

## EAPS Departmental Comprehensive Examination

August 2014

### 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 a Word Document in an e-mail attachment no later than 1:00pm on Monday, August 25, 2014 to Maria Moon (mmoon@albany.edu).
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. Please submit an additional signed hardcopy of your exam via First Class Mail or hand delivered in a sealed envelope, to Maria's Office, ED 344. Mailed envelopes must be postmarked by Tuesday, August 26<sup>th</sup> at midnight. Hand deliveries must be received by 5:00pm Tuesday, August 26, 2014. When submitting the hardcopy of your exam, add the Honor Code Statement along with your signature.

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### Question 1

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Many policymakers, educational leaders and education's stakeholders advocate the implementation of external accountability mechanisms. Calls for external accountability policies in education are often viewed as conflicting with another highly valued principle: autonomy—and, in particular, the kind of autonomy associated with academic and helping professions

Write an essay in which you address the relationship between the values of accountability and autonomy in educational policy (you are free to analyze policy in terms of leadership and / or management if you like). In your essay:

- a. Provide definitions of accountability and autonomy and relate these to relevant research and theoretical literature.
- b. Discuss in at least 2 of the following 4 administrative, leadership, or policy areas how and where accountability and autonomy issues come into play:
  - *Academic* matters (for example: deciding on curriculum and methods of teaching; degree requirements and courses; deciding on areas, scope, goals, and methods of teaching or research.)
  - *Financial* issues (such as acquiring and allocating funding, deciding on tuition fees, accumulating surplus.
  - *Organizational* structures ( for instance, setting operating structures and statutes, making contracts, electing decision-making bodies and persons, determining relevant organizational partners for joint problem-solving and resource-sharing)
  - *Staffing* policies (for example: responsibility for recruitment, salaries and promotion; workforce reconfigurations).
- c. Provide in each of your analyses at least one example, drawn from any level of education (pre-K to post graduate) country or administrative unit (school district, province, state, municipality, etc.).

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## Question 2

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Educational policy, leadership and practice in many nations have shifted toward the development of so-called “Cradle-to-Career Education systems.” Under the banner of “all one system,” these new configurations frequently are described with a pipeline metaphor. On the policy drawing board, they increase the unity of mostly-separate *levels* of education, including early childhood education, K-12, community colleges, 4-year colleges and universities, and adult career and technical education institutes.

Part 1: After choosing (and clearly identifying) a nation, a state/province, or a city or school district which will serve as your unit of analysis, develop a cogent essay that addresses the following priorities:

- What are the core public policy elements in such a new systems design?
- What are the essential leadership components?
- What are the main facilitators, constraints, and obstacles to systems implementation?

Part 2: Choose a *level* (see the levels listed above—e.g., *early childhood, K-12, etc.*) in the system (nation, state/province, city, etc.) you analyzed in Part 1.

- How do Cradle-to-Career System developments impact this level? In particular, what changes are implicated, and what is their meaning and significance?
- Reciprocally, how does this component or level impact Cradle-to-Career systems development overall?
- Finally, what are the recommended mechanisms for policy learning and improvement most prominent in the research literature?

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### Question 3

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Profound demographic and social-geographic changes are manifest in many nations. These take on particular characteristics in different parts of the world, including international migratory patterns, domestic migratory patterns and residential segregation (especially between rural, suburban, and urban areas), increases and decreases in gaps between the fertility rates of different socio-economic groups, nearly universal decreases (but often persistent gaps between socio-economic groups) in infant and maternal mortality and morbidity rates, and growing differences in family composition.

Part 1: After choosing a nation, region, state/province, municipality, school district or other administrative unit which will serve as your unit of analysis, develop a cogent essay that addresses the following:

- Specify the most important demographic challenges facing the educational system.
- Identify the core educational policy priorities that should be considered in a strategic response to these challenges as identified in leading scholarship.
- Identify the main facilitators, constraints, and obstacles to policy or administrative change that apply to the core priorities you identified above.

Part 2: After choosing a level (e.g., preschool, elementary school, community college, 4-year college or university) in your unit's education system, address 2 of the following questions, providing examples and citing relevant literature.

- What new organizational designs are needed?
- What are the essential leadership components to achieve these new organizational designs?
- What are the main facilitators, constraints and obstacles for these new designs?
- What are the main facilitators, constraints and obstacles for organizational and policy leadership?

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#### Question 4

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Many policy actors and agencies call for an increased use of rigorous research evidence in the formulation of education policy – in pre-primary (e.g., early childhood education) through post-graduate education. The non-partisan Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy is emblematic of this movement. For example, in their mission statement they aver:

“...the Coalition seeks to increase government effectiveness through the use of rigorous evidence about what works. In the field of medicine, public policies based on scientifically-rigorous evidence have produced extraordinary advances in health over the past 50 years. By contrast, in most areas of social policy – such as education, poverty reduction, and crime prevention – government programs often are implemented with little regard to evidence, costing billions of dollars yet failing to address critical social problems. However, rigorous studies have identified a few highly-effective program models and strategies (“interventions”), suggesting that a concerted government effort to build the number of these proven interventions, and spur their widespread use, could bring rapid progress to social policy similar to that which transformed medicine.”

Identify an example of an intervention (policy, program, project, leadership innovation, a new design for an educational organization) in Pre-K-12 or Higher Education that was or is advanced purportedly with the support of research evidence. Your essay must address at least 3 of the 4 elements listed below. Your essay must clearly identify the elements you choose, so take care to identify them clearly and coherently

1. Analyze both the difference and the relationship between data and evidence, and then offer your stance on their relationship (citing literature to support your stance).
2. Describe the ways in which the research was used to substantiate and legitimate the intervention/innovation and provide an assessment of the research-based argument or arguments used to justify the interventions.
3. Describe and evaluate the results of the intervention, both in light of the research evidence that inspired and recommended it, and at least one other consideration from the social science literature on education policy you consider pertinent.
4. Offer a critical assessment of the strengths and/or weaknesses of the evidence-based education policy movement, emphasizing the research and theoretical literature on the subject.