

TITLE: Exploring Leadership in Distance Education, the Blueprint for Success: A Study of Self-Reported Leadership Practices and Institutional Characteristics

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OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a difference between institutional characteristics and leadership practices that are necessary to construct a successful distance education program.

METHODOLOGY: Study participants were selected via “purposeful sampling” (Charles & Mertler, 2002). A total of 86 institutions were selected because of their “leadership” in the field of distance education, and 38 participated (44% response rate). Most respondents possessed a doctorate (58%), and the majority (47%) had 10 years or fewer in the distance education field, with another 32 percent having 11-20 years of experience. Respondents completed the LPI (in an actual and ideal mode), along with providing demographic and institutional data. Internal reliabilities with this sample on the actual mode ranged from .63 to .88 and from .61 to .91 on the ideal side.

KEY FINDINGS: Ideal LPI scores were consistently higher than actual scores. The rank order for actual was Enabling, Encouraging, Modeling, Challenging, and Inspiring and for the ideal mode the rank order was Encouraging, Modeling, Enabling, Inspiring and Challenging. There were no statistically significant differences between institutional types for either the actual or ideal leadership practices, suggesting “that distance education administrators can be successful at different types of institutions” (p. 77).