

THE ROLE OF NCPEA IN DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING “BEST PRACTICE”*

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Abstract

In determining “best practices” for the field of educational administration, it is recommended that a process similar to the one described in this article be developed and administered. Dissemination of the best practice is also a key element in the process.



NOTE: This module has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and sanctioned by the National Council of the Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a scholarly contribution to the knowledge base in educational administration.

THE ROLE OF NCPEA IN DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING “BEST PRACTICE” IN THE PROFESSION OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Instruction regarding “Best Practice” has become an important element in the preparation of educational administrators. The professional association for professors of educational administration, the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), has committed itself to the promotion of best practice in a number of ways. First, NCPEA has developed the NCPEA CONNEXIONS, an online E-Library of the Knowledge Base of Educational Administration. Second, The 2006 NCPEA Yearbook theme, Best Practices in Educational Administration: Research, Teaching, and Service, also reflects NCPEA’s dedicated efforts and desire to work creatively, effectively, and efficiently to respond to the challenges and constraints confronting P-16 educational leaders and administrators. Through these and other NCPEA activities, the association hopes to stimulate vigorous oral and written conversations that will produce practical solutions in relation to pedagogy, research, and engagement with internal and external communities.

Both CONNEXIONS and the 2006 NCPEA Yearbook reflect successful and creative practice with regard to the triumvirate demands of teaching, research, and service required of the educational administrative faculty member in higher education. These activities continue the NCPEA tradition of promoting learner-centered strategies by encouraging scholarship on active learning, student engagement, and structures which

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support learner-centered, student achievement-centered approaches. There are several aspects of “Best Practice” related to the preparation of educational leaders as follows.

Best Practices in Teaching Educational Administration

Many educators are experimenting with new strategies to promote learning. Case study methods, just-in-time learning, problem-based learning, distance learning, and blended pedagogy are just a few examples of strategies that move us away from the “sage on the stage” toward stronger learner-centered designs focused on student achievement gains, data analysis, and more imaginative methods of assessment. Through CONNEXIONS, NCPEA encourages sharing strategies on innovative designs—including those strategies that didn’t quite live up to their promise—to promote broad conversation in support of innovative pedagogy and the scholarship of teaching.

Best Practices in Research Relative to Educational Administration

Writings of scholars such as Ernest Boyer (see for example Braxton et. al. 2002) , suggest a new definition of scholarship adding for consideration scholarship in the realms of teaching and service in addition to the more traditional definition of scholarship as peer-reviewed publications. The call for scholarly production remains a key demand on the educational administration professor. As such this theme pays tribute to an understanding of the continued demand for scholarship.

Best Practices in Service Related to Educational Administration

Natural disasters and continued economic decline provide continued impetus and unending rationale for a call to service. This theme explores how to identify, promote, and document high quality service by and with students and faculty from a variety of perspectives. This theme can also address strategies for the promotion of excellence in addressing concerns related to all aspects of the community.

In the developmental process of CONNEXIONS and the 2006 NCPEA Yearbook, a number of policy and procedural questions arose. What is a “best practice”? Is it an activity? Is it content? Or is it both? Is there only one best practice? Does “one size fit all”? How is a best practice determined? What are the standards of review for determining a best practice? Who determines these standards? What is the review process for determining a best practice? Who conducts the review process? It is clear that these questions need answers, or at least some investigation. Further, there are at least three areas of activities that could be labeled a best practice: Best practice for the conduct of research to prove a best practice, best practice in teaching students the best practices, and best practices in achieving the best practice.

Regardless of the categorization of the best practice, there are several common components to each of these types of best practice: What is the goal? What is the desired outcome? What are the activities for achieving the goal? What is the assessment process for determining the extent to which the goal was met? What was the context of the activity? Does the environmental context influence the extent of attainment of the goal?

The recognition of best practices requires a standardized process. Following is a general model of the process that has been used by other professional associations and could be used in the development of best practices in the profession of educational administration. This model has been adapted from a best practices process developed by the Australian and New Zealand Environment Conservation Council (ANZECC, 1999). This process has five component stages. Figure 1 is a graphical depiction of this process.

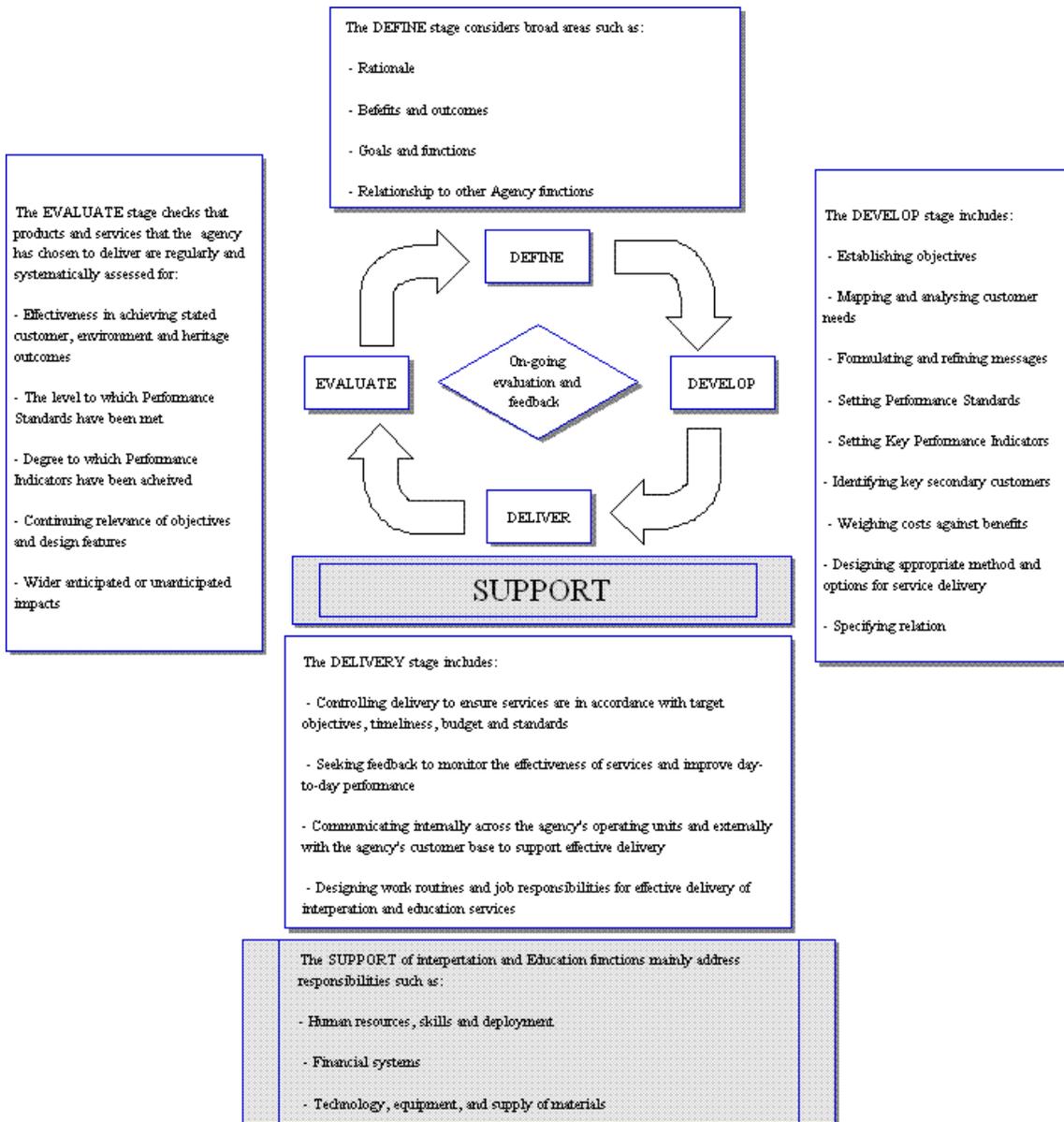


Figure 1

The Stages of Instituting a Best Practice:

- I. DEFINE
- II. DEVELOP
- III. DELIVER
- IV. EVALUATE
- V. SUPPORT

I. The DEFINE stage considers broad areas such as:

- Rationale
- Benefits and outcomes
- Goals and functions
- Relationship to other Agency functions

II. The DEVELOP stage includes:

- Establishing objectives
- Mapping and analyzing customer needs
- Formulating and refining messages
- Setting Performance Standards
- Setting Key Performance Indicators
- Identifying key secondary customers
- Weighing costs against benefits
- Designing appropriate method and options for service delivery
- Specifying relationships

III. The DELIVERY stage includes:

- Controlling delivery to ensure services are in accordance with target objectives, timeliness, budget and standards
- Seeking feedback to monitor the effectiveness of services and improve day-to-day performance
- Communicating internally across the agency's operating units and externally with the agency's customer base to support effective delivery
- Designing work routines and job responsibilities for effective delivery of interpretation and education services

IV. The EVALUATE stage checks that products and services that the agency has chosen to deliver are regularly and systematically assessed for:

- Effectiveness in achieving stated outcomes
- The level to which Performance Standards have been met
- Degree to which Performance Indicators have been achieved
- Continuing relevance of objectives and design features
- Wider anticipated or unanticipated impacts

V. The SUPPORT of Interpretation and Education functions mainly address responsibilities such as:

- Human resources, skills and deployment
- Financial systems
- Technology, equipment, and supply of materials.

In determining "best practices" for the field of educational administration, it is recommended that a process similar to the one described above be developed and administered. In addition, a best practice is only useful if it becomes a general practice throughout the profession. Once a best practice has been developed, it needs to be disseminated. Some of the dissemination processes for NCPEA include: CONNEXIONS, NCPEA Yearbook, Educational Leadership Review, NCPEA conference discussion sessions,

professional development workshops for appropriate audiences, etc. In NCPEA, for example, some possible module components of CONNEXIONS could be: (1) Reviews of literature for a best practice, (2) How to teach the best practice: course syllabi & lesson plans, (2) In-class activities including: case studies, simulations, & lectures (both the content of and the conduct of), (3) Field-based exercises, including course activities and internships, etc. and (4) Assessment activities of the best practices (both in the class and in the field). Also, what is the necessary supporting documentation required to fully describe this "best practice"?

A comprehensive plan for the dissemination of best practices requires the following policy and procedural decisions to be made:

- What is the purpose of the yearbook?
- What is the purpose of the journal?
- What is the purpose of CONNEXIONS?
- What occurs at the annual conference?

Should the yearbook be aligned with the conference?

Should NCPEA plan on conducting training programs on how to do all of this?

NCPEA has started in the right direction with regard to the development of best practices. It now needs to go to the next level and develop a comprehensive and systemic approach to the development and dissemination of best practice.

References

1

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