Learning to Lead?
What Gets Taught in Principal Preparation Programs

Frederick M. Hess - American Enterprise Institute
rhess@aei.org
Andrew P. Kelly - American Enterprise Institute
akelly@aei.org

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Executive Summary

Today, school principals are asked to lead in a new world marked by unprecedented responsibilities, challenges, and managerial opportunities. Are principal preparation programs equipping their charges for this new role? We examined the content of instruction at a stratified sample of the nation's principal preparation programs, including the programs training the most candidates, the programs regarded as the most prestigious, and more typical programs.

We surveyed 56 programs and collected at least four "core" course syllabi from 31 that met the standards permitting systematic coding for a total of 210 syllabi. The syllabi yielded 2,424 total course weeks. Key findings include:

- Generally, there were surprising similarities across the various types of programs.
- Just 2% of 2,424 course weeks addressed accountability in the context of school management or school improvement and less than 5% included instruction on managing school improvement via data, technology, or empirical research.
- Eleven percent of 2,424 course weeks made mention of or reference to statistics, data, or empirical research in some context.
- Eleven percent of course weeks dealt with instructional management issues like curriculum development, pedagogy, classroom management, and learning theory.
- Of 360 course weeks devoted to personnel management, just twelve weeks mentioned teacher dismissal and nine mentioned teacher compensation. Just 11% of course weeks devoted to personnel management addressed the recruitment, selection, or hiring of new teachers.
- Forty-two percent of courses on technical knowledge of school law, school finance, and facilities did not entail a final assessment to ensure that students have mastered the content.
- One percent of course weeks dealt with school public relations and small business skills, while less than one percent addressed parental or school board relations.

Critics often assert that education schools are ideological. Is there evidence of bias?

- In fact, just 12% of course weeks (293 of 2,424) focused upon norms and values, with the percentage higher in elite programs and lower in other programs.
- In the 293 norms and values course weeks, however, there was strong evidence of normative bias in the topic descriptions and assigned readings—with 190 course weeks identifiably left-leaning, 102 neutral, and one identifiably right-leaning.

What authors do students primarily read in the course of principal preparation?

- The most commonly assigned authors included: Terence Deal, Kent Peterson, Allan Odden, Thomas Sergiovanni, Richard Elmore, and Michael Fullan.
- Influential scholars of educational management, governance, or productivity largely absent from assigned reading included Paul Hill, Larry Cuban, William Boyd, Michael Kirst, and Jim Guthrie.
- Of the 50 most influential living management thinkers, as determined by a 2003 survey of management professionals and scholars, just nine were assigned in the 210 courses. Their work was assigned a total of 29 times out of 1,851 readings.

Introduction

School leadership is the key to school improvement. School principals are the front-line managers, the small business executives, the battlefield commanders charged with leading their team to new levels of effectiveness. In this new era of accountability, where school leaders are expected to demonstrate bottom-line results and use data to drive decisions, the skill and knowledge of principals matter more than ever. The rise of charter schooling, increasing school choice, and more flexible teacher compensation and hiring have granted thousands of principals new opportunities to exercise discretion and operate with previously unimagined leeway. In this environment, school improvement rests to an unprecedented degree on the quality of school leadership.

Superintendents make clear that they hold new and more demanding expectations for principals. Public Agenda notes that when today's superintendents "describe what they are trying to accomplish" they use the words "accountability, instructional leadership, closing the achievement gap, [and] teacher quality" (Farkas et al. 2003: 22). However, principals themselves suggest that they are not fully equipped for all of the challenges they face. Just 36% of principals report that tougher scrutiny of teachers is resulting in denied tenure for weak teachers and just 30% that students' assessed performance is being factored into the evaluation of teachers (Farkas et al. 2003: 21).

In this changing context, an array of scholars has asked whether traditional approaches to preparing and licensing principals are sufficient (Elmore 2000; Fordham Foundation 2003; Hess 2003; Murphy 2001; Tucker 2003). Leaders of the University Council for Education Administration have asserted that "in order to build programs that support leadership for learning—we must rethink and revise our practice in several areas"

(Young and Kochan 2004: 121). Theodore Kowalski, an influential scholar of educational administration, has advocated "substantial reforms in administrator preparation, program accreditation, and state licensing standards" (2004: 93).

Principals themselves are among the first to agree that they need to be more effectively prepared for their jobs. All but 4% of practicing principals report that on-the-job experiences or guidance from colleagues has been more helpful in preparing them for their current position than their graduate school studies. In fact, 67% of principals reported that "typical leadership programs in graduate schools of education are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today's school districts" (Farkas et al. 2003: 39).

A recent four-year study by the president of Teachers College at Columbia University, Arthur Levine (2005), raised the stakes in this debate by harshly assessing the quality of educational administration programs. Based on a survey of practicing principals and education school deans, chairs, faculty, and alumni, as well as case studies of 25 school leadership programs, Levine concluded that "the majority of [educational administration] programs range from inadequate to appalling, even at some of the country's leading universities" (2005: 23). In particular, he found that the typical course of studies required of principal candidates was largely disconnected from the realities of school management, though Levine did not seek to analyze the content of these courses. In light of the Levine analysis, and given the increasing demands on school leaders, the question of what candidates are actually being taught in principal preparation has taken on heightened significance.

Unfortunately, there exists no systematic information addressing this question. In this study, we set out to examine what candidates are taught in the core courses that constitute principal preparation at established principal preparation programs.

This question includes a range of more specific queries and concerns, including:

- Are principals taught the fundamentals of management?
- Are principals trained in instruction and pedagogy?
- Is there evidence of a clear ideological direction in instruction?
- Is there significant variation among the preparation offered in the most prestigious, the largest, and more typical institutions?

Absent a clear understanding of just what principals are learning in the course of their preparation, debates about how we should change principal preparation or about the importance of preparation and licensure rest more on faith than fact. Inevitably, we approach the analysis with certain conceptions of the skills and knowledge that contemporary principals require. We believe that effective principal preparation ought to include significant attention to accountability, managing with data, and utilizing research; to hiring, recruiting, evaluating, and terminating personnel; to overseeing an effective instructional program; and to exposing candidates to diverse views regarding educational and organizational management. The findings here do not provide clear-cut prescriptions as to what programs should teach, but they can help guide recommendations for reforming programs and policy.

We examined the course units and required readings contained in 210 syllabi collected from a national cross-section of 31 principal preparation programs. While some in the professional education community have argued that syllabi can tell us nothing

about a course or, as David Labaree has suggested, are nothing more than "ideological portraits" (quoted in Keller 2003: 8), this study presumes that university syllabi generally reflect the content and perspective of the courses being taught. While syllabi cannot convey the tone of classroom instruction, they enumerate what topics professors will cover and what students will read. Ultimately, this study rests on the notion that syllabi are like blueprints: they reveal structure and design, even if they do not fully reflect what real-life instruction looks like. Recognizing that blueprints necessarily lack context, we sought to avoid relying upon simple word counts. Rather, we gauged the emphasis of each lesson and coded each into one of seven areas of principal competency. Within each area, we then coded the various lessons based on their primary focus. This two-step approach allowed us to provide a broad take on the curricular landscape and to explore particular topics in some detail.

Existing Research

Almost no current research systematically documents the content studied in the nation's principal preparation programs, the instructional focus, or the readings assigned to students. Beyond the 2005 Levine study, recent research and commentary has focused on the need to reshape the principal's role so that school leaders are more focused on increasing student achievement, driving school improvement, and meeting the challenges of standards-based accountability and charter schools (Grogan and Andrews 2002; Portin et. al. 2003). In this study, we document the attention devoted to seven areas of principal responsibility, each of which have been deemed vital to effective school leadership by at least some leading thinkers in the field. The seven are: managing for results, managing personnel, technical knowledge, external leadership, norms and values, managing

classroom instruction, and leadership and school culture. Clearly, there are other ways to frame this list of skills, and other skills that might be included, but we believe this a useful and constructive rubric for examining the attention devoted to important areas of knowledge.

Scholars of educational leadership have highlighted the importance of each of these seven categories. First, the "managing for results" category, as envisioned for this study, mirrors the skills set forth by Tucker and Codding (2002). They suggested that preparation should stress the "principal's role as the driver for results" and highlight "the crucial role of data in the drive for results, from the careful setting of targets to the collection, display, and analysis of implementation and outcome data to the use of data for setting goals, monitoring progress, allocating and reallocating resources, and managing the school program" (37).

Second, the principal's role in "managing personnel" has taken on new significance as the pressures of accountability increase the expectations on school leaders to hire, induct, and evaluate personnel in a sensible manner. As the most commonly assigned human resources text states, "School districts are ethically bound to find the most talented and skilled people available to achieve their mandate of educating children" (Rebore 2004: 93). Recent survey data from Public Agenda reveals that 78 percent of superintendents and 57 percent of principals believe that principals are evaluated based on their ability to "judge and improve teacher quality" (Farkas et al., 2003: 21).

Third, the longstanding emphasis on "technical knowledge" of school law, school finance, and facilities management in principal preparation has fallen out of favor of late. As Ferrandino and Tirrozi (2004) recently put it, "Yesterday's principal was often a desk-

bound, disciplinarian building manager who was more concerned with the buses running on time than academic outcomes." Nonetheless, teaching aspiring principals this body of vocational knowledge remains an identifiable, significant element of instruction. Recent survey data reveal that 82 percent of principals report dealing with school facilities, resources, or procedures every day while only 40 percent say the same about driving student achievement (Education Week 2004).

Fourth, issues of external leadership loom large in the educational administration discourse. Scholars of educational leadership have pointed out the importance of dealing with external constituencies and attending to school board relations, school-community partnerships, and school politics (Bagin & Gallagher 2001; Kowalski 1995). As Hoy and Miskel (2005) point out in one commonly assigned leadership text, "understanding the existing and budding environmental influences is of extreme importance to school administrators" (241).

Fifth, educational administration thinkers and scholars have long argued for the centrality of "norms and values" in promoting equitable and effective schooling (Sergiovanni 1992; Ryan & Bohlin 1999; Meier 1995; Cochran-Smith 2004). Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2004) asserts that because schooling is inherently political, "participants" in the educational process "deliberately claim the role of educator as well as activist based on political consciousness and on ideological commitment to diminishing the inequities of American life" (19).

Finally, receiving less attention in this analysis—in part because they are the most commonly discussed elements of leadership preparation—are the topics "instructional leadership" and "school culture." Instructional leadership, in particular, tends to

encompass the many different facets of school management (DuFour 2002; King 2002; Murphy 2002; Supovitz & Poglinco 2001; Elmore 2000). For the purposes of this study we have adopted a focused conception of instructional leadership that emphasizes matters of pedagogy, curriculum, and classroom management.[1] With regard to culture, leading scholars have observed, "School culture affects every part of the enterprise from what faculty talk about in the lunch room, to the type of instruction that is valued…to the importance of learning for all students" (Peterson & Deal 1999: 7). While both sets of issues are important, this study focuses more upon the prevalence of skills that are newly significant in educational leadership.

To date, existing research has not scrutinized the attention devoted to each of these vital management questions in the course of principal preparation. The only previously published study to explore the content of administrator preparation using course syllabi was conducted by Nicolaides and Gaynor (1992). The authors analyzed 36 syllabi from doctoral programs at the 37 University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) programs to examine the focus of administrative theory courses and isolated five basic themes: theoretical and historical foundations, process and change, sociopolitical structures, leadership, and culture and symbols. A related effort by Norton and Levan (1987) surveyed UCEA doctoral programs and found that more than 60 percent of content addressed managing personnel, school administration, and technical knowledge of law and finance.

Two recent studies, conducted by Steiner (2004) and Butin (2004), have examined the content of syllabi in *teacher* preparation programs. Steiner's analysis

[1] Jamentz (2001) highlights this set of skills and asserts that principals must be actively engaged in constructing standards-based curricula, aligned assessments, and demonstrating and coaching effective teaching and learning practices.

examined 165 required-course syllabi from 14 elite teacher preparation programs and two other programs, focusing specifically on the areas of foundations, reading instruction, and math instruction. Butin analyzed 89 education foundations syllabi from 85 teacher preparation programs that had syllabi posted on the internet. Steiner argued that the data showed that teacher preparation courses were ideologically biased, while Butin disputed Steiner's finding.

The field of educational leadership has suffered from a general dearth of systematic scholarly inquiry. Leading authorities have pointedly observed that the overall landscape of educational administration research is "considerably bleaker than most would prefer" (Murphy and Vriesenga 2004: 11).[2] In particular, educational administration scholars have termed the body of research on administrator preparation "scant" (Lashway 2003). For instance, a recent effort to analyze the state of administrator preparation conducted by the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) commissioned six papers which yielded essays on topics like the challenges of reforming administrator preparation (Young et al. 2002), the need to rethink the foundations of leadership preparation (Murphy 2002), promising training programs across the country (Jackson and Kelley 2002), and a "self-evaluation" for preparation programs (Glasman et al. 2002). While useful, the NCAELP effort did not seek to present systematic data regarding what preparation programs do or what they teach.

[2] While scholars have examined the link between the values and beliefs of administrators and effective schooling (Krug et al. 1991), looked at "clusters" of leadership behavior and their relationship to school performance (Heck 1990), discussed the concept of "distributive leadership,"(Spillane et al. 2001) and reviewed previous research to determine the importance of the principal's role in effective schooling (Hallinger and Heck 1998), this work is regarded as more suggestive than conclusive.

The larger body of literature on educational administration preparation reflects the NCAELP effort; it consists primarily of essays or anecdotal descriptions of particular programs. According to Murphy and Vriesenga (2004), between 1975 and 2002, 296 articles on any facet of administrator preparation were published in academic journals. Of these, just 81 (or 27.4%) were empirical in some sense, and just 19 of those addressed any element of administrator preparation curricula.

Most of these 19 covered a particular curricular domain like technology (Garland, 1990, Bozeman and Spuck 1992; Spuck and Bozeman 1992), diversity (Parker and Shapiro 1992; Herrity and Glasman 1999), social justice (Lyman and Villani 2002), counseling aptitude (Lampe 1985), supervision and decision-making skills (Sweeney and Moeller 1984; Roberts 1991), or special education (Hirth and Valesky 1990; Sirotnik and Kimball 1994).[3] The only two that were similar to the present inquiry have already been discussed above. Ultimately, Murphy and Vriesenga (2004) have concluded, "From the extant research, we know almost nothing about the traditional curricular domains of preparation programs…nor…the shape of curriculum in a post-theory era where issues around teaching and learning and community are reshaping the profession" (p. 24).

Methods

This study sought to examine what skills and knowledge are being taught in principal preparation programs and how that material was being approached. Ultimately, we were able to collect 210 syllabi from 31 programs. Data collection, coding, and analysis took place between February and December 2004, and participating scholars and

[3] Other studies analyzed the effect of extra training in "interpersonal management" on candidates' interpersonal skills like "physical attending, empathy, respect, and concreteness" (Smith et al. 1992: 243) and surveyed administrators to identify skills that they report principals need (Schmeider et al. 1994; Daresh et al. 2000).

institutions were promised anonymity. In all cases, the most recent available syllabi from each institution were collected. In the handful of cases where programs indicated that old syllabi were obsolete but new syllabi had not yet been constructed, no syllabi were collected.

Sample

In early 2004, The U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) listed 496 administrator preparation programs. This study drew its sample from three categories of those programs: influential elite programs, large programs that train the most candidates, and more typical programs. This sampling strategy was designed so as to avoid the criticisms that have been made of the Steiner (2004) study of teacher preparation syllabi which looked primarily at elite preparation programs, said by critics to be atypical of standard practice. Our sampling strategy allowed us to see whether practice varied between elite and non-elite, or between large and small programs.

The pool of elite programs included the 20 ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2004 as the nation's top administration programs (two schools were tied for 20th). Large programs included the 20 educational leadership preparation programs that awarded the largest number of M.Ed. degrees as reported by IPEDS in 2003.[4] IPEDS is the only national source available on completion of administrator preparation programs, and the 2003 data was the most recent available when the study commenced. A third

[4] Because principal candidates will often take classes at two or more different institutions over the course of obtaining their credential, schools often do not keep records of the number of principals certified each year and the IPEDS database does not keep track of the number of certificates that are awarded by individual schools.

group of 20 programs was randomly drawn from the remaining universe of IPEDS institutions.

From this initial pool of 61 programs, 56 qualified for analysis. The 21 "elite" programs yielded a total of 19. One program was excluded because it does not have a principal preparation program and a second because it operates an unorthodox accelerated licensure track that does not have courses with syllabi. The 20 largest programs yielded 17 eligible for analysis. One program was incorrectly included in the IPEDS rankings. A second was dropped because its M.Ed. in educational leadership does not lead to licensure or certification in any state and requires candidates to take additional courses at other institutions to fulfill state guidelines. A third program offered only a nontraditional certification program without conventional courses.

From this sample of 56 eligible programs, we were able to collect at least four "core" course syllabi amenable to analysis from 31 (55% of the entire sample of 56). Of the 19 eligible elite programs, we were able to retrieve at least four "core" syllabi from 13. Of the 17 eligible "large" programs, we obtained at least four syllabi from 11 that met our standards for coding. Of the approximately 450 other preparation programs, we randomly selected 20 for inclusion in the third group. Of these, we collected at least four syllabi from 12 of the programs, though only seven sets of syllabi met the standards for systematic coding.

Syllabi Selection

For each program, we sought to collect syllabi for the courses that constituted the core of the principal preparation program. For those schools which did not have a clearly

delineated principal preparation track, we contacted the institutions to determine which courses were required of principal candidates.

Generally, programs had five to ten core courses that were required of all aspiring principals. Beyond that, some programs required candidates to complete unspecified electives, while others offered candidates a menu of classes from which to choose. In the case of unspecified electives, we did not seek additional materials. In cases where schools required students to take a set number of electives from a specific list of eligible classes, we randomly sampled a number of syllabi from the list equal to the number of required electives.

The final analysis only includes programs from which we collected at least four syllabi from core courses and the specified menu of electives. Consequently, the analysis includes at least four syllabi from each of the 31 programs.

Syllabi Collection

The retrieval process involved three steps. First the schools' websites were searched for target syllabi that were available online. At the handful of institutions where the majority of core course syllabi were available online, individual professors who taught the remaining courses were contacted to request additional syllabi. Each faculty member was contacted three times to request their participation.

At the vast majority of institutions, where few or none of the school's syllabi were available online, we contacted the department via email to request the materials. For schools that did not present a clearly delineated list of principal certification classes, the email requested a list of required courses and the corresponding syllabi. Each program was contacted at least eight times. Occasionally, department chairs deferred to the

individual professors to provide their syllabi. In these cases individuals were contacted at least three times to request their cooperation.

Standards for Including Syllabi

We were able to collect 243 syllabi in accord with these collection rules.[5] To be included in the sample, syllabi had to provide a clear course outline that enumerated specific topics for each week, class, or unit. Syllabi that listed only "course objectives," or that lacked any obvious weekly structure were not included. Ultimately, these restrictions dictated that we discard 33 deficient syllabi, producing a final total of 210 syllabi.

Coding

The various course weeks of instruction were coded according to the seven categories: managing for results, managing personnel, technical knowledge, external leadership, norms and values, managing classroom instruction, and leadership and school culture. The handful of weeks that surveyed multiple topics or that encompassed other specialized topics that did not fit this rubric were coded "other".

The "managing for results" category encompassed course weeks dedicated to school-level program implementation, evaluation, and organizational change efforts that require an active principal role. The specific focus of the weeks that comprise this category typically included issues like "accountability," "evaluation," "assessments," "data management," "decision-making," "strategy," "organizational structure," and "change."

[5] Three of the 210 syllabi included in the final sample did not have specific topics listed but did include assigned readings. Because the topic of the session could be gleaned from the readings, these syllabi were included.

The weeks coded "managing personnel" entailed any course weeks that dealt with a principal's relations with school employees, primarily teachers but also assistant principals, specialists, and staff members. These weeks discussed issues like "recruitment," "selection," "induction," "teacher evaluation," "clinical supervision," "motivation," "conflict management," "professional development," and "termination" or "dismissal."

The "technical knowledge" category entailed all weeks that dealt with instruction on matters of law, finance, facilities, data and research training, or technology. These course weeks discussed "school funding," "budgeting," "due process," "church and state," "student and teacher freedoms," "tort law," "literature reviews," "sampling," "statistical analyses," and "database management."

Those weeks coded as addressing "external leadership" dealt with the instruction that focused on the principal's relations with external constituents. Lessons that covered school board relations, collective bargaining, public relations and marketing, parent and community relations, and politics and policy were coded as external leadership.

The "norms and values" category entailed weeks that exposed principal candidates to different educational and pedagogical philosophies, discussed debates about the nature and purpose of public schooling, and examined the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic context of education (the sociology of education). These weeks typically included lessons on "stratification," "multiculturalism," "diversity," "constructivism," "inequality," "equity," "social justice," and "gender."

The "leadership and school culture" weeks encompassed those lessons that discussed leadership theory and the principal's role in cultivating school culture. Typical

topics in this category included “the frames of leadership,” “symbolic leadership,” “leadership vs. management,” “creating a school culture,” “leading with vision,” and “school climate.”

Weeks coded as “managing classroom instruction” dealt with the principal’s role and influence on what occurred in the classroom. Course weeks focused on “curriculum,” “learning theories,” “instructional leadership,” “pedagogy,” “classroom management,” and “collaborative learning” were coded as managing classroom instruction.

Findings

The primary unit of analysis for this study is the “course week”—or what principal candidates primarily studied during a week in a given course. Because the 210 syllabi averaged more than ten course weeks apiece, analysis of the full sample yielded a total of 2,424 course weeks.

The initial review sought to examine the amount of attention paid to the various areas of leadership across all coded syllabi. Table 1 shows the relative attention (measured in *course weeks*) that principal preparation courses paid to the seven major strands of school leadership outlined above. Programs devoted more than a quarter of their time to technical knowledge, about 15% to managing for results and managing personnel, and less to other areas.

Table 1: What Leadership Programs Cover

School Type	Managing for Results	Managing Personnel	Technical Knowledge	External Leadership	Norms and Values	Leadership and School Culture	Managing Classroom Instruction	Survey/ Other
Elite	17.1% (166/972)	13.3% (129/972)	24.9% (242/972)	9.5% (92/972)	14.9% (145/972)	7.3% (71/972)	11.8% (115/972)	1.2% (12/972)
Large	12.9% (107/827)	15.2% (126/827)	36.0% (298/827)	7.1% (59/827)	8.1% (67/827)	4.1% (34/827)	12.0 % (99/827)	4.5% (37/827)
Typical	17.3% (108/625)	16.8% (105/625)	28.5% (178/625)	6.9% (43/625)	13.0% (81/625)	6.6% (41/625)	8.0% (50/625)	3.0% (19/625)
Total	15.7% (381/2424)	14.9% (360/2424)	29.6% (718/2424)	8.0% (194/2424)	12.1% (293/2424)	6.0% (146/2424)	10.9% (264/2424)	2.8% (68/2424)

Striking in Table 1 are the broad similarities across the three kinds of programs. While the critiques of the Steiner study said that elite education school programs were atypical of common practice, we find little evidence of systematic variation among programs in the kinds of topics they address. There are noticeable differences in emphasis, but they are not nearly as distinct as some observers might have anticipated. While the figures in Table 1 should be interpreted with caution, they provide a rough sense of how time was allocated.

Managing for Results

"Managing for results" included those weeks linking school management with issues of quality control, improved performance, and rethinking or restructuring practices and routines. Weeks addressing managing for results focused on school-level implementation, evaluation, and organizational change efforts that require an active principal role. In general, about 16% of course weeks were devoted to managing for results.

In an era of No Child Left Behind and aggressive state efforts to ensure that every child is well-served, utilizing state assessments and leveraging accountability systems is a vital piece of effective school leadership. Public Agenda's 2003 survey of administrators asserts that 63% of superintendents report that raising student achievement is the biggest

part of a principal's evaluation and that 47% have moved a successful principal to a low-performing school to help it improve (Farkas et al. 2003: 23). However, while 73% of today's superintendents also think holding principals accountable for student learning is a "good idea" and just 18% that it's a "bad idea," 45% of principals term the idea a "bad" one and just 41% a "good" one (Farkas et al. 2003: 38). Given that current principals express this kind of evident discomfort with accountability, how much attention are programs devoting to accountability in training principal candidates?

In practice, just 50 of 381, or about 13%, of "managing for results" course weeks linked school management to standards-based accountability systems, state assessments, or the new demands of No Child Left Behind. This means that only about 2% of all course weeks addressed accountability as it relates to school management. Accountability was mentioned fewer than five times in other contexts, such as those relating to school law or policy, but these instances only accounted for a fraction of the attention to the topic.

Table 2: Managing for Results with Accountability

Type of School	Percentage of "Managing for Results" Course Weeks Linked to Accountability, State Assessments, or NCLB
Elite	13.3% (22 /166)
Large	14.0% (15 /107)
Typical	12.0% (13 /108)
Total	13.1% (50 /381)

Of course, as Theodore Creighton (2001) and others have noted, one precondition for using accountability as an effective management tool is that principals be equipped to make use of data, research, and the associated technology. How much attention are preparation programs devoting to these topics? Table 3 shows that the 381 course weeks devoted to "managing for results" involved "data, technology, or research" about 29% of

the time. These course weeks addressed topics like "Data-driven decision-making…the process of data collection and analysis at the district level" (Syllabus 66: Week 7) and "The bottom line: The principal's impact on student achievement…[using] data analysis" (Syllabus 88: Week 15). There was much variation in how individual programs covered these topics.

Table 3: Managing for Results with Data and Research

Type of School	Percentage of "Managing for Results" Course Weeks That Mention "Data, Technology, or Research"
Elite	28.3% (47/166)
Large	38.3% (41/107)
Typical	19.4% (21/108)
Total	28.6% (109/381)

Combining the results from Tables 2 and 3 reveals an estimate of the total amount of time devoted to using accountability, data, research, or technology as management tools. The bottom line is that perhaps 6-7% of instruction addressed one of these topics as it relates to managing school improvement. Course weeks that discussed managing for results without referencing accountability, data, or research often expressed a more spiritual approach to school improvement. One such course week asked, "How do we engage the moral and aesthetic imagination in the educational change process?" (Syllabus 57: Week 1).

Another way to characterize the attention paid to data and research is to ask what percentage of all course weeks included a description, reading, or assignment that referenced data or research. Overall, 263 out of 2,424, or 11%, of weeks referenced statistics, data, or empirical research in some context. In short, these results seem to reveal that issues of data and research receive very limited attention in principal preparation programs.

Managing Personnel

A critical role for any leader is hiring, evaluating, developing, and firing personnel. This category included course weeks addressing the hiring process (recruitment, selection, interviewing), employee motivation, teacher evaluation, and conflict management. About 15% of course weeks were devoted to personnel management.

While principals have always been limited in their ability to hire, remove, or reward personnel—due to state statutes, district procedures, staffing routines, collective bargaining provisions, and so on—they are now pressed both by expectations and by statute to play an increasingly aggressive role in ensuring teacher quality. In fact *Education Week* reports that 80% of principals believe they have a great deal of influence over evaluating teachers and that 74% say the same about hiring new personnel (2004: S7).

In light of these developments, the question arises: How much are training programs doing to prepare principals for the challenges of personnel management? The importance of the issue is highlighted by a 1999 study of 54 U.S. companies which concluded that the cost of the average managerial "mis-hire" was 24 times the failed employee's starting salary (Smart 1999). Table 4 illustrates that about 11% of the managing personnel course weeks addressed the various facets of the hiring process: recruitment, selection, interviewing, and placement. Coverage of the hiring process varied from program to program, with some paying no attention to recruitment, selection, or placement. In all, 21 of 31 programs, or 68%, covered the hiring process only once or not at all in all syllabi coded.

Table 4: Time Devoted to Recruitment and Hiring

School Type	Percentage of "managing personnel" course weeks addressing hiring process
Elite	7.0% (9/129)
Large	11.1% (14/126)
Typical	17.1% (18/105)
Total	11.4% (41/360)

While hiring good faculty is one challenge that principals face, a second critical task is evaluating personnel. How much time do various programs devote to helping principals learn to evaluate teachers? Table 5 shows that about 24% of the 360 course weeks that addressed managing personnel were devoted to teacher evaluation.

Table 5: Time Devoted to Evaluating Teachers

Type of School	Percentage of "Managing Personnel" Course Weeks Addressing "Teacher Evaluation"
Elite	31.8 % (41/129)
Large	20.6% (26/126)
Typical	17.1% (18/105)
Total	23.6% (85/360)

Table 5 suggests that a significant percentage of personnel management is devoted to faculty evaluation. However, the obvious question that emerges is the degree to which principals are being equipped to make important decisions about tenure, compensation, and professional development based on those judgments.

Table 6 examines the focus of the 85 course weeks devoted to teacher evaluation. Weeks addressing teacher evaluation that encompassed the more agreeable, supportive elements of the process like "observation," "clinical supervision," "coaching," or "mentoring" were coded "supportive" evaluation. Meanwhile, weeks devoted to less genial topics, like linking evaluation to student performance, evaluating teachers using non-observational data, rewarding excellence, or "remediating" or dismissing low-performing faculty were coded "tough-minded" evaluation.

Table 6: Teacher Evaluation: Tough-Minded vs. Supportive

Type of School	Teacher Evaluation Course Weeks	Tough-Minded	Supportive
Elite	41	26.8% (11/41)	73.2% (30/41)
Large	26	26.9% (7/26)	73.1% (19/26)
Typical	18	22.2% (4/18)	77.8% (14/18)
Total	85	25.9% (22/85)	74.1 % (63/85)

Table 6 shows that "tough-minded" evaluation received much less attention than did "supportive" evaluation. "Tough-minded" evaluation accounted for just 22 of 85 (26%) course weeks devoted to evaluation. This means that less than 1% of all instruction in the syllabi examined focused on aggressive efforts to identify, enhance, and reward teacher quality. Michael Fullan, one of the most frequently assigned authors in the syllabi, captured a common theme in the discussions of evaluation when he wrote, "Appraisal schemes that implicate 100% of the staff in order to detect a small percentage of incompetents are a gross waste of time. . . Any appraisal schemes should be decidedly focused on growth and development" (Fullan 1996: 10-11). In fact, course weeks routinely focused on procedural questions (e.g. "Cycles of supervision: What's due when," Syllabus 59: Week 7) or finding ways to support problematic staff (e.g. "Supervising the marginal teacher" Syllabus 135: Week 7; "Working with difficult people," Syllabus 188: Week 10).

To further examine this finding, we looked at how often managing personnel course weeks mentioned "tough-minded" notions like "termination," "dismissal," "firing," "teacher compensation," or "salary." Table 7 shows that just 3% of the personnel management course weeks made mention of teacher dismissal and less than 3% made mention of teacher compensation. In all, just 21 of 360 course weeks devoted to managing personnel addressed employee compensation or termination—two subjects that

typically receive significant attention when personnel management is addressed in other venues. Many programs did not discuss termination or compensation at all: 20 of 31 programs never mentioned termination, and 23 of 31 failed to mention compensation. None of the 31 programs mentioned either topic more than once.

Table 7: Dealing with Termination/Dismissal and Compensation

Type of School	"Managing Personnel" Course Weeks Addressing Teacher Dismissal	"Managing Personnel" Course Weeks Addressing Compensation
Elite	3.1% (4/129)	4.7% (6/129)
Large	5.6% (7/126)	0.8% (1/126)
Other	1.0% (1/105)	1.9% (2/105)
Total	3.3% (12/360)	2.5% (9/360)

This mindset contrasts sharply with the conventional wisdom in public and private sector management regarding the benefits of the selective use of evaluation, compensation, and termination for quality control. As former General Electric CEO Jack Welch—identified in a 2003 survey as one of the 50 "most important" living management thinkers—has explained: "Making these judgments is not easy, and they are not always precise…but...This is how great organizations are built. Year after year, differentiation raises the bar higher and higher and increases the overall caliber of the organization (2001: 158)." While the Welch model is not how schools operate, it would still seem appropriate to at least expose school leaders to such thinking on personnel management.

Although identifying and firing ineffective teachers can be difficult and costly, it is a task for which principals are responsible and should be regarded as an important element of building and maintaining a strong and accountable school. Overall, the preparation programs in the sample approach personnel management with little attention to teaching new principals to hire, evaluate, reward, or terminate employees. In fact,

some syllabi evince a peculiar take on these issues, as in the case of the course week that archly made reference to, “The symbolism of attempting to fire an incompetent teacher” (Syllabus 41: Week 8**).**

Technical Knowledge

While reformers discuss how to help principals focus more on improving school performance, the data suggest that principals continue to spend most of their work day on administrative issues and the nuts and bolts of running a school. For instance, a 2004 survey by *Education Week* revealed that 86% of principals report spending time each day on ensuring the security of their school and 82% spend part of their day managing facilities and resources (*Education Week* 2004). Presumably due to this reality, technical knowledge was the most frequently addressed topic in the syllabi examined. It encompassed 30% of the total course weeks—nearly twice the time devoted to any of the other six content areas.

The “technical knowledge” category included those course weeks which focused on topics like school law, school finance, facilities management, data training, research, technology, and related concerns like meeting coordination and food and transportation services. Data training and research were coded as technical knowledge when they were presented in the abstract rather than in a context linking them to schooling— in those weeks where use of data and research were linked to topics like assessment or program evaluation, “research” and “data” were coded as “managing for results” and included in Table 3.

What topics do preparation programs focus upon when teaching technical knowledge? Table 8 shows that nearly three-quarters of the time devoted to technical

knowledge was spent on education law and school finance. Of 718 course weeks devoted to technical knowledge, 324 (about 45%) focused on education law, and 196 (27%) on school finance. The remaining course weeks addressed research skills (10%), data management and utilization (7%), technology (5%), and facilities (4%). There was some variation across different kinds of programs. Elite programs devoted more than 85% of their attention to law and finance but just 5% to data, research skills, and technology. Meanwhile, both large and typical programs spent 27-32% of their technical knowledge instruction on data, technology, and research skills and 62-68% of their time on finance and law.

Table 8: The Coverage of Technical Leadership Skills

Type of School	Finance	Law	Facilities	Data training	Research Skills	Technology	Other
Elite	37.6% (91/242)	50.8% (123/242)	4.1% (10/242)	4.1% (10/242)	1.7% (4/242)	0% (0/242)	1.7% (4/242)
Large	16.1% (48/298)	45.6% (136/298)	4.7% (14/298)	10.7% (32/298)	14.4% (43/298)	7.0% (21/298)	1.3% (4/298)
Typical	32.0% (57/178)	36.5% (65/178)	3.9% (7/178)	6.2% (11/178)	14.0% (25/178)	7.3% (13/178)	0% (0/178)
Total	27.3% (196/718)	45.1% (324/718)	4.3% (31/718)	7.4% (53/718)	10.0% (72/718)	4.7% (34/718)	1.1% (8/718)

The titles of the technical knowledge course weeks raise some questions about the body of skills regarded as essential to school operations. Some courses on law, finance, facilities, and so on seem to have straightforward value, as with the weeks titled, "Preparation and Interpretation of Financial statements…[including] managing the accounting and control function" (Syllabus 19: Week 4) or "Revisit[ing] basic data distributions…[including] percentiles, inter-quartile ranges, descriptive statistics" (Syllabus 78: Week 2). On the other hand, some syllabi appear less focused on useful expertise, particularly those with lessons on "Financial equity: Should all students have a

constitutional right to an equal education? Should this require an equal or equitable allocation of funds to all schools?" (Syllabus 20: Week 9) or "Topics of silent, political, passive speech…valuing student speech, supporting versus tolerating speech…and civic and civil development of students" (Syllabus 51: Week 4). On the whole, however, a plain reading of the syllabi reveals that more than 85% of technical knowledge course weeks focused on operational and applied tasks.

Because topics like law, facilities, finance, and technology cover facts and formulas that principals are thought to need, we examined the extent to which courses teaching "technical knowledge" use final assessments to ensure mastery. We found that about 58% of 64 "technical knowledge" courses required students to take a final exam. Interestingly, while two-thirds of large and typical program courses in technical knowledge required exams, just 39% of the 23 elite courses examined did.

External Leadership

We also considered how much instruction was devoted to "external leadership" responsibilities such as working with constituencies like parents and community organizations, negotiating local politics, understanding collective bargaining agreements, and developing small business skills like marketing and public relations. In the aggregate, external leadership was addressed in about 8% of course weeks.

Table 9: Allocation of Time Within "External Leadership"

School Type	School Board	Parental relations	Small business skills	Community relations	Collective bargaining	Politics/Policy	Other
Elite	4.3% (4/92)	4.3% (4/92)	6.5% (6/92)	29.3% (27/92)	13.0% (12/92)	33.7% (31/92)	8.7% (8/92)
Large	6.8% (4/59)	0% (0/59)	23.7% (14/59)	20.3% (12/59)	22.0% (13/59)	22.0% (13/59)	5.1% (3/59)
Typical	2.3% (1/43)	2.3% (1/43)	16.3% (7/43)	11.6% (5/43)	2.3% (1/43)	34.9% (15/43)	30.2% (13/43)
Total	4.6% (9/194)	2.6% (5/194)	13.9% (27/194)	22.7% (44/194)	13.4% (26/194)	30.4% (59/194)	12.4% (24/194)

Within external leadership, Table 9 shows how much attention was devoted to specific topics of interest. The most attention was devoted to understanding politics and policy (30% of course weeks) and to community relations (23%). Small business skills and collective bargaining received significant attention in large programs, accounting for almost half of their external leadership course weeks, but only a fraction of that in elite or typical programs. Parental relations and dealing with the school board received minimal attention across the board, together accounting for only about 7% of external leadership course weeks.

Norms and Values

Education school critics assert that courses are often characterized by an ideological tilt that influences content (Steiner 2004). Does the evidence suggest such a bias in the case of principal preparation courses? The data in Table 1 suggests that only about 12% of course weeks explicitly focus on promoting particular norms or values. In the instruction that does address norms and values, is there evidence to support the claim that instructors are failing to expose students to diverse points of view?

Obviously, gauging the ideological content inevitably requires the researcher to make judgment calls.[6] All we can do here is assuage concerns by explaining the coding rules and providing examples to show how the coding metric was applied. Coded as "left-leaning" were course weeks that advocated concepts like social justice and multiculturalism, focused on inequality and race-based discrimination, emphasized notions of silenced voices and child-centered instruction, or were critical of testing and choice-based reform. Those weeks that critiqued notions of social justice and multiculturalism, critiqued a focus on inequality or discrimination as engaging in "victimhood," advocated phonics and back-to-basics instruction, or framed discussions of testing or choice-based reform in positive terms were coded as "right-leaning." Those weeks which did not display clear normative direction or which included a variety of normative views were coded "neutral."

For examples of how this metric was applied, some of the course weeks that were coded as left-leaning included:

- "The role of the curriculum in legitimating social inequality" (Syllabus 8: Week 10)
- "What role(s) do race and social class play in school reform? Is social Darwinism a useful reform concept?" (Syllabus 35: Week 9)

[6] It is, of course, theoretically possible for faculty to assign readings of one ideological perspective and then use instructional time to ensure balanced consideration. This analysis, however, proceeds on the premise that class instruction and course readings are important determinants of what students learn. We presume that courses in which students are exposed to a variety of perspectives are more likely to foster open inquiry and instruction.

- "Other silenced voices? (females, gay, impaired, over/underweight, bullied, biracial, . . . religion, homeless, transient, etc.). Sexism and gender roles? Equity? Heterosexism and gay issues?" (Syllabus 40: Week 11)[7]

Course weeks that were coded as balanced/neutral/ or indeterminate included:

- "Are unions good or bad for public education? What does the evidence say?" (Syllabus 22: Week 2)
- "Educational productivity, assessing educational productivity, does money matter? Improving productivity...class size, vouchers, charter schools" (Syllabus 33: Weeks 8 & 9)
- "What should schools teach? Phonics vs. whole language; multicultural education/teaching for diversity" (Syllabus 161: Week 3).

The single course week coded "right-leaning" was titled "The state and local politics of education reform" (Syllabus 23: Week 12) and was coded as such because the week's primary reading was authored by a well-known scholar regarded as conservative.

Table 10 shows the distribution of normative perspectives during the "norms and values" course weeks.

[7] Other examples include, "Transforming urban education with a social justice agenda: The role of the Brown Decision in the fight for social justice in urban communities" (Syllabus 92: Week 2); Fomenting social change" (Syllabus 128: Week 6); and "Tools for change: Social reconstructionist schooling" (Syllabus 174: Week 4).

Table 10: Distribution of Normative Perspectives

Type of School	Norms and Values Course Weeks	Normative Left	Normative Right	Balanced/Neutral/ Indeterminate
Elite	145	70.3% (102/145)	0.6% (1/145)	29.7% (42/145)
Large	67	65.7% (44/67)	0.0% (0/67)	34.3% (23/67)
Typical	81	54.3% (44/81)	0.0% (0/81)	45.7% (37/81)
Total	293	64.8% (190/293)	0.3% (1/293)	34.8% (102/293)

Table 10 suggests that there is a distinct left-leaning normative tilt in those weeks that address norms and values. Overall 65% of the norms and values weeks were coded as left-leaning, 35% as balanced, neutral, or indeterminate, and less than 1% as right-leaning. Contrary to earlier suggestions that elite programs were atypically biased, the left-leaning tendency was evident at all three kinds of programs. It was most marked at elite and large programs, but even at typical programs the majority of course weeks were left-leaning and none were right-leaning. Interestingly, many of the traditional bogeymen flagged by education school critics were not much in evidence. For instance, the words “diversity” and “diverse” and “multiculturalism” and “multicultural” appeared in only 3% of all course weeks.

In the end, however, the imbalance of ideological perspectives does raise cautionary flags about instructor’s interest in entertaining competing schools of thought on leadership. For instance, courses titled “Leadership, Diversity, and Social Justice” (Syllabus 174) or weeks labeled “Suturing together a conservative public agenda: markets, religion, standards, and inequality” (Syllabus 8: Week 9) raise doubts about whether the aim is to educate or to promote a particular point of view. Still, it is

important to note that these principal preparation programs only devote slightly more than 10% of instructional time to norms and values.

Most Frequently Read Authors

One way to delve deeper into the content of instruction is to examine which authors are included on course reading lists in principal preparation programs. Answering these questions required a way to systematically assess assigned readings. Only "required readings" were tallied; "recommended readings," "supplementary readings," and "suggested readings" were excluded. Authorship was coded as follows: A reading was attributed to an individual if they were first or second author. In cases where there were more than two authors, if the scholar in question was not first or second author, the reading was not attributed to that author. Edited volumes themselves are not attributed, although chapters assigned within edited collections—including introductions or conclusions authored by the editor—are attributed to the author and tallied. The most commonly assigned authors are listed in Table 11.

Table 11: Most Commonly Assigned Authors

Author	Number of Times Assigned
Terrence Deal	25
Allan Odden	25
Kent Peterson	24
Michael Fullan	15
Lee Bolman	14
Thomas Sergiovanni	13
David Schimmel	13
Richard Elmore	13
Linda Darling-Hammond	12
Wayne Hoy	11
Deborah Meier	9

N: 1,851 readings

The most commonly assigned authors were Terence Deal (University of Southern California) and Allan Odden (University of Wisconsin). Deal is a prolific scholar of

school leadership; Odden a scholar of education finance, state funding systems, and related issues. Other commonly assigned authors were Kent Peterson (University of Wisconsin); Michael Fullan (University of Toronto), Lee Bolman (University of Missouri-Kansas City), Thomas Serviovanni (Trinity University, TX), Richard Elmore (Harvard Graduate School of Education), Linda Darling-Hammond (Stanford University), and Deborah Meier (founder of Central Park East school). These authors tend to focus on the "unique" challenges of school leadership. Sergiovanni, for instance, argues that preparation for school leadership is unlike that for other leadership roles, declaring that "corporate" models of leadership cannot work in education and that, "We [must] accept the reality that leadership for the schoolhouse should be different, and...we [need to] begin to invent our own practice" (1996: xiv).

It is worth noting that several of these thinkers—particularly Darling-Hammond, Meier, Sergiovanni, and Fullan—are unapologetic skeptics of test-based accountability systems, standardized assessments, pay-for-performance, competitive pressure, and other key elements of the new educational environment.[8] While some of the authors are more balanced in their stance on such measures, nowhere on this list are there identifiable proponents of test-based accountability, expedited termination of poor teachers, educational competition, or related measures that are changing the managerial context.

To determine whether this impression may be an artifact of the list of most commonly read authors, Table 12 lists a number of influential education thinkers and how often their writings were assigned. While specialists in educational administration were frequently assigned, largely absent were influential scholars of education

[8] For instance, Linda Darling-Hammond and Deborah Meier are among the contributors to a recent volume that assails No Child Left Behind-style accountability entitled *Many Children Left Behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is Damaging Our Children and Our Schools* (Meier and Wood 2004).

governance and productivity like Paul Hill, Larry Cuban, William Boyd, Michael Kirst, and Jim Guthrie.

Table 12: The Representation of 10 Key Education Governance/Productivity Thinkers

Author	Number of Times Assigned
Eric Hanushek	6
Henry Levin	4
Richard Murnane	2
James Guthrie	2
Larry Cuban	2
Chester E. Finn, Jr.	2
Michael Kirst	1
William Boyd	1
Herbert Walberg	0
Paul Hill	0

N: 1,851 readings

Table 13 addresses the question of how frequently leading management thinkers were read in the courses studied. A 2003 survey of business leaders, business school professors, and MBA students by Bloomsbury Publishing and Suntop Media produced a list of the 50 "most important" living management thinkers (*Thinkers 50* 2003). Of the individuals identified by the *Thinkers 50* rankings, Table 13 shows that only nine were assigned at all, and they were assigned a combined total of just 29 times in all of the courses studied.

Table 13: Frequency of *Thinkers 50* Management Theorists

Author	Number of Times assigned
Peter Senge	7
Stephen Covey	4
Edgar Schein	4
Rosabeth Moss Kanter	3
Peter Drucker	3
John Kotter	3
Henry Mintzberg	2
Warren Bennis	2
Daniel Goleman	1

N: 1,851 readings

In other words, of the 1,851 readings contained in the sample, a total of just 1.6% were authored by one of the 50 thinkers deemed most influential by management students, teachers, and practitioners. Influential thinkers including Michael Porter, Jim Collins, Clay Christensen, and Tom Peters—some of whom are widely cited in education circles and asked to address national educational conferences—were wholly absent from every syllabus in the sample. The omission of these scholars, along with the inattention to serious education management thinkers, raises questions about whether principals are adequately steeped in important thinking and research on management and productivity.

For instance, when addressing school culture and climate, the most commonly assigned readings tend to focus almost exclusively on the importance of creating warm, supportive, and nurturing school environments. One of the most commonly assigned texts on school culture declares, "The social climate and culture of a school influence the emotional and psychological orientation of its staff. . . . This is especially the case in schools that are optimistic, socially caring and supportive, and energetic" (Deal and Peterson, 1999: 8). Offering a rather different take, Jim Collins, one of the *Thinkers 50* who appears nowhere among the assigned readings, has argued that, "Visionary companies are not exactly comfortable places….visionary companies thrive on discontent. They understand that contentment leads to complacency, which inevitably leads to decline" (Collins and Porras, 1994: 186-87). The point is that both sets of authors offer valuable, even crucial, insights, but that one school of thought appears to be largely absent from the reading lists.

While educational leadership lies at the intersection of two vibrant and powerful bodies of learning and thought—education and leadership/management—instruction in

the programs examined draws narrowly from a pool of "educational administration" specialists. This is particularly problematic because growth and advancement come not merely from new inventions or unearthing new resources but from entrepreneurial leaders and decision-makers configuring personnel, practices, operations, and existing resources in new and more effective ways. Of course, educational leaders will be far better equipped to do so if they are familiar with a broad body of knowledge on learning, technology, management, and productivity.

Conclusion

This study presents a comprehensive assessment of what aspiring principals are taught in a national sample of 31 preparation programs and reveals considerable consistency across a variety of institutions. The evidence indicates that preparation has not kept pace with changes in the larger world of schooling, leaving graduates of principal preparation programs ill-equipped for the challenges and opportunities posed by an era of accountability. As three professors of educational leadership have observed, "Leadership during this Age of Accountability has become more stressful, more political, more complex, and more time-consuming" but that school leaders have also been given unprecedented "clarity of mission" and "leverage to bring teachers into line" (Duke, Grogan, and Tucker 2003: 212). The recent study by Arthur Levine, President of Teachers College at Columbia, posed thoughtful structural remedies intended to address these needs. Among Levine's suggestions: to create an education management degree like the MBA, to eliminate the Ed.D, and to stop districts from offering pay raises for course credit. Such structural changes are certainly welcome, but Levine's study raises a

more fundamental question as to whether the content of preparation courses, in addition to their structure, must be reconceptualized.

Ultimately, the question of content is pivotal; principals receive limited training in the use of data, research, technology, the hiring or termination of personnel, or evaluating personnel in a systematic way. The reading lists suggest that aspiring principals receive little exposure to important management scholarship or sophisticated inquiry on educational productivity and governance.

While there is some evidence that the small slice of preparation addressing norms and values has a distinct leftward tilt, the real issue that emerges is not ideological bias but the apparent narrow-mindedness of today's instructional focus. The vital question is whether the lack of attention to serious thinking on management results in a tendency to only prepare people for the existing pinched world of leadership and not the full array of skills needed to lead effective organizations.

For instance, just 2% of 2,424 course weeks addressed accountability in the context of school management or school improvement and less than 5% included instruction on managing school improvement via data, technology, or empirical research. Just 11% of course weeks made mention of or reference to statistics, data, or empirical research in some context. Of 360 course weeks devoted to personnel management, just 12 weeks mentioned teacher dismissal and nine mentioned teacher compensation. Just 11% of course weeks devoted to personnel management addressed the recruitment, selection, and hiring of new teachers**.** Finally, of the 50 living most influential management thinkers, as determined by a 2003 survey of management professionals and

scholars, just nine were assigned in the 210 courses. Their work was assigned a total of 29 times out of 1,851 assigned readings.

What programs are doing is understandable. They are preparing principals for schools as they have traditionally been managed. Moreover, it is true that many practicing principals are uncomfortable with the changing environment or less than eager to exploit new managerial freedoms. Consequently, it is not surprising that professors of education administration have been slow to change. This reflects a fundamental structural reality.

Currently, a number of preparation programs are considering redesign. This means that these findings may become dated as new training programs are launched in the years ahead. It also means that these findings could be of immediate value in helping principal preparation providers to revisit their assumptions as they work to rethink their programs. That said, the Southern Regional Education Board, whose Leadership Initiative is driving preparation and certification reform in its 16 member states, has cautioned: "Redesigning leadership preparation programs does not mean simply rearranging old courses—as staff at some universities and leadership academies are inclined to do. True redesign requires a new curriculum framework and new courses aimed at producing principals who can lead schools to excellence" (SREB 2003: 7). Whether preparation programs are intent on answering that challenge remains to be seen, but the flurry of redesign efforts is a promising development.

Despite these nascent efforts to rethink preparation, the results of this study cannot be lightly dismissed. Principal preparation programs that pay little attention to data, productivity, accountability, or working with parents leave their graduates

unprepared for new responsibilities. This system creates new principals that are likely to resist or mishandle new freedoms—resulting in micromanagement, poor decisions, or the misuse of accountability instruments. Rather than merely empathizing with principals, however, educators and policymakers should take steps to ensure that principals receive the training they need. Meaningful reform of principal preparation programs must retool the content so that it matches the challenges confronting principals in 21st century schooling.

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