

# Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education Dissertation Abstracts 2012

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**SHANNON LYNN BURTON, 2012**

**BUILDING THE BRIDGE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF ACADEMIC ADVISING'S ROLE IN CAMPUS INTERNATIONALIZATION**

**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation was an exploratory study in the understanding of the campus internationalization process by professional academic advisors at a large research institution with an institutional strategic plan for internationalization. If academic advising is an instructional process by which the learning outcomes of internationalization are mediated, this study will indicate how professional academic advisors help their students and the institution achieve this learning outcome, what skills they feel need to be developed, and where integral pieces of training could be implemented. As such, it indicates how professional academic advisors potentially impact other learning outcomes. It provides higher education administrators with a point of connection for how these plans are being implemented and understood by a segment of professionals on the campus, as well as a perspective of academic advising as a teaching and learning process. Finally, it provides advisors with a means to make campus internationalization a more meaningful experience for colleagues and students.

The research question explored in this study was: *How do professional academic advisors see their role in internationalization on a campus with a stated international agenda?* To answer this question, I utilized a phenomenological approach to examine professional advisors' understanding of their role in campus internationalization as a component of the curriculum by revealing their lived experiences. I explored how professional academic advisors perceive and understand the parameters of the curriculum of internationalization. As academic advisors are engaged in the educational process, their description of what internationalization means, what actions they carry out in its plan, and how they interpret its curriculum to their undergraduate students is the center of analysis for this study.

I collected data through a two-step process. First, I sent out a screening tool designed to elicit potential participants' level of advising experience, demographic data, and priorities related to internationalization. From the responses to this screening tool, I then selected 23 participants to be interviewed in order to examine their understanding of internationalization. As meaning-making is central to phenomenology, I also administered the Global Perspectives Inventory (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2010) to each of the selected participants in order to gain a baseline for participants' own intercultural maturity and a means for better interpreting participant responses to my interview questions. The "phenomenon" that I focused on was campus internationalization. As a result, interviews offered the best means to not only reflect on participants' perspectives, but also allowed me to engage in the reflection process with the participants.

Both academic advising and internationalization are purposeful and deliberate processes and in order to better prepare undergraduate students for the demands of an increasingly globalized society, they should be coordinated. This leads to an intersection between these two areas as professional academic advisors understand the relevance of campus internationalization and its potential impact on the students with whom they work. In this vein, professional academic advisors take the lead in understanding the concept of campus internationalization. Compartmentalization emerged as the dominant theme throughout the interviews. Under this overarching concept, the sub-themes of knowledge, resources, and personal experiences arose.

**TIMOTHY G. CAMPBELL, 2012**

**LIVING IN THE MIDDLE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF NEW DEPARTMENT CHAIRS**

**ABSTRACT**

Making contributions as a new department chair is first dependent upon a chair's sense of role certainty. What is interesting is that after two decades of conference presentations, journal articles, and books on the department chair role we still have few data-based studies for understanding how individuals perceive themselves and their professional challenges in the post of department chair (Gmelch, 1991). The present research suggests a way of understanding how new chairs might see the barriers to understanding their role more clearly than current theory and research has offered. The combination of a role's characteristics (role confidence), a newcomer's individual characteristics (personality needs), and the role's context (role support) are predicted to explain the degrees of difference among and between new department chairs' sense of role certainty.

A survey was used to collect data from individuals who were first-time department chairs and had been in the job between 0 and 3 years. Standard multiple regression was used to help explain how well role confidence, personality needs, and role support were able as a group to explain the variance of role certainty among new department chairs. Separate tests were run to discern the relative contribution of each scale on role certainty.

The data from the present study show that making contributions as a chair is bound up in finding (Ashford & Cummings, 1983, 1985; Miller & Jablin, 1991) and making sense (Gioia & Thomas, 1996) of the contextual knowledge (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001) surrounding the role of department chair. New chairs who fail to realize the knowledge that one "lives" as a subordinate, an equal, and as a superior (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Uytterhoeven, 1972) will miss leveraging change for the department (Huy, 2001) resulting in a lack of upward influence for the benefits of the colleagues they represent (Falbe & Yukl, 1992).

Based upon the findings of this study institutions ought to look strongly at the role of the dean, the personal attributes and career aspirations of chair candidates, and current organizational development offices and programs in providing support to newcomer department chairs. Additional recommendations include a consideration of how the more general literature on middle management research might be a benefit to higher education, and in particular how institutions may integrate the idea that management is a multifaceted phenomenon and not limited to specific disciplines, industries, or a small group of individuals.

**NGOC LAN THI DANG, 2012**

**VIETNAMESE WOMEN IN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP: EXPERIENCES OF MID-LEVEL WOMEN LEADERS IN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES IN THE MEKONG DELTA**

**ABSTRACT**

Academic women in the Mekong Delta (MD) in southern Viet Nam remain underrepresented in key leadership positions and other positions of power and influence in their institutions. This situation exists regardless of various local, national, and international policies on gender equality and the implementation of numerous action plans, strategies, and activities to enforce this equality on Vietnamese campuses. No existing literature in Viet Nam examines the experiences of women in higher education in the MD and their underrepresentation in positions of power and leadership. Accordingly, this study sought to understand the lived experiences of a limited number of women leaders in higher education in the MD and the processes they have undertaken to advance into key positions of influence in their institutions. The study was framed within the larger context of gender equality in Viet Nam, but it focused on the nature of the leadership development process of women in academia in the MD. In particular, it explored the lived experiences of mid-level women leaders in two multidisciplinary public universities and two community colleges in the MD, to see how gender inequality issues have manifested themselves in this context. The women leaders' experiences, coupled with gender issues, were approached through the lens of feminist theories, together with insights drawn from the history of Confucianism and feudal ideology in Viet Nam.

Phenomenography was the primary research approach employed in this study. Data were collected from in-depth face-to-face interviews, participant observations, and documents in the four selected higher education institutions. The study's findings show a gap between gender equality policies and gender practices. Women and men in Viet Nam in general and in higher education in particular are equal in all spheres of life in law, but not in reality. The findings specifically reveal that although women encounter significant opportunities for their professional development and career advancement, thanks to the gender equality law and policies, there are still various barriers hindering their advancement and equality with men in real life. More important, traditional Vietnamese culture, which is still heavily influenced by Confucian and feudal ideologies, continues to affect adversely not only men's but also women's perceptions of women's roles, status, and forms of participation in different spheres of life. The negative impact of these collective beliefs on the academic women leaders in this study is pervasive and intense, regardless of their age. Even though they had subtle desires to become leaders, none of them developed strategies to move up their career ladder or to hold senior leadership roles. Rather, they all became leaders "unintentionally."

This study offers several suggestions for improving gender policies and practices, theories, and future research on women and leadership in academia. First, there must be changes in gender policies and practices at the national, institutional, and individual levels before academic women's leadership status in Viet Nam can be ameliorated. Moreover, the current study clearly describes and interprets how women who lack parental encouragement and career ambitions attain leadership roles, while not much Western and Asian literature on women's leadership delves into these issues. Similarly, it contributes to feminist theories (e.g., MacKinnon, 1989) by describing what sex differences and inequalities truly exist in Vietnamese higher education and society, and how they should be addressed. Finally, to better inform and benefit not only women but also men and policy makers, future researchers should conduct longitudinal qualitative and/or quantitative studies with large sample sizes to examine the lived experiences of both women and men in higher education in Viet Nam and other Asian countries.

**CHRIS R. GLASS, 2012**

**PROFESSING ON THE SCREEN: THE SUBJECTIVE DIMENSIONS OF PROFESSORS' EXPERIENCES LEARNING TO TEACH DIGITALLY-MEDIATED COURSES**

**ABSTRACT**

This research study utilizes grounded theory to explore how professors at a single research university learn to teach digitally-mediated courses. The study focuses on what learning means to them subjectively, within their professional lives. I explored the specific activities, qualities of social interactions, and intersecting contexts that support professors as they learn to teach digitally-mediated courses. I utilize a definition of learning informed by sociocultural theory and advanced within the communities of practice literature, defining it as “the interplay of experience and competence” (Wenger, 1999, p. 50) This study draws needed attention to the subjective dimensions of the technological transformations of our time, particularly how they are reshaping academic work and the human relationships vital to learning.

The study demonstrates how new technologies not only change the practices of academic teaching; the changing practices affect professors' experience of teaching itself. The proposed framework outlines three dimensions of experience the professors in the study inevitably confronted when teaching digitally-mediated courses:

The *engagement in work* explores the physical interactions of digitally-mediated teaching. Professors engage physical objects and settings in creating a teaching experience; this dimension provides insight into how the aesthetic qualities of the immediate environment affect professors' digitally-mediated teaching experiences.

The *engagement of one's self* dimension explores the personal meanings of digitally-mediated teaching. Professors express distinct dispositions, goals, and histories in creating a teaching experience; this dimension provides insight into how individual differences affect professors' digitally-mediated teaching experiences.

The *engagement with others* dimension explores the social bonds of digitally-mediated teaching. Professors encounter alive, biographical, creative human beings in creating a teaching experience; this dimension provides insight into how a sense of relatedness to others affects professors' digitally-mediated teaching experiences.

Professors' experiences are multiple, interrelated, and unfold over time. The framework proposed by this study allows an exploration of how digitally mediated teaching affects professors' academic identities as constructed through evolving life stories. Consequently, it emphasizes how a professor's evolving history of interactions along the three dimensions shapes the personal meanings each brings to her or his own practice. It emphasizes the development of functional relationships, not the integration of different types of knowledge, as a central feature of professional growth. It views engaging the tensions digitally-mediated teaching presents as the primary means of supporting professors' professional growth.

I conclude by reflecting on the manifest and latent functions of academic courses. I argue that, although the manifest functions of digitally-mediated academic teaching give courses their recognizable forms, their latent functions give courses their meaning. To explore the latent functions of academic courses, I examine dynamic processes inherent in professors' and students' relationships with themselves, their relationships with each other, and their engagement in meaningful work.

**ROBERT D. HAYDEN, 2012****RECONCEPTUALIZING PRESENCE: EXAMINING THE WORK OF TEACHING ONLINE****ABSTRACT**

A decade of research utilizing the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework has unveiled the priority of *teaching presence* in effective models of online education. The data for this finding are significant, as is the momentum of the CoI in suggesting theoretical and practical implications for implementing contemporary online education. However, questions remain regarding the CoI's proposed 3-dimensions of teaching presence. For example, CoI research to date has for the most part overlooked how online faculty envision their teaching. This study explores these perspectives providing additional conceptual work related to the nature of online teaching presence. These data suggest broadening the definition of the first dimension, *design and organization*, to include four sets of priorities evident in online course design. Confirming prior research, these interviews also argue for envisioning the CoI's proposed final two dimensions of teaching presence as a single dimension entitled *directed facilitation*, allowing for a broader combination of roles adopted by online teachers. Finally, the literature on teaching provides a guide for expanding the initial dimensions of teaching presence to include *teacher preferences*, that is, the variation evidenced in differing educational priorities, pedagogical styles, and even the personalities of online teachers. Two external influences, *institutional conditions* and *disciplinary contexts*, although not identified as dimensions, give shape to how these re-conceptualized dimensions of teaching presence are portrayed online.

**JOHN LETOURNEAU, 2012**

**INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN A HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT: FACTORS IN THE ADOPTION OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES**

**ABSTRACT**

The public higher education economic and competitive environments make it crucial that organizations react to the circumstances and make better use of available resources. Viewing higher education through the perspective of new institutionalism can help explain its conservative view of change including a resistance to ideas associated with management efficiency and innovation. Information technology is an increasingly important dynamic in higher education where changes in costs and efficiencies can be studied. A sub-section of information technology shown to help organizations become more economically efficient and competitive is the use of information technology project management best practices. This dissertation uses a case study to investigate how one higher education institution successfully adopted information technology project management best practices as a means of becoming more effective and efficient, improving customer satisfaction and quality, and addressing environmental complexities. This study was not a measure of how many best practices were put in place but rather how change was adopted, with guidance from an institutional change perspective framework (Van de Ven & Hargrave, 2004). Data were collected onsite via individual interviews with the senior IT staff at a major research university with a reputation of project management best practice adoption.

The findings include identification of those responsible for the promotion of PM adoption and of those who resisted. Documented as well were the actions taken by the organizational leaders enabling the changes, including process improvements, team development, communications, and skill development. The findings recognize why PM best practices were pursued, including the pursuit of higher productivity, quality, and customer satisfaction; as potential solutions to goals and complexities in the work environment; and based on the influence of outside sources including consultants and higher education resources. Factors were also identified in the cultural environment that contributed to the changes that took place.

The implications for practice focus on actions done well by the participating organization including the development of adaptive and transformative leaders through training and mentorship; building a foundation of organizational skills and tools expertise; successfully managing relationships; and effectively communicating with employees, customers, and campus collaborators. Activities requiring more attention are planning around management strategies including adoption of project management and service management best practice, and persuading university executives to plan and prioritize major project initiatives including those that are information technology related.

The implications for research include examples of coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) in higher education information technology, with efforts at legitimacy not consciously recognized. Documented institutional change included examples that fit with the perspectives of institutional design, adaptation, and diffusion, with individual leader agency a contributing factor in each.