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The Editors are looking for manuscripts that take as their topic the full range of Interdisciplinary and Liberal Arts related issues in primary, secondary and higher education worldwide. It is the hope of the editorial board that reports of quality research and practice will be published from schools around the world. Submitted manuscripts might take the form of (but are not strictly limited to) original empirical articles, theoretical analyses, book reviews, commentaries, literature reviews/conceptual analysis and reports of successful practices in higher education. Theoretically driven studies of hypotheses that have implications for understanding and improving the study and practice of diverse educational communities are particularly encouraged. Authors of manuscripts examining basic theory and research should identify implications for more applied topics, and authors of manuscripts dealing with more applied topics should draw conclusions that are relevant to basic research and theory.

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Welcome to the QUEST: Journal of Higher Education Excellence (QJHEE). QJHEE is a peer-reviewed, online published journal devoted to advancing scholarship and practice in the areas of Interdisciplinary Studies, Multicultural Education, and Minority Males in education with an emphasis on the African American and Hispanic male. QJHEE publishes research on a variety of educational issues. More so, QJHEE features articles that are grounded in research, theory and experiential knowledge, as well as, promote critical examination of issues facing minority males in education.
DLOPI (DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT)  
A ROAD MAP FOR EDUCATORS: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS  

By: Rufus Ellis, Audrey Lewis and Jà Hon Vance

ABSTRACT

Research on student success indicates that parental involvement plays a decisive role in student learning outcomes and has a positive impact on the school environment. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, signed into law in 2002, imposed new guidelines for student performance as well as educational accountability on the nation’s school systems. During an era of globalization, declining tax revenues and ever present technological change, many school systems face challenges in “measuring up” to the mandate of No Child Left Behind. Too often educators and lawmakers are pitted against one another in the battle over student performance in our nation’s schools. Parental involvement is mentioned on the periphery of discussions concerning education policy.

Different Levels of Parental Involvement (DLOPI) is designed to shift the paradigm of No Child Left Behind to No Parent Left Behind. Here you will find research based methods and strategies to engage parents and community leaders in successfully educating our children. The DLOPI program provides meaningful and fun ways to guarantee academic success for children and schools.

(Keywords: parent, involvement, impact, school, accountability, student)
Introduction

Different Levels of Parent Involvement (DLOPI) program was conceived during a summer of developing plans for the coming school term. It was originally an attempt to organize a parent program to help parents recognize their roles and a way to assist schools to involve parents, but more importantly, to take a serious look at how educators view parents and their involvement. Therefore, DLOPI evolved into a creative strategy for schools to use in a more comprehensive district-wide parent involvement program. Since its inception, extensive research and the inclusion of a data base accountability system creation measures parent participation in relationship to student performance.

Parent and family involvement has been a priority since the founding of the National PTA. Nevertheless, more than forty years of research on parent involvement has constantly maintained the importance—the need—and the positive effects on student behavior, grades, morale, and student achievement. In 1996, the State of Florida, along with many other states recognized Family and Community Involvement as Goal 8 of the State of Florida Education Plan. Departments of Education in many states charged individual school districts to include this goal in their school improvement plans for student achievement. This was a monumental step forward to acknowledge parents in the success of schools and the students they serve.

The PTA is one of the most organized associations that advocate for students, parents and educators. Recognition is given to the PTA as one of the driving forces of this new legislation for family and community involvement. In addition, it also assisted with supporting statutes to develop and include school advisory councils. To this day, this reform represents the cutting edge of what was the tip of the iceberg for parental choice, vouchers and leaving no child behind. Joyce Epstein (2005) nationally recognized as a pioneer in the area of parent involvement, created the six standards for National PTA while DLOPI was conceived.

Overview

Different Levels of Parent Involvement (DLOPI, pronounced de-low-pee) is a parent program with five modules designed to encourage parents to become and stay involved in their child’s education, whether at school or at home. This program provides teachers with a simple computerized formula for determining different levels of parental involvement by assessing the student’s classroom performance and behaviors as measured by the parent or guardian’s participation and interaction in their child’s education. The program further emphasizes literacy skills, leadership skills, mentoring, and volunteering. The character education component stresses the importance of students graduating from school and not becoming a drop out. Faith-based and community organizations are encouraged to “adopt a school, family or a child.” In addition, DLOPI program trainers offer incentives, such as DLOPI t-shirts, mugs, caps, and other rewards for parents and teachers to receive during trainings as promotional items. This serves as an awareness tool and a creative venue to generate conversation for future partnerships, increased parent involvement, and more parent participation.
While DLOPI is a program to increase parental awareness and participation, the creation of an all-inclusive district-wide model for parent involvement is the most effective approach to providing systemic structure and collaboration of all programs. Therefore, DLOPI offers a more comprehensive training on how to structure a district-wide framework for parent involvement and then, how to incorporate the DLOPI program as training modules.

**District’s Commitment**

*Providing the vision, leadership and commitment to DLOPI will increase your overall parental participation for the district and ultimately, student success.* School boards, superintendent’s and the entire administrative leadership team of a school district play a pivotal role in making parent and family involvement a reality. Staff, teachers and parents will sense the level of priority administrators give to involving parents. The climate in schools is created largely by the tone set at the district level and in the office of the head administration of the school. If district administrators, directors of targeted programs and school principals take the stance of making “collaborating with parents” important, other educators will join in.

The first standard of effective leadership is for the superintendent of schools to incorporate parent involvement into the district’s strategic plan. It is based not only on mandated policies, guidelines and procedures by federal and state legislative requirements for parent involvement, but it shows each school’s community the importance of the district’s involvement and partnership with parents and the community. With all of the new and changing requirements, accountability, academic standards of excellence, parental choice, educators and future teachers prerequisite to student success will be to view parent involvement differently.

Therefore, it is logical, and makes common sense to begin with designing a successful District-wide Parent and Community Engagement Program; an inclusive plan on how to interact and positively communicate with stakeholders and the parents of the students we teach.

**The Instructional Leader—The Principal**

*Administrative support is the key to the success of any parent organization, school advisory council or parent booster program.*

Principals can assist in charting the course of designing a successful plan by immediately creating an environment and philosophy of shifting the paradigm (way of thinking) of how their teachers view parental involvement. Even university professors at the college level are encouraging their students who are potential teachers to have a realistic plan in mind for parents. Parent involvement is becoming more and more integral in the “educational arena.” Therefore, continuous professional development to increase parent involvement and participation will always be necessary, especially at the school level.
Principals set the tone and should model the attitude for teachers and other staff members to treat their clients with dignity and respect.

**Principal’s Commitment**

*A principal’s commitment is the driving force for buy-in from teachers and staff.* Initially, a principal’s commitment to parent involvement must be conveyed to their employees before staff and teachers are asked to join in the development of a school’s parent involvement plan. Even before teachers can become more knowledgeable of the DLOPI program, it is suggested that school principals communicate in a forum or at a faculty meeting their commitment to the DLOPI parent program and why. Principals may want to express that the benefits are even greater when encouraging parents to participate and will increase student achievement. In this way, teachers and parents will know and feel the principal is serious and sincere. Principals may promote and offer teachers incentives for their commitment to implementing the program with in-service points, monetary awards, gift certificates, and flex or compensation time.

*Integrate the DLOPI components for teachers and strategies for parents into the school’s improvement plan.* The Different Levels of Parent Involvement program is a parent program with five modules designed with parenting tips and training opportunities to encourage parents to become and stay involved in their child’s education at different levels, whether at school or home. For teachers, the DLOPI program provides teachers with professional development training, strategies for schools, and a simple computerized format for determining parents’ levels of participation and involvement with data results.

**Direction, Time and Funding**

The principal can provide (i) information and direction for targeted areas needing improvement and special attention; and (ii) information for contacting parents of minority and low performing (level one students) with relevant data (academic scores, discipline, climate surveys, and school performance areas).

Principals can identify (i) funding sources to support the implementation of the DLOPI program into the parent involvement plan and provide facility accommodations for scheduled parent and community meetings on nights and weekends; (ii) a staff member to coordinate this initiative for parent involvement, allow the coordinator (a parent liaison, teacher or facilitator) compensation time for their efforts and flexible time to execute home visits, business partnerships and community outreach activities when needed; and (iii) encourage teachers to provide the designated parent liaison with supplemental academic information, resources, workshop dates, assessment resources, and benchmarks, practice materials for reading, mathematics, science and writing materials to distribute to parents.
A Guide for Schools to Implement a Parent Involvement Program Using the DLOPI Model

The Principal will (i) select a parent liaison—a person on staff as chairperson for the parent involvement program goals for your school improvement plan (remember this person will coordinate the committee for parent involvement activities and report to the principal); (ii) provide the parent liaison their specific role, duties and responsibilities; (iii) introduce the parent liaison to the faculty and staff; (iv) establish a parent care/parent committee as one of your school’s leadership teams (include all program representatives from each grade level and specific programs, such as Title I, Exceptional Student Education, Migrant, English Speakers of Other Languages), Pre-K, School Advisory Council Chairperson, and PTA; (v) encourage faculty members to volunteer to be on the parent involvement leadership commitment and the DLOPI program initiative; (vi) provide opportunities for professional development training for teachers and staff on the DLOPI program’s concept and components (train the trainer, data base training, and workshop trainings for parents); (vii) explore needed materials and supplies for parent involvement (computer, cameras, workshop materials, and incentives); and (viii) identify funding sources to support parental accountability areas (Title I-2% involvement; SAC, ESE, ESOL, Migrant, school improvement, special grants for literacy, technology, PTA and businesses.) NOTE: All grants usually have a line item specified for parent activities. Explore 21st CCLC and career academies, after school programs that have a line item budgeted specifically for parents.

The DLOPI Curriculum

Utilizing the Different Components of the Curriculum. Each of the five levels of the DLOPI program is exciting and fun filled. It provides parents the opportunity to assess their level of involvement. One component of the program assists educators with the skills needed through professional development and a data tracking system for measuring the correlation between parent involvement and student achievement. For others, the curriculum opens up the opportunity for communities and faith-based organizations to engage in training and critical conversations.

The entire DLOPI curriculum and each workshop session for each level are interactive. It allows for an exchange of ideas and strategies for communicating with teachers, school administrators, universities, parents, faith-based community and peers. The first step and most efficient usages of the curriculum are to identify and decide the main priority or needs toward meeting your parental involvement goals. Remember, a parent’s participation level is a measure for comparison to student achievement results.

One component of DLOPI developed for teachers is to track the percentage and/or number of parents involved at some level in their child’s education. Principals should ask teachers to rate the levels in which parents are involved throughout the school year using the DLOPI chart of parent activities. This rubric provides teachers with a system for measuring true parent participation by the student’s classroom performance and behaviors as determined by their parents’ participation.
At the end of each grading period or semester, request teachers to identify their students’ parent’s levels of involvement under each category by using the DLOPI software system. This will yield calculated parent participation levels for each selected reporting period.

By teachers and staff working together, implementing the DLOPI program, the entire school will accomplish success. Increased parent involvement can then be assessed based on data results. Solutions to address pertinent parental issues will be focused directly on parents’ levels of participation. Finally, using the results will reveal concrete data information regarding parent’s participation and their impact on increased student achievement. Your school can use this data and plan toward focusing on areas of weaknesses and build on areas of strength for success.

**Literature Review**

Hawley and Rosenholtz (1984) indicate that children have an advantage in school when their parents continuously support and encourage their school activities. Williams and Stallworth’s (1984) research at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Texas, involving parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members showed total agreement that parental involvement is vital to a child’s success in school and that parents and teachers should communicate and cooperate frequently. He found that parents are eager to play a variety of roles at school, ranging from tutoring children or helping in the classroom, to sitting on committees that decide such matters as disciplinary policies or changes in curriculum. Generally, there is an aggregate effect on the performance of students and teachers when schools collaborate with parents.

White (1982) says that parent participation in school generally brings about improvement in social development, effective management and teaching and learning outcomes. White believes that school and parent relationship allows government to preserve funds for more development projects, as competent people are involved in planning and decision-making.

Musaazi (1982) holds the view that the school, through the principal, staff and pupils could harmonize parents, school and community interests, resources, agencies, materials, and institutions for the benefit of both the pupil and the community. He further adds that education is an activity, which involves the cooperation of teachers, parents, children and the community as a whole. Parents are naturally interested in the education of their children and would want to know who is doing the teaching, what is being taught and how well it is being taught.

Epstein (1986) surveyed parents of an elementary school located in Baltimore, Maryland where over 85 percent of parents spent a quarter hour each day helping their children with assignments, which resulted in increased parent participation and student improvement.
From kindergarten through High/Secondary School, children’s contact with teachers amounts to about 8 percent of their time. Parents have access to their children for much of the 92 percent when children are not in school. It is therefore imperative that this 92 percent of the children’s time is judiciously used in helping them succeed at school.

John Hopkins University Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools (1989) study on effective schools, found that students whose parents help them with homework do better in school and have a positive attitude towards education than students who do not receive such assistance. According to these studies, the "data are clear that the school's practices to inform and to involve parents are more important than parent education, family size, marital status and even grade levels in determining whether inner-city parents get involved with their children's education in elementary school and stay involved through middle school."

Researcher Clark (1983) states that parent behavior influence the success of children in school when they: (i) establish frequent and initiate contact with the school; (ii) expect to play a major role in their children’s schooling; (iii) demonstrate that they value education; (iv) provide regular instructions and coaching; (v) monitor school work on a firm and consistent basis; (vi) give positive reinforcement of school work and other interests; and (vii) have regular routines, mealtime and encourage effective use of time and space. This study also strongly suggests that parent support and involvement is critical at the secondary level. It further states that students whose parents closely monitor their academic progress and general whereabouts perform significantly better in school.

Becher (1984) reviewed literature on parent involvement in education and shared examples of programs in which low-income parents have been trained to work with their children. The outcome for students showed dramatic improvement in language skills, test performance and school behavior. Parents also developed better attitudes toward schools, became more active in community affairs and sought more education for them. Henderson (1987) asserts that parents should not be left on the periphery of the educational enterprise, that their involvement in the educational enterprise is neither a quick fix nor a luxury. It is absolutely fundamental to a health system of public education. Shaeffer (1994) points out that parents and school personnel need to stay in harmony in order to improve organizational and human relations between the school and parents, offer general advice to the school and concern themselves with teachers’ welfare in the teaching-learning processes as well as teaching activities. In this way, parents input directly leads to an improved learning environment, more proper or intensive teaching and improved quality. Fuller and Olsen (1998) state when parents, community members and teachers work together, children’s lives are improved. Children will see a variety of adults working to help them improve their school performance and respond positively, leading to increased achievement.

Several prominent sources to consider are the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs endorsed by nearly 100 education organizations and universities and are built around the PTA’s six types of parent involvement identified by Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., at Johns Hopkins University. Dr. John H. Wherry, President of The
Parent Institute, published many researched-based materials, which are relevant to educators’ needs and is of the highest priority of interest (Wherry, 1996(a)(b)(c), Wherry, 2003(a)(b)(c), Wherry, 2007).

**Methodology**

*Parental Involvement = Student Success.* As profound as the studies on parental involvement have shown, years of research continues to indicate, that when parents are involved, students are successful. Now that the research is beyond dispute, and the results reveal this great truth, we must ask ourselves, have we really involved all parents from every lifestyle, race, culture, economic level or intellect, as it relates to student achievement? If we are to benefit from all students being successful, and we know that if their parents are involved, they will be successful. Let us take full advantage of this knowledge to encourage more parental involvement and participation. The question remains. Where do we as educators begin to ensure we give every parent an opportunity to assist and take responsibility for the education of our children? We balance the scales of education when both educators and parents share in the accountability.

**Decades of Research—Beyond Dispute.** During the past several decades, the benefits of parents’ and other family members’ involvement in the children’s education have been well documented. Although it is not the only factor in improving student learning, decades of research has consistently linked family involvement to high student achievement, better attitudes toward school, lower dropout rates, increased attendance and many other positive outcomes for students, families and schools. Educational researchers, practitioners and policy makers consistently rank parent involvement in the education of their children high among the components of effective schools. The following data compiled by major researchers on parent involvement exhibits how important it is for parents to become and stay involved in the child’s education.

**DLOPI: Data Base and Tracking**

Initially, DLOPI was designed for parents to self-reflect on where they were within the stages of the different levels of involvement and where they would like to be. Consequently, after realizing that this tool could be helpful to school staff in understanding and tracking how parents help their children at home and in their schools, technical support was given to create an online DLOPI data tracking system. Any district staff can access the online system from the district’s website and access student listings for each class within each school.

- The DLOPI for Educators program provides a concept and tool for teachers to address specific areas in which parents are most active and those areas where parents are least likely to become involved. To increase the likelihood that the parent or guardian of each student is evaluated, local school administrators are asked to select a single class period for which all teachers at the school would conduct the DLOPI assessment. A middle school or high school may select on specific class period for consistency throughout the school and/or the district.
The assessment tool identifies a common set of categories (program outcomes) for which every parent is assessed. Each category has a set of activities (program deliverables) of which parents will be graded and assigned a parent participation level (program output). There are a total of twenty (20) activities among the five categories. Parents are given one deliverable point for each activity achieved. The degree of parent participation is rated from Level 1 to Level 5 and determined by the total number of deliverable points achieved.

The rating scale is described below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The DLOPI database development purpose is to identify the parent’s participation levels for each teacher, each school and each school district. The data allows for developing improvement strategies and verifying the impact of parental involvement on student achievement. The data provides for the legitimacy for the DLOPI concept.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories and Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibilities &amp; Attendance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student attends school regularly and on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student is equipped with necessary school supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student displays good behavior during class and is respectful of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Teacher-Student Compact is signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student attends school appropriately dressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teachers Assign Points.* Teachers allocate parent participation points based on observations of their students’ performance in class, the direct interaction with their students’ parents or knowledge of a parent’s involvement in other school activities, such as serving as a volunteer, member of the PTA or a member on the school advisory committee.
Conclusion—Paving the Way for Implementation

Administrative support is paramount to the implementation of the DLOPI program. Once the results of the data is compiled and revealed to administrators, the integration of the DLOPI model in the school’s improvement plan then becomes a reality. Administrators can then see the benefits of using the results in a variety of ways, such as supporting data for the school accreditation process. Continuous learning is for the teacher as well as for the student. Teachers should be involved in DLOPI staff development training, offered individual and/or group technical assistance with the DLOPI training modules, the rubric and tabulation of assessing parent participation levels. Teachers will need to have some basic computer knowledge, although the DLOPI software will tabulate the data entered by the teacher. The DLOPI data base will calculate several reports. Ongoing support and assistance from a trained parent liaison or parent coordinator on DLOPI is vital. Parent coordinators can serve as the conduit between the parent and the teacher. This way a parent liaison can support the teacher in collecting the data and reporting the data to the school’s parent committee or school advisory council for integration in the school’s improvement plan.
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ervisor Vance, Executive Director of Journal Publications  
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Go beyond / Organizations become more diverse when they dig deep

By: Paul Henry Hawkins

Sometimes facts act like snapshots. First they record a moment, then they help us remember it, then they help us understand its long-term relevance. To demonstrate, here are two local facts from each of the past two years: In 2009, Allegheny County Council barely passed an ordinance prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity -- and then only after carving out a huge exemption for religious, charitable and fraternal organizations. In 2010, census data revealed that among the nation's 40 largest population centers, the Pittsburgh region has the highest poverty rate among working-age African-Americans.

Taken together, these factual snapshots reveal that our region has work to do. We have not yet overcome persistent barriers to employment, barriers that stem from a generational legacy of racism, heterosexism and other interconnected social inequities. But the good news is that when we see contemporary employment barriers as the result of a generational legacy -- and not just momentary acts of individual discrimination -- then we can see the importance of acting collectively and acting for the long-term.

Over the long term, our region can only respond to persistent employment barriers as employers recognize how those barriers have imbedded themselves within their organizations. This is a steep challenge. Compared to overt bigotry, which has gone out of fashion, it is far more difficult to pinpoint the subtle nuances that advantage some while disadvantaging others. Besides, in our PR-driven world, organizations are resistant to the idea that they have a problem; stating and enforcing a nondiscrimination policy often seems like a sufficient response.

But it is precisely the organizations that go beyond the mere adoption and enforcement of a nondiscrimination policy -- organizations that actively manage for diversity and inclusion -- that are rising as industry leaders. These organizations are retaining loyal employees, building team cohesiveness, better communicating with customers and identifying emerging opportunities. They understand that actively managing for diversity and inclusion is a smart business strategy just as much as it is indispensable to the evolution of an ethical, socially responsible organization.

This kind of active management does not occur automatically, however. It takes time. It takes time to acquire a multilayered knowledge base, and it takes time to develop leadership capable of leveraging that knowledge to guide the organization through process-oriented change. Moreover there are no cookie-cutter solutions. Every organization must identify solutions appropriate for their business model and stage of development.
Understanding diversity in these terms opens two questions for Pittsburgh-area organizations. How do we acquire the knowledge base? How do we develop the leadership? To help Pittsburgh-area organizations answer these questions, this year a small group of local professionals started a new nonprofit entity: Working Diversity Inc. Working Diversity matches a volunteer consultant with an individual or organization. We work with organizations that have started building a diversity vision, but want to make it stronger. We also work with individuals attached to organizations that have not yet developed a diversity vision. We help those individuals become organizational change agents.

As a result of identifying this niche, Working Diversity is the only nonprofit corporation in our region that focuses on directly helping individuals and organizations create more diverse work environments. We are also different from other nonprofits and for-profit consultancies because we have no fee schedule. Instead of working to generate revenue by selling services to potential clients, we look for promising relationships where our investment in people and organizations will create a community benefit.

Although we are glad to help the individuals and organizations that grow from our guidance, our primary allegiance is to the people of the Pittsburgh region. We believe that when we help organizations create more diverse work environments, the communities where those organizations operate are positively affected. And as our region's organizational landscape changes, so does our regional ability to redress the historical legacy of identity-based inequalities. Working together for long-term change, we can reduce the hidden employment barriers that impede the social and economic development of the Pittsburgh region.
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THE QUEST: JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION EXCELLECE

CALL FOR PRESENTATION PROPOSALS
4th Annual QUEST CONFERENCE: MINORITY MALE
HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE


The executive directors of the QUEST: Journal of Higher Education Excellence invites workshop proposals for the 4th Annual African American Male Conference in Higher Education to be held on April 11-12, 2013 at Baltimore City Community College. For more information, please email JVance@bccc.edu.
LITERATURE REVIEW
ONLINE EDUCATION: EVALUATION AND QUALITY

ABSTRACT

This literature review presents an analysis of research as it relates to evaluation and quality in online education and further offers research on the instructional designer's role in evaluation. It concentrates on four main areas: instructional design, online learning, evaluation, and quality.

Quality in Distance Education

As institutions and organizations attempt to enhance course effectiveness in education, the increase in distance learning has drawn added attention. For not only is distance education another mode of delivery, but it calls for a different approach to learning as well. Some organizations saw barriers (Krauth, 1996) created by state policies and made efforts to establish standards, principles, or benchmarks to address distance education program quality. Significant dialogue about what represents quality in distance education continues (Stella & Gnanam, 2004). Although there’s a need to ensure quality, who or what depicts the quality of a course?

Quality expresses itself, however, through the viewpoints, values, and needs of the course consumer, whether he is a student, an instructor, a department chair, an academic vice president or financial officer, an institutional planner, or a corporate human resources director. (Alley & Jansak, 2001, p. 3)

When these stakeholders join, all together or in part, decisions are made to decide what avenue is best to examine what they have determined to be quality.

A number of organizations have established guidelines, principles, benchmarks, or standards to guarantee quality in distance education. The Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET), a program of the Western Interstate
Commission of Higher Education (WICHE), felt there was a need to review electronically delivered programs and created the *Principles of Good Practice* in 1995. The principles were an outgrowth of a three year project between Western higher education states’ regulating agencies, higher education institutions, and accrediting bodies (Krauth, 1996). Those twenty-two principles covered by three areas – curriculum and instruction, institutional context and commitment, and evaluation and assessment – were not intended to be tied to any particular campus structure.

The WCET principles were adopted by several organizations (Twigg, 2001; Blackerby, Shelton, & Gillis, 2002) as well as the *Standards for Quality Online Courses* (2006) by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). These standards, originally published in 2001, are an example of the attention given to quality standards for online courses, focusing particularly on high schools. Among these competencies are those that address instructional design standards. Both the WCET and SREB standards helped to establish the standards for distance education by the Texas Education Agency. As a result of an Investigating Quality (IQ) project, 45 guidelines divided into three categories – course components, academic support, and financial components – were developed. These guidelines were designed to ensure quality in online courses among K-12 as well as higher education courses (Blackerby, Shelton, & Gillis, 2002). The National Education Association (2002) established criteria for examining quality in online high school courses because it felt the guidelines that existed were insufficient to execute online programs. In order to meet quality design standards, the NEA suggests seven categories should be considered as a framework: curriculum, instructional design, teacher quality, student roles, assessment, management and support systems, and technological infrastructure. The chart contains eighty-eight sub-indicators to help secondary stakeholders evaluate quality in online courses.

Alley and Jansak (2001) report on a study designed to describe how quality is assessed in elearning. The study addressed “the instructional design of quality pedagogy, quality assurance in course delivery, and assessment of quality in existing courses” (p. 5). The results included 10 principles where the investigators provided an application and practice method for each with the intent to show how these principles could be integrated into instructional design. Buck (2001) posited that what was needed to recognize quality in distance learning were the seven principles of the 1999 AAUP’s *Statement on Distance Learning*. Despite the integrity these principles held, they did not constitute a review of course quality. In a Pew Learning and Technology Program symposia, researchers created a list of 24 benchmarks that they deemed “essential to ensure quality in Internet based distance education” (Twigg, 2001, p. 5). The list was derived from 45 benchmarks established by the Institute for Higher Education Policy. The benchmarks were subsets of seven categories: institutional support, course development, teaching/learning, course structure, student support, faculty support, and evaluation and assessment.

Other organizations and groups have developed statements or distributed documents about quality standards for distance education, particularly online learning. The American Council on Education (ACE) issued a paper, the second in a series (2002), about maintaining a balance between distance learning, higher education accreditation, and self
regulation. The ACE draws attention to the public’s interest in quality and why higher education institutions are responsible for providing indicators of quality. “Public interest in the effectiveness of colleges and universities, as well as the value that institutions provide in return for tuition fees that they charge, is high. More and better information about quantity is essential” (Eaton, 2002, p. 11). Frydenberg’s (2002) investigation summarizes U.S. standards of quality into nine categories: institutional commitment, technology, student services, instructional design and course development, instruction and instructors, delivery, regulatory and legal compliance, and evaluation, but this article was more a literature review of published standards that postsecondary institutions can use to reflect and consider in their plans for quality review or evaluation.

The attempt to define quality continues. The Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C) held a workshop in 2002 where researchers synthesized the Five Pillars for Quality Online Education created in the mid-1990s: learning effectiveness, student satisfaction, faculty satisfaction, cost effectiveness, and access. These pillars were to represent the values, principles, or goals of online learning networks. Sloan-C considers these five pillars to be “a framework for measuring and improving an online program within any institution” (Lorenzo & Moore, 2002, p. 3). The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) examined 17 accrediting bodies across the United States. Eight of these accrediting bodies are regional accrediting organizations that adopted a best practices platform.

This platform of seven key areas – institutional mission, institutional organizational structure, institutional resources, curriculum and instruction, faculty support, student support, and student learning outcomes – served as a basis for reviewing quality in distance learning. Even though the remaining nine national accrediting bodies constructed their own standards, policies, or competencies, they too “focus[ed] on seven fundamental features of institutional operation important to assuring quality in distance learning” (CHEA, 2002, p. 7). Wang (2006) purports that there are several best practices that are vital to quality in distance education: administrative leadership and support, faculty support, student support, curriculum design and instruction, and assessing student achievement, especially in online programs. As academia continues to identify new approaches to assessing quality, particularly in online learning, more models will continue to surface (Wang, 2006).

Many of the accreditation organizations that have been noted differ in the principles that govern standards of quality, but they do similarly emphasize these elements: “(1) strong institutional commitment; (2) adequate curriculum and instruction that fit the new delivery medium and match the rigor and breadth of equivalent on campus programs; (3) sufficient faculty support; (4) ample student support; and (5) consistent learning outcome assessment” (Wang, 2006, p. 270). All the former attempts to define quality demonstrate how important quality standards, principles, benchmarks, guidelines, and competencies are but also show how confidence in identifying quality that everyone can agree upon is still lacking. Online learning quality is not possible without instructional design, which is evidenced by the many organizations and groups mentioned heretofore that included instructional design standards as an essential component of program or course quality.
Instructional Design Standards of Online Quality

There are many standards set forth in education such as those designed by accrediting bodies for K-12 and higher education. These standards concern themselves with course content, media, support services, teacher performance, student satisfaction, and the like. Other organizations and professional groups have developed sets of standards or competencies as well. The International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction (IBSTPI) provided a second edition of competencies for instructional designers. The first set was published in 1986. The second set involved 16 core competencies (IBSTPI, 1994). Those standards were expanded in 2000 to 23 competencies in order to address technology (Spector et al., 2006). These standards can aid in curriculum design as well as certification and accreditation along with human resource development. It is standards such as these that professionals consider in delivering quality educational curricula that is effective and efficient.

A quality course makes use of instructional standards, strategies, and activities to support student learning expected by the curriculum. In order to ensure effective learning takes place, the focus on instructional design standards must be maintained. Why are these standards so important? Estabrook and Arashiro (2003) explain why academia, industry, and business should make use of these standards:

- Standards allow people to make apples-to-apples comparison of courses…
- For course design, it lays out an instructional blueprint that has a high probability of success…
- By using standards, all parties involved in producing courses can be ‘on the same page’ and can know exactly what is to be expected going into a project.
- If used correctly, standards can represent a common starting point from which to improve and change the quality and nature of online instruction. (p. 163)

To design online courses, several universities, colleges, organizations, and professional groups establish a list of standards to ensure quality. The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) Certification Institute (2003) revised its E-Learning Courseware Certification (ECC) standards to ensure usability and instructional design in elearning. There are four clusters of standards: interface, compatibility, production quality, and instructional design. The certification is now based upon nineteen standards. Five substandards follow the interface cluster, four standards in the second cluster, two in the third cluster, and eight substandards for the fourth cluster, instructional design. One of those standards, the facilitation of learning, has been added since this 2003 report (The ASTD, n.d.). ASTD’s certification program does not concern itself in whole with the medium, for “rather than certifying a particular technology, the ECC certifies the quality of the learning experience. In essence, it certifies the likelihood that a course will be able ‘to teach’” (ASTD, 2003, p. 4).
The Michigan Virtual University (MVU) instituted 100 standards in technology, usability, accessibility, and instructional design. Each standard is reduced into substandards also. The instructional design standards are separated into discrete skills and knowledge as well as complex skills and knowledge. The discrete skills and knowledge have their foundation in Merrill’s Component Display Theory, and the complex skills and knowledge come from van Merriënboer’s work (Estabrook & Arashiro, 2003). The discrete skills and knowledge are broken down into 50 substandards while the complex skills and knowledge have eight substandards (Michigan Virtual University, 2002a).

Other universities have developed quality standards also such as Royal Roads University in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. These standards for online courses were created out of a pilot project. The instructional design standards align with the university’s teaching values. There are 53 standards under five categories of standards (Centre for Teaching and Educational Technology, 2010). Like the model being investigated in this study, Quality Matters, instructional design standards are included with other standards to ensure quality. Several of Royal Roads University standards align with Quality Matters, and although they may not be worded exactly alike, the outcome is still the same in what is trying to be achieved: the learning objectives/competencies describe or align with stated outcomes, information/objectives are chunked or located in modules, assessments are clear and measure the objectives, instructional strategies align or support learning objectives, course interaction or online discussions are articulated and clear, instructional materials and resources are organized, instructor response/feedback standards are clear, and multimedia and other technological tools support the learning objectives/outcomes (Chao, Tessier, & Saj, 2006; MOL, 2006). Despite the institution, organization, group, or model, instructional design standards are the impetus to help formulate a basis for examining quality in online courses.

**Evaluation and Online Courses**

An evaluation takes place for several reasons. One reason may be a personal interest of the evaluator or it may be that an organization or institution requested it. Many institutions share a common goal: “to review and assess the quality of instructional software and share the results of that evaluation with educators so that they may make wise choices” (Reiser & Kegelmann, 1994, p. 63). The models of evaluation that have been developed can differ on a number of facets such as purpose of evaluation, methods of data collection, individuals in a program or course being evaluated, and relationship between evaluator and administrators supervising an evaluation (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

The purpose for evaluating a program or course can vary from institution to institution. E. Jane Davidson (2005) suggests that there are basically three main purposes of evaluation: to determine the overall quality or value of something, to find areas for improvement, or both of the former purposes and questions of merit or worth that must be answered as initial steps to any evaluation. W. Paul Vogt (2007) indicates there are specific purposes for conducting evaluation research and primary activities. They are as follows:
1. Evaluations help program implementers to judge whether the program’s objectives are aimed at the problem.
2. Evaluators often assess whether the program is being implemented as specified.
3. Evaluators also sometimes help participants gain a clearer understanding of what they are doing.
4. Sometimes evaluation research uncovers unintended consequences (positive or negative) of the program.
5. Evaluators are sometimes expected to gather data to assist managers to make decisions about aspects of the program.
6. Evaluators usually offer suggestions about how to improve programs.
7. Evaluators try to measure the program’s success at achieving its objectives.
8. Evaluators sometimes measure outcomes per unit of cost.
9. Evaluators help make decisions about whether to continue or renew funding.

Since evaluations have such varying purposes, it is likely that there will be different types of individuals, stakeholders, and procedures at various phases of evaluation. Stakeholders can include “persons receiving the services, persons delivering the services, program managers who want to improve the services, and external funders who want to know that they are getting value for money” (Vogt, 2007, p. 269), as well as basic researchers.

As Davidson (2005) notes, there are many reasons why determining “the overall quality or value of a program, policy, project, organization, product, service, or period of individual, team, or business unit performance” (p. 14) is essential. This kind of evaluation is called a summative evaluation, for it concentrates on the program’s product or final outcomes and is performed at the end of the course or program phase. Summative evaluations are sometimes used for accountability reasons, but they also are useful in helping an institution see what works, make practical decisions, and gain a competitive edge. Finding areas of improvement calls for a formative evaluation, and Davidson proposes two reasons why such evaluation is useful: “To help a relatively new product, service, or program ‘find its feet’ or to help a relatively new staff member get up to speed, and to explore ways of improving a ‘mature’ product, service, or program” (p. 16). Some evaluations use a combination of both summative and formative evaluations, but when an evaluator’s role is to judge the program, course, service, or product, a summative evaluation is more appropriate, as is the case with the reviewers utilizing the Quality Matters process even though the information gained from the evaluations can still help educators improve their online courses.

Many evaluation procedures involve the use of a rating form by evaluators to measure various features or elements of a course or program. How an overall rating is achieved can also vary from one case to the next. In some cases, evaluators rate specific program elements with one or two kinds of rating scales while others evaluate the program elements on a Likert type scale by “indicating the degree to which the feature is present” (Reiser & Kegelmann, 1994, p. 65), or in other cases evaluators are required to utilize a combination of both those approaches. Contrary to these situations, Reiser and
Kegelmann (1994) claim an evaluator may not evaluate specific features but rather be expected to review a program or project holistically and draw an overall conclusion. Despite the procedure, evaluations can be used for traditional and online modalities to determine the effectiveness of an evaluand.

Online learning evaluation instruments have been developed to serve a variety of functions. For example:

- To explore the potential effectiveness of online courses;
- To compare online courses;
- As a formative tool to guide and inform the development of online learning materials;
- For summative purposes associated with establishing the quality of existing materials. (Herrington et al., 2001, p. 265)

Hosie, Schibeci, and Backhaus (2005) identify several approaches to course evaluation that are used in higher education such as checklists, analytical (open ended) reviews, interviews, and experimentation. These approaches have also been used to evaluate online education, as continuous quality improvement has become a focal point in course and program effectiveness. Instruments such as the checklist can be useful, depending on their purpose and scope. “Checklists for evaluating online learning materials are a screening device that provides predetermined questions or statements for rating to indicate where design and delivery are sound and to identify deficient aspects” (p. 545). Edith Cowan University developed a checklist to provide individuals with a tool to evaluate online course quality. There are three primary areas which guide users in their evaluation. The checklist does not provide a numeric rating, but its intent is to identify strengths and weaknesses. The criteria for rating an online course are indicated by the rate at which an online course adheres to various components such as never, sometimes, and always. Hosie, Schibeci, and Backhaus (2005) note the problems associated with a checklist, but two that are of concern are the need to add more criteria for specific situations and the lack of weights for questions.

Another instrument that has been useful in evaluation is a rubric. Davidson (2005) states, “a rubric is a tool that provides an evaluative description of what performance or quality ‘looks like’ at each of two or more defined levels” (p. 137). Rubrics can include or produce a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data, which are “a good conversation starter with the evaluation team and stakeholders” (137). Such instruments “are effective tools to assess a program or process… [and] are used to develop formal assessment plans for instructional and non-instructional purposes” (Gold, 2006, p. 200). There are varying forms of rubrics that come with different complexities, yet they share many common traits. Gold (2006) notes that rubrics have three shared features:

- “Focus on measuring a stated objective (performance, behavior, or quality)
- Use a range to rate performance
• Contain specific performance characteristics arranged in levels indicating the degree to which the standard has been met” (p. 201).

Some rubrics are designed to gain faculty feedback, student feedback, or program outcomes.

Quality Matters (QM), a project of Maryland Online (MOL), involves a process that uses a rubric, which is a primary tool of the QM tool set, an instrument to be used in this study. “The rubric was primarily designed to enable faculty peer review teams to apply practitioner expertise to evaluating the quality of online courses” (Sener, 2006, p. 74). The rubric consists of 40 standards that are combined into eight general areas. Each of these areas is organized into the 40 sub standards. In five of the general areas, two through five, the key components must align. Each standard receives a rating of one through three, where three is the highest score. The Quality Matters rubric “undergoes a continuous improvement process and has gone through several iterations since the project’s inception” (p. 74). Unlike other rubrics, the QM rubric is an inter-institutional model that is used collaboratively. California State University Chico also uses a “Rubric for Online Instruction (ROI),” which is comprised of six categories to evaluate online courses and assist faculty in self evaluation and course development (Rubric, 2003). Evaluators using the rubric have a choice of three ratings: baseline, effective, or exemplary, not utilizing a numeric value. The ROI, however, is designed for intracollegiate use rather than as a collaborative implementation among institutions although it has been used with various platforms (Rubric, 2003).

Other evaluative tools have been employed to evaluate online courses in higher education. The Monterey Institute for Technology and Education Online Course Evaluation Project (OCEP) is a criterion based instrument intended for measuring and comparing online course quality (Threlkeld, 2005, para 1). Like Quality Matters, OCEP uses a three member team approach to evaluate courses. The project instrument includes eight standards and over 50 sub categories (Monterey Institute, 2005). The evaluators in this project, however, do not participate collaboratively as with Quality Matters, for team members with the OCEP are paid consultants.

The Michigan Virtual University’s Standard for Quality Online Courses includes a Course Evaluator tool that addresses 107 standards under four categories and accessible in Microsoft Excel (Michigan Virtual University, 2002b). There are Measurement Criteria for each standard, and these Measurement Criteria include benchmarks, which guide the evaluator. Each standard also has a weighted rating: mild, serious, and fatal. If the standard is completely met, a rating of five is awarded and a one if a standard is not met. The standards also include a prescription used in the correction of a standard when it fails to be met (Michigan Virtual University, 2002c). “The authors were concerned about the complexity of this instrument” (Wood & George, 2003, p. 554), for the number of standards to be evaluated are a concern. The Australasian Evaluation Society (AES) developed guidelines for the process of evaluation in 1997. Those guidelines were then given to AES members and other organizations in 1998. By 2000, the guidelines were then included into the society’s Code of Ethics. These guidelines have been produced.
twice since then, concluding with a July 2006 set. The guidelines are focused on the ethical practice and decision making process of evaluation. Program evaluation, internal or external, is complemented by these guidelines, as the behaviors of evaluators are upheld by the ethical procedures inherent in the Code of Ethics. There are three overall guidelines: commissioning and preparing for an evaluation, conducting an evaluation, and reporting the results of an evaluation. Each guideline begins with a principle and then spells out the guideline, including its limitations. Although these guidelines are a precursor to evaluation standards, they set a framework for best practices in the process of evaluation (AES, 2006).

One other evaluation instrument not mentioned in the literature (Sener, 2006; Wood & George, 2003) is an evaluation rubric that is part of the TELIGN project for the School of Nursing at the University of Minnesota. The instrument provides a formative evaluation of online courses. It is identified here because it also involves a collaborative three member team approach between faculty and instructional designers, similar to the three member peer reviewer team used by Quality Matters although an instructional designer is not required on a QM team. There are four categories and 18 scaled items. The items are evaluated on a 5 point scale, where five is the higher score. The area of concern with this rubric is that it is designed to serve as a formative measurement, yet the focus of this study is on a summative evaluation (Avery, Cohen, & Walker, 2005).

The evaluation process in the research, notes Reiser and Kegelmann (1994), reveals a difference in evaluator rating techniques. Teachers and students show marked differences in rating technology, and in general, “subjective ratings often differ greatly across individuals and groups” (Reiser & Kegelmann, 1994, p. 67). The reason for such variations is due to the manner in which different individuals and groups view various elements of programs claim Reiser and Kegelmann. Furthermore, Reiser and Kegelmann assert that teachers and technology developers “tend to value technical aspects...most highly” (p. 67). The evaluation instrument for the TELIGN project in the School of Nursing (SoN) at the University of Minnesota noticed how reviewers scored differently on certain criteria. In particular, instructional designers rated higher than nursing faculty reviewers. This was true in four of 16 cases. The SoN proposes several possible explanations for this difference: “nursing faculty are more knowledgeable, hence more critical; DMC [Digital Media Center] staff are invited outsiders, hence less critical; DMC staff have seen many online courses of widely varying quality” (University of Minnesota, 2007). These conjectures are those of the reporting authors involved in the TELIGN project, yet other reasons for the differences among raters could remain unknown.

Just as there is a diverse population of evaluations, so is there a similarity in the diversity among standards chosen, measurement of criteria, individual evaluators, ratings of the standards, and evaluation goals. With such differences at stake, a close look at these aspects and consideration of the variation among them can lead to a better understanding of what is needed to an evaluand and what is needed from the evaluator in order to maintain an effective and quality end product. As Conole (2004) notes, “What makes evaluation particularly relevant in the context of quality assurance is the importance of
sound procedures and documentary evidence for decision making” (p. 17). Additionally, continuous quality improvement keeps an evaluation current and inclusive.

**Role and Criteria of Reviewer/Evaluator**

The role of an evaluator, particularly in educational evaluation, can be complex. An evaluator has to make judgments that are directly impacted by his or her values. There are, however, some inherent problems with an evaluator’s use of certain values, but an evaluator’s own values can be utilized in an acceptable manner as well.

Fathy (1980) defines evaluation as “the act of placing a value or determining the worth of something” (p. 167). These values are part of the evaluation process as well as research techniques, methods, procedures, and human philosophies. Individuals use research, standards, and social norms to make judgments about what is adequate or acceptable, which influence one’s values notes Fathy. Despite the fact that the ideas can be about goals, content, or methods, each will have an effect on the evaluator’s thinking about one in relationship to the other.

Lincoln and Guba (1981) claim that there can be problems associated with an evaluator’s value and belief system. The first problem arises when an evaluator adopts the value and belief system of others in the program or course he or she is evaluating. Lincoln and Guba indicate that this creates additional problems, but in particular, the evaluator’s results can be skewed, favoring the program and ignoring or intentionally excluding the unfavorable. The second problem is ethnocentrism. Lincoln and Guba say ethnocentrism “arises when the evaluator has been sufficiently blinded by his own value system that he fails to see, and thus take into account, divergent values that characterize audiences or recognize how those values reshape objectives or goals” (p. 3). These problems can create evaluator bias, which in turn leads to distorted judgments or suspicious recommendations, not to mention the loss of the evaluator’s credibility and his or her inability to produce legitimate results.

Yet Fathy (1980) asserts that an evaluator can create an objective and realistic image about the worth of any program facet by establishing standards that can be determined by both logical and empirical analysis. Logically, an evaluator must be able to accomplish several things: understand the meaning of the goals and results, apply his or her acquired knowledge and understanding to certain situations, examine specific parts of a program in relationship to other parts, consider new alternatives, draw upon his or her experience or resources to make sense of the criteria, and make judgments according to the standards or criteria set forth. This logical analysis is how Fathy indicates an evaluator can justify his or her needs and what will represent real values in the evaluation process.

Fathy (1980) suggests that “since people need to be directly involved in the program evaluation process, their values, ideas, criteria, and circumstances should be considered”
His suggestion is based on the assumptions that changes and needs can be established through group consensus, program evaluation must involve the people for whom the program is intended, and evaluators need to know how others judge a program. For an evaluator to be competent, Fathy asserts he or she must understand how his or her values, beliefs, and experience influence his or her understanding about what is valuable in addition to avoiding wishful thinking and realizing one’s biases.

In a study commissioned by Western Illinois University’s Center for the Application of Information Technologies to review virtual high schools in the U.S., the LUDA (Large Unit District Association) Virtual High School project in Illinois’ findings about the evaluation process were presented (Vrasidas, Zembylas, & Chamberlain, 2003). The report indicates some problems associated with the evaluator’s role. The evaluator, as part of a design team, showed a strong desire to improve the project and concluded that this desire could have influenced their judgment, which they believe is a challenge for internal evaluators. The team felt “there is no way out of the politics and ethics involved in evaluating programs...[and] there is no bias-free point of view in any approach to evaluation” (p. 204). The project team could not ignore their prior knowledge, and they acknowledged that each evaluator constructs his or her perspectives from how he or she views a project or program. Vrasidas, Zembylas, and Chamberlain conclude that there are advantages and disadvantages to evaluation. The investigators purport that there is a belief that external evaluators are more objective but say internal evaluators are more inclined to collect more quality data because they know the program better. In either case where there is an external or internal evaluator, “the politics involved raise the issue of the ethical responsibility of the evaluator” (p. 206).

In 2004, the American Evaluation Association (AES) renewed its standards and produced five principles: systematic inquiry, competence, integrity/honesty, respect for people, and responsibilities for general and public welfare. The AES makes it clear that these principles are not designed to replace any standards of other organizations of which evaluators may be participants. The order of the principles does not represent any particular order or priority, for an evaluator’s role or situation will determine the priority. Although there are a number of statements that explain the scope of each principle, the summation of the statements can be expressed as follows:

A. Systematic Inquiry: Evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries about whatever is being evaluated.
B. Competence: Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.
C. Integrity/Honesty: Evaluators ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.
D. Respect for People: Evaluators respect the security, dignity and self-worth of the respondents, program participants, clients, and other stakeholders with whom they interact.
E. Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare: Evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of interests and values that may be related to the general and public welfare. (AES, 2004, pp. 5-6)
These principles can guide any member of an evaluation team just as the standards set forth by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC).

The ACCJC published a manual for team evaluators in 2005. The manual provides guidelines for peer review evaluation, similar to information provided peer reviewers who evaluate online courses with the Quality Matters (QM) process, although the ACCJC team is instructed to follow accreditation standards while QM has established standards that relate to online education. The ACCJC, however, does note that quality, student achievement, and student learning as well as integrity are areas that must be evaluated or maintained. Evaluators must especially maintain integrity in the evaluative process and report any conflict of interest; this should be done before an evaluator takes on an assignment (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 2005). There are nine expectations of evaluators set forth in the manual, which mainly concern themselves with an evaluator having sufficient knowledge of ACCJC standards, understanding the peer review process, being objective, and maintaining confidentiality. As further emphasis on team evaluation, the manual further instructs evaluators to reveal all concerns to the team, and “the evaluator must be diagnostic, impartial, and, ultimately, able to make recommendations for improvement to the institution” (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 2005, p. 8).

The Australian Evaluation Society adopted a Code of Ethics in 2000. All its members are expected to endorse the Code as a membership requirement. Evaluators must adhere to 18 responsibilities in evaluation. Of those responsibilities, the society expects its members to conduct ethical evaluations and carry out quality work, including the same principles as the American Evaluation Association and the ACCJC. The society additionally indicates that evaluators should provide reasonable criticism, as to not injure an institution’s reputation. Unlike some other standards, principles, or guidelines, the Code concerns itself also with corporate responsibility and diversity. As with other organizations, the United Kingdom (UK) also provides a guide for the evaluation of educational programs.

The UK guide, reported by Goldie (2006), discusses ethical problems faced by evaluators similar to those described earlier in this chapter. The guide recognizes the standards established by other organizations in the U.S., Canada, and Australia. Whether evaluators are faced with political circumstances or budgetary restraints, evaluators still have an ethical responsibility. Goldie suggests that in order to conduct evaluations, evaluators can be helped by evaluation theory throughout their whole process. He adds a note of caution that evaluators should know the limitation of specific evaluations. Findings should be presented in a manner that all stakeholders can comprehend, and the evaluator should reflect on his or her performance. “It is important for the educational evaluator to remember the lesson history teaches: that improvement, even when modest, is valuable” (Goldie, 2006, p. 222).

Despite the organization, the role an evaluator plays must be ethical, respectful, and responsible in addition to his or her demonstrating competence. These are the standards that appear to be universal. However, one’s values can impact the outcome of an evaluation, and these values are often reflected in some definitions of evaluation that
evaluators may function in when conducting an evaluation. Those evaluators who are cognizant of and in agreement with the value and expectations associated with social evaluations illustrate the importance of involving many stakeholders. This is not a new phenomenon, as Guba and Lincoln (1989) presented the theory of the fourth generation evaluation process, which involves social evaluations that include a college or university, agency, group, or organization’s stakeholders several decades ago.

Furthermore, evaluators, particularly internal evaluators, find themselves part of a team process, consulting team members at varying steps in the evaluative process. Many institutions are concerned with quality, as noted in the literature presented thus far, but do not want an evaluation to be punitive but rather informative so that course developers, for example, can understand how to improve their courses. This type of evaluation can differentiate from one institution or organization to the next, and the peer review process has been adopted by several. As with any social evaluation, the evaluators participating may make a difference in the outcome of any formal evaluation. It is, therefore, vital that the essence of the evaluative process be understood by all involved in evaluating courses or programs.

Some organizations, regulating agencies, higher education institutions, and accrediting bodies have established guidelines, principles, benchmarks, or standards to determine the quality of a course, especially with an increase in attention to the quality of distance education. This concern for quality and the measures created are not done in isolation, for some realize instructional design standards are an essential component of any program or course quality. Such measures used to evaluate distance learning are growing as the definition of quality continues to evolve.

Evaluations are used for different purposes, some with a formative approach and others summative. These evaluations can be used for traditional or online modalities, and organizations, agencies, and educational institutions use them to decide whether courses are effective. Despite the purpose, competent evaluators must remain ethical, respectful, and responsible, and the literature (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) reveals the importance of involving many stakeholders. In doing so, a team process is adopted, which can have a direct bearing on how quality is determined. It is the importance of the instructional designer and his or her participation as a stakeholder in evaluations which seek to decide the effectiveness of online courses that is the subject of this study. To investigate the instructional designer's role, the methodology to conduct the study must be established.


Would you ignore a woman singled out as dangerous by a community? In the antebellum South this specially trained Black woman lived independently, in a neighborhood of free Blacks, in her own cabin. Aunt Peggy, the heroine in Charles W. Chesnutt’s 1899 collection of stories titled The Conjure Woman, possessed the ability to perform sacred rites. Uncle Julius, the narrator, states she “‘could wuk de mos powerfulles’ kin’ er goopher’” and “…’she wuz a witch ‘sides being’ a cunjuh ‘oman’” (Chesnutt, 1986). Although the narrator reminds a reader of the power of Peggy’s “cunjuh” critical essays seem to find her a minor player in Chesnutt’s classic work.

The publisher’s 1899 book cover initiates Aunt Peggy’s disappearance. The three images on the upper third portion reinforce the aesthetic of an invisible conjure woman. At the top there is a caricature of a respectable looking, elderly, gray, fully mustached, bearded and bald Black man between two large long eared rabbits; the title and author’s name appear on the lower third. The mid third of the cover is blank and unless the conjure woman has become a white rabbit or assumed the countenance of a Black man there appears to be no direct feminine connection between the title and the images.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines conjure: “(III) to invoke by supernatural power, to effect by magic or jugglery.” More specific to the African diasporic culture, Houston Baker, Jr., (1989) in a discussion of Chesnutt’s The Conjure Woman finds “conjure is the transatlantic religion of diasporic and Afro-American masses in the New World. Descended from vodun, an African religion in which the priestess holds supreme power, conjure’s name in Hatti and the Caribbean is voodoo” (Baker 1989). In his study Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance, Baker offers a splendid opening for a discussion about conjure where he manages to recall Peggy’s name only once and within parenthesis (1989). He tactfully minimizes her significance in his later work Workings of the Spirit, where he finds that Chesnutt never fully developed the conjure woman; thus, denying a reader “…a figure irradiant in the magnificence of her specific powers” (1991). Aunt Peggy is the conjure woman and heroine of Chesnutt’s compilation of stories aptly titled The Conjure Woman. Peggy has had to overcome over one hundred years of being ignored, labeled, slighted and attempted critical silencing. To distinguish the actions and voice of a Black female character can release her from the margins of obscurity.

To begin to recognize Aunt Peggy’s fictive significance one needs to study the critical invisibility or relegation of conjure woman as evil or inconsequential. Critic Robert Bone
devotes a section of his famous book, *Down Home*, to Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Woman*. Bone (1988), like many critics, identifies Chesnutt and his storyteller character Uncle Julius as conjurers and finds that “at the core of each conjure tale is a transformation that reveals some essential truth concerning slavery times.” He does acknowledge that Aunt Peggy was hired by Mars Dugal for her conjuring services in the story “The Goopered Grapevine,” and later was “persuaded to suspend the power of the conjure.” He goes on to discuss the magical transformation of Henry, two major themes, a moral and parable of the collection without further mention of contributing priestess Peggy—the conjure woman.

Bone indirectly gives credit to Peggy when he discusses the merits of the tale entitled “Sis’ Becky’s Pickaninny.” He finds that Becky is reunited with her son at the end because of “…the devious maneuvers of a conjure woman trick the white folks into canceling the trade [of Becky from her son]” (Bone, 1988). It seems the conniving Aunt Peggy exploited enslavers by reuniting an enslaved mother to her infant son. He, further, finds that Peggy is at the center of two metamorphoses that occur in this fable—when baby Mose is transformed into a bird who flies away finds and sings for his mother. Somehow Peggy’s significance is again lost as Bone finds that the singing Mose, in bird form, is “…emblematic of the black man’s musical imagination. Music did not alter the slave’s external circumstances, but it did offer consolation to his wounded spirit. Which is why, after all, his songs are called *spirituals*” (Bone 1988). Peggy gets lost in Bone’s metamorphosis discussion. Her ability to make Mose both a singing hummingbird, mockingbird and rejoin him with his mother is incidental and insignificant as they relate to Aunt Peggy’s abilities.

Two stories in the collection include conjure men. “The subtlest and most difficult of Chesnutt’s conjure tales,” according to Bone, is “The Conjurer’s Revenge”. After stealing a conjure man’s shote Primus is turned into a mule. Bone seems to have a more sympathetic view of the unnamed conjure man who, he points out, “on his deathbed the conjure man relents, and determines to restore him [Primus] to his human form. Unfortunately he [the conjure man] dies before the second transformation is complete,” (Bone, 1988). Although he only appears in one frame, Bone remembers a conjure man’s partial paranormal feat where he tried to right his vengeful act committed against Primus. On the other hand, Peggy performs spectacular acts of conjuration throughout the book and is quickly marginalized and forgotten in Bone’s analysis. Perhaps the unnamed conjure man’s “…conversion to Christianity” enabled him to be seen by Bone who finds that “overcome by remorse, he [unnamed conjure man] hopes to atone for the harm that he has done by turning the mule back into a man. It is not so easy, however, to wipe the slate clean”(Bone, 1988). Although there were at least two incidents where folk disobeyed her instructions, Peggy is never portrayed as intentionally invoking her abilities for revenge.

There are seven conjure stories in Chesnutt’s book, and Bone focuses on four including the only two stories that contain conjure men. In “The Gray Wolf’s Ha’nt” both Peggy and Jube are conjurers. After Jube’s obnoxious and intimidating son is accidentally killed he seeks revenge against his son’s killer—Dan. Peggy works to protect Dan.
Again, Bone does not directly acknowledge Peggy’s role in this story. However, Bone finds “…he [Dan] falls prey to a satanic figure who manipulates appearances and tempts him into murdering his own wife”. It seems Bone can see many other characters in this collection except for Aunt Peggy the conjure woman.² Notably Bone’s perspective is not unique.

In “Chesnutt’s ‘The Goophered Grapevine’ as Social Criticism”(Hovet, 1973), manages to discuss this opening story without directly mentioning Aunt Peggy. He observes that enslaver McAdoo had to “resort to pagan witchcraft in order to maintain exclusive rights to the bounties of nature” (Hovet, 1973). Moreover, he characterizes Peggy as pagan and her abilities as a manifestation of witchcraft. He writes, “The vineyard, that once [was a] happy Eden for both blacks and whites, becomes personal property which must be patrolled with shotguns and, when that fails, cursed by the spells of a witch.” Hovet fails to take the same tone toward enslaver McAdoo who actively recruited and hired Aunt Peggy knowing her services were against the law, Christianity and would reinforce her influence within the community. He does include a discussion of the story entitled, “Po Sandy,” where he manages to ignore the only other conjure woman in Chesnutt’s stories, Tenie. In line with Hovet’s focus on social criticism, Cynthia L. Lehman’s (1996) essay, “The Social and Political Views of Charles Chesnutt” avoids a discussion of The Conjure Woman other than noting that it is a thematic folkloric precursor for Harlem Renaissance writers and Zora Neale Hurston’s work.

In “The Art of The Conjure Woman” R. E. Baldwin (1971) finds “the penetrating insights of these stories in [The Conjure Woman] he [Chesnutt] never matched in his realistic fiction”. In appreciation of his well crafted book, The Conjure Woman, Baldwin asserts that Chesnutt “avoids stifling stereotypes while criticizing the myths of white supremacy and demonstrating the range and quality of black experience”. Agreeing with Baldwin, one finds that Chesnutt offers an appreciation and acknowledgement of African American vernacular culture, with emphasis on the sass of some enslaved, free and freed Black women. Relatedly, many critics, like Baldwin, maintain that Black writers like Chesnutt were writing to audiences with white supremacist sensibilities. Consequently, “Whites had to be trained to perceive black experience from the black point of view, for until the white man was so changed no serious black literature could receive a hearing because it would not be understood” (Baldwin, 1971). Such training also applies to some Black female characters in literature. Many readers are trained to understand African American culture identifying the heroism, bravery and resistance of Black males. Likewise, in women’s studies the heroine, the beauty, the activist and fem fatale is rarely dark brown, coffee, sepia, or ebony colored, intelligent, independent thinker, self-confident, satisfied with being single, articulate, enslaved or formerly enslaved women. The title to Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith’s (1982) book succinctly describes Black women’s place in United States literature, history and culture and too often still applies All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave. Even today somehow the majority of women/activists in mainstream media appeared to be White, in African American studies too often the literary heroes are mostly Black men but as Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith most insightfully remind the public in their title But Some of Us Are Brave. Charles Chesnutt
demonstrates how brave, confident and influential some Black women were in his book *The Conjure Woman* where the passing of time has reinforced the marginalization and invisibility of heroic Black women and the attempted muting of their sass. This paper privileges the voice, actions and in general sass of Aunt Peggy as demonstrated in the first story of Chesnutt’s collection “The Goophered Grapevine.”

**Conjure Woman Sass**

Most critics agree that Chesnutt wants to challenge ruling culture. Aunt Peggy directly resists and confronts white, male authority through her words and deeds and most specifically by being a conjure woman, openly practicing her religion, beliefs and consequently her supernatural abilities during slavery. Marjorie Pryse (1985) carefully points out that “Aunt Peggy of Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Woman* stories provides a connection between black women and literary authority…Chesnutt offers her and the actual conjure women who served him as models as a source of power that makes his own fiction possible.”

“The Goophered Grapevine”

The reader is introduced to Aunt Peggy the conjure woman, in Chesnutt’s first story, “The Goophered Grapevine,” when an enslaver is unsuccessful, after numerous attempts, to save his grapes. The storyteller, Uncle Julius, describes Peggy as: “a cunjuh ‘oman livin’ down ‘mong de free niggers on de Wim’l’ton Road, en all de darkies fum Rockfish ter Beaver Crick wuz feared er her. She ….—could make people hab fits, er rheumatiz, er make ‘em des dwinel away en die; en dey say she went out ridin’ de niggers at night, fer she wuz a witch ‘sides being a cunjuh ‘oman (Chesnutt, 1986).

During slavery Aunt Peggy, who physically appears to be a Black woman, lived in a neighborhood with free Blacks and distinguished herself as a respected, powerful force in a larger community by using techniques associated with beliefs that were against the law, custom and Christianity practiced in the southern United States during the antebellum period. Aunt Peggy is a powerful sassy Black woman—with a voice, convictions and the determination to utilize her abilities to clearly think and act in a resistant manner that confronted patriarchy, Christianity and the legal system. In a time when Blacks were subject to violence, terrorism, and supernaturally cruel forces, over which they had limited control, Aunt Peggy, like other conjurers, “had powers the enslavers lacked, and they were precisely the kinds of powers that a people living within a sacred context found impressive” (Levine, 1977). “In many instances, the conjurer had more control over the slaves than the master had” (Blassingame, 1979). Radically, Chesnutt establishes a non-Christian Black woman as a purveyor of power. Peggy lives alone in a home accessible to the community. Though free she does not move to the North. She is middle-aged, unmarried and satisfied to be that way, without a child and by all indications contented with her life. Those in the surrounding neighborhoods are familiar with conjuring Peggy, including the enslavers and the enslaved, some of whom are in fear of her. Although the ruling class forbade Blacks to practice the religious beliefs of their ancestors Julius, the narrator, reveals: “One day in de spring er de year, ole miss pack’ up a basket er chick’n

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en poun’-cake, en a bottle er scuppernon’ wine, en Mars Dugal’ tuk it in his buggy en driv ober ter Aun’ Peggy’s cabin. He tuk de basket in, en had a long talk wid Aun’ Peggy” (Chesnutt, 1986).

Mars Dugal outwardly courts Peggy’s support with the help of his wife—“ole miss.” He approaches her bearing gifts dinner including drink and dessert. Dugal is determined to reach an agreement since he “…had a long talk wid Aun’ Peggy” (Chesnutt, 1986). Additionally, Dugal also pays Peggy at least ten dollars for her services (Chesnutt, 1986). Dugal, an enslaver, understands conjure woman protocol—one must pay for service and she must be respected. Like a sassy woman, Peggy is up front about her activities.

Sassy women rarely cower or hide. Peggy conducts her activities in plain view. Since her magical practice/livelihood is against the law her actions directly confront laws and customs of the ruling class. Dugal’s gift bearing presence acknowledges three important characteristics about Aunt Peggy: she is an expert in her field, she is visible and known in the entire community as a conjure woman (making her bold enough to be visible) and she is powerful (her conjure must work). She appears at the plantation the next day and Julius describes some of her ingredients and where she buried her “vimya’d” root. For any slave that failed to understand why she was at the plantation she “…come back en tole one er de niggers she done goopher de grapevimes, en a’er a nigger w’at eat dem grapes ‘ud be sho ter die inside’n twel’ mont’s” (Chesnutt, 1986). Again, the conjure woman operates or performs her conjure in the open, she gives instructions and expects them to be followed and when duly respected and compensated she responds with consideration as well. G. C. Oden (1978) finds that “conjure was central to the story” and “What is of interest here is that Aunt Peggy excepts Henry from the continuing effects of her still-working conjure”2 (Oden, 1978).

The Importance of Aunt Peggy

Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Woman* demonstrates the lingering qualities of a literary heroic black women existed before our eyes waiting to be recognized for at least a century. Without the heroine, Aunt Peggy, “The Goophered Grapevine” would be an inaccurate title and the story nonexistent. It is Aunt Peggy’s actions that provide a link between most of the stories. One must unearth and acknowledge the presence of long ignored heroines who, in some cases, are masked so well we miss them while looking directly at their words and deeds.

A closer evaluation of Aunt Peggy suggest that some critics wanted to silence, ignore or down play the role of Peggy, the conjure woman. Aunt Peggy’s actions should establish her as a heroine rather than being deficient or an evil witch. Perhaps they simply misunderstand sass.

Priestess Peggy’s characteristics contribute to her importance as a heroine. Unlike “the tragic mulatto” one envisions Peggy as a recognizable Black woman. A reader is not reminded about her flowing hair or being able to read the blue veins under her creamy skin. She is a single Black woman, concerned with the community, living by her beliefs
in confronting the mores and customs of the dominant culture, and most importantly she recognizes her self-worth.

In her study, “The Case of Voodoo in New Orleans,” Jessie Gaston Mulira (1990) states “throughout the period of slavery and for twenty years after the Civil War the most powerful figures among the blacks in New Orleans were the voodoo queens…In fact, voodooism seems to have been a matriarchy from its first days in New Orleans”. V. Lee (1996) finds in her book, *Granny Midwives & Black Women Writers*, that “rather than the negative associations of witchcraft, conjuring has been an empowering concept for many black women.” Conjuring pays homage to an African past, while providing a present day idiom for magic, power, and ancient wisdom within a pan-African cultural context” (Lee, 1996). Although Peggy lives in North Carolina under patriarchy she assumes a role as a powerful individual in the community. Sass is potent because it is a public voice invoked by a Black woman in support of herself and her extended family—the community.

Peggy penetrates public dialogue through self-assertion. Through her voice and actions Aunt Peggy talks back, talks with, answers and responds to an oppressive, terroristic ruling culture blatantly invoking an African and African American oral aesthetic and practice. Aunt Peggy, as Chesnutt was fully aware, operates in a literary environment that holds her in low-esteem, an environment that ignores or minimizes the ability and contribution of a Black, unmarried, non-Christian and no-nonsense fictive heroine. Interestingly, when nineteenth century narrative Black women are perceived as articulating an authoritative stance their voices are characterized as sassy, saucy and unladylike by the ruling culture and often ignored by literary critics. Sass is employed in one form or another to claim or demonstrate self-respect and assert liberation while simultaneously resisting the terrorisms, perversions, and degradations of slavery in the United States. Joanne Braxton (1989) finds, for a female slave, “language is her first line of defense”. Often when Black women invoke an oppositional public voice the knee jerk reaction is to silence them.

Aunt Peggy is described as a sassy woman because there is a limit to what and how far she would submit her will, allegiance and obedience to conventions and the legal system. As a sassy woman, Aunt Peggy emerges from the pages of *The Conjure Woman* as hopeful, self-assertive, rebellious, powerful and active and open supporter of the enslaved community. The voices of Black women in literature offer insight into how women met the social structure. One finds that Chesnutt’s title frees the conjure woman from the confines of the frames to a critically larger portion of the work. One believes it is Aunt Peggy’s voice, confidence, abilities, sense of fair play, bold confrontation of patriarchal traditions that make some readers want to ignore her—she is too accomplished, too moral, too brave, too fearless, and finally too sassy.

Priestess Peggy is not a woman to be ignored.
References


G. T. Hull, P. B. Scott, & B. Smith. (1982). *All the women are white, all the blacks are men, but some of us are brave: Black women's studies.* New York: Feminist Press.


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1. Although *The Conjure Woman* is recognized as an important literary work, R. Bone’s marginal observation of the conjure woman, Peggy, is common. Her significance is ignored in many literary critiques such as: M. G. Cooke’s *Afro-American Literature in the Twentieth Century*; J. Taxel’s “Charles Waddell Chesnutt’s Sambo” where he points out “the pervasiveness of supernatural events and superstition” in *The Conjure Woman* without identifying one conjure woman; T. R. Hovet’s Chesnutt’s “The Goophered Grapevine’ as Social Criticism” mentions pagan witchcraft and “the spells of a witch” without ever mentioning Peggy’s name. These are a few examples there are others.

2. Henry a newly purchased naïve slave eats scuppernong and later learns the vines are rooted. The overseer intervenes and brings Henry to Peggy.

3. The following nineteenth century narratives are examples of women’s narratives that were ignored for decades: *Memoir of Old Elizabeth* (1863) Elizabeth describes how folk tried to prevent her from speaking publicly; L. A. Delaney’s (1898) *From the Darkness Cometh the Light or Struggles For Freedom*; H. Mattison (1861) *Louise Picquet, the Octoress*; Susie King Taylor (1902) *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33rd States Colored Troops Late 1st S. C. Volunteers* are just a few examples of *The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers* (1988) published by Oxford University Press.