

### Abstract

This study investigated the credentials of 755 tenure-line educational leadership faculty members, using data collected through an online questionnaire. Findings disclosed that research institutions were significantly more likely than doctoral or comprehensive institutions to hire faculty with a PhD from a research university and who identified research as their primary professional strength. A greater proportion of faculty in comprehensive universities had served as school administrators before entering academe than was the case for those at research universities. These findings have significant implications for the field, given that an increasing number of school leaders nationally are prepared at comprehensive institutions.

Characteristics of Tenure-Line Faculty in Leadership Preparation Programs: An Analysis of  
Academic Preparation and Administrative Experience

Educational leadership is an applied field, and high quality preparation is essential so aspiring administrators attain the knowledge and skills to effectively lead the nation's schools and school systems. Arguably, program quality is directly attributable to the characteristics of faculty members who deliver the curriculum (Hackmann, Bauer, Cambron-McCabe, & Quinn, 2009). The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration in 1987 advocated that leadership preparation programs should demonstrate "intellectual vigor" and "contain a challenging faculty who are themselves active scholars" (p. 23). Educational leadership units typically rely on a "critical mass of faculty members" (Hackmann et al., 2009, p. 225) to staff their programs, including full-time tenure-line faculty, full-time clinical faculty members, and part-time adjunct instructors. Although each faculty type fulfills an important function, a skilled core of tenure-line faculty is essential in most universities to satisfy the institution's staffing requirements. Acknowledging this expectation, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA, 1998) has adopted a standard requiring that member institutions maintain a minimum of five tenure-line faculty members.

Higher education faculty members in tenure-line positions typically conduct research, teach courses and advise students, and provide service to the institution and profession, and the emphasis on these responsibilities can vary by institution type (LaMagdeleine, Maxcy, Pounder, & Reed, 2009). For example, research institutions often place greater emphasis on research and scholarly productivity (Hackmann et al., 2009), while regional institutions may focus more on teaching expertise (LaMagdeleine et al.). The prototype tenure-line educational leadership professor holds a doctoral degree in educational administration/leadership, has served as a school

administrator, is a productive researcher and scholar, demonstrates teaching excellence, and maintains an ongoing understanding of contemporary problems of practice through regular engagement in schools (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Levine, 2005). The weight placed on desired traits may vary, depending on the type of institution in which the professor is employed. In contrast, full-time clinical faculty members in educational leadership often focus on field-based aspects of leadership preparation, teaching courses and supervising internship experiences, with few, if any, expectations to engage in scholarly research (Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1988; Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a).

The experiential background and academic credentials of tenure-line educational leadership faculty members have long been scrutinized and debated. Criticisms of faculty quality include concerns regarding professors' lack of successful school administrative experience or the absence of recent experience (Levine, 2005; McCarthy, 1988). Some have claimed that many professors are inadequately trained to conduct research (Hawley, 1988; Miskel, 1988), are not engaged in research (Immegart, 1990) or dedicate only a fraction of their responsibilities to research (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004). Yet, criticisms of educational leadership faculty often rely upon anecdotal information, are unsubstantiated by empirical research, and/or cite outdated works. Additionally, there is limited research examining faculty characteristics based upon institution type: For example, a faculty member's research competence and academic preparation may be more highly valued at a research university than at a comprehensive institution.<sup>1</sup> We believe a systematic analysis of the characteristics of tenure-line educational leadership faculty, by institution type, is essential so that discourse and policy analysis can be enriched. In relation to this topic, the field is currently vulnerable to misinformation. Thus, we conducted this study to

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<sup>1</sup> Institutional classifications are described in the conceptual framework section.

investigate characteristics of tenure-line educational leadership faculty members in the U.S. We addressed the following research questions:

1. Does the administrative experience of tenure-line educational leadership faculty members differ by classification (research, doctoral, comprehensive) of their employing institutions?
2. Does the classification of institutions (research, doctoral, comprehensive) from which tenure-line faculty members earned their doctorates differ by classification of their employing institutions?
3. Does the type of doctoral degree (PhD or EdD) of tenure-line educational leadership faculty members differ by classification of their employing institutions?
4. Does the doctoral major of tenure-line educational leadership faculty members differ by classification of their employing institutions?
5. Does the primary professional strength (research, teaching, service) of tenure-line educational leadership faculty members differ by classification of their employing institutions?

We begin this article by providing a brief historical overview of educational leadership preparation, followed by a review of research on characteristics of educational leadership faculty. Next, we present findings from our examination of tenure-line educational leadership faculty credentials. We conclude by presenting implications for institutions of higher education.

### **The Context of Educational Leadership Preparation: A Changing Focus**

In the mid-1950s, when the teaching and educational administration fields began to separate into two distinct professions (Goldhammer, 1983), some decried the scant educational administration knowledge base and hiring former administrators in educational leadership faculty

positions. Critics claimed these individuals drew primarily on their experiential base when teaching courses (Marland, 1960) and were too often unfamiliar with theory and uninvolved in research (Hills, 1965). In an effort to elevate the field (Goldhammer, 1983), a small group of academics set out to develop a science of school administration (Culbertson, 1988) grounded in the social sciences and steeped in theory (McCarthy, 1999b). This movement, which peaked in the 1980s, prompted changes in faculty hiring practices. Discipline-based scholars trained in political science, economics, and law and who held little or no practitioner experience (Murphy, 1998) were favored for employment over former school administrators (McCarthy, 1999a).

By the late 1980s, leadership preparation programs were subjected to renewed calls for reform. Critics perceived programs were disconnected from the realities of school leadership and were devoting “insufficient attention to curriculum, instruction, and learning and to linkages between preparation and practice” (McCarthy, 1999b, p. 125). School systems were transforming their visions of education to focus on constructivist approaches to teaching and learning and more democratic forms of governance, which promoted “different ways of thinking about the profession of school administration and the education of school leaders” (Murphy, 1999, p. 10).

The development of leadership standards also has been influential in reculturing the profession. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996), in particular, have reoriented the leadership preparation curriculum toward a national set of research-based practices that promote effective educational leadership (Murphy, Young, Crow, & Ogawa, 2009). Murphy et al. (2009) noted that the technical core has been reforged, with greater interest on teaching and learning; ethics and values; social justice, equity, and equality; data-based decision making; and self-reflection and critical analysis. As a result, professors are expected to be more engaged with schools and to prepare aspiring school

leaders to address problems of practice that exist within their organizations (LaMagdeleine et al., 2009).

As the curricular focus within leadership preparation programs has evolved, debates regarding the quality and appropriateness of educational administration degrees have intensified—most notably related to requirements for the Doctor of Education (EdD) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (Orr, 2007). Although it might be assumed that EdD degrees are more oriented to practice and that PhD degree programs provide more intensive research preparation, scholars have reported that, across the nation, distinctions between the two doctoral degrees have been minimized or erased (Griffiths et al., 1988; Hallinger, 2011; Hawley, 1988; Levine, 2005). Of note, the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate has been instrumental in facilitating nationwide conversations focused on the reform of doctoral education (Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, & Garabedian, 2006), and some leadership preparation programs now are reconsidering the purpose and utility of the EdD doctoral dissertation (Buttram, 2014).

The number of university-based educational leadership units in the U.S. has increased substantially through the years, from 299 in 1972 (Campbell & Newell, 1973) to 590 in 2008 (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a), with the expansion primarily occurring in comprehensive institutions. Baker, Orr, and Young (2007) reported that comprehensive institutions experienced a 48% increase in doctoral degree programs between 1993 and 2003; as a result, educational leadership doctoral degree production is shifting. Research universities awarded 60% of doctoral degrees in 1990 but only 42% in 2000 (Baker, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2007). The practice of non-research institutions developing processes to emulate prestigious top-tier research universities has been termed *academic drift* (Berdahl, 1985); often, an initial step in this process is the addition of doctoral programs (Morphew & Huisman, 2002). Orr (2007) noted numerous

concerns with the expansion of educational leadership doctoral programs in non-research institutions, including a lack of institutional resources, fewer full-time faculty members, and a perceived inability to support faculty and research and students' research skill development. Levine (2005, p. 43) also expressed a concern that "the proportion of faculty engaged in productive research is small" at non-research universities that award educational leadership doctoral degrees.

The number of faculty members working in leadership preparation units varies by institution type: Hackmann and McCarthy (2011a) reported a mean of 6.5 full-time educational leadership faculty members in research universities in 2008, compared to means of 4.5 in doctoral universities and 3.9 in comprehensive institutions. The proportion of educational leadership faculty members in non-tenure-track lines has increased over time. Whereas only 1% of full-time faculty members were in non-tenure-line (clinical) appointments in 1994, by 2008 clinical faculty comprised 16% of faculty lines (Hackmann & McCarthy). Clinical appointments comprised 18% of all lines in research universities, 12% in doctoral universities, and 15% in comprehensive universities. This increase in non-tenure-track appointments has been experienced throughout college and university campuses as states have cut public higher education funding (Ott & Cisneros, 2015).

Our study focused on full-time tenure-line educational leadership faculty members, because they are expected to be involved in all aspects of programming, including teaching, research, service/outreach, and advising responsibilities. Baker, Wolf-Wendel, and Twombly (2007) noted that faculty "are ultimately the principal designers and deliverers of those programs, and themselves provide the research base for what is taught in their own as well as other programs in educational administration" (p. 191). Full-time tenure-line faculty members in

research universities reported spending a higher percentage of their time on research and writing (19.4%) than did those in doctoral (14.2%) and comprehensive institutions (12.9%); faculty members in comprehensive institutions spent more time teaching and advising students (47.9%) than did those in doctoral (41.2%) and research institutions (35.1%) (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a). These variations in faculty activities by institution type generally are consistent with those reported for faculty members across all disciplines (Layzell, 1999). In addition, tenure-line faculty members in educational leadership have reported spending a higher proportion of their time on research and writing (17.6%) than do clinical faculty (5.7%), whereas clinical faculty spend more time on teaching and advising students (45.9%) than do their tenure-line colleagues (36.6%) (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a).

The changing focus of leadership preparation programs has implications for desired traits of educational leadership professors. Educational leadership professors are encouraged to address problems of practice in their instruction, professional service, and in their research (Levine, 2005), yet varying institution types typically have differing expectations regarding the individuals they employ and how faculty allocate their time and responsibilities (LaMagdeleine et al., 2009). Given the shifting focus of leadership preparation, it is important to discern if tenure-line faculty profiles across institution types align with these expectations. However, researchers have not empirically examined whether the credentials and characteristics of tenure-line educational leadership faculty members vary significantly based upon the type of institution in which they are employed (e.g., research, doctoral, or comprehensive institutions).

### **Prior Research on Educational Leadership Faculty Characteristics**

Investigations into the academic credentials and characteristics of the educational leadership professoriate historically have considered such features as type of doctoral degrees



held by faculty and major area of study, institution type from which degrees have been earned, whether faculty possess school administrative experience, and faculty predispositions toward research (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997; McCarthy, Kuh, Newell, & Iacona, 1988). In this section we provide an overview of prior research on characteristics of tenure-line faculty in educational leadership.

### **Degrees, Majors, and Classification of Institution from Which Degrees Were Earned**

Historically, the educational leadership professoriate has maintained a balance between individuals holding the PhD and EdD degrees. In 1986, 46% of educational leadership faculty members had earned the PhD (McCarthy et al., 1988), with this proportion increasing to 51% in 1994 (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997) and 53% in 2008 (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a). The majority of faculty members historically have earned a doctoral degree in educational administration/leadership, with 68% reporting this major in 1986 (McCarthy et al., 1988) and 67% in both 1994 and 2008 (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a; McCarthy & Kuh, 1997). Other commonly reported majors are usually within the field of education, such as curriculum and instruction and special education (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a).

The institution types from which faculty have earned their doctoral degrees have shifted over time. In the 1960s and 1970s nearly half of educational leadership faculty members attained their degrees from only 20 research universities (Campbell & Newell, 1973), but by 1994 this proportion declined to 40% (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997). Whereas three in five professors earned their degrees from research universities in 1994 (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997), by 2008, 86% earned their degrees from research institutions (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a). Since the majority of educational leadership doctoral degrees are now awarded from comprehensive institutions (Baker, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2007), “the pool of doctoral recipients is increasingly

dominated by graduates from less selective institutions” (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007, p. 296).

Given these institutional shifts, it is possible that the proportion of educational leadership faculty members with doctoral degrees from research institutions will decline in the coming years.

### **School Administrative Experience**

The percentage of faculty with prior experience as school leaders has changed over time, peaking at 90% in 1965 (Hills, 1965), dropping to 33% in 1994 (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997) and increasing to 67% in 2008 (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a). These changes largely coincide with the social sciences movement of the 1980s, in which leadership experience began to diminish in perceived importance relative to other faculty characteristics (Murphy, 1998). More recently, when support for the theory movement waned, school administrative experience began to be cited again as a desirable trait for educational leadership faculty (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011b; Levine, 2005), as former school leaders can enhance classroom instruction and relevance by incorporating their leadership perspectives and experiences in learning activities.

### **Orientation Toward Research**

Extensive research-based preparation and an interest in engaging in scholarship are desired faculty traits, and educational leadership professors have been criticized as being inadequately prepared as researchers (Miskel, 1988; Murphy, 1999). Traditionally, educational leadership faculty members have overwhelmingly cited teaching as their primary strength, with 74% reporting this preference in 2008 (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a). The proportion of faculty reporting research as their primary area of strength was 15% in 1986 (McCarthy et al., 1988), 16% in 1994 (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997), and 18% in 2008 (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a). Orr (2007) expressed concerns that faculty members working in comprehensive institutions may be unprepared to conduct and supervise research. Baker, Orr, and Young (2007)

questioned the adequacy of faculty members' research preparation to provide quality dissertation advisement. Also, they cautioned that doctoral graduates from comprehensive institutions would dilute the overall quality of the educational leadership professorial applicant pool. They predicted:

It is likely that, over time, faculty will be increasingly drawn from the major producers—Comprehensive I institutions—which not only have less institutional capacity to conduct such preparation but also have less selective admissions. These new faculty will, in turn, train the next generation of educational leaders and leadership faculty. (p. 311)

### **Conceptual Framework**

Central both to job seekers' decision making and hiring officials' recruiting and selection processes are individual and collective assessments about persons' likely fit in specific roles and organizational settings. If educational leadership programs tend to vary (e.g., in terms of their mission, goals, and emphases) by institution type, then the results of these assessments of fit will be systematically observable: Different institution types will tend to be comprised of faculty whose backgrounds and experiences are distinguishable. Programs housed in research universities, for instance, may attract and favorably consider those who have acquired PhDs and who cite research as a primary strength. Thus, the interrelated concepts of person-environment, person-job, and person-organization fit are the primary contributors to the conceptual framework applied in this study. Person-environment fit, an overarching concept that subsumes various subtypes of fit, is defined as the degree of congruence between a person and environment (Holland, 1997; Pervin, 1968; Sekiguchi, 2004). It is grounded in an interactionist psychological perspective (Chatman, 1989; Lewin, 1951; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987; Sekiguchi) in which an individual's behavior and attitudes are expressed as a function of the person and her/his

environment. Although there has been substantial debate regarding the relative importance of the person and the environment in determining one's behavior and attitudes, the preponderance of evidence supports that the *interaction* of person and environment, more so than either of these aspects alone, is primary.

Person-job fit refers to the match between a person's skills and desires and the demands and attributes of a particular job (Edwards, 1991). Typically, this concept undergirds the employee selection process, in which the essential task is to identify applicants who possess requisite skills and abilities to perform the job (Sekiguchi, 2004; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). A demands-and-abilities perspective assumes that each job carries with it a set of demands, and an individual possesses a set of abilities that may or may not allow her/him to perform as required (Sekiguchi). Abilities may include an individual's educational and experiential background, which both help to develop and signal the knowledge and skills he/she may possess (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Sekiguchi). Employers utilize numerous strategies in an effort to accurately assess applicants' person-job fit (Werbel & Gilliland) and progress toward a well-informed hiring decision.

Person-organization fit, in contrast, is defined as the congruence between people and organizations (Kristof, 1996), including their cultures and other attributes (Sekiguchi, 2004). Its origins trace to Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework, which asserts that individuals seek out situations that are appealing to them. Individuals initially may be attracted to a particular organization if they perceive it as favorable to their preferences and they will persist if their fit is confirmed over time; if not, they will leave.

For the purposes of this study, both employee and employer selection and long-term decision making are assumed to be important factors underlying current job placements of

tenure-line educational leadership faculty. Higher education institutions (and their respective colleges and departments) differ in appreciable ways, including their values and mission, cultures, reward structures, and expectations for their faculty members in tenure-line appointments. Individuals may be more or less attractive—and, thus, worthy of hiring—to an organization on the basis of their background characteristics in relation to their distinct environments and job expectations. Likewise, applicants for tenure-line faculty positions are more likely to identify institutions and programs that they perceive as fitting their backgrounds and preferences and will be more likely to experience satisfaction and maintain long-term employment in such organizations.

The use of these concepts in contemporary higher education is not yet clear. Riddle (1989, 1993) has documented considerable isomorphism both in aspirations and content of higher education institutions, and others have found that this trend has extended to faculty composition (Frank & Gabler, 2006; Gabler & Frank, 2005). Some important variations may exist by institution type. Milem, Berger, and Dey (2000), for instance, documented clear differences in the allocation of faculty members' time by institution type. Cox, McIntosh, Reason, and Terenzini (2011) found institution types to consistently predict both faculty practices and culture, concluding that faculty members from the 33 non-doctoral institutions in their sample perceived their institutions to value teaching more so than faculties at 12 doctoral-granting institutions. These researchers found a clear patterning of institutional identities, such that research is emphasized over teaching at doctoral-granting institutions, and teaching over research at non-doctoral granting institutions. Faculty reward structures may partially explain these differences: Fairweather and Beach (2002) found that each of three research institutions that they studied allocated rewards "first and foremost to research and scholarship" (p. 112).

Thus, for example, a candidate for a tenure-line position in a research university may have applied because he/she predicts both person-job and person-organization fit.

For our study, we accessed the 2005 Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (n.d.) classification system, which contains six basic classifications: doctorate-granting institutions, master's colleges and universities, baccalaureate colleges, special focus institutions, tribal colleges, and associate's colleges. Higher education institutions are subdivided within these six classifications based upon their externally funded research activity and the number and type of graduate degrees awarded. We modified the Carnegie framework (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.) for the purposes of our analyses, reducing it to three categories of institutions: Research, Doctoral, and Comprehensive. The *Research* category contained Research Universities-very high research activity (RU-VH) and Research Universities-high research activity (RU-H); the *Doctoral* category contained Doctoral/Research universities; and the *Comprehensive* category included Master's colleges and universities, baccalaureate colleges, special focus colleges, and tribal colleges (Chart 1). These categories are consistent with those used by Baker, Wolf-Wendel, and Twombly (2007) in their study of educational administration faculty.

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Based on research we reviewed, in this study we expected to find differences by institution type in the professional qualities and characteristics of tenure-line educational leadership faculty members. For instance, we expected to find that research institutions would disproportionately employ individuals with PhDs from research institutions and individuals who

lack prior administrative experience. We further expected that tenure-line faculty members employed at comprehensive institutions would be more likely to cite teaching as their primary professional strength.

### **Research Methodology**

In addressing the research questions, we conducted additional analyses on a dataset of 895 full-time faculty members collected as part of a national study of U.S. leadership preparation programs and faculty in 2008 (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a). These data were used because they are the most recent comprehensive national data of tenure-line educational leadership faculty. This information was obtained through an online questionnaire that included faculty demographic characteristics, professional activities, perceptions of leadership program quality, and attitudes and beliefs regarding the profession. For the purposes of the current study, we derived a subset of the survey sample to include only full-time tenure-line faculty ( $N = 755$ ; 84.4% of the total respondents), excluding the 140 respondents employed in full-time clinical positions.

Of the 590 leadership preparation programs Hackmann and McCarthy identified in the U.S., 144 were situated in research universities (24.4%), 63 in doctoral universities (10.7%), and 383 at comprehensive universities (64.9%). Within our subset of 755 full-time tenure-line faculty, 310 were employed in research universities (41.1%), 79 in doctoral universities (10.5%), and 366 in comprehensive universities (48.5%).

Given the nature of our data, we utilized categorical data analyses to address each research question. We performed chi-squared tests and employed post-hoc testing when significant differences were found, with a .05 alpha level (two-tailed) required for significance. We used the R statistical computation and graphics system to complete all analyses. In all cases,

we were interested in the relationship between the classifications of institutions where tenure-line faculty members were employed and selected educational background characteristics (school administrative experience, institution type where they earned their doctorate, type of doctoral degree earned, major field of study) or professional self-appraisals (indicated area of professional strength).

We also repeated all analyses upon a subsample including tenure-line faculty members employed at institutions offering doctoral degrees (PhD or EdD) in educational administration or educational leadership ( $N = 550$ ; 72.8% of 755 tenure-line faculty respondents), since some respondents were employed at institutions that offered only master's degrees. It was important to analyze faculty at doctorate-granting universities separately due to concerns expressed in the literature regarding qualifications of faculty who supervise doctoral student research.

### **Limitations**

Our study included only full-time tenure-line faculty in higher education institutions. We chose to exclude full-time clinical faculty and part-time faculty, even though their representation in the field is increasing (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a), because our focus was on members of the professoriate who have responsibilities for research and scholarly productivity in addition to teaching, advising, and service within their units. A second limitation was that this study focused only on faculty in university-based leadership preparation programs; therefore, we did not include individuals who staff alternative programs, such as professional organizations, school districts, for-profit organizations, and philanthropic foundations. A final limitation was that this study relied on faculty data gathered through survey research methods, and the demographics and perceptions of respondents may have differed from nonrespondents.

### **Findings**



This section presents data on faculty respondents grouped by type of institution where employed and analyzed by whether they have administrative experience, how the institution granting their doctorate is classified, type of doctoral degree earned, doctoral major, and self-reported primary professional strength. In addition, findings are reported for a subset of faculty employed in institutions that offer doctoral degrees in educational leadership.

### **School Administrative Experience by Classification of Employing Institution**

Our first question asked whether respondents' school administrative experience varied predictably by the classification of their employing institution. Respondents reported whether they had served in school administrative roles, including building-level (principal, assistant/associate principal) and district-level (superintendent, assistant/associate superintendent, human resource director, as well as other central-office administrative positions). Of the total respondents, 62.4% had served as school administrators, with variations noted by institution type: 48.4% of research, 69.0% of doctoral, and 73.5% of comprehensive faculty members possessed administrative experience (Table 1). Differences were significant,  $\chi^2(2, N = 660) = 41.11, p < .001$ . Post-hoc analyses<sup>2</sup> revealed that individuals employed at research institutions were significantly less likely and faculty at comprehensive institutions significantly more likely to have had prior administrative experience.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Post-hoc analyses entailed the computation of standardized residuals for each cell of our contingency tables. Thereby, we assessed the degree to which cell values differed from what would be expected under the null hypothesis, which states that the level of one variable is independent of the level of other variables. For post-hoc analyses, we treated standardized residuals as significant if they exceeded +/- 2.58 ( $p < .01$ ).

<sup>3</sup> For all analyses, doctoral faculty members resembled comprehensive faculty members; differences for doctoral faculty compared to research faculty did not reach statistical significance in most cases, however. Tenure-line faculty from doctoral institutions represented just 10.5% of the sample, which likely in part explains the non-significant results.

Insert Table 1 about here

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We repeated all analyses upon the subsample including only tenure-line faculty members employed at institutions offering a doctoral degree in educational administration/leadership or education policy ( $N = 550$ ; 72.8% of 755 tenure-line faculty respondents). Among this subsample, 56.4% had served as school administrators, with variations by institution type that tended to mirror the full sample. Differences in school administration experience by institution type remained significant,  $\chi^2(2, N = 491) = 18.36, p < .0001$ . Post-hoc analyses clarified that faculty employed at research institutions were less likely than faculty employed at comprehensive and doctoral institutions to have served as school administrators.

#### **Classification of Institution Where Doctorate was Earned by Type of Employing Institution**

Our second question asked whether institution type from which the respondents earned their doctoral degrees varied predictably by the classification of their employing institutions. Of the total respondents, 86.4% earned doctoral degrees from research institutions, with 94.4% of faculty employed at research institutions, 75.8% at doctoral, and 79.1% at comprehensive institutions earning degrees from research universities (Table 1). Differences were significant,  $\chi^2(4, N = 723) = 35.46, p < .0001$ . Post-hoc analyses revealed that faculty at research institutions were significantly more likely and faculty at comprehensive and doctoral institutions significantly less likely to have earned doctoral degrees from research institutions. Findings for our doctoral degree-offering institutional subsample were also significant,  $\chi^2(4, N = 531) = 31.66, p < .0001$ . Post-hoc analyses with this subsample also revealed the same pattern as the full sample.

#### **Doctoral Degree Type by Classification of Employing Institution**

Our third question concerned whether respondents' doctoral degree type (PhD or EdD) varied predictably by the classification of their employing institutions. Of the total respondents, 54.8% had earned a PhD; 68.5% of respondents at research institutions, 46.8% at doctoral, and 44.8% at comprehensive institutions had earned the PhD (Table 1). Differences were significant,  $\chi^2(2, N = 737) = 39.59, p < .0001$ . Post-hoc analyses revealed that faculty at research institutions were significantly more likely and faculty at comprehensive institutions significantly less likely to have earned the PhD.

Among our subsample of faculty employed at institutions offering a doctoral degree, 61.6% had earned a PhD, with variations by institution type that mirrored the full sample. Differences were significant,  $\chi^2(2, N = 539) = 14.53, p < .001$ . Post-hoc analyses clarified that faculty members employed at research institutions were more likely to have earned a PhD, while those employed at doctoral institutions were less likely to hold the PhD.

### **Doctoral Degree Major by Classification of Employing Institution**

Our fourth question examined respondents' doctoral major in relationship to the classification of institutions in which they were employed. We coded educational administration/leadership and education policy degrees (and combinations) as "1" and all other fields of study as "0" (i.e., "other"). A total of 74.6% of respondents reported doctoral majors in educational administration/leadership, and an additional 2.9% reported majoring in education policy. Thus, more than three fourths of the faculty (77.5%) reported doctoral majors in educational administration/leadership or education policy, with 76.2% of respondents at research institutions, 81.6% at doctoral, and 77.6% at comprehensive institutions reporting these majors (Table 1). Respondents' major was independent of the classification of their employing institutions,  $\chi^2(2, N = 693) = 1.00, p = .61$ . We also re-coded data so that individuals holding

education policy degrees were included as “other,” and in this case as well respondents’ major was independent of how their employing institutions were classified,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 693) = 3.85, p = .15$ . Findings for our doctoral degree-offering institutional subsample were similarly non-significant,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 512) = 0.69, p = .70$ .

### **Reported Primary Professional Strength and Classification of Employing Institution**

Our fifth question examined respondents’ self-reports of their primary professional strength, in relationship to the classification of their employing institution. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate their primary professional strength, selecting from research, teaching, and service/outreach. Of the total respondents, 20.5% reported research as their primary strength, with 35.7% of research, 17.1% of doctoral, and 8.9% of comprehensive faculty members citing research as their primary strength (Table 1). Differences were significant,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 658) = 67.79, p < .0001$ . Post-hoc testing revealed faculty employed at comprehensive universities were more likely to indicate teaching as their greatest strength, and faculty at research universities were more likely to indicate research as their primary strength than were faculty at comprehensive universities. Findings for the doctoral degree-offering institutional subsample mirrored those of the full sample,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 478) = 39.26, p < .0001$ . Post-hoc testing, as well, revealed the same pattern as found with the full sample.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The findings from this study provide empirical evidence of significant differences in tenure-line educational leadership faculty members’ administrative experience, academic preparation, and professed professional strengths, when stratified by institution type. Previously these topics have been much debated but have lacked research to support the claims that have been made. Our study confirmed that compared to comprehensive institutions, research

universities were significantly more likely to hire faculty who earned a PhD from a research university and who identified research as their primary professional strength. Comprehensive institutions were significantly more likely than were research universities to hire faculty who possessed school administrative experience and identified teaching as their foremost professional strength. No differences were found across institution types in the proportion of faculty members who had earned doctoral degrees in educational administration/leadership or education policy. Due to low numbers of respondents from doctoral institutions, the only significant difference noted for doctoral institutions was the institution type from which the faculty members' degrees were earned. Faculty employed in doctoral institutions were significantly less likely to have earned a doctorate from a research institution, compared to faculty employed in research universities. In general, however, the professional characteristics of educational leadership faculty in doctoral institutions were more closely aligned to their colleagues in comprehensive institutions than those in research universities.

How one interprets the implications of these findings depends in part on personal values and beliefs regarding the attributes educational leadership programs and tenure-line faculty should possess. For example, the prevailing current view is that faculty members teaching aspiring school leaders should have served as school administrators themselves (Baker, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2007; Levine, 2005). Accordingly, the significant increase in hiring tenure-line faculty with administrative experience since the mid-1990s (from about one third of the faculty in 1994 to two thirds in 2008) likely would be viewed by many as a positive development. It seems logical that tenure-line faculty who have served as school leaders would be more capable of engaging with the field and establishing university-school district partnerships (LaMagdeleine et al., 2009) than would be the case for their colleagues without such

experience. Former practitioners also may be more skilled in conveying practical field-based knowledge to graduate students regarding what successful school leaders do on the job.

Comprehensive and doctoral universities hire a greater portion of tenure-line educational leadership faculty who have served as school administrators than is the case with research institutions. In fact, fewer than half of the educational leadership faculty members at research institutions in this study had been school administrators, whereas approximately 70% of faculty members at doctoral and comprehensive universities had such experience; these findings may provide evidence of person-organization fit (Kristof, 1996), in which administrative experience is more highly prized at doctoral and comprehensive universities. Assuming that administrative experience is a favorable attribute of educational leadership faculty members, on this measure comprehensive and doctoral institutions appear to be advantaged relative to research universities. However, research confirms that full-time clinical faculty in leadership preparation programs are much more likely to have school administrative experience and to focus on field-based aspects of their programs (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011b) than their tenure-line colleagues; thus, some research institutions may address the lack of administrative experience of their tenure-line faculty by hiring clinical faculty who are former school administrators. The person-job fit perspective may confirm that, in research institutions, clinical faculty are expected to possess school administrative experience (Sekiguchi, 2004; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999) while such experience is not an expectation for tenure-line faculty.

We believe our findings reflect the subtle operation of preferences from employers and (prospective and current) employees. Research institutions, doctoral, and comprehensive institutions alike, we suspect, *prefer* to hire candidates who are both highly skilled in conducting research and seasoned in terms of the practice of educational leadership. However, given the

scarcity of individuals who meet all criteria, sacrifices and trade-offs often must be made.

Faculty search committees at research institutions may thereby be more likely to overlook a lack of practical administrative experience, whereas those at doctoral or comprehensive institutions may be more likely to overlook limited research skills and experience. Meanwhile, prospective applicants and/or employees may anticipate values or skills mismatches and accordingly self-select into institutions that they expect most closely align with their academic profiles and personal interests. Of course, we acknowledge that a good deal of diversity is present across institutions within each institution type; as such, we are describing general trends, allowing that exceptions may be plentiful. Future research is needed to test these propositions.

Tenure-line faculty members with extensive administrative experience tend to be leadership generalists rather than content specialists (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a). Accordingly, it is possible that hiring more tenure-line professors with administrative experience may have a negative impact on the breadth of students' leadership preparation and on knowledge production in the field. These faculty members may not have sufficient in-depth understanding of specialized content to effectively teach courses such as school law and economics of education, topics about which school leaders need to have adequate knowledge. The trend among tenure-line faculty with administrative experience to focus on leadership in general rather than on content specializations (e.g., organizational theory, school law) also may limit the perspectives faculty members use in educational leadership research (Hackmann & McCarthy).

Implications of other findings are more straightforward. The numbers of educational leadership programs, faculty, and students that are housed in comprehensive institutions are increasing dramatically. While the overall percentage of educational leadership faculty nationally who earned their doctoral degrees from comprehensive institutions has actually declined since

the mid-1990s, those employed at comprehensive institutions are far less likely to have earned their doctorates from research universities and to have earned the PhD than are educational leadership faculty employed in research universities. Comprehensive universities experienced a dramatic increase in educational leadership doctoral programming between 1993 and 2003 (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007), it appears that leadership preparation units within comprehensive institutions have been strategic in hiring tenure-line faculty members with PhD degrees from research universities, intending to enhance their capacity to engage in research and supervise doctoral students' dissertation research projects. However, faculty in comprehensive institutions that award doctoral degrees were significantly less likely than those in research universities to cite research as their primary professional strength. As the number of comprehensive institutions offering doctoral degrees and their faculty aspire to mirror the practices of research universities when implementing doctoral program offerings (Morphew & Huisman, 2002), one would assume that their tenure-line faculty would cite a primary focus on research, but such is not the case. This finding supports concerns voiced by others (Levine, 2005; Orr, 2007) regarding the research orientations of tenure-line educational leadership faculty in comprehensive institutions.

Because the majority of educational leadership doctoral degrees now are awarded from comprehensive institutions, it may be imminent that faculty applicant pools will be increasingly populated by candidates with degrees from these institutions. Thus, it is likely that, as the production of educational leadership doctoral degrees becomes progressively skewed away from research institutions, the academic credentials of those aspiring to enter the professoriate will also shift significantly. The field of educational leadership may be nearing a tipping point, with the proportion of faculty holding degrees from research institutions poised to decline markedly in the near future. This trend closely relates to the conceptual framework applied in this study,



involving the concepts of person-environment, person-job, and person-organization fit. From an organizational perspective, if educational leadership faculty search committees at research institutions seek individuals with degrees from research institutions, they may be faced with rapidly dwindling applicant pools meeting their desired qualifications. Faculty search committees may need to reconsider their expectations for “fit” in regard to academic credentials or they may face the possibility of failed searches.

Even if tenure-line professors were to continue to receive their doctorates primarily from research institutions, because in recent years they have been increasingly employed at comprehensive universities, they will be influenced by the norms of those institutions, which relates to the person-organization fit within our conceptual framework. Compared to research universities, educational leadership units in comprehensive institutions have fewer faculty members and heavier advising and teaching loads, and their faculty members are less likely to engage in scholarship or be involved in research-oriented professional organizations (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a). Indeed, the significant differences in research orientation between tenure-line research university faculty (more than one third indicated that research is their primary strength) and comprehensive university faculty (less than one tenth so indicated), coupled with the other differences across types of universities noted above, have important implications for the preparation of school leaders.

The vast majority of aspiring school leaders nationally are being prepared in doctoral and comprehensive institutions (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007) by tenure-line faculty who are generalists, less research-oriented than faculty at research universities, and are not significantly involved in the national professional organizations that are leading reform efforts in leadership preparation. For example, in 2003, only 15% of educational administration master’s degrees,

10% of specialist degrees, and 31% of doctoral degrees were awarded from research institutions (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007). The concerns raised about the ability of faculty at comprehensive institutions to contribute to the literature and effectively supervise student research (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007) are supported by the data analyzed in this study.

The trend since the 1990s for educational leadership faculty to be leadership generalists rather than content specialists may account for the fact that more than three fourths of the respondents reported doctoral majors in educational administration/leadership or education policy in 2008 (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011a). In studies conducted in 1986 and 1994 about two thirds of the respondents reported these majors (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997; McCarthy et al., 1988). As the range of majors narrows among tenure-line educational leadership faculty, the breadth of course offerings may be narrowed as well.

With mounting efforts to differentiate the EdD from the PhD (Boyce, 2012), it should not be surprising that there has been a modest, but steady, increase in the portion of educational leadership faculty nationally who have earned PhD degrees in contrast to the EdD. This trend may continue if the Carnegie initiative on reclaiming the EdD is successful in substantially altering the EdD to focus even more on preparing practitioners for leadership roles in diverse educational settings rather than on preparing researchers and academics. It was perhaps of little concern that fewer than half of the faculty members at comprehensive institutions held a PhD when the two degrees were very similar at many (if not most) institutions. However, the intent of the Carnegie initiative is to make the two degrees substantially different, with the mission of the EdD to prepare practitioners and the PhD to develop researchers. Consequently, EdD candidates would focus on the applied aspects of research, including program evaluation and action research, with capstone projects rather than traditional dissertations (Boyce). Unless the portion

of tenure-line faculty with research-oriented PhDs and with strong orientations toward research increases at comprehensive universities, this will mean that the bulk of school leaders are being prepared by those who have not been trained to be researchers and faculty members and, consequently, may not have sufficient understanding of research methods to supervise their students' projects.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Because the focus of our study was on tenure-line faculty, we excluded clinical faculty members from this investigation. However, the significant differences among educational leadership faculty members at research versus comprehensive universities in terms of administrative experience and academic preparation might have been even more pronounced if data on clinical as well as tenure-line faculty were considered. The portion of full-time clinical faculty members in educational leadership units increased from 1% in the mid-1990s to 16% in 2008 (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011b) and currently may exceed 20%. Since clinical faculty, compared to their tenure-line colleagues, are more likely to be generalists, have administrative experience, and be older (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011b), additional research should be conducted on this faculty group. Part-time adjunct educational leadership faculty members also are disproportionately employed at comprehensive universities, and these instructors have received very little attention in educational leadership research, even though they teach the majority of educational leadership courses at some institutions.

Although our research identified significant differences in academic credentials and professional experiences of tenure-line educational leadership faculty by institution type, we were unable to demonstrate why these differences exist. In the discussion, we described some possible mechanisms, but additional research is required to further examine them. We encourage

scholars to design and conduct these studies guided by the overarching concept of person-environment fit and/or its subconcepts. For instance, research using surveys or interviews could be conducted of tenure-line faculty to identify factors that influenced them to apply for particular educational leadership professorial positions. It would be interesting to learn to what extent their decisions relied upon heuristics based upon the institutional type to which they applied, versus more careful analysis of particular aspects of the jobs. Related, an analysis of faculty vacancy postings may be useful, to identify differences in job requirements by institution type (the person-organization fit). It is possible that faculty vacancy postings differ, with research institutions more likely to state highly developed research skills and publications records as required qualifications, while comprehensive institutions may require administrative experience. Or, perhaps individuals self-select, applying to positions at institutions based upon mission and values statements and/or upon desired traits listed in position postings.

### **Conclusion**

Tenure-line faculty members comprise the foundational core of the educational leadership unit in their institutions: This faculty group not only maintains control of leadership preparation programming within their units but also is responsible for knowledge production in our field. We found it troubling that fewer than 1 in 5 tenure-line faculty members in doctoral institutions and 1 in 10 at comprehensive institutions cited research as a professional strength, even though three fourths of faculty members in these institutions had earned their doctoral degrees from research institutions. Person-organization fit, particularly in research institutions, possibly may be operationalized as the institution type from which the faculty member earned the degree: Faculty search committees may rely first on the doctoral degree source when reaching hiring decisions, with research expertise being a secondary consideration.

Leadership preparation programs across all institution types—research, doctoral, and comprehensive—have an obligation to staff their units with high quality professors. Educational leadership units at comprehensive institutions typically have fewer faculty members and significantly lower proportions of faculty who identify research as their primary strength. Yet, these institutions are preparing the majority of our nation’s school leaders and, as we have noted, in the future may be preparing the majority of individuals who aspire to the professoriate. Given criticisms regarding educational leadership faculty quality (Levine, 2005), it is important for all leadership preparation units to review the credentials and experience base of their tenure-line faculty. Specifically, they should assess the faculty’s collective capacity to engage in high quality research that contributes to the field, to support students’ research activities, and to prepare students for administrative or academic careers. If the unit perceives that there are deficiencies in their collective expertise—whether it be research skills, school administrative experience, ability to supervise dissertation research, or content expertise—the faculty has an obligation to ensure that when faculty vacancies come available, individuals are hired with the academic credentials to enrich the capacity of the unit.

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## Chart 1

Carnegie Classification Descriptions of Institutions Housing Leadership Preparation Units

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**Doctorate-granting Universities.** Institutions that awarded at least 20 research doctoral degrees during the year. Institutions were assigned to one of three categories based on a measure of research activity.

- RU/VH: Research Universities (very high research activity)
- RU/H: Research Universities (high research activity)
- DRU: Doctoral/Research Universities

**Master's Colleges and Universities.** Generally includes institutions that awarded at least 50 master's degrees and fewer than 20 doctoral degrees during the year.

- Master's/L: Larger programs, awarding at least 200 master's degrees
- Master's/M: Medium programs, awarding 100-199 master's degrees
- Master's/S: Smaller programs, awarding 50-99 master's degrees

**Baccalaureate Colleges.** Generally includes institutions where baccalaureate degrees represent at least 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees and where fewer than 50 master's degrees or 20 doctoral degrees were awarded during the year.

- Bac/A&S: Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences
- Bac/Diverse: Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields

**Special Focus Institutions.** Institutions awarding baccalaureate or higher-level degrees where a high concentration of degrees (above 75%) is in a single field or set of related fields.

- Spec/Faith: Theological seminaries, Bible colleges, and other faith-related institutions
- Spec/Other: Other special-focus institutions

**Tribal Colleges.** Colleges and universities that are members of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, as identified in IPEDS Institutional Characteristics.

- Tribal: Tribal Colleges

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Source: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (n.d.). *Classification descriptions*. Retrieved from <http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/descriptions/>

Table 1

Faculty Respondents' Administrative Experience, Institution Type Where Doctorate was Earned, Doctoral Degree Type, Doctoral Major, and Professed Professional Strength by Classification of Employing Institution

	<u>Faculty in All Institutions</u>			<u>Faculty in Doctoral-Granting Institutions</u>		
	<u>Research</u>	<u>Doctoral</u>	<u>Comprehensive</u>	<u>Research</u>	<u>Doctoral</u>	<u>Comprehensive</u>
	N %	N %	N %	N %	N %	N %
<b>Administrative Experience</b>						
Yes	135 (48.4%)	49 (69.0%)	228 (73.5%)	132 (48.0%)	47 (70.1%)	98 (65.8%)
No	144 (51.6%)	22 (31.0%)	82 (26.5%)	143 (52.0%)	20 (29.9%)	51 (34.2%)
<b>Institution Type Where Doctorate was Earned</b>						
Research	351 (94.4%)	69 (75.8%)	302 (79.1%)	283 (95.6%)	57 (77.0%)	134 (83.2%)
Doctoral	16 (4.3%)	18 (19.8%)	56 (14.7%)	11 (3.7%)	13 (17.6%)	18 (11.2%)
Comprehensive	5 (1.3%)	4 (4.4%)	24 (6.3%)	2 (0.7%)	4 (5.4%)	9 (5.6%)
<b>Doctoral Degree Type</b>						
PhD	209 (68.5%)	37 (46.8%)	158 (44.8%)	205 (68.3%)	35 (47.3%)	97 (55.8%)
EdD	96 (31.5%)	42 (53.2%)	195 (55.2%)	95 (31.7%)	39 (52.7%)	88 (44.2%)
<b>Doctoral Major</b>						
Educational Administration/ Leadership or Education Policy	218 (76.2%)	62 (81.6%)	257 (77.6%)	216 (76.3%)	58 (80.6%)	119 (75.8%)
Other Professional Field	68 (23.8%)	14 (18.4%)	74 (22.4%)	67 (23.7%)	14 (19.4%)	38 (24.2%)
<b>Professed Professional Strength</b>						
Teaching	150 (57.0%)	53 (75.7%)	277 (85.2%)	147 (56.5%)	51 (77.3%)	129 (84.9%)
Research	94 (35.7%)	12 (17.1%)	29 (8.9%)	94 (36.2%)	11 (16.7%)	18 (11.8%)
Service	19 (7.2%)	5 (7.1%)	19 (5.9%)	19 (7.3%)	4 (6.1%)	5 (3.3%)