



Educational Considerations

Volume 32
Number 2 *Preparing Educational Leaders*

Article 2

4-1-2005

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Recommended Citation

Young, Michelle D.; Mountford, Meredith; and Crow, Gary M. (2005) "Preparing Educational Leaders: A Roadmap to Success," *Educational Considerations*: Vol. 32: No. 2. <https://doi.org/10.4148/0146-9282.1240>

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Introduction

Preparing Educational Leaders: A Roadmap to Success

**Michelle D. Young, Meredith Mountford,
and Gary M. Crow**

Many have argued that educational leadership preparation programs are under siege (Young, Pertersen & Short, 2001). Although the mounting national attention can be traced back to the 1980s and perhaps earlier, the past few years have been witness to highly objectionable media commentaries and politicized disputes about leadership preparation. During this time, a focus on standards and higher education accountability—and with it a shift from emphasizing preparation program strengths to focusing on candidate knowledge and skills—has come to dominate the educational leadership agenda. At the same time, there has been a decrease of funding to higher education as well as considerable growth in alternate routes into educational leadership, for example, online certification and degree opportunities, and for-profit leader preparation centers. A variety of alternative programs—Boston Aspiring Principal Training, The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems, The Broad Residency in Urban Education, KIPP charter schools' principal training model, National Institute for School Leadership, New Leaders for New Schools, New York City Leadership Academy, and the San Diego Educational Leadership Development Academy—have emerged as ways to prepare individuals from a variety of backgrounds to become school and school system leaders.

Indeed, the challenges facing educational leadership preparation are certainly complex. However, this is only part of the story. This story of struggling, impoverished leadership programs overlooks the aggressive and complex changes underway in leadership preparation programs across the nation. It leaves the impression that leadership preparation programs are passive recipients (or resisters) of reforms, and that faculty-led efforts to improve leadership programs are non-existent or barely underway. This, unfortunately is a sad and overused misrepresentation of reality. In fact, across the nation, many faculty members have been working to improve leadership preparation for

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years. Their efforts range from realigning programs to address national leadership standards to drastically reforming and restructuring ineffective programs.

This special issue of *Educational Considerations* explores the preparation of educational leaders, highlighting issues of pedagogy, student and program evaluation, and the transference of learning from higher education to the PreK-12 environment. The articles belie the oft-heard critique that leadership preparation is interested only in self-preservation. To the contrary, the articles included in this issue are forward-looking—focusing on improving program curricula, pedagogy, and entire programs in order to better support candidate learning.

The issue contains four articles in addition to the Introduction. Here, we provide an overview of each of the articles and then discuss several themes common among the pieces that we believe make them thought-provoking contributions to the growing knowledge base on leadership education. We then expand this discussion and link the practices described in the articles to the work of the Joint Research Taskforce on Educational Leadership and the efforts of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) to identify a signature pedagogy for educational leadership preparation. Finally, we chart a path to improved leadership preparation that builds on efforts like those described in this special issue.

The first article, “Transferring Learning from the Classroom to the Workplace: Challenges and Implications for Educational Leadership Preparation,” by Bruce G. Barnett, explores how knowledge and skills learned in university classrooms are best transferred to other environments. In particular, Barnett is concerned with how the transfer of knowledge about leadership for school improvement obtained in preparation programs can be transferred to the workplace. The concept of transfer, particularly the factors influencing successful transfer of knowledge and skills from one context to another, are considered in-depth. Barnett also highlights the specific challenges educators face when attempting to assist aspiring school leaders to apply ideas and lessons learned to the workplace and suggests strategies for promoting both knowledge and skill transfer.

The second article in this special issue, by Kathleen M. Brown, is titled “Transformative Adult Learning Strategies: Assessing the Impact on Pre-Service Administrators’ Beliefs.” This article describes a pedagogical approach that interweaves Mezirow’s (1990) work on transformative learning theory with adult learning strategies and explores the effects of using this alternative, transformative andragogy in an educational leadership preparation program. According to Brown, this pedagogical approach enables university faculty to teach through the challenges associated with preparing educational leaders for equity and social justice and supports future leaders’ development as transformative intellectuals who can take a broader, more inclusive approach in addressing issues of student learning and equity.

The third article, “Learning Outcomes of an Educational Leadership Cohort Program,” by Pamela D. Tucker, Cheryl B. Henig, and Michael J. Salmonowicz, focuses on the evaluation of student learning from program perspective. Specifically, this article describes a new approach to program evaluation that focuses on students’ “direct learning outcomes” (Orr, 2003). Following the description of the process, the authors share the results of using the process within the educational leadership program at their home institution.

Like the third article, “Standards-Based Leadership Preparation Program Improvement Through the Use of Portfolio Assessments,” by Donald G. Hackmann and Thomas L. Alsbury, focuses on the

evaluation of student learning. However, these authors take a rather different approach and discuss the way that data on student learning outcomes can be used for program improvement. Specifically, this article describes one educational leadership program's experiences with using ISLLC-aligned student portfolios to assist in assessment of the program's effectiveness in preparing aspiring school principals.

As these articles demonstrate, there is a strong interest in ensuring that educational leaders are well-prepared to lead schools in which students can be successful. Importantly, the articles in this issue focus on pedagogy (supporting student learning), on evaluation (measuring student learning) and on using data that are collected on student learning and student experiences to continually improve programs. We believe that more and more faculty are focusing on such issues. Indeed, all of the articles that we reviewed for this special issue (over 25 manuscripts) focused on one or more of these issues. Moreover, the increased participation in the Teaching in Educational Administration Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the large number of individuals involved in the Joint Research Taskforce on Educational Leadership Preparation indicate a keen interest in understanding how to ensure that educational leadership preparation supports strong school and district leadership.

Although the attention that leadership preparation programs are receiving is primarily critical in nature, members of the educational leadership field consider this national attention as an opportunity for positive and substantive change. In fact, the array and scope of reform initiatives around educational leadership is quite impressive. For example, faculty of leadership preparation are undertaking substantial self-assessment through state and national accreditation processes, a Taskforce on Evaluating Leadership Preparation Programs (www.aera.net/?id=440), some state requirements, and individual program initiatives (Young, Crow, Orr, Ogawa & Creighton, 2005).

Some reform efforts have been led by professional associations, states, and foundations. For example, the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), a consortium of 32 educational agencies and 13 education administration associations, developed a set of standards currently being used in many states and institutions to reform and assess preparation programs. In 2002, the ISLLC standards were integrated into the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)/Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Program Standards for evaluating leadership preparation programs for national accreditation, and are used as the basis for standardized leadership tests. States and other organizations have expanded these standards to further improve their impact --- organizations include the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) (Young, Crow, Orr, Ogawa & Creighton, 2005).

Additional reforms have been spurred by the State Action for Educational Leadership Preparation (SAELP) grants, funded by the Wallace Foundation. Additionally, the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP), sponsored by UCEA and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), developed a series of studies based on changes in school leaders' roles, identified recommendations for reforming preparation programs and professional development, and advanced a national research taskforce on educational leadership preparation. Moreover, based upon the work of NCAELP and current research on high quality leadership preparation, UCEA revised its membership standards.

Over 70 doctoral granting institutions, all members of UCEA, have the following quality characteristics in common: 1) Program faculty identify, develop, and promote relevant knowledge for the leadership field; 2) Programs involve a critical mass of full-time leadership faculty members, who exhibit excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service; 3) Programs collaborate with practitioners and other stakeholders in candidate selection, program planning, teaching, and field internships; 4) Programs collaborate with scholars, practitioners, and other stakeholders to inform program content, promote diversity within their program and the field, and develop sites for clinical practice and applied research; 5) Programs are conceptually coherent, aligned with quality leadership standards, informed by current scholarship, and incorporate best practices in leadership preparation; 6) Programs engage in ongoing programmatic evaluation and enhancement; 7) Programs include concentrated periods of study and supervised clinical practice in settings that provide an opportunity to work with diverse groups of students and teachers; 8) Programs are characterized by systematic recruitment and admission plans that use multiple sources of evidence and purposive recruitment of a high quality and diverse applicant pool; 9) Programs maintain systematic efforts to assist students in placement and career advancement; 10) Program faculty participate in professional development programs for educational leaders, in cooperation with professional associations and other stakeholders; and 11) Programs offer regular professional development for leadership faculty to enhance their skills in leadership preparation and research methods (UCEA, 2004). We believe these program standards in conjunction with quality leadership standards (e.g., ISLLC) form the basis of effective leadership preparation and would recommend their widespread adoption.

We believe that the reform contributions made by UCEA to the field have been particularly significant. For over fifty years, the UCEA consortium has worked to ensure that its membership criteria and program efforts support quality leadership preparation. In addition to its development of quality membership criteria, UCEA supported the development of the ISLLC standards; works with other professional organizations to the benefit of leadership preparation and policy; sponsors program centers focused on important issues in educational leadership; publishes case studies, other instructional materials, research, and discussions of critical issues in our field; holds an annual conference attended by faculty and practitioners to present relevant research on leadership and leadership preparation; established a national network of graduate students of color to facilitate their entrance into the leadership professorate; and cosponsors a national research seminar for graduate students in educational leadership.

During the last two years, UCEA has held conversations to inform the signature pedagogy of educational leadership. Following on the work of Lee Shulman and the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate, UCEA members have focused attention on what is unique in the preparation of educational leaders that is aligned with practice. Instead of promoting a one-size-fits-all orientation, this ongoing conversation has sought to both understand and critique what is distinctive about the practice of educational leadership that should be reflected in leadership preparation programs. This discussion also aligns with the conversations that UCEA member institutions are having regarding the nature and relevance of a professional Ed.D. degree and the reforms of these degree programs.

From our perspective, we have before us an opportunity to make some important and positive changes in the field of educational leadership. There is a great deal of energy around the improvement of

educational leadership preparation and some very important projects underway. To further support positive change in our field, we believe the time has come to develop a national reform agenda for educational leadership preparation. Below, we offer our initial sketch of such an agenda. We designed it with an awareness of the work already underway in our field and see it as building upon the program work and reforms described above.

In developing this agenda, we begin by identifying what we believe needs to change in our field in programs, at the university level, and within the broader context. Specifically, we believe that at the program level the following areas need to be addressed: 1) low performing programs; 2) models of effective preparation program based not on the uniqueness of educational organizations; 3) substantive and effective internships; 4) standards, evaluation, and accreditation of leadership programs; 5) regular and non-regular faculty issues; and 6) continuous performance improvement of leadership programs. At the university level, changes are also needed. We identify the following as problematic: 1) professional school versus arts and sciences model for education; 2) redefining faculty workload, incentives, and evaluation; 3) redefining what counts as scholarship; 4) bureaucratic nature of higher education institutions and the difficulty of changing programs and courses; and 5) the professional Ed.D. degree. Within the broader educational and economic context we believe that attention needs to be given to the following issues: 1) partnerships with local districts and agencies; 2) economic environment (e.g., resources, financing, quality internship and private sector investment in higher education reform); and 3) state responsibility for funding, evaluating, and promoting leadership preparation reforms.

After identifying areas in which changes are needed, we believe a national reform agenda should discuss identified levers for change, including influencing ideas, programs, and policy. With regard to ideas, we agree that we need to ensure that we effectively communicate and disseminate information on the work that is being conducted in our field, including program work, research, and policy work. It is essential that as this work is done that it is shared broadly through academic journals, practitioner magazines, and conferences. In addition to influencing ideas, we believe that we must use quality research on preparation to influence programs. We believe that major emphasis must be placed on providing faculty with the mechanisms to evaluate their programs and that data from such evaluations should be collected in a central location in an effort to inform the field of our progress. Additionally, we believe it is important that the field come to agreement on the characteristics of a quality educational leadership program and then commit to (re)designing programs around those characteristics. However, we must speak plainly here. We do not believe that all programs should look alike, and it is not our intent that they should; rather we believe that there should be a common set of core quality characteristics that define preparation programs in our field. Finally, we believe that programs should undertake periodic self-assessments that are conducted in conjunction with a critical friends or APA style program review. With regard to influencing policy, we believe our field needs a national conversation or a set of regional conversations that involve major leadership stakeholders and are focused on supporting positive change in educational leadership preparation programs. Such a conversation has begun with the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation and should focus on a national agenda to investigate and promote quality leadership preparation. We also believe that it is important that we, as a field,

begin to build alliances outside the field of education with organizations that also have children's best interests in mind.

As Young, Petersen, and Short (2001) point out: "The challenges that face educational leadership preparation are multifaceted and complex. Neither reactionary behavior, such as caustic remarks or finger pointing, nor well-intentioned but ill-guided policy interventions, such as alternative certification, will "fix" educational leadership preparation. There are no simple solutions, no quick fixes" (pp.140-141). Indeed, our approach to supporting positive change must be thoughtful, research-based, and comprehensive.

This issue of *Educational Considerations* supports positive reform in educational leadership preparation. It not only delineates a strategy for large-scale, research-based improvement, but also it shares several excellent examples of scholarship on leadership preparation. This scholarship contributes important perspectives to the knowledge base on leadership preparation and exemplifies the strong commitment of leadership scholars to quality preparation.

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