

Editorial – Leadership in Open and Distance Learning Notes

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Volume 14, Number 4, September 2013

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1066910ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v14i4.1674>

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Publisher(s)

Athabasca University Press (AU Press)

ISSN

1492-3831 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Cleveland-Innes, M. (2013). Editorial – Leadership in Open and Distance Learning Notes. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 14(4), i–ii. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v14i4.1674>

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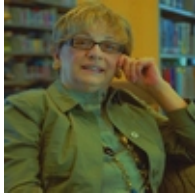
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Editorial – Leadership in Open and Distance Learning Notes



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One might ask “who needs leadership?” in higher education organizations, organizations full of talented, highly intellectual faculty. Highly trained as experts in a discipline or field of study, faculty are also expected to self-manage their organizations through service, and teach functions that require further expertise for which they may have little or no systematic training. In discussion with faculty, it is suggested that “like good teaching, academic leadership is not telling or transmitting information and ideas; it is a sort of conversation aimed at helping people to change and develop” (Ramsden, 1998, p. 163). If we accept these premises as true, it is reasonable to look at micro-interactional processes that support change and development, as indicated in the Powers article on leader-member exchange theory.

Founded in early versions of social exchange considerations, leader-member exchange rests on earlier exchange propositions suggested by Homans in 1958:

The Success Proposition. “For all actions taken by persons, the more often a particular action of a person is rewarded, the more likely the person is to perform that action” (under similar stimulus conditions)” (p. 16).

The Stimulus Proposition. “If in the past the occurrence of a particular stimulus, or set of stimuli, has been the occasion on which a person's action has been rewarded, then the more similar the present stimuli are to the past ones, the more likely the person is to perform the action, or some similar action, now” (pp. 22-23).

The Deprivation-Satiation Proposition. “The more often in the recent past a person has received a particular reward, the less valuable any further unit of that reward becomes for him” (p. 29).

The Value Proposition. "The more valuable to a person is the result of his action, the more likely he is to perform the action" (p. 25).

The Rationality Proposition. "In choosing between alternative actions, a person will choose that one for which, as perceived by him at the time, the value, V , of the result, multiplied by the probability, p , of getting the result, is the greater" (p. 43, as quoted by Emerson, 1976, pp. 339-340).

Notably behaviorist in perspective, this gives us the opportunity to consider that, in spite of the reductionist views and limitations of such thinking, this kind of internal assessment is still a part of interaction – within the chaotic influences of context and social construction (Uhl-Bien, 2011). Internal assessment is continuous throughout interaction for those doing the interacting within relationships. Key to understanding leader-member exchange is the notion that relational leadership emerges through processes of exchange in the interaction between people, and not the people themselves. It is these unique processes that single-out leadership among faculty, such that leadership in this setting must be considered as unique as the individuals and interactions themselves.

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