

**Department of Educational Administration & Policy Studies, University at Albany**  
**Spring 2014 Doctoral Exam**

**Directions for Writing Exam Essays:**

**General directions**

Answer two exam questions from the list 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 any statement that refers to ideas, words, or research findings of another person. Use appropriate headings and subheadings throughout the paper. Write clear and grammatically correct sentences, and logical paragraphs.

**Formatting**

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-spaced, numbered pages.

Final submission must be spell-checked.

**Submitting your Essays**

1. Submit your essays as e-mail attachments no later than 1:00pm on Monday, January 20, 2014.
2. On a separate sheet, add the Honor Code Statement below followed by your name and date:

***"The two comprehensive 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 also have read the university's 'Standards of Academic Integrity' and confirm that I have adhered to them."***

<Name>, <Date>

3. Submit a hardcopy of your exam postmarked the same or the next business day. When submitting the hardcopy of your exam, add the Honor Code Statement along with your signature.

## Spring 2014 EAPS Doctoral Exam Questions

Pick TWO of the following four questions to answer following the directions on the previous page.

### QUESTION ONE

Recently, the call is becoming louder for educational organizations (schools as well as higher education institutions) to operate more efficiently. The standards explicitly or implicitly invoked by those supporting greater efficiencies in the educational context are frequently derived from private sector business organizations.

Write an essay discussing the quest for efficiency-driven change in a particular type of educational organization (e.g., an elementary school or a research university). Be sure to examine both the opportunities and challenges associated with the drive for greater efficiency. In doing so, be sure to address FOUR of the following issues:

- a) Identify strands of public discourse and scholarly discussion in which "business-like" efficiency in educational organizations is advocated and the changes that presumably necessitate greater attention to efficiency;
- b) Identify major theoretical paradigms on which those advocating for efficiency typically draw (or might draw) to support their arguments;
- c) Describe similarities and differences between the chosen educational organization and a for-profit business that could impact the implementation of new efficiencies;
- d) Identify opportunities as well as challenges of such efficiency-driven reform;
- e) If the schemes you have discussed have been tried in practice, indicate practical experiences with, and consequences of, these kinds of reforms.

In the course of your essay, be sure to define what you mean by efficiency in an educational organization and to take a stand on how it helps or hinders achieving the organization's educational goals. Throughout, employ scholarly literature.

## **QUESTION TWO**

Increasingly educational policies are being promoted by multilateral and regional governmental agencies (e.g., the World Bank, UNESCO, the EU, InterAmerican Development Bank, UNICEF, OECD) with applications across national boundaries. In some instances broad policy statements (or ‘policy regimes’) are advocated as valid for an entire region, a set of countries or for all the nations of the world. Examples of such global policy regimes include the Education for All goals, the Millennium Goals initiatives, and the Bologna Accords.

- a) Choose a particular transnational policy regime and write an essay, citing and critiquing relevant research and/or theoretical literature, in which you account for the rise of the chosen policy regime, and analyze the principal institutional actors and their motivations.
- b) Consider the apparent successes and failures of your chosen educational policy regime, based on evidence that is available to date.
- c) Consider the impact of your chosen policy regime on domestic educational policies and reforms in a particular country (or countries) and in a specific educational sector (e.g., early childhood, primary, secondary or higher education; public or private institutions; formal or non-formal education, etc.).

## **QUESTION THREE**

Over the last decade or so, national and state authorities have given greater attention to setting out not only what students should know but also the skills and proficiencies they should possess. Curriculum guidelines on content have been replaced by competency-based standards at both the K-12 (e.g. the Common Core) and higher education level (e.g. Collegiate Learning Assessment's CLA+). Although the education levels, states/countries, or education establishments concerned differ, the common element is a shift from content to competences.

Essay assignment: For a specific education level, type of institution, or country that you select, develop an essay that addresses the following points.

- a) Situate the shift from content to competence-oriented education and curriculum policies in the wider economic, social, and political context.
- b) Provide an analysis of the consequences of the focus on competences, with regard to policy and practice. You may consider the effects on education establishments, education professionals, students and graduates, the economy and labor market and/or the society.
- c) State and analyze the most prominently presented pros and cons to this policy shift.

As always, be sure to define key terms, apply concepts from the social science disciplines used in our field (e.g., economics, political science, sociology, organization leadership), and offer evidence drawn from the knowledge base where appropriate. Your analysis must be backed by reference to concepts and findings from relevant, peer-reviewed literature.

## QUESTION FOUR

Profound demographic and social-geographic changes are occurring in many nations, states and cities, which create significant challenges for educational systems. All manner of educational organizations—preschools, elementary schools, secondary schools, community colleges, and universities—are impacted.

One such change involves huge waves of human migration (e.g., international immigration into the United States; voluntary and required internal migration from rural to urban areas in China). Another change is the diversification of family structures, including increasing rates of single-parent families, blended families, and other types of non-traditional families. Concurrently, increasing income gaps and other disparities are accompanied by higher rates of poverty. Poverty-related migration and settlement patterns add a spatial dimension to this problem cluster. For example, families who are clustered in particular locales (e.g., planned urban settlements, urban and inner ring suburban neighborhoods and isolated rural communities) experience greater vulnerability. Social scientists, policymakers and educational leaders are struggle with the cultural, social, political, and economic implications of such large-scale changes.

What is their meaning and significance for the design and conduct of preschools, K-12 schools, community colleges, and universities?

Selecting a level of schooling (e.g., preschool, elementary, secondary or postsecondary), write an essay that responds to the question above. Draw on and cite relevant literature. Your essay should address, at a minimum, the following three priorities.

1. Using one or more social science perspectives (political, economic, sociological, anthropological), describe the educational challenges arising from a particular demographic or social-geographic trend for your selected level. (You pick the trend.) Be sure to clearly identify the trend and explain how it creates or exacerbates educational challenges due to evolving cultural, social and/or economic conditions. Support your claims with social science theories, frameworks and empirical research.
2. For your selected level, discuss policy changes or new organizational designs to address those challenges at either a system or institutional level. Be sure to specify the main facilitators, constraints and obstacles to those policies or new organizational designs.
3. Conclude your analysis with implications for policy leadership or organizational leadership at your selected level.