



a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Education Finance for School Leaders
EDST 565
September to November - 2014
Thursday – 16:30 to 19:30
Ponderosa F- Room 201

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Calendar Description:

While situating the financing of education generally within its larger economic and related socio-political contexts, and while surveying contemporary issues in the financing of education in British Columbia and Canada, this course focuses primarily on issues, such as equity, adequacy, and equality, with most relevance to and impact on the school and school district level.

Aims, Goals, Objectives, Outcomes:

What should practicing school leaders know about the financing of education? Should we consider a budget as a discourse underlined by a certain understanding of what is public education, how should it be provided, for what purposes, and for whose benefit? These are the key guiding questions for this course. By definition, then, this course addresses itself to school-level administrators and to school-level administrators as aspirants to more senior leadership positions in education.

The answer to these questions necessarily involves more than knowledge of how to manage a school budget technically. First, some sense of how the financing of publicly funded education fits into the evolving economic context of both private- and public-sector activity is necessary if school administrators are to understand, engage in, and influence financial decision-making with more than a “recipe-book” approach. Second, lest they find themselves prey to facile ideas about how much better life in schools would be if government—and school boards—simply used alternative approaches to distributing available resources, school leaders should have some general idea of the generic approaches to funding education that are possible and the advantages and disadvantages of each. They should also understand some of the central issues, trade-offs, measurement problems, controversies, and dilemmas that transcend any particular technical approach to distributing available resources, especially the debate around the aims of public education and issues of adequacy. Closely linked to the debate about the financing of public education, the aim(s) of education are also subject to an intense debate, especially when governments re-examine aspects of the provision of public schooling and struggle with defining the need for educational change. In order to participate intelligently within this debate and the discussion around issues of financing education, educators need to understand the contested nature of education—how the debate is influenced by fluctuating social, cultural, economic and political trends that emerge locally, nationally, and globally. Competing claims have foundations in diverse conceptions of the educated person, the good life, and the good society. Those conceptions are situated in larger discourses that address foundational issues of purpose, paradigm, and finances in education.

Next, school leaders should grasp the essentials of issues and research evidence surrounding devolution of control over educational decision-making to the school level. In short, they require an informed understanding of questions surrounding site-based management (SBM). Next, they should understand how school-based management inevitably links to and is delimited by the approach to site-based budgeting (SBB) chosen by a school jurisdiction. Approaches to SBB can range from comprehensive devolution of budgetary authority (very rare, at least in North America) to highly constrained discretion over narrow expenditure categories. In the same vein, they need to understand both conceptual and technical issues that surround SBB.

These areas of concern define the terrain of this course. Students completing this course should have a solid working knowledge, appropriately contextualized, of education finance as it relates to the work of school-level and district-level leaders.

The principal goals of this course will be to foster understanding of:

1. the changing place of publicly funded education in the context of a rapidly evolving, increasingly globalized, volatile, technology-intensive, knowledge-based economy,
2. basic alternative approaches to funding education, their rationales in terms of equity, adequacy, and efficiency, and their applicability to different types and levels of educational services,
3. issues surrounding alternative revenue sources for education with particular focus on the property tax and market-driven funding mechanisms,
4. questions and issues surrounding school-based budgeting and management,

Weekly Schedule

Each week will consist of three three-hour sessions (13 sessions in total from September to the end of November, 2014). Most sessions will blend instructor presentation and discussion. Several sessions, however, will be devoted to case studies, students-led seminars, and presentations by invited guests on particular subjects such as funding mechanisms and budget processes.

Instruction will consist of a combination of lectures by the instructor and guest speakers, participant presentation of cases, and small and large group discussions of legal issues and of assigned materials. As a community of learners, you will be expected to share your personal, professional, and collaborative queries, explorations, and expertise through group discussions and projects. Participants will also need to have recourse to the Faculty of Education Library, and other sources, including the Internet, for the purpose of researching and preparing their presentations and final papers.