

ABSTRACT

Laura Johnson Hummell, DISTANCE EDUCATION LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES: A STUDY OF HOW SELECT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IMPLEMENT AND LEAD ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS (Under the co-direction of Drs. Cheryl McFadden and Veronica Pantelidis) Department of Educational Leadership, March, 2008.

The purpose of this research was to study the perspectives, characteristics, and experiences of ten distance education leaders at four-year, not-for-profit, degree-granting higher education institutions implementing online distance education programs. Using a dominant qualitative approach, this study explored leaders' distance education perspectives, theoretical influences, professional experiences, the selected institutions' demographic information, and the participants' personal characteristics. This study examined the leaders' theoretical perspectives using the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self as one part of the overall research framework and data collection process. Then, using semi-structured interviews and demographic data, this study triangulated the data, garnered in-depth information, and analyzed emerging themes. Finally, this study explored how these factors affected the ways in which distance education leaders design, staff, implement, support and lead their distance education programs.

DISTANCE EDUCATION LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES: A STUDY OF HOW
SELECT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IMPLEMENT AND LEAD
ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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Laura Johnson Hummell

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ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Information and communication technologies have significantly impacted the way in which higher education institutions (HEIs) conduct the business of higher education (Cornford & Pollock, 2003; Ertl, Winkler, & Mandl, 2007; Irlbeck, 2001; Portugal, 2006; Singh & Means, 2000; Timmons, 2002). In particular, in the area of online distance education, increasing competition in the global education marketplace, the desire for more individualized education plans, and growing diversity of learners have led to a change in the way HEIs include and implement online distance education programs in their overall mission (Berge, 2001; Cornford & Pollock; Salmon, 2000; Vrasidas & Zembylas, 2003). No longer ad hoc add-on programs, over time many brick and mortar higher education institutions recognize that the expectations, planning, and implementation of online distance education or e-learning programs are to be considered within the context of each institution's individual characteristics (Beaudoin, 2003; Ertl et al., 2007; Honegger, 1996). According to Ertl et al., as online distance education budgets are facing criticism about accreditation, student motivation, student retention, and student isolation, online distance education leaders are under increased scrutiny. Shoemaker's (1998) assessment that continuing and distance education leadership "is built upon planning for change" (p. 26) emphasized how important it is to have a better understanding of how online distance education leaders handle changes in their respective organizations. Beaudoin also put

emphasis on change in the context of the significant impacts faculty members have on online distance education. Faculty members' willingness to take on new roles in the education market by using emerging technologies in their courses can have profound impacts on the efficacy of online distance education. Most directly, Beaudoin cautioned both faculty and higher education leaders stating that "it seems we have not yet paid adequate attention to new roles required of leaders within those institutions" when it comes to defining how, when, and where to make the changes necessary to move in the direction of more distance education implementation (p. 1).

Contemporary work in this area advises distance education leaders to be aware of the ways to introduce new technologies and online distance education programs to faculty and staff members (Ertl et al., 2007; Irlbeck, 2001; Portugal, 2006; Singh & Means, 2000; Timmons, 2002). This work also signals that leaders' theoretical foundations, prior experiences, and philosophies of teaching and learning directly affect the development and implementation of distance education programs (Beaudoin, 2003; Ertl et al.; Irlbeck; Portugal; Timmons). Thus, for optimal success in design, development, and implementation of online distance education, new teaching and learning theories may be created, the latest teaching and learning approaches may be applied, change theories may be studied carefully, and innovative educational strategies may be initiated as a result of theoretical and practical preparation for online coursework (Beaudoin; Ertl et al.; Irlbeck; Portugal; Timmons).

Statement of the Problem

Gone are the days when distance education was merely a part of a higher education institution that received little attention or focus. According to Peterson's (2005) *Guide to Distance Learning Programs* and the United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (USDE NCES) (2003), over 1,100 higher education institutions implement distance education programs as integral parts of their learning communities. Distance education (DE) programs are at the forefront of many universities' student recruiting and retention efforts (USDE NCES, 2006a). Leaders in many universities are discovering the importance of reaching and teaching a previously overlooked and growing market of students—those people who for numerous reasons cannot travel to campus to attend classes. In fact, in 2004-2005, 86% of 4-year, public degree granting higher education institutions offered distance education courses, compared to 78% in 1997-1998 (USDE NCES, 2004; USDE NCES, 2006b). As shown by this information, distance education courses and programs have become components of many universities' departments and courses.

As a result, universities worldwide want to understand how to develop the positive attributes of online distance education and avoid the negative consequences of poor planning in their online distance education programs and the leadership of such programs. Definitive research studies provide reviews of the published literature upon which frameworks can be built (Salmon, 2000; Simonson & Schlosser, 2003; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2003;

Stephens, 2003; Portugal, 2006). Few formal research studies have been completed that investigate and compare the distinctive leadership perspectives, educational backgrounds, and philosophies of online distance education leaders. In this constantly evolving field, online distance education leaders have certain styles of leadership that allow them to focus their attention in particular ways, inspire others, and enable the evolution and continuation of distance education programs they began (Beaudoin, 2003; Irlbeck, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2003a; Timmons, 2002). This encouragement and motivation of others is a key factor in many institutions' successes, and a lack of it may cause failures (Beaudoin; Collins, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Timmons). However, Marcus (2004) finds "[a]lthough the organizational behavior theorists and researchers have investigated perceived organizational support in many different organizational environments, higher education institutions have rarely been examined" (p. 1) in the context of how the organizational behaviors affect how distance education is integrated into the overall institutional mission. Marcus goes on to reiterate throughout his examination of the scholarship of distance education that more studies about higher education institutions' distance education leadership need to be conducted.

Much more needs to be understood about the institutional and leadership characteristics which contribute to an overall understanding of online distance education program inclusion and implementation institutionally. While studies have discovered that leadership in distance education is a factor that can affect

the overall program, more still needs to be learned about the perspectives and other characteristics that drive these distance education leaders (Irlbeck, 2001; Schauer, 2002; Schwer, 2001; Timmons, 2002). As a result of the increasing impact online distance education is having on higher education institutions, higher education leaders are carefully considering what are the best ways to direct, administer, staff, monitor, and lead distance education programs. By delineating how online distance education leaders have created, built, integrated and maintained their institutions' online distance education programs, this study will examine the theoretical perspectives and experiences of the educators who are leading distance education programs at select higher education institutions.

In order to describe and find common themes, this study looked at artifacts, such as school websites, online distance education brochures, and mission statements. To better understand interview dynamics among the wide variety of experiences, characteristics, and leadership qualities that these online distance education professionals possess, participants' individual and institutional demographic data was examined. Overall a qualitative-dominant approach was used. In this study, distance education programs and their leaders were identified using distance education institutional benchmarks set forth by the Sloan Consortium Quality Framework (Moore, 2005), the American Distance Education Consortium (2003), and the Institute for Higher Education Policy's Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-based Education (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). Because little research exists about how multiple

educational and leadership theories and perspectives impact and influence distance education programs' leaders, this study used an integrated approach to examine and compare multiple leaders' perspectives and backgrounds through the lenses of the leadership theories of transformational leadership and leader-member exchange.

Purpose of the Study

Organizational leadership has been at the center of many articles and studies concerning distance education (Adams, 1999; Irlbeck, 2001; Schauer, 2002; Schwer, 2001; Timmons, 2002). Despite these wide-ranging investigations about the relationships between distance education leaders and their inherent leadership styles, few of these studies have examined the leaders' standpoints using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, multiple leadership theories, and a variety of evaluative instruments.

This study serves to enrich the leadership of online distance education programs by delineating and analyzing the online distance education leaders' experiences, theoretical beliefs, educational backgrounds, and perspectives. Their beliefs and experiences may directly affect the design, development, and implementation of their institutions' online distance education programs as has been indicated by other studies (Schauer, 2002; Schwer, 2001; Shoemaker, 1998; Stephens, 2003; Portugal, 2006). There are many outstanding examples of online distance education programs from which to learn. By discovering what these programs and their leaders have in common, it may become possible to

foster, or emulate, the same theoretical frames and characteristics driving their successes. In the same vein, it may also help other online distance education leaders to avoid the same pitfalls as their predecessors.

Research studies about distance education focus on the institutional characteristics instead of the theoretical backgrounds of the key leaders at their institutions, who are influencing others to adopt distance education (Jackson, 2000; Kinley, 1998; Lamkins, 2004; Stephens, 2003; USDE, 2003; USDE NCES, 2006a). Others focus on distance education leadership at the department chair level, when examining effects on implementation (Schauer, 2002; Schwer, 2001). Still others focus on individual demographics and paper-based instruments like Timmons' (2002) version of the Leadership Practices Inventory. Timmons also called for further examination of potential leadership differences among different genders and perceptions about leadership at various levels from department to college to university.

When deliberating on how to implement this study, the statistics from numerous select four-year, not-for-profit, degree-granting institutions of higher education across the United States were examined. By corroborating how important studying leaders' perspectives and multiple leadership theories is, many of the research studies indicated in their recommendations for future study that there is a need for research to carefully delineate the viewpoints of these leaders (Irlbeck, 2001; Schauer, 2002; Schwer, 2001; Timmons, 2002). In addition, with a newer version of Peterson's (2005) Guide and the online LPI-S

(Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) available, this study used more current data and institutional information to contact distance education leaders and give them a more user-friendly, less invasive online instrument to complete. Using a highly refined online version of Kouzes and Posner's (2003c) Leadership Practices Inventory-Self, many participants in past studies have indicated how much easier it is to complete this inventory compared to the traditional paper-based instrument version. Many studies have focused on one theory or one instrument in order to reach conclusions about the effects leaders have on distance education programs. Many studies call for future research, which analyzes data gathered via multiple theoretical perspectives and methods. This study helps to fulfill those needs.

Significance of the Study

Leadership identification and development is a main concern for many in higher education (Adams, 1999; Irlbeck, 2001). Institutions of higher education are undergoing transformations in the forms of changing student demands, technological innovations, and faculty needs. Consequently, understanding what organizational change is and how to deal with it becomes crucial for online distance education leaders (Irlbeck; Portugal, 2006). Examining organizational change processes may help higher education institutions' leaders adjust their practices by adding to the research concerning the processes and theories surrounding transformations (Cornford & Pollock, 2003). Online distance education, due to the evolving nature of communication and information

technologies, needs effective leaders that can address changes and still provide quality educational programs (Cornford & Pollock; Portugal). Because online distance educators will be working with students continuously during the transformation process, distance education leaders who understand this process and become transformational leaders become more skillful at various types of exchanges to help faculty and students integrate information and communication technologies more effectively and efficiently (Christo-Baker, 2004; Cornford & Pollock).

Numerous people may benefit from the results of the study. Faculty, administrators, and staff involved with the design, development, delivery, and growth of online distance education should find this study's results useful. By tracking and dissecting the views and underlying theoretical perspectives of select online distance education leaders and relating them to leadership theories, this study gathered information about the attitudes, values, beliefs, and experiences that have guided select online distance education leaders. When analyzing the underlying educational and organizational perspectives and practices of select online distance education leaders, through the lenses of transformational leadership and leader-member exchange theories, connections and themes emerge. The connections made between the factors of distance education leadership, organizational change, and informed decision-making should add a much-needed resource to distance education research.

Research Questions

To facilitate an enhanced view of what characteristics are necessary to build online distance education programs, several criteria were established. By adapting standards from the Institute for Higher Education Policy, Sloan Consortium, and American Distance Education Consortium's benchmarks, this study examined the theoretical perspectives of online distance education leaders at select universities. Universities, which are identified by the Carnegie foundation's Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency, offered more than one degree program online, had more than 350 students enrolled in distance education courses, and had been utilizing distance education for eight or more years were included in an institutional database to establish a form from which ten participants would be chosen.

Examining multiple leadership theories can give further guidance for current and future leaders, so this study will develop its theoretical framework around two of those theories. Transformational leadership (Bass, 1985, 1989, 1995; Bass & Steidelmeier, 1998; Burns, 1978, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2002, 2003a) and leader-member exchange theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975) are the cornerstones of this study. Basu and Green (1997) propose that there are only subtle differences in the transformational leadership and leader-member exchange theories. They go on to indicate that understanding both perspectives is valuable to understanding how to function in

given situations and at different levels of an organization. Because of similarities such as how, “Both perspectives focus on the relationship between members and leaders, have been influential bodies of research in leadership, and have direct implications for innovation in organizations,” Basu and Green also insist on examining both theoretical frameworks in conjunction with one another (p. 478).

The central research question of this study is “What are the theoretical perspectives of higher education institutions’ distance education leaders concerning online distance education programs?” The supporting questions are:

1. How do the scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) compare and contrast among distance education leaders?
2. Do distance education leaders at institutions exhibit the characteristics of transformational leadership or leader-member exchange? If so, how? If not, then what is revealed instead?
3. Do demographic differences, such as age, educational experience, and job experience affect theoretical perspectives? If so, how?
4. Do institutional demographic differences, such as community-based need or geographical isolation, affect leaders’ theoretical perspectives about distance education? If so, how?

Limitations of the Study

Due to the constantly evolving nature of distance education especially at universities, this study had several limitations. Defining distance education was a difficult task since each institution has its own policy, procedures, and mission statement concerning distance education. Online distance education was defined for this research study as education courses delivered to off-campus sites via information and communications computer-based technologies including both synchronous and asynchronous communication (USDE, 2003). Since distance education is such a broad category, one of this study's limitations was how to define distance education to avoid studying everything about a very complex and vast topic. Thus, for the purposes of this study, distance education at the university level was defined as those programs that have online courses as their main method of delivery. This, of course, limited this study to a smaller sample of fewer universities. It also involved eliminating some institutions from being included in this study, although in several of the other areas of online distance education they are otherwise well-qualified for inclusion this study. In addition, the study's results are not generalizable for the entire population of universities implementing distance education programs because purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling helped to identify the specific distance education institutions and leaders to be surveyed, interviewed, and analyzed.

When distance education leaders take the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self, the scope of the data gathered may be limited because the leadership

information may be skewed since it is self-reported. How institutions' leaders examine their own practices and perceptions can have a significant effect on what they report. Internal biases are to be expected. People are reluctant to reveal detailed, personal, in-depth information about their ideas and perspectives unless reassured that the results will be held in complete confidentiality (Creswell, 1995, 1998). Also, qualitative research protocols recommend that participants be studied in their natural environment. Because the structure of the data gathering was conducted primarily via distance methods, employing an online survey, phone interviews, and then follow-up e-mails using this strategy may be viewed as a limitation. However, surveying the participants and interviewing them face-to-face was not done because for the most part the participants, being online distance education leaders, their preferences were for the convenience of other forms of communication rather than face-to-face, such as e-mail and the telephone. These forms of communication denote the natural environment within which these participants work. Throughout the use of these communication methods, the confidentiality of individual identities was maintained by using assigned codes. Yet, because of the study's nature, some institutional characteristics may be revealed in order to report the overall findings and do detailed follow-ups.

Definitions of Terms

Because many words and phrases have multiple meanings that may change depending on the context, key terms employed in this research study are defined here in order to establish clear and understandable guidelines.

Distance Education – Any education in which learning occurs at various times and places using numerous technologies other than on a traditional campus at a specific meeting place. Moore defines distance education as any education “that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements” (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 2).

Distance Education Leader – A person at a higher education institution identified as overseeing or directing the distance education courses and/or programs typically identified by Peterson’s (2005) Guide to Distance Learning Programs as “Coordinator of Distance Learning,” “Coordinator of Distributed Learning,” “Coordinator of Distance Education,” “Director of Distance Learning,” “Director of Distance Education,” “Director of eLearning,” “Director of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning,” “Dean of Adult and Continuing Education,” or “Dean of Continuing Studies.”

Leadership – The acts of establishing direction, aligning people, motivating, inspiring, seeking adaptive change, and producing movement and success within an organization (Kotter, 1990; Northouse, 2007).

Leader-Member Exchange Theory – The leadership theory created around the concept that leaders form an inner-circle of people developing special exchange relationships with this small number of people who then carry out specific organizational mission-related goals (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Truckenbrodt, 2000).

Management – According to Fayol (1916), management's primary functions are planning, organizing, staffing, and controlling while providing order and consistency to organizations.

Online Distance Education – Online distance education was defined for this research study as education courses delivered to off-campus sites via computer technologies including both synchronous and asynchronous communication (Moore & Kearsley, 2004; USDE, 2003).

Transformational Leadership – The leadership theory developed by Burns (1978), refined by Bass (1985, 1989, 1990, 1995, 1997, 1998a, 1998b), Bennis and Nanus (1997), and Schein (1997) which describes charismatic, moral, responsible, inspiring, committed, just, and inspirational leaders. According to these authors and Newtzie (2002), leaders who follow the transformational leadership model exemplify the importance of maintaining morality and ethics

within their organizations, while pursuing innovative means to further the organization's mission.

Summary

This exploratory study conducted an in-depth analysis of the influences that affect online distance education leaders' design, delivery, and implementation of online courses and programs at their respective institutions. Using mixed methods, qualitative-dominant methodological approach, the study explored how online distance education leaders have created, built, and maintained their institutions' online distance education programs through periods of great change. It will also explore the differences or balance achieved between management and leadership of online distance education organizations. In so doing, this study examined the theoretical perspectives and experiences of the educators and administrators who are leading distance education programs at select higher education institutions.

Although there are limitations, such as the restricted number of institutions which fit the criteria, many of the inherent weaknesses were decreased by triangulating the data gathered. Using a combination of the individuals' and institutions' demographic information, Leadership Perspectives Inventory-Self data, and themes that emerge from the semi-structured interviews, the result was a comprehensive examination of how theoretical perspectives, experiential influences, educational experiences, institutional characteristics, and

personal characteristics affect distance education leaders and their associated programs.

Overview of the Dissertation

The subsequent chapters cover in depth the literature, quantitative data, and qualitative results garnered during this study. Chapter 2 contains an inclusive review of pertinent literature on related topics including an overview, distance education background and history, characteristics of distance education programs, leadership of distance education and organizational change, leadership theories, and the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c). In order to best address the complexities of leading distance education programs, this qualitative-dominant study gathered data first from quantitative self-evaluations of leadership perspectives and then, more importantly, hold qualitative key informant interviews. Chapter 3 provides detailed descriptions of how the quantitative and qualitative data and information was gathered. The data analyses, information outcomes, and emerging themes are explored in chapter 4. Chapter 5 offers discussion of the resulting issues and themes, conclusions, and recommendations for future research. This final chapter reaches several conclusions from the research outcomes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

By moving from a general understanding of distance education history and background to specific leadership theories and perspectives, this study systematically reviewed existing literature, which addresses these topics in detail. More and more, educational leaders are searching for ways to address the rapidly changing face of education. According to Taylor (2001), “universities with a significant commitment to distance and open education institutions have been at the forefront of adopting new technologies to increase access to education” (p. 2). As the world changes due to the influx of technology so does the face of education—especially online distance education. As a result of these changes, this literature review scrutinized distance education background and history, characteristics of distance education programs, the leadership of distance education and organizational change, leadership theoretical perspectives, and the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2003b, 2003c).

Business and management institutions seem to adapt more rapidly to technological change than institutions of higher education (Collins, 2001; Cornford & Pollock, 2003). As a result, educational leaders may turn to business management and leadership literature to find innovative ways of operating and directing their organizations (Archer, 2005). Researchers (Grimes, 2005; Irlbeck, 2001) have called for research about the factors that influence faculty members in a higher education institution to adopt or refuse to integrate online distance

education techniques into their courses. A summary of the literature examined and related emerging themes concludes the chapter.

Distance Education Background and History

According to numerous sources, distance education in the United States is not new (Gunawardena & Mclsaac, 2002; Taylor, 2001). For over one hundred years in the United States, people have needed, wanted, and received education far from the traditional campuses and classes which meet at a specific time and place. From distance education's correspondence courses delivered by postal mail of the past to the Internet-driven personal computer-based online programs of today, the fact that distance education teachers and learners do not always share the same geographical space has not changed. Yet, the delivery methods have changed considerably (Gunawardena & Mclsaac; Taylor). It's just in the last 25 years that computer-based, or online, distance education has made its impact on higher education institutions (Nasseh, 1997). Specifically, in the case of the American (US) context, distance education has been a prevalent part of American educational history, significantly influencing the way United States citizens are educated (Moore & Kearsley, 2004). Nasseh described how Ticknor encouraged home-based study for women during the late 1800s. Simonson et al. (2003) indicated that American distance education is over 160 years old.

Correspondence study, electronic communications, and distance teaching universities have added unique dimensions to distance education (Simonson et al., 2003). In addition, Simonson and Schlosser (2003) indicated that distance

education in the United States began as correspondence courses and eventually moved into a different arena due to the invention of advanced telecommunication devices, such as communications satellites and personal computing technology. Indeed, distance education delivery methods have changed considerably over time and with particular rapidity over the last two decades (Gunawardena & Mclsaac, 2002; Taylor, 2001).

Distance education implementation has changed significantly since its inception due to innovations in media and our definitions (Simonson et al., 2003). Taylor (2001) traces how distance education procedures and programs have developed and changed through subsequent generations. Identifying the first generation distance education model as “The Correspondence Model” based in print, the second generation model as “The Multi-media Model,” the third as “The Telelearning Model,” the fourth as “The Flexible Learning Model,” and the fifth up-and-coming model as “The Intelligent Flexible Learning Model,” each of these distance education models has progressed based on what delivery technology and resources were (or are) available and used (p. 3) (see Table 1).

Distance education leaders have their own belief systems which may influence how their institutions are implementing distance education, and the models of distance education which are utilized. Taylor (2001) affirmed that “In many universities the development of web-based initiatives is not systemic, but is

Table 1

Taylor's Models of Distance Education

Model by Generation	Delivery Type	Characteristics
First Generation The Correspondence Model	Print	Has time, place, and pace flexibility, but lacks advanced interactive delivery
Second generation The Multi-media Model	Audiotape, Videotape, Computer-based learning, interactive video	Has time, place, and pace flexibility, but lacks advanced interactive delivery in two of the types
Third Generation The Telelearning Model	Audioteleconferencing, videoconferencing, audiographic communication, broadcast TV/radio and audioteleconferencing	Lacks time, place, and pace flexibility overall, but does have advanced interactivity for those students who are present and cooperate
Fourth Generation The Flexible Learning Model	Interactive multimedia online, Internet-based access to WWW resources, computer mediated communication	Has time, place, and pace flexibility and advanced interactivity, but is costly based on its implementation modes
Fifth Generation The Intelligent Flexible Learning Model	Computer mediated communication using automated response systems and campus portal access to institutional processes and resources	Has time, place, and pace flexibility, advanced interactivity while allowing institutional costs to be relatively low since all levels of the institution strategically plan, and integrate the model

Note. Adapted from Taylor (2001) Keynote Address 20th ICDE World Conference

on Open Learning and Distance Education.

often the result of random acts of innovation initiated by risk-taking individual academics” (p. 10). Taylor cautioned distance education leaders to understand the need for strategic planning and all-inclusive institutional integration of distance education while simultaneously understanding specific models, philosophies, and characteristics. In his five models, Taylor discussed at lengths the economic and pedagogical ramifications of understanding the various generations of distance education. As Taylor asserted, the fifth generation is the model toward which institutions strive because they want “to improve the economies of scale but also to improve the pedagogical quality and responsiveness of service to students” (p. 10).

General Distance Education Characteristics

Given the range of modes of distance education, when an educator talks about distance education, without more explanation one can be unsure of what meaning or delivery mode is implied. Any number of circumstances and meanings can arise. One definition from Moore and Kearsley (1996) included any kind of education “that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements” (p. 2). Adding to Moore and Kearsley’s definition, Simonson and Schlosser (2003) recognized how distance education programs are “institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated, and where interactive

telecommunications systems are used to connect learners, resources, and instructors” (p. 1).

Specifically, according to Simonson et al. (2003), “the Internet was the medium of choice for most institutions providing distance education” (p. 14). However, in terms of distance education student groups, little has changed, according to Simonson et al. since “The original target groups of distance education efforts were adults with occupational, social, and family commitments. This remains the primary target group today” (p. 33).

Distance education, according to the United States Distance Learning Association (2006), has become comprehensive, incorporating any form of education that occurs when student and teacher are separated by time and space. Yet, while many agencies are highlighting all-encompassing definitions of distance education, many other institutions focus on online distance education programs. Simonson and Schlosser (2003) asserted that higher education institutions, who are designing, developing, and implementing distance education programs, have changed the way education works fundamentally.

Gunawardena and Mclsaac (2002) ascertained that “Distance education has developed very differently in the United States from the way it has in the rest of the world” (p. 358) and, as a result, American educational and governmental agencies’ policies about distance education development and implementation have lagged far behind other countries’ policies. Distance education programs in the United States, in contrast to those in other countries, are typically presented

by individual states or institutions (Matthews, 1999). Unlike the United States, the British Open University initiated distance education to a substantially larger extent with governmental and educational support across the United Kingdom and beyond its borders (Matthews). Across the United States, this lack of continuity and national guidance has led to the fact that “Most recently, distance educators have been concerned about quality assurance and setting policies that assure quality both from the standpoint of students and faculty (Gunawardena & Mclsaac, p. 378). Thus, as distance education has developed and affected higher education in the United States, the more researchers and educators have explored and challenged the history, definitions, characteristics, theories, and policies that influence it.

Characteristics of Quality Distance Education Programs

According to the American Distance Education Consortium’s (2003) ADEC Guiding Principles for Distance Teaching and Learning, quality distance education programs are guided by certain principles. These principles consist of:

learning experiences with clear purpose and tightly focused outcomes and objectives, actively engaged learners, learning environments making appropriate use of a variety of media, learning environments including problem-based as well as knowledge-based learning, learning experiences supporting interaction and the development of communities of interest, and the practice of distance learning contributing to the larger social

mission of education and training in a democratic society (p. 1-2).

Additionally, the Institute of Higher Education Policy's *Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Internet-based Education* (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000) outlined over 20 different benchmarks that online programs should achieve to be considered excellent examples of distance education. The major categories are institutional support, course development, teaching and learning processes, course structure, student support, faculty support, and evaluation and assessment (Merisotis & Phipps). Each of these categories allowed researchers to better understand and assess whether or not a distance education program of study had value or not. It is also a method by which universities can delineate the characteristics of existing programs, build new programs, and improve their delivery of distance education overall. The Institute of Higher Education Policy's *Quality on the Line* (Merisotis & Phipps) also used certain procedures to determine what institutes they would visit as part of their original study. IHEP's (Merisotis & Phipps) procedures demanded that the higher education bodies "(1) must have substantial experience in distance education; (2) are recognized as among the leaders in distance education; (3) are regionally accredited; and (4) offer more than one degree program via online distance learning" (p. 9-10). These procedures offer potential guidelines for future researchers to use when researching higher education institutions' distance education initiatives and courses of study.

Finally, Moore (2005) emphasizes that online learning provides access to education to people who otherwise would not be able to learn in a traditional environment. Moore, a noted authority on distance education, has authored and presented hundreds of research articles about the processes and theories behind distance education (Penn State University [PSU], 2007). Through the Sloan Consortium, Moore also has released a framework for assessing quality online education programs and outlined the five “quality principles” as “learning effectiveness, cost effectiveness and institutional commitment, access, faculty (employee) satisfaction, and student (customer) satisfaction” (p. 2). Moore insisted that, as a result of establishing these standards, or benchmarks, educational institutions, businesses and governments all should consider these guiding principles when developing and implementing distance education programs.

Distance Education Leadership and Organizational Challenges

Distance education programs and their related technologies introduce new tools and tasks into higher education institutions’ overall structure. With the introduction of these new tools, new hierarchies, roles, positions, activities, and processes are added (Cornford & Pollock, 2003). Yet, at the same time these new features are added, existing hierarchies, roles, positions, activities, and processes may need to be altered or redefined. This potential redefinition may cause organizational change and require faculty and administrators to deal with the demand for clearer policies, roles, and procedures (Agre, 2000; Cornford &

Pollock; Schein, 1997). According to several sources, distance education administration and leadership must be prepared for handling organizational change regularly (Schauer, 2002; Schwer, 2001). Portugal (2006) states that:

Leaders in distance learning must constantly be aware of how to adjust, evaluate, and assess the validity of programs, content, and emerging technologies to remain competitive and viable in this new society.

Educational leaders will benefit from collaboration with business and industry leaders and vice versa” (p. 1).

Finding mentors, allies, and supporters for any distance education endeavor poses special problems for distance education leaders (Portugal, 2006; Thompson, 2006). White (1997) also affirmed that the most effective future leaders will learn to capitalize on the successes and failures of their predecessors. In addition, White surmised that future leaders will need to lead others through institutional changes. White goes on to recommend that leaders take advantage of learning from the past, while maintaining enough flexibility to take risks and utilize emerging trends and technologies effectively.

With the ever-increasing demands for accountability and standardization, the function of technology in education in the United States stands to be affected greatly by educational reform and organizational changes (Singh & Means, 2000). Similarly, Gregorian (2005) looks closely at the fundamental issues and organizational challenges affecting every college campus. These include:

1. The information-glut (hereafter referred to as “info-glut”) and the fragmentation of knowledge;
2. the curriculum crisis, including the liberal arts;
3. the commercialization of research;
4. the evolution of a two-tier system of faculty, with full-time and part-time members;
5. the concerns about quality, especially in schools of education; and
6. the changes that distance learning and e-learning may bring (Hersh & Merrow, 2005, pp. 77-78).

His examination of these issues, many of which directly affect distance education, indicate a need for distance education leaders to increase their awareness of change at all levels of an organization. Gregorian cautioned educational leaders to remember that while “distance learning and electronic learning offer major benefits...an education requires following a well-constructed curriculum of study” (p. 94).

Beaudoin (2003) points out some specific characteristics that a distance education leader needs to create conditions for innovative change. These characteristics include enabling people and their respective institutions to change, creating and sharing a vision, moving in conjunction with its subsequent course of action, and contributing to the supervision and execution. While these traits are inherent and understood to be main characteristics of transformational

leadership, the methods of applying them to the diverse situations distance education leaders encounter are complex (Newtzie, 2002).

Changes due to educational reform, accreditation, and creation of national standards will make it necessary for distance educators and administrators to prepare for broad and sweeping changes in many areas of an educational organization (Eaton, 2001). Change behaviors among members of educational institutions undergoing transformation are researched to better understand and adjust for managing future changes (Agre, 2000; Cornford & Pollock, 2003). Change issues can include, but are not limited to, new delivery methods, new leadership, students, faculty, mission, and facilities, all of which ultimately affect how well distance educators work (Eaton). Because distance educators must continue to instruct others during a time of change, the school's distance education leadership must understand the change process to help its members' cope and ultimately achieve their mission (Christo-Baker, 2004).

Many changes result from integrating distance education initiatives into an existing and thoroughly ingrained university culture. Cornford and Pollock (2003) insist that little is to be gained if institutions focus on immediate gains and losses. Rather, "[t]he focus should be on the processes by which an institution and technology mutually shape each other (Cornford & Pollock, p. 107). These transformations may take many forms including the alteration of methodology, delivery, leadership, faculty, students, philosophy, mission, or facilities. When any of these changes occur, an institution and its members as a whole exhibit

certain behaviors. Sometimes, these changes occur gradually, giving an institution's members a chance to adjust. At other times the changes may be abrupt and cause the members to react accordingly. The timelines and the associated behaviors usually follow patterns that researchers have been tracking and analyzing for decades. Yet, while researching these complex subjects, time and again the researchers remind the reader to understand that change will not now or ever be a simple process (Kotter, 1998). All educational organizations' change processes ultimately involve human beings, and because human beings are complex creatures, we must then assume that introducing and sustaining change will be a thought-provoking, complicated, and occasionally messy feat (Kearney & Hyle, 2003).

Many pieces of research literature indicated how crucial it is to understand the intricacies of how change affects organizations and their members (Kearney & Hyle, 2003; Zell, 2003). Because the mission of many higher education institutions utilizing distance education involves preparing people for lifelong learning and their chosen vocational pursuits and using a wide variety of educational technology, change is inevitable (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges [ACCJC/WASC], 2005; Eaton, 2001). Change is an unremitting part of any educational entity and, as a result, educational institutions must be prepared to deal with numerous events (Eaton). These events can include adjusting curriculum, obliging ever-changing workplace requirements, introducing new

technologies, accommodating differences in learners' needs, improving or adding to the curriculum, hiring new faculty and staff, and altering mission and procedures (Eaton). Because faculty support can have a substantial influence on distance education programs' efficacy, distance education leaders should possess an understanding of the leadership of change processes (Christo-Baker, 2004, p. 251).

Zell (2003) researched organizational change and educational reform by scrutinizing the change process that occurred at a large public research university. Zell indicated that professionals like professors hesitate to "make fundamental changes in their work practices...because they typically have invested huge amounts of time and resources into their careers and are guided by entrenched beliefs and values established during years of indoctrination and training" (p. 74). Zell encouraged leaders of change movements to look beyond the resistance to change to the cultures, reasons and people behind it.

Kearney and Hyle (2003) analyzed how emotionally charged the change process was in an educational institution when profound changes occurred. Tracing the patterns that participants experienced, they offered suggestions for how educational leaders may prepare their staffs for impending changes. Knowing that people will inevitably reach the denial, isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance stages (Kübler-Ross, 1969), educational leaders or change managers can assist the other members of the organizations. Through careful communication at all levels, openness about the reasons for change, and

establishment of realistic timelines for the processes to occur, leaders illustrate how important all people in an organization are to successful and sustainable change. According to several researchers, without sustained success and ongoing support for the new factors or change agents, failure is imminent and nothing has been altered (Kearney & Hyle; Zell, 2003). These changes are especially predominant in online distance education due to the continuously evolving technologies that are used, such as personal computers, course management programs, and operating systems. Kearney and Hyle recommend that those people who are overseeing or leading a group through a time of change need to be aware of the energy people expend going through the change and grief cycles because not doing so may lead to frustration and mission failure that could be easily avoided. While these changes may vary from institution to institution, Kearney and Hyle illustrated how facilitating a difficult process can be managed by dividing it into understandable and controllable elements.

Many researchers have viewed and subsequently developed differing methods on how to deal with change (Bates, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Rogers, 2003). According to Bridges and Mitchell (2000), the transformational nature of implementing distance education at an institution of higher learning affects how administrators and leaders should prepare to deal with the stages of change behaviors that they, their faculty and their students may experience. The reasons for change vary widely depending upon the organization's mission. In education, though, change occurs as a result of the introduction of technological

innovations, changes in the institution's learners' needs, changes in leadership, or changes in mission (Bates; Fullan; Rogers). Since all of these changes are an integral part of distance education design, development, and delivery, distance education administrators and leaders will deal with them at some point (Bates; Fullan).

As a result of addressing these changes, educational administrators and leaders may use more than one behavioral or leadership approach to design, develop, communicate, and implement changes in their organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The understanding of how individuals in an organization react to change has grown exponentially as education, business, and industry have realized that change affects both the institutions' people and profits (Bolman & Deal, p. 124). The term "profits" may take on many meanings in these different contexts, manifesting themselves as more money in business, increased productivity in industry, or increased student enrollment in education.

In order to separate the business and social arenas, Collins (2001) offered key examples of great social and humanitarian organizations dealing with change. The groups he studied were able to hold onto their enduring principles while simultaneously embracing evolutionary progress. Possessing seemingly contradictory and elemental goals is what causes many great education institutions, such as Collins' examples of Harvard and Teach for America, to produce lasting contributions despite change. The people in these organizations know how difficult it is to change others. Yet, these effective change leaders are

able to perform a delicate balancing act of understanding an organization's culture and history, protecting its members, and motivating people to generate newer and better results.

Since online distance education is pushing educators into "emerging leadership roles" there are certain characteristics that have been proven to be essential to success (Portugal, 2006). Portugal insists that "Leaders in distance learning must constantly be aware of how to adjust, evaluate, and assess the validity of programs, content, and emerging technologies to remain competitive and viable in this new society" (p. 1). Many authors encourage embracing change as an inevitable part of being an institutional distance education program leader (Irlbeck, 2001; Portugal; Timmons, 2000). In addition, Bridges and Mitchell (2000) suggest that innovation means outside changes, and internal transition occurs while attempting change. According to the authors, change via innovations is external to the organization while transition is internal and ultimately affects the people in an organization and takes longer because people need time to adjust.

Bridges and Mitchell (2000) also mentioned coaching for change, which is described as a leader's capacity to bring the members' fears and concerns to the surface quickly, to hear what people are really saying about their parts in the change process, and to gain personal insight and awareness of the process through others' perspectives. If one method is not working, leaders are told to choose another (Drucker & Senge, 2001). Seeking collaborative assistance is

highly suggested in solving problems, focusing on developmental features, and understanding implementation and diffusion studies. In all of these methods, collaboration is necessary to move into and through the implementation phase successfully. Adoption and diffusion literature have carefully examined how people or society adjust to changes (Hall & Loucks, 1979; Rogers, 2003).

There is a certain amount of symmetry in what Zell, Bridges and Mitchell, Moore, Fullan, and Bates are describing. Issues such as those that Zell, Bridges and Mitchell, Moore, Fullan, and Bates have raised in their theoretical and research literature mirror many of the benchmarks established by the Institute for Higher Education Policy, Sloan Consortium, and American Distance Education Consortium. Maintenance and support are the keys to sustainability and are reflected throughout the literature (Bates, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Moore, 2005). Educational leaders should be ready to deal with change issues and altered behaviors for many months and even years after the initial processes are complete (Agre, 2000; Cornford & Pollock, 2003).

Throughout the literature, whenever researchers discussed organizational change, they reiterated the fact that organizations are only reflections of the people working and/or living within their structure. While several of these examples and research pieces were business sources, numerous outstanding examples come from the social and humanitarian segments of society. Throughout the implementation and sustaining processes, careful planning, appropriate communication, timely intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and motivation

at all levels from the top down and bottom up are at the center of all of these change management methods.

Pieces of research-based literature from Bolman and Deal (2003), Collins (2001), Goodman (2002), Kearney and Hyle (2003), Rogers (2003), and Zell (2003) assist educational leaders about to go through or currently going through any major organizational transformations. When managing change, distance education administrators and other higher education institutions' leaders awareness of resistance, fear, and grieving in the face of change is of utmost importance (Bates, 2000; Fullan, 2001). More than just wanting to change, but also understanding the organizational culture, people, grieving cycle, and amount of time it takes will help distance education leaders achieve successful and sustainable transformations (Bates; Bridges & Mitchell, 2000; Fullan).

Leadership Theoretical Perspectives

An understanding and foundation in multiple educational and leadership theories can be useful for education leaders in their quest to build successful distance education programs (Jonassen, 1996; Moore & Kearsley, 2004; Northouse, 2007; Portugal, 2006; Simonson & Schlosser, 2003). However, a need for more research studies about how leadership theories relate to distance education still exists today in spite of the fact that distance education in one form or another has been around for over 160 years (Simonson & Schlosser). Rather than creating a new distance education leadership theory, bridging the gap between existing educational leadership theories and distance education

leadership needs to be done. In terms of distance education leadership theory and research, Portugal stated:

Emerging leaders in distance education not only must be transformational leaders but must also become situational leaders who are innovative visionaries that can motivate, energize, inspire, and induce others to move forward while fully articulating a shared and competitive distance learning agenda (p. 9)

In the current educational culture many distance education leaders need to understand and adapt their theoretical perspectives and pedagogical models as emerging technologies change the face of distance education (Portugal, 2006). Since leadership is a factor in the continuing success of many distance education programs, higher education leaders carefully consider how, when, and where implementing distance education programs should occur (Bates, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Portugal). Distance education leaders can apply many of the leadership and business management theories that have been developed and refined throughout the last two decades (Bass, 1985, 1989, 1990, 1995, 1997, 1998a, 1998b; Bennis & Nanus, 1997; Burns, 1978; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Schein, 1997). Examination of more than one leadership theory is useful because leading people is more complicated and involved than any one theory can explain (Basu & Green, 1997; Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2004; Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999).

People can also view leadership through the numerous interpretations and theories about why leaders and followers act in the ways that they do. Because

of these inquiries, leaders were questioned about the attributes that make some organizations excel while others do not (Collins, 2001). The people who lead companies discuss how important understanding the intricacies of leading all different kinds of people is to an organization's overall success. Thus, many researchers seek out explanations about leadership styles and principles.

Distance education leadership can be comprised of a multitude of characteristics with individuals possessing more than one notion of what it takes to be an effective leader (Bates, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Portugal, 2006). People's perceptions can simultaneously consider leadership as an attribute one can learn, as an exchange between peers, subordinates, and superiors, and as an authority wielding power (Jung et al., 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Examining multiple leadership theories can give further guidance for current and future leaders, so this study will develop its theoretical framework around two of those theories. Two leadership theories, transformational leadership (Bass, 1995; Bass & Steidelmeier, 1998; Burns, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2003a; Northouse, 2007) and leader-member exchange theory (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Northouse) are the cornerstones of this study. Understanding multiple perspectives is vital when determining how to function in given situations and at different levels of an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Northouse). Finding a way to expound upon the more simplistic and popular leadership approaches and focus on the complexities present in theoretical approaches are the goals (Northouse).

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership is the focus of many books and articles written concerning ethics and morality when leading people in organizations (Bass & Steidelmeier, 1998; Burns, 1978, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2002, 2003a; Northouse, 2007). Bass and Steidelmeier discussed how transformational leaders are typically charismatic, motivational, intellectual, and considerate. In addition, Dixon (1998) discovered several characteristics of transformational leaders that lead to positive actions, such as self-confidence, integrity, and honesty that ultimately influence the leader's behavior.

These concepts distinguish between transformational leadership and transactional leadership, which reflects the actions that are merely appropriate for the immediate circumstance (Bass, 1997; Bass & Steidelmeier; Irlbeck, 2001). These same authors described transformational leadership as a theory that a leader can follow consistently over time (Bass, 1997; Bass & Steidelmeier; Irlbeck). Tracey and Hinkin (1998), who associated their research with that of Bass and Avolio (1994), observed that characteristics of transformational leadership follow clear themes. The themes emphasize the differences between leaders who exhibit transformational, transactional, and leader-member exchange characteristics. The first characteristic of transformational leaders is questioning the status quo and promoting unconventional ideas and philosophies. The areas of problem solving and decision-making also take on different views in transformational leadership than in the leader-member

exchange framework. Another theme that Tracey and Hinkin connected with the work of Bass and Avolio is the concentration on professional development. This theme blends the needs of the individual with the importance of being a strong role model. The leader emphasizes self-development and offers constructive criticism to improve performance. The transformational leader wants others to develop into leaders themselves. Those leaders who are operating within the transactional or leader-member exchange frames want the status quo to remain unchanged and do not encourage others to develop professionally unless the people are members of an elite inner-circle.

Burns (1978) reflected on the importance of having not only focused leadership, as in the case of transactional leadership, but moral, ethical, and transformational leadership as well. Burns (1978) stated that

The ultimate test of moral leadership is its capacity to transcend the claims of multiplicity of everyday wants and needs and expectations, to respond to the higher levels of moral development, and to relate leadership behavior—its roles, choices, style, commitments—to a set of reasoned, relatively explicit values (p. 46)

He also articulated that the difference between transactional leadership and transformational leadership was that in transactional leadership “A leadership act took place, but it was not one that binds leader and follower together in a mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose” (p. 20). Since “Distance education will affect every area of academic study as well as current business training

models,” distance education leaders and faculty members are “becoming funnels of knowledge, servicing via transformational leadership, and by having the ability to operate within complex organizational structures” (Portugal, 2006, p. 10).

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

When Bass and Avolio (1994) characterized transformational leadership theory others comparatively investigated the leader-member exchange theory (Basu & Green, 1997). Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory explained how leaders’ relationships might work on different levels due to the level of responsibility and interaction between the leader and other members of an organization (Basu & Green; Jung et al., 2004; Tierney et al., 1999). In accordance with what Graen and his co-authors (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) have stated over the years, leader-member exchange theory proposes that leaders function according to various supervisory restrictions. Because of the restrictions of time, professional responsibilities, and authority, leaders must be careful about choosing whom they allow to become parts of their inner circles. Thus, they cautiously establish discerning relationships with the other members in their organizations.

Comparing and contrasting leader-member exchange theory and transformational leadership theory can reveal significant findings that have an impact on how leaders develop and implement distance education programs (Basu & Green, 1997; Jung et al., 2004; Tierney et al., 1999) because they allow for distinctions within institutional frameworks (see Table 2). Although there are

Table 2

Comparison and Contrast of LMX and TL Theories

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory	Transformational Leadership (TL) Theory
Also known as the vertical dyad theory	Also known as moral and mission-based leadership
Assumes the leader treats outer circle subordinates differently than peers and inner circle subordinates	Assumes that the leader acts in moral, ethical, and equitable ways with all members of an organization
Relationships evolve carefully over long periods of time, yet the inner and outer circles usually remain the same	Relationships also change over time, but more quickly than in LMX with all members of the organization assuming leadership roles
Want subordinates who aren't in the privileged inner-circle to stay the same and maintain the status quo	Want others to view work from new perspectives and improve the organization by becoming leaders in their own right
Generate awareness of the mission via top down communications	Generate awareness of the mission via concentric circles of communication

Note. Adapted from Basu and Green (1997), Jung et al. (2004), Northouse

(2007), and Tierney et al. (1999).

many similarities connecting the two theories, the interactions between leaders and subordinates and how organizations or educational institutions and their members act on or react to the inclusion of new programs vary widely due to institutional characteristics and restrictions. Jung et al. insist that transformational leaders allow their subordinates to contemplate solutions and create new ideas by giving them the motivation they need intellectually and emotionally. Similarly, leader-member exchange among an organization's members can generate innovations. The differences between the two theories exist in how the innovations and communications reach the highest echelons of an organization (see Table 2).

While leader-member exchange has a tendency to focus on the affiliations between the leader and the members of an inner circle, transformational leadership focuses on the relationships formed between the leader and all members of the organization. Altering the fundamental characteristics of any organization is no easy task. Yet with a more complete understanding of the inner-workings of an organization's behaviors and leadership styles, leaders can create atmospheres of acceptance, morality, and ethical deeds. By comprehending both theoretical perspectives, Portugal (2006) states "one who can navigate across a multitude of frames will be most promising among distance education leaders" (p. 4).

From the comparison of these leadership theories (see Table 2), it becomes more apparent that transformational leadership and leader-member

exchange theories' characteristics may have profound effects on how distance education leaders design, develop, staff, and implement distance education programs at their respective institutions. Bolman and Deal (2003) ascertain that leading via "multiple perspectives" gives a leader more than one behavioral, philosophical, and theoretical model from which to work (p. 5). They refer to this process as "Reframing," which "requires an ability to understand and use multiple perspectives, to think about the same thing in more than one way" (p. 5).

Bolman and Deal (2003) assert, "Like surfers, leaders must ride the waves of change" and "Commitment to both durable values and elastic strategy involves a paradox" (p. 433). Finding the balance in perspective and approach is not easy. Their perspectives affect how they integrate and communicate their programs within their institutions overall. Since "Educational structures can no longer exist as static environments and must adopt business sensibilities to remain competitive", theoretical perspectives from business and leadership are valuable to distance education leaders (Portugal, 2006, p. 10). Pettigrew (1988) also maintains that transformational leadership is an integral part of facilitating any type of strategic alteration to an organization's mission.

Leadership Practices Inventory

By focusing on identification of transformational leadership and leader-member exchange characteristics, Kouzes and Posner (2002) delineate five practices and ten commitments of leadership. For over two decades they have been developing and refining their leadership theories and assessment tools in

order to help leaders understand what their strength and weaknesses are. The content of their studies and related books and articles offer a theoretical foundation for many leadership programs and leaders around the country. They have a research base of over 70,000 public and private sector leaders with whom they have refined their leadership practices and inventories over the last two decades. Supported by these studies, Kouzes and Posner have determined what leaders do to assist others in fostering accomplishment among their organizations. They have also made proposals for how to encourage growth and creativity by outlining the key propositions, which include having leaders who:

1. Model the way
2. Inspire a shared vision
3. Challenge the process
4. Enable others to act
5. Encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 22).

The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) is at the core of Kouzes and Posner's leadership preparation workshops and allows leaders to self-assess their own strengths and weaknesses in terms of the five areas listed above. It has been continually tested and redesigned to ensure reliability, validity and consistency (Jurow, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 1988, 1993; Leong, 1995; Zagorsek, Stough, & Jaklic, 2006). Timmons (2002) found that after analyzing the Leadership Practices Inventory's reliability using Cronbach's Alpha test that the subsections within the inventory were relatively reliable. In addition,

Timmons' study offered unique insights into the actual and ideal leadership practices of distance education leaders ($N = 38$), which were evaluated via the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). Timmons also uses ANOVA to show that there were no significant differences in the actual and ideal leadership practices between leaders at different institutional types. This means that these results can help further a better, general understanding of the leadership characteristics of successful distance education leaders (Timmons).

Also, Timmons' (2002) demographic data yielded some significant information showing that many of the distance education leaders surveyed did not have a terminal degree and had fewer than ten years experience. Other sources discovered that distance education flourishes at lower levels in the typical university hierarchy after using the LPI-S to evaluate the department chairs' and influential faculty members' roles in the inclusion of distance education (Schwer, 2001; Shoemaker, 1998). The implication is that much of distance education leadership occurs at the grassroots level of higher education institutions with specific professors, students, courses, programs, or departments demanding online educational opportunities well before they are available university-wide.

Summary

This chapter reviewed areas in the literature that are related to distance education leadership. These areas included distance education background and history, characteristics of online distance education programs, leadership of

distance education and organizational change, leadership theories, and the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c). In reviewing the literature on the characteristics and background definitions of distance education, discoveries were made about why and how many institutions have widely varying explanations about what distance education is at their institutions. As a result, carefully delineating what distance education is and what type this study will cover is essential. For this study, online distance education is the focus. This literature review also explored the history of distance education in the United States specifically. As communication technologies evolve, distance education will continue to progress and adjust to future technological inventions and innovations.

When examining the issues of distance education and organizational change and the leadership of organizational change, much became known about how leaders help the members of their organizations move through the change processes in various ways and how leaders facilitate positive transformations. The literature exposed how important it is to understand, manage and lead people through change, especially in light of the rapid transformations of distance education's emerging technologies and modes.

The characteristics of distance education programs made a difficult assessment process easier to comprehend and apply to this study. By following the IHEP, Sloan Consortium, and American Distance Education Consortium's benchmarks for quality online distance education programs, selecting and

studying institutions that meet these criteria was more distinct. Studying two main leadership theories also helped form a professional and theoretical foundation for surveying and interviewing select leaders of online distance education institutions. Transformational leadership theory highlighted factors, such as the dynamics of professional relationships, change agents, concentric circles of communication skills, ethics, and morality. In a different light, leader-member exchange also focused on understanding a different type of professional relationships through maintaining the status quo and developing an inner-circle. As a result of studying these two theories, choosing an existing evaluative instrument was facilitated. Because of a connection, Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory was selected for use with a follow-up, semi-structured interview protocol. Reviewing the Leadership Practices Inventory and research studies that had utilized that instrument in the past demonstrated how to best implement the inventory and analyze the data gathered from its use.

Conclusion

Several themes emerged from examining the literature. Many previous studies focused on smaller groups of people or a single theory in order to reach conclusions about distance education programs and their leaders (Adams, 1999; Irlbeck, 2001; Schauer, 2002; Schwer, 2001; Timmons, 2002). Typically, these past studies did not use a mixed method approach focusing on gathering and analyzing data only through quantitative, or statistical, means. Also, in much of

the literature, business models are prevalent in the subjects of leadership and change.

Emerging themes included:

1. understanding the history of distance education is crucial to comprehending its place in any given institution,
2. identifying the characteristics of quality distance education programs,
3. using multiple perspectives can lend a valuable tool to a distance education leader's inventory,
4. looking carefully at the people behind the changes in an organization is essential to knowing how to best navigate the changes that are inevitable in distance education as technology advances,
5. considering vigilantly how the changes will affect all of an organization's members,
6. understanding the cycles people may encounter during major transformations,
7. communicating vision and necessary changes cautiously and continuously,
8. involving all people who will be affected, and
9. realizing that successful alteration of an organization and its members does not take place in days, but rather over months, years, and even decades, using a subtle blend of two or more educational and leadership perspectives or theoretical frameworks.

Knowledge like this allows all involved to react with the knowledge that strategizing more effectively can help to effectively design, develop, and manage the changes of online distance education. When directing online distance education programs, higher education institutions leaders must be aware of more than just their programs, but also the history, organizational culture, the people, cycles, multiple theories, and the realistic amount of time it takes to achieve rigorous and sustainable distance education programs. The thoughts that arose from this examination of the literature were: (1) if leaders' experiences and educational backgrounds reflect basic theoretical tenets and (2) if understanding distance education and educational theory have impacts on online distance education programs and their leaders.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to garner an assessment of the theoretical perspectives, educational experiences, professional experiences, and institutional characteristics of online distance education leaders at four-year, degree-granting higher education institutions. This was done by exploring and assessing the implementation and leadership of online distance education programs at ten select institutions. The research methods employed were mixed methods with a qualitative-dominant approach. Although primarily qualitative in nature and scope, some quantitative analysis was used to underscore the comparisons and contrasts between individual and institutional demographic data. This chapter describes the study's design, participant selection procedures, data gathering, and methods of analysis. While several studies have focused on identifying the characteristics and skills that leadership programs for distance education leaders must emphasize (Adams, 1999; Irlbeck, 2001; Timmons, 2002), this qualitative study delved into a more detailed and precise examination using qualitative data gathering to supplement the individual and institutional demographic data information. The leaders' leadership styles, perspectives on distance education, the factors the leaders and their programs have in common, the factors that differ, and the influences of the communities surrounding the respective institutions' campuses were under scrutiny in this qualitative assessment.

Study Design

The central research question of this study was “What are the theoretical perspectives of higher education institutions’ distance education leaders concerning online distance education programs?” The supporting questions were:

1. How do the scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) compare and contrast among distance education leaders?
2. Do distance education leaders at institutions exhibit the characteristics of transformational leadership or leader-member exchange? If so, how? If not, then what is revealed instead?
3. Do demographic differences, such as age, educational experience, and job experience affect theoretical perspectives? If so, how?
4. Do institutional demographic differences, such as community-based need or geographical isolation, affect leaders’ theoretical perspectives about distance education? If so, how?

To explore these questions, this study utilized a mixed-method, qualitative-dominant approach (Creswell, 1995; 1998; 2002). Given the complex relationships between what factors and issues are known concerning online distance education leaders and what is unknown, this approach is particularly valuable (Creswell, 1995; 1998; 2002). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stated “The goal of mixed methods research is not to replace either of these

approaches but rather to draw from strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies” (p. 14).

Throughout the twenty-year development and refinement of their survey instruments and numerous leadership inventories, Kouzes and Posner (1987, 1988, 1993) have continued to improve the Leadership Practices Inventory. According to Zagorsek et al. (2006), “An instrument’s measurement precision is crucial for the quality of the inferences and decisions based on that instrument, whether the purpose is leader assessment in organizations or academic theory building” (p. 180). Their assessment of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, 2003a) revealed “that the LPI appears to be a moderately reliable instrument” (p. 190). Other studies that had utilized Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer (LPI-O) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003b) and Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S), (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) found it to be a reliable and valid mechanism for identifying key leadership traits (Adams, 1999; Irlbeck, 2001; Timmons, 2002). A substantial amount of literature exists and the variables and issues surrounding the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) are known to support an understanding of leadership characteristics, it will be used to gather leadership perspective and demographic data on the selected participants. This instrument has been used and refined for over two decades. The instrument was used for identification of key beliefs, perspectives, and other characteristics that online leaders may share or to highlight the differences among these participants.

Participant Selection

The participant selection technique employed in this research design is purposive sampling (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling is used when potential study participants have specific characteristics that deem their participation particularly valuable. This type of sampling allowed the researcher to facilitate comparisons at the exclusion of being able to generalize the information for the entire population in question. Purposive sampling is appropriate in this research design as the number of online university distance education programs within the United States are a specific and relatively small population ($N=60$). The specific criteria for inclusion are taken from the IHEP 2000 report entitled *Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-based Distance Education*. The conditions the IHEP (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000) established in their benchmarks document, which must have existed in order for the institution to be included, were that they:

1. must have substantial experience in distance education;
2. are recognized as among the leaders in distance education;
3. are regionally accredited; and
4. offer more than one degree program via online distance learning (p. 2).

Additional characteristics for the purpose of this study would be accreditation that is both appropriate and recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, 2006) and have a minimum of 350 students enrolled during the current school year in all their courses combined. Peterson's

(2005) Guide to Distance Learning Programs and Peterson's (2006) Guide to Online Learning were consulted to gather the desired contact and institutional information from more than 1,100 higher education entities. Chosen participants were sent an initial letter requesting their participation (see Appendix C).

The participant-institutions that fit the established criteria have been included in a database (see Appendix A). It included those institutions who:

1. are four-year, degree-granting institutions of higher education
2. have accreditation that is both appropriate and recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, 2006)
3. have a minimum of 350 students enrolled during the current school year in all their distance education courses combined
4. offer at least two distance education degree-granting programs
5. have at least ten years experience in higher education institutional distance education program delivery

Then, ten institutions were randomly selected using a random number generating database programming component from all those included in the database.

By addressing the combined components that the Sloan Consortium (Moore, 2005), the IHEP (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000), the Peterson's (2005) Guide to Distance Learning Programs, and Peterson's (2006) Guide to Online Learning have created, this study can use certain specific components to identify ten leaders to complete the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c), demographic questions, and a semi-structured interview. These

components include overall institutional support, course and program design and development, clearly delineated course and program learning outcomes, student support and satisfaction, faculty support and satisfaction, course and program implementation, and ongoing evaluation and revision.

As distance education leaders are the units of analysis, from these sixty education programs a leader, an administrator with primary responsibility for distance education programs, was selected for input into an Excel dataset. More specifically, a distance education leader is typically classified as a person at a higher education institution identified as overseeing or directing the distance education courses and/or programs. Their respective titles at a given university may include, according to Peterson's (2005) Guide to Distance Learning Programs, "Coordinator of Distance Learning," "Coordinator of Distributed Learning," "Coordinator of Distance Education," "Director of Distance Learning," "Director of Distance Education," "Director of eLearning," "Director of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning," "Dean of Adult and Continuing Education," or "Dean of Continuing Studies." From this grouping, ten were selected for key informant interviews which are discussed in greater detail below.

If they agreed to participate, institutional and community data and results from the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) were gathered (see Appendix B). The Kouzes and Posner (2003c) Leadership Practices Inventory-Self instrument is available in Appendix B and is discussed further in the following section. If no response was returned in a timely manner, a

follow-up letter (see Appendix D) was sent. Completed LPI-S results were entered into a Microsoft Works database and spreadsheet. Company-designed software that can be integrated into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was also used to analyze the data and generate graphs, tables, and charts as needed. Non-respondents were sent a follow-up letter (see Appendix D) approximately one week after the initial contact was made.

If any of the initial ten randomly selected individuals did not respond, the additional leaders were contacted as needed. Finally, key informant semi-structured interviews were conducted (see Appendix E) with one online distance education leader at each of the ten institutions for a total of ten case studies. Using a semi-structured interview process, information about leadership styles, distance education perspectives, institutional similarities, and the communities' influence were collected in a qualitative format.

Instrumentation

The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self

Over the past twenty years, Kouzes and Posner (2003c) have continued to develop, refine and improve the Leadership Practices Inventory. Since “[a]n instrument’s measurement precision is crucial for the quality of the inferences and decisions based on that instrument, whether the purpose is leader assessment in organizations or academic theory building” (Zagorsek et al., 2006, p. 180), it is important that any instrument used in this vein meets basic standards of validity and reliability. The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) has

developed a reputation of being a valid and reliable instrument (see Appendix B; Adams, 1999; Irlbeck, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2003a; Timmons, 2002). Several researchers' assessment of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) revealed "that the LPI appears to be a moderately reliable instrument" (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 190; Adams, 1999; Irlbeck, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2003a; Timmons, 2002). Other studies utilizing the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S), (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) found it to be a reliable and valid mechanism for identifying key leadership traits (Adams; Irlbeck; Timmons; Zagorsek et al., 2006).

The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self Third Edition (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) was developed to assess and analyze leadership practices and characteristics and for educational purposes initially in the field of business, but has been readily adapted to analyze leadership practices in numerous fields including education (Adams, 1999; Irlbeck, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2003a; Timmons, 2000). Because Kouzes and Posner's (2003c) Leadership Practices Inventory-Self Third Edition reflects on transformational leadership theory and outlines how to assess leadership style and guide actual practice using this self-awareness, it was used. To do so, this study used the data gathered from an administration of Kouzes and Posner's (2003c) Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) with permission from the original authors. The LPI-S was chosen because the five practices for leadership that it highlights in conjunction fit within the theoretical foundations and framework of this study. The online version of the

LPI-S utilizes the same question and answer format as the paper-based LPI-S (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) which is easier to use and more quickly returns feedback to both the researcher and study participant.

Data collection. Upon receiving Institutional Review Board approval, each participant received a cover letter explaining the nature of the study and why participation is strictly voluntary and confidential (see Appendix C). Each also received a link to an online version of the LPI-Self and demographic data gathering instrument to complete which provided the researcher with individual and group data and analyses. The researcher also offered to send a report in the future that summarized the key factors and emerging themes that better delineated the characteristics of online distance education programs and their leadership. Follow-up letters, e-mails or phone calls (see Appendix D) were made to those individuals who had not completed the initial LPI-Self. Once they had completed the LPI-S, the ten participants were contacted for a additional qualitative follow-up phone semi-structured interviews.

Next, a review of institutional data was garnered concerning the select institutions' distance education enrollments, student characteristics, faculty characteristics, and leader characteristics. This examination of these facts created a deeper understanding of how their respective leaders' practices affected the overall distance education agenda. Participant demographic data, such as age, gender, years of experience in distance education, years of formal education, and income levels, was collected because of the potential effects on

the distance education leaders' perspectives. Then, key informant interviews, were utilized to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the leaders' interaction within the institution and the inner-workings of institutions implementing thriving distance education programs.

Data analysis. The LPI-Self has accompanying software that allows the user to analyze the data gathered. External influences, such as geographic isolation, that may shape an institution's distance education success were examined using tables to visually represent the descriptive statistics, which are composed of composite mean scores for the variables considered to be influential factors, such as LPI-S scores, age, or years of experience.

Key Informant Interviews

Numerous sources have noted the value of using a qualitative method when studying the intricacies involved in higher education institutional leadership (Creswell, 1995, 1998, Gay, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The complexities of online distance education programs within the universities' overall organizational schemes require qualitative analysis in order to discover the intricate details and characteristics that affect the programs' design, delivery, and implementation methods. In addition, qualitative approaches can create a richer, more in-depth examination of the factors affecting online distance education leaders and their respective programs. It also gives more comprehensive insight into the lives, personal experiences, professional development, and theoretical backgrounds of online distance education leaders. Thus, in order to produce

more thorough information not possible in a quantitative analysis alone, the gathering of institutional data, demographic data, and interview results was performed.

For the purposes of this study, the interview process was used to conduct qualitative key informant interviews. Interviewing is a frequently used technique commonly applied to the social sciences (Creswell, 1998). The qualitative methods used include semi-structured phone interviews and informal discussions (Creswell, 1998). According to Weiss (1994) finding a key informant, who is a “knowledgeable insider” for a qualitative study can help move the study forward (p. 20). In this study, ten key informants were chosen randomly from a database compiled using Peterson’s (2005) Guide to Distance Education Programs, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System: Executive Peer Tool and Peer Analysis System, and the Chronicle of Higher Education’s (2006) online Carnegie Classification databases according to the institution’s distance education programs’ characteristics. This process is more fully described above. Through the use of the LPI-S these ten leaders articulated how they use the five key practices identified by Kouzes and Posner (2003c), including how to:

1. model the way,
2. inspire shared vision,
3. challenge the process,
4. enable others to act, and
5. encourage the heart” (p. 4-5).

Given the relatively small number of informants and the random selection process, geographical and time limitations may pose problems that could lead to prejudiced outcomes. Yet, despite the small sample size, key informant interviews allowed the researcher to garner valuable insights from people immersed in distance education programs. It also allowed for the gathering, reduction, and analysis of thematic data important to qualitative research. However, any information gathered during the qualitative section interviews and informal discussions is not generalizable to a larger population. Instead the detail gathered from this portion will add a dimension to the data not previously understood or included.

Interview protocol and procedures. Because the interview process was in a semi-structured, intensive format, a formal instrument was not be developed. Instead, a series of eight guiding questions was developed, and this informal interview instrument focused the respondents' answers and the overall discussion (Chambliss & Schutt, 2003). Recordings of each interview were transcribed and analyzed for associated and similar themes. Initially, the interview transcripts were read and reread to identify and index themes and focusing upon recurring phrases, incidents, and behaviors. In these interview transcripts, interesting or repeated terms used by the participants produced the source and foundation for persistent themes. Themes such as educational philosophy, educational background, distance education theoretical perspectives, leadership perspectives, personal experiences, and work experiences were

examined. The researcher, using an audio recording device, transcriptionist and appropriate thematic coding, completed transcription and analysis (Weiss, 1994).

Qualitative data analysis. For the purposes of this study, an inductive interview analysis general interpretative approach was used. Chambliss and Schutt (2003) elaborate that using inductive reasoning and data interpretation offer opportunities for the themes or recurring topics to appear more naturally. Based on these definitions and explanations, this study used inductive interpretation of the information and data obtained during the qualitative semi-structured, intensive interviews with key informants. For this study, qualitative data gathering consisted of creating selection criteria, conducting the interviews, recording the information, transcribing the audio recordings, then coding and analyzing the reduced information. For this study, phone interviews and e-mail follow-ups were conducted due to the constraints of time and distance and to allow the participants to utilize a format with which they were comfortable. The use of a semi-structured interview component is appropriate for studies in which the researcher desires to understand perspectives and leadership styles (Merriam, 1998).

According to Stake (1995), theme and characteristic identification occurs on two levels: direct interpretation and pattern identification. Direct interpretation consists of drawing specific meaning from each individual interview and can be very detailed. On the other hand, pattern identification compares the transcripts from multiple interviews in order to gain correlation, develop relationships, and

expand upon more abstract themes, which transcend individual cases (Stake). Cross-interview qualitative analysis was used which entailed describing the participants, identifying reoccurring themes and characteristics, and developing generalizations or conclusions (Creswell, 1998). The interviews were recorded and transcribed precisely. As they occurred, interview transcripts were then analyzed, interpreted, and categorized accordingly. Rather than waiting to complete all the interviews, immediate thematic and cross-interview correlations were evaluated. Ryan and Bernard (2006) outlined several techniques, which were utilized during analysis and evaluation. These techniques included: word analysis, comparing and contrasting large blocks of text, analyzing linguistic attributes, or manipulating key passages of text (Ryan & Bernard). In order for all comments to be held in complete confidence and no participant to be identified, pseudonyms or codes were used. To enhance data accuracy, transcripts were reviewed and verified with the participants as requested.

All research participants received an informed consent letter containing the requisite components as outlined by the University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB). A statement discussing the research's purpose, the research procedures, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and freedom to withdraw at any time was included in communication with the participant. The form also asked for permission to use any information gathered in subsequent publications. UMCIRB forms were prepared and submitted prior to beginning the data collection process.

Summary

This mixed methods, predominantly-qualitative study delved into a precise exploration of ten online distance education leaders' leadership styles, perspectives about distance education, and the factors the leaders and their programs have in common. The method used in this study was dominantly qualitative in scope. Even though the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self was used with all ten online distance education leaders, its use was limited to assisting in the identification of the online distance education leaders' strengths in the five areas outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2003c). These five areas highlight how the distance education leaders "(1) model the way, (2) inspire a shared vision, (3) challenge the process, (4) enable others to act, and (5) encourage the heart" (pp. 4-5). It was also used to gather demographic data about the study's participants and their respective institutions.

Then, key informant semi-structured interviews were conducted with the ten online distance education leaders to create a more detailed, in-depth analysis of the leaders' characteristics and to answer the main research question and supporting questions. Further exploration of the participants' demographic differences, such as age, educational experience, and job experience, and institution's demographic differences, such as community-based need, geographical isolation, or accreditation was conducted as a result of these interviews. Transcripts were generated and cross-interview analysis was performed. Ultimately, the information and themes arising from these

comparisons should answer the research question “What are the theoretical perspectives of higher education institutions’ distance education leaders concerning online distance education programs?” and the supporting research questions for this study.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Overview

The purpose of this study was to discover what the theoretical perspectives of higher education institutions' distance education leaders concerning online distance education programs are. It answered four supporting questions: (1) how distance education leaders at institutions exhibited the characteristics of transformational leadership or leader-member exchange, (2) how Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) scores compared and contrasted among distance education leaders, (3) how institutional demographic differences, such as community-based need or geographical isolation, affected leaders' theoretical perspectives about distance education, and (4) how demographic differences, such as age, educational experience, and job experience affected theoretical perspectives.

This study examined the leadership practices and perspectives of online distance education leaders at select universities across the United States. Specifically, using the Kouzes and Posner (2003c) Leadership Practices Inventory-Self, this study revealed their self-reported leadership characteristics based upon the five leadership practices highlighted by Kouzes and Posner. In addition, through semi-structured key informant interviews, these leaders revealed how they lead, what challenges distance education leaders face, and what characteristics they felt future distance education leaders needed.

This chapter, which highlights the findings of this study, is divided into four major sections. The first section analyzes the leaders' demographic data and notes how select demographic information, such as age, educational experience, and job experience, did or did not affect their theoretical perspectives. It also assesses how institutional demographic differences, such as community-based need or geographical isolation, affects leaders' theoretical perspectives about distance education. The second section evaluates how the scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) compare and contrast among distance education leaders. The responses to the LPI-S that have been summarized were used to address the leaders' characteristic differences and similarities. The third section synthesizes the open-ended, semi-structured key informant interviews. The last section examines whether or not distance education leaders at institutions exhibited the characteristics of transformational leadership or leader-member exchange.

Institutional and Participant Demographic Data

The participants in this study met stringent researcher established guidelines. A total of 60 institutions were selected using various publications, including the Institute for Higher Education Policy's (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000) Quality on the line: benchmarks for success in internet-based distance education, Peterson's (2005) Guide to Distance Learning Programs, Peterson's (2006) Guide to Online Learning, and the Carnegie Foundation's Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2006). The

higher education institutions included in the database are all four-year, degree-granting universities. In addition, the institutions in this study met all of the criteria established by the researcher, which included having extensive experience in distance education, being recognized as distance education leaders as defined in the participant selection section, being regionally accredited, and offering more than one degree program via online distance learning.

All the participants' institutions qualified in Carnegie Foundation's Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2006) as either a Doctoral Research Intensive ($n = 2$) or Doctoral Research Extensive ($n = 8$) higher education institution. Three of the ten participants' institutions were established as land grant institutions and had a university mission of outreach to the population in their respective communities or regions. All of the representative institutions had achieved and maintained appropriate accreditation from the regional accrediting agencies including the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSACS) ($n = 1$), the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS) ($n = 3$), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) ($n = 6$).

Of the ten leaders, one was between 36-45 years of age, one was 46-55 years old, and seven were between 56-65 years of age, with one being between 66-75 years of age (see Table 3). Many of them indicated that they had to work their way up through numerous distance education and continuing education

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

		<i>f</i>	%
Age	36-45	1	10
	46-55	1	10
	56-65	7	70
	66-75	1	10
Gender	Male	4	40
	Female	6	60
Years in Distance Education	7-9	4	
	10-12	1	
	16-18	2	
	19-21	1	
	26-29	1	
	30+	1	
Level of Education	Master'	1	
	Master's + ABD	2	
	Doctorate	7	

positions to achieve their current positions, which deemed them as distance education leaders and administrators. Thus, the age range indicated approximately how many years they spent beyond graduate school, with on-the-job distance education teaching and administrative experience averaging out to 12 years before starting in their current positions.

Gender distinctions were slightly influential in the reactions and inclusion of information among the since six female participants that was not evident among the four participants who were male. Gender-based differences are elaborated on later in this chapter during the interview synthesis. Two of the women noted that without some form of distance education many of them would not have achieved a terminal degree. All of the female respondents otherwise stated that they recognized the impact distance education has on many single-parent households and other constituencies who have commitments that prevent them from participating in on-campus, traditional education. All of the male participants indicated the importance of access to underserved populations, but without noting the personal impact it may have had on their own educational pursuits.

Four of them had between 7-9 years of experience in distance education, one had between 10-12 years, two had 16-18 years, one had 19-21 years, one had 26-29 years, and one had over 30 years experience in distance education (see Table 3). This wealth of knowledge and experience led them to take on increasingly more involved and higher-level administrative and leadership roles in

continuing education, adult education, and distance education. Overall their focus and experience in online distance education had occurred within the last decade with the majority indicating that their years of experience in online distance education leadership positions were in the last 7-9 years specifically. Because of the relative newness of completely online distance education programs and administration, this number may be slightly skewed to the lower end of the experience scale when compared to the participants' overall experience in continuing or adult education. The participants were then asked to further elaborate on their specific entrance into the field of distance, adult, and continuing education. According to their responses, their experience level average was closer to 16-18 years.

When discussing their experiences and educational backgrounds, many of these leaders stated that they considered themselves more educational leaders and administrators than online distance education leaders in particular. Their experiences were focused in the areas of educational outreach or continuing education, with a major focus on adult education for the majority of the participants. Frequently, their personal experiences as continuing education or distance education students were what spurred them on to become leaders in distance or continuing education. One participant discussed how without distance education, she would not have been able to attain the level of education she has due to personal and professional obligations. Another offered an example of a highly influential colleague who inspired him to become an administrator and

leader in distance education. Many of them also said that their experiences as teachers or professors taught them about the importance of addressing students' needs and wanting to improve access for underserved constituents in their respective geographical regions.

The highest degree attained by three of the ten was a Master's degree, while seven of the ten had a doctorate. Of the three with Master's degrees, two of them had finished all of their doctoral level course work except the dissertation (All But Dissertation, ABD) and were finishing their doctorates. Many of them stated that when they began in this field it was an emerging concentration, and a Master's degree was all they needed at the time to attain an administrative and leadership position in distance and continuing education. However, many of them also stated that this is no longer the case in higher education, and a doctorate is a necessity for attaining and retaining a position in the field. All of them agreed that in the future all online distance education leaders would need a terminal degree, but not necessarily in educational leadership.

Instead many of the participants focused on their experiences and the importance of having a background in several key areas. They all stressed how important budget and finance are in the realm of distance education planning and implementation. All ten also emphasized how important it is for administrators and leaders to be well-rounded and comprehend the significance of adult learning theory. Rather than focusing on the technology driving their many distance education programs or educational leadership in particular, the array of

their educational experiences indicated that a solid foundation in educational theory, instructional design, and finance are fundamental.

Comparing and Contrasting LPI-S Results

By using the third edition of the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) published survey instruments developed and refined by Kouzes and Posner (2003c), the participants self-reported leadership characteristics were compared and contrasted to see what similarities and differences in leadership styles existed among identified online distance education leaders. This study examined the leaders' self-reported theoretical perspectives using the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self as one part of the overall research framework and data collection process. This study revealed how the participants perceived they lead their programs and what their thoughts were about how to best lead distance education programs. Specifically, this section highlights the findings of the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self third edition (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c). The authors delineated in their Leadership Practices Inventory-Self how leaders engage in the five practices of exemplary leadership to better direct the people that work with and for them. These five leadership practices are, "Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, Encourage the Heart" (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c, pp. 4-5).

Of the ten leaders who took the LPI, five of them had their highest scores in the "Enable Others to Act" section of the inventory (see Table 4). According to Kouzes and Posner (2003c) leaders who show strength in this area typically

Table 4

Results of LPI-S

The Five Practices	Model the Way	Inspire a Shared Vision	Challenge the Process	Enable Others to Act	Encourage the Heart
Average Score	47.1	47.3	48.6	53.2	50.1
Median Score	46.5	48.5	49.5	52.5	50
Mode	46, 53	47, 54	53	51, 52	48, 50, 53

facilitate teamwork, allow people to take action within their organizations, encourage cooperation and know they cannot do their jobs without everyone contributing to the joint effort. Northouse (2007) described leaders who are skilled in team leadership as people who are comfortable with diagnosing potential tribulations, resolving conflicts, solving problems, focusing on the mission, and influencing others. This is especially true in distance education, according to several of the leaders' open-ended responses, where vast teams of people must work together to design, develop, deliver and sustain online distance education programs. Team leaders in these complex environments must be able to effectively and efficiently assess the team's present status and plan for the future.

Three of the ten leaders had their highest scores in the "Inspire a Shared Vision" section of the inventory (LPI-S). According to Kouzes and Posner (2003c), leaders who show strength in this area imagine the potential of their online distance education programs and departments and work toward enlisting stakeholders, constituents, and team members to achieve the future missions of their respective institutions. Also, having an articulated vision of the future missions, goals and objectives is crucial to leaders with a strong focus in this area. When planning strategically for the future, many of the leaders who had high scores in "Inspire a Shared Vision" elaborated in their interview responses that understanding the big picture and having a future vision for distance education programming was necessary for growth.

Finally, two of the leaders found “Challenge the Process” to be the area in which they scored the highest on the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c). These leaders found ways to make change a palatable and achievable goal at their institutions. This also implied that while many of these leaders feel that they and their teams have developed outstanding distance education departments and programs, they feel that there is always room for improvement. In addition, leaders in online distance education know that there are always more innovative ways to deliver their programs, new technologies that can be utilized, and opportunities to take calculated risks to produce better results and progress in their areas.

The averages for each section were 47.1 Model the Way, 47.3 Inspire a Shared Vision, 48.6 Challenge the Process, 53.2 Enable Others to Act, and 50.1 Encourage the Heart (see Table 4). These averages indicated an overall focal point in the area of enabling others to act with a score of 53.2. Many of the leaders focused on the function and importance of teamwork as an integral part of their departmental and institutional missions. The second highest average by section, or leadership practice, was a 50.1 in the area of “Encourage the Heart.” A high score in this leadership practice indicated leaders who know the magnitude that recognizing constituents’ and team members’ contributions can have on the success of the institution. This leadership practice also showed the importance of creating a viable community spirit and keeping hope and trust at the forefront of any institutional online distance education objective. In addition,

these results implied the leaders know how significant finding the optimal plan of work is while simultaneously avoiding exhaustion, frustration, and dissatisfaction within their departmental or institutional teams. Leaders with high scores in this area also focus on timely recognition and rewards. Since many of the averages among the five practices were very close, this indicates that these leaders carefully balance the way they lead while considering the needs of those they are leading.

Semi-Structured Interview Synthesis

Self-Reported Leadership Characterizations

One of the emerging themes that arose after transcription and analysis were completed was that a majority of these leaders did not consider themselves leaders per se. This theme was entitled modesty. The overall repetition of variations of the statement “I don’t consider myself a leader, but more of an educator who’s been lucky to do something I enjoy,” “I don’t necessarily view myself as a distance education leader, but an educational leader who has the opportunity to open access to higher education whether they choose DE or not,” and “I don’t view myself as an online distance education leader. I view myself as an observer of leaders who attempts to document and learn about leaders in distance education rather than being one myself.” They were humble, unassuming, and flattered that they are considered leaders in such a complicated field as online distance education. Many of the participants said that they were more comfortable with being called adult and continuing education

administrators, educators, educational researchers, or educational administrators. They had a tendency to emphasize the importance of understanding the educational process, having business acumen, and using effective team management practices rather than focusing on leadership alone.

The participants all referred to how important using the team approach was at their respective institutions because of the complexity of online distance education. Many talked of achieving consensus and understanding that no one person can effectively or efficiently lead or administer online programs or courses without hundreds of people and things working together seamlessly. “You just can’t add people to online distance education, strategic planning and multiple levels of teaming must occur to successfully implement new programs.” “I have found my role to be one of inspiration, coordination, and information. I am a facilitator who brings people who usually don’t communicate about distance education together.”

Acknowledging how leadership came from all people and areas within online distance education was another prominent theme. “There is no one leader in an online distance education program. Otherwise, it’d be a dismal failure. Everyone has to be a leader in their own right.” Another theme that arose from this semi-structured interview question was how important it was to be a hands-on type of administrator and leader who could talk to anyone within their units, departments or colleges about needs, wants, and challenges. Several encouraged the leadership style of “leading by walking around” so that they were

both approachable and never holed up in their offices without knowing what the team needed. One leader in particular also stated that this method helped “address concerns before they become major problems.”

Delegating and facilitating the transfer of responsibility for a multitude of tasks was vital to these leaders. More than once, leaders who were interviewed stated how critical it was that their team members understand their job responsibilities and apply the requisite skills when, where, and how they were needed without constant supervision. “Leadership in distance education is in balancing the day-to-day operations with long term future goals.” “Many of the people in this program are leaders in their respective areas.” Several said how they avoided “micro-managing” the members of their online distance education divisions or teams because it was unnecessary and in most cases impossible due to the size of the teams involved. “I can’t afford to hire someone who needs constant supervision...they have to be self-motivated and leaders in their own right.”

The participants discussed how they had particular skills that were essential for the job and leading a diverse group. These referenced abilities included using analytic skills, planning strategically, thinking strategically, solving problems, being well-informed, focusing on the students, and collaborating with administrators, colleagues, other leaders, and team members.

Effective and efficient use of communication skills was also a predominant topic that was mentioned throughout all of the interviews. According to the

participants, no matter what communication technology was used, ideally a leader must be careful, considerate, and concise when communicating his or her vision, the institutional mission, or job expectations. In fact, one leader stated, "...the technology doesn't matter, the mode or manner of distance education delivery may change, but the students stay the same." Another stated how vital it was to "depend upon the strengths of my staff I work with and use their ideas as much as possible." There was a sense of how important collaboration, multiple layers of leadership and teaming are. All of the leaders expressed in these interviews how no one person was the solitary leader of online distance education programs.

Institutional Online Distance Education Leadership Characteristics

All of these institutions were identified as online distance education leaders using the benchmarks set forth by the Sloan Consortium Quality Framework (Moore, 2005), the American Distance Education Consortium (2003), and the Institute for Higher Education Policy's Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-based Education (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000.) In order to better compare and contrast institutional characteristics that allowed these institutions to rise to the forefront in the field, several questions were asked. When asked about what distinguished their respective institutions and qualified the institutions as online distance education leaders, several themes emerged. These included a history of distance education and outreach, cultural influences, geographical barriers coupled with regional constituents' needs, partnerships

with other state or federal government entities, financial and budgetary support, and supportive leadership.

Many of the institutions whose leaders were participants in this study were established initially as land grant institutions under the 1862 and 1890 Morrill Land-Grant Acts. These universities were provided with funds and land in order to educate the “industrial classes” (Whalen, 2001, p. 1). Because of this early mission of outreach to rural populations who were originally “engaged in some form of labor in agriculture, commerce, and the arts” (Whalen, p. 1), these institutions have found the transition to online distance education integration an easier one than some of their counterparts. In their respective regions or states, they have led the charge in support of various types of distance education throughout their institutions’ histories. Almost all of the leaders interviewed (8 out of the 10) mentioned that historically their HEIs had a commitment to some form of distance education from correspondence courses through today’s online programs. The progression through a variety of delivery modes and various technologies was done without any type of controversy or upheaval at many of these universities—it was just something that was an inherent part of the overall institutional mission and progress. Many felt that implementing DE was an obligation because of the needs of their constituents.

Other key reasons many of these institutions are considered leading DE organizations are regional geographical barriers and, as a result, their potentially isolated constituents’ needs. Many of the universities’ leaders expressed how

widespread their constituents are due to the rural nature of their regions or states. Frequently people had difficulty getting on campus to take advantage of programs or courses. This obstacle to obtaining an education was discussed as having a major impact on the use of distance education on the whole and, more specifically, online course work. The make-up of the constituencies in the universities' respective outreach area had a tremendous impact on how, when, and where online distance education was developed and implemented, according to the participants. "Our university's long history of outreach through various forms of distance education is well-established and well-known." "Outreach engagement is clearly connected with the land grant mission at the university."

Three of the leaders discussed how they had received money in support of distance education programming through various government or related agencies including the state's community college systems, Department of Defense, and National Science Foundation. These government partnerships as well as the resulting financial support they received, repeatedly spurred institutions to develop online distance education courses and programs more rapidly than their peer institutions. Having financial and budgetary support and control made the difference in how well programs are developed and implemented on a wide scale.

The final distinguishing characteristic that set many of these institutions apart as distance education leaders and innovators was supportive leadership.

Throughout these institutions, there were key individuals or groups that encouraged the design, implementation and growth of online distance education programs. Whether it was the university president, board of governors, alumni, or the director of continuing, distance or adult education, the leadership of key individuals and groups was cited as a major cause of increased DE usage.

Leaders' Professional and Personal Experiences

Outreach and distance education experiences and activities as students and/or faculty members were the overarching subjects that were mentioned throughout these interviews. Many shared or discussed how they felt it was important to accommodate a non-traditional population of learners who needed additional education or professional development in order to improve their current status. The thought that they could have an impact on the lives of so many people was a highly motivating factor to several of these participants. Being able to make courses more accessible to students who otherwise would not be able to get an education was important to many of them. One discussed the importance of reaching underserved constituents stating how important it is “To see people who may not have been able to go to college otherwise and see them succeed makes all the hard work worthwhile.” With backgrounds in education, many believed wholeheartedly in reaching and teaching as many people as possible—no matter what the delivery method.

Many also expressed how there had been personal educational experiences in which they encountered barriers in their own lives that without

distance education may have prevented them from getting a needed degree or other educational opportunities. One participant discussed how she “experienced firsthand as a student and working mother the institution’s mission of outreach to adult learners through distance education.” Several identified professors they had in graduate school who promoted environments that were student-centered. One even commented on how the institution’s “commitment to excellence and student service” translated to superior online distance education services from highly sophisticated course work to integrated student services.

Finally, several expressed how several jobs led them to their current positions. Either they began as faculty members who integrated DE into their own courses or they were curriculum and instruction specialists who found distance education modes and methods an intriguing development for adult education. Many felt that the outreach potential of online distance education for their respective constituencies was important enough to seek better methods, new technologies, and more financing for their respective programs. They also discussed how important it was to reach typically underserved populations and give them better access to higher education. To find ways to retrain displaced workers or other adult learners struggling to get an education were additional factors that motivated many to move into distance education.

Online Distance Education and Mission Relationships

Five of the leaders expressed how distance education was an integral part of their institutions’ missions from their inceptions as land grant institutions. Land

grant institutions as designated by the 1862 and 1890 Morrill Land-Grant Acts were provided with funds and land that “would provide support for colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts in each of the states” (Unknown, 2007). Because of this early mission of outreach to rural populations in their respective regions or states, these institutions have found the transition to online distance education integration an easier one than some of their counterparts. One leader highlighted his university’s role as a land grant institution, “History, our history, is a long history of engagement. It’s been a mainstay—not just a sideline. It’s closely tied into the fabric of the university and its land grant mission.” Another reiterated the significant impact being a land grant had on online distance education, “Our role as a land grant institution has given traditionally underserved constituents the opportunity to benefit from higher education. To continue to fulfill this mission of outreach we must look at all the ways we can serve them. Online distance education allows us to do this and gives our constituents better access on their own terms.”

All of the leaders expressed how important access and integration were in order to serve the widespread and diverse populations. They also indicated that in order to increase access, their institutions were early adopters of online distance education initiatives, technologies, and programs. With so many adult learners not able to be on campus due to other responsibilities, the participants indicated how crucial it is to still allow people access to the research and

nationally accredited and recognized programs available at their respective institutions.

Online Distance Education Strengths and Weaknesses

Of course, online distance education has its strengths and weaknesses. The participants listed the strengths using common subjects. These subjects included access, diversity, and integration. Access was an overriding theme among all the leaders. The discussion centered on how important it was to know what underserved population members and learners needed by communicating with their constituents regularly. Open public forums indicated what programs and course work were needed at particular institutions. The demand for these programs may not have been apparent before the community outreach was done.

For example, initial work-related professional development or education for new jobs was seen as an important objective at five of the institutions. All ten named degree program outreach as a significant objective in which all the institutions had different degrees being offered solely online while each was in a vastly different area. Several had undergraduate degrees offered online, while all offered online Master's graduate level programs or degrees in business, education, health, or agriculture related disciplines.

Online distance education weaknesses were also a part of the line of questioning. However, all of the participants preferred to call these weaknesses "challenges" instead. According to numerous sources, leaders focus more on

solving problems rather than focusing on the problems themselves (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Collins, 2001). Seven of the ten participants stated in various ways that these weaknesses were mere barriers that their teams would eventually overcome to improve their programs. Of the prevalent themes that became apparent, finances and budgetary concerns were at the forefront for all of the leaders. Regularly, these leaders said that their main concerns and barriers involved funding and budget constraints. Several had little or no budgetary authority or control, while many did.

Another challenge all of the leaders faced was cultural in nature and scope. Many expressed dissatisfaction with the permeating traditional stance that did not accept online distance education as a fully integrated part of their respective institutions. This challenge was interpreted as a need for better integration of online student services and a university-wide understanding of what the needs and limitations of adult or non-traditional learners are. One example that was given centered on registration, financial aid disbursement, and library services. For years, the leader had pressed for changes in these systems that would allow online distance education students access to these services without having to physically be on campus. It took years of communication, frustration, and coordination before these services were offered online and these systems still have many trials and tribulations to overcome. This lack of coordinated student services was a topic that was listed as the primary concern for 7 of the 10 leaders.

Another challenge or weakness of the select institutions centered on faculty issues. Mainly, recruiting, educating, support, and retaining quality faculty members were the principal problems these leaders faced. Many also discussed how important it was to educate faculty and have intelligent and sophisticated discussions about online distance education between administrators, leaders at all levels, and all faculty members. How to best foster a sense of community, open communication, support, and understanding while promoting distance education initiatives was a basic concern for all.

Online Distance Education's Future Effects and Challenges

All the leaders agreed on several of the major challenges facing online distance education now and in the future. Even though each may have expressed it differently, the major themes remained the same. All agreed upon how important rigor, relevance, assessment, and acceptability of distance education courses and programs would be. In addition, they talked about financing, facilities planning, and curricular change. Online distance education course work rigor and relevance would need to be approached and assessed differently than many currently are in order to increase acceptability. According to one leader, "From the top down, educational leaders will need to recognize that education offered at a distance is not necessarily better or worse than traditional, residential higher education, but just different applications of delivery." Another difficulty that many educational leaders involved in higher education will encounter is determining how to charge for education. Student fees and tuition

will need to change so that the financing of higher education will be greatly affected.

Many of the leaders (8 out of 10) in one form or another said the future is now when it comes to online distance education affecting higher education. One in particular stated, "Online distance education has already started to transform higher education as we know it." Others elaborated, discussing how as more and more people expect and demand more convenient educational options and opportunities, online distance education will continue to evolve and expand. This evolution will center on the technologies being invented, used, refined, and transformed. It will also involve how, when, and where programs are offered online. Finally, the amount and type of individual courses and complete programs being offered will expand exponentially.

According to the participants, distance education (DE) will continue to grow and infiltrate almost all areas of the traditional, residential structure and culture of higher education institutions. Future DE enterprises will no longer be able to function as separate entities in their respective university settings. In order for universities to thrive in the future, DE will need to be seamlessly integrated within the residence or on-campus culture. "The schism between DE and residence instruction will need to be bridged because more learners will demand education and training on their own terms—not those dictated by the institution," said one leader. Delivering educational opportunities to learners whether it is face-to-face, a hybrid, or completely online will need to be tailored to

the needs of the adult learner. “More than ever before learning something right when you need it—just-in-time training—will become the norm,” another affirmed.

Distance education leaders, administrators, and team members will need to focus on the various types of technology—both existing and emerging—as well as how integration will occur by altering existing curriculum and course delivery. “The lines between on-campus and online learning will be blurred since in the broadest sense, there won’t be much education that doesn’t have technology involved or online activities, such as virtual guest speakers and labs” insisted one participant. Another added, “Residential courses are being affected and redesigned as more faculty members supplement face-to-face learning with online resources.” Increasingly over the next 10-20 years, the curriculum in most courses will be infused with online learning initiatives. “Online learners will rarely, if ever, step foot on campus and will continually demand increased access to on-campus resources, such as the library’s and registrar’s services.”

With this evolution, a transformation will occur in how future faculty members are recruited and educated to teach online distance education courses. Ultimately, how faculty members teach online courses will change. The support services that will need to be in place to improve and sustain online distance education offerings will need to change also, according to the participants’ input. Several leaders focused on the need for fundamental changes in how registration is completed, how library and media services are delivered, and how faculty members are educated to teach online distance education courses.

Another challenge facing online distance educators is avoiding the same problems that other distance education methods encountered. For example, one leader discussed how distance educators need to avoid becoming “snake oil salesmen” and profess that online distance education is appropriate for everyone and everything. Elaborating, he stated that online distance educators, leaders, and administrators need to “think and apply distance education logically rather than unilaterally.” Being skeptical, practical, and demanding users and providers of online distance education can only strengthen it, according to this leader.

Others furthered his recommendations and explanations of future challenges by discussing how online distance education no longer should focus solely on content, but more on context. One leader said the mode of delivery does not matter as much as the application of how the learner learns best. Focusing on the students themselves, institutions must be progressively more aware of how to define students and this is not going to happen by separating them based upon where or how they receive their course work. Universities will need to be ready for a new demographic of learner accessing their institution’s programs. A participant acknowledged that “As people find that they need to continually grow and change in their jobs, online DE will be a huge part of retraining and the changing job front.” Another avowed, “No longer will people stay in the same job for 30 years or more.” People will need to upgrade existing knowledge and skills or gain all new skills as the job market evolves. Another went on to describe that no longer will rote memorization and regurgitation of

content be the focus as much as “just-in-time learning” and “job training” which is focused on “using project-based and real world problem solving scenarios.”

The participants discussed how imperative it is to begin asking the questions that haven't been posed yet. For example, questions that arose included: “How will facilities construction and usage be impacted by DE?” and “Do we still need to continue building elaborate facilities for residence instruction, if much of the instruction will be occurring virtually?” Future facilities planning and handling will present dilemmas for educational leaders across the board whether or not they are involved in DE implementation. Imagining what the classrooms of the future look like and knowing the quantity required is just one test future educational leaders will face.

Finally, in terms of leadership in online DE, the question was asked by and of several of the participants, “Are there really DE leaders per se?” Rather than focusing on the one leader, top down, hierarchical concept of leadership, teaming and the various concepts of team were discussed and elaborated upon. The team concept arose consistently throughout the interviews, especially when discussing DE's future effects on higher education institutions and their faculty members. Many of the leaders who were interviewed for this study questioned the definition and description of online DE leadership, focusing instead on the importance of teaming, consensus building, and group effort. Participants throughout their interviews stressed the fact that in online distance education the leadership paradigm is very different from other forms of educational leadership.

Several insisted that no one person could be a DE leader at an institution. “It is not a separate role, but a continuum for all educational leaders to know how you get faculty to embrace different delivery methods.” Elaborating on this theme, another added, “The future of education will demand a much more sophisticated pedagogy on the part of the faculty with more cooperation and collaboration between individuals and institutions.” Understanding what each person’s responsibilities and educational backgrounds are is imperative to operating a successful higher education institution’s online distance education program or department.

Future Distance Education Leader Preparation

This question yielded some of the most poignant and constructive responses and persistent themes. Almost all of the leaders interviewed offered practical recommendations and perspectives that they were willing to share. Rather than focusing on what institutions could do to better prepare future distance education leaders, these leaders preferred to offer practical and theoretical suggestions for what online distance education leaders could do for themselves and their teams.

All of the participants ascertained that leadership, rather than being something that could be taught in a course or workshop, is something that is developed over the course of time, education, professional experiences, and personal growth. One leader said, “Leadership in theory is easily defined, while leadership in practice is a constantly changing jumble of trials, tribulations,

education, and growth.” All of the ten leaders stated emphatically that no one course or book could help anyone on his or her quest for a leadership position in DE. Rather a sum of their experiences and a sharing of the knowledge and skills gained would set future leaders apart from their peers who were not destined for leadership positions. Several purposively stressed the importance of experiencing positions of leadership of any kind as an intern or apprentice. They also signified how crucial it is that future leaders possess advanced financial literacy as well as excellent communication skills.

Recommended literature that reflected their theoretical and educational foundations included several distance education-related professional organizations’ newsletter and journals, including the Association for Educational Communications and Technology’s *Educational Technology Research and Development* and *TechTrends*. Several said that the best way to stay on top of educational trends and issues was to read *The Chronicle of Higher Education*’s weekly issues. Duderstadt, Atkins, and Van Houweling’s *Higher Education in the Digital Age* was also mentioned by two of the leaders. Bates’ *Managing Technological Change*, Collins’ *Built to Last* and *Good to Great*, Argyris’ *Overcoming Organizational Defenses: Facilitating Organizational Learning*, Knowles’ *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, Moore’s *Handbook of Distance Education*, (2nd ed.) and Moore and Kearsley’s *Distance Education: A Systems View*. Berge and Clark’s *Virtual Schools: Planning for Success*, Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, and Zvacek’s

Teaching and Learning at a Distance: Foundations of Distance Education (3rd ed.), and the Oblingers' (eds.) *Educating the Net Generation* also came highly recommended among several of the participants. *Monitoring the Standards of Education* by Tuijnman and Postlethwaite (eds.) and Husen, Postlethwaite, Clark, and Neave's *Education: The Complete Encyclopedia* were also suggested as valuable reading and resources.

All of these leaders were asked for their input concerning their professional and personal perspectives about online distance education. They offered unique insight into the leadership styles many used to gain administrative and leadership roles in their respective institutions. Many of them expressed some of the wisdom they have gained from years of education and experience at the university-level. Their perspectives focused on using enthusiasm to your advantage. One leader discussed how to "Figure out who wants to do something [in DE] and give them the resources to do what they want." When people are enthusiastic about what they are doing and have a purpose behind it, their passion will translate into success at many levels.

Another elaborated on having a high level of commitment to your colleagues or teammates. "Listen to the people you work with and understand what's essential for success." Another said, "Commit to what you and your team feel is important." Included in this is having and effectively communicating a vision to all levels of online distance education programs. Online distance education leaders need to "Be forward thinking about technology and change,"

and “Be mindful to balance the day-to-day operations with long-term future goals.” Others talked about maintaining a strong work ethic. “Never expect those around you to work hard, if they don’t think that you are.” In addition, a leader should “Always remember the team comes first, not the individual” and that “The team should be recognized for their successes and encouraged in the face of failures.”

In online distance education, many participants felt it was crucial to understand the adult learner and their characteristics. “Know the people who take advantage of the opportunities DE offers that they wouldn’t otherwise have in the traditional on-campus university,” elaborated one leader. Also, to best understand the learners’ perspectives several recommended being a lifelong learner personally and professionally. “Never stop learning because distance education’s going to change,” stated another participant. In this same vein, many of the participants recommended understanding the fundamental principles of teaching and learning as well as knowing the difference between theory vs. action. One focused on how “Knowing instructional design, adult learning theory, andragogy vs. pedagogy, and interacting with colleagues is valuable beyond compare.” Another stated “Be aware of what’s happening in adult and continuing education across the board because it will inevitably have an effect on distance education.” Finally another said, “Don’t just tell me—show me what a difference distance education can make.”

Others about staying focused and expressed a desire to never become complacent. One cautioned “Watch out for being over-committed—pick one or two major things, do them well, and give them time to take hold.” Another said to “Think about what your core work is and be selective. Build the infrastructure and good, strong relationships.” “We may be doing things well, but we can always improve.” They discussed how far their online distance education programs had come, but how much farther they could still go to reach and teach more students using better or newer methods and modes.

Many of the leaders voiced these perspectives continually throughout our audio interviews although they may have used different terminology. Several of their quotable thoughts were included. Their perspectives and the transcripts was synthesized for the purposes of this presentation of information and any mistakes are those of the researcher. All were focused on overall adult education and teaming factors to be remembered and considered.

Transformational Leadership or Leader-Member Exchange Characteristics

Finally, an exploration of the leaders’ self-reported and researcher-perceived leadership characteristics was accomplished. By using two distinct leadership styles for the study’s overall framework, this study analyzed the LPI-S data and interview responses to explore how the leaders used either transformational leadership or leader-member exchange approaches. Transformational leadership is characterized by the methods of power and persuasion that subsist between a leader and those they lead. Bass and

Steidelmeier (1998) discussed how transformational leaders are typically charismatic, motivational, intellectual, and considerate. As people in an organization move toward their mutual goals, transformational leaders will be the role models whom others want to emulate. Excellent transformational leaders use their authority and power to inspire, motivate, and alter their environment (Bass, 1998b; Bass, & Avolio, 1994; Dixon, 1998; Tracey & Hinkin, 1998).

While a few of these leaders exhibited characteristics of the leader-member exchange approach to leadership, the leaders' self-reported leadership approaches reflected the characteristics of transformational leadership more than that of leader-member exchange. The focus that most reflected leader-member exchange (LMX) theory were the ways leaders communicated with others among their department. These interactions or dealings in some cases were focused more from the top-down which is more like the LMX dyads. Leader-member exchange has a tendency to spotlight effective communications and overall institutional mission rather than focusing on the individual. Because of the size of the institutions, this was indicative of a communication style rather than an overall leadership style. Vertical dyads with inner-circles and outer circles are used to communicate pertinent information due to the sheer number of subordinates in larger organizations.

Based on the interviews and research data gathered, higher education institutions like the universities for which the participants work desire transformational leaders to direct distance education departments.

Transformational leaders like those interviewed seek to alter the existing institutional composition and influence people to accept new missions or innovative ideas. Such leaders focus upon organizational change, which is essential in the constantly changing environment of online distance education.

Summary

The study contained herein sought to answer the main research question: (1) What are the theoretical perspectives of higher education institutions' distance education leaders concerning online distance education programs? Four supporting questions were also examined including: (1) How do the scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) compare and contrast among distance education leaders? (2) Do distance education leaders at institutions exhibit the characteristics of transformational leadership or leader-member exchange? If so, how? If not, then what is revealed instead? (3) Do demographic differences, such as age, educational experience, and job experience affect theoretical perspectives? If so, how? (4) Do institutional demographic differences, such as community-based need or geographical isolation, affect leaders' theoretical perspectives about distance education? If so, how?

The participants were composed of 10 online distance education leaders from a group of select universities throughout the Southeastern, Northeastern, and Midwestern United States. Respondents to the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self were asked to identify their self-reported leadership characteristics

based on Kouzes and Posner's five main leadership practices. They were then asked to elaborate on a series of distance education and leadership-related semi-structured interview questions.

The results of the LPI-S and interviews did show that the participants had a tendency to demonstrate transformational leadership characteristics and style over leader-member exchange approach to leadership. Their LPI-S results also revealed a predilection for enabling others to act while developing leaders within the organization. Thus, "no one person was truly in charge" at their respective institutions when it came to designing, developing, implementing, sustaining, and improving online distance education programs. The results were also affected depending on the time the participants had been in their current positions or distance education in general. The more time in the field, the more focused they were on adult learners as a whole instead of on the delivery mode or technologies used in particular.

While for most of the demographic data there were no statistically significant differences analyzed, basic analysis of the participants' demographics does disclose some interesting factors for consideration. The findings of this study indicate the majority of the participants were between 56-65 years of age having spent 7-9 years in distance education. All but three had a terminal degree with four holding doctorates in education and the rest possessing doctoral degrees in a mix of disciplines including history, business, and psychology among others.

From a leadership standpoint, according to this study's findings, online distance education leaders are likely to primarily utilize a transformational leadership approach while also making use of leader-member exchange communications as needed depending upon their respective institution's size. Although not generalizable because of the relatively small number of participants, this study's results have interesting implications for continuing education and adult education. When the results are considered in conjunction with existing research about leadership styles, organizational change, and online distance education, these findings have potential repercussions for future online distance educators, administrators, and leaders. The final chapter will interpret the study's data and information, give some suggestions for practice in online distance education professional development and higher education in general, and offer recommendations for future research ideas about the theoretical perspectives of distance education leaders.

CONCLUSION

Summary of the Study

The previous chapters provided the historical and theoretical background of this study. In addition, chapters one through four indicated the reason for conducting this study which is to better understand the personal and theoretical perspectives of leaders of online distance education programs across the United States. The study endeavored to answer the main research question: (1) What are the theoretical perspectives of higher education institutions' distance education leaders concerning online distance education programs? Four supporting questions were also examined including: (1) How do the scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) compare and contrast among distance education leaders? (2) Do distance education leaders at institutions exhibit the characteristics of transformational leadership or leader-member exchange? If so, how? If not, then what is revealed instead? (3) Do demographic differences, such as age, educational experience, and job experience affect theoretical perspectives? If so, how? (4) Do institutional demographic differences, such as community-based need or geographical isolation, affect leaders' theoretical perspectives about distance education? If so, how?

The participants were composed of 10 online distance education leaders from a group of select universities throughout the Southeastern, Northeastern, and Midwestern United States. Respondents to the Leadership Practices

Inventory-Self were asked to identify their self-reported leadership characteristics based on Kouzes and Posner's five main leadership practices. They were then asked to elaborate on a series of distance education and leadership-related semi-structured interview questions, which were audio-taped, transcribed, analyzed for themes, and synthesized.

This chapter briefly summarizes the purpose and results of the study. The subsections present a summary of the study, a discussion about the significance and implications of the findings, recommendations for future research, and the study conclusion. As stated at the beginning in chapter 1, at the outset this study explored distance education leaders perspectives using the self-reported findings of Kouzes and Posner's LPI-S. Then, with semi-structured interviews, how their perspectives affect the ways in which they implement and lead online distance education programs were investigated.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Online distance education has emerged as a popular delivery method for coursework and programs at universities across the United States. In fact, many institutions have invested major amounts of time, effort and resources to design, develop, implement and sustain online distance education. This study set out to examine the unique perspectives of online distance education administrators and leaders at select universities across the country using specific criteria. To determine leadership perspectives initially, Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practice Inventory-Self was employed to highlight the ten leaders' self-reported

scores in five leadership areas. Then, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to further delve into their perspectives about leadership and online distance education at their respective universities.

During the analysis, reduction of the interview data, and interpretation of the findings from the LPI-S and interviews, several themes emerged concerning the perspectives of the participants. An analysis of the demographic data revealed three noteworthy characteristics. The results of this study revealed that the majority of the online distance education leaders were between 56-65 years of age, had between 8-12 years experience in online distance education, and had a doctorate. This may be due to the fact that in order to attain an administrative or leadership position of this nature, a person has to have an advanced level of academic experience and educational achievement. It is also a derivative of the traditional tenure and promotion process that most of higher education institutions in this study employ. This is supported by the self-reported data that several of the study participants ascended through ranks in adult or continuing education from instructor to administrator.

Kouzes and Posner delineated in their Leadership Practices Inventory-Self how leaders engage in the five practices of exemplary leadership to better direct the people that work with and for them. These five leadership practices include, "Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, Encourage the Heart" (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c, pp. 4-5). After obtaining and analyzing the LPI-S data, it showed the participants had high scores on the

LPI-S in the areas of teamwork, collaboration, and inspirational leadership. These same characteristics were echoed in the interviews with the themes of teaming, cooperation, communication, and access rising to the forefront of almost all of the interviews.

Of the ten participants, five of them had their highest scores in the “Enable Others to Act” section of the LPI-S. According to Kouzes and Posner (2003c), leaders who have high enabling scores encourage teaming strategies, allow people to take action, promote collaboration, and understand the importance of each team member having a say and stake in the overall online distance education process. This is especially true in online distance education, according to the participants, whenever a group or several groups must cooperate to design, develop, deliver and sustain complex online distance education programs.

Three of the ten leaders had their highest scores in the “Inspire a Shared Vision” section of the inventory (LPI-S). Leaders who demonstrate leadership in this area, envision the big picture of how online distance education programs and departments should work and influence stakeholders, constituents, and team members to achieve various tasks toward future objectives. Having a well-expressed and accurate representation of the future missions, goals and objectives is crucial to leaders with a strong focus in the shared vision part of the LPI-S. Two had high scores in the area of “Challenge the Process,” which indicated a need to always find reasons or ways to improve. Participants who

had dominance in this section of the LPI-S also continually find ways to make change processes comfortable and manageable for themselves and others in their departments or institutions.

Interviews were synthesized and several issues emerged that have the potential power to alter the face of online distance education. These issues included financial and budgetary concerns, faculty and students demand for and acceptance of online distance education initiatives, and changing delivery modes with various technological inventions and innovations. In addition, several leaders emphasized how crucial it is for future distance education leaders to understand the population of adult learners whom online distance education affects significantly. They recommended literature, course work, and workshops about adult learning and adult learners' characteristics because these learners differ considerably from the typical 18-21 year-old undergraduates on many campuses. Many of the adult learners the leaders discussed had many other responsibilities that may impact their educational attainment. The participants cautioned never to forget these important constituents when designing, developing, implementing, improving, or sustaining online distance education programs. Several of the leaders interviewed focused on how adult learners or other constituencies must be given a voice. Open communication via universities' offices of continuing education should be a valued and well-used information source about training and other educational opportunities.

Other facts revealed that many of these leaders exhibited the characteristics of transformational leadership over the leader-member exchange style of leadership. The participants referred to how important using the team approach was at their respective institutions because of the complexity of online distance education. Many talked of achieving consensus. All emphasized how no one can effectively administer online programs or courses alone without hundreds of people working together flawlessly. Recognizing how all people and divisions contributed to the overall success of online distance education was another major topic. Also, many participants signified the importance of being a practical leader and excellent communicator who could talk to anyone within their units, departments or colleges about the issues facing them. Several encouraged the leadership style of “leading by walking around” so that they were easy to talk to, accessible, and knowledgeable about team members’ jobs and needs.

While this study explored perspectives of online distance education leaders, researchers should be aware that online distance education is only one method of distance education currently employed at most universities. Continuing and adult education at a distance may include synchronous or asynchronous course work, individual or team work, and various delivery modes. Modes can include hybrid courses, web casts, satellite links, video-streaming, and over a thousand other combinations of technologies and factors. This study was purposely limited to select universities implementing online, or web-based, distance education that have been recognized for their excellence and

contributions in the field. Despite this narrow focus, certain elements of the findings could be applied to faculty, administrator, and leadership development courses and programs for distance education across the board. These elements include course and program development and leadership implications.

Several of the participants concluded that no one course or piece of literature could adequately prepare a future online distance educator for an administrative or leadership role. However, they offered insight into their educational and professional experiences that all educational leaders and administrators could benefit from having.

Implications for Practice

The results obtained in this study have several possible implications for distance education leadership practices and for leaders in higher education overall. All of the participants agreed that in the future all online distance education leaders would need a terminal doctoral-level degree, but not necessarily in education or educational leadership. Rather, the assortment of their educational, professional, and personal experiences reflected several other potential implications for practice. A need for on-the-job exposure to educational theory, instructional design, and finance was a theme that was prevalent. Also, they stated that their personal experiences as continuing education or distance education students, educators, or researchers were what prompted them to become leaders in distance or continuing education. Several themes arose concerning educational professional development. These reoccurring themes

focused on graduated internship experiences, specific literature, leadership skills, and teaming approaches.

First, many of the leaders had a wide variety of experiences in business, management and education. Because of the diversity in their personal and professional backgrounds, few commonalities were immediately apparent other than their work in higher education. Yet as they revealed more of their personal and professional accounts of influential experiences or people, many had similar experiences. In their professional lives, many had a mentor whose example steered them into adult, continuing, or distance education services. In their personal lives, they all had unwavering and substantial support from family, friends, and their community to further their educations and careers. Many had well-developed skills and numerous jobs in finance, adult learning theory, educational research, educational psychology, instructional design, and continuing education.

Several expressed the importance of gaining real world training, on-the-job training, or focused exposure to adult, continuing, and distance education via internships or entry level positions. As a result of these experiences many had moved up through the ranks accordingly. Higher education institutions may develop more mentoring and interning opportunities in adult and continuing education programs/departments to help future online distance education leaders gain valuable real world experience in the day-to-day operations of these ever-growing divisions. Universities could also consider offering more or up-to-date

courses in adult learning theory, adult and continuing education programming, budget and finance, grant-writing, and instructional design to their emerging educational leaders.

Many of them also said that their experiences as students and educators taught them about putting their students first and wanting to improve access for underserved people in their outreach areas. The information gathered indicated that future distance educators should also not limit themselves to obtaining professional development and experiences from one source or one type of institution. The variety of the career paths, educational backgrounds, personal experiences, and degrees these participants have suggests that future distance educational leaders should pursue multiple situations in which they master the art of distance education leadership in institutions with different size, student population, function, experience and location.

This study proposes that participants in this study function primarily using the characteristics of transformational leadership with leader-member exchange factors being evident in communication policies depending on the institution's size. The larger the institution, the more likely those leaders would have inner-circles of people who communicated with others on the distance education team directly. While the leaders focused on the bigger picture concerns, communication was more likely to resemble that of the leader-member exchange format. Otherwise, transformational leadership was the dominant approach that was used to enable others to develop their own leadership skills and procedures.

Examining one's leadership style and continually learning and applying new strategies was another recommendation. Also, participants talked about the importance of lifelong learning. Several discussed the importance of remaining active and continuing educational pursuits to maintain their mental and professional intensity. Professional affiliations and attendance at regional, state, national, and international symposia were encouraged. They included that the size of the group did not matter as much as the quality of discussions and presentations that ensued. Several expressed how important it was to maintain contacts through personal and professional associations because sustaining these relationships helps to strengthen soft skills, such as effective communications and teaming. They signified how important it is to network with colleagues at workshops and conferences in order to stay abreast of current trends, emerging technologies, and other practical concerns in adult and distance education.

Other recommendations about literature were expressed throughout the interviews. These literary references focused on professional periodicals, such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *TechTrends* as well as various textbooks and other professional volumes on adult learning theories, andragogy, instructional design, organizational change management, and distance education planning and systems. Many referred to compilations that illustrate case studies within higher education on topics such as Moore's books on distance education organization and Bates' or Collins' on organizations' transformation behaviors. All

in all, the most important idea expressed was to maintain a good professional library and to read all types of literature, both in print and online, constantly.

Today more than ever before, it is important to educate distance education professionals to utilize diverse academic backgrounds to their fullest potential in order to generate resourceful and innovative solutions to complex distance education challenges. The complexity of distance education will necessitate a need for distance education leaders of the future to understand and apply communication, collaboration, and coordination skills as never before.

Leadership is necessary, if directional shifts in interdisciplinary educating of distance education leadership are to be accomplished. Creating cooperative professional development opportunities and educational practices for distance education professionals within a constantly evolving environment is a challenge to be explored by higher education institutions nationwide. According to Schein (1997), Newtzie (2002), and Kearney and Hyle (2003), organizational leadership is examined, but organizational change behaviors are disregarded or overlooked in educational environments. This is a major consideration and challenge for distance education leaders since distance education programs are constantly undergoing change. Distance education leaders must understand and prepare to deal with these changes as is indicated in the personal and professional insights given by the study's participants. In addition, the authors' recommendations and the leaders' LPI-S results and transformational leadership characteristics indicate that time should be spent educating online distance education administrators and

leaders to deal with educational organizations' change processes and outcomes (Kearney & Hyle, 2003; Newtzie, 2002; Schein, 1997). In summary, higher education institutions can address the key components of the development of future distance education leaders by giving them opportunities to gain practical experience through multiple levels of internships, develop better soft skills, manage organizational change, read a wide variety of professional literature, and focus more on distance education students and their programs. Internships may be offered only once in an educational leadership graduate program of study. According to these participants, it is much more important to offer internship opportunities at a variety of times throughout a graduate level course of study and in numerous situations relating to online distance education and educational leadership. While many higher education institutions do these things and more, they are done as parts of educational leadership study without focusing specifically in the area of online distance education.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this primarily qualitative study, there are several recommendations to be made. Like most research studies recommend, future studies about the perceptions of online distance education leaders should endeavor to include more participants. It could also be replicated with different institutional characteristics to compare whether or not smaller or larger, private or public, or profit or non-profit institutions have online distance education administrators and leaders who have different characteristics, LPI-S responses,

and interview answers and perspectives. The participants in this study consisted of ten leaders at universities with nationally recognized award-winning online distance education programs. Although some of the implications and findings may be useful for educational leaders, the overall results are not generalizable to a larger audience. By replicating this study with a larger group of participants, the results may be refuted or supported.

Comparing and contrasting new and established online distance education programs and their leaders' perceptions should occur, too. By comparing new programs' leaders LPI-S results and interviews with time-honored programs may reveal that leadership style is inherently different based on the programs' longevity also. Long-term studies may also compare and contrast more accurately how online distance education leaders deal with the various challenges associated with new or established programs. Longitudinal studies may indicate stability or change in leadership perceptions and styles over a longer period of time with consistent follow-ups over a period of several semesters, years, or even decades.

The current study concentrated on analyzing and interpreting based on the transformational leadership and leader-member exchange frameworks. For the purposes of this study, the participants exhibited more transformational characteristics. However, if all things were considered, the participants exhibited a much wider range of leadership styles and approaches moving easily between various leadership concepts depending on the wide assortment of constituents'

needs or work situations. Input from various participants of this study indicated that various models or approaches to leadership development are needed in order to navigate and succeed in the hierarchical systems prevalent at many universities. While the framework of this study used only two leadership approaches for analysis, focusing on only one or two leadership styles was not recommended by the participants. In fact, limiting oneself to only one leadership technique can be detrimental to future educational leaders. Instead, understanding and applying various approaches seems to be better overall. Future studies would be better off reflecting on numerous leadership styles in their analyses.

This study could also be reproduced using more of the online distance education team members' Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) results and implementing the Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer (LPI-O) analysis survey instrument also. This would reveal if self-reported characteristics were consistent or not among team members at different levels within an online distance education team or department. It would also indicate how members at different levels of an online distance education team may need to use different leadership approaches because of their positions or prominence.

It has been indicated in various studies (Ansari, 1989; Chliwniak, 1997) that there are major differences between male and female leadership roles and styles. Since many leadership theories and approaches have been designed, delivered, and analyzed by men using male-dominated models for ranking

leadership factors and behaviors new studies that create new instruments based on female roles and behaviors or more equitable or gender-neutral perceptions of leadership are needed. Another variation may compare and contrast gender based results of the LPI-S and LPI-O and how different genders approach leadership and administration of online distance education teams and their related programs. Focusing on distance educational leadership and the gender gap would reveal pertinent information for future female distance leaders. Because women remain underrepresented in the overall leadership at higher education institutions, studying their perceptions and reactions to leadership situations in comparison and contrast to their male counterparts would fill a gap in the existing literature.

Finally, using newer or modified versions of the LPI-S and LPI-O may reveal more intricate details and patterns than those represented or disclosed in the present study. Using Kouzes and Posner's instrument as well as additional instruments with similar scope and detail may validate the results and delineate leadership development needs. Observing participants and their team members may yield additional information and data that may change the results of this research. Plus, using different study designs may have a significant impact on the overall understanding of leaders' perceptions and approaches. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method research designs have their own inherent strengths and weaknesses. The challenges associated with focusing on one research design over the others accounts for the need for continued studies in

the area of educational leadership and online distance education leadership using a variety of methods.

Summary

The present study explored the key issue of understanding the theoretical perspectives of higher education institutions' distance education leaders concerning online distance education programs. For the most part, leaders in these positions emphasized teamwork, effective communication, management of organizational change, and lifelong learning. Demographic differences, such as age, educational experience, and job experience have profound effects on the participants' theoretical perspectives and professional perspectives. For example, when a participant experienced quality distance education as a student, the more likely he/she was to want to pursue a career in the field. Age was also another factor that had an impact on the participants' current positions. Many were between the ages of 56-65 which indicated that most had a multitude of personal and professional experiences that steered them toward these positions in adult, continuing, distance and online education. Institutional demographic differences, such as community-based need or geographical isolation, profoundly affected leaders' theoretical perspectives about distance education. Many stressed the impact of being land-grant institutions. Because of the historic outreach mission of land-grant institutions, online distance education administrators and leaders found it to be less difficult to get financial and professional support for their programs, divisions, or departments. Also,

institutions near military facilities experienced fewer challenges to developing, funding, and implementing online programs for their military students. Finally, those institutions whose populations were geographically isolated indicated the significant effect this had on overall online distance education. The scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-S) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003c) showed numerous comparisons among the leaders, such as how five of them had their highest scores in the “Enable Others to Act” section of the inventory while three focused on “Inspire a Shared Vision” and two of the leaders found “Challenge the Process” to be their strength. Overall, their average scores reflected an affinity for being able to “Enable Others to Act” primarily. Finally, distance education leaders at institutions exhibited the characteristics of transformational leadership over leader-member exchange factors. Throughout this research study, the participants, based on their LPI-S scores and subsequent interviews, revealed a rich understanding of change processes and transformational attributes as they applied to the select universities. Leader-member exchange was only evident as the size of the institution became larger thus requiring leaders to communicate through top-down dyads rather than concentric communication circles.

In conclusion, the present study intended to present research that explored the perceptions of online distance education programs’ leaders at select universities across the United States. Leadership frameworks based on Bass’ (1985, 1989, 1990, 1995, 1997, 1998a, 1998b) transformational leadership studies and papers and Basu and Green’s (1997) leader-member exchange work

were analyzed to determine what leadership style the participants exhibited more prevalently, based upon their LPI-S results and interview responses.

Unfortunately, there were distinct limitations due to the limited number of institutions who fit in the stringent researcher designed criteria. These restrictions limited this study to smaller sample of fewer universities. It also involved eliminating some institutions implementing qualified online distance education programs. Purposive sampling was used to select the specific distance education institutions and leaders that were surveyed, interviewed, and analyzed. Consequently, the study's results are not generalizable for the entire population of universities implementing online distance education programs.

However, there were major implications for future online distance education leaders indicated by the study's results despite the present study's constraints. Focusing on understanding and applying adult learning theory was an important part of these participants' theoretical perspectives. Knowing how to best deal with adult learners as a whole instead of concentrating on the learning about distance education delivery modes or technologies used was important to online distance education programs' leaders. Also, teaming was a prevalent theme. Understanding how to best work and communicate with team members from various perspectives was essential.

No one course, workshop, person, job, or book can teach educational leaders all they need to know, according to these participants. Rather a rich educational course of study in adult learning and distance education, varied

professional experiences, carefully developed work ethic and relationships, constant reading of current articles and new research, and a commitment to lifelong learning are the keys to strong online distance education leadership and the development of well-balanced leadership knowledge and skills.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL DATABASE

	University Name	Accreditation	Online Programs	350+ DEstudents	DE for 10+ yrs	Carnegie Class
1	Ball State University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
2	Bowling Green State University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
3	Central Michigan University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
4	Cleveland State University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
5	Colorado State University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
6	Columbia University	MSACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
7	East Carolina University	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
8	Florida A & M University	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	MA I
9	Florida State University	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
10	Fort Hays University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	MA I
11	George Mason University	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
12	Georgia Institute of Technology	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
13	Gonzaga University	NASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	MA I
14	Indiana State University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
15	Indiana University of Pennsylvania	MSACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
16	Iowa State University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
17	Kansas State University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
18	Mary Baldwin College	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	MA II
19	Middle Tennessee State University	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
20	Mississippi State University	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
21	New Mexico State University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
22	North Carolina State University	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
23	Nova Southeastern University	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
24	Ohio State University, Main Campus	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
25	Ohio University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
26	Oklahoma State University, Main Campus	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
27	Old Dominion University	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
28	Oregon State University	NASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
29	Portland State University	NASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
30	San Diego State University	WASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
31	The Pennsylvania State University	MSACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
32	University of Akron	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
33	University of Alabama	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
34	University of Central Florida	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
35	University of Colorado at Denver	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
36	University of Florida	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
37	University of Illinois at Chicago	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
38	University of Maryland, University College	MSACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
39	University of Missouri, Columbia	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
40	University of Montana	NASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
41	University of Nevada Las Vegas	NASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
42	University of New Mexico	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
43	University of North Carolina Greensboro	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
44	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
45	University of North Dakota	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.
46	University of Toledo	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
47	University of Utah	NASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
48	University of Vermont	NEASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
49	University of Virginia	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
50	University of Washington	NASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
51	University of Wisconsin, Madison	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
52	University of Wyoming	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
53	Utah State University	NASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
54	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
55	Washington State University	NASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
56	Weber State University	NASC	Yes	Yes	Yes	MA II
57	West Virginia University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
58	Western Carolina University	SACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	MA I
59	Western Michigan University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Ext.
60	Wright State University	NCACS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Doc/Res Int.

Compiled from Peterson's Guide to Distance Education Programs (2005), the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System: Executive Peer Tool and Peer Analysis System, Chronicle of Higher Education's online Carnegie Classification database (2000).

APPENDIX B: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY-SELF

1. I set a personal example of what I expect of others.
 - a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally
 - f. Sometimes
 - g. Fairly Often
 - h. Usually
 - i. Very Frequently
 - j. Almost Always

2. I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.
 - a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally
 - f. Sometimes
 - g. Fairly Often
 - h. Usually
 - i. Very Frequently
 - j. Almost Always

3. I seek out challenging opportunities that test my own skills and abilities.
 - a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally
 - f. Sometimes
 - g. Fairly Often
 - h. Usually
 - i. Very Frequently
 - j. Almost Always

4. I develop cooperative relationships among the people I work with.
 - a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally

- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

5. I praise people for a job well done.
- a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally
 - f. Sometimes
 - g. Fairly Often
 - h. Usually
 - i. Very Frequently
 - j. Almost Always
6. I spend time and energy making certain that the people I work with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on.
- a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally
 - f. Sometimes
 - g. Fairly Often
 - h. Usually
 - i. Very Frequently
 - j. Almost Always
7. I describe a compelling image of what our future could be like.
- a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally
 - f. Sometimes
 - g. Fairly Often
 - h. Usually
 - i. Very Frequently
 - j. Almost Always

8. I challenge people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work.
 - a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally
 - f. Sometimes
 - g. Fairly Often
 - h. Usually
 - i. Very Frequently
 - j. Almost Always

9. I actively listen to diverse points of view.
 - a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally
 - f. Sometimes
 - g. Fairly Often
 - h. Usually
 - i. Very Frequently
 - j. Almost Always

10. I make it a point to let people know about my confidence in their abilities.
 - a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally
 - f. Sometimes
 - g. Fairly Often
 - h. Usually
 - i. Very Frequently
 - j. Almost Always

11. I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make.
 - a. Almost Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Once in a While
 - e. Occasionally
 - f. Sometimes
 - g. Fairly Often

- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

12. I appeal to others to share an exciting dream of the future.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

13. I search outside the formal boundaries of my organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

14. I treat others with dignity and respect.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

15. I make sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of our projects.

- a. Almost Never

- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

16. I ask for feedback on how my actions affect other people's performance.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

17. I show others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

18. I ask "What can we learn?" when things do not go as expected.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually

- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

19. I support the decisions that people make on their own.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

20. I publicly recognize people who exemplify commitment to shared values.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

21. I build consensus around a common set of values for running our organization.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

22. I paint the "big picture" of what we aspire to accomplish.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom

- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

23. I make certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

24. I give people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

25. I find ways to celebrate accomplishments.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually

- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

26. I am clear about my philosophy of leadership.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

27. I speak with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

28. I experiment and take risks, even when there is a chance of failure.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

29. I ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely

- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

30. I give the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.

- a. Almost Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Seldom
- d. Once in a While
- e. Occasionally
- f. Sometimes
- g. Fairly Often
- h. Usually
- i. Very Frequently
- j. Almost Always

(Reprinted with permission Kouzes & Posner, 2003b)

APPENDIX C: INITIAL LETTER REQUESTING STUDY PARTICIPATION

Dear Distance Education Leader (or participant's name):

Hello! I would like to introduce myself. My name is Laura Hummell and I am a graduate student at East Carolina University. I am conducting a doctoral dissertation research study entitled "DISTANCE EDUCATION LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES: A STUDY OF HOW SELECT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IMPLEMENT AND LEAD ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS." Because of your position and university's online distance education program implementation, you have been selected to receive this request to participate in a study investigating the theoretical perspectives of distance education leaders.

Individuals who serve in the capacity of Coordinator of Distance Learning, Coordinator of Distributed Learning, Coordinator of Distance Education, Director of Distance Learning, Director of Distance Education, or other related positions at select institutions will be asked to complete the online version of Kouzes & Posner's 2003 third edition of the Leadership Practices Inventory. The LPI-S online takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. Then, with your continued agreement to participate, a follow-up interview will be conducted at your convenience.

Please be certain that all your responses and information will be kept confidential. Participants' identities will not be disclosed. All data gathered will be retained for one year in a password-protected and secure environment. According to East Carolina University's Institutional Review Board policy, it will then be deleted and destroyed according.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact me at LJH0613@ecu.edu or (252) 216-9300. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the East Carolina University Institutional Review Board. You are free to choose not to participate in or withdraw from this study at any time.

If you choose to be a participant, I would like for you to complete the online Leadership Practices Inventory-Self by December 30, 2007. I truly appreciate the time and effort you are expending. Your input is genuinely valuable to this study. Thank you for your time and support in generating valuable information for this study.

Sincerely,

Laura J. Hummell
Doctoral Candidate
East Carolina University
Greenville, NC

APPENDIX D: FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Dear Distance Education Leader (or specific title/person's name):

Hello! I recently solicited your responses to the online version Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (2003) in conjunction with a research project concerning the theoretical perspectives of distance education leaders at select higher education institutions who are implementing online distance education programs. If you have already completed the online LPI-S, I thank you. If you have not done so, I would like to offer this letter as a reminder and stress the importance of having your participation in this study. The LPI-S online takes approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please be certain that all your responses and information will be kept confidential. Participants' identities will not be disclosed. All data gathered will be retained for one year in a password-protected and secure environment and then deleted and destroyed according to Institutional Review Board policy.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact me at LJH0613@ecu.edu or (252) 216-9300. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the East Carolina University Institutional Review Board. You are free to choose not to participate in or withdraw from this study at any time.

If you choose to be a participant, please complete the online Leadership Practices Inventory-Self by December 30, 2007. I truly appreciate the time and effort you are expending. Your input is genuinely valuable to this study.

Sincerely,

Laura J. Hummell
Doctoral Candidate
East Carolina University
Greenville, NC

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

Initial analysis of key informants will be conducted based on longevity of program, success of program, and longevity of leader at the selected institution. Introductions will be conducted to determine if a face-to-face or phone interview is possible. Introduce myself and my study. Thank the person for completing the LPI-S. As you know I am investigating the theoretical perspectives of distance education leaders at select higher education institutions who are implementing online distance education programs. All answers you give will be kept strictly confidential. May I conduct and record a phone (face-to-face) interview with you at this time to garner more in-depth information about your perspectives and characteristics? If yes, tell them about IRB voluntary participation. If no, thank the person and terminate the call or interview.

1. As a distance education leader, how do you view yourself? How would you characterize yourself as a leader?
2. What about this institution makes it a leader in online distance education?
3. What type of experiences have you had that made you want to become a distance education leader?
4. Do you think that something or someone in your life or educational background influenced how you ended up in this position? How? What were the experiences?
5. How do the online distance education programs fit into this department's, college's, or university's mission?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of online distance education programs at this university?

7. How will online distance education affect higher education in the future? What challenges do you think online distance education leaders will face in five years? Ten years? Twenty years?
8. How can higher education institutions better prepare future distance education leaders? What literature or courses would you recommend that future distance education leaders read or study?

APPENDIX F: CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Research Study: DISTANCE EDUCATION LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES: A STUDY OF HOW SELECT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IMPLEMENT ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS
Principal Investigator: Laura. J. Hummell
Institution: East Carolina University
Principal Investigator's Address: 108 Roanoke Trail Manteo, NC 27954
Telephone #: 252-216-9300

INTRODUCTION

You have been asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Laura J. Hummell, a doctoral student at East Carolina University. The purpose of this research study is to identify characteristics that online distance education leaders have in common. In addition this study will interview select distance education leaders in their respective institutional settings.

PLAN AND PROCEDURES

Participants will be asked to respond to five demographic statements and the Leadership Practices Inventory survey instrument consisting of 30 questions. Then, select individuals will be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews via the phone or on-site visits at the participants' convenience. Phone or on-site visits may be recorded via audiotape with the participant's permission.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

None

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

While you will not receive personal benefit from your participation in this study, the research will contribute to an understanding of what common leadership characteristics online distance education leaders possess. Themes and similarities will be shared in formal presentations and publications with the online distance education community. In addition, distance education leadership

educational opportunities will be proposed and designed based upon the factors that are identified in this study.

SUBJECT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

All surveys and records will have codes assigned to them and will never identify from which person or institution the information was obtained. All the study's surveys and records will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet or secure, password-protected online environment for two years after the study has been completed then will be destroyed and/or deleted.

COSTS OF PARTICIPATION

None

COMPENSATION

None

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participating in this study is voluntary. If you decide not to be in this study after it has already started, you may stop at any time without losing benefits that you should normally receive. You may stop at any time you choose without penalty.

PERSONS TO CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS

The investigator will be available to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the investigators, Laura J. Hummell at 252-216-9300. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Chair of the University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board at phone number 252-744-2914 (days) and/or the ECU Risk Management Office at 252-328-6858.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Title of Research Study: DISTANCE EDUCATION LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES:
A STUDY OF HOW SELECT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
IMPLEMENT ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

I have read all of the above information, asked questions and have received satisfactory answers in areas I did not understand. (A copy of this signed and dated consent form will be given to the person signing this form as the participant or as the participant authorized representative.)

I (circle one) do or do not give Ms. Hummell permission to audiotape our interview.

Participant's Name (PRINT)
Date Time

Signature

Laura J. Hummell Laura J. Hummell 11/27/2007 10:25AM
Principal Investigator's (PRINT) Signature Date Time

APPENDIX G: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board

East Carolina University

Ed Warren Life Sciences Building • 600 Moye Boulevard • LSB 104 • Greenville, NC 27834

Office 252-744-2914 • Fax 252-744-2284 • www.ecu.edu/irb

Chair and Director of Biomedical IRB: Charles W. Daeschner, III, MD

Chair and Director of Behavioral and Social Science IRB: Susan L. McCammon, PhD

TO: Laura Hummell, 108 Roanoke Trail, Manteo, NC 27954

FROM: UMCIRB *uk*

DATE: October 17, 2007

RE: Expedited Category Research Study

TITLE: "Distance Education Leaders' Perspectives: A Study of How Select Higher Education Institutions Implement Online Distance Education Programs"

UMCIRB # 07-0615

This research study has undergone review and approval using expedited review on 10.10.07. This research study is eligible for review under an expedited category because it is on collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes. It is also a research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Dr. S. McCammon deemed this **unfunded** study **no more than minimal risk** requiring a continuing review in **12 months**. Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

The above referenced research study has been given approval for the period of **10.10.07** to **10.9.08**. The approval includes the following items:

- Internal Processing Form (dated 9.24.07)
- Cover Letter
- Survey
- Informed Consent (no version date)

Dr. S. McCammon does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

The UMCIRB applies 45 CFR 46, Subparts A-D, to all research reviewed by the UMCIRB regardless of the funding source. 21 CFR 50 and 21 CFR 56 are applied to all research studies under the Food and Drug Administration regulation. The UMCIRB follows applicable International Conference on Harmonisation Good Clinical Practice guidelines.