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# Effective Leadership of Online Adjunct Faculty

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## Abstract

Post secondary education leaders and administrators are currently facing two separate but inter-related trends: the growth in online education, and the significant increase in adjunct (part-time) faculty. In order to maximize the educational quality and institutional effectiveness, education leaders must develop an approach that leverages the characteristics of online adjunct faculty. The paper describes the characteristics of online adjunct faculty and their motivation for teaching, explores leadership style approaches to leverage this highly motivated workforce, and offers a framework to education leaders that draws from the transformational and situational leadership styles. The framework is made up of two prongs: the effective leadership of the online adjunct faculty workforce throughout their teaching careers, and the management of online organizational systems. Educational leaders who can lead their workforce in embracing educational technologies to provide a superior learning environment for students will lead the way in education. These leaders need to be visionary, motivational and highly supportive of their workforce especially those who are in direct contact with students, the online adjunct faculty

## Introduction

Post secondary education leaders and administrators are currently facing two separate but inter-related trends: the growth in online education, and the significant increase in adjunct (part-time) faculty. Allen & Seamen (2008) report that between 2002 to 2007, the number of students taking at least one online course has more than doubled to over 20% of the overall student population. This was paralleled by a strong growth in the number of adjunct faculty who now represents some 48 % of instructional faculty in degree granting institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Although there are multiple reasons for the growth of adjunct faculty (critical expertise, evenings and weekend availability, real-world perspectives, economic containment), the growth in online education is becoming an increasingly key factor (Lyons, 2007).

The increasing dependence on adjunct faculty is causing education leaders to seek new strategies to maximize institutional effectiveness through leveraging adjunct faculty's specialized expertise, flexibility, and passion for sharing real-world perspectives. The integration of online adjunct faculty into the education community presents further difficulties due to their physical separation from the institution. To address these challenges the APLU Sloan National Commission on Online learning (2009) recommends that education administrators need to understand the characteristics and motivations of the online teaching community and use communication strategies that target and engage them.

This paper describes the characteristics of online adjunct faculty and their motivation for teaching, explores leadership style approaches to leverage this highly motivated workforce, and offers a framework to education administrators for effective leadership of online adjunct faculty. The framework is built on transformational and situational leadership styles and is made up of two prongs: the effective leadership of the online adjunct faculty workforce and the management of online organizational systems. The paper further argues that many of techniques offered for effective online student support are equally applicable to integrating online adjunct faculty into the educational community.

## Adjunct Faculty

## Adjunct Faculty Growth

The strong growth of part time faculty teaching over the past forty years to now almost fifty percent of teaching staff (Table 1) in degree granting institutions has been attributed in the literature to a number of interrelated factors:

1. Need for specialized “real-world” expertise in a wide range of disciplines in the field (Berry, 1999). Nontraditional or adult students expect faculty to have real-world experience and the ability to be flexible and dynamic, be comfortable with learning equality and customer-service oriented (Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009; Lyons, 2007).
2. Greater need for scheduling flexibility to maximize institutional costs – adding or canceling course sections at the last second (Berry, 1999).
3. Declining educational funding coupled with a demand to keep tuition low are leading higher education institutions to increase their use of adjunct faculty who teach “at a fraction of what tenure system faculty earn.” (National Education Association, 2009).
4. Increasing enrollments especially in online education (Allen & Seaman, 2008).

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
# of Faculty (000s)								
Full time	369	440	450	459	530	551	604	676
Part time	104	188	236	256	295	381	466	615
% Part-time	22%	30%	34%	36%	36%	41%	44%	48%

Table 1: Instructional faculty in degree-granting institutions by employment status  
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, (2008)

## Adjunct Faculty Characteristics and Motivation Factors

In a recent study, Shiffman (2009) utilized the categorization of adjunct faculty developed by Gappa & Leslie (1993) in understanding their respective teaching motivations. Of 697 online adjunct faculty in two large virtual universities, Shiffman (2009) found that 43% (or 296) identified themselves as *Specialist* (adjunct faculty who are employed full-time outside of their teaching), 27% (or 184) as *Freelancers* (adjunct faculty who choose to be employed in multiple part-time jobs), 9% (or 61) as *Career Enders*, 8% (or 58) as *Aspiring Academics*, and 13% (or 89) as *Other*. This categorization is consistent with other studies that have found that the *Specialist* category account for approaching half of adjunct faculty (Lyons, 2007).

Shiffman (2009) study of online adjunct faculty teaching motivations found that all adjunct categories ranked the top three factors as: (1) the joy of teaching; (2) personal satisfaction; and (3) the flexible work schedule, whereas factors such as job security, advancement, and benefits (e.g. insurance) were the three least motivating factors. Financial compensation for teaching ranked as only a neutral factor for all adjunct categories with the exception of aspiring academics.

This study supports the findings of much of the literature that online adjunct faculty are highly motivated to succeed and derive their principal satisfaction from the intrinsic rewards of teaching (Maguire, 2005). Intrinsic motivating factors include a feeling of self-gratification and self growth from teaching online (Schroeder, 2008), a personal motivation to use technology (Maguire, 2005), and that teaching online provided optimal working conditions as they were able to “teach” at any time and from any place (Schroeder, 2008).

At the same time, adjunct faculty can be demotivated by extrinsic factors, such as their perception that educational institutions treat them like second-class citizens. “Isolation, frustration, and lack of recognition are common feelings of adjuncts as they feel marginalized in the teaching profession” (Gaillard-Kenney, 2006, p.11). The significant salary disparity between full-time and adjunct faculty further exacerbates the feeling of second-class citizenship (National Education Association, 2009).

In addition, a review of online literature indicates that the majority of barriers to teaching on line are in the areas of administrative and technical support (Maguire, 2005). Administrative factors include a lack of inclusion in university issues and policies (Brindley et al., 2006), course and curriculum development (Degeneffe & Offutt, 2008), a lack of recognition of the time required to teach online courses (Coppola et al., 2002), and a lack of distance education training provided by the institution (Maguire, 2005).

## Leadership Style Approaches for Online Adjunct Faculty

In order to maximize the educational quality and institutional effectiveness, education leaders must develop an approach that leverages the characteristics of online adjunct faculty. This entails utilizing a leadership approach that stimulates and continuously develops the talents, skills and expertise of this highly motivated workforce.

The approach must also take into consideration the shift in the educational environment to a service industry business context in which serving the needs of the student is the primary focus as they are the ultimate customer. Indeed, Nunam et al. (2000) assert that “universities are moving from scholarly ivory towers to information corporations....this paradigm shift is described as a shift from a culture of production to one of consumption” (p. 87). Competition is especially prevalent in the distance education environment as technology enables access to students anywhere in the world, and students are generally adults who are paying for their education. This competitive nature of education has resulted in “student in ODL [online distance learning] being constructed as the customer” (Tait, 2004, p. 288). Students, as consumers of education, have now started to question the return of investment for their education dollars (Nalewaja Van Vorhiss et al., 2004), and are demanding a high quality of education at an affordable price.

Against this backdrop, university leadership in defining “the vision, mission, goals, and objectives for the institution or program regarding distance learning” (Moore & Kearsley, 2005, p.187) now sets the tone for facilitating effective student learning in all aspects of the educational experience by committing the organization to support the student (Holmberg, 2005). The successful implementation of the institutional vision is dependent on educational leaders creating an environment in which adjunct faculty members feel inspired to achieve the prescribed goals and objectives, and have the skills and support systems in place to meet students’ needs. Thus the ability of educational leadership to fully integrate adjunct faculty into the institution’s community, and to train them to be highly effective online instructors is critical to the success of the institution’s mission.

The online learning environment requires shifts in the roles of the leader and follower. The academic literature highlights the need for instructors to shift from being lecturers to facilitators and for student to assume a greater level of responsibility in the learning process (Moore & Kearsley, 2005; Holmberg, 2005). This shift in roles is equally applicable to the education leader and online adjunct faculty member relationship since the virtual environment tends to create a flattening of the organizational structures. The educational leader’s role also shifts to a coach and facilitator, as the online adjunct member assumes greater responsibility in fulfilling the goals and vision of the institution.

This calls for educational leaders to create an environment in which adjunct faculty members feel inspired to reach the institutional vision and have the skills and support systems to meet the challenges. As such, education leaders should utilize leadership styles that couple these objectives with the online adjunct faculty characteristics. A review of the academic literature would suggest the use of two leadership styles: transformational and situational.

### **Transformational Leadership in a Distance Education Environment**

Beaudoin (2004) maintains that “the future of distance education is ultimately not so much about enhancing technology or improving pedagogy, but rather about managing change” (p.92). In managing change, Beaudoin (2004) confesses to a bias towards a transformational leadership style. Transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they originally intended and often even more than they thought possible. Transformational leadership behaviors include: idealized leadership (leaders behave like role models), inspirational motivation (leaders inspire those around them), intellectual stimulation (simulate innovation and creativity) and individualized consideration (support, encouragement and coaching to followers).

Transformational leadership is particularly effective in a distance education environment from the perspective of both leading virtual teams and leading knowledge workers. Kayworth & Leidner (2001) study found that effective virtual teams require a high degree of trust, empathy, empowerment, and mentorship. This is consistent with transformational leaders who express confidence in followers, articulate a clear and appealing vision, empower people to achieve the vision, and lead by example (Yukl, 2002). Zayani (2008) found that transformational leadership style was strongly associated with global virtual team success, with success defined as (1) the motivation of global virtual team members to exert extra effort; (2) the leader’s effectiveness in interacting with team; and (3) the team member’s satisfaction with the leadership.

Bell-Roundtree (2004) found that transformational leaders will most likely experience higher trends in positive outcomes of knowledge workers’ satisfaction with their job and their job commitment. “Managing knowledge worker job satisfaction is important because these attitudes have been positively related to increased customer support, willingness to exert extra effort, performance, and retention rates and negatively related to employee burnout” (p.114).

A transformation leadership approach will thus motivate and inspire online adjunct faculty to achieve the institutional vision and, in doing so be willing to exert more effort in creating an exceptional learning experience for students.

### **Situational Leadership**

Situational leadership is also very relevant since distance education leaders are faced with a radically changing environment on multiple fronts:

1. A highly competitive global environment in which customers (students) can easily switch from one online university to another.
2. Increasing customer (student) demands for higher quality of education at reduced costs.
3. Redefining the mission beyond the geographical proximity.
4. Shifting the organizational structure from a face-to-face centralized academic setting to a (global) virtual environment.
5. Training, motivating and directing an ever expanding adjunct faculty population.
6. Constantly changing technologies.

These challenges require distance education leaders to “need a variety of skills that are constantly refined and include resource mobilization, needs assessment, fitting technology to needs, program evaluation and accreditation, policy formulation, strategic planning, operationalizing ideas, market analysis, implementing online infrastructure, collaborating with partners, training and support for faculty, and mentoring the next generation of leaders” (Beaudoin, 2002, p. 43).

These diverse challenges call for situational leaders who seek to find the effective integration of the needs of the followers, and the organizational processes and systems to complete the tasks or mission (Hersey et al., 2008).

### **Distance Education Leadership Framework**

The essence of effective online adjunct faculty leadership consists in education leaders creating an environment that combines inspiring and motivating online adjunct faculty towards a compelling vision (transformation leadership) with helping them collectively and individually achieve their task (situational leadership). Educations leaders create this environment by:

- Hiring, training and retaining excellent, committed, quality adjunct faculty who are students centric, empathic and motivated.
- Providing an effective organizational and systems infrastructure that supports distance education students and faculty.

In other words, an effective leadership framework in a distance education environment is twofold: the leadership of people, and the management of organizational systems to support online adjunct faculty and students (Figure 1 - adapted from Tait, 2004).

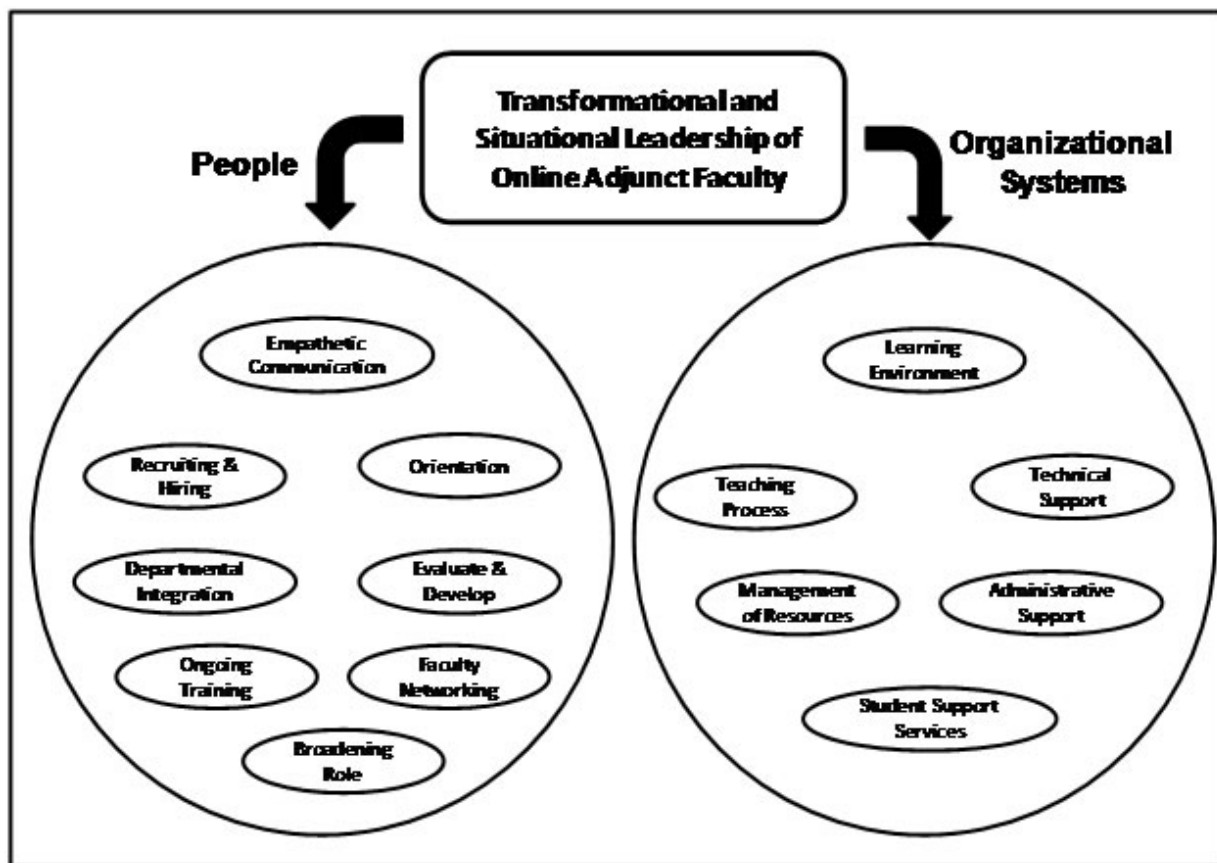


Figure 1. Leadership Framework of Online Adjunct Faculty

## Leadership of People

### *Leadership Continuum throughout the Career of Online Adjunct Faculty*

In the service industry, the link between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction has been well established (Heskett et al., 1997). Similarly, in distance education, it is critical that the faculty are highly motivated and satisfied as this will lead to higher levels of student satisfaction and retention (Brindley et al., 2006). This requires educational leaders to continuously focus on the needs of adjunct faculty throughout their academic career: recruiting and hiring, training (initial and ongoing), mentoring, networking, management and appraisal practices as depicted in Figure 2. The organizational objective in this process is to attract and hire outstanding adjunct faculty and provide them superior support such that they will contribute to both an excellent student learning environment and the institution's mission and vision.

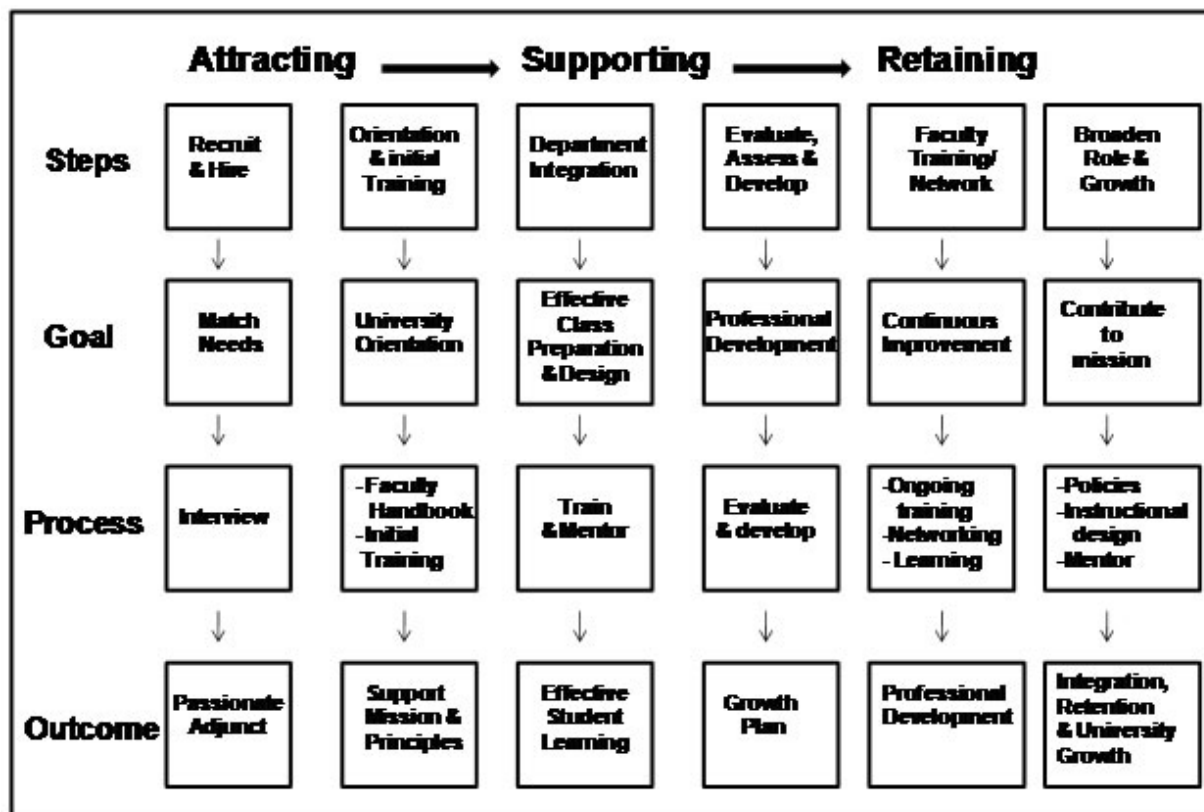


Figure 2: Attracting, supporting & retaining quality Adjunct Faculty. Adapted from Strycker (2008)

### Empathetic Communication

Communication with faculty who are located all over the world requires education leaders who can effectively evoke passion, encouragement, stimulate and direct operations through telephone calls, emails, and other asynchronous and synchronous technologies. Empathetic communication is based on an emotional appreciation for another's feeling, invoking a feeling of a personal connection and trust.

Holmberg (2005) maintains that the empathic approach in all communications "between the parties involved in the teaching-learning process as central to distance education" (p.38). Friendly and stimulating dialog between the leader and adjunct faculty members (and among adjunct faculty members) on university mission and policies, curriculum development, and teaching best practices provides intellectual stimulation, motivation, and feelings of trust and involvement between the adjunct faculty member and the university.

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### Recruiting and Hiring

"Recruiting, hiring and developing adjuncts for a distance education environment is no easy task" (Schnitzer &

Crosby, 2003, p.1); at the same time, finding high quality candidates are crucial to an institution's success (Strycker, 2008). "Good credentials on paper, and 'brick-and-mortar' teaching accomplishments, do not necessary translate into a similar level of success online (Sixl-Daniell et al., 2006, p. 4). In a student centric online environment, administrators should seek out candidates who are subject matter expert, enthusiastic about their subject, technologically oriented, well organized, and care about students (Rahman, 2001).

Administrators should use a transformational approach in hiring interviews by emphasizing the institution's vision and commitment to quality and professional development. Indeed, in the service industry, Gudergan et al. (2008) found that the greater the emotional motivation displayed by frontline staff, the better the customer service provision. In distance education, it is thus critical to hire highly competent online adjunct faculty who are enthusiastic about their subject, working with students, and teaching at the educational institution.

### **Orientation and Initial Training**

An online orientation session to acquaint and assimilate (Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003) should immediately follow the hiring process. This session should be the first step in making the online adjunct faculty feel welcome and connected to the organization (Green, 2006). Transformational educational leaders need to use this session to enthuse new adjunct faculty members about the institution's mission, service to students, and academic values. In this context, synchronous video and audio technologies are preferred as this medium contributes to a greater sense of community and intimacy, where the speaker can connect with the audience and provide immediate feedback to questions (Murphy & Laferriere, 2007).

The new adjunct faculty member needs to be introduced to a high level of administrative and technical information including "administrative and technical support group contacts, an explanation of administrative procedures, instructional procedures, instructional requirements, technical requirements, technical resources for teaching online, curriculum processes, copyright guidelines, and standards and expectations for distance education instruction" (Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003, p.5). However, care needs to be taken in assessing the new faculty member's ability to absorb all this material; it is recommended that reference material (such as online faculty handbook covering administrative procedures) and online teaching pedagogy and technology training courses be provided to supplement the initial orientation session.

### **Departmental Integration**

Integration within the academic department is critical to the adjunct faculty's teaching experiences, growth and development, and ultimately their ongoing retention at the university. The departmental head needs to demonstrate the transformational leadership attributes of being enthusiastic and motivating about the institution's mission and vision, and leading by example. At the same time, (s)he must demonstrate situational leadership attributes in adapting each adjunct faculty member's integration and training to their respective skills and background, and in being highly supportive and responsive to their specific needs.

There is no stronger and more effective way to connect to, and integrate into, a department's life than pairing the new adjunct faculty with a model instructor who is passionate about serving students and the institutional mission. Mentoring program helps to provide new hires with a deeper understanding of institutional and departmental policies, procedures and culture, increase collegiality, and improve channels of communication (Lyons, 2007).

### **Evaluate, Assess and Develop**

Effective leadership of adjunct faculty requires a regular evaluation and assessment of their teaching styles and pedagogy, and developmental feedback for continuous improvement. The effectiveness of this important developmental process is very dependent on the rigorousness of the assessment, and the empathy and quality of the feedback. The evaluation and assessment process must be:

1. treated as a development tool to help develop online adjunct faculty members, rather than a means of reprimanding and flushing out weak adjunct faculty members.

2. fully understood by the adjunct faculty member through references in the interview, orientation, and departmental integration process.
3. well defined and consistently applied across all faculty.

The ability to appraise an online adjunct faculty member's teaching is relatively easy as administrators can access any online classrooms at any time. The assessment should make a systematic assessment of the faculty member's course syllabus, teaching pedagogy, clarity of instruction, content value, classroom activity, responsiveness to students, and grading practices.

The assessment feedback process requires educational leaders to display three key attributes: commitment, conversation and trust (Tait, 2004). Appraisals are an effective tool for educational leaders to demonstrate both a personal and institutional commitment to excellence. An empathetic feedback discussion creates a conversational environment between the leader and the faculty member on effective teaching approaches. Positive feedback geared to adjunct faculty self-development builds a trusting relation between management and faculty.

Extensive research into college level student evaluations of teaching effectiveness highlights that "it can be safely stated that student ratings are valid, reliable, and worthwhile means of evaluating teaching" (Wachtel, 1998, p.192). Student ratings feedback can help to improve instruction, increase student learning and achievement, and increase the likelihood that excellence in teaching will be recognized and rewarded. In the student centric environment of online education, 'customer' feedback is critical to achieving a rewarding learning experience for students and ultimately in achieving the institutional mission of educational excellence.

### **Ongoing Faculty Training**

The initial one-time online faculty training, while essential, is not sufficient for effective online instructors; they require a variety of experiences and training interactions over time (Yang & Cornelious, 2005). Ongoing professional development that is aligned to the mission and vision of the higher education institution is the ultimate goal of developing a highly effective workforce (Rodgers et al. 2009). Blodgett's (2008) research found that online adjunct faculty perceived their primary need for ongoing training included training in course management systems, pedagogical approaches to online teaching, university/institution specific student support systems, and instructional design on how to develop an online course.

Continuous training and development contribute to institutional success in three ways: (1) individual development; (2) remedial development identified during the evaluation process; (3) preparation to meet change and future organizational needs (Tait, 2004). Faculty development also creates a tighter bond between the faculty member and the institution.

### **Faculty Networks**

Organizational learning does not just take place in a hierarchical approach but across peer networks (Pahor et al. 2008). However, in an online teaching context, the physical separation and the feeling of isolation of online adjunct faculty can lead to ineffective teaching practices of consistently delivering the same material in the same old way (Eib and Miller, 2006).

Eib & Miller (2006) further notes that "the focus on collegiality and creating a sense of belonging, as well as a formulation of knowledge as a social process, is not new"(p.3). In the traditional face-to-face environment, many educational institutions offer onsite faculty meeting and events to stimulate adjunct and full-time faculty collegiality (Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003). In the online environment, Puzziferro & Shelton (2009) suggest that frequent contact and communication over virtual synchronous technologies (e.g. skype) are good practices for adjunct faculty involvement and motivation. While synchronous technologies create a sense of community, they require all attendees to be present at the same time, which may be difficult for busy adjunct faculty members especially if they are living in different time zones (Bates & Poole, 2003). As such, online asynchronous networking systems, such as the institution's learning management system and/or commercial social networking systems such as blogs or Facebook, are excellent platforms to accommodate the physical and time constraints of online adjunct faculty especially as they are the tools of their learning environment (Eib & Miller, 2006; Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003).

### **Broaden Role & Growth**

While the primary activity of online adjunct faculty is to engage in teaching, if faculty are to be fully engaged in the institutional mission, educational leaders must find ways to involve them into the full scope of the institutional life (Baron-Nixon, 2007). This includes having a voice in setting institutional policies, scholarships, course design and development, mentors, and invitations to institutional events.



Maguire (2008) found that online adjunct faculty expressed a desire for greater involvement in the creation of institutional policy. They felt that their close links with students would lead to improving the distance education process through the clarification of current policy and the identification of missing or problematic policy. However, online adjunct faculty members “believed that they do not have the opportunity to be proactive in the process, resigning instead to reacting to policy that they may not learn about until they violate it or make an error” (p.1). Maguire (2008) recommends giving online adjunct faculty representation in policy committees in a variety of areas including curriculum and program policy, student and faculty services, and institutional policies.

Smith (2007) discusses the systems approach at the Rio Salado community college in which adjunct faculty are used almost exclusively to accomplish Rio Salado’s mission, vision, and purposes. In noting the increasing numbers of “professional adjuncts” (adjunct faculty who chose to hold several part-time teaching and consulting jobs), Rio Salado use online adjunct faculty as faculty chairs who relieve the educational administrators in routine and mundane tasks. These tasks include instructional leadership, content and curriculum development, text book selection, new faculty mentoring, supervising and evaluating, and college-wide system projects.

Educational leaders should advocate and support adjunct faculty in continuous learning and scholarship (Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009). “If part-time faculty are to provide students with the same well-rounded education expected from full-time faculty, and if, as has been suggested, the quality of education rises with scholarship activity, then part-time faculty – like their full-time colleagues – should be expected to engage in scholarship” (Baron-Nixon, 2007, p.93). This support should include financial assistance in attending and presenting at conferences, support services in obtaining research grants, graduate studies tuition remission for continuous professional growth (Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009; Baron-Nixon, 2007).

## **Management of Organizational Systems to support online Adjunct Faculty**

While there has been an abundance of literature written on effective learning environments for students, there has been little literature on effective online faculty support. However, Puzziferro & Shelton (2009) argue that “if you are involved in faculty support and development, every time you read those articles, you should replace the word *student* with *faculty*. In many ways online adjunct faculty are exactly the same as online students” (p. 11). Ultimately, “excellent, committed, quality instructors are retained by excellent, committed, quality faculty support” (Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003, p.2).

From an online adjunct faculty member’s viewpoint, the key systems that educational leaders need to manage are: 1) Online learning management environment; 2) Course development and teaching process; 3) Management and protection of online resources; 4) Technical support; 5) Administrative support; 6) Student support services.

### **Online Learning Management Environment**

Education leaders should continuously reassess their learning management environment to ensure that their technological platform provides an affordable high quality instructor – learner environment today, and to prepare for tomorrow’s technological capabilities. In an online environment, asynchronous Learning Management Systems (LMS) are currently generally favored as they provide multi-tasking adult learners the flexibility to participate in the class at any time and any place (Moore & Kearsley, 2005) and to provide deeper thinking, well-researched responses. However, as broadband technologies become more prevalent, multimedia learning offers a number of advantages. Multimedia incorporates different learning styles and facilitates a deeper level learning leading to a more effective transfer of pedagogical knowledge (Bates, 2005).

### **Course Development and Teaching Process**

The literature identifies two approaches to online teaching: the broadcast model, where the course material is provided by the institution and the instructors act as tutors; and the collaborative approach or interactive approach, where the instructors have a broader responsibility of create the detailed teaching pedagogy (Brindley et al., 2006). Educational leaders need to define the appropriate model and the faculty support infrastructure that takes effect from the bottom to the top (Zawacki-Richer, 2004). This should include:

1. Binding agreements on the teaching pedagogical model and outcome targets for all departments within the educational institution.
2. Organizational structures for the faculty and student support systems.
3. Establishment of a faculty training center with formal measurements for professional training.
4. Process for learning from examples of colleagues' good practices including having access as a visitor to another class section.
5. Process for informal personal pedagogical and media technological advice – for example being linked to a mentor or faculty network (as discussed in the earlier section) and having access to an online “faculty help desk”.
6. Complaints procedure.

### **Management and Protection of Online Resources**

The management and protection of online resources have three key components for faculty: (1) the ability to readily access scholarly material; (2) the incorporation of scholarly material into the online classroom; (3) the ownership and protection of faculty material presented in the virtual classroom.

“Online library services are regarded as key to success of the virtual university” (Brindley et al, 2006, p. 147). Services, such as 24/7 librarian support, online access to a broad range of scholarly articles and journals, home delivery, obtaining copyright permission and digitizing articles for use in a virtual classroom, are essential institutional capabilities for online adjunct faculty success.

The institution's intellectual property policy, which is defined by the academic leadership, can have significant consequences to online adjunct faculty (Bonner, 2006). In order to recruit highly qualified faculty, the policy should adopt the teacher's exception in the 1976 Copyright Act that permits faculty members instead of their employers to own works routinely authored in connection with their teaching (Loggie et al., 2006).

### **Technical Support**

Many online adjunct faculty members feel uncomfortable with their skills and competencies in the effective use of educational technology (Park & Bonk, 2007). Therefore 24 hour/7 days a week technical support capability is essential to create an effective online educational environment. At the same time, however, faculty members must feel comfortable with the technological learning environment as they are generally the first contact person for students. In fact, “Hara & Kling's study shows that the frequency of experiencing frustration and drop-out rates increases if faculty are practically unable to help directly with simple technical problems and must refer students to technical support” (Zawacki-Richter, 2004). As such, faculty members' technology training must be more comprehensive and at a higher level than student training.

### **Administrative Support**

Online adjunct faculty members have to interact with numerous administration processes, which include: 1) Ongoing selection of online course instructors; 2) Course cancellation process; 3) Contract and payment process; 4) Text book and teaching material delivery process; 5) Promotions procedure; 6) Class record keeping – ongoing and final grade recording; 7) Exam delivery systems; 8) Access to equipment, software programs and supplies.

The ease of interactions with these educational institution's administrative organizations and procedures has a significant impact on an online adjunct faculty member's motivation and persistency of teaching at an educational institution (Meyers, 2009). As such the development of these administrative procedures must be made from the perspective of their ease of use to the online adjunct faculty member.

### **Student Support Services**

Faculty members are the primary point of contact with students; as such the quality of student support services has a very direct impact on online adjunct faculty. If the educational institution provides student with a comprehensive set of high quality support services, students will be able to devote their online classroom energies to learning the course subject matter. However, if the institution's student services are weak, then the adjunct faculty member will become the support service.

### **Conclusion**

The effective leadership of online adjunct faculty members is critical to the success of a distance education university. Research studies have found that adjunct faculty are highly motivated to succeed and derive their

motivation from intrinsic factors such as the joy of teaching, personal satisfaction, and the teaching mission of the university. However studies also show that online adjunct faculty have the perception of being treated as second rate citizens and lack teaching, administrative and technical support. The challenge to educational leaders is to harness this motivation and the specialized skills of the online adjunct faculty while addressing their concerns in order to maximize both educational quality to students, and institutional effectiveness.

A review of leadership literature in distance education suggests that transformational and situational leadership styles are the most effective in leveraging the skills, expertise and motivation of the online adjunct faculty workforce. Leaders who behave like role models, inspire those around them, and simulate innovation and creativity, as well as providing for individualized considerations (support, encouragement and coaching to followers), all help to bridge the distance barrier between the educational leaders and online adjunct faculty.

Drawing from these two leadership styles, the paper offers a framework that is made up of two prongs: people leadership and support systems. In interacting with adjunct faculty workforce, the academic literature suggests that effective leadership requires an empathetic communication approach throughout the online adjunct faculty member's academic career. This ranges from recruiting and hiring, orientation, mentoring, teaching, faculty learning (initial and ongoing), faculty networking, evaluation, assessment and development, and broadening responsibilities.

In terms of adjunct faculty support systems, much of the literature on online student support systems is equally applicable to online adjunct faculty. Educational administrative leadership and institutional systems serve online adjunct faculty and students, not the other way around. From an online adjunct faculty perspective, key systems and processes to address include the online learning management technology, course development and teaching process, management and protection of online resources, technical and administrative support, and the student support services.

Ultimately, transformational leadership creates an environment in which online adjunct faculty feel inspired and motivated to fulfill the institutional vision, while situational leadership helps to tailor the individual member's development to provide the skills necessary to achieve these goals. In addition these leadership styles creates an innovative, creative and adaptable environment to develop (and continuously refine) the organizational processes and support systems necessary to meet the needs of online adjunct faculty and students.

This is an exciting time in education; the rapid growth in technology is making it possible for people from all corners of the globe to readily access educational opportunities. Educational leaders who can lead their workforce in embracing educational technologies to provide a superior learning environment for students will lead the way in education. These leaders need to be visionary, motivational and highly supportive of their workforce especially those who are in direct contact with students, the online adjunct faculty.

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*Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, Volume VIII, Number I, Spring 2010*  
*University of West Georgia, Distance Education Center*  
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