

## INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, ADMINISTRATION, AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME INVENTORY

David Burgess, PhD  
Department of Educational Administration  
University of Saskatchewan  
28 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, Canada S7N 0X1  
david.burgess@usask.ca

Paul Newton, PhD  
Department of Educational Policy Studies  
University of Alberta  
7-119 Education North  
Edmonton, Canada T6G 2G5  
pmnewton@ualberta.ca

### Abstract

The authors discuss early results of data collection comparing the ways in which educational leadership, administration, and management (ELAM) is defined as an intellectual discipline within Canada, South Africa and the United Kingdom. Graduate course descriptions pertaining to ELAM are employed as a dataset (Canadian n=397, from 28 universities/colleges; South African n=79 from 7 universities/colleges; and British n=251 from 37 universities/colleges). Limitations of processes and initial considerations for *non-contested EMAL knowledge clusters* are discussed.

### Introduction

In this paper, the authors explore the nature of educational leadership, administration, and management (ELAM) as an intellectual discipline in an international context. Specifically, this paper presents early comparisons of the ways in which ELAM is defined as an intellectual discipline within Canada, South Africa and the United Kingdom. The data discussed below represents a subset of on-going work exploring key subject matter generally found as a part of graduate university based ELAM programmes within the English-speaking world. The larger project from which this sample has been drawn is in the process of cataloguing university undergraduate and graduate course descriptions through the use of retroductive content analysis to identify how course-content areas might be clustered in each of the countries studied.

### Method

#### *Technology*

Due to the highly specialized needs of this project, a web-based database application was written in the MySQL and PHP languages by the principal investigators. The application permitted online access for both the principal investigators during the coding and analysis phase of the project, but also a team of undergraduate and graduate students during the data collection phase. Access to the database for searching, coding and analysis was restricted to the principal investigators and one graduate research assistant. Data collection began in November 2007 and continues today.

#### *Process*

Data collection and data entry were entirely web-based. Researchers conducted electronic queries of internet search engines for publicly accessible course descriptions from universities in each of the three jurisdictions discussed below. Course descriptions were

commonly found in text or pdf documents; at times searches of institutional databases were required. In many cases, course descriptions were collected in conjunction with applicable programmes of study for undergraduate and graduate students. Where programmes of study were not available to guide the researchers, more liberal collection criteria were employed.

Individual course descriptions were assigned individual records within the database. Several metadata were collected for each description in addition to the course title. These included: (a) the country of origin; (b) the name of the institution; (c) the name college, faculty, department or other institutional subunit; (d) whether the course was required or elective; (e) whether the course was intended for undergraduate or graduate students; (f) if additional course completion was prerequisite; (g) the course number or designation; and (h) any additional comments or notes assigned to the course description in its original context. Additionally, each course was initially and automatically assigned a designation of confidence. The purpose of this designation permitted the principal investigators the ability to conduct an initial assessment and ranking of a course' description as intuitively falling under the domain of educational administration—especially where researchers were unable to juxtapose programmes of study.

Various knowledge classification schema were explored during the preparatory phase of the project. The purpose of these initial classification schema was to provide a standardized basis upon which course descriptions could be compared. The thesaurus (subject headings) for bibliographic cataloguing specific to educational administration (school management and organization) employed by the United States Library of Congress (2002) was selected for use as the core classification structure (see appendix 1). The selection of the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) was based upon the ubiquity of its use in libraries of the English-speaking world (Olson, 2001, 2004). Furthermore, the LCSH provided a top-down organizational hierarchy that encompassed a knowledge classification schema constructed by professional academic librarians, and a longevous logical collection of relationships among knowledge clusters (Waller, 2008). Each node in the subject heading hierarchy was treated as independent for the purposes of course description analysis. As a group, these categories represented the core classification system employed in this research.

Following data collection, course descriptions and metadata were systematically analyzed through the use of retroductive (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002) content analysis techniques (Berg, 2001; Krippendorff, 1980; Silverman, 2000). The principal investigators conducted this analysis with the following retroductive question guiding the exploration: what are the basic concepts defined in this academic course that distinguish it as pertaining to the administration of schools and other educational institutions? Each course description was read and examined for key words associated with (a) available codes, (b) recurring themes not represented in available codes, or (c) basic concepts not represented in available codes but intuitively valuable to the contemporary understanding of the field as perceived by the principal investigators. No more than three core classifications, and no more than three cognate classifications—classifications added in situ during the coding phase of the research as a result of points (b) and (c) above—were assigned to each course description record.

The coding of data was an iterative process. Initial codes numbered 164 and were reduced to 46 final coded knowledge clusters for the courses. Many of the codes (particularly from the LCHS) were eliminated as data were analysed because no courses were assigned those codes. Further reduction of the number of interpretive codes was the result of a synthesis of

subcodes in to supraordinate codes (e.g., school administrators—assistant principals was subsumed into the code school administrators).

### *Limitations*

The collection and analysis of data discussed in this study is limited. One of the most significant challenges encountered in this project was determining whether courses were primarily educational administration courses or courses of another discipline within educational studies. In the Canadian context, the merging of departments of educational administration with other disciplines (e.g., educational foundations) resulted in difficulty for the research team with respect to a determination of *educational administration* for a particular course. In some cases, this was a relatively simple judgment to make. Some universities have departments of educational administration, which made this determination easier, while some courses were explicitly labeled as educational administration in the course title or description. In many cases, however, there appears to be a considerable blurring of boundaries between the discipline of educational administration and educational foundations. Both disciplines are informed by sociological orientations to social science and both have sociology, politics, and policy (among others) as central objects of interest. In these cases, information on the academic program was informative, but in many cases, courses were included if we perceived that the course was shared by both of these disciplines.

In the United Kingdom, the great number of courses or modules offered by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) caused a further lack of conceptual clarity. The modules, as articulated on websites, contain descriptions that were not easy to classify. In many cases, the modules offered by the NCSL covered a vast array of topics in a single module. In these cases, we discarded modules that were described a diverse set of topics or theoretical constructs, as coding would have proved of little value.

As a final note, the most significant limitation is that our analysis depends on the knowledge encoded within course descriptions and titles. The authors are aware that the courses taught may differ slightly or even significantly from the syllabi published on websites; however, as a starting point, the authors hold the assumption that these descriptions represent some conceptualization of the knowledge clusters that occupy the field of educational administration. In future research, the authors hope to explore other sources to confirm our understandings presented here.

### Data

For this study, the researchers collected 397 Canadian course descriptions (from 28 universities/ colleges), 251 Course descriptions from the United Kingdom (from 37 universities/ colleges), and 79 South African course descriptions (from 7 universities/colleges).

The data were analysed by percentage of total codes for each country. There were 453 assigned codes for Canadian courses, 271 for British courses, and 111 for South African courses. Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the top knowledge clusters for each nation. The critical value for determining top knowledge clusters was 4% of the total assigned codes for each nation. For each nation, there were knowledge clusters that appear to be regionally significant that did not represent more than 4% of the total assigned codes. They are, nonetheless significant, as they appear to be unique to the different contexts. In particular, Aboriginal/Indigenous issues in education administration (in Canada) and HIV/AIDS (in South Africa) were represented, albeit in a small number of courses.

*Table 1. Top knowledge clusters – Canadian universities*

---

School management and organisation	8%
Leadership theory	7%
Educational policy studies	7%
School personnel mgt.	6%
Organizational theory	6%
Organizational change	5%
Law and legislation	5%
Economics of education	5%
Sociology of education	4%
School improvement	4%
School supervision	4%

*Table 2. Top knowledge clusters – South African universities*

---

Educational policy studies	12%
School personnel management	10%
Leadership theory	8%
Economics of education	7%
Governance of education	7%
Organizational change	6%
Educational research	6%
School improvement	5%
Law and legislation	5%
Accountability	5%
Curriculum	5%
Community development	5%

*Table 3. Top knowledge clusters – British universities*

---

Leadership theory	13%
School personnel mgt.	10%
School administrators	10%
School improvement	8%
Organizational change	7%
Educational policy studies	6%
International and comparative education	6%

School management and organization	6%
Educational research	5%
School effectiveness	4%
Mentoring	4%
Sociology of education	4%

#### Discussion

In all three countries, leadership theory is ranked near the top of knowledge clusters identified. However, the characterization of leadership in these countries differs significantly. Most notably, in Canada the courses on leadership use language such as *leadership theories* or *perspectives*, while in the United Kingdom, the words *skills* and *capacities* are most often paired with leadership.

In South Africa, sociology of education was not identified within the courses studied. While in the United Kingdom, law and legislation appear to be absent from the courses. South Africa is unique with respect to the percentage of courses that incorporate the knowledge clusters of accountability and community development. There also appears to be an emphasis on curriculum and curriculum reform with EMAL courses in South Africa. The relative importance of educational policy studies in South Africa also is worthy of further investigation.

The coding of clusters also demonstrates the diversity of knowledge clusters in Canadian courses. There were 41 assigned codes for Canadian courses, 33 for British courses, and 28 for South African courses. This is not surprising, as the Canadian education context is non-centralized, with provincial jurisdictions having the entire responsibility for education and educational policy in Canada. Also significant is the relative importance of organisational theory in Canadian EMAL courses.

There is considerable similarity in the configuration of knowledge clusters among the three countries studied. The importance of leadership theory, personnel management, policy studies, organizational change, and school improvement is not surprising, and perhaps these represent *non-contested knowledge clusters* within the discipline. More investigation of the areas of significant difference is required, in particular, the knowledge clusters of law and legislation, organizational theory, and accountability and their relative importance and lack thereof within the various countries studied.

#### Future

The data presented in this paper represents a fraction of a growing international sample. At the time of writing, 1000 course descriptions have been collected from Commonwealth universities (with the Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions currently the subject of data collection) pertaining to the academic field of ELAM and its variants.

#### References

- Berg, B. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Danermark, B., Ekström, M., Jakobsen, L., & Karlsson, J. (2002). *Explaining society: Critical realism in the social sciences*. London: Routledge.
- Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. London: Sage.

- Library of Congress. (2002). *Library of congress subject headings*. Washington: The Author.
- Olson, H. A. (2001). The power to name: Representation in library catalogues. *Signs*, 26(3), 639-668.
- Olson, H. A. (2004). The ubiquitous hierarchy: An army to overcome the threat of a mob. *Library Trends*, 53(3), 604-616.
- Waller, V. (2008). Legitimacy for large public libraries in the digital age. *Library Review*, 57(5), 372-385.