ESSAY DIRECTIONS

Answer two exam questions of the four provided. Devote about equal time and space to each of the two essays. Do not repeat in your second essay content and analysis already provided in the first essay. Take care to address each component of the exam question. Draw appropriately from the scholarly literature. Make sure to provide references to original sources (e.g., book, chapter, or journal article) for statements that refer to ideas, words, or research findings of another person. Use appropriate headings and subheadings throughout the paper. Write clear, grammatically correct sentences and logical paragraphs.

Formatting

Clearly label the question number for each essay.

Each essay should be between 2,000 and 2,500 words. Do not exceed 2,500 words per essay.

For each essay provide a bibliography of works cited. Essay word count does NOT include the bibliography.

Use a standard 12-point font, double-spacing, and numbered pages.

Run a spell check on each essay prior to submission.
SUBMITTING YOUR ESSAYS

1. Submit your essays by e-mail attachment no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, January 19, 2015. The attachment must be a single Word document. Send your essays to Maria Moon at mmoon@albany.edu AND Professor Vergari at svergari@albany.edu.

2. On a separate sheet, add the Honor Code Statement below followed by your name and date:

   The two doctoral exam essays I submit are original, new work that I alone have authored. In writing these essays, I have not consulted with or received help from others. I have taken care to provide proper citations for all ideas, statements, quotations, and facts presented that are not my own. I have also read and adhered to the university’s “Standards of Academic Integrity.”

   Name___________________________ Date________________

3. Please submit an additional hardcopy of your exam and Honor Code Statement along with your signature and date. You may submit these hard copies via First Class Mail or hand delivery in a sealed envelope to Maria Moon’s office at 344 Education Building. Mailed envelopes must be postmarked by Tuesday, January 20, 2015 at midnight. Hand deliveries must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 20, 2015.
Question 1 Centralization of Education Governance

The past ten years have seen a significant increase in the centralization of education policy in both primary and secondary ("K-12") and higher education. In K-12, the relevant initiatives have included No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Common Core. In higher education, the Spellings commission’s attempt to federalize accreditation failed, but at the state level there have been and are many initiatives to centralize quality control and "accountability."

Among the rationales for this widespread centralization (which may be seen to run counter to a historic American commitment to decentralization in education -- "local control" of schools and autonomous governance for colleges and universities) are that national policies and educational standards, and government (federal and state) financial tools tied to accountability are needed to make American education more competitive internationally.

a. Consider the original rationales for decentralized educational governance. What are the main arguments for how societal changes (specify which changes) have rendered that original reasoning obsolete? If societal changes do not account for the shift towards centralization, what does account for it?

b. What is the reasoning behind the assumption that centralized curricula, central education standards, and financial control will boost student achievement and education quality? What is the available evidence? Draw on evidence from the domestic and/or international-comparative arenas.

c. Select one specific education policy measure (e.g., Common Core, Race to the Top, Annual Professional Performance Review, accountability reforms in higher education) and consider whether the available evidence so far supports or weakens the expectations and hopes associated with it.
Question 2  Policy Implementation

Education leaders are responsible for ensuring successful implementation of education policies. “Successful” in this context refers to policy implementation that is closely aligned with the original policy design and yields the types of results expected by policymakers who adopted the policy. It is common for problematic elements of the original policy design to be revealed during the implementation process. In addition, there are often economic, organizational, political, and social obstacles to successful policy implementation.

Select a major policy reform for any level of education in any country or jurisdiction and address the following:

a. Discuss the original policy design and objectives.

b. Discuss challenges to successful policy implementation.

   (1) Identify economic, organizational, political, and/or social obstacles to successful implementation of the policy you have selected.

   (2) Discuss the extent to which these obstacles have been overcome. If they have been overcome, how so? If not, why not?

   (3) If a given obstacle has jeopardized successful implementation, identify feasible ways in which an education leader might overcome the obstacle.

c. Is the policy as originally designed likely to survive the implementation process over the long term? Why or why not? What lessons about education policy design, policy implementation, and policy outcomes can be drawn from this case?
Question 3  Strategies for Education Reform in a Global Context

For more than a decade, education leaders have been trying to respond to the fact that education is taking place in a global environment for which schools and colleges are expected to prepare students. Frequently discussed watchwords are "cultural competence," "global citizenship," and "economic readiness." Schools and colleges have begun to respond to these challenges by focusing on curricular content, delivery formats, bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements, new partnerships, faculty and student cross-border mobility, and other methods to enhance international learning and global competitiveness.

a. Select any level of schooling in any country or jurisdiction and identify several existing or potential internationalization strategies for the primary, secondary, or postsecondary sector you have selected. Discuss the goals of each strategy.

b. For each strategy, analyze its demonstrated strengths and weaknesses and the extent to which the sector you have chosen is well-suited to achieve the stated goals.

c. Based on your discussion under points (a.) and (b.), reflect on the most promising directions to internationalize and globalize education.
Question 4 Workforce and Economic Development

Public discussion has heightened awareness of the role of education in addressing needs of the workforce. Current proposals intended to address workforce and economic development needs refer to any level of education, from pre-K, primary and secondary schooling to higher and adult education.

You are asked in this essay to evaluate a proposal or set of proposals that call for changes in educational practice intended to lead to improvements in workforce and economic development.

For your essay, select and briefly describe a current proposal or set of proposals for education aimed at improving workforce and economic development. The proposal or set of proposals may be directed at any level of education, in a country or jurisdiction that you choose.

a. In the main body of the essay, draw on social science research (e.g., anthropology, economics, history, law, organizational behavior, philosophy, political science, sociology) to evaluate your selected proposals. Consider strengths and weaknesses in the proposal(s) with regard to implementation of changes in practice. Discuss implications (if any) for leadership practice, policy development, or the need for new research.

b. Assuming that the changes are implemented as envisaged in the proposal(s), provide judgments on their effects on intended workforce and economic development and possible unintended consequences.