Innovative Instructional Design and Implementation Strategies in Doctoral Education

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Abstract: Societal demands in the twenty-first century have created challenges for institutions of higher education offering doctoral programs. In response to the changing needs of doctoral learners, institutions of higher education may consider exploring creative trends for designing asynchronous doctoral degree programs. Online doctoral programs can be developed to include comprehensive learning opportunities in residency settings. Doctoral learners must demonstrate critical and creative thinking and problem-solving skills in collaborative communities. Online courses could be enhanced with current, dynamic technology such as Virtual Organizations. Administrators can facilitate Doctoral Program Councils’ development of core competencies, while they design evaluation of learning outcomes.

Instructional Design

Curriculum development for doctoral programs presents a unique set of challenges. This session is designed as an interactive discussion covering innovative approaches in designing, implementing, and assessing doctoral programs in a distance learning environment.

Oversight of processes through governing councils is an approach to consider, particularly during the inception and creation of new programs. Collectively, these governance bodies provide the fundamental schematic for curriculum developers and subject matter experts to follow, as well as the assessment criteria to ensure that the university meets curricular goals.

Courses should be developed in alignment with an overall vision of the program. Governing councils can be instrumental in creating programmatic goals, domains, sub-domains, competencies and assessments. Competencies are broad statements of graduate ability that represent cumulative learning occurring across a particular program. Unlike objectives, competencies typically do not deal with course content. Rather, content is a focus of the analyses described in the competency statement. Thus, competencies are not solely associated with a certain course; the same competency is often stated and assessed at several junctures throughout a program.

Through a curriculum mapping process, these councils are able to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum design based on the criteria set to meet program goals. This analysis is designed to ascertain the degree to which course competencies and assessments communicate and enable the program’s intended learning outcomes. This review includes three distinct levels: an analysis of domain and sub-domain representation, a Bloom’s affective analysis of learning competencies, and an analysis of assessment types. An example of such a process will be provided.

In designing doctoral education, constructing the Scholar, Practitioner, Leader Model, honors the traditional role of the doctorate while utilizing a distinct approach to higher education. Within this model, academic and practical approaches to learning are integrated throughout the curriculum as complementary components of leadership education. Integrating scholarship, practice, and leadership in a complimentary, rather than conflicting, manner affords learners more meaningful integration of course content into their personal and professional lives and an epistemic foundation for making data-driven, effective decisions. In the interchange between the academic and the practical, leaders emerge – leaders ready to face the challenges of a challenging world.
Implementation and Assessment

One approach to comprehensive assessment in residency will be offered. The experience may be offered through a course representing a crucial point at which competencies are assessed holistically. Instead of the course serving as a strictly cognitive assessment, the Collaborative Case Study is designed to measure learners’ competence as leaders in organizational simulations. For successful completion of the course, learners must demonstrate leadership, follower-ship, problem-solving, strategic planning, and meta-cognitive ability. Learners and faculty have described this course as a transformational experience. Many educational offerings simply address cognitive aspects of learning, with emphases on building knowledge within learners irrespective of how that knowledge is affected by the learners’ experiences, values, and core identity. In order to fulfill the mission of fostering the growth of leaders, however, it is necessary to center learners’ rich experience as a crucial component of the curriculum. To that end, coursework is designed to both foster a deep understanding of the concepts, theories, and practice of a field as well as an introspection of how that knowledge integrates with an individual learner’s experiences and personal epistemology.

Further discussion regarding technology-supported innovations will be presented. Virtual Organizations may be created and implemented within any learning institution. These programmatic enhancements offer learners opportunities to study within environments that may not otherwise be accessible.