ADMINISTRATOR LICENSURE INSTITUTIONS’

PLANNING FORUM

Best Practice in Education Leadership Preparation Programs

SAELP
PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY AND LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE

PRESENT

Best Practice in Educational Leadership Preparation Programs


Please send comments and suggestions to chenoweth@pdx.edu

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Introduction

The concept of best practice has its roots in law and medicine and implies that professionals have standards, are aware of current research, and offer clients the field's latest knowledge, technology, and procedures.

The purpose of this paper is to identify and review the research on best practice in educational leadership preparation and continuing professional development programs. The hope is that this paper will stimulate university-based educational leadership preparation programs and state policy makers to begin an earnest conversation and come to consensus on what is most important in preparing and supporting school administrators in Oregon for the 21st century. Numerous recent reports and papers focus on particular aspects of leadership preparation such as what the curriculum or internship should look like, however this paper is distinctive in that it attempts to present a holistic picture of what is needed to develop and support successful school administrators.

This work is sponsored by the State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP), a partnership of five national organizations: The Council for Chief State School Officers, The Education Commission of the States, The National Association of State Boards of Education, The National Conference of state Legislators, and the National Governors Association. SAELP’s mission is to educate and assist state policy makers in their understanding of leadership development and to how leadership development links to raising student achievement in schools. Fifteen states, including Oregon, are currently involved in the project. Work to develop statewide visions, laws, policies, and
infrastructures related to improving school leadership is being sponsored by the Wallace Reader’s Digest Funds’ district initiative, Leadership for Educational Achievement in Districts (LEAD), in ten school districts and fifteen states.

This paper will attempt to answer the question “what is best practice in educational leadership?” Borrowing from Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, best practice is defined as “solid, reputable, state of the art work in a field” (1998, p. viii). The concept of best practice has its roots in law and medicine and implies that professionals have standards, are aware of current research, and offer clients the field’s latest knowledge, technology, and procedures. Education has not had a tradition of best practice because the field, until recently, has lacked well-developed standards or clear outcomes informed by previous work and research. Educators have failed to take advantage of what has been learned in the past and tend to tinker anew each time that change is proposed (Wilson & Daviss, 1994).

This paper utilizes some of the latest information about what the field considers to be best practice in leadership preparation and continuing career support. The information presented is a distillation, synthesis, and a recasting of what is considered to be the best and most recent literature about the preparation of school administrators. It is hoped that the paper will offer a framework and design process for building on what is considered to be best practice in the field of leadership development. This definition of best practice is drawn from collective experiences of leaders of university-based educational leadership preparation programs, as well as from several research-based resources found to be particularly helpful: a special theme issue of Educational Administration Quarterly (Young & Peterson, 2002) focusing on university-based educational leadership preparation; the Handbook of Research on Educational Administration (Murphy & Louis, 1999) sponsored by the American Educational

In the paper, seven key areas are discussed and explored: program philosophy and design; recruitment and selection; curriculum; instruction/delivery systems; internship/practicum; program evaluation; and professional development. Each of these sections identifies what is considered to be best practice, raises issues for further consideration, and closes with a question for Oregon policy makers to address. The paper concludes with a set of policy recommendations for improving leadership development in Oregon. These recommendations should be studied and acted upon.
Philosophy and Design

Best practice in the field of educational leadership has evolved from a managerial orientation to a basic philosophy that communicates the importance of being clearly focused on the teaching & learning process and the success of all children.

At the heart of any effective organization is a clearly defined and expressed vision. This is no less true for educational leadership preparation programs, where the underlying core values and beliefs driving the program should be clearly embedded within a vision statement which has been collaboratively shaped by its faculty and stakeholders. In the innovative and exemplary programs mentioned in recent literature, these stakeholders include community members, businesses, school districts, and other university preparation programs (Kelley & Peterson, 2000; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Over the past decade a clearer consensus has developed among educators regarding the nature of leadership, and thereby leadership preparation, moving from a managerial model to a visionary collegial model focused on the centrality of student learning (McCarthy, 1999).
Furthermore, the national movement toward accountability has resulted in the creation of educational standards as manifested for leadership preparation in the public schools and for educational leadership preparation programs. This evolution of thought has brought educators to the beginning of change in the philosophy and design of leadership preparation programs. Leading proponents of this reframing of educational preparation programs speak of a focus on transformational leadership, moral stewardship, principal as educator/instructional leader, and principal as communicator/community builder (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Murphy, 2002). Fullan (1992) clarifies the meaning of transformational leadership as follows: “Transformational leaders... focus on changing the culture of the school. They build visions, develop norms of collegiality and continuous improvement, share strategies for coping with problems and resolving conflicts, encourage teacher development as career-long inquiry and learning, and restructure the school to foster continuous development” (p. 7). Best practice in the field of educational leadership has evolved from a managerial orientation to a basic philosophy that communicates the importance of being clearly focused on the teaching and learning process and the success of all children.

Working together over a decade, professional organizations including AASA, NAESP, NASSP, UCEA, NCPEA and NPBEA have endorsed a common definition of the best educational preparation programs. This definition currently reflects the values encompassed within the guiding principles of the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, and the outcomes-based standards of the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC). These guidelines have found expression in the university program accreditation standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Educators (NCATE), and are referred to as the Educational Leader Constituent Council (ELCC) standards. Thirty-five states had adopted or based their own standards
Wilmore (2002) lists the ISLLC guidelines originally developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers that formed the philosophical core of the ISLLC standards and now drives the ELCC standards. Those guidelines are:

- Reflect the centrality of student learning
- Acknowledge the changing role of the school leader
- Recognize the collaborative nature of school leadership
- [Upgrade] the quality of the profession
- Inform performance-based systems of assessment and evaluation for school leaders
- Be integrated and coherent
- Be predicated on the concepts of access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community (pp. 12-13)

Building these guiding principles into a program philosophy as non-negotiables means having them at the core of every element of the preparation program. They should be evident from initial recruitment and selection of students to the chosen program delivery model, curriculum, instructional strategies, internships, assessment and accountability measures and ongoing professional growth opportunities.
Changing focus from a traditional theory and skills-based preparation program to one that focuses on teaching and learning requires retooling of many university faculties. Collaboration with stakeholders in developing, delivering and assessing such a program requires development and maintenance of strong community relations. Integration and coherence will require rethinking academic course structures and delivery.

Questions for Oregon

Do universities offer incentives and support for such fundamental changes in philosophy, or must Oregon look to new sources for leadership development?

How can principles of social justice and equity which are plaguing public schools be included in program philosophy to meet the needs of diverse students and administrative candidates?

Should Oregon join the national conversation by adopting ELCC standards and assessment rather than the current legislatively imposed and TSPC-defined standards and Praxis II assessment?
Recruitment and Selection

Traditional recruiting practices typically produce candidates that do not mirror the existing demographic composition of the local district and community.

The process of recruiting individuals into the profession of school administration is intricately tied to the process of admission and entry into a university program. For most administrator candidates, the first step toward an administrative license is being admitted into an approved license preparation program. While state standards for the license apply to all license preparation programs, the mission of an urban university might differ from a private regional college. Admissions policies, practices and target audience shape the recruitment and selection practices of each institution, even as the institution strives to meet the state goals for preparation of administrator candidates.

Recruitment  For many years, policy makers, educators, and the public have called for greater diversity in the profession of school administration. It is common to read that teachers and administrators should reflect the demographics of the community they serve. Yet a Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) publication reviewing the literature on school improvement reports that even today most principals and superintendents continue to be white
men (Hoachlander, Alt and Beltanena, 2001). The profession seems unable to attract a candidate pool that is diverse in terms of gender and race. Traditional recruiting practices typically produce candidates that do not mirror the existing demographic composition of the local district and community.

Current recruitment practices must be examined if the goal of increased diversity is desired and has some hope of being realized. Existing practices seem to rely on two methods. The first is self-nomination where candidates decide that they possess the qualities necessary to be an administrator, choose a license preparation program, and complete requirements. Wendell (1992) indicates that professors in preparation programs describe self-nominators as often being the best students. A second method occurs through supervisor nomination. Potential administrative candidates are identified by a supervisor and informally recruited to consider an administrative career. While colleges and universities require recommendations from colleagues, this informal recruitment processes continues to result in a non-diverse administrative candidate pool.

In a report for the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), Wendel (1992) describes aggressive outreach strategies that could increase gender and racial diversity. Included are intentional recruitment practices in local school districts, collaboration with professional associations and special interest groups like Northwest Women in Educational Administration (NWEA), and linkages and cooperative programs with local universities and historically minority institutions. For Oregon, the most viable way to increase diversity in educational roles is to go where those candidates might be. If they are teachers, nurture and support them in ways that make administration a viable professional choice. If they are not in education, invite them to think about education as a positive option.
When considering the issues of recruitment for administrator candidates, disincentives to serving in this role also need to be examined. Salary and working conditions are mentioned frequently as reasons individuals do not consider administrative positions. In addition, the high cost of additional college tuition necessary to obtain a license discourages potentially viable candidates from seeking the position. Included in an aggressive recruitment strategy would be the use of tuition and scholarship incentives to help develop a larger, more diverse candidate pool.

The current recruitment practice is to entice individuals into programs that prepare candidates for a position with overwhelming responsibilities. An alternative strategy might be to restructure the role of the principal by making use of the concept of distributed leadership. Might recruitment of individuals into a position where there was a team orientation rather than the traditional solo practitioner be possible? Should colleges and universities experiment with the preparation of teams rather than individuals? In addition, the fact remains that people occupying school leadership positions do not reflect the diversity of the children in schools. There appears to be a combination of insufficient incentives, job-related disincentives, and structural obstacles, which prevent minority candidates from seeking the principalship in adequate numbers.

Selection The selection of entry-level school administrators is directly affected by the recruitment practices in the region. The selection of potential administrative candidates begins with the admissions process at each preparation program institution. Ideally, the faculty at each institution develops a philosophy that is used as criteria for decisions about admissions. Potential administrator
candidates should be admitted based on the compatibility with program philosophy. Currently, admission into a preparation program is generally based on academic preparation as evidenced by transcripts, recommendations from district officials, and test scores such as the Millers Analogy Test and the GRE as described by Jackson and Kelley (2002). In addition, some programs make use of leadership assessment techniques such as the one developed by NAASP or interviews to evaluate individual candidates. Duke (1992) argues for a generous admissions policy that collaborates with districts in establishing meaningful internships. In order to develop a larger administrator candidate pool, universities should make known their philosophies and program goals. This would allow school districts to help recruit candidates into administrative preparation programs that meet district objectives and that match candidate preferences. Districts that actively recruit individuals into pre-service licensure programs tend to have a larger pool of administrator candidates than districts that do not have recruitment plans.

Selection of potential candidates should be made with the program philosophy as the major criteria. How will the competing institutions be able to differentiate their philosophy in ways that allow individuals to match their own conceptions of leadership with that of the institution? Since traditional selection processes and criteria is inexact at best, how might institutions modify their programs to assess learning potential? It is the ability to learn and apply new learning that is frequently cited as a distinguishing characteristic of a leader and a learning organization. Emphasis might be better placed on assessing the skills of the administrative candidate at the completion of a pre-service program rather than creating screening criteria that prevents an individual from starting the program. This would be especially important in the case of promising administrative candidates who might be considered too much of a maverick or
too controversial to gain the needed support within their own district for program admission.

When formal assessments are used as part of the selection process, how might these assessments be used in the learning plan of the administrator candidate? Accreditation agencies such as NCATE and TSPC expect that preparation programs assess student competence as they complete a pre-service program. Emphasis should then be on the way students learn and use the knowledge and skills presented in the program rather than attempting to determine whether the potential candidate would be a good administrator before starting a program.

**Question for Oregon**

What long-term incentives and support can be developed to recruit a diverse pool of individuals seeking school leadership positions?
Curriculum

In place of a series of traditional managerial courses in law, finance, and facilities, the infamous ‘buses, budgets, and books’ curriculum, all taught in isolation, administrative candidates in today’s exemplary programs encounter these topics in a problem-based curriculum built upon real experiences of the challenges of teaching and learning encountered in actual schools working toward improved achievement for all students.

Over the past twenty-five years there has been increasing concern among educational administrators and related professional organizations about the lack of relevance, or disconnect, between what is taught in administrative preparation programs and actual administrator practice in schools (Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). Numerous studies have also pointed to the traditional emphasis on content such as ‘leader as manager,’ traditional administration and organizational theories, and courses built around social science frameworks. A deductive teaching approach was common and the ‘one best curriculum’ centered around a series of isolated and mostly theoretical courses reflecting the same topics as in the 70’s, such as organizational management, curriculum and supervision, finance, personnel, history and philosophy of education, and school facilities in a teacher-centered setting (Cordeiro, P. A., Krueger, J. A., Parks, D., Restine, N., & Wilson, P.T., 1993; McCarthy, 1999; Murphy, J., 2002; National Policy Board for Educational Administration[NPBEA], 1989).
The national movement toward accountability and improved K-12 student achievement beginning in the 90’s has brought increasing focus on the preparation of school administrators and a resulting disillusionment regarding the usefulness of the traditional program in preparing leaders capable of reconceptualizing and reculturing our schools for the improvement of teaching and learning. Today there is a new emphasis on the principal as a transformational leader rather than manager. This new perspective sees the principal acting as a facilitator, mentor and coach in a system of distributive leadership involving and utilizing the skills of the entire school community. This philosophical shift requires major changes not only in the vision of preparation programs, but also in the curriculum. Our changing society brings the necessity of clear programmatic focus on democratic schooling, school improvement, ethics and social justice to the fore as school leaders are prepared to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse K-12 student body (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Murphy, 2002).

The new model of educational leadership preparation focuses not merely on traditional discrete knowledge and content, but on a combination of knowledge, skills and dispositions, delivered in a learner-centered setting utilizing the principles of adult learning theory, all built around standards such as those enumerated in the NCATE/ISLLC (ELCC) standards. This type of knowledge base is a foundational part of the curriculum for the development of a personal vision and mission statement by each administrative candidate. Taught in this learner-centered environment, the goal is for the emerging leaders to assimilate these values and incorporate them into a transformational and constructivist leadership style. Ongoing personal reflection and assessment is an integral part of
such a learning experience as administrative candidates encounter new ideas and increasingly rapid societal change (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

In place of a series of traditional managerial courses in law, finance, and facilities, the infamous ‘buses, budgets, and books’ curriculum, all taught in isolation, administrative candidates in today’s exemplary programs encounter these topics in a problem-based curriculum built upon real experiences of the challenges of teaching and learning encountered in actual schools working toward improved achievement for all students. At the core of leadership preparation must be a thorough understanding of teaching and learning processes not only for K-12 students, but also for the faculty and staff working with those students (Best Practices Panel Report, 2002; Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001; Kelley & Peterson, 2000; McCarthy, 1999).

Coursework delivered in a coherent, spiral design integrates all new topics studied with material presented previously, combining content with leadership skill development in areas such as change, conflict resolution, delegation, teamwork, and communication. Analytical and process skills such as problem finding and problem solving are taught to hone decision-making skills. Administrative candidates must learn to utilize multiple data sources, including state and national testing results and local action research in gathering and analyzing field-based information to drive school improvement efforts (Best Practices Panel Report, 2002). Further, coursework must assist emerging leaders to understand, respond to and influence the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context of schooling not only with expertise, but with integrity and caring and an eye toward fostering learning communities (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Rallis & Goldring, 2000).
Higher educational institutions' traditional tenure system does not normally reward field-based activity such as the integral relationship of educational administration program faculty and school districts being described. An integrated and spiral curriculum instead of a traditional quarter or semester arrangement requires creative scheduling on the part of the university. How can these shifts be encouraged?

Districts and universities must build field-based programs collaboratively. How does such a program develop when most participants are full-time teachers in an increasingly financially strapped educational system?

Increasing diversity in our society is not being met by similar diversity within school leadership or university faculties. A recent survey of UCEA institutions related to a significant presence of social justice in educational leadership curricula reveal very few programs actually addressing the topic except in a cursory manner (Michelle Young, telephone interview, 2002). Can this condition be influenced through preparation programs?

**Question for Oregon**

Are the TSPC standards consistent with the national ELCC standards in fostering a vital useful curriculum for administrative candidates that combines theory and practice toward achieving success for all K-12 students?
Instruction / Delivery Systems

The last 15 years of national leadership reform initiatives have all had strongly consistent themes that describe leadership preparation programs as “mindlessly dependant on lectures and classroom based instruction rather than experiential learning.” – Gary Hoachlander, Martha Alt, & Renee Beltranena

Currently it is assumed that clearly defined standards focused on developing prospective administrator knowledge, skills, and dispositions will propel change in educational leadership preparation programs. Yet, while “there is growing consensus on the ends of change, there is much less agreement on the means” (Hoachlander, Alt, and Beltranena, 2001, p.7). The means are the “how” or instructional strategies and delivery systems whereby students learn the “what” or curriculum needed to become effective school administrators.

The last 15 years of national leadership reform initiatives have all had strongly consistent themes that describe leadership preparation programs as “mindlessly dependant on lectures and classroom-based instruction rather than experiential
learning” (Hoachlander, Alt, and Beltranena, 2001, p.6). In fact, anecdote and prescription or what some would call the “sharing of war stories” dominated educational preparation until the 1960s (McCarthey, 1999). Gradually, however, the social sciences began to influence program content, yet there was no significant attention given to instruction until the mid 1980s with the initial use of case studies, in-basket exercises, and simulations. The social sciences were viewed as a method of making the curriculum more rigorous and academic through the application of disciplinary based knowledge from fields ranging from sociology and anthropology to economics and history.

The lecture method remained dominant until the mid 1990s when an instructional shift began to emerge from faculty-centered to student-centered approaches. The goals were to actively involve students in the learning process, eliminate anonymity, and personalize instruction (McCarthey, 2002). There was a shift in teaching practice from a traditional lecture and discussion method to a constructivist orientation in which students are expected to be more responsible for their own learning and to actually construct their own knowledge through meaningful, authentic, and relevant assignments and projects. The use of inductive, problem-based learning (Bridges & Hallinger, 1992; 1995) grounded in adult learning theory (Murphy & Hallinger, 1987) and the reality of schools began to be valued. Greater emphasis was also placed on the internship and learning in the workplace (See internship/practicum section of this paper.)

Other recent and emerging instructional innovations include assignments and projects requiring cooperative learning, collaborative research, and reflective practice. In a growing number of programs there is a shift away from the traditional 3-credit course to modules and integrated units of study. Furthermore, increasing numbers of leadership preparation programs are shifting to a cohort
model with the expectation that students and faculty become a “learning community” much like what is expected currently in K-12 schools. There is also growing experimentation with team teaching approaches to instruction. Such practice also models for students what is considered increasingly important in K-12 work settings, the ability to cooperate and be collegial. Such approaches provide for the effective modeling of relationships, decision making and gives meaning to the aphorism “how you teach is what you teach.” Finally, a significant and growing instructional practice is the use of technology for distance learning, on-line courses, web page development, record keeping, data presentation, Internet-based research, and methods for keeping cohorts or other learning communities linked.

Instructional practices are increasingly grounded in more holistic, experiential, and a constructivist orientation. Traditional roles of university faculty and prospective administrators have blurred as all members of the “learning community” share their unique areas of expertise and experience. In responding to the litany of criticisms launched against educational leadership preparation programs, some would say that restructuring efforts have gone too far by over emphasizing relevance at the expense of sound theoretical constructs. Ideally, theory and practice should inform one another.

Questions for Oregon

How can we assure that our university-based educational leadership programs are balanced and have the right mixture of theory and practice?

What is the unique contribution and focus of university-based programs?
How do we know if those instructional activities considered to be best practice actually do make a difference in promoting effective teaching and student achievement?
The ideal situation for an internship is a “full-time, year-long, paid internship conducted under a trained mentor with joint supervision from school district and university personnel.” – Elaine L. Wilmore

The research and professional literature stresses the importance of the internship in the preparation of candidates for the principalship. The National Policy Board (NPB) (2002) specifically states that all programs preparing administer candidates must have an internship component. While internships may now be part of a candidate’s preparation, there remains much confusion about the length and emphasis internships play in that preparation. The NPB suggests that some key learning experiences must take place at the internship school site, particularly the application of knowledge and the practice of skills. However, the NPB suggests at a minimum a relatively short internship of 9-12 hours per week for a period of six months. For the purpose of preparation of educational leaders, a different conceptualization of the internship is needed.
The opportunity for students to apply classroom knowledge is described in the literature in a variety of ways. It is commonly referred to as “internship”, others label it as a “field experience”, while in Oregon the term “practicum” is identified in administrative rules. For the balance of this paper, these terms will be used interchangeably to identify the time during the initial license preparation period where candidates learn and practice the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are introduced in formal coursework. Currently in Oregon, a 9-week full-time or 360 hour practicum is required by TSPC.

The more common perception of the internship would be similar to the assertion of Cohen (2001) that the internship is the period of time that helps teachers prepare for school leadership positions. Jean and Evans (1995) conclude that first year principals with an internship experience were significantly more confident that they were well prepared for their jobs than those without an internship experience. Furthermore they state that individuals with an internship experience are statistically better at the critical tasks related to the principal’s role: supervision, evaluation, team-building, and resource allocation.

Wilmore (2002) in Principal Leadership, Applying the New Educational leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards, states that the internship should be authentic, allowing administrator candidates to do things that real administrators do each day. In addition, the ideal situation for an internship is a “full-time, year-long, paid internship conducted under a trained mentor with joint supervision from school district and university personnel” (Wilmore p.105). The goal for all internships should be a supported opportunity to do meaningful work that is full-time, field-based and sustained over a significant period of time.
In a recent article by Jackson and Kelly (2002) describing exceptional and innovative programs, the internship ranges from a relatively modest requirement of 100 hours to a half-time full year placement of approximately 700 hours. In most of these programs, the practicum includes the professional guidance of a mentor or veteran, practicing principal who assists candidates in applying course content to daily experiences in schools. On a national basis, guidelines for practicum vary with differing state requirements and institutional expectations. Administrator candidates may be required to have practicum experiences in more than one level of administration (elementary, secondary or central office) or in different contexts (urban, rural, large or small school). The common feature in these innovative programs is the blending of coursework and practicum experience. Bradshaw (1997) reports that extended internships allow administrative candidates to practice listening and other interpersonal skills, and afford them opportunities to identify problems and investigate potential solutions. These authentic school-based problems and activities provide learning opportunities that are often missing in regular traditional classroom-based coursework.

Through this review at least four types of practicum structures were found:

- Independent: Practicum experiences are not linked to course content.

- Interdependent: Practicum experiences are designed to follow the formal coursework. The coursework is designed with activities to prepare candidates for a later practicum experience.

- Embedded: Practicum experiences are part of the formal coursework and practicum experiences inform course content.
• Apprenticeship: Practicum experiences serve as the total preparation structure with reading and theoretical constructs added as deemed appropriate. The Principal Residency Network in Providence, R.I., is a recognized example of this model.

There are usually three people who take an active role in the practicum experience: the administrator candidate, the mentor who is usually the building principal and may also be referred to as the site supervisor, and the university practicum supervisor who is often a retired building principal.

Most often identified as an important factor in the success of principal candidates during and after practicum is the quality of mentorship provided by experienced administrators. Jackson and Kelley (2002) identify programs that require mentors to apply before being selected to serve. Other recognized programs require mentors to be trained in the NASSP mentoring model. In most cases, the mentor is the acting principal serving in the building where the administrator candidate completes the practicum. Since the role of mentor is critical in the preparation of candidates, a strong orientation to learning and a positive working relationship is essential.

It must be acknowledged that there are many obstacles to a successful practicum. Chief among them is the limited time most administrator candidates are able to devote to authentic practicum activities. In Oregon, most candidates are full-time teachers, counselors or other school personnel who must attend to job responsibilities as well as practicum activities. In addition, limited opportunities exist for candidates to experience a full range of administrative responsibilities.
District meetings are an important part of administrator responsibilities. These meetings often occur during the school day, when the administrator candidate is performing regular job responsibilities.

Practicum is an essential element of a sound preparation program. How might programs integrate course content to support practicum activities? How might practicum events be used to shape course content? The length and quality of a practicum experience are linked. How might administrator candidates and districts be supported to provide extended in-depth practicum opportunities? Finally, the on-site mentor is an important part of a successful practicum. What might be done to make the mentor / administrator candidate experience beneficial to both parties?

Question for Oregon

How might administrator candidates be supported to have high quality practicum experiences?
Program Evaluation

There is much anecdotal evidence and testimony to the fact that our programs make a difference. So far, however, no evaluation design has been created that gives us definitive answers about the effects of leadership preparation.

There is a growing number of what are considered to be innovative leadership preparation programs around the country, yet there is little or no systematic evaluation. Some of these innovative programs are beginning to experiment with a self-evaluation process centered on standards-based outcomes. These standards have been chosen by the Education Leaders Constituent Council (ELCC) and cover seven primary areas: vision, culture, organizational management, collaboration, contexts, ethical behavior, and work experience. Prospective administrators are assessed along these dimensions and then program faculty self-evaluate their program as a whole based upon how well their students have performed along these dimensions (Glasman, Cibulka, and Ashby, 2002).
So far, however, no evaluation design has been created that gives us definitive answers about the effects of leadership preparation. Leadership programs may be training prospective school administrators who are significantly more knowledgeable about teaching and student learning and more savvy about school-based problems or dilemmas, but they still can not assure that students will leave leadership programs “with the knowledge and skills to go forth and make the kinds of changes in school that lead to higher student achievement - especially for students who have not fared well in elementary and secondary schools in America” (Hoachlander, Alt & Beltranena, 2001, p. 9).

For some there is even the question of whether graduate level leadership preparation is necessary. Colorado, for example, has eliminated the administrator license and is considering eliminating the principal license as well. What is needed, therefore, is evidence of how leadership influences student learning, directly and indirectly, as well as measures of how leadership preparation develops such leadership attributes (Orr, 2002).

Traditionally, program evaluation in Oregon occurs every five years and is facilitated through a partnership of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Oregon Teaching Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC). It is an external review that complies with requests for information and is largely done by faculty members from other universities, not necessarily even familiar with the field of educational administration. The program evaluation process, however, is moving towards a performance-based, outcomes model and the greater involvement of students, alumni, field administrators, as well as faculty members. Evidence of program effectiveness includes program alignment and responsiveness to NCATE and TSPC standards, faculty qualifications (typically looking for faculty with doctorates from accredited
institutions) student and program portfolio development, passing scores on the Education Teaching Service (ETS) specialty exit exam on leadership and supervision, discussions with students, visits to field or practicum learning sites, conversations with field-based mentors, program specific research, and surveys of former students.

There is anecdotal evidence and testimony to the fact that educational leadership programs make a difference. Yet we really do not know whether what we do does, in fact, make a difference in practice. Some would argue that we basically take good people and make them better, while others question the utility of our work all-together. There seems to be an emerging consensus that school administrators need to be firmly grounded in strategies that promote effective teaching and student achievement. With this focus in mind, it will be important to link what is done in university classrooms and internships to successful administrative practice in the future.

Question for Oregon

How can we follow our program completers to determine the causal links between what they learned in our programs about promoting effective teaching and student achievement and its effects on practice in their schools?
Professional Development

Practicing school administrators end up with a patch-work series of professional development learning opportunities loosely linked to their initial preparation programs with little attention to coordinated, long-term learning.

It is a given that prospective administrators in leadership preparation programs can not learn everything about the job prior to practicing and that on-going professional development from a variety of sources will be needed. Currently there are a multiplicity of professional development learning opportunities from a variety of university programs, professional organizations, and governmental agencies that represent more of a shot-gun approach to professional development than a carefully thought-out, sequenced, and integrated approach to career development. On a national level there has been little systematic thought paid to strategies for developing school administrators once they meet the requirements for initial licensure (Hoachlander, Alt, and Beltranena, 2001).
Professional associations such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and state administrator organizations like the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) all provide a wide variety of professional development opportunities. Furthermore, university institutes, forums, academies, and continuing administrator licensure programs for practicing school administrators are regularly offered at universities ranging from Harvard and Vanderbilt to in-state programs like ours at Portland State University and Lewis and Clark College. Comprehensive school reform programs like the Accelerated Schools Project and the Coalition of Essential Schools also provide their own specialized training for school leadership development. Finally, district programs, state departments of education workshops, specialized offerings from regional laboratories like the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL), and training from for-profit firms, result in a patch-work series of professional development learning opportunities loosely linked to initial preparation programs with little attention to coordinated, long-term learning. Preparation programs and professional development programs must be linked and coordinated to expand learning and reduce redundancy (Peterson, 2002).

In the final chapter of the 101st yearbook of National Society for the Study of Education, Kochan, Bredson, and Riehl focus on professional development for school leaders, which they define as, “Learning opportunities that engage educators’ creative, critical, and reflective capacities in ways that strengthen their own practice and the practice of other educators” (2001, p.291). They also point to the characteristics of adult learners in that they are self-directed, have work experiences that need to be viewed as a learning resource, want learning to be relevant to their work, and want learning to be active and experiential. The authors point to involving practitioners in the design of their own professional
development as the best way to determine what is motivating to them. Furthermore, providing varied learning opportunities tied closely to work challenges at their own worksites or at the worksites of other practitioners is most relevant. E-mail and the Internet are other ways for practicing administrators to share what Roland Barth describes as “craft knowledge.” Additionally, outside technical support from mentors, problem-solving and critical friends groups, and portfolio development were all cited as promising practices.

The National Staff Development Council (2001) recommends that effective professional development programs be long term, carefully planned, job-embedded, and focused on student achievement and how it is reached. Moreover, reflective practice must be encouraged and facilitated through discussion, study groups, problem solving, and coaching with peers. Professional development programs must also attend to cultural elements such as the building of strong norms and clear symbols, the questioning of assumptions about practice, the creation and institutionalization of regular ceremonies, and the building of learning communities.

Rather than a multitude of brief one-shot learning opportunities, best practice involves all day, retreat, and multiple session activities over an extended period of time with a cohort group or learning community. Additionally, curriculum should be integrated, carefully planned, and most importantly linked to preparation and/or initial licensure programs. Topics may include a refinement and extension of topics covered in the initial administrative license such as meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, school change, shared leadership, vision development, shaping school culture, social justice, moral and ethical leadership, technology, standards based reform, powerful learning, interpersonal relations, meeting management, and school community
relations. Moreover, instructional activities should be varied and experiential with a variety of approaches including small group work, simulations (computer and noncomputer) mini-lectures, videotapes, role-playing, case study, reflective writing, and systematic problem solving through inquiry and action research processes. (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2002; Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

Best practice then demands content that is more tightly organized to match topics covered in preparation programs, recent research, and context specific or current district initiatives and state mandates. Best practice also involves an element of mentoring, coaching and feedback, and being formally linked to seasoned and veteran administrators. This type of support is especially important during the first years of administrative practice.

**ISSUES TO CONSIDER**

We have no coordinating agency in the state of Oregon. If professional development is to be helpful and purposeful, there must be a tighter linkage between preparation programs, the school workplace, and recognized and emerging best practices in the field. TSPC, NCATE, ISSLC, and ELCC standards are vaguely defined, frequently overlap, and typically overlook site or context specific issues or themes. As a professional community, we need to come to consensus about what we must have in our various professional development opportunities for practicing school administrators. We cannot teach it all in our initial licensure preparation programs. What is needed is more of a spiraled curriculum that improves the reflective capacity of school administrators over the course of their careers.
Questions for Oregon

Does the state need some type of coordinating agency or group for the professional development of its school administrators?

How can such professional development be more closely linked to the initial administrator license and meet the site-specific needs of practicing administrators?

Do we need a professional group like the Oregon Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (OACTE) or the Washington Council of Educational Administration Programs (WCEAP)?
Conclusion

The hope is that this paper will stimulate university-based educational leadership preparation programs and state policy makers to begin an earnest conversation and come to consensus on what is most important in preparing and supporting school administrators in Oregon for the 21st century.

This paper has reviewed seven key areas of university-based educational leadership preparation programs by focusing on what research and current professional literature and practice represent as “best practice” in the field. For each of these areas (program philosophy and design; recruitment and selection; curriculum; instruction/delivery systems; internship/practicum; program evaluation; and professional development), “Issues to Consider” have been highlighted and “Questions for Oregon” policy makers have been posed for consideration when assessing the future needs of the state’s university-based educational administration preparation programs. When the sections are considered as a whole there are several summary points that stand out with policy implications.

The philosophy and design of many educational preparation programs reflect a new vision and understanding of leadership for a changing society. Transformational and shared leadership are represented among “best practices” as the preferred model for reframed preparation programs along with a driving focus on instruction and the success of all children. This model is reflected in the
standards set by a variety of professional organizations and state departments of education for professional preparation in place of a more traditional and managerial approach to school leadership.

In the recruitment and selection of administrative candidates there is a clear concern nation-wide about the diversity of candidates entering educational administration. This concern is echoed in Oregon preparation programs, and seems to be exacerbated by the selection processes most commonly utilized; self-selection and supervisor nomination. Disincentives such as the high cost of preparation are also at work and need to be addressed to develop a larger and more diverse candidate pool that is more representative of the students they will serve.

Instruction/delivery systems for preparation programs are the focus of much debate. Instructional practices are increasingly grounded in a more holistic, experiential, and constructivist orientation rather than traditional lecture and discussion. Instructional innovations include inductive, problem-based learning, cooperative learning, collaborative research, and reflective practice. The cohort model is increasingly utilized with the expectation that students, faculty, and school district personnel become a learning community. Technology has become integral to instructional delivery and communication.

Curriculum for administrative preparation programs today combines knowledge, skills, and dispositions, delivered in a learner-centered setting, utilizing principles of adult learning theory. Among other issues, topics of study should include leadership, shaping a shared vision, democratic schooling, school improvement, change, ethics, and social justice along with traditional managerial
knowledge and skills. A thorough understanding of the teaching and learning processes of an increasingly diverse student population is needed.

While internships may now be a part of most candidates’ preparation, there remains much confusion about the length and emphasis internships play in that preparation. The quality of associated mentorships and opportunities for targeted administrative experiences vary widely across the nation. Clearly candidates and districts require increased support to provide in-depth quality practicum opportunities.

Systematic program evaluation that assesses whether preparation programs’ claims of preparing candidates capable of actually implementing changes resulting in improved teaching and student learning is lacking across the country. Evaluation procedures utilizing national standards such as NCATE/ELCC are moving toward a performance-based outcomes model, but validity studies of these and state standards have yet to be developed and studied in actual practice in schools to determine program effectiveness.

Professional development offered in the traditional manner of discrete and isolated in-services has resulted in often ineffectual and inefficient use of professionals’ time. Best practice demands that content be more tightly organized to match topics covered in preparation programs, recent research, and context specific or current district initiatives and state mandates. Mentoring, coaching, and feedback have been shown to be essential in fostering adoption of new educational techniques and strategies.
Policy Recommendations:

In order to seriously address the concerns raised in the literature review presented here, the following policy recommendations are presented with the further advice that they be studied and acted upon in the future.

- Initiate and support a sustained recruitment and selection process of under represented populations in administrator candidates and university faculty membership.

- Provide substantive and comprehensive research-based pre and in-service internship opportunities along with the financial support to ensure a pool of well-prepared beginning administrators.

- Establish strategically coordinated and designed statewide professional development opportunities for beginning and practicing administrators that meets the needs of adult learners.

- Conduct research in Oregon schools to validate the usefulness and relevance of varied national and state performance standards that guide administrator preparation programs.

- Encourage the development of a social justice and diversity curriculum centered on the teaching and learning process.

- Develop a research process for following preparation program graduates to determine the causal links between program content and instruction and the ability of school administrators (program graduates) to promote effective teaching and learning and raise student achievement in their schools.

- Identify through research the unique, site-specific leadership challenges and local community priorities within the Oregon context.
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