a meaningful way to further dissect the data, especially in a nationwide study where the larger sample size would be more conducive.

Future studies should consider conducting a MANOVA similar to this one but with the addition of traditional public schools to further understand the nuance of broader public education providers. A similar MANOVA with three independent variables: MO, Non-MO, and Traditional Public Schools would showcase the vast majority of education paid for with public dollars and could be a meaningful way to quantitatively compare the three separate subgroups. Other quantitative analysis where schools are separated out by grade level band (elementary, middle, or high) could also provide insights as student mobility to charter schools could be higher during the middle school years.

Future studies looking into charter school data to understand what leads to data gaps and inconsistencies and the acceptance thereof would be very helpful. Having insights into the lack of accountability around everything from naming conventions to missing quantitative data is needed if all schools, including charter schools, are to be held accountable.

Future studies should consider using the generative questions produced from this quantitative study to develop qualitative measures to understand phenomenologically what is happening at the school sites. Tracking student attrition to better understand what happens with the approximately 4% of charter school students leaving their MO or non-MO charter school is information that policy makers and authorizers need. A version of this study that included traditional public schools would help to understand if that 4% loss is consistent with all school types in Florida, or just charter schools.

Future studies involving interviews of teachers and administrators to phenomenologically examine what causes the rates of highly qualified teachers to be so much lower at MO run schools would be extremely beneficial. There would be significant value in interviewing site-based personnel to understand their interactions and relationship with their MO. This would

serve to better understand how daily operations within charter schools affect opportunities for students.

Significant research needs to be conducted to peel back the layers around SES of students served to gain a full picture of why students receiving FRL are served at higher rates in MO run schools (e.g., funding or other incentives). Further, analysis on this population is warranted as this group of students is diverse and free vs reduced status for lunch have not been disaggregated. Further disaggregation and deconstruction of this data is warranted to fully understand the levels of poverty being served and to examine if the most desirable of the FRL students are being served in MO run schools. Again, including traditional public schools into a MANOVA of this nature could lead to considerable insights.

Similarly, future studies need to deconstruct the SWD data and fully understand the nuance within this group of students. Understanding which SWD are being served and which are not would be particularly helpful; one might hypothesize that the SWD students with the most profound disabilities are being left behind by neoliberal tendencies. Also, isolating for schools that explicitly serve SWD students would help understand which school types serve SWD students without having that focus.

Similarly, understanding the district level charter authorizers' approach and thought process around the inequity produced by this neoliberal approach would help inform everyone from policy makers to district leadership. Whether it be through interviews, document analysis, content analysis, or other methods, a considerable number of questions could be addressed qualitatively.

Phenomenologically there is a lot going on beneath the surface of this quantitative study that demands a deeper investigation. This study should set the stage for more studies to examine

these different phenomena including both the explicit and implicit. Without the follow-up quantitative leg work, this study could become a dead canary in a coal mine instead of a warning sign with a call to action.

Neoliberalism Moving Forward

As our nation's experiment with neoliberal education reform continues to evolve, policy makers must not forget that all of the numbers and inputs examined in this study represent individual students and teachers. As our education policymakers continue down the de facto Neoliberal accountability model track and as the number of students attending charter schools continues to grow understanding that simply comparing charter schools to traditional public schools is not a precise enough approach to ensure equity for all students. The neoliberal approach is an interesting and perhaps problematic way to distribute or perhaps ration resources. Whether looking at hospitals, prisons, or schools the neoliberal agenda has many critics, especially in settings where the bottom line may not be the most ethical way to make decisions. Moving forward policymakers and policy implementers must continue to monitor not only the neoliberal creep happening in our institutions, but monitor the neoliberal institutions to ensure equity of access and opportunity.

As neoliberalism and neoliberal solutions continue to enjoy widespread support, policymakers need to fundamentally reflect on the implications for students, teachers, parents, district staff.

Policy Implications

From a policy perspective, accountability measures for charter schools need to include more equity measures, especially around inputs to ensure that schools accurately represent the communities they serve. While it is problematic that the percentage of SWD is almost 50%

higher in traditional public schools when compared to charter schools (FLDOE, 2018), it is equally problematic that charter schools that utilize MOs are less likely to service SWD than their non-MO counterparts. School accountability needs to be about more than a school grade and as neoliberalism evolves within our schools, appropriate and student benefiting accountability needs to evolve with it.

Further, as policy makers and district administrators strive to hold all schools accountable for everything from learning gains to students served, policy makers must require charter schools be held to the same standards of data reporting as their traditional public school counterparts. A better system of accountability for schools needs to exist; standard school nomenclatures and unique identifiers must be applied throughout all reports. School districts who authorize these charter schools must hold their charter schools as accountable as they hold their public schools when it comes to transparency, data integrity, and sincerity of reporting. Until schools or perhaps school districts and their authorizers accountable from a data integrity perspective, it will be impossible to fully hold them accountable from an educational perspective and continues to disadvantage traditional public schools.

Conclusion

This study resulted with significant differences being found between the sample of charter schools utilizing a management organization, and those not utilizing a management organization. Specifically schools utilizing MOs had a higher rate of students on free/reduced lunch, had a higher rate of ELL students, a lower rate of SWD students, and a higher rate of Not Highly Qualified Teachers. Significant differences were not found within the two groups when looking at school grade and stability rate. More studies, looking at the same variables over time would provide more power and generalizability as would a more complete data set from the

state. As the charter movement continues to grow and evolve, more care needs to be placed to determine which schools are have the best outcomes and also which schools have the most equitable inputs.

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