

IMPLICATIONS FROM UCEA

ADVANCING FROM PREPARATION TO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: THE INFLUENCE OF TIME, INSTITUTION & DEMOGRAPHICS



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Differences in career advancement rates among aspiring leaders and their programs provide useful frameworks for understanding both program influence and advancement challenges. These differences suggest program, district and state interventions and follow up support to improve the fit and advancement of graduates into the leadership field.

How has the leadership preparation field changed in recent years?

Graduate institutions have increased both the number of educational leadership graduates and their advancement to leadership positions in recent years. Nationally, there has been a modest expansion in the number of degree programs over the last ten years and a dramatic increase in the number of degrees earned (masters, specialist and doctorate) (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007). Much of the increases occurred at regional universities.

What are the rates of graduates' advancement into leadership positions?

Once certified, aspiring leaders advance to leadership positions, depending upon access to and availability of positions. Their advancement rates have improved in recent years (in part because of reported shortages (Educational Research Service, 2000))but vary among institutions where they were prepared. In New York State from 1970-1 through 1999-2000, less than half who earned leadership degrees ever advanced to

a principal position (Papa, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2002).

The pathway to the principalship varies somewhat. The majority advanced to the principalship through assistant principals or subject administration positions. NYS teachers with administrative certification are most likely to advance to administrative positions right after certification; the rate drops by half four years later, but that the probability of transition had nearly doubled in recent years (1995-2001) (Lankford & Wyckoff, 2003).

It takes a few years to advance into even an initial leadership position, particularly when coming from some institutions. Multi-year data from Texas, as presented in Table 1, shows that on average, 43-48% of leadership program completers advance to an initial leadership position within two years. But these rates differ widely among institution types from 44-67%. Within seven years of program completion, the rate of advancement increases to 60%, ranging from 53-67% among different types of institutions (Fuller & Orr, 2006). Thus, some institutions have more graduates who advance and do so more quickly than do other institutions. On average, the rate of advancement to a principalship takes four years, ranging from 3.5 to 4.4 years among institutions.

Aspirants' demographics matter as well. While women make up 67 percent of program completers, they move more slowly into leadership positions than do men (4.4 vs. 3.4 years into first principalship,

among 1995 completers). Similarly, minority candidates, while only 32 percent of completers, advance more quickly to initial leadership positions but then take longer to advance to their first principalship (4.4 vs. 3.7 years).

Implications

These results suggest that program preparation matters in the career aspirations, speed and readiness of graduates to advance to initial leadership positions. Local district conditions contribute as well,

particularly in hiring women and minorities. Thus, both programs and districts need to monitor influences on graduates' rates of advancement and hiring in order to improve the fit between preparation and placement.

Since it takes 4 years on average for graduates to reach the principalship, however, further leadership education and support would be warranted to help them be successful in that new role. This underscores the importance of state and district support of on-going leadership education for school leaders and coaching and mentoring of new principals.

Table 1: Texas Leadership Preparation Graduates, 1995-2007

	N	% advance in 2 years	% advance in 7 years	years to 1 st principalship	% principals
Total	1754	53% in 2004	60%	4 years	42%
Institutions	53	44-67%	54-78%	3.5-4.8 years	35-61%
Women	67%	42%	55%	4.4 years	27%
Minorities	32%		64%	4.4 years	25%

Source: Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), 1995-2007.

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