

**The Changing Role of Higher Education
in School Administration Collaborative Training and Partnerships**

Clifford E. Tyler

Dorothy Singleton

National University-San Jose, California

A relatively new trend is taking place in American higher education, shifting from on-ground classes to more online classes. Higher education is also struggling with increased competition from non-traditional institutions offering competitive training with enabling state legislation. Institutions such as county offices of education, professional employee organizations, and private organizations have become adept at coaching administrators, and offering all of the traditional programs in education previously offered exclusively by institutions of higher education (IHE).

This paper discusses why this transition has happened, citing higher education traditional inflexibility, lack of awareness, inadequate marketing efforts, political in-activism, and little or no overall vision for paradigm shifts to cope with aggressive non-higher education institution multiple missions of wanting a share of school administrator training. The paper will also investigate the resulting damage to higher education, i.e. enrollment drops, unfavorable legislation, eroding public support for higher education, and declining revenues, all of which has accelerated this change in recent years.

This paper will suggest strategies for relevance for higher education to compete with non-higher education organizations, involving the formation of collaborative partnerships. These strategies will capture roles and strengths of both higher education and competing organizations, creating a win-win solution for all stakeholders.

Have you noticed American institutions of higher education (IHE) significantly changing in recent years from offering on-ground classes to more on-line classes? Have you also noticed higher education institutions struggling with increased costs, declining public revenues, and increased competition from non-traditional higher education institutions offering competitive training programs with enabling state legislation? Why has this transition happened, and what events have caused these changes? What organizations have stepped in to create this additional competition with IHE's for delivery of these classes and services? What has been their motivation for offering these competitive programs?

For many years, well-known and elite private and state institutions have provided authentic learning by engaging students with teacher-centered and textbook driven on-ground classes featuring lectures, labs and smaller group seminars, depending on the subject discipline and undergraduate vs. graduate level. (Herrington, 2001). According to one study, lecturing still absorbs over two-thirds of college teaching. These traditional forms of teaching seem to have been relatively untouched, despite huge strides and an enormous investment in technology. (Cuban, 2001)

Traditional Role of Higher Education

While full-time tenure track professors are still held accountable by universities for their teaching, scholarship and service responsibilities, many have been replaced with less-qualified instructors with no terminal degrees. These adjunct professors receive lower pay and little or no fringe benefits, while teaching an ever increasing number of on-line classes, most with limited or no training for on-line instruction. Some adjunct professors earn substantial money due to an incredible number of on-line classes taught. When a proliferation of these on-line classes are taught in combination with the responsibilities of a full-time position, the value of student learning becomes insignificant.

The increasing costs of higher education, government funding reductions, and decreasing private monies and grants available, due to deteriorating world-wide economic conditions, has required institutions to raise tuition and fees, increase faculty workload, tighten accountability, and open the doors to commercialization (Altbach, 2005). These developments have decreased student academic quality and rigor, motivated grade inflation and the overall lowering of standards, and decreased public support for higher education.

Has Higher Education Lost Its Relevancy?

With this overall decline of standards and academic rigor and increasing perception among professionals that higher education has become dated, stodgy, and lost its relevancy to the changing needs and challenges of professionals, non-traditional higher education institutions and non-higher education organizations have moved in to take advantage of this void and perception by offering many equivalent services. These non-higher education institutions have been effective and utilized sophisticated legislative lobbying in gaining enabling state legislation to establish their legitimacy in assuming training and education roles once reserved only for higher education institutions.

For example in California, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), a non-higher education institution and advocate for school administrators, teamed up with the California Commission for Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), the state school educator licensing agency to get a state senator to sponsor legislation (Scott Bill) passed by the California state legislature in 2002, enabling ACSA, County Offices of Education, large school districts, and any other non-higher education organization who could submit a standards-based preliminary administrative services (Tier I) and professional administrative services licensing program (Tier II) to obtain licensure approval by CCTC. Furthermore, funding was approved in this legislation that provided training at no cost to school administrator candidates. Before this legislation was passed, only institutions of higher education were licensed by CCTC to offer preliminary administrative service credential programs.

What was the rationale of the legislature for passing this legislation? ACSA and other organizations, through their effective lobbying efforts, made convincing arguments that a school administrator shortage has been generated by institutions of higher education, who have made it too difficult and inefficient for aspiring school administrators to earn their credential through

graduate classes and fieldwork. Higher education institutions and faculty organizations provided little or no counter-lobbying efforts with legislators and state commissions, i.e. the California Commission for Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) that their academic and comprehensive subject matter graduate classes and fieldwork could generate higher quality school administrators than non-higher education institutions.

To add “insult to injury” to higher education educational administration programs, California is offering an educational administrative exam to aspiring school administrators as an alternative to attending higher education classes and paying tuition to earn their educational administration credential/license to become sitting administrators. Some states are contracting with the Education Testing Service (ETS) or other vendors to develop an exam for administering to students for a fee throughout the calendar year. So far, the administrator candidate success rate in passing these exams has been strong, and the exams have established relevancy for students finding public school district administrative positions.

These same organizations continue to be more competitive by expanding their influence through trailer legislative bills and taking advantage of a lack of counter legislative lobbying and marketing efforts from higher education institutions. Recently, legislation which proposes to completely change administrative training from traditional to transformational leadership training has been introduced. In addition, non traditional universities, and institutions such as county offices of education, professional employee organizations, and private organizations have become adept at coaching, and have joined to offer coaching training previously offered exclusively by institutions of higher education (IHE).

How have these paradigm shifts from the dominant role of traditional higher education institutions training school administrators to non-traditional higher education institutions and non-higher education institutions affected the licensing landscape of school administrators? Although precise state-wide enrollment figures are not available, these institutions have nearly eliminated higher education institution Tier II Program enrollments, and have substantially reduced Tier I enrollment. For instance, National University Educational Administration in enrollment was 1,500 students in 2005. Now it is approximately 950 students (Hoban, 2009). Without the online program offering, the enrollment would be substantially lower.

Motivation of Non-Higher Educational Institutions

What has driven these non-traditional and non-higher education institutions to successfully begin the training of administrators with aspirations of teacher education and special education training for state licensing? There are several factors: 1.) these organizations do not have student admission standards, 2.) they more quickly and easily meet changing student needs, 3.) curriculum offered is more up-to-date, practical, addresses contemporary problems and challenges, and offers practical solutions for real world problems and issues, 4.) recent enabling legislation picks up a portion or total cost of student training, whereas higher education institution tuition remains a student cost issue, and most importantly 5.) lucrative staff development revenue fuels incentives for non-traditional and traditional institutions branching out into training school administrators that higher education institutions normally

collect through student tuition. By contrast, traditional higher education institutions still require admission and rigorous academic standards, as required by their respective accrediting agencies, i.e. Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), National Accrediting Agency for Teacher Education (NCATE). Some of them also maintain a traditional semester or term schedule, allowing few enrollment window periods for students throughout the year.

Often the curriculum offered in higher education courses is outdated for contemporary educational administration problems, rendering much of the content irrelevant and disconnected. Despite new educational administration demands and changes in the field, higher education institutions lack a vision to make paradigm shifts for revising, streamlining and offering competing programs to compete with non-traditional or non-higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions collectively lack state political or legislative lobbying money and muscle in legislative bodies to promote their programs and research. Many of these institutions have limited budgets to market their programs. Non-traditional higher education and non-higher education institutions influence political decisions through their professional organizations containing large professional memberships, i.e. University of Phoenix, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), etc.

Can Higher Education Meeting These Challenges Through Paradigm Shifts?

How can higher education change roles, make paradigm shifts, and evolve into relevant contemporary institutions in today's world of challenges in educational administration? They need to assess their role and review their purpose for existence, compared with competing organizations, and determine how they can compete and expand their traditional degree granting role. They also need to assess the changing needs of their students, who may need new and updated services from the traditional degrees, and become more flexible in their schedule for offering programs.

Colleges and universities must think of themselves not as stores of knowledge but as institutions of re-acculturation. (Bruffee, 1999) Higher education institutions still enjoy a unique "nitch" that competing organizations cannot offer, i.e. offering degrees, cultural influence, etc. Possible expanded roles may include administrator coaching, extended education, staff development services to local school districts or large companies, sponsorship of professional conferences traditionally sponsored by professional associations, and forming team partnerships with competing organizations. Another challenge is an inequitable distribution of power and resources among the partners. (Achieving, 2007). Getting a partnership off the ground engenders a long range commitment. (Bullough, et al., 1999).

Higher Education/Non-Higher Education Partnership Examples

There are three partnership examples: First, is National University-local school district partnerships in both the fieldwork seminar and the intern program. In this partnership, a university supervisor works closely with a school campus supervisor in supervising educational administration fieldwork candidates, who are completing 22 activities in eleven categories, i.e.

school law, finance, school-community relations, curriculum leadership, technology, human resources, etc. in an E-Portfolio, while completing their California Preliminary Educational Administration Services Credential. The intern program is similar in supervision, but is more intensive in that the university supervisor maintains monthly contact with the intern candidate and campus supervisor. Several classes are conducted throughout this one year experience that are problem scenario-centered.

The second partnership example is an administrative credential/Masters Degree partnership involving National University-San Jose, California and the Santa Clara County Office of Education. This large intermediate education unit offers California Commission for Teacher Accreditation (CCTC) approved administrative credential program, while the students earn graduate credits for the county courses and add six additional courses. Approximately 20 students are currently enrolled in the program, and are recruited from local school districts.

A third example is the University of California-Santa Cruz Teacher Center partnership with the Association of California School Administrators, which offers school principal coaching services, administrative credential and training programs, etc. Again, this partnership also includes local school districts where the students are employed as school administrators.

Needed Outreach Partnerships and Adaptability Efforts for Higher Education

Higher education institutions need to make a greater community outreach effort by publicizing their programs and services to the local community, and seek partnerships by being active community members. For example, university administrators and faculty members should join local service clubs, business associations and the chamber of commerce to promote community outreach and community/school/university partnerships.

Higher education must also be more adaptable to changing traditional schedules and locations. Instead of enrolling students at the beginning of fall and spring semesters (or trimesters), universities need to enroll students anytime of the academic year, offer month long classes, and become more flexible in offering non-degree programs, contracting out for offering staff development programs, and more frequently update curriculum content to meet current student needs and educational trends.

Finally, long range commitments are needed to sustain partnerships over a long range period of time. Research supports initial enthusiasm and excitement, but there is a danger of loss of interest among faculty members and other stakeholders over time. (Bullough, et al, 1999). Much of this potential loss of interest may be mitigated by ongoing communication between partners and long range strategic planning by assessing changing student needs and exploring new ideas to meet these needs. Higher education needs to re-invent and attempt to maintain partnerships and offer more relevant programs to constitute a paradigm shift to establish new relevancy to student needs in the changing work place environment.

References

“Achieving the Promise of Authentic Community-Higher Education Partnerships:

Community Partners Speak Out,” 2007. Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, UW Box 354809, Seattle, WA 98195

Altbach, Philip G.; Berdahl, Robert O.; and Gumport, Patricia J., American Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Social, Political and Economic Challenges (2nd edition). JHU Press, 2005. ISBN 0801880343

“Bill eyes new look for CA credentialing” ACSA EdCal, April 13, 2009.

Bruffee, Kenneth A., Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge (2nd Edition). Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
<http://www.press.jhu.edu> (paperback: ISBN-0-8018-5974-3)

Bullough, Robert V. Jr. et. al., “Paradise Unrealized: Teacher Educators and the Costs and Benefits of School University Partnerships.” Journal of Teacher Education, Nov.-Dec. 1999, Volume 50, No. 5.

Cuban, Larry, Teachers and Machines: The Classroom Use of Technology Since 1920. New York: Teachers College Press, 1986. ISBN 080772792X

Herrington, Tony and Jan, Authentic Learning Environments in Higher Education. Ideal Group Publishers, 2006. ISBN 1591405947

Hoban, Gary, “Educational Administration Enrollment Trends,” National University Educational Administration Department Meeting, April 8, 2009.

Pugach, Marlene C. and Johnson, Lawrence J., Collaborative Practitioners, Collaborative Schools. Denver: Love Publishing Company, 1995.

Smith, Barbara Leigh and McCann, John (Eds.), Reinventing Ourselves: Interdisciplinary Education, Collaborative Learning, and Experimentation in Higher Education. Anker Publishing Company, Inc.