

Directions for Writing Exam Essays:

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.

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 no later than Monday, 12.30pm
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 2013 Doctoral Exam Questions

1. Governing Boards

Schools, colleges, and universities are governed by lay governing boards. This means that members of the general public assume the fiduciary duty for the organization, set organizational policies, and are responsible for the hiring and firing of the CEO (e.g., superintendent, president, chancellor).

Drawing upon at least two different theories (e.g., principal-agent, resource dependency, open systems) and relevant case examples, analyze the opportunities and problems associated with having educational organizations run by a lay governing board. What are the implications of your analysis for educational leaders and for governing board members?

2. Declining Public Funding

Over the past two decades, public funding of education appears to have stagnated or grown more slowly than expenditures for education. In the U.S., this trend applies to primary, secondary, and higher education. Drawing on the scholarly literature and existing evidence, analyze this trend. Be sure to explain what factors account for the trend. In addition, discuss why the trend is featured in education policy debates.

Your essay should:

- (a) Provide alternative understandings of the key terms and concepts in relation to the trend and refer to relevant findings and data.
- (b) Carefully link the findings and information to the terms and concepts, and critically assess the findings and information you have collected.
- (c) Draw from social science theories and research (i.e., organizational leadership, political science, sociology, economics) to elaborate the main arguments for and against public funding of education.

3. Education Quality

Quality is a central concept in the design of policies and evaluations pertaining to educational systems, institutions, and student performance. The concept is also a core component of many major proposals for educational reform.

Your essay should discuss and explain how the social sciences can contribute to the study of quality. Select a particular educational system, setting or policy arena to illustrate your main points throughout the essay. If a policy is selected, you may discuss its impacts on more than one educational setting; if a setting is selected, you may discuss how it is impacted by more than one policy.

In the essay, address 3 of the following 4 issues concerning educational quality (indicate clearly which issues you selected and where they are covered in your essay):

- a) Describe how the social sciences can define educational quality in ways that would be considered legitimate by practitioners or policy makers.
- b) Describe how the social sciences can operationalize or measure educational quality in ways that would be considered legitimate by practitioners or policy makers.
- c) Discuss how conflicts over alternative definitions or measurements of educational quality among researchers, practitioners or policy makers are resolved or left contested.
- d) Discuss how a lack of consensus over definitions or measurements of educational quality can produce inconsistent assessments of the quality of an educational system or setting or the effectiveness of an educational policy.

4. Education Autonomy

While relatively autonomous “self-managed” schools and colleges are found in different educational systems within and across countries, they often differ substantially in form, functioning, and outcomes. Select two distinct contexts (e.g., two countries) or two educational levels (e.g., K-12 versus higher education) or two educational sectors (e.g., public versus private, formal versus non-formal alternative programs) to examine these differences. Your essay should include the following elements:

- a) Compare and contrast definitions, conceptualizations, and operationalization of autonomy used in several social science disciplines.
- b) Compare and contrast how autonomy is practiced in the selected contexts or educational levels.
- c) Compare and contrast how the outcomes of autonomy are conceived and evaluated.

Discuss specific social, political or economic conditions, policies and/or practices that either foster or constrain autonomy.

September 19, 2012

EAPS DOCTORAL EXAM QUESTIONS

Fall 2012, Spring 2012, Fall 2011, Spring 2011, Fall 2010

FALL 2012

Question 1

In many countries around the world, including the US, teachers and faculty are organized in strong—and sometimes politically powerful—unions. Their effect on education is often subject to considerable controversy. For some stakeholders teacher or faculty unions are perceived as helping to ensure quality education and to improve student learning outcomes; for others they represent a hindrance.

Critically review the evidence on teacher effects on student learning, and place this evidence in the wider perspective of school-based and non-school based factors that significantly influence educational achievement. Then briefly evaluate the main arguments that have been advanced concerning the constructive or deleterious impact of unions on these relationships.

Finally, based explicitly on the evidence and arguments you have developed above, outline a small series of teacher-focused policies that, in the context of a specific educational sector and system with which you are familiar, you would recommend be implemented to improve the outcomes of education.

Question 2

In recent years the idea of “world class universities” has gained wide currency in higher education circles worldwide. National governments as well as the leadership of higher education institutions in many countries are responding by adjusting policies and strategies to improve their institutions’ global standing and reputation.

Write an essay critically situating and interpreting this new phenomenon, its causes, consequences, and action-implications. Be sure to touch on the following:

- define “World Class” as it is used in higher education
- explain the rise of this nomenclature;
- delineate the consequences of a focus on world class universities in global higher education;
- discuss the implications for leaders in governments and universities who would like to improve their odds to ascend to world class status

In your essay be explicit about the literature on which you draw and the economic, political, and/or sociological concepts that inform your analysis.

FALL 2012, cont.

Question 3

In recent years, policymakers, educational leaders, and scholars in the United States have been talking about education in terms of a "P-16" system. P-16 refers to preschool through four years of college. Write an essay addressing the items noted below. In your response be sure to apply concepts, insights, and findings from at least three social sciences (anthropology, economics, history, law, philosophy, political science, sociology).

- Specify and analyze several arguments for and against a P-16 approach.
- Identify several barriers to establishing a P-16 system of education in the U.S. Consider, for example, economic, technical, political, and social factors.
- What factors might facilitate the establishment of a P-16 system of education?
- What is likely to happen on the P-16 issue in the future and why?
- Support your assertions.

Question 4

"Choice" is a key value in education that is favored by numerous analysts, educational leaders, policymakers, and special interest groups. As a concept in education, "choice" has been interpreted and implemented in various ways. Some choice initiatives are embedded within traditional educational structures while other choice initiatives reflect efforts to break away from traditional structures and practices.

Write an essay in which you identify and analyze three forms of real or potential choice in education. You may discuss any single level of education or multiple levels. Be sure to address the following issues:

- Analyze the pros and cons of each form of choice using economic, political, and sociological concepts.
- To what degree does each form of choice depart from traditional structures?
- Identify forces that favor and oppose each form of choice.
- Discuss what is likely to happen in the future regarding the forms of choice you have analyzed and specify why.
- Support your assertions.

FALL 2012, cont.

Question 5

Whether formal or informal; private or public; or primary, secondary or tertiary – education plays a role in economic development and other development policymaking across the globe. First, critique the use of education policy in international and national policymaking for the promotion of development. What evidence favors the presence of educational policy making in development policy? Second, choose any country or jurisdiction in the world, and any level or type of education and identify one specific policy initiative intended to use education to promote development. Critique the policy in reference to research evidence and theory.

SPRING 2012

Question 1

Schools or colleges [choose one] with otherwise similar macro-characteristics (size, governance, socio-economics, ethnic composition, etc.) can differ in observed climate or culture to an extent that impacts the institution's effectiveness. Drawing on relevant theories (organizational studies, sociology, educational leadership and policy, school improvement, etc.), write an essay that explains how climate / culture related factors can affect an institution's performance despite shared macro-characteristics. Your essay might proceed along three steps:

--First: begin by attending to the conceptual difference between "climate" and "culture." Some scholars use these terms synonymously, others insist on their difference. Explain and defend your stance.

--Second: assume that you were called upon to research a sample of schools / colleges regarding their organizational climate or culture. The goal is to distinguish schools/colleges with strong (performance enhancing) and weak (performance limiting) climates / cultures. Describe how you would design and implement your research. Make certain that you specify the variables you will study, the hypotheses you will test, and the data you would collect.

--Thirdly, assume that you were asked to design an intervention program meant to improve an institution's climate / culture. Identify and describe the components amenable to improvement-oriented interventions. Draw on relevant theory and research as you justify your intervention framework and emphasize the roles and responsibilities of teachers / faculty and senior administrators.

Question 2

Student engagement has been developed as concept useful in understanding how the relationship between students and their schools / colleges [choose one] can promote academic success. Similarly, theories concerning student involvement argue that students who are active participants in the educational experience are likely to have higher academic and personal achievements. Research drawing on these concepts and related theories explicitly examines both in-class and out-of-class environments as important contributors to student outcomes.

Write an essay discussing how assessments of student engagement might be used to help educational leaders evaluate their schools and sharpen administrative efforts to improve student learning. In the essay, be sure to address the following:

SPRING 2012, cont.

-Theoretical underpinnings from the social sciences (e.g., sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, etc.) framing research on student engagement and involvement.

-Conceptual distinctions between “engagement” and “involvement” made by some scholars and researchers. Provide examples from the literature on how constructs for engagement / involvement are used and discuss whether there are potential problems for development of policy and/or practice from the terms being used interchangeably.

-Primary criticisms of student engagement and involvement theories and/or research. Discuss the implications of these criticisms for development educational policies and practice concerning educational environments and effectiveness.

Question 3

For this question, select two journal articles from the list of recommended journals (preferably from issues published since 2000).^{*} Select articles that address the same issue or research question in the educational arena of your choice (e.g., k-12 administration and policy; higher education administration and policy; comparative education). Your charge is to provide an evaluative review of these two articles. Your review essay should include the following three parts.

--In part 1 of your essay, briefly summarize these two articles’ main knowledge claims, including (where appropriate) their potential contributions to policy and/or practice.

--In part 2, evaluate the two articles’ contributions to existing theoretical concepts or models in educational administration and policy studies as well as to methodological innovations in education research.

--Finally, in part 3, rank the two articles in terms of their originality and overall contribution to educational research, policy and practice, justifying your decision by comparing and contrasting the quality of the research presented.

*[*Your articles should be drawn from recognized, peer reviewed journals, including, but not limited to: American Educational Research Journal, American Journal of Education, Comparative Education Review, Economics of Education Review, Education Finance and Policy Journal, Educational Administration Quarterly, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Educational Policy, Harvard Educational Review, Higher Education, Journal of Educational Policy, Journal of*

SPRING 2012, cont.

Higher Education, Learning and Instruction, Policy Studies Journal, Publius: The Journal of Federalism, Review of Educational Research, Review of Higher Education, Sociology of Education, Teacher's College Record, Urban Education]

Question 4

International assessments of school performance are becoming increasingly influential in the education policy of nations across the globe. This relatively new development is not without controversy. Supporters and detractors can be located in both the education policy community and the research-scholarly community. Differences among them involve political, methodological, and policy issues. Your charge is to explore and clarify this controversy. Your response should include at least three parts.

First: Drawing on relevant social scientific theories, discuss the causes and consequences of the growth of international education assessment.

Second: Focusing on a country or global region and an international assessment system of your choice, describe the assessment's impact on the country. For example, discuss the relationship between goals and objectives of the national education system and the goals / standards represented by the international assessment. Do these goals converge or diverge? What are the implications?

Third: Provide a reasoned recommendation as to your focal country's involvement / participation in the assessments.

Question 5

Write an essay in which you consider both documented and potential links between social science research and the activities of education policymakers and leaders. You may focus your essay on K-12 education, postsecondary education, or both. Support your claims by citing relevant literature.

- a. Provide three examples of particular social science concepts, findings, or insights that are relevant to the activities of education policymakers and leaders and consider these examples from the vantage of two social sciences (anthropology, economics, history, law, philosophy, political science, sociology, interdisciplinary research).
- b. Given the gaps, disagreements, and conflicting findings in social science research on education, what challenges and opportunities does this state of affairs present for education policymakers and leaders?

Fall 2011

Question 1

New educational policies are often designed to promote sustained changes to educational organizations and systems. Policy makers and researchers are often interested in the extent to which policy implementation is faithful to the policy as originally designed. Participants in the policy process are typically confronted with various challenges. For example, policy makers and policy implementers may struggle to agree upon an optimal balance between regulation and flexibility. Moreover, policy outcomes depend not only on the actions of the original policy designers but also on the will and capacity of policy implementers.

For an education reform policy of your choice, first present key elements of the policy as originally designed. Next, discuss the extent to which the policy implementation process is consistent with the policy as originally designed. Explain reasons for this state of affairs. Finally, address whether participants in the policy process have addressed policy implementation challenges skillfully and why or why not.

Question 2

Select two articles published in the past 5 years from two different peer reviewed journals* in the fields of education, educational administration, education policy, comparative education, and allied fields.

First, for each article provide a critical assessment of the article's contribution to at least two of the following:

- a) existing theoretical concepts or models in educational administration and policy studies;
- b) the pool of evidence-based knowledge in educational administration and policy studies;
- c) policies or practices addressing a practical problem of education;
- d) methodological innovations in education research.

Second, drawing on ONE of the two chosen articles, suggest several ways to extend, build on or improve the article's line of inquiry in future research, and the rationale for your suggestions.

*Your articles should be drawn from the following list of journals: American Educational Research Journal, American Journal of Education, Comparative Education Review, Economics of Education Review, Education Finance and Policy Journal, Educational Administration Quarterly, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Educational Policy, Harvard Educational Review, Higher Education, Journal of Educational Policy, Journal of Higher Education, Learning and Instruction, Policy Studies Journal, Publius: The Journal of Federalism, Review of Educational Research, Review of Higher Education, Sociology of Education, Teacher's College Record, Urban Education.

FALL 2011, cont.

Question 3

In the current fiscal and economic climate, leaders are often asked to make substantial changes to their organizations. Various strategies for organizational change exist, which often can be distinguished by whether they favor a "quick turn-around" strategy or gradual and incremental change. You are asked to lay out the different change options and advise the governing board of a school district or postsecondary institution (choose one of these education levels) on the pros and cons of either approach. Your "employer" expects advice that is soundly grounded in the research literature but which may also include examples of leaders exemplifying either approach.

Question 4

Consider the argument that high-quality, publicly-accountable elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions are essential for ensuring a well-informed, politically-participatory citizenry dedicated to maintaining a robust democracy. Write an essay in which you discuss this argument focusing either on elementary / secondary schools or postsecondary institutions.

In your essay, examine the extent to which these institutions are preparing students for informed civic participation in a democracy. First, identify contemporary factors that facilitate or hinder the ability of educational institutions to prepare students for citizenship. Secondly, identify policies or policy proposals designed to encourage or discourage education institutions and leaders from making such preparation a priority. Finally, discuss implications of your analysis for the future role of education in a democracy.

SPRING 2011

Question 1

Accountability in education is a policy that holds schools/universities and teachers/faculty to account for various educational processes and outcomes. Accountability can take different forms, depending on whether one is focusing on public schools or private universities, or whether one is examining accountability issues in the USA, Europe, or other world regions. Institutional sector also influence accountability policies, as does the level of education and country-specific traditions and political agendas.

Please describe two different accountability policies and/or procedures that currently exist in an education system, with which you are familiar. Discuss how level, institutional sector and/or national tradition have influenced their design and implementation. Your essay may focus on primary, secondary or post-secondary education, or some combination of the three. Identify the significant organizational, political, and economic factors that created the need for accountability in each instance, making sure to reference the most relevant published research and theory. Assess the extent to which these or other factors may encourage or discourage the adoption of new accountability measures in the future.

Question 2

Over the past several decades, decentralization has been a frequently employed change strategy in both public education ('k-12') and higher education. The assumption has often been that bringing decision making closer to those who have the requisite expertise and responsibility would increase decision quality, and organizational commitment of lower level participants. Yet, studies on decentralization in education have shown that there is little evidence that devolving decisions leads to improved outcomes or major changes in established educational practices.

Select a sector, level or stage of education and analyze the problem and its implications for management and policy. In developing your analysis, you are expected to draw upon relevant theory and research. Your analysis should provide an evaluation of the extant research that bears upon the problem.

Finally, as a result of your analysis, make a recommendation as to the use/non-use of decentralization as a strategy in education reform, and in what specific form.

SPRING 2011, cont.

Question 3

Choose a noteworthy issue related to primary, secondary or post-secondary education policy and leadership and write an essay in which you define and then analyze the principles of equity, excellence, efficiency, and choice* as they pertain to the issue. Choose a policy or policy arena and specify the ways in which different groups of stakeholders define and prioritize these four principles and why. Describe the nature of the dilemmas that education policymakers and leaders may face when confronted with demands for equity, excellence, efficiency, and choice in education? Explain why and propose ways in which these dilemmas might be resolved. Throughout your essay, cite relevant scholarly literature from any disciplines or fields.

*'Choice' is a principle that has strong, abiding roots in US educational policy discourse, although its existence (or absence) animates many policy discussions throughout the world.

Question 4

Choose a particular setting and time period. It could be for example the contemporary US. Consider the interplay between the education system and the social, economic, and political context within which it is embedded. Focus on one education level, at least two social science disciplines, and some major perspective from organizational or management studies. Specifically address three of the following four:

- a. How the education system affects the surrounding context.
- b. How the surrounding context shapes the educational system.
- c. How factors and dynamics within the educational system continue to shape the system internally.
- d. Implications for public policy (either actual policy or reform or both).

FALL 2010

Question 1

Important international institutions, such as the World Bank, identify social analysis as key to their efforts. The World Bank claims:

“High quality social analysis is essential to fulfilling the Bank’s mandate for effective poverty reduction. At the global level it underpins our understanding of processes of social and political change which cross borders, including migration, conflict and the social impacts of climate change. At the national level it is necessary to understand the context in the countries where we work in order to identify the key socio-political barriers to sustainable poverty reduction. At the local level it is necessary to ensure that poor people benefit as much as possible from our projects and policies.” (From World Bank Web Site, “Social Analysis at the World Bank.”)

This is an example of how some policy analysts and advocates sometimes refer to the roles social and political structures are understood to play in shaping the paths and results of educational systems. Some even claim that failure to anticipate political and institutional challenges is a chief cause of unsuccessful policy reform processes in education.

Write an essay in which you demonstrate the importance of social analysis in promoting good educational policy. You may focus on any educational level or system, in any part of the world. Substantiate your arguments including a consideration of evidence from the empirical research literature of the strengths and/or weaknesses in social analysis that you identify. You must also carefully address at least one likely rebuttal to your argument.

Question 2

Organizational studies and other social science approaches to the study of educational leadership and policy may be critiqued as being too abstract and having little relevance to the preparation and daily work of education leaders and policymakers. Write an essay supporting or refuting the principle that theory-based analysis — specifically, concepts, tools, and findings derived from organizational studies and other social science fields — can aid K-12 or postsecondary education leaders or policymakers. In your essay, draw upon organizational studies and at least one other social science field.

Question 3

Episodes of violence in schools (both k-12 and postsecondary) receive a great deal of attention in the news media and result in continuing calls for educational institutions to take actions to prevent such tragedies. Some argue that less dramatic examples of alienation that exist at all levels of education include students who drop out and faculty who burn out. Write an essay discussing several actions an education leader or policymaker might take to reduce student and faculty alienation. In doing so, discuss the social science research suggesting potential reasons for individuals' feelings of alienation and describe the theory from organizational analysis that you find best accounts for those empirical findings. How might the proposed actions differ based on the type of organization or its location?

Question 4

Quality remains a persistent policy priority in education, at all levels and in most countries of the world. In the U.S., the evidence is mixed regarding the quality of educational outcomes for students in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

- In k-12 education, a recent edition of *Education Week's* "Quality Counts" report concludes that state efforts to carry out standards-based education over the past decade have a positive, but modest, relationship with gains in student achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. On the other hand, U.S. students consistently perform lower than their international peers from developed countries in international mathematics and science tests.
- In tertiary education the evidence is also mixed. U.S. colleges and universities are often called among the best in the world, and yet the title of Derek Bok's (2005) widely read book on quality in U.S. higher education is *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More*.

Consider the question of educational quality at any educational level in any country of your choice. Identify an example of a current policy or reform initiative intended to impact quality in that educational sector and country. Using and carefully identifying conceptual tools from any two social science disciplines, analyze the policy or reform proposal. Your analysis should include: a) a critical assessment of the definition of quality that the policy or proposal tacitly or explicitly promotes, and b) an appraisal of the reform initiative or policy based on evidence from the scholarly literature in the two selected social science disciplines.