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ABSTRACT

Educational administrator preparation is facing challenges in keeping up with rapidly changing delivery systems, as well as dealing with a shortage of well-trained school principals and superintendents. Distance learning offers an opportunity to serve diverse populations with a focus on individual uniqueness, needs, and concerns. Technology can eliminate barriers, divisions, limits, and boundaries, and it offers boundless opportunities for expanding knowledge horizons for at-risk populations. There are a variety of delivery strategies that have proven useful in teaching educational administration courses. Some examples are hybrid courses that combine traditional with distance learning classes, compressed-video classes, and learning modules. Administrators should increase their knowledge of all operations of technology in their schools. Standards for distance learning in over 35 states include developing vision, developing instructional plans, collaborating with families and communities, fairly and ethically treating at-risk and other students, and understanding and responding to larger political, social, and cultural issues and trends. Distance learning is important in assisting educational administrators to continually upgrade and update their knowledge of emerging trends and issues in the field, as well as reaching entry-level administrators in their graduate programs. (RT)

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Using Distance Education to Teach Educational Leadership

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The Field

Educational administrator preparation is facing challenges of keeping up with rapidly changing delivery systems as well as responding to the need to deal with a shortage of well- trained school principals and superintendents. Developing and maintaining a healthy organizational climate within a litigious educational environment is a daunting challenge.

Distance learning offers an opportunity to serve diverse populations with a focus on individual uniqueness, needs and concerns. In Orlando as well as 47 other major populations centers we now have a majority-minority population. Schmitt (2001) noted that whites are now a minority in 49 of the top 100 cities. The largest U.S. cities gained over 32.8 million Hispanics. Hispanics, Blacks, Asians and other minorities exceed the white population in nearly half of the top 100 cities and 71 of the largest 100 cities are losing the white population.

With a burgeoning immigration (legal and illegal population) English as a second language students, require special assistance in gaining a knowledge of our culture and its mores and folkways.Florida Atlantic University's College of Education, like others around the nation are requiring courses in multiculturalism and divers populations to meet the need for sensitivity and understanding of individual and group differences. Technology can eliminate barriers, divisions, limits, boundaries and offers boundless opportunities for expanding knowledge horizons for at-risk populations.

These are the populations educational administrators will be working with in the foreseeable future as immigration, legal and illegal continues to surge. Wolf (2002) reveals a microcosm of our society, by noting that from 1990-1998 over 125,000 legal immigrants from 193 countries came to the Washington, D.C. area. A mix of cultures, races, ethnicities and values is changing the face of America's schools. Foods, dress, customs, attitudes, beliefs and historical differences are reflected in the salad bowl of our schools. A mosaic of beliefs spread throughout the land as educators adapt, adjust, discover, and learn to appreciate the rich variety of human resources that provide the human energy for reinvigorating American society.

In "A Reply to Martha McCarthy" in the spring issue of *Teaching in Educational Administration,* Charles J. Fazzaro (2002) raised questions about intended outcomes of educational experience as well as the age- old challenge of "what is ultimately worth knowing?" These are questions that need to be address in planning for the use of educational technology in teaching educational administrators. Although it may be a while before we name it, it is clear we are going through a major historical transitional period in our society and world. Bioterrorism, terrorism, suicide bombers, unspeakable crimes against humanity such as 9/11 require educational administrators to expand curriculum to include school violence, safety, safe sex, sexual preference, driver education, as well as rediscovering civility, comity and mutual respect and understanding cultural, racial, ethnic differences.

Often educational administrators are place-bound and find it difficult to attend regular classes. Distance learning allows them to take their courses at their own convenience. There are a variety of delivery strategies that have proven useful in teaching educational administration courses.

Hybrid courses that combine traditional with distance learning classes can prove helpful in providing personal contacts with others in the field. Compressed video classes provide an opportunity for students to use their own television facilities to engage in learning. The University of Arkansas has several distance learning rooms with interactive video facilities together with technical consultants available during the class period. Educational Administration faculty offers the Education Specialist Degree by Distance Learning to Helena, Hope and Pine Bluff.

Learning modules provide specific information following textbook table of contents, and experiential based open ended response opportunities for students. Information is provided for each subdivision of the modules for students to prepare for examinations. These modules may have built in multiple choice, fill in the blank, or essay examinations. Students can find out immediately their scores after submitting the tests to the instructors. There are deadlines for course completion and instructor assistance through e-mail anytime throughout the course.

Technology and Educational Administration

Van Horn (2002) suggests administrators increase their knowledge of all operations of technology in their schools. In addition, administrators should know where user names, passwords and other computer information is accessible as well as being able to recovery from major loss of telecommunications. Van Horn also notes that school administrators need to be able to recover quickly from loss of telecommunications links, networks and servers and back up all connections to the Internet. Finally administrators need to have a contingency plan to replace departing technology staff as well as to continually update school computers as fund permit.

Standards: The *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium* (1996) Standards for School Leaders are in use throughout the country. Over 35 states are in the process of implementing the standards in reforming school leadership within their state.Included in the standards for distance learning are:

1) Vision. An ability to plan for future trends and developments in educational delivery systems.
2) Instructional program development
3) Insuring management and organization for a safe effective learning environment
4) Collaboration with families and communities.
5) Fair and ethical treatment of at-risk and other students. Understanding and sensitivity to students who say "please don't send me there." Working toward providing an environment for learning yet, sensitivity to handling a case of a student with a third time detention.

6) Understanding and responding to larger political, social, cultural issues and trends as well as needs in society (http://www.ccsso.org/islic.html).

In a work in progress as the rapidity of change in technology occurs, *Technology Standards for School Administrators* provide role specific technology leadership tasks elaborating on 1996 Standards for School Leaders. :

Leadership and Vision

1) Leadership and vision designed to align program technology with district technology goals.
2) A continuing systemic review of a comprehensive district technology plan.
3) Support for best practices in the field of technology to achieve program goals.

Learning and Teaching

4) Develop and provide electronic resources that support improved learning for program participants.
5) Encourage staff development and support of technology use.
6) Work to have program curricular and services adopt current and emerging new technologies.

Productivity and Professional Practice

7) Use technology with the curriculum and teaching learning processes.
8) Model technology uses within the schools.
9) Use online collaboration to build and interact with learning communities.

Support, Management, and Operations

10) Implement technology initiatives following a district plan.
11) Develop financial planning to meet technology needs within schools and school districts.

Assessment and Evaluation

12) Monitor and analyze technology use progress
13) Use authentic assessment measures to ascertain student progress.

Social, Legal and Ethical Issues

14) Involve all school personnel in emerging technology delivery systems
15) Disseminate information about privacy-confidential concerns
16) Provide information about health related, safety, legal and ethical issues as well as holding technology planners and users accountable for the quality and monitoring of information (http://cnets.iste.org/tssa/pdtaskprofile.html).

Conclusion

Distance learning is important in assisting educational administrators to continually upgrade and update their knowledge of emerging trends and issues in the field, as well as for reaching entry- level administrators in their graduate programs. In Arkansas as in other states an increasing number of administrators are retiring.In

some states buy out offers designed to bring in new people, have led to a large number of early retirements. Some 801 administrators out of 2300 in 310 school districts and 160 out of 168 central office administrators are retiring in Arkansas.

The challenge of educating, recycling, retraining and providing distance- learning classes for prospective new educational administrators is daunting. The recession after the tragedy of 9/11 has affected all state finances. Educational budget cuts are the order of the day. Educators have an obligation to encourage legislators to place education in a high priority for expenditures especially if educational administrators are working to assure "that no child is left behind."

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