The Multiple Futures of the Field of Educational Leadership Research and Practice – An Introduction[1]

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As the sixth volume in the *International Research on School Leadership* series, the contributing authors in this volume consider the history, challenges, and opportunities of the field of research and practice in educational leadership and administration in schools and districts. Ten years after the work of Firestone and Riehl (2005) and their contributing authors, our aim with the present volume was to summarize and update the work of the field, and provide a space to consider the multiple futures of educational leadership in schools and districts, as both challenges and opportunities. The first decade of the twenty-first century brought significant critiques, challenges, and competition to the research and practice of training leaders and administrators of schools and districts around the world. Congruently, the field experienced significant growth and change, as multiple new sub-domains flourished and were founded. Thus, in this volume we were delighted to included excellent chapters from multiple authors that considered the duality of the challenges and opportunities of:

- The work of the field of educational leadership and administration research to date.
- The opportunities and challenges of new visions of leadership in traditional and non-traditional schools.
- The evolving state of research evidence in educational leadership and the increasing sophistication of multiple methodologies, including qualitative research, quantitative modeling, the ability to test theory, and the increasing opportunities brought on by the intersection of data, research, and practice.
- The preparation of educational leaders.

- And the emerging trends in the professional development of school leaders.

Throughout the volume, our colleagues from around the world provided chapters that speak to these central issues across the school leadership research domain, both as issues of the past, as well as visions of possible futures. Research on school leadership has historically been critiqued on issues of theory, methodology, research, findings and application (Hailer, 1968). As one of the first citation analyses in education administration research, Hailer (1968) noted that the burgeoning field of educational administration at the time paradoxically suffered from these scholarly issues while at the same time had made great strides in providing new ways to understand and improve school leadership. Since that time, educational administration and school leadership research and preparation has come under continued critique (Edmonds, 1979; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005), while at the same time making significant strides in what is known about good school leadership (Bowers, Shoho, & Barnett, 2014; Boyce & Bowers, 2013; Hallinger, 2013; Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Krüger & Scheerens, 2012; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Louis, 2011; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Scheerens, 2012; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004), especially for students in underserved and disadvantaged contexts. This continued conversation in the field is noted here in the present volume in Chapter 9 by Carolyn Riehl as "unpunctuated disequilibrium". Indeed, recent studies of the field of educational leadership and administration research have demonstrated that while researchers seem to work somewhat in isolation on significant problems of research, theory and practice, a strong literature of research and theory has emerged over the last 50 years in the domain which has served to positively inform the research, policy and practice of school leaders (Murphy, Vriesenga, & Storey, 2007; Richardson & McLeod, 2009; Wang & Bowers, in press).

The authors of the nine chapters in the present book volume took on this challenge of confronting the duality of not only including the past as we look to the future, but also the duality of the critique of the field in the midst of exciting and significant progress in our knowledge and understanding of leadership in schools. Here, in the first section of the book (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), the authors

examine the interplay of educational leadership research and theory as it relates to reform in schools, especially as it relates to serving historically underserved populations globally. In section 2 (Chapters 5 and 6), the authors highlight the importance of methodological considerations in school leadership research as a means to understand theory and practice as well as providing interesting avenues that point to multiple exciting future possibilities through relying on current innovations noted within the chapters. Section 3, (Chapters 7 and 8) examine the research and practice of school leadership preparation, especially as it relates to university-district partnerships and non-traditional school settings. And in the final chapter, (Chapter 9), our capstone contributor provides a means to link the present volume with the past writings on these topics, while also providing a lens to view the exciting possibilities and promises of the multiple futures of the field of educational leadership research and practice.

Section 1: Educational Leadership Research, Theory and Reform

In Chapter 2, "Four Decades of Collective Leadership: The Connection between Leadership Theories of Action and Student Achievement", Chase Nordengren works to build a theory of collaboration and collectivity in schools as he synthesizes the research across multiple theories of leadership in schools, including instructional leadership, transformational leadership, teacher leadership and distributed leadership. The central argument of the chapter is that the research on each of these theories, when examined together, demonstrates that they all focus on the collective context of leadership, as enacted through relationships between leaders (teachers and principals), leader actions, and student outcomes. Using a "theories of action" perspective, Nordengren conducted an extensive review of the literature on collective leadership through a systematic synthesis of the research to date. Through this process, Nordengren articulates a synthesis of three specific theories of action relating to the enactment of collective leadership in service to student achievement: targeting school improvement capacity, cultivating a culture of shared purpose, and redesigning teachers' work.

In the first theory of action, targeting school improvement capacity, Nordengren notes that collective conceptions of leadership are often framed as positively impacting student achievement and a school's ability overall to improve teaching and learning. This type of conception focuses on broad conceptions of school improvement, as well as conceptualizing school capacity through a systems lens, in which effects are more than direct, and are often mediated, moderated and reciprocal. Second, cultivating a culture of shared purpose, Nordengren foregrounds the work of the large body of literature that places the culture of the school at the center of leadership practice. Here, conceptualized around the idea of collective leadership, and linked to the

first theory of action on improving school capacity, school collective leadership focuses on a central shared purpose of improving teaching and learning, which in turn relates to the shared commitment and capacity of the organization. The third theory of action is centered on the issue of redesigning teachers' work. In this theory of action, the work of teachers is positioned as the central mediating variable between collective leadership and school achievement. Nordengren posits that the literature to date demonstrates that collective leadership consistently takes up the question of designing and redesigning teacher work, in an effort to adapt to multiple contextual and environmental demands of a school on teacher practice. The key synthesis here is that through the decentralized nature of collective leadership, teachers may be able to engage in deeper modes of work around school improvement through working together on alignment and coherence within and between classrooms.

In the end, through his synthesis throughout Chapter 2, Nordengren proposes the unifying concept of collective leadership as a means to bridge the multiple learnings across the current and recent theories in educational leadership. In this way, he provides a means to understand school improvement through a broader lens of teacher and leader collective action, taking into account the main perspectives of theories of leadership in schools that are central to the research literature to date.

In Chapter 3, "Tensions and Contradictions in Approaches to Improving Urban Inner-City Schools in the United States," Gavin Luter examines the challenges associated with trying to improve urban schools. To frame his examination, Luter looks at four approaches to addressing urban school improvement. They are comprehensive school reform, school choice, neighborhood/community, and place-based school reform initiatives. There are inherent tensions and contradictions to the various approaches for improving urban schools. What is not mentioned in the examination is the role of ideology and epistemology in these various approaches. In each of the approaches, there is an underlying philosophical theory driving its advocacy. For example, school choice advocates believe competition and student centered empowerment are the way to improve urban schools. In contrast, other approaches focus on the existing conditions within either the community or the school and attempt to improve those conditions to facilitate urban school improvement.

Luter's analysis revealed three emergent gaps in these approaches to urban school improvement. The first gap dealt with the implementation of place-based comprehensive community initiatives (PBCCI) efforts like Promise Neighborhoods (PN) and Choice Neighborhoods (CN). The second gap focused on the roles of the school district and the individual school in PBCCI. And the final gap derived from conflicting policy demands.

The implementation gap illustrated the challenges of coordinating multi-sector players to collaborate. The complexity of the multi-layers created a bureaucracy unto itself. As Luter noted, the scholarship on implementing any of the PBCCI is sorely lacking and needs to be addressed if we are to make any headway in what makes some approaches work and others not work. We may find out that it is not the approach, but rather the fidelity of implementation that is key to successfully helping urban schools to improve. It may be informative to the implementation challenge to examine the nature of the collaboration and determine if this is either fostering or hindering implementation of the PBCCI. A good resource to facilitate this examination would be Barnett, Hall, Berg, and Camarena's (2010) typology of partnerships for promoting innovation.

The next gap focused on the role of the school system in facilitating individual school improvement. As Luter discovered, there were no studies on how school systems actually help individual schools implement PBCCIs. This is represents unexplored territory, ripe for in-depth study and analysis of the role school systems play in either fostering or hindering the progress of individual school improvement. Related to this, Luter highlighted the importance of the school leader working with their school community to initiate effective school reform.

And finally, Luter found there were a number of conflicting policy demands. He highlighted the lack of common metrics to determine progress, citing how states and the federal government look at student achievement as the end all, be all metric, while PN/CN metrics may be focused entirely on the services they provide. This illustrates the tension between short-term and long-term goals and how these goals are measured for success. As Luter notes, with the amount of money being spent on school reform initiatives, attention needs to be devoted to determining how all the facets and players intertwine to produce a successful outcome. Otherwise, we are likely to continue a "shot gun" approach where we hope something hits the target, yet we won't know for sure why or if it works in a systemic way. Or as Jim Collins (2001) referred to in his book, *Good to Great*, can urban schools figure out what is required to be successful using a "hedgehog" approach or will we continue to use a "fox" approach where we grasp for straws, never knowing why something may or may not work. If we are to improve urban schools and help students in urban environments, we need research that focuses on processes tied to successful outcomes. Without it, we will continue to wade aimlessly in the ocean of urban school improvement.

Chapter 4, "Current Research on Arab Female Leaders' Career and Leadership: A Review of Extant Literature and Future Direction for Research," by Khalid Arar and Izhar

Oplatka examines how various cultural and structural elements in Arab societies affect female school leaders. As growing numbers of females enter school leadership roles around the world, it is important to understand the realities women leaders encounter in different societies and cultures. Arar and Oplatka provide important insights to these lived experiences by examining the barriers Arab females experience in pursuing school leadership careers, the leadership styles demonstrated by these leaders, and the challenges they face in attempting to lead their schools. To address these three issues, the authors conducted an exhaustive review of existing empirical literature from 2000 to 2014 on this topic published in peer-reviewed journals written in English and Arabic. Their review examined 20 studies, consisting of 18 journal articles and two doctoral dissertations.

Their findings reveal important themes regarding Arab females' aspirations, leadership styles, and challenges in the principalship role. First, Arab females must overcome a variety of social and cultural barriers in their quest to become school leaders. On one hand, the strong patriarchal culture in Arab societies inhibits opportunities for women to engage in leadership roles, resulting in far longer time to obtain principalships than their male counterparts. Socio-cultural norms also pressure many women to maintain their homemaking and child-rearing roles. On the other hand, these obstacles negatively affect females' self-confidence and self-efficacy as well as their participation in secondary education, further hampering their career advancement. Second, the leadership styles Arab women demonstrate appear to be greatly influenced by the male-dominated societies in which they live. For example, many female leaders adopt masculine or authoritative leadership style early in their careers; however, as they grow more comfortable in their roles, they shift to a more feminine style, emphasizing emotions, student learning outcomes, and participatory decision making more often than male principals. Finally, during their tenure as principals, many females face unique obstacles based on social and cultural norms. Many teachers of both genders prefer working with male school leaders; therefore, females are likely to encounter far more resistance to their goals, decisions, and ideas than males. Also, within many Arab communities, women who seek to initiate professional development and teacher remediation face powerful opposition from local tribal families.

Arar and Oplatka conclude that gender leadership research in the Arab and Middle Eastern context is in its infancy with many promising areas for future studies, focusing on the positive aspects of their leadership. They suggest future investigations explore the factors that facilitate females' entry into and success in school leadership positions, uncover the lived leadership experiences and careers of successful female leaders, and examine the influence of

Arab school leaders on their local communities and the broader society. We applaud these authors for identifying under-appreciated areas of research and look forward to seeing how their proposed research agenda unfolds in the future.

Section 2: Methodological Challenges and Innovations in Educational Leadership Research
In Chapter 5, "Challenges and Opportunities for Education Leadership Scholarship: A Methodological Critique," Peter Goff and Maida Finch examine recent trends in quantitative studies on school leadership. In particular, they focus their investigation on the methodologies used and inferences drawn from their study. Specifically, they identify some of the potential benefits of conducting longitudinal versus the liabilities of cross-sectional studies. Their analysis illustrates how researchers can engage in deeper, more insightful inquiries if they were to use longitudinal studies to examine leadership effects.

Goff and Finch put forth a convincing argument for why educational researchers should be using more longitudinal studies rather the more commonly used cross-sectional studies. Unlike medical studies, educational research tends to use cross sectional, single site, and incident focused studies. This limits the impact and implications of educational studies. As noted by Goff and Finch, cross-sectional studies are easier and less expensive to conduct, but they also yield less robust and impactful findings.

This chapter is a major contribution to advancing the methodologies used to conduct school leadership studies. Rather than rely on single site studies, which have limited implications beyond their context, Goff and Finch provide the field with an invaluable argument for pushing the field to pursue more impactful and wider ranging studies across time and location.

To support their argument, Goff and Finch provide an example using a study involving leadership effectiveness as assessed using the 72-item Vanderbilt Assessment for Leadership in Education (VALEd) as the instrument and an adapted trust instrument from Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999). In their example, Goff and Finch examine the relationship between faculty trust in their principal and the principal's ability to practice learner-centered leadership. Intuitively, Goff and Finch hypothesized that as faculty trust in their principal increased, the principal's ability to practice learner-centered leadership involving classroom observations and meaningful post-observation de-briefings would be enhanced.

In order to test out their hypothesis, Goff and Finch used five models from ordinary least squared regression to clustered, fixed effects, two level HLM, to an SEM model. They examined these five models using three different

specifications of leadership effectiveness and teacher-principal trust. What they discovered was with cross-sectional data, there was no way of knowing if a one-unit change in teacher-principal trust is a reasonable magnitude of change that occurs among teachers. With a longer time frame, lingering questions could be addressed. In addition, Goff and Finch note that cross sectional analyses were more susceptible to Type I errors, creating the illusion of a significant relationship when in reality none existed. And lastly, the results show that carrying out sophisticated analytical methods to analyze data does not compensate for weak research designs and data collection protocols. Although Goff and Finch's timeframe was only one academic year, the power of their method suggests that if scholars carried out longitudinal methodologies to multi-years, the results would likely yield more robust and meaningful results, conclusions, and implications for practice.

In Chapter 6, "Advancing Educational Leadership Research using Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)", Kathrine Marie Caves, Johannes Meuer, and Christian Rupietta provide an overview and primer of the purpose and innovative application of the methodological process of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) as applied to studying educational leadership. As noted by the authors, QCA originated out of work in the 1980s, and has been applied in multiple domains previously, especially political science. In application to educational leadership issues, Caves, Meuer & Rupietta eloquently detail how QCA is able to identify strong leadership practices and relate them directly to the impact of the school context on instructional improvement. QCA is a case-level analysis in which combinations of specific variables are aligned to outcomes and examined through a set of logic rules to provide specific recommendations for which effects are most likely working across contexts, and which are context specific. In this way, the authors present QCA as a means to bridge between qualitative case study analysis and specific recommendations about the most frequent practices in an organization that may be generalizable across multiple schools.

Caves, Meuer & Rupietta note that Qualitative Comparative Analysis provides a means to analyze data in this novel fashion through focusing on a data minimization strategy that aligns directly to the goals of recent research on the educational leadership literature, including focusing on necessary and sufficient conditions, conjunctural causation in which multiple factors explain an outcome, equifinality in which multiple pathways lead to a desired outcome, and causal asymmetry in which the configuration of an outcome and its opposite are not mirror images. QCA provides these data analytic structures through a process of examining school case data to identify specific activities and processes occurring in the case in relation to specific outcomes.

Throughout Chapter 6, Caves, Meuer & Rupietta expertly guide the reader through the process and the application of the Boolean logic analysis procedure to identify each of the four issues of necessary and sufficient conditions, conjunctural causation, equifinality, and asymmetry. Then, the authors provide the case of "Ms. Barloetti superintendent of Circle County Schools" applying QCA to examine her organization in which hypothetical Superintendent Barloetti walks through each stage of QCA as she works to analyze the extent to which the district teacher training program is influencing student achievement in the district schools, focusing on the level of communication in the schools (measured through surveys), teacher participation in the training, and the socio-economic status of the school. Through the QCA process, the authors show that in the hypothetical case of Superintendent Barloetti, she is able to find that "…thus, schools with excellent communication and high SES will likely meet targets regardless of participation in teacher training, and those with training and excellent communication will likely succeed independent of socioeconomic context". Hence, in these ways, Chapter 6 provides one of the first detailed applications of QCA in educational leadership and administration research, and does so through an easy to follow application and example that aligns with real-world issues faced by educational leaders in schools and districts today.

Section 3: Research on the Preparation of School Leaders
Kristy Cooper and Kate Rollert's study of preparing alternative school leaders is depicted in Chapter 7, "Viable and Effective Alternatives: Preparing Leaders for Non-Traditional Schools." Recently, more leadership preparation programs are emerging with the aim of developing leaders for specific contexts, such as turnaround schools and charter schools (Duke, 2014; National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2008). Cooper and Rollert contend that preparing leaders for the growing number of alternative schools serving disenfranchised students who struggle academically and socially in traditional schools is equally important, especially if our society wants to educate growing numbers of students who are "slipping through the cracks." They maintain that leading alternative schools requires a unique set of knowledge and skills, ones that are fundamentally different than those needed by leaders in traditional schools settings. Based on their review of resource guides and research guides as well as effective leadership and teaching practices in alternative school settings, they identify seven areas of distinct leadership knowledge and skills, ranging from understanding students' social and emotional needs to developing wrap-around services to providing targeted professional development.

After identifying these skill and content areas, the authors describe a continuum of leadership preparation options

(which they call models) to prepare skilled and knowledgeable leaders for alternative schools. The first model involves developing a single course dedicated to leading alternative schools. The advantage of this model is that it would not require recruiting students; the course would become a requirement for all students in the preparation program. A second model, offering concentrations, expands the single course option by having students enroll in a series of courses devoted to alternative school leadership. This option would offer a multi-disciplinary perspective by incorporating coursework from psychology, sociology, curriculum and instruction, and program evaluation. Internships would provide opportunities for students to work for concentrated periods of time in alternative school settings. The final, and most comprehensive, model for preparing alternative school leaders would be to design an entire program dedicated to developing leaders for these school settings. Using a cohort-based learning format, students and faculty would establish networks with alternative school educators in the region. Recruitment would be more selective by targeting alternative school teachers, special educators, and social workers. This model would require creating partnerships between leadership preparation programs and local alternative schools. Besides identifying long-term internship sites for students, partnership school educators would help shape the curriculum and learning activities, similar to what occurred in the study conducted by Lochmiller and his colleagues reported in the next chapter, Chapter 8. Here, in Chapter 7, Cooper and Rollert provide a compelling argument for tailoring leadership preparation for a specific educational context, a trend we believe will become more prevalent in the future.

In Chapter 8, "Preparing Leaders in an Era of School Turnaround: The Promise of University/District Partnerships as a Lever for Program Improvement," Chad Lochmiller, Colleen Chestnut, and Molly Stewart reveal the internal dynamics and changes university faculty and programs experience when investing in school-university partnerships. They begin by identifying the advantages of school-university partnerships reported in the literature, highlighting trends for recruitment, selection, curriculum, and instructional delivery. They contend that partnerships have particular relevance for preparing principals for turnaround leadership, and describe a recently-developed school-university partnership with this expressed aim. Using resources from the federal government's Race to the Top initiative, program developers created an accelerated preparation program that combined intensive internship experiences with university coursework. To obtain multiple perspectives on the partnership's formation and operation, program evaluators conducted interviews with university faculty and administrators, principals in the district who served as clinical instructors, mentor principals, and district administrators. The interviews focused on the

operationalization of the partnership; however, specific attention was devoted to understanding ways in which the partnership influenced program content and delivery.

Interview analysis revealed significant ways in which the preparation program was impacted by the district participation. Initially, tensions arose between university faculty and district partners. University faculty expressed reluctance to accept school practitioners' knowledge base, believing they had little expertise in how best to prepare school leaders. School administrators, on the other hand, felt that program graduates lacked important knowledge and skills, particularly in helping teachers to work more effectively with struggling learners in turnaround schools. Over time, however, this balance of power shifted as district participants took more responsibility for shaping course content and aligning this information with the needs of their schools. By emphasizing practical and relevant learning experiences (as opposed to focusing on state standards and theoretical constructs emphasized by university faculty), district administrators, clinical faculty, and mentors began shaping the curriculum to become what they termed "the district way." Over time, university faculty realized their notions of leadership preparation were outdated and lacked the relevance sought by their district partners. These interactions also forced program developers to wrestle with their definitions and conceptions of key program concepts, especially the complexities of instructional leadership and school turnaround leadership. Over time, university faculty came to appreciate the contextual realities of turning around low-performing schools, realities they had heretofore not realized or overlooked. Although a great deal is known about the *mechanics and operations* of forming and delivering school-university leadership development partnerships (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2010), Lochmiller and his colleagues shed new light on the *internal dynamics* between university faculty and district partners when engaging in collaborative preparation programs. Understanding these dynamics is critical if universities and districts want to develop more symbiotic partnerships that deeply connect theory and practice, an ongoing challenge in leadership preparation graduate programs (Levine, 2005).

Section 4: Conclusion:

The capstone final chapter, Chapter 9, "Mostly Unpunctuated Disequilibrium: A Commentary on New Directions in Research and Practice in Education Leadership", by Carolyn Riehl concludes the book volume with a look back, a synthesis and a look forward. In this final chapter, Riehl first provides additional framing for the present book volume, following on ten years since the publication of the Firestone and Riehl (2005) book volume "A New Agenda for Research in Educational Leadership". The present work in a way is a successor to that work, but builds on, and builds beyond the work over the last decade in the research on educational leadership. In this chapter Riehl first takes a historical lens to the field and the chapters here, and posits that educational leadership research, as a field, does not so much contain the "punctuated equilibrium" of other fields, which grow and develop not in consistent and stable ways, but rather through fits and starts, but rather that the field of educational leadership is an "unpunctuated disequilibrium" in that it is consistently contested and at odds, especially at the intersection of research, policy and practice. However, throughout this final chapter, Riehl summarizes and synthesizes the chapters in the present volume as a means to demonstrate the evolving and positive outlook in the field of educational leadership research, which has made great strides in providing a robust and rich decade of proposing and testing novel and innovative theories and methods as a means to improve practice, both in schools in which leaders serve as well as in schools which train these same leaders. Through this lens, she then provides a thought provoking synthesis and framing of each of the chapters in relation to each other as well as the broader issues at play in the field of educational leadership today. As the final capstone chapter of the book volume, Chapter 9 provides a means to view the book volume as a synthesis across the chapters, and a lens to view the future of the domain.

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