

Public Abstract

First Name:Carolyn

Middle Name:Patrice

Last Name:McKnight

Adviser's First Name:Barbara

Adviser's Last Name:Martin

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:SP 2012

Department:Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis

Degree:EdD

Title:Creating an effective educational environment for adult learners: A qualitative, multi-case study of off-campus center administrators use of invitational leadership.

This qualitative, multi-case study was designed to examine off-campus centers and their administrators in creating an effective learning environment for adult learners. Serving as the conceptual framework, invitational leadership theory is a holistic approach which nurtures the belief that everyone is intrinsically motivated and it is the leaders' responsibility to unleash their true potential (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). The researcher utilized invitational leadership theory as lens to analyze off-campus center administrators to understand the perceptions of faculty, students, and staff on the four characteristics: trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality within the five environments: people, places, policies, programs, and processes (Novak & Purkey, 2001).

The off-campus centers analyzed were located in Midwestern States and the universities were classified as Master's Universities and Colleges by the Carnegie Foundation. The study's populations consisted of three off-campus center administrators and their supervisors, faculty, students and staff. Data was collected and triangulated through interviews, focus groups, observations and historical material (Creswell, 2003). Through data analysis, three themes emerged: 1) Intense Collaboration, with subthemes of Quorum of Stakeholders and Distributive Responsibility; and 2) Motivational Influence, with subtheme of Optimism, and Intention; and 3) Inherited Sense of Kinship subthemes of Dispensation of the Patron, and Ambiance Conducive for Erudition.

From the research, conclusions derived from the finding indicated: the off-campus center administrators' practices were consistent with invitational leadership characteristics; the environments were created to serve the adult learner; and there is a continuous need for transparency between their main campuses and the off-campus centers.