

# **NCPEA**

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# **Education Leadership Review**

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# **NCPEA**

## **Education Leadership Review**

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# NCPEA

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# **Examining the Educational Leadership Knowledge Base: A 5-Year Citation Analysis**

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Casey Graham Brown**

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*The professionals who research and publish in the field of educational administration impact the theory and best practice cycle that develops into the discipline's body of knowledge. This body of knowledge, in turn, is imparted to aspiring educational leaders. The authors examined whose research educational administration researchers are citing, and thus, by assumption, whose research and ideas are being incorporated into graduate-level coursework. The citations in a leading online research journal in the field were examined to seek what discernable patterns and trends existed in citations. In an examination of measures of impact, the authors studied data from an electronic tracking system that indicate the number of times a Portable Document Format is retrieved from the journal's website and analytical data that indicate the frequency of electronic article/module retrieval.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The study of educational leadership involves an examination of how school administrators impact educational outcomes (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). Those professionals who study, instruct, research, and publish in the field of educational administration impact the postulate/theory/best practices cycle that evolves into the disciplines scholarly body of knowledge. The body of knowledge developed through that research and reflection in turn affects those seeking to be educational leaders through their participation in university-based educational administrator preparation programs.

If the work that scholars contribute to in the field of educational administration informs and evolves the disciplines body of knowledge, then we may deduce that those cited in scholarly venues have an impact on education. This research project began with the simple question, "Which articles and authors are highly cited in the field of educational administration?" This brought about the above discussion of assumptions one could make from that citation analysis regarding whose ideas and research comprise the framework of the field. Pilkington (2009) argued, "with adequate screening and a sufficiently large sample,

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citation analysis can provide useful insight into which journals, papers, and authors are considered influential” (para. 1).

From “Which articles and authors are highly cited in the field of educational administration?” our question evolved into an examination of who educational administration researchers, are citing, and thus, by assumption, reading, and incorporating into their graduate coursework. The references cited in a leading research journal in the field were examined to determine if discernable patterns or trends in citations existed. Data pertaining to additional measures of impact were also examined, including those data from a tracking system that indicates the number of times a Portable Document Format (PDF) is retrieved and how often the journal’s publication site is accessed.

### **Background Literature**

The American Association of School Administrators (1993) wrote “Traditional university and state certification programs have been the target of criticism because of their perceived lack of focus on the future roles, knowledge, and skill base necessary for superintendents” (para. 16). Such statements emphasize traditional disputes over the educational administration knowledge base. Donmoyer, Imber, and Scheurich (1995) posited that a knowledge base “can ground and legitimate professional work” (p. 2). Specifically, referring to the field of educational administration, Scheurich (1995) described the knowledge base as “the core knowledge, or the canon, that every member of the profession should know” (p. 18). According to Scheurich, a knowledge base,

standardizes the profession in that all of its members are certified to have mastered this canon. It also standardizes the training necessary to become a member of the profession in such a way that it does not matter in which institution a person receives her or his training; she or he will receive basically the same training, at least within some acceptable range of difference. (p. 18)

Scheurich wrote, however, that there was “no acceptable justification for supporting a knowledge base in educational administration” (p. 21) and that “the general public is much less concerned about the stature of educational administration, either as a professional discipline in the university or within the context of all professions, than it is concerned about the success of the public schools” (p. 25). Lunenburg’s (2011) opinion differed. He posited, “one of the best criteria of a profession is that it has matured as a science. . . developed a solid theoretical base—a body of organized and tested knowledge. Such is the case with educational administration as a social science” (p. 8).

Debate on the knowledge base issue may never cease. For example, Styron, Jr., Maulding, and Hull (2006) wrote that some people debate that “those with field experience make better instructors because they can relate theory to practice” (para. 4) while others “argue that those with field experience have no desire to acknowledge theory; they come to the university to be semi-retired, and bore their students with ‘war stories’” (para. 4).

## **National Council of Professors of Educational Administration**

Since the 1940s, the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) has served as a network for professors of educational leadership (Murphy, Young, Crow, & Ogawa, 2009). The organization has a membership of approximately 600; members represent higher educational institutions from across the United States and draws international members from countries such as Australia, England, and Saudi Arabia (J. Berry, personal communication, 2011). NCPEA, an active professional organization that supports robust publishing activity, sponsors regular professional conferences, conducts sponsored research, and advocates for the profession on behalf of its members. For these reasons, the authors elected to use a NCPEA publication for their research efforts.

The National Council of Professors of Educational Administration has a history of sponsoring four peer-reviewed publications: *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation* (IJELP); *Education Leadership Review* (ELR), *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* (M&T), and the annual *NCPEA Yearbook*. According to the organization's website, a fifth publication, *NCPEA Policy Briefs*, debuted in February of 2012 (<http://www.ncpeapublications.org>). Recently, NCPEA has begun publishing eBooks, printing the publications on demand (T. Creighton, personal communication, 2012). The authors selected the *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation* as the NCPEA publication targeted for this research.

## **International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation**

*International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation* is a scholarly, electronic journal published by NCPEA four times a year. The journal solicits for publication articles about research and practice in the field of educational administration. The articles are grouped into domains; all submissions are blind, peer-reviewed, and edited prior to publication.

*IJELP* is an open educational resource. Open Educational Resources (OER) are “teaching and learning materials that you may freely use and reuse, without charge” (“What are open educational resources,” n. d., para. 1). For OERs, a reader may simply download, share, and use the resources. Others can be downloaded, edited, and reposted as a “remixed work” (“What are open educational resources,” para. 1). *IJELP*, a research journal, sustains the expansive foundation of the educational administration field.

## **Connexions**

Elmore (2008) posited that those individuals who want to modify educational leadership practice are confronted with how to make the subject matter and teaching of educational leadership “match the aspirations of reformers, and how to make powerful new ideas about the practice of leadership in the sector accessible to a broader audience of individuals and institutions than the current collection of innovative, but marginal, providers” (para. 6). The Connexions Project was created in 1999 by Burrus and Baraniuk from Rice University (Farmer & Sackett, 2009). Connexions, according to its creators, “is one such innovative forum for collecting, organizing, and sharing educational data” (para. 1).

Connexions is a “dynamic digital educational ecosystem consisting of an educational content repository and a content management system optimized for the delivery of educational

content” (“About us,” n. d., para. 1). The site has more than “17,000 learning objects or modules in its repository and over 1000 collections (textbooks, journal articles, etc.). . .used by over 2 million people per month” (About us, para. 1). A free to use site, Connexions contains content from a variety of disciplines.

Murphy, Young, Crow, and Ogawa wrote in 2009 that NCPEA is likely to impact educational leadership via two main means: strengthening “university faculty networks by creating state affiliates in many regions” (pp. 10-11) and through the facilitation of the “online open-access publishing site they have developed in collaboration with researchers at Rice University” used to “share research in progress as well as course materials” (p. 11). *IJELP*, published and accessed via the Connexions web site, is an open-access publication. *IJELP* was created in July 2008 as the “formal, online journal of the NCPEA Connexions Project” (Farmer & Sackett, para. 12). Contributors and other users alike can access *IJELP* articles and other materials for free from the Connexions web site. The aim of the NCPEA/Knowledge Base Connexions Project is to “add to the knowledge base of the educational administration profession” and “aid in the improvement of administrative theory and practice, as well as administrative preparation programs” (NCPEA Project Executive Editorial Board, p. 8; NCPEA website, 2005, as cited in Mullen, 2006). Authors can publish in Connexions without NCPEA, but must go through NCPEA to receive the organization’s endorsement (Personal communication, T. Creighton, 2012).

## **Impact Factor**

NCPEA uses FastTrack as a reviewing tool. FastTrack streamlines the review process. The tool is “a fully automated web-based manuscript management and tracking service” (“The NCPEA Connexions Project,” n. d., p. 1). When a module is accepted for publication it is also published in *IJELP* (“The NCPEA Connexions Project,” n. d.).

Software is utilized by NCPEA to track the number of times a PDF is accessed, allowing articles published to be tracked individually and examined for impact. Some journals collect data on how often the journal or article has been referenced. *IJELP*, however, is “focused on the author. . .our numbers reflect individuals’ manuscripts” (T. Creighton, personal communication, 2012). Authors can monitor the frequency with which their article is accessed.

NCPEA utilizes Google Analytics to measure the traffic that the organization’s endorsed publications receive. The application disaggregates website visitor data to show user’s geographical locations and how they arrive at the site. *IJELP* publishers can monitor the cities, states, and countries of the individuals accessing the site.

*IJELP* assists professors seeking to document their scholarly research. Upon publication, authors are sent a letter, indicating data about the contribution’s impact to show tenure and promotion committee members the impact the article is having, as indicated by the tracking system (T. Creighton, personal communication, 2012).

## **Methods**

The data source for this study included a compilation of research articles published in *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation* as well as individual article and web site statistics. The references of articles published were examined to better comprehend

the discipline's citing of its own works; article and site data provided information pertaining to impact factor.

The act of counting citations is often called *citation analysis*. Authors of the article "Citation Analysis" (2010) discussed the importance of citation analysis to "gauge the importance of a publication by counting the number of times it has been cited by other scholars" (para. 1). Citation analysis involves calculating the "number of times an article has been cited in published research," thus allowing the researcher to "gain information about that article's impact on its discipline. If an article has a high number of citations, you may conclude that it has been the subject of discussion or criticism in its discipline" ("Citation Analysis," para. 1).

Richardson and McLeod (2009) found in their study "Where Should Educational Leadership Authors Publish to Get Noticed by the Top Journals in the Discipline?" that discovering "citation patterns noted in the current article will help authors consider issues of spread and replicability when seeking suitable outlets to publish their scholarly work" (para. 1). This process is also referred to as *bibliometric analysis*. Bibliometric analysis involves a documentation of "the publication patterns of authors in terms of the citations they receive as well as whom they cite in their own published work" (Heberger, Christie, & Alkin, 2010, p. 25).

Authors who cite other educational administration researchers are participating in a type of *boost factor*. Citing another researcher acts to boost his or her research, expanding its readership. A similar phenomenon occurs in the scientific and invention community:

groundbreaking discoveries of Nobel Prize Laureates and other famous scientists are not only acknowledged by many citations of their landmark paper. . .they also boost the citation rates of their previous publications. Given that innovations must outcompete the rich-gets-richer effect for scientific citations, it turns out that they can make their way only through citation cascades. (Mazlounian, Eom, Helbing, Lozano, & Fortunat, 2011, para. 1)

The top ten authors cited in the *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation* were *boosted* by others in the profession.

Heberger, Christie, and Alkin (2010) wrote that "bibliographic citations can be thought of simply as reference lists" (p. 25). Bibliometric studies "have been conducted in many fields and in many countries to better understand the influence of their scholars' work" (Heberger et al., p. 25). Miller, Stewart, and West (2006) acknowledged the need to review literature and analyze citations to uphold the significance of the discipline's research agenda. Those who write and publish in the field of education are those authors who influence the knowledge base as they are read and cited in scholarly venues. Since *IJELP* is a leading NCPEA journal we thought it important to examine who was being cited.

References were compiled and analyzed from 5 years of *IJELP* articles (2006-2010) to identify the most frequently cited authors in *IJELP*. The citations were sorted, categorized, and ranked to reveal the top ten *IJELP* referenced authors.

Once the leading cited authors were identified, it was deemed essential to determine the number of times the publication was accessed and how frequently individual articles were retrieved. Their published articles were reviewed to ascertain whether those being cited in *IJELP* the most contributed back to the journal also authored other journal submissions. Data



pertaining to additional measures of impact were also inspected, including article/module retrieval and publication site access frequency data.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Use of *IJELP* as a source of data for the research proved to be a rich source of metrics for the study. The numbers of citations were sufficient to establish a creditable level of significance and to identify several trends in the data.

Almost 300 articles were published in *IJELP* from 2006-2010. The articles' references were examined to determine the individuals or organizations that are most present in the articles' references in an attempt to ascertain whose voices are contributing to the knowledge base. Along with the knowledge base contributors it was also important to look at how widely read *IJELP* articles are. If no one is reading or retrieving the articles, they will not be read and thus a list of references would prove pointless.

### **Author Citations**

The researchers retrieved the 291 articles that were published in the *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation* from 2006 through 2010. Disaggregable citation references from those articles were assembled into a database for analysis. These scholarly peer-reviewed articles contained 7,292 cited references. The 7,292 references do not represent discrete citations of scholarly work. The analysis showed that the authors' works published in the journal had patterns of repetition. Multiple citations and references to scholarly works by certain researchers were apparent. In other words, certain authors were cited as experts multiple times in many articles over the 5-year period.

Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) posited, "A person's professional background and knowledge base determines his or her view of what is essential or secondary in education" (p. 415). One of the most prolifically cited authors was an organization (Texas Education Agency). Of the nine individuals cited, three had earned doctoral degrees in educational administration/leadership, two in curriculum and instruction or supervision, one in sociology, one in urban education, one unlisted (Leithwood), and an additional one in management. Hines (2007) wrote,

The dissertation is a significant knowledge based component of doctoral programs of educational administration. But some members and students of the profession view the dissertation as a segue into higher pay and recognition in society. While the dissertation does symbolize power, privilege, and prestige, this unilateral value counters original value of the scholarly work. (para. 54)

One organization and one female were present in the top ten group of those most frequently cited. All others (8) were male. No references to past PK-12 experience could be found for three of the cited authors. Four had teaching experience without school administration experience; one had vast school administration experience and one served as a teaching principal. Regardless of employment history or educational background, these authors affect the educational administration/knowledge base as we know it. Further, regardless of the beliefs, of those cited, whether authors agree or disagree with the researchers

or their prolificacy, those cited are the people who are contributing to the knowledge base. Those most oft quoted are the ones whose beliefs and findings are being relayed via references in the works of others. Whether their work is being used to support or negate current research in the field, theirs are the findings and ideas that are being discussed, and, in the realm of educational leadership, that to which other work is compared. The following ten authors/organizations were the most cited over the 5-year period examined.

### **Joseph Murphy**

Joseph Murphy is the Chair of Education and the Associate Dean of Peabody College at Vanderbilt University. He was the most prolifically cited author during the years studied. Murphy has published over 200 articles in the field of leadership and policy and school improvement and has written or co-written 21 books and edited 12 others (“Joseph F. Murphy,” n. d.). Murphy earned a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Public Finance from the Ohio State University. In the public schools, Murphy has past experience as a school administrator (“Vita, Joseph Murphy,” n. d.).

### **Texas Education Agency**

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) was the second most frequently cited during the years examined. TEA’s mission is to “provide leadership, guidance, and resources to help schools meet the educational needs of all students” (TEA, 2011, para. 1). TEA may have earned a second place listing due to the large number of Texas authors that appear in the *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*. According to its own website, TEA “comprises the commissioner of education and agency staff. The TEA and the State Board of Education (SBOE) guide and monitor activities and programs related to public education in Texas” (para. 3).

### **Michael Fullan**

Michael Fullan, the third most cited author in *IJELP*, has served as professor emeritus of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. He has experience as a special advisor to the Premier and Minister of Education in Ontario and holds honorary doctorates from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and Nipissing University in Canada (“Biography,” n. d.b). He has a doctorate in sociology from the University of Toronto (Sparks, 2003). No school teaching or administrative experience was located for Fullan.

### **David T. Gamage**

David Gamage is an associate professor at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Gamage is the fourth most frequently cited author; his background includes work in public administration, economics, political science, international affairs, and educational administration. He earned a Ph.D. in Educational Administration from La Trobe and has published five books, 17 book chapters, and more than 100 articles. His educational work experience includes serving as a teaching principal (“Assoc. Professor David T. Gamage,” 2008).

### **Robert J. Marzano**

Robert Marzano, the fifth most frequently cited author in the years studied, is the cofounder and CEO of Marzano Research Laboratory. He has served as a speaker and is the author of more than 30 books and 150 education-related articles. Marzano's doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction is from the University of Washington. His past public school experience includes service as an English teacher and department chairperson ("About Dr. Marzano," 2009; "Education and Experience," 2009).

### **Kenneth Leithwood**

Kenneth Leithwood has served as a professor of Educational Leadership and Policy at OISE/University of Toronto and was identified as the sixth most frequently cited author. He has written on the topics of educational policy, organizational change, and school leadership. Leithwood has published more than 70 journal articles, and authored or edited more than 30 books ("Ken A. Leithwood," n. d.). He received his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. No public school teaching or campus administrative experience was located for Leithwood.

### **Thomas J. Sergiovanni**

Thomas Sergiovanni served as the Lillian Radford Professor of Education at Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, and is number seven on the most frequently cited list. Sergiovanni received his Doctor of Education degree in Educational Administration from the University of Rochester. He was a prolific author whose work includes multiple books. Sergiovanni served as a teacher and science consultant ("Biography," n. d.a).

### **Francis (Frank) M. Duffy**

Frank Duffy has served as a professor of Change-Leadership in Education at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC and is number eight on the most frequently cited list. He is the founder and president of The F. M. Duffy Group. Duffy has written several books on whole-system change in school districts. He served as a high school special education teacher and earned a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Supervision from the University of Pittsburgh ("Frances [Frank] M. Duffy, Ph.D.," n. d.).

### **Linda Darling-Hammond**

Linda Darling-Hammond has served as the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at the Stanford University School of Education, where she commenced the School Redesign Network and the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute. Darling-Hammond is author or editor of more than 300 publications and tied Peter Senge for the ninth most cited author position. Her Ed.D. in Urban Education was earned at Temple University; she has served as a teacher ("Darling-Hammond, Linda," 2012).

## Peter M. Senge

Peter M. Senge has served as a senior lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and as founding chair of the Society for Organizational Learning. Senge is the author of multiple books including *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* and *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*. His Ph.D. in Management is from MIT (“Peter Senge,” 2012). No public school teaching or campus administrative experience was located for Senge.

### Knowledge Dissemination

Discovering who is being cited and to what extent is important, but so is knowing how widely distributed are the journal itself as well as its individual articles. *IJELP* is distributed in a way that allows the impact factor of individual articles to be measured. *IJELP*’s publishers can determine how widely the publication’s articles are distributed by collecting data pertaining to readers’ locations and how many and how often the articles are read, all factors that address impact. *IJELP* is viewed by approximately 3,000 readers each month. Readers come from all 50 states and 60 countries (T. Creighton, personal communication, 2012). *IJELP* abstracts are translated into Spanish to, thus increasing its impact.

OER Commons was designed by the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME) to assist learners in their search to find resources that have been posted elsewhere online. “Traditional journals often diminish in readership as the journal ages; *IJELP* is more dynamic and because of OER actually *increases* in readership as time goes on” (T. Creighton, personal communication, 2012). OER Commons:

is not a search engine (like Google) and it is not a list of links. This site is a structured database of links to high-quality resources found on other websites. OER Commons provides a single point of access through which educators, students, and all learners can search, browse, evaluate, and discuss over 30,000 high-quality OER. (“What are open educational resources,” n. d., para. 2)

The impact of OER Commons is vast, as they have joined with more than 120 content partners. Learners can retrieve more than 30,000 items. “By being ‘open,’ these resources are publicly available for all to use, and principally through Creative Commons licensing, many thousands are legally available for repurposing, modifying and improving” (“What are open educational resources,” n. d., para. 7). The underlying premise of OER is “equitable access to high-quality education is a global imperative” (“What are open educational resources,” n. d., para. 8). With Connexions an OER content partner, OER is filtered for scholarly contributions to the preparation and practice of education administration (T. Creighton, personal communication, 2012).

### Impact Factor

It is important for those considering where to submit a manuscript to be aware of the readership of journals. NCPEA also uses Google Analytics to measure traffic that the publications site experiences. As of September 2012, the site had 1,482 user visits per month,

up from 1,239 from the previous September. From October 1, 2011, to September 30, 2012, the web site had 14,767 visitors, of which 10,190 were unique visitors. There were 11,869 visits (80.38%) to the site by individuals from the United States, 462 (3.13%) from the Philippines, and 231 (1.56%) from India. The site experienced 52,172 page views and visitors averaged 3.53 page views per visit. The average visit was 2 minutes and 32 seconds in duration; this short time may be attributed to visitors locating and downloading an article or module, then logging out of the site. According to Vockell, Asher, Dinuzzo, and Bartok (1994),

An understanding of how research is disseminated can help users of research identify sources in which they are likely to find current information on educational topics. In addition, a knowledge of dissemination patterns will help researchers identify channels for publishing the results of their research. (para. 1)

From the top 10 referenced authors cited, 7 of the 10 had, as of August 2012, authored no articles or modules for *Connexions/IJELP* (TEA, Fullan, Marzano, Leithwood, Sergiovanni, Darling-Hammond, and Senge). Murphy authored “*PERSPECTIVE: Of Dubious Efficacy—Questioning the Core of University-based Preparation Programs for School Leaders*” in 2006. As of August 2012, his contribution had received 2,424 views (1.16 per day) and was ranked 13,857. Gamage authored four published submissions, ranging from 2,115 to 47,521 total views (1.57 to 22.59 views per day). His articles ranked 10,523, 7,837, 865, and 464. Duffy authored 13 modules and 2 collections, ranging from 1,034 to 24,079 total views (0.90 to 10.63 views per day), ranking from 16,569 to 1,326.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research should analyze authors’ agreement or disagreement with the researchers or agencies they cite to determine whether research being referenced is being used to support or refute current findings. A qualitative research approach might best be employed in this case. Such a study would allow the researchers to examine the publications of the most cited authors for any common themes that may be present across their scholarly output represented in *IJELP* submissions.

## SUMMARY

In a 2006 article that was posted in *Connexions*, Dembowski wrote, “a comprehensive plan for the dissemination of best practices requires the following policy and procedural decisions to be made” (para. 11). In his list Dembowski asked, “What is the purpose of *CONNEXIONS*?” After examining the readership of *IJELP*, the authors of this article believe that *Connexions* serves as a forum of distribution and as a framework in which to share content knowledge and widen and further explore the educational administration/leadership knowledge base. Dembowski’s question, however, may not ever be answered definitively because as technological platforms and interfaces evolve, *Connexions* and the publications it hosts will likely change in an attempt to meet the needs of its readership.

According to the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (Thomson, 1993),

The arena in which today's principals work is constantly being reshaped by societal forces and conditions. Static patterns are out; so, too, is the notion that solving today's problems automatically prepares candidates for future challenges. Accordingly, the preparation of school leaders should focus on the development of a broadly applicable knowledge and skills base that is timeless and that emphasizes knowledge and skill development rather than particular problems of practice. (p. xi)

Kennedy (1997) wrote, "In the world of scholarship, we are what we write" (p. 186). Whether or not one argues that a knowledge base in Educational Administration exists, researchers in the field continue to publish and, by doing so, expand the content of the discipline and thus influence other educators in the field. This analysis has revealed that patterns of thought about educational administration exist and form a basis for concluding that there is a de facto knowledge base in the discipline and that thousands of users are accessing one such leading publication of the knowledge base.

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# Champion or Chump: Using a Book-Length Case Study to Evaluate a Mythical Principal

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*This study examined how 130 participants enrolled in the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) principalship program completed a standards-based evaluation after reading a book-length case study of a mythical principal. Application of the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL), which mirror the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and Educational Leadership Constituency Council (ELCC) standards reveal widespread agreement on the principal's performance related to vision, instruction, management, collaboration and politics. However, participants were distinctly split as to the mythical principal's ethics. The authors discuss potential responses to literature that identify many programs as weak and inadequate by providing more authentic and rigorous experiences around ethics and other practical issues for preservice principals.*

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An alarming number of scholars have concluded that many educational leadership programs fail to adequately prepare principals for reality (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003). Levine (2005) called programs at many prestigious institutions “inadequate to appalling” (p. 23). The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) urged “departments of educational leadership to awaken from their complacency, reject the status quo and respond to appeals and criticisms from the field by identifying new content that addresses what principals need to know in order to do their jobs...” (2006, p. 11). Murphy (2006) concurred, noting that criticism of schools of education is most well founded when aimed at the preparation of administrators.

Increasingly complex expectations for principals led Hess and Kelley (2007), to conclude that “principal preparation programs that pay little attention to data, productivity, accountability, or working with parents may leave their graduates unprepared for new responsibilities” (p. 14). Such criticism is not limited to scholars of educational leadership. Research suggests that many practitioners agree. Indeed, the authors’ own experiences as practitioners support these conclusions.

Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, and Cohen (2007) cited a Public Agenda survey that showed 80% of superintendents and 69% of principals felt university educational leadership programs were out of touch with reality in today’s schools. Hess and

Kelley (2005) noted a Public Agenda survey indicating that a whopping 96% of principals said their colleagues were more helpful than graduate school in helping them prepare for the job. If Whitaker (2012) is correct in asserting that the “principal is the decisive element in the school” (p. 22), we should be aghast.

Despite this harsh criticism, there is reason to believe that principalship preparation programs are heeding the call for improvement. For example, Orr (2006) identified encouraging changes in many programs, including an increased emphasis on constant reflection. In a well-received book addressing principal preparation, Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr (2010) identified promising model practices. Key among these was a relevant, well-developed and thoughtful curriculum aligned with state and professional standards. These programs embraced “active, problem-based learning that integrates theory and practice and stimulates reflection” (p. 50). They emphasized “action research; field-based projects; journal writing; and portfolios of evidence about practice that require feedback and assessment from peers, faculty, and the candidates themselves” (p. 50).

Darling-Hammond’s team (2010) identified cohorts with mentoring and advising from experienced practitioners as essential. They also stressed the importance of structured, well-supervised internships “under the guidance of expert principals” (p. 50). Finally, they highlighted the importance of close relationships between K-12 schools and universities developing future principals.

The use of case studies and problem-based learning (PBL) has been identified as essential. Yin (2011) touted the value of case studies for students who, for example, “want to know about... How and why a high school principal has done an especially good job...” (p. 5). PBL, which draws its roots from the training of physicians, has been identified as a way to address common shortcomings of principal preparation (Bridges, 1992; Bridges & Hallinger, 1995; Copland, 2000).

Stein (2006), of the New York City Leadership Academy, advocated PBL as a promising way to prepare principals “...by having future school leaders address authentic problems that closely mirror the realities of the job, PBL enables them to develop the ‘muscle memory’ they will need to analyze complex systems even as they act within them” (p. 523).

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The principalship program at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) enrolls students from across the state in two cohort groups. Students from Iowa’s urban districts enroll in a program that exists as a partnership between the Urban Education Network (UEN) and UNI. This program was collaboratively developed in response to UEN districts’ desire to “grow their own” administrators. “Large urban districts often need to grow their own leaders, as they require leaders that understand the urban community, the teachers’ union, and the problems of large school size (Schneider & Zigler, 2007, p. 105). Students from Iowa’s rural/suburban districts enroll in the “All-Iowa” cohort. Both groups engage in courses delivered through a blend of distance education technology, on-line, and face to face instruction and complete an extensive internship aligned with the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL), which closely mirror the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and Educational Leadership Constituency Council (ELCC) standards.

Students’ initial course in the program introduces them to a balcony view of the principalship in a “societal context that is more dynamic and complex than in the past” (Crow,

2006, p. 310) through immersion in ISSL. Students examine the standards through selected readings, discussions, guest speakers, and development of a field-based internship plan supervised by campus and field-based faculty and a field-based mentor. Participants in this study were graduate students who were members of the UEN and All-Iowa cohorts during the 2008-2011 academic years.

In the fall of 2008 our team revised the syllabus to include Dunklee's (1999) *You Sound Taller on the Telephone*. The book traces mythical principal Grant Sterling through his career as an elementary, middle school, and high school principal. Throughout the 262 page book, the principal experiences authentic dilemmas ranging from personality conflicts and district politics, to wayward students, recalcitrant teachers, and difficult parents. The scenarios consistently produced lively discussions and debate.

At the end of the term participants completed an evaluation of Principal Sterling based on ISSL using an instrument provided by School Administrators of Iowa. It required them to cite specific evidence and criteria and also allows for reflection and comment. The instrument required participants to determine whether Principal Sterling was in need of small adjustments, more specific improvements, or remediation. In response to Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2010) call for greater interaction between students and expert practitioners, we invited a handful of practitioners to read the book along with students and share their own evaluations during the final class session.

## DATA COLLECTION

After four years of data collection we wondered if participants' characteristics equated to different evaluations of Principal Sterling. For example, did participants with an elementary background evaluate him differently than their secondary counterparts? Did participants from a particular certification area see his performance differently? Was there a gender difference in terms of their evaluations? What about differences between the urban and rural/suburban participants? Did they view Principal Sterling to be deficient in particular standards?

After reviewing the data, we quickly determined that Standard 5 – Ethical Leadership was the only standard in which participants had markedly different judgments (Chi Square (5) = 221.58,  $p < .001$ ). As shown in Table 1, Principal Sterling maintained at least a 95% ( $n = 123$ ) rating of “meets standard” in each of the other five standards (visionary leadership, instructional leadership, organizational leadership, collaborative leadership, and political leadership). However, for Standard 5 - Ethical Leadership, only 55% ( $n = 72$ ) of the participants judged him as “meets standard.”

As we reviewed the assessments of Sterling's performance related to ethics, we examined participant demographics. Included in our population of participants that completed the evaluation were: 41% ( $n = 53$ ) elementary teachers; 52% ( $n = 68$ ) secondary teachers; and 7% ( $n = 9$ ) termed ‘other,’ referring to participants employed in district central offices or educational service agencies. Of the forty-five percent ( $n = 58$ ) of participants who determined that Principal Sterling “does not meet” standard 5 for Ethical Leadership, 55% ( $n = 32$ ) were secondary teachers and 38% ( $n = 22$ ) were elementary teachers. The total number of participants were evenly split between male and female ( $n = 65$ ). Of the 58 participants who determined Principal Sterling did not meet the ethics standard, 55% ( $n = 32$ ) were male and 45% ( $n = 26$ ) were female. While this finding intrigues us, Jackall (1988) asserted that research into gender differences and ethical decision making provide conflicting results.

Table 1  
*Summary of Standards and Student Ratings (n = 130)*

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Standard 1 Visionary Leadership</b>	<b>Standard 2 Instructional Leadership</b>	<b>Standard 3 Organizational Leadership</b>	<b>Standard 4 Collaborative Leadership</b>	<b>Standard 5 Ethical Leadership</b>	<b>Standard 6 Political Leadership</b>
<b># of students – meets standard</b>	128	123	126	128	72	128
<b>% of students – meets standard</b>	98.5	94.6	96.9	98.5	55.4	98.5
<b># of students – does not meet standard</b>	2	7	4	2	58	2
<b>% of students – does not meet standard</b>	1.5	5.4	3.1	1.5	44.6	1.5

We also examined participants' teaching experience in categories of: 0-4 years; 5-9 years; 10-14 years; 15-19 years; and 20+ years. Three of the five categories were relatively equal with regard to the number of participants choosing "meets standard" or "does not meet standard." The largest discrepancies came in the "10-14 years of teaching" and the "15-19 years of teaching" categories. These participants with more teaching experience were more likely to judge Principal Sterling as having met the standard. This finding interests us relative to research performed by Benninga, Sparks, and Tracz (2011) who found that teachers' moral judgment does not improve over time.

We also wondered if participants with certain undergraduate majors tended to evaluate Principal Sterling differently. Data indicated that the undergraduate major of our participants appeared to have no impact on their judgment of Principal Sterling. Likewise, participants' urban/suburban/rural background had no impact on their judgment of his ethical decision making.

## DISCUSSION

Requiring participants to evaluate Principal Sterling has deepened their understanding of ISSL. While some viewed his actions more favorably than others, we found nearly unanimous agreement that Principal Sterling met the standards related to vision, instruction, management, collaboration and politics. Some felt strongly that Sterling was a model administrator from whom they could learn a great deal. Many admired his firm, direct style and felt convinced that his heart was consistently in the right place. Others saw him as sometimes careless and sloppy, mired in management and criticized the small amount of attention he gave to instruction. These debates were lively, impassioned and rich in their connections to the standards.

That nearly half of the participants found Principal Sterling to have failed to meet ethical standards revealed a more complicated reality. This discrepancy suggests students in principalship programs need additional opportunities to explore authentic ethical dilemmas. Being required to *justify* their judgments of Principal Sterling's ethical conduct by citing specific standards and criteria caused participants to more actively engage in the complicated, nuanced and sometimes conflicting ethical dilemmas principals routinely face.

The lively debate around how participants arrived at their judgments of Principal Sterling's ethical behavior mirrors the reality of the principalship. An ethical dilemma, as suggested by Kidder (1995), is not a choice between right and wrong, but rather, between two rights. Principals navigate this every day. Class discussions reflect Kouzes and Posner's (2007) assertion that "we want our leaders to be honest because their honesty is also a reflection upon our own honesty" (p. 32). Evaluating Principal Sterling's ethics reflects on students' own practice.

This study helped to affirm two important benefits to our program. First and foremost, it has provided our students with a relevant and engaging look into the principalship and the standards that govern it. Second, it has allowed our program to respond to the aforementioned criticisms of principal preparation. We have applied Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2010) recommendation that students' experiences be tied more explicitly to standards using an active approach that integrates theory and practice, while encouraging reflection.

It is surely not possible to separate a solid understanding of ethical practice from the increasingly complex responsibilities of school leadership, such as sensitivity to growing diversity in schools, and skill at forming collaborative relationships that support teacher growth and student learning (Jazzar & Algozine, 2007; Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2002). Effective ethical practice requires principals to understand that a productive school climate impacts teacher morale (Black, 2001) and student learning (Brunner & Greenlee, 2000). Immersing students in the practical application of standards is essential. Heeding calls for more relevant preparation, reflection, and immersion in standards builds better principals and programs alike.

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# **An Empirical Study of Cultures of Assessment in Higher Education**

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*Higher education campus leaders face a complex state of affairs regarding the documentation of evidence of student learning. There is no shortage of technical guidance for conducting assessment (e.g. Allen, 2006; Bresciani, 2007; Bresciani, Zelna, & Anderson, 2004; Lui, 2011; Maki, 2010; Suskie, 2009; Walvood & Anderson, 2010), and a great deal of energy and resources are expended gathering, analyzing, interpreting, disseminating, and using data generated through this methodological advice. Yet, the advancement of assessment methods has outpaced explorations of assessment's philosophy and discourses of how assessment and campus cultures are changed have been slow to emerge. In essence, the art and science of assessment are divided and, as Snow (1959) cautions, "when those two senses have grown apart, then no society is going to be able to think with wisdom" (p. 29). As higher education places greater emphasis on empirical data from standardized learning, research regarding why assessment is conducted, how it is leveraged for change, and the ramifications of assessment's purposes must be elevated to a more meaningful level. To this end a new instrument—The Survey of Assessment Culture<sup>®</sup>—was developed to explore factors and strategies influencing the cultivation of cultures of assessment. The Survey supports research and dialogue into cultures of assessment and how assessment emerges as an accepted institutional way of existence. This article reviews the methodological approaches used in the study, shares basic descriptive statistics, and concludes by discussing various implications for the study of assessment cultures and for administrative practice in higher education and educational administration preparation programs.*

## **INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH GOALS**

Popularly theorized by noted assessment scholar, Trudy Banta (2002), a culture of assessment refers to the deeply embedded values and beliefs collectively held by members of an institution influencing assessment practices on their campus (Banta & Associates, 2002; Banta, Lund, Black, Oblander, 1996). A culture of assessment is the primary and often unexplored system undergirding assessment practice on a campus. It is the system of thought and action reinforcing what "good" conduct of assessment looks like on a campus. Extending the concept of a culture of assessment further, Maki's (2010) *Principles of an Inclusive Commitment* offer a structure of institutional partnerships, which, when operating efficiently, indicate a commitment to assessment of student learning. Maki (2010, p. 9) writes:

An inclusive commitment to assessment of student learning is established when it is (1) meaningfully anchored in the educational values of an institution—articulated in a principles-of-commitment statement; (2) intentionally designed to foster interrelated positions of inquiry about the efficacy of education practices among educators, students, and the institution itself as a learning organization; and (3) woven into roles and responsibilities across an institution from the chief executive officer through senior administrators, faculty leaders, faculty, staff, and students. (p. 3)

Drawing from Maki's work, a culture of assessment is defined (in this research endeavor) as the *overarching ethos that is both an artifact of the way in which assessment is done and simultaneously a factor influencing and augmenting assessment practice*.

Guided by this scholarship, the Survey explores six constructs: a) Shared Institutional Commitment, b) Clear Conceptual Framework for Assessment, c) A Cross Institutional Responsibility, d) Transparency of Findings, e) Connection to Change-Making Processes, and f) Recognition of Leadership or Involvement in Assessment. The research goals for this long-range study include the exploration of factors supporting or impeding institutional capacities to develop, maintain, or augment a culture of assessment on their campus. In support of this goal, this study offers a description of the responses to various practices and tactics used by assessment practitioners across the United States.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The *Survey of Assessment Culture* is a twenty-one item, electronic survey that collects forty-six data points divided into five parts: a) Identifying respondent's role/ Chief Assessment Officer, b) Purpose for assessment, c) Assessment Culture Scales, d) Support, resistance, or indifference rankings, and e) Consent to follow up studies/contact. In 2011, the Survey was administered to a representative sample of U.S. institutional research and assessment directors to determine the usefulness and consistency of questions and generate information for instrument improvement. In general, the instrument was well developed and required minimal revision. For example, internal consistency measures (Cronbach's alpha) for the Assessment Culture Scale items were 0.922, well above the generally-accepted 0.7 threshold.

### Sampling Method and Administration

Prior research has relied on samples of convenience to explore assessment practices. This study relies on publically-available resources to construct a stratified, representative sample of the U.S. directors of institutional research and assessment. A listing of *undergraduate, degree-granting*, regionally-accredited institutions was downloaded from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education website<sup>1</sup> and was stratified according to institutional full-time enrollment size, accreditation region, and Carnegie Basic Classification. This stratified listing of institutions was placed in a sampling matrix according to the type of degrees awarded (primarily associates vs. primarily bachelors), regional accreditation region, and size of full-time enrollment [Small (under 1,999), Medium (2001 to 4,999), Large (5000 to 9,999), and Very Large (Over 10,000)]. This resulted in a listing of 2,617 institutions; a

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<sup>1</sup> <http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/>



population similar to those surveyed by Kuh and Ikenberry (2009). Institutions were sampled at the most refined level of stratification and were over-sampled by a factor of three to ensure the best possible dispersion of a representative number of respondents at and across each level of stratification.

A total of 1,026 institutions were randomly sampled for invitation to participate in the Survey. The Higher Education Directory<sup>©®</sup> was utilized to identify the contact information for directors of institutional research and assessment at sampled institutions. Although the Higher Education Directory is a voluntary listing of contact information, 77.2% or 792 email addresses for contacts were obtained using this resource. The remaining institutional contacts underwent status checks using institutional websites and public search engines<sup>2</sup> to identify Chief Assessment Officers; the individuals for whom assessment is their primary responsibility. One hundred and seventy Chief Assessment Officers were identified using this method. The remaining 64 participants did not have an entry in the Higher Education Directory and web searches did not yield contact information. In these cases, the Provost of the institution was invited to participate in the survey and his/her contact information was gathered using the Higher Education Directory. [Once the 1,026 survey respondents were invited to participate in the Survey, a total of 109 emails were returned as either inaccurate or no longer active. It can be assumed a total of 917 participants were adequately invited to participate in the survey]. A complete overview of methodology and limitations can be found at <http://www.shsu.edu/assessmentculture/>

## RESULTS

Of the 917 invited participants, 316 responded to the survey and completed at least three-quarters of the survey, providing a 34.5% response rate. This response suggests the potential for *cautious generalizing to the national level* and could be strengthened with greater response in future administrations. Instances of overrepresentation within the strata were not noted.

### Institutional Role

The *Survey of Assessment Culture*'s first section collects data on the roles respondents hold on their campus. Participants were asked to respond to the question: "Does your institution employ a Chief Academic Officer?" The survey defines the role of a Chief Assessment Officer as "an individual for whom assessment is their sole responsibility on their campus" and asks participants to indicate if they, another individual, many individuals, or no individuals on their campus fulfill this role. Nearly a third of respondents (31.0% or 98 participants) indicated they were the Chief Assessment Officer for their campus while over half (54.3% or 172 participants) indicated their campus delivers assessment through many practitioners. Participants could describe their role on campus as a Chief Assessment Officer (31.0% or 98 participants), identify another colleague as the Chief Assessment Officer (10.1% or 32 participants), indicate their campus employs many individuals to lead assessment (54.3% or 172 participants), indicate no one at their institution holds that role (4.4% or 14 participants), or that they were unsure if anyone held such a position (0.6% or 2 participants).

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<sup>2</sup> Search terms: assessment; institutional research, evaluation, institutional effectiveness.

## **Institutional Resources**

Maki (2010) suggests one of the most important roles an institution can have in place is to formally task an individual or individuals with the responsibility of meeting with faculty when questions about assessment arise. To this end, the Survey asks participants if they are the person formally tasked with meeting with faculty to support this need. Two hundred and thirteen participants (67.4%) indicated they were the primary person with whom faculty should meet to seek assistance in assessment activities. In contrast, 76 participants (24.1%) indicated they were not the primary person tasked with this responsibility, 20 participants (6.3%) indicated no one held this responsibility on their campus, and 7 participants (2.2%) indicated they were not sure if anyone on their campus held this responsibility.

## **Purpose of Assessment**

Assessment can be done for a variety of reasons and the intent with which it is done gives assessment practice a perspective driving its practice in both apparent and hidden ways. To explore this phenomenon, the Survey asks participants to complete a sentence describing the reason assessment is done on their campus: [ “\_\_\_\_\_ is the primary reason assessment is done on our campus.” ]. Respondents had to complete the sentence using only one of the following randomly-ordered selections derived from Maki’s (2010) purposes for assessment: Access to financial resources, Accountability, Accreditation, Compliance with governmental mandates, Improving student learning, or Tradition. Subsequent open-ended questions asked participants to share additional reasons assessment is done on their campus and expound upon their reasoning for answering this question as they did. Table 1 offers frequency and percentage statistics for this question.

Table 1  
*Reason Assessment Done*

Reason	Count	Percentage
Improving student learning	151	49.0
Accreditation	125	40.6
Accountability	26	8.4
Compliance with government mandates	3	1.2
Tradition	2	0.8
Total	307	100

## **Support, Resistance, and Indifference to Assessment**

Respondents were asked to rank a variety of campus leaders regarding their supportiveness, resistance, or indifference/unawareness to assessment. A seven-point Likert-type scale was developed ranging from “Highly Resistant” (1) to “Highly Supportive” (7). Respondents could also indicate if they perceived specific campus leaders to be “Indifferent/Unaware of assessment” (0) and if they held the position being ranked. In the case of the latter, participants’ responses on their own performance are not included in these results. Indifferent or unaware rankings were assigned a value of 0, reflecting the qualitative nature of this label.

Table 2 depicts data as percentages of respondents that are the most supportive, resistant, or indifferent to assessment. Responses are collapsed down across rankings to “Supportive” “Resistant,” and “Unaware/Indifferent” categories. The campus president, provost, and student affairs/services staff command the greatest percentage of “Supportive” rankings (91.6%, 90.6%, and 88.5%, respectively). Faculty and faculty/academic senate leadership are the only groups to obtain relatively large percentages of rankings in the “Resistant” categories (22.9% and 17.4%, respectively), though even these percentages can be considered minimal.

Table 2

*Aggregated Support, Resistance, or Indifference/Unawareness to Assessment*

Group	% Supportive	% Resistant	% Indiff./Unaware
Board of Trustee Members	69.5	0.0	30.5
President	91.6	2.2	6.2
Provost	90.6	4.2	5.2
Faculty	75.8	22.9	1.3
Student Affairs Administrators	88.5	5.8	5.8
Faculty Senate Leaders	78.9	17.0	4.0
Fundraising/Devel. Officers	53.4	3.7	42.9
Alumni groups	29.0	1.4	69.5
Academic Advisors	73.2	7.3	19.6
Student Government Leaders	49.3	1.4	49.3
Overall	70.1	6.7	23.1

## DISCUSSION

These descriptive findings hold promise for future explorations and dialogue. First, the fact that over half of participants indicated their institution delivered assessment through many leaders suggests the need to take into account this multi-leader form of administration. America’s approach to assessment is largely by a *distributed model*. While this offers opportunities to explore connections to dialogical and participatory theories it also challenges traditional leadership theories. Seemingly, only a third of participants possess the formal authority of being a Chief Assessment Officer. Half of the respondents possess a different, less formal form of authority; one requiring unique skills of negotiation, finesse, and the ability to balance shared responsibilities and academic governance. This is not to say Chief Assessment Officers or do not require similar skills. Indeed, their role also requires them to negotiate more frequently than they mandate. Nonetheless, this finding suggests the need to further explore theories of leadership, organization, and administration that take into account the shared nature of assessment and the unique contexts of being one leader among many.

Data regarding the reason assessment is done on a campus also offer opportunities for further dialogue. Almost half (49.0%) of the respondents indicate improvement of student learning is the reason assessment is done. For some, this could be a point worth celebrating as it supports the general logic and noble intentions outlined in assessment scholarship. For

others, the fact that less than half of the respondents indicated improvement of student learning as the primary reason assessment is done may not be “enough.” For every respondent focusing on student learning, there is another whose attention is turned to “accountability” or “accreditation” (40.6% and 8.4%, respectively for a total of 48.9%) as the primary reason assessment is done.

Assessment leaders should strive to maintain appropriate focus on student learning while responding to the pragmatic, day-to-day pressures of assessment, accountability, and accreditation efforts. Wolff (2005) advocated the explanation of accreditation as “a bulwark for quality in an environment where institutions are buffeted by state priorities to increase institutional access, improve graduation rates, and operate with less financial support” (p. 78). Educational administrators must be prepared and capable of underscoring that accreditation exists to support student learning. In an increasingly complex relationship between institutions and governing bodies, faculty, and administrators, campus leadership must refine and reiterate messages about the importance of student learning in institutional operations and accreditation.

The findings pertaining to those constituents who are most supportive, resistant, or indifferent to assessment may aid campus leaders in support the advancement of assessment messages and practices. Empowering supportive campus leaders to engage indifferent or unaware campus leaders may prove beneficial. Partnerships between supportive and resistant or indifferent groups may also be useful in educating more campus leaders about the benefits and processes of assessment. Furthermore, traditional narratives espouse high levels of faculty resistance to assessment (Driscoll, de Noriega, & Ramaley, 2006) or illustrate the notion of academic gamesmanship (Astin & Antonio [sic], 2012) faculty employ to diminish assessment’s prominence or refute its purpose. Findings from the current study reveal a more positive belief in faculty than may be traditionally assumed. Although assessment administrators perceive faculty and academic senate leaders as more resistant than other groups, faculty and academic senate leaders could hardly be described as “highly resistant” to assessment based upon these data. Faculty members have daily contact with students and are vital collaborators in an effective culture of assessment focused on improving student learning. These data generally support the notion that faculty members are as supportive of assessment and educational administrators must work to deliver these positive findings throughout their campus constituencies. Doing so may resolve many traditional barriers to faculty participation and advocacy for assessment in higher education.

Lastly, these findings may be of importance to faculty in graduate level educational administration programs. Graduate students preparing entry into higher education administration must carry with them the ability to engage in respectful generative dialogue about meaningful aspects of teaching, learning, quality, and higher education administration (Fuller, 2012). Administrators can do much to gain legitimacy in the eyes of professors and staff if they can construct reasonable plans for improvement using sound empirical evidence, a skill often honed in graduate school. The data provide insights into the contexts for which graduate students must be prepared as future educational leaders.

## CONCLUSION

Scholars and researchers exploring the art and science of assessment may find these results useful in outlining plans for future research or crafting theories about assessment cultures and

practices. However, the true significance of these data may be in their relevance to the scholarship on assessment and the new questions they pose about assessment cultures. Readers may see any number of interesting findings in the data and further research using the *Survey of Assessment Culture* is necessary and has already begun. If these data offer insights or intriguing possibilities for future research, they have made a meaningful contribution to this complex line of emerging scholarship.

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# **Observations on Leadership, Problem Solving, and Preferred Futures of Universities**

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*A focus on enrollments, rankings, uncertain budgets, and branding efforts to operate universities could have serious implications for discussions of sustainable solutions to complex problems and the decision-making processes of leaders. The Authentic Leadership Model for framing ill-defined problems in higher education is posited to improve the process of ethical problem solving and the creation of sustainable solutions to complex problems faced by university leaders.*

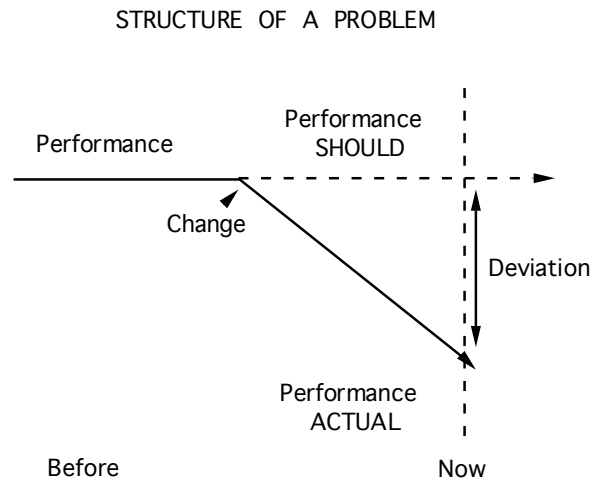
## **INTRODUCTION**

Use of a business model to frame thinking about running universities is so engrained in our culture that a widespread acceptance of the idea that a university is a business has occurred. The acceptance of this idea has reached the status of being a non-conscious, permanent part of our thinking about universities. The Authentic Leadership Model by Robert Terry (2001) offers leaders a way to frame solutions to difficult problems by articulating decisions through a lens of mutual goals and shared values of the academy.

## **DEFINING A PROBLEM**

People become cognizant of problems when a need motivates people to search for a solution to eliminate discrepancies (Arlin, 1989). Leaders lead people to a solution to the problem. Consequently, an unknown cause of a problem presents a tremendous opportunity for leadership. As shown in Figure 1, a problem is a deviation from SHOULD for which there is CAUSE, and the cause is UNKNOWN (Kepner & Tregoe, 1981, p. 37).

Figure 1. Definition of a Problem Illustrated (See Kepner & Tregoe, 1981)



Adapted from Kepner, C., & Tregoe, B. (1981). *The new rational manager*.  
Princeton, NJ: Kepner-Tregoe, Inc., p. 37.

A critical attribute of problem solving is that the solution to the problem is not readily apparent in the problem, so the problem solver must identify the nature of the problem and a process for arriving at an acceptable solution. The problem-solving process depends upon the problem solver's understanding of the problem and the goal. The solution to the problem represents the leadership goal.

General problems are ill-defined or well-defined. Ill-defined problems are domain- and context-dependent (Bransford, 1994), whereas well-defined problems usually involve skills and solutions suitable to most classroom content domains (e.g., statistics). Solving ill-defined problems may necessitate specific skills or require a different way to frame solutions to problems (Jonassen, 2000). Well-defined problems, such as most problems taught in classroom settings, may have limited transferability to solving ill-defined problems in the academy.

Examples of ill-defined problems found in the real world of universities include critical incidents such as bullying and prejudice (Puncochar, Choi, Khan, & Strom, 2003) and emergent dilemmas such as pollution (Jonassen, 1997). Information needed to solve ill-defined problems is not contained in the problem statement (Chi & Glaser, 1985). Ill-defined problems have unknown problem elements and an associated lack of confidence in the known elements (Wood, 1983), domain knowledge (Alexander, 2010), undefined goals and unstated constraints (Voss, 1988), and possess multiple solutions, solution paths, or no solution at all (Kitchner, 1983). Typically, no consensual agreement is available for any single solution to an ill-defined problem.

### AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP MODEL

The Authentic Leadership Model (Terry, 1974; Terry, 1993; Terry & Cleveland, 2001) provides a leadership framework for human action involved with achieving solutions to ill-defined problems. According to Terry (1993), leadership is a type of action that has the potential to convey enormous consequences. Dr. Terry posits the central organizing foundational principle of effective leadership is authenticity, which takes into consideration



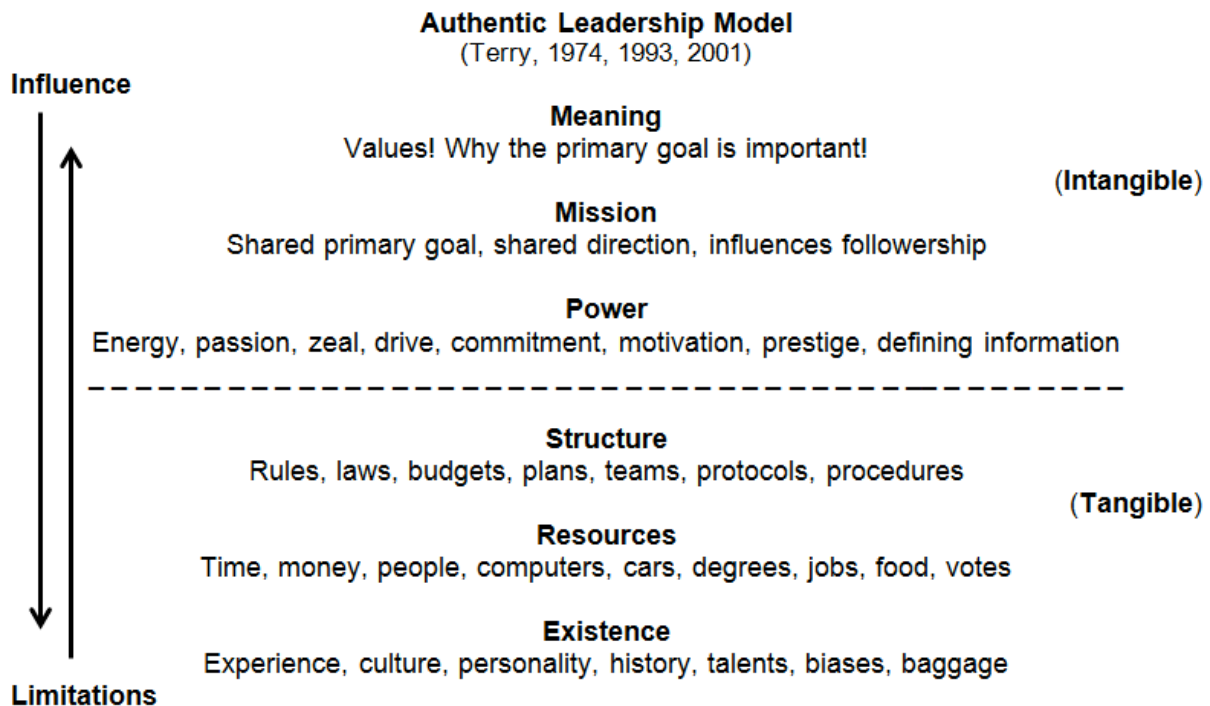
courage, vision, and ethics. His model offers a tool for selecting strategic actions necessary to achieve sustainable solutions to ill-defined problems in universities.

The Authentic Leadership Model has six hierarchical dimensions that provide a framework for leadership actions.

Meaning	Values, ethics, principles, why people maintain the mission
Mission	Primary goal, stated direction, purposes, influences followership
Power	Energy, commitment, influence, conflict, morale, defining information
Structure	Rules, laws, plans, policies, budgets, bureaucratic processes, schedules
Resources	Materials, time, food, information, water, land, votes, people, assets, supplies
Existence	Basis of knowledge, culture, history, limitations, possibilities, biases, capabilities

According to the model, leadership has influence from the top down and limitations from the bottom up. The significant concept of the model is that, wherever people frame an issue, the solution to the problem lies at the next level above or higher, and people typically and mistakenly look for solutions at the next level below or lower. When leaders attend to all six levels of the model, the result is a sense of fulfillment with the leadership role *and* follower satisfaction (Terry & Cleveland, 2001). According to the model, an effective leader would show competence at all six levels and would emphasize the top two levels for moving people toward a specific goal. Figure 2 depicts a schematic drawing of the model for framing ill-defined problems.

*Figure 2. Authentic Leadership Model Adapted for Hierarchical Problem Solving by the Author*



**Key.** Wherever people frame the issue, the solution to the problem lies at the next level above or higher, and people typically and mistakenly look for solutions at the next level below or lower.

As the first of two examples, consider a university lecture where students lead a walkout against a guest speaker invited to the class by the instructor. The Department Head, Grievance Officer, and instructor become involved and try to suggest solutions to the problem. Assume their first solutions typically and mistakenly are at the lower levels of the Authentic Leadership Model, and in the style of fundamental attribution errors (Ross, 1977) hold the instructor, guest speaker, or students accountable for the problem. Suggested solutions might include disciplinary action for the students, monitoring the instructor's teaching plans, hiring a different instructor, requiring permission for guest speakers, and obtaining help from academic counselors for the students.

According to the Authentic Leadership Model, leadership frames issues and management solves problems. The issue is at the level of Power. The leader should begin a discussion at the levels of Mission and Meaning before jumping to solutions. For example, "What values do persons involved in the situation share?" "What common goal does everyone have?" "What is lost without collaborating with shared values and goals?" The leader must act authentically and use the higher levels of the Authentic Leadership Model to build core competencies, affirm a shared identity of the problem, and create ownership before the leader proposes solutions.

As the second of two examples, consider using the Authentic Leadership Model as a framework for understanding branding of universities through lenses provided by the various levels of the model. A brand should describe a university's vision (Mission), reveal a promise to customers (students and parents) about a university's services (Structure) and assets (Resources), differentiate one university from another (Existence), and include established perceptions of the university (Existence). At the level of Structure, debates about branding include procedures for obtaining a competitive edge in the market, such as ranking colleges by acceptance rates or according to students' desirability to select an acceptance from one institution over another (Hoover, 2013). At the level of Resources, branding discussions include numbers of expected high school graduates, completed applications for admission, financial aid, tax dollars, donors, expenses, and tuition. Explication of various ideologies associated with branding is an essential starting point for solving the ill-defined problem of marketing a university. A leader must articulate the brand as a shared value (Meaning) and necessary direction (Mission) of the university before a leader can attract sufficient followership toward a single concept of branding. Leadership influences people's energies (Power) toward a shared direction (Mission), whereas the lack of leadership can result in a cacophonous environment filled with a multitude of divergent and perhaps conflicting parochial concerns.

Leaders would start a discussion with questions related to the top two categories of the Authentic Leadership Model, as depicted in Figure 3, and would continue to frame questions at each level of the model. Use of all six levels of the Authentic Leadership Model suggests a higher likelihood of realizing the attainment of a shared solution to ill-defined problems.

Figure 3. Prospective Questions for Hierarchical Problem Solving at the Six Levels of the Authentic Leadership Model (Terry, 1990, 1993, 2001)

**Meaning: Values, Ideals, Ethics**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Are values associated with the goal shared by a critical mass?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are people understanding why the primary goal is ideal?

**Mission: Moving People toward the Primary Goal**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Are people working collaboratively to accomplish the goal?

**Power: Action, Energy, Effort, Apathy, Motivation, Conflict**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Are people engaged enthusiastically and proactively in work toward the primary goal (or are people engaged in conflicting individual or group goals)?

**Structure: Procedures, Rules, Plans, Curricula, Methods, Protocols, Budgets**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Are rules and interactions fair and just?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are methods impartial to diverse perspectives?

**Resources: Personnel, Students, Alumni, Technologies, Collections, Time, Money**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Are personnel and resources accurate and equitably available to everyone?

**Existence: History, Experience, Talents, Biases**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Do I identify with *each* person and ask, “How would I feel in this situation?”
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is talent congruent with institutional ideals and values?

Numerous issues can create ineffective problem solving by leaders who face ill-defined problems (e.g., the leadership candidate pool, a relative lack of coherence between training of university leaders and the problems they face, and university culture). At the outset, one should not expect inexperienced leaders to advocate strongly for the maintenance of shared values, although some leaders emerge with a values-advocacy platform (e.g., a new university president who charges a university-wide committee to place diversity as a core value of the university). Because of limited leadership experience and training, most new university leaders would reflect a tendency to seek solutions to ill-defined problems at the lower three categories of the Authentic Leadership Model. Solutions at the lower three categories are tangible, ordinary, and typical of discussions (e.g., suggestions for resource allocation and structural changes). Over time, experienced leaders should reflect wisdom in their discussions of solutions by addressing the upper two levels of the model.

The leadership question university leaders should ask when faced with ill-defined problems is, “What is *really* going on here?” (Terry, 1994). The question helps leaders assess what *really* needs to happen when solving complex university problems and allows leaders to frame discussions of problems using multiple levels of the model, rather than relying only on customary structural and resource levels to frame solutions to problems.

The choice of models employed by leaders to frame ill-defined problems affects the quality and effectiveness of solutions. Any difference between models (e.g., a business model and the Authentic Leadership Model) is *not* with their use of evidence and evidence-based methodologies (Faust, 2000, pp. 478-479), but is rather a difference of focus when solving ill-

defined problems. For example, a typical business model emphasizes an economic focus with business plans and resource sheets to help solve ill-defined problems. The Authentic Leadership Model emphasizes mutual goals, shared values, and common ideals to influence followership to help solve ill-defined problems.

When leaders face ill-defined problems, uncertain knowledge, and uncertain followership, leaders must articulate mutual values and shared purposes before promoting solutions to ill-defined problems. Leaders who use the Authentic Leadership Model as a problem-solving framework would influence a discussion of complicated issues by drawing people's attention to collectively shared values and urging collaborative efforts to achieve mutually shared goals.

According to the Authentic Leadership Model, the university's mission is limited from the bottom up, so leaders must articulate a university's intangible values to channel the energies of the university community toward sustainable solutions to complex problems. A typical business model by its nature focuses on solutions at the lower levels of the model. These solutions are *not* sustainable without constant vigilance and resources. When the six levels of the Authentic Leadership Model work synergistically, universities are posited to be more likely to achieve sustainable solutions to ill-defined problems.

### **THEORETICAL IMPORTANCE**

The Authentic Leadership Model appears to show great promise as a leadership development tool to increase effective leadership behaviors in universities. Future research on the model could examine whether training in the Authentic Leadership Model would promote self-perceptions and behaviors of university leaders as authentic leaders with a clear focus on ideals and values, rather than a business focus on structure and resource topics. Such training might include practice discussing and suggesting solutions to university case studies and critical incidents. Leaders trained to use the Authentic Leadership Model should show a tendency to employ the upper two dimensions of the Authentic Leadership Model. Conversely, university leaders without leadership training in the Authentic Leadership Model should show a tendency to focus on the lower three categories of the model. The Authentic Leadership Model should provide university administrators and institutional researchers with an effective leadership tool to keep a focus on values and ideals when responding as effective leaders to ill-defined problems of universities.

### **CONCLUDING DISCUSSION**

The Authentic Leadership Model developed by Robert Terry's (1993) is posited to serve as a hierarchical problem-solving model to generate sustainable high quality solutions to ill-defined problems. When an individual identifies a solution at the lower levels of Existence, Resources, or Structure, a solution likely would reflect existing frameworks, measurable entities, laws, or rules. When an individual uses the higher levels of Mission and Meaning on the model, a solution likely would become more collaborative, sustainable, and integrative with the university's values and ideals.

Operational use of all six levels of the Authentic Leadership Model situates hierarchical problem solving as a leadership tool. The three lower levels of the model (Existence, Resources, and Structure) are concerned with concrete experiences, materials, and

laws, and usually benefit individual or group concerns. The middle level (Power) is concerned with influence and energy to affect an outcome. The top two levels (Mission and Meaning) are concerned with shared values and ideals that tend to benefit the entirety rather than an individual or one group and tend to be sustainable (e.g., education of the citizenry and respect for human dignity and cultures). To achieve preferred futures envisioned by university leaders, efforts to solve ill-defined problems should begin with a focus on shared values and the shared primary goal of the academy.

**Note:** I would like to express my appreciation to Paul Duby, Don Faust, and Patricia Hogan of Northern Michigan University for their stimulating conversations on the problem solving nature of leadership.

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# **Criticality and the Pedagogical Reconstruction of Leadership Standards in an Educational Leadership Classroom**

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*The authors describe their attempt to develop students' critical perspectives on the content and assumptions in the 2008 Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) through a reflective essay assignment in a class titled Ethics, Equity, and Leadership in Education. The authors conducted textual analysis of 92 student essays (a total of 922 pages) submitted in 5 sections of a class from the summer of 2008 through the spring of 2009. The authors describe ways students analyze knowledge claims in the FPLS in relation to the standards' considerable silence around issues of ethics and equity, which were central to the class: a) Standards are sufficient and helpful; b) Standards are insufficient, but helpful; and c) Standards are insufficient and lack critical elements. The article concludes with a discussion of how university professors and other professional development leaders might consider working within and, when strategically appropriate, against notions of standards representing comprehensive legitimate knowledge through six specific pedagogical and professional stances.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

*To question the beliefs is to question their authority; to accept the beliefs is evidence of loyalty to the powers that be, a proof of good citizenship.*

Dewey, 1991, p. 149

Educational leadership students have been described as nice, genuine, and committed to good citizenship (English, 2008; Marshall & Theoharis, 2007). Students enroll in state approved standards-based educational leadership preparation programs in order to gain knowledge and meet administrative licensure requirements that signal their potential to be effective administrators. A prominent and extensive literature has blossomed around the purpose and development of principal licensure standards, particularly the ISLLC-based standards movement. Standards are often invoked as central elements of educational leadership program curricula and program improvement efforts (Anthes, 2004; Fry, O'Neill, & Bottoms,

2006). However, as Dewey implies, we may have an obligation to question the authority of standards that guide principal preparation programs. As Assistant Professors new to a particular state context, we encountered standards that for us were inappropriately silent on issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, politics, ethics, and social justice. We pondered how to question the authority of the state standards as comprehensive representation of legitimate knowledge in educational leadership in our pedagogy. We wanted help students become advocate leaders when such an orientation was not included in standards that would be central to our programs' upcoming state-level program approval process. We approached this dilemma through a social reconstructionist pedagogical strategy utilized in one of our masters-level classes, *Ethics, Equity, and Leadership in Education*.

The purpose of this article is twofold: First, we share our pedagogical approach to teaching the 2008 Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) and highlight myriad pedagogical tensions we encountered in our classrooms as we attempted to actively navigate stances of compliance with and resistance to knowledge represented in standards. This is illustrated in our description of a particular essay assignment and our analysis of 922 pages of 92 student essays produced in 5 sections of the Ethics, Equity, and Leadership class taught by the authors from the summer of 2008 through the spring of 2009. Second, we seek to publicly document our process of mutual adaptation to standards-based policy given the regulatory nature of program approval policy, and discuss strategic approaches to encourage equity-centered leadership preparation in a standards-based environment that was largely silent on issues of ethics, equity, and social justice.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PEDAGOGICAL ORIENTATIONS**

### **Teaching in Educational Leadership and Social Justice**

The centrality of attention to pedagogy to social justice leadership education has been noted by various authors (Brown, 2006; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Hafner, 2010). Various scholars have provided models for programs preparing leaders for social justice in professional development, and pre and in-service leadership preparation programs as a separate but equal component to effective leadership training (Anderson, 2009; Cambron-McCabe, 2010; Larson & Murthada, 2002), while infusing transformational learning experience into preparation programs has gained importance (Larson & Murthada, 2002; Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2009). However, transformational learning often requires a reevaluation of personal beliefs and values, and pre-existing paradigms (Cambron-McCabe, Mulkeen, & Wright, 1991). Inherently, such shifts tend to be accompanied with tension and resistance (Capper & Young, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Young, Mountford, & Skrla, 2006).

A considerable part of the literature emphasizes the importance of awareness and understanding of the potential harmful effects of the inequalities as a fundamental component towards creating socially just environments (Brooks & Miles, 2008; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Hafner, 2006; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Lopez, Magdaleno, & Reis, 2006; Theoharis, 2007) with specific recommendations provided to address aspects of curriculum, instruction, and assessment of educational leadership programs oriented toward social justice. Young and Laible (2000) suggest three approaches educators could use to address racial injustice: a) the personal approach, b) the institutional approach and c) the multiple fronts approach. Brown



(2004) advocates a radical change of content, delivery, and assessment. She outlines eight strategies that comprise her transformative framework and pedagogy (Brown, 2004) that include: cultural autobiography, life histories, prejudice reduction workshops, reflective analysis journals, cross cultural interviews, educational plunges, diversity panels, and activist action plans. Hafner (2010) describes two specific pedagogical tools to create a socially just environment in one's classroom: a) Social justice education practice, and b) social reconstructionist schooling. According to Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006), emotional safety for risk taking is a necessary condition that permeates all dimensions of leadership programs that includes critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills, that need to be reflected in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Anderson (2009) stresses the need to train beyond managerial skills privileged in many reform models and to develop critically minded professionals that advocate for the less powerful. Similarly, Shields (2010) posits that there are limitations of transactional and transformational leadership models when social justice issues are concerned- leaders should be prepared for conflict and advocacy in order to become transformative rather than transformational leaders.

### **Social Reconstructionist Schooling**

Sleeter and Grant (1987) developed social reconstructionist schooling as a philosophical lens to view educational practices. Such a view teaches about oppression in educational institutions, and challenges individuals within these institutions to take action. As a two-step process, social reconstructionist schooling includes deconstruction and reconstruction. The former step seeks "to expose the silences and gaps between that which is valued and disvalued" (Cherryholmes, 1988 as cited by Capper, 1993, p. 290). The latter step involves a process of re-purposing or reconceptualizing practices. Hafner (2010) described social reconstructionist schooling as a useful pedagogical approach in social justice leadership preparation programs. We use this framework as a pedagogical approach in conceptualizing the assignment students complete in the first course of the masters-level leadership preparation program. We ask students to deconstruct the concepts, values, and knowledge Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) attempt to impart and legitimize, and reconstruct the standards by filling in the gaps with knowledge that centers social justice and inequities. We do so in hopes that students who are aware of "silences" and "gaps" would take action to address inequitable practices in their schools and classrooms.

## **EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP STANDARDS AND PRINCIPAL LICENSURE PROCESSES**

### **Development and Support for Leadership Standards**

Standards for students, teachers, and more recently educational leaders are common features of the political lexicon and have, in some shape or form, permeated the educational platforms of presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama (Robelen, 2009). Debray-Pelot and McGuinn (2009) suggest that the standards-based accountability policy landscape is now characterized by the entry of so many actors that standards-based accountability policy is unlikely to be substantially altered in the near future, regardless of shifts in political party dominance. Standards-based approaches and attempts to provide a clear and cohesive set of expectations

have become even more prominent with the development and adoption of the common core standards across state contexts (Rothman, 2012). In Educational Leadership, state licensure standards play a significant role in legitimizing preparation content, values, and orientation. Recently, several states (including Florida in 2008) have become more prescriptive about program content and features, requiring schools of education to close their existing programs and reapply for accreditation using detailed guidelines and regulations aimed at connecting leadership to improved student achievement (Orr, 2010).

Educational leadership standards and program approval processes are normative, refer to research conducted in the field, and help clarify and reinforce specific roles university leadership preparation programs should have in preparing and developing educational leaders (Fry, et al., 2006; Murphy, 2005). Standards are created through a relatively public and democratic process that includes many more stakeholders beyond a select few university faculty to become involved in determining what future leaders should know and do (Murphy, 2005). Well-articulated standards provide a means for the state and accrediting agencies to regulate program quality through initial and ongoing program approval processes (Adams & Copeland, 2005). Engaging with standards, particularly at junctures of program approval, push faculty to deliberate over issues of quality and force programs to respond to the needs of k-12 schools and state departments of education (Anthes, 2004).

### **Limitations and Critiques of Standards-Based Approaches**

Even advocates suggest that licensure processes are limited in purpose, scope, and power. For example, Adams and Copeland (2005) posit that standards, assessments, and program approval processes need to be more robust and designed not only as an initial gate keeping mechanism for individuals seeking initial administrative licensure, but as means of supporting individuals at various points in their careers. Even if the intent of standards is to provide a floor upon which to further develop, they can become interpreted, in practice as the ceiling. As Danzig and colleagues note: “standards, by their very nature, are typically basic or minimal standards, [yet] once adopted they tend to become ‘The Standards’ that imply the highest standard” (Danzig, Black, Donofrio, Fernandez, & Martin, 2012, p. 58).

Adams and Copeland (2007) note the minimalist approach of state licensing and accreditation processes, when the profession is better characterized as one of lifelong learning and support. In a similar vein, Anderson (2002) argues that standards are written and assessed in ways that tend to encourage sound bite and check-list thinking rather than deep reflection and the development of judgment. Scholars note that leadership standards tend to favor managerial and instructional leadership functions rather than reflect a more complex conceptualization of the principal’s work, which includes artistry and craft knowledge (Bellamy, Fulmer, Murphy, & Muth, 2007). Furthermore, others highlight the historically loose relationship between licensure standards and educational leadership preparation program quality (English, 2006; Harrington & Wills, 2005; McCarthy, 1999). With the push towards measuring outcomes also affecting higher education institutions, the evolving and tricky measurement issues involved in attempting to establish links between program characteristics, leadership behavior, and ultimately student outcomes continue to be areas of study and concern (McNeil, 2009; Orr, 2007; Orr & Pounder, 2006). Even with its limitations, many argue that centering on leadership development that is attentive to producing positive measured student outcomes is a fundamental, if not exclusive, outcome for leadership

development. This emphasis is often politically much more sustainable than social justice approaches, which may conflict with powerful constituents' value orientations or perceived self-interest (Alexander, 2012; Jean Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009; Murphy, 2002).

Market-oriented critics reflect discomfort against the use of standards to support and legitimize the “monopoly” of university-based principal preparation programs, and argue for broadening access to leadership development experiences and for potential leaders from outside the certified teacher ranks and the university-based programs, which they believe should not be the primary or exclusive venue for training educational leaders (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Rather, they argue that an executive leadership model that demands accountability, makes data-based decisions, cultivates leadership in others, monitors performance and provides support for strong managerial leadership is not prevalent in university-based programs and should be supported through multiple institutional means (Elmore, 2006; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005; Young & Brewer, 2008). This approach has gained much credibility with various policymakers, including the state of Florida, although evidence suggests relatively few individuals are choosing this route (Harrington & Wills, 2005; Smith, 2008).

Scholars with critical orientations are concerned that the instrumental bias of leadership standards does not push educational leadership students to become advocates for marginalized kids. In effect, attentive adherence to standards content in program curricula may serve to crowd out robust engagement with issues of values, justice, marginalization, and ethics and to silence discourse around those arenas as not pertinent to the legitimate knowledge represented in standards (Bogotch, 2009; English, 2006; Rusch, 2004; Young & Brewer, 2008).

## **FLORIDA PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP STANDARDS AND OUR PEDAGOGICAL RESPONSE**

### **Introduction of New Leadership Standards and Program Review**

With the passage of Florida Rule 6A-5.081, the Florida Department of Education established a mandate to develop new Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) in April, 2005 and adopted them in 2008. These rules required a total of 132 competencies and skills, as well as state-level leadership modules developed by vendors to be incorporated into the curriculum of the 11 public and 6 private university-based educational leadership masters and principal certification programs and for each of those programs to reapply to gain state approval (Mountford, Maslin-Ostrowski, & Acker-Hocevar, 2009). The development of the new standards was a result of a collaborative effort of the Council for Educational Change with 160 Florida K-20 educators, officers and membership of the Florida Association of School Administrators (FASA), state department personnel, community leaders and university educational leadership professors. However, only a quarter of the faculty in Florida indicated that they had any opportunity to have input on the standards and only 9% had involvement in developing the Florida Educational Leadership Examination (FELE) (Mountford et al., 2009). The authorization of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards signaled the need for curriculum overhaul by university leadership preparation programs for program approval and preparation for the new high stakes FELE, which went into effect in January, 2009 and whose passage is now required in order to earn a masters degree in educational leadership.

Significantly, all these processes occurred over a period of six months and during a time period when public universities were struggling with significant budget cuts.

As often reported, redesign work is very labor intensive and forces faculty to cut back on other responsibilities (Reed & Llanes, 2010). Program redesign efforts involve multiple negotiations between the state requirements, faculty needs and interests (as is our case), school district needs and interests, as well as external agencies and foundations.. Surveying university faculty in Florida, Mountford and colleagues (2009) found that 38% of the educational leadership departments in the state spent over 40 hours in meetings cross referencing syllabi to the 91 skills and preparing documents for program approval in 2008. By November of 2012, the state of Florida adopted a new set of standards, which include 10 standards and 50 criteria (Florida Department of Education, 2012). The focus on this manuscript is with the previous standards, adopted in 2008.

### **Our Concerns as Professors**

The 2008 standards were adopted as we were developing a foundational masters level class titled *Ethics, Equity, and Leadership in Education* and a program centered on inquiry, collaboration, and equity. One initial concern related to the prescriptive tone of the standards. We felt it could subtly lead Florida leaders to believe that individually centered rule-bound compliance is the most desirous behavior of leaders. Whereas the 2008 FPLS aligned with national movements to center instructional leadership and data management, they were distinct from the educational leadership standards that have been the basis for standards adopted in 45 other states, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards (Sanders & Simpson, 2005). Clearly, both sets of standards emphasize knowledge and skills, however while ISLLC standards focus on “valued ends and outcomes” (Murphy, 2002), the 2008 FPLS emphasized specific knowledge and function, alignment of curriculum and assessment, and the ability to formatively read student achievement data. While the ISLLC standards define in generalized terms the behavior and tasks of effective leaders that would lead to success of all students in schools (Murphy, 2002), in our interpretation, the FPLS attempted to excessively narrow expected behaviors of principals through specific definitions and descriptions of actions.

Scholars have long underscored the importance of collaboration and capacity building in schools (Sergiovanni, 2007; Strike, 2007), which is reflected in the ISLLC standards and the 2012 Florida Standards. However, we argue that the language in the 2008 Florida standards was largely absent of relational and collective processes beyond legally prescribed collaboration. Rather, they more strongly reflected a belief in individualized leadership and emphasized technocratic (assessment in particular) managerial skills. We felt that the language of the 2008 Florida leadership standards provided an exemplar of what Brooks and Miles (2006) consider a return to scientific management in schools where issues of equity and social justice are almost non-existent. At the time, we did not feel that the standards made the program stronger, rather that attending to them might crowd out a significant amount of what is important and part of broader national conversations around equity and excellence.

A final and significant concern dealt with the complete lack of attention to issues of equity, marginalization and social justice in the 2008 FPLS when students and district partners sought to operationalize the standards as the primary expression of important and legitimate knowledge in leadership preparation. In that context, our challenge was to respond to the

demands to incorporate knowledge of the standards and yet to keep the course content and assignments consistent with our social reconstructionist orientation and the department's social justice emphasis.

### **Our Negotiated Stance: Students Critically Examine the Content of the Standards**

McClellan and Dominguez (2006) posit that philosophical divides exist between pedagogical stances that emphasize critique and engagement with issues of social justice versus those stances that seek to prioritize functional skills that are useful in their immediate applicability to workforce demands. While arguing for a pedagogical approach which is critical and social reconstructionist that engages large issues of equity and schooling, Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl (2002) also reminded us that the kind of work educational leaders are asked to do “tends to bias [them] toward solution-oriented learning” and therefore “nuggets of knowledge that can be immediately applied are preferred over solutions requiring reflection and long-term study” (p. 290). However, as we sought to incorporate a critical perspective into our teaching, we also did not want to take a naïve or disconnected stance. When McClellan and Dominguez (2006) considered democratic institutions and teaching social justice in educational leadership programs, they urged the professoriate to “recognize the complexity of educational institutions and account for all voices from students to policymakers, inclusive of those who think alike and of those who think differently...schools’ relationship with social reform is far more sensitive than doing what is deemed as ‘right’” (McClellan & Dominguez, 2006, p. 226). Additionally, Bogotch (2009) cautions that as activists in the academy, “our theories must push intellectual boundaries, but unless we provide educators with concrete strategies and skills to confront structures, cultures, and hierarchies, we see the predictable failures of reform” (p. 17).

With these concerns and tensions in mind, we considered what to do with an introductory foundational class in the program, *Ethics, Equity, and Leadership*. Similar to approaches in other leadership for social justice preparation programs (Hafner, 2010) and social reconstructionist pedagogical approaches, the *Ethics, Equity, and Leadership* class emphasizes critical reflection, problem based learning, and includes critical theories (social reconstructionist schooling, ethic of critique) and leadership that emphasizes ethics, diversity, and social justice. As professors of the course, we attempt to challenge students to move away from linear and managerial perspectives toward much more reflexive stances that engage issues of race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and privilege. The class is designed with the understanding that contemporary educational leaders are moral stewards and public intellectuals who reflect expansive and inclusive notions of who they are responsible to and what they are accountable for. In the class contemporary educational leadership practice is conceptualized as concerned with a) issues of equity, fairness, and justice; b) the development of people and the cultivation of leadership across school communities; c) the generation of respect across difference, d) the maximization of every student's opportunity to learn and e) the improvement of educational outcomes. Student assignments include writing an educational leadership platform, conducting an equity audit and writing a critical essay on Florida leadership standards.

It is the critical essay on the standards that represented an effort to incorporate the standards into our coursework and program in a social reconstructionist fashion. First, the students needed to review all of the standards carefully. They were then asked to critically

reflect on the content of the standards in relation to the content and orientation of the course and department. Specifically, they were asked to write about the ways in which issues of equity and social justice were reflected (or not) in the standards. In addition, they were asked to incorporate in their analysis how the four ethical frameworks used in a central text-ethics of justice, critique, care, and profession (Shapiro & Stepkovich, 2005) were represented in the 2008 Florida Standards, and to offer their critique and suggestions for use of the standards in their future practice.

## METHODS

All the students enrolled in the class submitted their papers as part of the class requirements. Approximately 85% of the students were white, and 70% were female. We used a classroom as research site clause in the syllabus as a way to acquire permission to use students' papers as data for our research. Document data collection spanned over 12 months (three semesters from summer 2008 through spring 2009) and included essays from five sections of the course. The full sample of 92 students' essays that range in length from 6 to 18 pages, with the majority of the students writing around 8-10 pages makes up the data collected for this study.

We conducted a textual analysis of students' work. As a team of two professors and a doctoral student, we collected and analyzed 922 pages of text using constant comparative thematic analysis protocols (Miles & Huberman, 2004; Walcott, 2004). Constant comparison method followed four distinct stages; comparing incidents applicable to each category, identifying the properties used for grouping, grouping the various categories, and writing a statement describing common threads related to the categories (Miles & Huberman, 2004). A graduate student performed the first stage analysis in order to limit professor bias toward selecting certain students or themes over others. We collectively identified categories used for grouping. The professors performed the secondary analysis, underlining significant statements, identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns and clusters of statements in the data (Patton, 1990). We constructed the categories that are represented in the findings. Statements within each category requiring further differentiation were divided up into separate "sub-categories" and then we discussed implications from the subcategories by writing statements describing the common threads (Miles & Huberman, 2004).

## FINDINGS

Our findings are organized across three major themes around standards, equity, and social justice: 1. Standards are sufficient and they should guide practice; 2. Standards are helpful and they should guide practice, but they are not sufficient; 3. Standards have critical shortcomings. Within each of the themes, we sought to answer the following-what do students' writings reveal about: a) the legitimacy and utility of the standards; b) the students analysis (if any) of assumptions embedded in the content of the standards; and c) students' understanding of concepts of social justice and diversity vis-à-vis the standards and d) students engagement with ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and profession, which were frameworks used in a primary text in the class, *Ethical leadership and decision making in education* (Shapiro & Stepkovich, 2005).

### ***Standards are ethically sufficient and they should guide practice***

About 10% of students fell into this category. Students' essays in this category tended to embrace a traditionalistic political culture in which one should trust the lawmakers and those who make the rules (Fowler, 2009). As one student reflected, "I trust that the state of Florida has a good understanding of what constitutes a good leader. Even though the standards are a form of bureaucracy, if followed, they will develop an effective leader." Others expressed beliefs that compliance is simply unquestionable: "...complying with the law is a vital component in the standards that leaders need to be fully knowledgeable and adhere to at all times."

Students' essays in this category generally contained arguments that the ethic of justice was well represented in the standards because of the FPLS' emphasis on legal requirements. These students valued the standards because they emphasized, through knowledge of laws and regulations, concepts of fairness and equality (but not equity) in relationship to student achievement, special education students, ELL students and the rights of students and teachers. Not only did the students explicitly demonstrate an assumptive belief that knowledge of and compliance with laws led to more ethical and equitable schools (just schools), their statements tended to imply faith that just schools and practices would be accomplished by acting in a manner consistent with legal and regulatory policies. For example, one student stated, "If all Florida leaders would lead by the standards, and use the ethic of justice, then we would not have the injustices that we have in schools," while another opined: "all Florida Principals should have a clear unequivocal proclamation that these standards must apply to all students, all families, and all members of the school community."

The ethic of justice was represented through students' general stance that might be characterized as bureaucratic and non-critical: standards provided a comprehensive set of guidelines and knowledge claims that had been vetted through state approval protocols and a legal system. Although these students used the term "equality," none of these students used the terms "social justice" or "equity" in their reflective essay as they clearly avoided engaging the terminology and concepts in the ethic of critique. Their interpretation of the ethic of justice tended to lead this group of students to argue that statements in the standards sufficiently infer equity in regards to fairness, diversity, cultural relationships, and education of students with disabilities. It is in this subset of student essays that the term "must" was most evident in terms of describing behaviors and knowledge that leaders "must" have. The ethic of care was infrequently invoked by this group of students. The ethic of the profession was represented primarily in this group of students' suggestion that the specificity of the standards was particularly helpful, and compliance and fidelity to the intent and language of the standards was appropriate because they were official and would lead to higher student performance.

### ***Standards are helpful and they should guide practice, but they are not sufficient***

The majority of students, 70%, fell under this category. These students tended to have an additive approach, that is, other supplementary content knowledge, including much of the course content, needed to be added to their repertoire to become a strong leader. They tended to see standards as the floor, while issues of social justice represented the ceiling. As such, the assumptions and orientations of the standards were never robustly questioned or critiqued

beyond illustrating limitations. Even if they are overly focused on technical and managerial concerns and leaders need more frameworks, the FPLS are to be followed and constitute legitimate knowledge. As an example, one student reflected:

based on the readings, the uses of the standards are legitimate, but they have their limitations. When implementing instructional leadership, managing the learning environment, technology, decision-making, community and stakeholder partnership, the standards can be a great resource and guide. On the other hand, in dealing with social issues, care, critique and equity, it is necessary to lean on the frameworks and conceptualizations presented in the readings.

Similar to the first group, an assumptive belief was that the standards represent the law, so therefore they needed to be followed with fidelity. This group of students perceived the emphasis on laws and regulatory policies, knowledge of performance accountability metrics and ability to use data as positives. Similar to the first group, the ethic of justice is represented through the process by which the standards were vetted.

Nevertheless, the students in this group were perhaps less naïve than the first group in that they recognized that standards would almost inevitably be lacking in terms of guiding the development of principal preparation curriculum and principal disposition and behavior, particularly in terms of ethical commitments to care and the cultivation of leadership, the profession, and notions of “good” communities. Ethic of critique and notions of social justice were not addressed in any particular depth by these students, although notions of diversity and equity were more commonly brought forth. Moreover, no students in this group addressed explicitly in writing the obvious absence of notions of social justice, equity, and diversity, which is what we found in the last set of student essays. Other ethical commitments did emerge as important in the students’ responses:

**Care.** The majority of the students personally identified with the ethic of care however they found this ethical framework to be largely absent in the standards. These students wrote about care in ways that were tied to their professional purpose and identity as teachers. “Finding care and compassion in the Florida standards can be even more difficult than finding critique. Again, administrators are called to identify accommodations, rights and strategies for students, but they do not ask the administrator to make a decision based on the students needs or desires,” expressed one student. Another lamented: “I feel that the Ethic of Care is not well addressed in the standards ... In caring for our children, equity and equality are highly valued.” This response reflects how many students in this group approached notions of equity and diversity primarily through more personally identifiable and well-developed conceptions of the caring teacher.

**Profession.** Discussion around the ethic of profession tended to be much more critical of the 2008 Florida Principal Leadership Standards, as students engaging this framework with any depth tended to highlight the narrowness and technicality of the language of the standards. “It is obvious that the Ethic of Profession is irrelevant when it comes to the Florida Leadership Standards due to the fact that it has been ascertained that the standards revolve around data and law.” Another noted the relationship between the rational and the good: “The standards seem to be what Sergiovanni (2007) would refer to as being technical, and educational (p. 7), and consequently lean heavily on leaders using technical rationality, ‘rationality based on what is effective and efficient,’ (p. 25) versus normative rationality;



‘rationality based on what we believe and what we consider to be good’ (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 25).” Another student offered a critique of the content and expansiveness of the standards: “What would the profession expect me to do? What does the community expect me to do? What should I do based on the best interest of the students who may be diverse in their composition and their needs?...the standards do not seem to reflect the ethics of the community and when it comes to, the best interests of the student, they are based on what is best from the eyes of the Florida legislature.”

**Cultivating leadership.** Students also noted that the standards do not address this important process goal, as instead they focus on performance outcomes. One student directly pointed out that “ ‘cultivating leadership capacity in others’ is not mentioned in the standards,” while another argued that “the standards do not address how an educational leader should design a school community to cultivate leadership in school staff by distributing leadership, generating critical dialogue about students and learning, and developing trust and meaningful relationships.” Another noted critically: “the standards do not do a commendable job on instructing leaders how to share leadership. The standards support communication with teachers and other groups, but they do not even hint at empowering these groups to grow in leadership qualities.” Here the student notes that communication spoken about in bureaucratic and legalistic fashion, rather than in a way that cultivates leadership or builds good communities, themes touched upon in the class.

**Building good communities.** Using Strike’s (2007) discussion of the purpose of leadership “to build good communities” and various articles and text on leadership for social justice, many students came to see the narrow and managerial foci of the standards. “The standards, do not answer the questions of how to live well together, how to engage in socially just educational institutions, or how to design school communities to encourage leadership in others,” reflected one student. Drawing from a critique of business to education models, another student struggled with how to ever conceptualize the standards as sufficient: “The standards provide the bare, business minimum—the “legal conceptions expressed in a body of law” (Strike, 2007, p. 47); not the values, or moral ideals that are needed to create good school communities.” With this group of student reflections, we again witnessed a critique of instrumental leadership. Nevertheless, the students did not particularly engage Strike’s (2007) compelling discussion around the dangers of goal displacement and gaming as unethical responses to accountability pressures that ultimately destroy efforts to collectively construct a “good” community.

### ***Standards have critical shortcomings***

Around 20% of the students’ reflective essays fell into this category. While discussion of ethics of justice and care were noted, this group tended to focus their arguments around the ethic of the profession as having a moral and communal dimension, and the ethic of critique, with particular attention to standards’ silence on issues of equity and marginalization and the implication for leadership work.

**Profession.** For the ethic of the profession, students in this group reflected that the emphasis on individual behaviors and knowledge was a shortcoming, when compared to knowledge of vision, and moral transformation they had been exposed to, particularly as a collective endeavor:

The level of attention to school site culture building and leadership development within the FPLS is concerning. Future administrators have learned the need and tremendous impact shared ownership has on a school culture. ... It is not the role of an administrator to say what needs to be done but to servant lead an environment that cares and practices what should be done.

Another student added: “those standards related to knowledge of vision support Strike’s (2007) theory that leaders must have visions for their schools (34-35); however, Strike goes on to include that those visions must respect the views of others—a key piece that might be overlooked if following the Standards as written.”

**Critique.** Many of the students’ essays surfaced the argument that the standards entirely miss the ethic of critique. As one student pointedly observed:

...much of the FPLS neglects the ethic of critique. The [standards] do not deal ‘with inconsistencies, formulates the hard questions, and debates challenges and issues’ (Shapiro & Gross, 2008). While it does ask candidates to identify groups and implement strategies to increase performance, it does not ask administrators to question if these issues are institutional or societal inequities.

They observed the absence of concern for issues such as class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. Another reflection included this statement: “The standards cannot compensate for ingrained prejudices deeply hidden within one’s own psyche. Only effective educational leadership instruction can help build those immeasurable qualities that create the constructs of ethical administration.” The very “soft” and non-controversial language in standards was seen as very limited in relationship to the course readings around larger institutional and societal dynamics: “the generic terms of respect and tolerance do not erase or eliminate the prejudices and pain that ignorance has nurtured... The FPLS do not specifically address the impact of these larger societal issues [race, gender, class, sexual orientation] as they pertain to their impact about schooling.”

This group of students pointed out the nonexistent support for concepts of equity and social justice, and the overemphasis on accountability, laws, and student achievement on standardized testing.

As I read the course questions I really started to gain a greater appreciation for the purpose of the master’s program I am enrolled in. If you are looking to the standards as a definitive source of answers to moral or ethical questions such as the purpose of education or meaning of leadership, you will find yourself empty. If you look to them for guidance toward social issues such as race, gender, and sexual orientation you will find them to be absent of any direction with the exception of statutory requirements.

Similarly, another student observed: “The standards also do little to address issues of inequity specifically connected to race. There is mention of discrimination and the socio-political influence on schools in terms of discrimination and access, however the standards do not call attention to the inequity that often occurs.” Others spoke to the lack of value explicit language around social justice and equity. One student argued that “much of the state

certification test pertains to the identification and intervention of disabled students and those in ESL programs, however little is said about race, gender, class, or sexual orientation”

A final set of reflections focused on the role-bound and technical/managerial emphasis of the standards that crowds out discussion of ethics and equity and argued that the explicit nature of standards leaves little room for decision-making that takes into consideration issues of equity and social justice is a significant shortcoming of the Florida leadership standards. One student’s quote captured the ethic of critique and the shortcomings of laws: “If the Jim Crow law supports segregation, that doesn’t mean that the principal has to support segregation because it is not fair and it is unjust. When the law shows evidence of injustice a leader has to turn to ethics to make fair decisions.”

## **DISCUSSION**

We are professors residing in a field often defined as a problem by government and business interests (Bogotch, 2009) as well as academics (Elmore, 2006; Levine, 2005). In addition, the knowledge base on leadership preparation may be characterized as embarking upon a journey to maturity with standards playing a significant role in program curricula and governance (Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009). In this context, as professors of educational leadership we understood reasons for the development of the 2008 FPLS and the rationale for state program approval processes. We had an obligation to our students to provide programmatic exposure to the 91 skills-based indicators of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards in a manner that provides students with certain skill sets and knowledge that was generated by a process that included various stakeholders. And, our students practically need to pass the state licensure examination, the FELE.

We also felt that knowledge of many of the skills embedded in the standards prepared students to work within the assumptive worlds of hierarchical and rule-governed school contexts informed by data-driven performance norms that were intended to have positive effects on student learning. Yet, when we as faculty came to believe that the standards largely ignore the robust research and discourse around ethics, equity, and values-centered leadership that has become much more prominent in the field of educational leadership (Fullan, 2003; Furman, 2003; Marshall & Oliva, 2010), the questions for us became not how should we comply, but how might we legitimately socially reconstitute aspects of the generally technicist orientation of standards in our own teaching?

### **Educational Leadership Students Discomfort with Critique and Embrace of Care**

Students tended to have a shallow understanding of ethics in general and ethic of critique in particular. Some even thought that asking whether a curricular program or approach “worked” demonstrated application of an ethic of critique. Given the early stage of the students’ journey and many students’ confessions that this is new material that was not covered in their undergraduate teacher education program, this is not a surprising finding. As students beginning in the program, many of the students were encountering new concepts and some students lacked vocabulary that helped to provide schema for understanding concepts. Very few students could explore the multiple meanings associated with critical thinking, being critical, and critical theory/ethic of critique. By contrast, they generally understood more varied definitions of care, which they commonly attributed as a necessary trait for teaching.

Most students had been exposed to a relatively narrow, but dominant policy approach to equity through the construct of closing the achievement gap, which emphasized the use of student achievement data and differentiated instruction. This approach aligned with the language of the FPLS. While the use of data and compliance with regulations are important and necessary, as critically informed scholars, we note that this emphasis is not neutral or innocent. The FPLS text is wrapped in powerful discourses and practices that tend to narrow conceptions of ethics and equity to issues of management of data and not inquiry. Without decentering and entering of difficult conversations, efficiency and compliance then came to be viewed as justice in many of the students' reflections, demonstrating little evidence of a deep examination of the assumptions of who stands to benefit if one loyally follows the standards. While we remain hopeful about the power of turning a critical eye back on the standards, our examination of student essays clearly demonstrates the limitations of learning in one course. Equity-oriented advocacy leadership is an ongoing process of critical reconstruction (Anderson, 2009; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Hafner, 2010). Understanding that leads to such a critical disposition is not gained through a course, but rather processes of selection, program exposure, robust internships, and socialization and ongoing professional development experiences in schools (Capper, 1993).

As indicated in the responses of the students, many aligned with an ethic of care and they generally characterized themselves as nice people who did not like conflict and politics, which the ethic of critique represented. Marshall and Theoharis (2007) point out that many teachers may not consider it "nice" to "reflect critically about how inequity and injustice occur" (p. 2). Congruent with Marshall and Theoharis (2007), we have come to the conclusion that more work on the knowledge of the self and the construction of whiteness needs to occur, before guiding students to understand the reasons behind the silence in the 2008 standards around issues of social justice in a state where half the students are students of color and low SES. It is our responsibility to guide students and ourselves make meaning of ethics, equity, and social justice in ways that help students see that "good intent" is not sufficient and to provide them with alternative ways of thinking as well as concrete applications that allow begin to take steps against practices that reproduce marginalizing ideologies and unjust outcomes.

### **Teaching with and against Standards: The Pedagogical Politics of Social Reconstruction**

Recognizing that the state had taken a bigger role in defining the content of our professional practice of teaching, we realized that we played a part in constituting the state's role in producing legitimate knowledge by teaching the content of the standards. As such, we are partially functioning as pedagogical agents of the state, constituting legitimate knowledge not just from competing and often less power-privileged claims from the discipline of educational leadership and subfield of leadership for social justice, but rather in our own teaching about the standards. This led us to consider multiple ways to think about working with and against the claims of comprehensive knowledge of important leadership practice being best represented in the content of standards. We offer six ways to conceptualize our teaching and professional work vis-à-vis technicist standards.

**Enacting Safe Spaces for Critique.** As professors, we believe in classrooms as democratic spaces where pedagogy of care (Noddings, 1987, as cited by Shields, 2004) centered on relationships is fundamental and influences all the facets of the curriculum. We

recognize the issues of power associated with our position as instructors however we attempt to create classes based on democratic fundamentals where dialogue is central to learning and sensemaking (Shields, 2004; Strike, 2005). We employ dialogue to engage our students in conversations about social justice issues that are purposefully omitted from Florida standards to overcome “pathologies of silence” (Shields, 2004) regarding ethnicity, SES, home language, disability, sexual orientation, and gender. We acknowledge and see difference and by doing so we seek to acknowledge everyone’s lived experiences.

We discovered that our students were more forthcoming and willing to openly express their views in discussions than in written form. Interestingly, writing could be a source of uneasiness around issues of ethics and equity, as one student commented that writing it down rather than saying it seems that much more permanent. Some students saw the opportunity to be liberating and energizing. What we have noticed is that some students, who are younger teachers, have commented that discussing these issues in schools might mean you will not get a job.

We had to work constantly to enable students to reach their own conclusions on standards without imposing our views of them. We continue to reflect critically on our own practice. After grading the papers and dialoguing with the students through feedback on their statements and views, we found ourselves in a somewhat defensive position as to why we were not more forthcoming on our views of the standards. Some students on the other hand clearly picked up our value orientation through the assignment wording and texts assigned which leads to apprehension that this group of students knew what the “right” answer might be in this particular course. Nevertheless, the classroom has been a site for powerful discussions, disagreements, tears, “coming out” in class, and admission of bias and deficit thinking. It is through socially just spaces, caring relationships and dialogue that we can model and hopefully assist our students to overcome pathologies of silence and start their own conversations in their schools and classrooms.

**Collective Professional Engagement and Evaluation.** In their survey of faculty in Florida, Mountford et al. (2009) reported that 47% of faculty felt that their professional identity had been challenged as a result of the standards adoption process and many expressed great frustration over having their course content, particularly in reference to ethics, equity, and social justice, potentially delegitimized by the competing content of the standards. As professors of educational leadership, we can and should collectively organize to directly impact the state’s construction of leadership standards and assessment of school leaders.

One important component of our work is finding new and multiple ways to define our own measurement metrics as an important way to evaluate our effectiveness (Orr & Pounder, 2006). We are obligated to question and evaluate ourselves as a profession, including reference to shifting dispositions toward ethical commitments and equity. We also need to recognize that even the educational leadership field is fractured as well, with many faculty members endorsing the standards and others finding them limiting or even harmful-even within the same department. This implies doing the work of finding points that most can agree upon even though university Educational Leadership Departments are busy places with many stressors, vulnerabilities, and urgencies fed by webs of policy mandates and growing high stakes assessment pressures. Given the time intensive nature of collective work, conversations about university reward structures would also need to be put in place in ways that allow for different ways of measuring faculty productivity and impact (Cambron-McCabe et al., 1991; Orr, 2010; Reed & Llanes, 2010).

**Continued Intellectual Work on Knowledge and Power.** We argue that the deep modernist epistemological orientation of the standards provide an opening to interrogate knowledge claims through post-structural lenses (St. Pierre, 2012). Johnson (2008) argues that post-structural approaches to social justice are concerned with how “the interests of the powerful exert a regulatory influence over the meaning and enactment of social justice in the collective (p. 310), and it is postmodernists’ responsibility ‘de-construct,’ ‘de-center’ and expose marginalization. Given post-structuralism’s subjectivist ontology, the standards come to be seen as subjectivist claims of knowledge that are always open to the work of de-centering assumptions of truth embedded in the knowledge claims that constitute the standards. The final group of reflections deconstructed critical shortcomings in the standards, and began to see the subtle circuitry of power that serves to maintain dynamics of marginalization of certain kinds of knowledge. Our teaching can also provide students with lenses to view standards and curricular initiatives as internalized within their own ways of being in schools and importantly, can guide students to view claims of leadership effectiveness and curricular packages marketed as “scientific” and “evidence based” as partial claims to be contested or expertly appropriated in local practice (Bogotch, 2009; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009).

In addition to teaching, we should continue to use our place in Universities to interrogate knowledge and power in our writing. Writing about power and the elevation of some forms of knowledge over others is an important contribution given that our positions as university professors allow us to engage in this work. It is also an important space to claim in an anti-intellectual environment that tends to delegitimize work that does not provide solutions that can be quickly applied or does not consent with dominant policy parameters (Lather, 2004). Our writing can focus on the invisible and subtle ways the unequal effects of power are hidden. We strategically may even desire to suspend solutions in order to better understand how power is articulated in the implementation of standards-based claims of knowledge (St. Pierre, 2012).

Our teaching and writing can provide students with a healthy skepticism that fights blind naiveté that would make the Florida Leadership Standards as the only comprehensive and coherent way to see the world of educational leadership practice. This stance allows us to envision spaces for socially reconstructing purpose and limitations of standards, and allows us to put standards knowledge “on the table” to enable teaching a politics of negotiation and to create spaces for values and attention to the local.

**Moving towards Teaching a Politics of Negotiation.** Even if standards are examined and deconstructed in ways that allow students to articulate their limitations or their reinscription of marginalizing practices through their regulatory expression of power, this is certainly not sufficient. McClellan and Dominguez (2006, p. 227) importantly remind us of the complexity of developing leadership preparation programs centered around social justice values that nevertheless need to develop students’ abilities to work *within and against* k-12 governance systems and school leadership norms in strategic ways by providing keys on how to work within traditional structures, maneuver the political terrain, critique bias, and learn to shape socially just organizations. Therefore, it is worthwhile to provide students with knowledge about how leaders learn to be savvy political leaders who strategically recognize short term conventions that are unlikely to change. A more explicit teaching of how leaders engage in different politics of negotiation is called for. Students need to be provided with tools from advocacy leadership portraits, social network analysis, critical policy

implementation, school law, and school finance that prepare them to negotiate complex organizational structures and shape them into more socially just organizations.

We are not so constrained if we understand policy implementation as slippery (Fowler, 2009), or even as a cultural phenomenon that provides many opportunities for appropriation and the active practice of power (Levinson et al., 2009). In studying experienced school leaders, Haynes and Licata (1995) found that one important component of their discretionary decision-making was creative insubordination, which was a “means of counteracting the dehumanizing effects of bureaucratic authority” (p. 21). Creative insubordination practice is rarely sharply disruptive, but rather demonstrates a sophisticated reading of policies such as standards and a commitment to local needs and values. Leaders who engage in creative insubordination are strategic, as they read and play with aspects of a policy that can be loosely coupled. They tend to have a stronger internal locus of control that grants them permission to bend some mandated programs, a tolerance for deviation, and view the acts of creative insubordination as tied to professionalism. In responding to mandates of standards, can we also seek value-defined and “professionally invoked” (Hayes & Licata, 1995, p. 33) stances that are justifiable on the professional and ethical grounds articulated in the broad literature on leadership for social justice.

**Centering Values.** As Begley (1996) reminded us over 15 years ago, values have a special function and influence on administrative action. An increased attention to social justice brings to the center a focus on the moral purposes of schooling (Jean-Marie, et al., 2009). Therefore, we would argue for explicit discussions of values that guide leadership actions in schools (Theoharis, 2009; Strike, 2007), as well as curriculum and teaching (Schiro, 2012) and policy development and implementation (Alexander, 2012). This effort provides students opportunity and theoretical frameworks to reflect on practice. This includes insight into what students find exceedingly important, why we, as professors choose a social reconstructionist approach to teaching the class. It also spurs discussions of ethics and equity and large and enduring issues in education that go beyond knowledge that is represented in standards. The centering of values in our teaching allows us to help students forecast what they are willing to stand for in their politics of negotiation, including what stance informs the future leaders’ negotiation of the politics of the local vis-à-vis the state.

**Centering Place.** Whereas our students may not know state politics, as in Hayes and Licata’s (1995) creatively insubordinate leaders, they can come to know rather intimately the local. Their critical responsibility is to create more expanded notions of the school community than are represented in the standards, to build meaningful connections with others, and to start from the local and place-based pedagogies as a political standpoint from where to incorporate leadership standards. Students need to have the cultural and political perspectives to “negotiate the borders and ideological dissonance between [socioecological justice and a critical pedagogy of place] and the more instrumental purposes of externally mandated standards and accountability mechanisms” (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004, p. 69).

In their work in Alabama with faculty committed to social justice, Reed and Llanes (2010) argued that social justice oriented faculty were very concerned with a prescriptive and deficit-driven approach laden in leadership standards and program approval processes. In reflection, they felt that “faculty and partners should interrogate these competing demands while remaining open to fresh points of view to determine which approaches are contextually appropriate for their own programs” (p. 393). As a starting point, they viewed standards as a minimum baseline that were addressed in the program that also encompassed other

approaches that responded to local pressures in ways that were true to the vision they had for their program.

## CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVES

The passage of the 2008 Florida Principal Leadership Standards and the requirement to resubmit educational leadership programs that demonstrated how 132 competencies and web-based modules had been woven into the curriculum for approval within 6 months to the state of Florida created much stress, discord, and some sense of vulnerability into leadership programs in Florida. Many of the requirements were seen as prescriptive by faculty throughout the state (Mountford et al., 2009), and we as instructors, viewed them as silent on issues of ethics, equity, and social justice-central themes in the course we were to teach and the mission of the department.

We believe that emerging school leaders should be taught to be accountable to all students and communities, and in questioning our own pedagogical stances as professors, we recognized and taught many of the skills and dispositions represented by the standards, and sought to appropriate and contest the regimes of truth the 2008 FPLS presented to us. We sought to prepare “administrators [who] must open organizations to educational ideologies that are inclusive and diverse, ones that uphold the status quo and those that call it into question. The programs that educate these leaders must address the complexities of working within while changing throughout” (McClelland & Dominguez, 2006, p. 227).

Our analysis of student reflections suggests that our efforts need to be continued and extended. Our texts and course content expanded the notion of knowledge of practice and value-centered leadership that might lead them to work beyond and against some of what was represented in the standards. We attempted to use the unique positions we have in Universities to create safe spaced that helped students to practice critical inquiry, understand how knowledge is socially constructed, and recognize the hidden curriculum, all central components of preparing leaders for social justice orientations. Future work needs to include more extensive collaborations with our colleagues across local districts, as well as the state in order to find ways to continually engage in discussions about the assumptions and limitations of standards. Our analysis of student texts, while showing some promise, clearly showed us there was more to do. We continue to strive engage in the intellectual work of looking at knowledge and power in its many forms, including in the construction and potential [re]construction of leadership standards in our localized practices of teaching and writing.

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# **Still Waiting for “Superprincipal”: Examining U.S. Policymaker Expectations for School Principals, 2001-2011**

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*This study seeks to understand US policymaker expectations regarding principals during a decade of increased school accountability. We used historical methodology to map connections and locate themes among principal-centered reform documents and policies from the past ten years. We found that policymakers framed the principal as someone who: (1) serves as the focal point of school improvement initiatives, (2) delegates leadership to others, and (3) accepts ultimate individual responsibility for school results. We contend that, in the end, these three resonant policy themes from the decade intensified rather than softened the notion of school leader as superprincipal. The study concludes by considering implications.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

If America’s schools are going to deal affirmatively with the problems of candidate supply and attract strong, competent leaders into the ranks of school administration, we must deflate the pervasive myth of principal as everything to everyone.

*Michael Copland (2001) “The Myth of the Superprincipal” (p. 532).*

Our principals today, I think, are absolutely CEOs. They have to manage people. They have to be first and foremost instructional leaders. They have to manage multi-million dollar budgets. They have to manage facilities. They have to work with the community. The demands and the stresses on principals have never been greater...

*US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, quoted in The Wallace Foundation (2010) “Education Leadership: An Agenda for School Improvement” (p. 22).*

This study is grounded in the notion that studying past educational policy debates, implementation approaches, and reform activities can help us understand the complexities of current change efforts in K-12 education, as well as the potential for future progress (Cuban, 2010; Hess, 2010; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Specifically, we sought to understand United States (US) policymaker expectations regarding principals over the past decade, as test-score-derived accountability became systemic and pervasive. Previous historical accounts have centered on

the principalship, including Kafka (2009), who provided a concise longitudinal overview that showcased the fact that principals played an important role in schools long before the decade of 2000-2010. Rousmaniere (2007) called on historians to produce more relevant studies of the position. Broad historical overviews such as Brown (2005) and Beck and Murphy (1993) provided insight into how public beliefs regarding the importance of school principals have remained constant even as role expectations have changed. In terms of the origin of the term “superprincipal,” early appearances in the late 1970’s (Schroeder, 1977; Weldy, 1979) preceded references in later decades. At times, authors invoked the term as a main article focus (e.g. Chamley, McFarlane, Young, & Caprio, 1992; Copland, 2001), while at other times authors referenced the concept within the context of a broader analysis of the principalship (e.g. Adams & Copland, 2007; Grubb & Flessa, 2006). Our study augments principal-centric historical scholarship as well as studies focused on the “superprincipal” by presenting how the last decade’s policy talk and action have manifested the idea that school leaders should (if not *must*) possess heroic qualities.

Our study also adds to existing research literature regarding the effects of accountability policy implementation on school leaders by detailing an emerged, accountability-infused policy context that has helped sustain the belief that only “superprincipals” need apply. Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita, and Zoltners (2002), for instance, utilized a cognitive perspective to examine how administrators and teacher leaders in three Chicago schools made sense of, constructed, and mediated high-stakes district accountability policy implementation in their schools in accordance with their differing personal inclinations and institutional contexts. Another study found that school leaders adapted organizational routines in an attempt to couple a school’s instructional practices with government regulations in the form of academic performance standards (Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011). McGhee and Nelson (2005), meanwhile, described a climate of fear that school evaluation pressures induced among principals. In New York City, principals became more likely to respond to external accountabilities such as test scores rather than follow an internal, moral compass to guide their school leadership (Shipps & White, 2009) and many felt “beleaguered” rather than “empowered” (Shipps, 2012).

In this study, we asked: In what ways did major principal-focused reform efforts over the last ten years reflect changing policymaker expectations regarding the position? To address this question, we engaged as historians and examined principal-centered reform policy documents from the past decade. Specifically, we sought connections among K-12 educational leadership *policy talk*, such as foundation-sponsored studies, and *policy action*, such as federal legislation or changes in state school leadership standards (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). To highlight these connections, we employed a qualitative technique to create textual maps that describe how a trending reform idea gained greater visibility, as indicated by references to the trending reform idea in documents produced in the policy arena (Peck & Reitzug, 2012).

Based on our historical review of the decade’s policy talk and action, we found three resonant themes:

1. Principals are fundamentally important to school improvement;
2. Principals must distribute leadership and delegate duties; and
3. Principals must accept ultimate responsibility for school academic performance.

These challenging, interrelated, and occasionally, conflicting expectations describe an updated version of the mythical “superprincipal” who is “everything to everyone” (Copland, 2001, p.532)—only even more so. In addition to framing the NCLB superprincipal as the focal point of school improvement initiatives, the past decade’s policymakers positioned this heroic school leader as someone who would delegate leadership to others while accepting final individual responsibility for school results. By way of metaphor, while the superprincipal of the past leaped tall buildings in a single bound, the post-*No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) superprincipal must compel an entire school community to leap that same tall building. Woe to her if she and her fellow leapers do not soar to sufficient heights, for there is a chunk of kryptonite (in the form of accountability consequences) waiting *for her* if *they* fail. In essence, the three resonant policy themes from the decade descended and interacted in ways that seemed to intensify rather than soften the notion of school leader as superprincipal.

Before examining our historical findings in greater detail, we first describe our methods and data sources.

## METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

Our study involved analysis of texts related to principal-focused reform that spanned 2001-2011. The collection of documents included scholarly literature, foundation-sponsored studies, policy documents, and popular press accounts. We retrieved the materials through Internet search engines like Google, academic data-bases such as *Lexis-Nexis Academic*, and library book collections. Using standard policy history methodology exemplified in works like Tyack and Cuban (1995) and Hess (2010), we examined the collected primary and secondary source documents to surface prevailing ideas and concepts. Similar to Beck and Murphy (1993), we aggregated results into definable thematic categories. Two of the three thematic categories used in this particular study are similar to those that surfaced in a previous study into the principal’s place in contemporary urban school politics (Peck & Mullen, 2010). From the results of this methodological process, we created a thematic history that emphasizes (or textually “maps” – see Peck and Reitzug [2012]) connections between what Tyack and Cuban (1995) described as “policy talk” (e.g., scholarly texts, foundation studies, and popular accounts) and “policy action” (e.g., changes in state standards, district policy, or federal legislation) (p. 40). Below, we share excerpts from our study’s thematic history and the resulting textual maps.

## FINDINGS

Three major themes appeared in principal-focused reforms over the past decade.

### *Principals are fundamentally important to school improvement*

The idea that principals play an important role in schools is well-established and long predates the decade of 2000-2010 (Kafka, 2009). A demonstrable change in policy makers’ and the public’s expectations of principals occurred, however, amidst the arrival of school accountability systems attendant to 2002’s federal “No Child Left Behind” legislation. Principals were now uniformly expected to *improve* student and school academic performance as measured by school report cards and other data-based metrics (West, Peck, & Reitzug, 2010). Accordingly, policy talk in the form of scholarly works and foundation studies

showcased the positive effects principals could have toward making student and school numerical academic performance data increase. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), for instance, surveyed thirty years of research to provide quantitative documentation of how school leaders who exhibited certain leadership characteristics could dramatically boost student achievement. For the purposes of their study, they used “leader” and “principal” interchangeably, accentuating the idea that a sole individual could have a profound effect on school performance. In a subsequent publication, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) elaborated on what they had identified as the 21 “responsibilities” that characterized highly effective school leaders.

Of particular note in regard to policy talk, the Wallace Foundation began funding K-12 leadership studies and made the published results downloadable at no cost from their website. For instance, a freely-available Wallace Foundation-sponsored study (i.e., Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004) provided a powerful key finding: “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 5). The authors explained that they defined leadership broadly in their study, and emphasized, “leadership is a highly complex concept” (p. 20). Nonetheless, they also noted that improving formal school leadership could make an outsized impact on academic performance.

Educational leadership, our review also makes clear, comes from many sources, not just the “usual suspects”—superintendents and principals. But the usual suspects are likely still the most influential. Efforts to improve their recruitment, training, evaluation and ongoing development should be considered highly cost-effective approaches to successful school improvement. (p. 70)

As the decade progressed, Leithwood and colleagues’ single finding regarding the importance of school leadership helped form a defining theme that principals mattered greatly for school improvement. Accordingly, this distilled kernel of policy talk drawn from the Leithwood and colleagues report informed policy action. For instance, an end note to the North Carolina State Board of Education (2006) “North Carolina Standards for School Executives [Principals]” stated, “The Wallace Foundation (2004) review of the research and literature on how leadership influences student learning found that leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning” (p. 11). The Leithwood and colleagues’ quote, “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” served as the opening, framing words in the “Standards for Educational Leadership in Rhode Island” (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2008), though the quote was attributed to The Wallace Foundation rather than Leithwood and his colleagues. Significantly, the ISSLC 2008 Educational Leadership Policy Standards, which influenced school leader standards in various states, explained, “research now shows that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that influence student outcomes, according to...research literature conducted in 2004 by Kenneth Leithwood, Karen Seashore Louis, Stephen Anderson, and Kyla Wahlstrom” (CCSSO, 2008).

Just as commonly, the statement was modified slightly and made without any attribution at all, as on this statement on the New York City Leadership Academy website:



“Research demonstrates that principals’ impact on student learning is second only to that of classroom teachers” (NYC Leadership Academy, n.d., p. 1). In another case from 2009, US Senator Al Franken (Democrat, Minnesota) sponsored proposed federal legislation called the *School Principal Recruitment and Training Act*. The text of the legislation submitted before Congress read in part, “Congress finds the following: (1) Research shows that school leadership quality is second only to teacher quality among school-related factors in its impact on student learning” (S. 2896--111th Congress, p. 2). Senator Franken repeated a similar claim in a blog post he made subsequent to the Bill’s submission, writing, “research shows that school leadership is second only to teacher quality in its impact on student learning” (Franken, 2010).

In essence, the idea that principals are fundamentally important to school improvement had taken firm hold in the policy arena in the decade of the 2000s.

### *Principals must distribute leadership and delegate duties*

At the same time that principals were positioned as fundamentally important to school improvement, the notion that effective school administrators must share leadership throughout their buildings gained significant traction in policy talk. In educational leadership scholarship, Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) helped define the concept of “distributed leadership.” In various works throughout the decade, Spillane refined the theory that principals who interacted effectively with teachers could create a shared, mutual perspective that resulted in a climate conducive to fostering school success (e.g. Spillane, 2005). Noting that the distributed leadership idea had existed in education for at least 70 years, Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) emphasized, “Neither superintendents nor principals can carry out the leadership role by themselves. Highly successful leaders develop and count on leadership contributions from many others in their organizations” (p. 27). In their list of 21 “principal leadership responsibilities,” Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) emphasized collaboration when they described characteristics such as “culture – fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation” and “input – involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies” (p. 4). The Wallace Foundation-sponsored study, Portin, Schneider, DeArmand, and Gundlach (2003), reported shared leadership as a key tendency of the school principals they had studied, though the authors emphasized that contextual factors affected how much leadership and duties the principals were in fact willing to share with others. Popular principal preparation texts such as Robbins and Alvy (2009) emphasized the need for principals to involve teachers and staff in leadership activities and find ways to delegate duties.

The sustained emphasis on distributed leadership in policy talk significantly influenced policy action, as evident in new standards various states developed for school leaders during the decade. For example, “Iowa’s School Leadership Standards and Criteria” included statements such as, “In collaboration with others, [the school leader] uses appropriate data to establish rigorous, concrete goals in the context of student achievement and instructional programs” and “Promotes collaboration with all stakeholders” (School Administrators of Iowa, 2007, p.1). In its standards for school principals, Ohio included, “Standard #4: Collaboration - Principals establish and sustain collaborative learning and shared leadership to promote student learning and achievement of all students” (Ohio Educator Standards Board, 2007, p. 54).

Of particular note, the “North Carolina Standards for School Executives [Principals]” that was approved by the State Board of Education in 2006 emphasized the distributed nature of leadership through statements such as, “Leadership is not about doing everything oneself but it is always about creating processes and systems that will cause everything to happen” (NC Board of Education, 2006, p. 2). Adding emphasis to such points while also underscoring the broad sweep of the entire standards document, the text went on to note,

Taken as a whole these standards, practices and competencies are overwhelming. One might ask, “How can one person possess all of these?” The answer is they can not [sic]. It is, therefore, imperative that a school executive understands the importance of building an executive team that has complementary skills. (NC Board of Education, 2006, p. 2)

Showcasing policy talk’s influence on policy action, the North Carolina standards cited the Leithwood et al. (2004), Portin et al. (2003), and Waters et al. (2003) studies as influential in its development, though in each case authorship was attributed to the sponsoring organization (McRel and Wallace Foundation) rather than the individuals who actually executed the studies.

In sum, connections among school-leader-focused policy talk and action during the decade helped ensure that the theme “principals must distribute leadership and delegate duties” resonated.

#### *Principals must accept ultimate responsibility for school academic performance*

Signed into law in 2002, NCLB ushered in an era of unprecedented accountability for school performance (Vinovskis, 2009). Correspondingly, principals were positioned as ultimately responsible for student outcomes. Early in the decade, policy-related works such as Tucker and Coddling (2002) suggested looking to the business and military sectors for insight into how to better prepare principals to lead in an environment of heightened accountability. Some theorists eventually sought to “empower” principals by devolving increasing authority to school leaders in return for making them more responsible for school performance (Ouchi, 2009; Shippis, 2012).

Policy talk regarding the importance of holding principals accountable for school performance translated into policy actions. For example, the era saw the development of various state and local accountability systems that mandated that principals were expected to *improve* student and school academic performance or face dire consequences for failing to do so (West, Peck, & Reitzug, 2010). Previous scholarship has also documented how, in urban areas, city and district leaders used rhetoric and symbolic actions to anoint principals as having central responsibility for school performance. Suggestive of this “no excuses” approach, one urban superintendent, while she was being filmed for a television documentary, removed a principal (who was off-camera and unseen) from their position for lack of progress toward school improvement (Peck & Mullen, 2010).

Extending the focus on principal responsibility soon after the decade ended, new state school principal standards developed just years earlier were revised to include a focus on holding school leaders accountable for student outcomes as measured by test scores. In Florida, the state’s receipt of federally-distributed Race to the Top grant funding in 2010

prompted revision of the state's school principal standards (Florida Department of Education, n.d.). The standards, as revised November 15, 2011, included as a first item, "Effective school leaders achieve results on the school's student learning goals" with the accompanying clarification, "Student learning results are evidenced by the student performance and growth on statewide assessments; district-determined assessments that are implemented by the district under Section 1008.22, F.S.; international assessments; and other indicators of student success adopted by the district and state" (Florida Department of Education, 2011).

Accumulating in policy talk and action over the decade of the 2000s, then, was the central idea that principals must accept ultimate responsibility for school academic performance.

## DISCUSSION

We have examined how, over the last decade, three interrelated, principal-centric policy themes in the US have helped perpetuate rather than curtail the idea that principals must be superheroes. Given this operational environment of superhuman expectations for principals and low tolerance for those who fail to fulfill these lofty ideals, we note two implications: possible negative personal effects from increased principal turnover and an apparent overreliance on principals as a silver bullet policy solution.

The subject of principal turnover has gained notice as accountability metrics have become the essential yardstick for measuring school success in the US. On the one hand, studies have characterized principal turnover as an intentional, salubrious after-effect of accountability consequences that force poor performers from their positions (Ladd, 1999), though a recent study demonstrated that such principals may actually just transition to other schools (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2012). On the other hand, negative effects of frequent school leadership changes, such as "teacher turnover increases with principal turnover," have also received attention (Fuller, Orr, & Young, 2008, p. 1). Whatever the immediate, substantive effects of principal turnover, the lasting question we developed from our findings is philosophical: where will we find future candidates who are fit and willing to serve in such a pressure-filled yet operationally-constrained position?

A second implication of our study is underscoring the extent to which the principalship has been increasingly promoted as a favored space from which to leverage school reform. Offering perspective from the White House, a report from a Wallace Foundation-led school leadership conference quoted US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stating, "if at the end of the day, our 95,000 schools each had a great principal, this thing [school improvement] would take care of itself" (Wallace Foundation, 2010, p. 21). Adding to this sense that principals can make a significant difference in school achievement, studies have emerged demonstrating that focusing on principals is also cost-effective as compared to reform efforts targeting other K-12 stakeholders such as teachers (Butrymowicz, 2011). Apparently, not only is principal reform a silver bullet, but it is also a cheap one. However, creating a context in which we expect 95,000 principals to be superheroes is destined to lead to disappointment. As Superman, Spiderman and Wonder Woman would tell you, only a select few can be imbued with extraordinary powers. Expecting every school leader to possess such super abilities is simply a debilitating fantasy.

## CONCLUSION

Copland warned in 2001 that we must, “deflate the pervasive myth of principal as everything to everyone” (p. 532). In the intervening decade, school-leader-focused policy talk and action centered on accentuating the important role principals play in school improvement and emphasizing that principals must distribute leadership. The idea that principals must accept ultimate responsibility for school performance emerged as a third policy theme. This triad of policymaker expectations interacted in ways that appeared to inflate rather than deflate the notion that only superheroes need apply for a school leadership position. The fallout from policies that increasingly expect superprincipals *to be even more* is diminished physical health, mental health difficulties, burnout, and frequently, early departure from the profession (West, Peck, & Reitzug, 2010).

If the past is any indication, policymakers’ tendency to imbue principals with superhero qualities will only continue. A recent opinion article in *Education Week*, for instance, declared, “until we have outstanding leadership in every school, we will not achieve teacher effectiveness—nor significantly improved student-learning outcomes—at scale” and “teachers are critical, but we cannot forget that it is the principal who is best positioned to ensure successive years of quality teaching for every child” (Briggs, Davis, & Cheney, 2012, p. 3). Ironically, then, even as the thrust for distributed leadership increased over the last decade, school-based leaders continue to be positioned to feel the central onus for enabling school greatness. Such escalated, taxing expectations underscore our responsibility as school leadership scholars to research and disseminate skills and tactics all principals can use to cope personally as they strive relentlessly to lead others.

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# The Role of Inquiry in Closing the Gap between University Experience and Assistant Principal Career Transition through Simulated Realistic Job Preview

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*Educational administration is the weakest program that schools of education offer...most (principal preparation programs) vary in quality from inadequate to appalling. Their shortcomings include irrelevant and incoherent curricula, low admission and graduation standards, inadequate clinical instruction...(and) degrees that are irrelevant to the jobs students eventually hold” (Levine, 2005, B16). Arthur Levine, the president of Teachers College at Columbia University, was roundly lambasted for these comments by the educational leadership community. In particular, his report was criticized for ignoring the many positive aspects of leadership preparation programs (Young, 2005). While Levine (2005) contends that Universities are not connected enough with local district practices, Flessa (2007) counters that non-university based school leadership programs lack the ability to meaningfully critique substandard local district policies that may be in place. Perhaps it is not surprising to find that schools of education have vehemently defended their usefulness – but is there value in Levine’s critique? Can educational administration programs improve their relevance to the jobs their graduates hold while continuing to provide them with a sound theoretical base?*

## PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION

This study was undertaken by two professors of educational leadership at a newly established public university in the Southwestern United States. Because the principal preparation program at this institution is nascent, the professors are particularly interested in exploring questions as to the relevance and usefulness of their program to the local educational community. In order to explore this question, the authors recently instituted the practice of conducting follow up interviews with program graduates who have been hired as school administrators. In its first iteration the purpose of these interviews was to ask two primary questions – what did the program do well to prepare graduates for their position as school administrators? And how could the program be improved? The result of the first series of interviews revealed a desire on the part of students to have a greater level of involvement with local school districts (Herrington & Kearney, 2012). Program enhancements were made



based on the feedback students provided. Perhaps the most interesting of these changes was the implementation of a pilot program in which core courses are now co-taught by a tenure-track faculty member and a veteran administrator from a local school district (Herrington & Kearney, 2012).

The purpose of this study (which was conducted exactly one year after the first investigation) is to report on the second set of interviews with program graduates who have been hired as school administrators. This study followed much the same protocol as the previous investigation, with the added benefit of being informed by lessons learned therein. As will be further discussed in the Findings section of this paper, many of the responses from program graduates centered on the desire to have a more realistic job preview. The authors now turn their attention to a review of the extant literature on effective educational leadership programs and realistic job previews.

### **What Makes an Educational Leadership Program Effective?**

Most evaluations of educational leadership program quality are conducted on individual programs and are qualitative in nature. Each of these studies is useful in presenting innovative approaches to program refinement. While it is beyond the scope of this literature review to present all of the innovative strategies being utilized in educational programs today, what follows is a brief overview of a few program innovations that have been recently documented in the literature on effective school leadership programs. One such innovative approach is employed at the University of Louisville, in which applicants must be nominated by their principal before being accepted into the leadership program (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, La Pointe, & Orr, 2010), their logic being that principals are in the best position to assess the future leadership potential of current teachers. At East Tennessee State University, students must complete 540 hours of internship experiences (Klein, 2007), which is far greater than the national average. At Cal State University in Fresno, students are required to complete exit interviews at the end of each semester with program faculty and district supervisors to ensure that they are prepared to lead local schools (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Meanwhile, Wichita State University employs a field based curriculum with reduced class contact hours in order to maximize students experiences by having them work on action research projects with local school districts (Orr, 2006). Of course, there are many other effective innovations being employed in principal preparation programs across the United States.

Recently, a number of meta-analyses have emerged that have identified certain common characteristics shared by high quality school leadership programs (Davis, Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, & LaPointe, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Orr, 2006; Young, Crow, Ogawa, & Murphy, 2009). These common traits include: a strong theoretical base in leadership for school improvement; a curriculum that emphasizes instructional leadership; integration of theory and practice; quality internships; knowledgeable faculty; social and professional support for students; and internal evaluation of program effectiveness (Orr & Orphanos, 2011). Perhaps just as importantly, research has been conducted as to what makes a school leadership program ineffective.

The University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) sponsored an investigation into the quality of Educational Administration programs. The results of their research indicate a number of problem areas most commonly associated with ineffective

school leadership programs, including: underutilized recruitment collaborations with local K-12 schools; a lack of cooperation with local educational agencies; limited professional development for current school leaders; and preparation that is irrelevant to the actual work done by school leaders (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

### **Realistic Job Preview: A Conceptual Framework for Consideration**

Clearly there is a recognized need within the educational leadership professorate for school leadership programs to be more tightly coupled with and responsive to the needs of their local school districts. The authors looked into the literature of other leadership disciplines and have identified one vehicle that may hold promise for closing the gap between what is taught in our classes and what is expected of program graduates in the field. Realistic Job Preview (RJP) is an approach to training and development that was first used in the military during the 1980's as a way of inoculating recruits against the feelings of disillusionment and discouragement often experienced by inductees when facing very difficult, boring, or stressful assignments (Brooks & Evans, 1996). The underlying principle was that if the recruits knew in advance the adverse circumstances they might face on the job and had made an informed and rational decision to accept their role, they might be more inclined to experience job satisfaction and would remain more committed to the organization than those who had been traditionally recruited. However boring, dangerous, or otherwise stressful the assignment might be, they were more inclined to continue in that role than those who had not been made previously aware.

Bohlander & Snell (2009) noted that what is unique about an RJP is that it strives to let candidates know about all aspects of a job (both desirable and undesirable job requirements) before hiring an employee. By way of contrast, a typical job preview presents only positive aspects of employment to potential employees as in a sales presentation. Individuals are often drawn to a job or career field because of assumptions they have made about that field of study. All too often these assumptions are inaccurate or incomplete, which leads to confusion, dissatisfaction, and a lack of fulfillment (Dubois, 2000). RJP's have been shown to enhance employee satisfaction and reduce employee turnover (Hom, Griffeth & Palich, 1999; Premack & Wanous, 1985).

The concept of RJP has also been applied in business and industrial settings as a potential vehicle for addressing the cost of high attrition rates. Duncan (1994) compared the retention rates of job recruits who experienced RJP during the recruitment and hiring process with those who entered the labor force in the customary fashion and noted that those who been provided with an accurate sense of the job and its requirements during the actual hiring process had a lower attrition rate in their respective positions than those who had not been provided an accurate picture. Specifically, after eighteen months 57% of RJP hires remained on the job compared with 35% of traditional hires. After 3 years the differential was 41 percent retention rates for RJP inductees, compared to a 21 percent retention rate for traditionally hired individuals (Duncan, 1994).

Health care professionals have also examined the use of RJP's. Crow, Hartman, & McLendon (2009) note that, "Health care organizations are better served by using realistic job previews (Flynn, Mathis, & Jackson, 2004) because they hold promise for reducing unrealistic expectations, disenchantment and dissatisfaction, and turnover by providing applicants a clear picture of the job" (2009, July, p. 322). Perhaps not surprisingly, Griffeth & Hom (2001)

found that many organizations that use RJPs have an established reputation for their commitment to good employee relations.

### **Applying the Concepts of a Realistic Job Preview to Educational Leadership Preparation**

While there are many examples in the literature of Realistic Job Preview philosophies being applied to military, business, and the health care professions, there is unfortunately a paucity of research into the potential usefulness of RJPs in the preparation of future school leaders. The extant literature on RJPs would seem to suggest that these concepts can be applied to individuals seeking employment in any profession. This places Universities in a unique position to benefit from RJPs. To this end, Laker (2002) conducted research with over 1,000 college students in which participants received specific information and exposure to the expectations of the jobs they were currently studying to undertake. Perhaps not surprisingly, some participants determined they were in the wrong field of study. Naturally, this caused disappointment and anxiety, however, Laker (2002) contends that it is better for students to find that out early in their career pursuits than after they have completed coursework and find themselves stuck in a job they do not enjoy.

Induction year school administrators face social and political situations that are unfamiliar, along with unprecedented levels of disrespect and hostility, and ambiguous situations wherein they may have high levels of expectation for success without authority to complete a mission or task successfully. Finding ways to provide some realism in the preparation of future school administrators is an important challenge for educational leadership preparation programs to address.

How then can educational leadership preparation programs provide a more realistic job preview for their students? The first step toward creating a more realistic job preview may be to diagnose what is really going on within the campuses in which aspiring candidates hope to be employed. It may also be beneficial to identify situations that current administrators find challenging. Once these realistic job experiences are identified, professors of educational leadership can begin to determine what kinds of realistic job previews they can provide to program participants. Applying lessons learned from RJP in other fields, perhaps the most important factor is to provide this information to aspiring administrators as early in their graduate programs as possible (Wanous, 1989).

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study is a follow-up study to a program evaluation of a relatively new principal preparation program. The coauthor/professors set out to interview the very first round of assistant principal graduates. They were contacted during their first few months on the job and again at the end of their first year to learn what had been most helpful and what had been lacking in their graduate education in educational leadership. Based on these interviews of these ten assistant principals, a number of key findings were recorded and reported with recommendations for program improvement (Herrington & Kearney, 2012). Recommendations in the previous article had focused upon the need for more realistic decision-making experiences and more concrete examples of what might be faced in their future administrative roles. The information provided by these informants led

coauthor/professors to examine other fields to find a conceptual framework that seemed to correspond with the identified needs. “Realistic Job Preview” was examined because it was both descriptive of a process that had been used in other fields to improve professional preparation and it incorporated the realism needed to provide an “eyes-wide-open” approach to the profession.

Because this would be a follow-up study, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed based not only on the extant literature on assistant principal career transition, but also on information gleaned from the first round of interviews (Herrington & Kearney, 2012). Respondents within the previous investigation had indicated that increased use of scenarios designed to provide a realistic job preview would have assisted them in their new positions as school administrators. Accordingly, the following questions were asked: 1) What did our principal preparation program do that prepared you well for your current position as a school administrator? 2) What could our principal preparation program have done to better prepare you for your current position as a school administrator? And 3) Can you give examples of interactions you have experienced on campus during your first year as a school administrator that may be useful as a teaching tool within our program?

The ten interviews were conducted over a two week period of time. Nine of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. One was conducted as a telephone interview. Coauthor/professors explored the range of responses and coded items based on common themes (Maxwell, 1996). Once interview responses were coded and developed into key themes, the coauthor/professors reflected on ways the principal preparation program may have been perceived of as useful and relevant. This juxtaposes areas where gaps between education and experiences were greatest. These reflections focused on the potential usefulness of scenarios in providing a more realistic job preview for aspiring administrators.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The ten assistant principals for this study were selected because they were among the second group of completers of this institution’s nascent principal preparation program. Six of the assistant principals that participated in this study are male and four are female. Six are Latino, two are African American, and two are Anglo. Participants ranged in years of teaching experience prior to appointment as assistant principal from 2 to 8 years (R1 = 2; R2 = 6; R3 = 3; R4 = 7; R5 = 8; R6 = 5; R7=2; R8 = 6; R9 = 2; R10 = 4). At the time of the interview, eight respondents were employed by public schools; one was employed by a private parochial school, and one was employed by a charter school. School levels at which participants were serving as administrators during the time of the interview are as follows (R1: Elementary School; R2: High School; R3 = Middle School; R4 = K-12 Alternative School; R5 = Intermediate 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade campus; R6 = Elementary School; R7 = Elementary School; R8 = Middle School; R9 = Elementary School; R10 = Elementary School).

The coauthor/professors conducting the study are both male (N=2). Both are charter educational leadership faculty members who have previously taught the respondents within their principal preparation program.

## **FINDINGS**

It is interesting to note that across all interviews (six in year 1, and ten in year 2), there was an overlap between what the university had done well to prepare program graduates and what could be done better. In response to what the program had done well, respondents mentioned how much they learned when professors brought in Public Information Officers (R1, R3, R6), Principal panels (R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R8, R9, R10), superintendents (R2, R3, R5, R7) and other school administrators (R2, R6). In response to what the program could do better, all 10 respondents indicated a need to create an even stronger connection with what they would be expected to do on the job by the school district that hired them. The overarching concept that emerged from these interviews was the need to provide a more realistic job preview. Scenario responses fell into three categories or sub-themes: interactions with parents, safety/student discipline, and supervision.

One important difference that was inescapable is that the graduate students, while employed as school district teachers, could not be ethically placed in situations that they did not possess the authority to carry out in their roles as teachers. In some cases, family confidentiality or employee confidentiality might prevent them from serving in a bona fide administrative role. Former graduate students, one year into their administrative roles, were asked to provide scenarios that they had found difficult and for which they had no prior experience. The graciously provided the coauthor/professors with a wealth of scenarios which are presented below. These scenarios will be used to provide graduate students aspiring to become administrators with actual simple examples where their cursory understanding of school law, ethics, and organizational effectiveness can be applied. In this way, educational administration candidates can best be provided realistic experiences before actually being seated in the proverbial, “hot seat.”

### **USING ADMINISTRATIVE SCENARIOS TO CREATE A MORE REALISTIC JOB PREVIEW**

Once an understanding of what is really going on within the hiring organization(s) is ascertained, the onus falls upon the preparation program to provide a realistic job preview to its participants as early and as clearly as possible (Laker, 2002). What follows is a set of scenarios provided by program graduates in response to the question, “Can you give examples of interactions you have experienced on campus during your first year as a school administrator that may be useful as a teaching tool within our program?” It is the authors’ intent to utilize these scenarios within their own courses in educational administration to create a more realistic job preview.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE SCENARIOS**

Scenarios fell into three categories: 1) interactions with parents, 2) safety and student discipline, and 3) supervision. These scenarios are provided in groups below. After each scenario, we provide a brief series of questions designed to initiate face to face or online discussions with aspiring school leaders. Finally, a possible theme is provided in order to assist professors in identifying how they may wish to incorporate these scenarios into their own courses.

## **Interactions with Parents:**

Parent Scenario #1: A parent comes to school and sits at the back of a classroom. They remain for the entire day. They return and repeat this process 3 days in a row (R9).

Questions: Do you intervene? If so, when? How?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: school communication; parental involvement; school board policy; campus climate

Parent Scenario #2: A parent comes to school upset and uses foul language in the office in the presence of students (R1, R3, R8).

Questions: Do you ask the parent to leave the campus? Do you ban the parent from returning to campus if their behavior does not change? Do you involve the school police officer (if there is one)?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: school safety; school board policy; campus norms; student handbook; parental involvement

Parent Scenario #3: A non-custodial parent picks up a child from school. According to your paperwork on file in the office, the parent has custodial rights, but now the mother is in the office, furious, telling you a judge had removed the father's custody rights, and you should never have released the child to him (R9, R10).

Questions: How do you respond to the mother? What are your next steps? Is there anything that could have been done to help prevent this issue?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: parental rights and responsibilities; school personnel; school safety plan

Parent Scenario #4: A parent is upset that a child who was involved in a fight with her son was not punished severely enough. She threatens a law suit and indicates she will go to the superintendent (R8).

Question: How do you respond? What is your rationale?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: family education right to privacy act (FERPA), student code of conduct; student discipline

Parent Scenario #5: While registering their child to enter your campus, the parents indicate that they feel their child is far advanced and should be enrolled at one grade level above their age group. They have a letter from the principal of the last school that supports this move (R7).

Question: How do you proceed?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: school board policy; gifted and talented education; free and appropriate public education (FAPE); student assessment

Parent Scenario #6: Your campus policy is to allow students to carry cell phones but only if they keep the cell phone in their backpack. An incident occurs in which two students remove a cell phone from a class mate's backpack and download inappropriate content before placing the phone back in the child's backpack. The misbehavior is discovered, the students admit to their misdeeds, and they are punished accordingly. Subsequently, the father of the child whose cell phone was temporarily stolen instructs his son that he is to keep his cell phone in

his pocket from now on. You inform the parent that this is against school policy and if discovered, he (the child) will be punished. The father nods his head slightly, but does not respond. The next day, the cell phone falls out of the boy's pocket during class, and the teacher confiscates the phone (as per campus and district policy). The parent comes into your office screaming and irate (R7).

Questions: How would you respond? Do you feel the parent is justified in his frustration? Would you bend the policy in this instance? Why or why not?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: parental rights and responsibilities; school board policy; school community relations; grievance process; interpersonal trust

Parent Scenario #7: A parent calls upset about a grade their child received on a major assignment. You have attempted to direct the parent back to the teacher, but they continue to insist on speaking with you (R1, R5).

Question: What is your next step?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: school law; chain of command; chain of communication

Parent Scenario #8: You are an assistant principal on a 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade campus. In an effort to ease traffic congestion in your hallways, you inform parents that they are not allowed to escort students to class. One of the parents complains to the superintendent, and the next day you receive a memo indicating that district policy allows parents to visit their child's classroom at any time as long as they have first signed in at the office and are not specifically banned from that campus (R5).

Question: How do you respond to the superintendent? Would you follow up with the parent who complained about you? If so, how?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: school board policy; parental rights and responsibilities; school safety; upward advocacy; school facilities

### **Safety and Student Discipline:**

Student Scenario #1: Two children are involved in a fight. One of them is a repeat offender, the other you have never seen in your office before (R8, R9).

Questions: How do you discipline the two children? Identically? Differently? How do you justify your decision? How will you respond to the parents when they ask how the other child was disciplined?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: student code of conduct; cultural considerations; student behavior; progressive discipline; FERPA

Student Scenario #2 A teacher brings a child to you for "frequent and persistent misbehavior." She complains that the child is disrespectful and needs to be suspended for a poor attitude (R1, R9).

Questions: Are you inclined to suspend a child for this type of behavior? What other options might you have?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: behavior management; classroom management; student teacher relationships; role of trust; documentation; referral process

Student Scenario #3: As you are walking by a classroom, you overhear a child telling a teacher to “shut up” (R8).

Questions: Do you intervene? Do you allow the teacher to handle it? What is your rationale?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: classroom management; student teacher relationships; teacher authority; supervision; teacher rights

Student Scenario #4: It is your responsibility to enforce the dress code policy as it is written.

During the playoffs, a local sports team has made the finals. A student on your campus gets a hair cut with his favorite player’s jersey number shaved into the side of his head. This violates dress code. A teacher brings him to the office to bring the infraction to your attention (R8).

Questions: Do you follow the code of conduct? If not, how would you proceed? What is your rationale?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: school board policy; dress code; grievance; school community relations

Student Scenario #5: A child is choking in the lunchroom as you walk by. You have never received training in how to conduct the Heimlich maneuver, but you have seen it done before. How do you proceed (R8)?

Questions: What are the implications if you act, save the child, but break one of the child’s ribs? What are the implications if you act, but do not save the child? What are the implications if you do not act?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: school safety; crisis management plan; professional development; parental rights and responsibilities

Student Scenario #6: A teacher sends a student to your office because the child has cut marks on their arms. Although the student denies it, you begin to sense that the student has self inflicted these wounds and that the child may be suicidal (R7).

Questions: What other personnel would you involve in this issue? What legal requirements should you be aware of?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: role of counselor; duty to report; child protective services; special education; student assessment; behavioral response to intervention

Student Scenario #7: A high school student is kicking a locker in the hallway during a passing period. You approach the child and ask him to come speak with you. The child looks at you, stops kicking the locker, and begins to walk away. You raise your voice slightly and tell the child to stop. He does not (R7).

Questions: How do you proceed? What is the rationale for your decision?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: role of trust; character education; de-escalation tactics; conflict resolution; student code of conduct; parental involvement

Student Scenario #8: You have a student on your campus that is deaf. The child has punched another child on the playground who was making fun of him. The deaf child is now in your office. You do not know sign language. The child refuses to look at you (R6).

Question: How would you attempt to communicate with this child? What resources might you have at your disposal?



Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: bullying; individual education program (IEP); district support services; character education; parental involvement

Student Scenario #9: An elementary aged child is assaulted by a fellow student on a school bus on the way to your campus. The bus video provides clear evidence of the attack, and the aggressor receives an appropriate consequence in accordance with campus and district policy. Two weeks later, the mother of the assaulted child walks onto the bus to confront the offending child. Although the bus driver instructs her to get off the bus, the mother pushes past the bus driver and confronts/threatens the child who accosted her offspring (R6).

Questions: What authority do you have in this situation? How would you respond?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: role of local law enforcement; school board policy; school transportation; conflict resolution; media relations

Student Scenario #10: You are the assistant principal at the District Alternative Education Program (DAEP). You are in a good mood because you feel as if you are truly helping students who have made bad choices begin to turn their lives around. It is five minutes before school is supposed to begin when a student who has recently been showing great progress shows up on your campus appearing to be high on drugs. The student is currently on parole. A violation of parole will send this child back to the Juvenile Justice Center (R2).

Questions: What do you do next? Provide a rationale.

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: discretionary placements; cultural competency; school board policy; state and federal law; education code; ethics

### **Supervision:**

Supervision Scenario #1: As you pass by a classroom, you notice that one of your teachers is on his/her cell phone taking a personal call during class time (R9).

Questions: Do you write up the infraction? Provide a verbal warning? What is the rationale for your decision?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: supervision; personnel actions; school board policy; school safety; professional rights and responsibilities of teachers

Supervision Scenario #2: A student is sent to the nurse because he says he hit his head on the floor. The nurse is suspicious and sends the child to speak to you. The child tells you that he was pushed to the ground by another child while the class was left unattended by the teacher. You speak to the teacher, who admits to leaving the class unattended while going to the bathroom. This is not the first time you've spoken to this teacher about not leaving the class unattended (R3).

Questions: Do you write up the infraction? Provide a verbal warning? What is your rationale?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: school safety; professional rights and responsibilities of teachers; supervision; teacher collegiality; ethics; negligence; school law

Supervision Scenario #3: A teacher brings a pet to work without consulting you. You have previously instructed all staff not to bring pets to work unless they have cleared it with administration first (R4).

Questions: Do you write up the infraction or provide a verbal warning? What is your rationale? What is the potential harm in allowing animals into the classroom?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: verbal/written directives; student health/safety; school board policy; teacher handbook; ADA compliance

Supervision Scenario #4: A veteran teacher is under your supervision. You have rated the teacher as proficient/average. The teacher comes into your office and begins to cry, indicating they have never received such low ratings. The teacher asks if you will reconsider (R7).

Questions: How do you proceed? Would you consider changing your assessment? If so, under what circumstances? If not, why not?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: clinical supervision; grievance; school board policy; high expectations; interpersonal trust

Supervision Scenario #5: A parent writes a formal letter to you requesting that their child be removed from their homeroom teacher's class. The parent gives no explanation for her request other than to remark that the child does not feel that this teacher likes her (the child) (R6).

Questions: How would you respond? What are the possible ramifications of granting/not granting the request?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: parent rights and responsibilities; school board policy; documentation; classroom climate; school community relations; chain of command

Supervision Scenario #6: You have just been promoted to assistant principal on the same campus where you used to teach. Your former teacher colleagues are now under your supervision. For years, you have been "friends" with many of them on Facebook and other social media sites (R6).

Questions: Would you choose to continue sharing online information with your former colleagues in this manner? Why or why not?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: professional roles; teacher code of ethics; social media awareness; teacher professionalism; moral turpitude; community standards

Supervision Scenario #7: It is your district policy to provide teachers with advanced notice before they are scheduled to be observed for their annual evaluation. A teacher who is under your supervision has been absent each of the last three dates on which an observation was scheduled (R10).

Question: How would you proceed? Would it make a difference if the teacher had a poor performance evaluation the prior year?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: school board policy; clinical supervision; contractual obligations; school law

Supervision Scenario #8: You have just been hired as the new assistant principal on a campus that has historically underperformed on state exams. As a classroom teacher you personally had great success in regard to student achievement on standardized tests. You attribute much of your success to the time you spent tutoring students individually. Accordingly, you have just announced at an after school faculty meeting that you will be implementing a more aggressive tutorial program on this campus. After school, three teachers approach you in the

parking lot to let you know that you can do what you want with your own time, but they will not be staying late to tutor students (R4).

Question: What would be your immediate response? If this proves to be the prevailing attitude among the entire staff, what would be your next course of action?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: school climate; community relations; communication of expectations; hiring protocol; grievances; professional rights and responsibilities; teacher contract; union contract

Supervision Scenario #9: While standing in front of the school to greet students, you notice a teacher pull into the parking lot late. This will be her third infraction. During her planning period, you speak with the teacher, informing her that an official letter of reprimand will be placed in her personnel file. She responds that 5 other teachers were also late that day (and she gives you their names). Although you did not personally see these teachers arrive late, you know it is possible that what the teacher said could be true (R3).

Questions: What would you say in response to this teacher? What action (if any) would you take based on this reported information?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: use of 3<sup>rd</sup> party information in supervision; union contracts; interpersonal trust; school safety

Supervision Scenario #10: At the beginning of the school year, teachers are sent a mass email indicating who everyone's supervisor will be. You receive emails from three separate teachers indicating they don't trust the other assistant principal, and they would rather have you as their supervisor (R2).

Questions: Do you respond? If so, what would you say to these teachers? What would you say (if anything) to the administrator about whom they are complaining?

Scenario is Rich for Analysis of: professionalism; school climate; interpersonal trust; communication skills; professional boundaries

## **IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS**

The authors are utilizing these scenarios as a teaching tool within their own courses in educational administration. Because coursework within this program is offered in a hybrid format (a combination of online/face to face/ and field based delivery), the authors are utilizing the scenarios for both small group discussion during class time and in online discussion boards. Scenarios are introduced in class with discussions, interactions, and role-play. These scenarios are then posted online for reflection and response by each program participant. Additionally, we have invited current school administrators to attend educational leadership courses to allow for direct interaction between current administrators and program participants. The scenarios are useful as a vehicle for entering into discussions in which aspiring administrators are able to ask current practitioners if they have encountered similar issues as those raised in the scenarios, and if so – how they handled them. Similarly, the university hosts an annual principal panel in which program participants are able to query panelists both in regard to their success and current challenges.

This study was undertaken out of a desire on the part of two professors of educational administration to explore and enhance the relevance of their school leadership program to the needs of the local school districts who employ their graduates. Furthermore, through the

research and findings regarding the success with Realistic Job Preview, it seems that this approach might also lead to a more cognizant, aware, and resilient future administrator. The inquiry and subsequent dissemination of realistic job expectations for aspiring school leaders is but one tool that can help educational administration programs to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The authors are aware that there exist many other innovative approaches and designs that are being implemented at many other Universities and wish to add to that body of knowledge.

This study is limited in scope to the experiences of recent graduates from one principal preparation program in south central Texas. It would be interesting to broaden this inquiry by including experiences of first year school administrators from other regions across the United States or internationally. The coauthor/professors invite the readers to use these scenarios and provide feedback on how applicable and realistic the experiences may be. This represents an attempt by the coauthor/professors to reduce the gap between university learning and real world learning where professors become the learners and former students become the teachers, all in an effort to “keep it real.”

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