Should We Revise or Recast Principal Preparation Programs? Part 1[*]

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Abstract

This study used focus groups to create building blocks for the creation of a collaborative program consisting of a university and a school district for the preparation of principals. The focus groups of practitioners considered recommendations from researchers and applied it to the context of their experiences to develop the essentials of a collaborative program that would create a cadre of highly qualified candidates for school leadership. Findings from the focus groups were used by leaders of the school district and faculty from the university in the planning process for a pilot program.

NOTE: This entire manuscript is published in three parts: PART 1; PART 2; and REFERENCES with their respective links positioned at the end of each section.

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1 Introduction

The myriad of responsibilities and roles assigned to K-12 principals have made the positions extremely demanding and challenging. Equally demanding and challenging has been the responsibility of preparing leaders for the principal role. The Educational Leadership Department at Oakland University has rewritten the course preparations to align with the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC), extended the administrative internship program from one year to two years and increased the number and magnitude of the field assignments. Additionally recent findings and recommendations of scholars in the field were considered and incorporated into the course work when appropriate and possible.

The task before us was intimidating. How could we possibly include all of the learnings and experiences into our course work and field work to prepare an individual for the role of a building leader for the interactive, globalized, 21st Century? The research recommendations are numerous, expectations for the role are high, local, state and federal accountability ever present, personal commitments extensive, and a mountain of requirements cause many to not take on or consider the challenge of a principal position. What could be best accomplished by on the job training? What could be relegated to professional development, mentoring and coaching by more senior administrators? Key resources for helping us find some answers to these tough questions were the practitioners who provide school leadership and their respective supervisors from our region.

We decided to work with practitioners who are current school leaders and school district administrators to review the strengths and weaknesses of our principal preparation program. Groups of selected practitioners were gathered in focus groups to provide us with insights, recommendations, and challenge the current practice of principal preparation by the university. After gathering participants' thoughts on what principals should know and be able to do to better serve the schools and districts in today's competitive and highly accountable educational environment we asked them about the concept of partnering with Oakland University to provide an off-campus pilot program that would be held in a school district setting and engage our partner school districts in the program design and student candidate election process. We proposed working with local school districts as full partners to identify, encourage, select qualified teachers into the program, and provide up-to-date professional preparation of the school leaders needed for the future. The proposed program would take advantage of the current research covering leadership while also designing real world experiences, mentoring, and cohort collaboration that would provide the local school districts leadership cadre of candidates well prepared for the principalship.

Principal preparation programs have been under fire for some time (Griffths, 1988; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hale and Moorman, 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Lashway, 2003; Murphy,2002; Murphy, 2005; Olson, 2007). There were accusations that leadership programs were long on theory and short on practice (Murphy, 2007). The application of what was being learned in classes was considered inadequate for neophytes so on the job training was considered a better method of preparing to be a principal. Hale and Moorman (2003) reported that the current training of educational leaders has been criticized by principals as "out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run a school" (p.5). A consensus from twenty years of reform efforts reported by Hale and Moorman (2003) on the work done in the Danforth Foundation's Principals Preparation Program found limited success in reforming administrator preparation.

Hess and Kelly (2005) maintained that 96% of practicing principals say that colleagues were more helpful than graduate studies in preparing them for the job responsibilities and that there is a wide gap between what principals say they need to know and do in their job and what is required by state departments of education and is actually taught in education programs. Hale and Moorman (2003) found that principals gave administrator training programs a grade of "F" in a survey and believed that the programs were "out of touch" with the real world situations faced by school leaders. (p.5) The University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA)(1987) identified problem areas in need of attention:

- Lack of definition of educational leadership;
- Absence of collaboration between school districts and universities;
- Low number of minority and female candidates;
- Lack of a systemic professional development approach;

- Poor quality of candidates admitted into programs;
- Irrelevance of preparation received;
- Need to update licensure programs; and
- A need for a national sense of cooperation in preparing school leaders. (p. 2)

A four year study by Levine, was cited by Hess and Kelly (2005) in which a survey of 25 school leadership preparation programs found that the majority of the programs ranged from inadequate to appalling. Hess and Kelly concluded that "preparation of principals has not kept pace with changes in the larger world of schooling" (p. 38). Murphy (2002; 2009) looked upon educational administration and the preparation of the leaders as needful of a new definition and a foundation. At the same time that this abundant criticism was being generated the role of the principal was evolving from managerial functions to instructional leadership and well beyond. This evolution included a series of titles such as manager, administrator, democratic leader, humanistic facilitator, instructional leader, strategic leader, visionary leader, community builder, moral steward, innovative educator, etc.

A significant step forward took place when the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards were adopted in many states and incorporated into university preparation programs. Numerous universities have adjusted their preparation programs for principals, attempting to pack the ISLLC Standards and the emerging demands for preparation such as clinical experiences and longer internship experiences into one degree program. Some scholars in the field such as Murphy (2002) called for a year of full time service as an intern to more fully prepare for the principalship. Waters and Grubb (2004) suggested that McREL's research findings added value to the ISLLC standards through new insights into leadership. The ISLLC standards structure and the Balanced Leadership research are incorporated into our recasted preparation program.

Some school districts gave up on the principal preparation program as implemented by universities and began internal programs to prepare their principals similar to some of the alternative teacher certification programs that attempted to eliminate or reduce university classroom preparation, favoring on the job preparation. A neighboring school district is going alone in the preparation of principals, creating its own workshops and internships. Such an approach is not new. The military and many business corporations both went through a similar process where they moved training for leaders from classrooms to preparation in real life situations, but afterward found that this approach did not resolve all of their concerns for lack of entry skills. Both the military and the corporations returned decades ago to viewing classroom instruction in tertiary settings as a vital component of leadership preparation (Martin and Papa, 2008). Although critical of leadership programs as they have been implemented, Grogan and Andrews (2002) continued to support the preparation of principals in university based programs.

Recently a multi-school district teacher leadership program in Southeastern Michigan was designed to be free of university involvement. After several years of implementation it was decided by the developers and leaders of the program that the preparation of teacher leaders would be better served and more effective if linked with a university and its faculty. Martin & Papa (2008) recommended that universities and school districts work together to develop programs to prepare school leaders. Berry and Beach (2002) supported such collaboration when they stated that:

The programs that will emerge over the next twenty-five years will not be exotic or be formulated by accreditation bodies or by university planners. They will emerge from the foundation of the profession which is well documented; grounded in practical, cultural, and educational experience; and from knowledge gained by observing successful schools (p. 2).

2 Methodology

We decided to work collaboratively with practitioners in the recasting of our preparation program to begin the process of creating such an alliance at Oakland University and to improve the principal preparation program. We have a history of using focus groups at Oakland University to develop new programs. Several years ago we used small focus groups to develop selected aspects of a new doctoral program in educational

leadership and then a larger focus group was drawn from Southeastern Michigan to critique the entire draft and make suggestions for improvement. More recently we used focus groups to help define the role, characteristics and implementation of a new graduate teacher leadership program. In both cases the quality of the programs was greatly improved through the involvement of practitioners from various levels in the education profession.

Focus group methodology has gained respectability and is found more frequently in studies of educational settings and problems (Gibbs, 1997, Barbour & Kitzinger, 1998). A focus group is defined by Williams and Katz (2001) as "a small gathering of individuals who have a common interest or characteristic, assembled by a moderator, who uses the group and its interactions as a way to gain information about a particular issue" (p. 2). Focus groups promote an environment where participants share ideas, experiences, and attitudes concerning an area of mutual interest that develop data and ideas through verbal interaction that can provide the researcher with ideas and insights that may not be possible with any other research method (Barbour and Kitinger, 1998; Kruger and Casey, 2000). Glitz (1998) stated that the method of using focus groups for research is based upon two assumptions; (1) participants can provide meaningful information, and (2) collecting focus group responses will give the researcher information not available through other research methods. An important attribute of focus groups is that they have the potential for synergy and stimulation that leads participants to connect with and build on each other's experiences and thoughts to develop higher levels of concepts (Catterall & Maclarin, 1997; Panyan, Hillman & Liggett, 1997; Glitz, 1998). A rich dialogue that is possible in a focus group can provide the researcher with ideas and insights that may not be possible with other research methods (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Guidance in the use of focus groups was provided by Einsieder, Brown and Ross (1996) who suggested five objectives or steps for use with focus groups:

1. Focus on the research purpose
2. Select a skilled moderator
3. Design an effective interview guide
4. Select and recruit appropriate participants
5. Analyze and use the results

We used a skillful moderator who had recently retired as a superintendent of a large, suburban school district, taught university administration courses and was familiar with the challenges faced by new principals and the schools that they served. The department faculty helped develop an interview protocol to be used under the leadership of the moderator. The interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

The initial focus groups consisted of a dozen carefully selected superintendents, central office administrators, and building leaders who could provide reactions to the real world challenges faced by school leaders in Michigan's schools. They met in three small groups with two of our department members in each group to address and interact in a professional dialogue covering a set of focused questions, concerns, and seek insights and recommendations for program improvement. The second set of focus groups consisted of ten principals and teachers from rural and suburban school districts north of Oakland University. The group had three principals, one from a small suburb and two from rural communities, one literacy coach who served in three elementary schools, one secondary curriculum coordinator who served in a suburban district and five teachers from elementary, middle and high school. This second set of three focus groups worked under the direction of a single moderator. The third set of focus groups were made up of building level administrators who were organized into three groups each working with two department faculty as did the first group.

Thirteen graduate students completing the current Master's program were asked to respond and provide insights and recommendations. The graduate students comprised the fourth set that was divided into three focus groups working under the directions of a single moderator.

The ideas, insights and recommendations from all of the focus groups were collated, coded and analyzed by the two authors. Findings from the analysis were used for the development of a model for a pilot program for the preparation of principals and assistant principals. The model was shared with the leaders of several nearby school districts for further development and joint implementation by the school districts and the university.

3 Findings

The recommendations of the focus group dialogue sessions are listed in categories to assist in our analysis for use in generating a transformation of our program at Oakland University.

3.1 Structure

- Site-based off campus location
- Collaboration with school districts as partners
- Practitioners involved in teaching courses (team-teaching)
- Cohort model utilized
- Use a mix of class meetings and on-line activities
- Use Saturdays or other convenient days/times for districts involvement
- Selection process includes recommendations from school district leaders
- Use electronic portfolios
- Use mentorships for real world problem-solving
- Utilize internship experiences for two years

3.2 Cognitive Content

- Leadership and innovation
- Professional standards and practices
- Use professional learning communities
- Know and use best teaching practices
- Relationship skills and role
- Technology used by faculty and students
- Nature and use of data emphasized
- Evaluation methods
- Assessment data techniques taught
- Dissemination of information
- Special education issues
- Grant writing
- Energy savings and environmental issues
- Policy and procedures
- Legal issues studied
- Politics and leadership challenges
- Finances and resource management
- Management skills
- Virtual schooling practices and options
- Accreditation process and expectations
- School Improvement and change process
- Scheduling and time issues
- Visioning and values
- Collaboration and teaming
- Planning and future-forecasting

3.3 Affective Content

- Integrity and trust issues
- Ethics and leadership
- Cultural competence and diversity

- Social responsibility
- Interpersonal skills
- Human relations skills
- Reflective practice

3.4 Skill Content

- Teaching and learning best practices
- Student achievement focus
- Facilitator skills learned and practiced
- Setting directions and keeping the vision
- Developing others
- Organizational improvement and change
- Communication skills
- Use technology
- Nurture
- Delegate
- Effective meetings
- Action research
- Encourage teacher leaders
- Ability to connect with all stakeholders

The findings support the development of a cooperative partnership between school districts and a university aimed at ensuring relevance in the training program. A second recommendation was that those universities not able to work cooperatively with school districts to prepare school leaders should get out of the business. A third recommendation was that policymakers should base licensure on what equips an individual to provide leadership in a school (Hale and Moorman 2003). Whitaker (2006) presents that there exists a need for universities and school districts to work together to prepare principals for the future. Zepeda (2007) maintains principal leaders for the future need to be instructional leaders with the requisite skills, capacities, and commitment to lead and handle all aspects of accountability. The Oakland University program needs new life to connect with school districts, provide the technical and emotional training necessary to succeed in 21st century schools, make balanced leadership, licensure, accreditation, change agent and transformational experiences for the professional transition from teaching to leadership a significant part of the preparation program.

The National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) (2001) reported that principal preparation programs need to be aligned with the daily demands of the positions and not as theoretical as university programs. They further indicated that the course work was poorly sequenced and clinical experiences need to be practical and mentored for better application to job competences. NCAELP (2001) further reported that admission standards are too low, and not enough is done to identify high potential applicants or to target women or minorities for program involvement. A real lack of significant partnerships between university programs and local school districts was a weakness that placed limits on the recruiting of highly qualified individuals to lead schools in our changing social environment. Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, and Porter, (2007) identify the components of the type of leadership for learning stating that "the leader must stay consistently focused on the right stuff – the core technology of schooling, or learning, teaching, curriculum, and assessment." (p.1) Our focus groups indicated that emphasis must be placed upon knowing instruction so that guidance could be provided to teachers concerning student learning and program evaluation at the building level. A solid background in pedagogy, content, and human relations was essential for success. An understanding of, keen respect for, and value of diversity was expected as well. Communications ability was needed in interpersonal situations as well as in writing and using various forms of technology. The new leaders needed to have an understanding of the policy development process and related methods used to influence local and state decision making. New leaders must have political skills to

get things done when conflicts and multiple agendas are involved. The fact that these individuals needed to be passionate about the role and related tasks was a given.

Hargreaves and Shirley (2008) suggest a fourth way of transforming education as a public good that is essential to our successful future. Their research signals four catalysts for establishing and maintaining coherence to a common cause:

1. Sustainable leadership;
2. Networks of mutual learning;
3. Responsibility before accountability; and
4. Building up from the bottom, while steering from the top (p. 60).

Our focus group members in interactive dialogue emphasized a transformational aspect of the role of principal. (Marks and Printy, 2003) presented the work done by Hallinger (1992) which focused upon problem finding, problem solving, and collaboration with stakeholders that was needed in order to make a real difference in organizational performance.

Orozco (2001) maintains that a shortage of school leaders exists and the job of finding talented school leaders will become more difficult unless all stakeholders, including leadership preparation programs get busy addressing the crisis and seeking solutions to the current challenges to preparing and finding talented school leaders needed to make a difference in our schools. Orozco states that the job of school leader needs to be re-invented. She also contends that a well-designed plan for recruiting, preparing, placing, and retaining successful administrators in school leadership positions is a must. It is her contention that higher education institutions are a key in educating school leaders and they must find a way to address the leadership crisis. She recommends the establishment of collaboration with school districts, schools, and county offices to address the challenges of recruitment, training, and job reinvention. Lashway (2003) states that leadership training programs should work collaboratively with school district practitioners to identify candidates for program enrollment. The use of formal nominations by principals and superintendents would positively impact the entrance into a school leadership preparation program. In some cases the talented teacher leaders may need to be talked into seeking a principal role by school leaders. A recruitment plan by the local district that includes a partnership with a university can assist in taking on the many challenges of finding new talent for leadership positions.

The Wallace Foundation (2008) placed a focus on principal training programs that are more selective, emphasize instructional results, align to the needs of partner school districts, and place importance of hands-on internship opportunities. Petzko (2005) surveyed middle school principals finding that their top five topics for principal preparation were:

1. Interpersonal skills/relationships;
2. Staff supervision/evaluation;
3. Collaborative decision making;
4. Instructional leadership; and
5. Organizational development and the change process.

These recommendations from the Wallace Foundation and study done by Petzko are consistent with the focus group responses and the other professional literature covering leadership.

An essential reality of school leadership identified in our focus group dialogues was that multiple leaders are necessary in a school setting seeking school improvement. Teacher leaders must be nurtured and empowered then be actively involved in decisions and the research for finding solutions to local student achievement issues. The distributive leadership practices used by a principal are central to the success of the improvement efforts (Spillane, 2005). Spillane provides a working definition: "leadership refers to activities tied to the core work of the organization that are designed by organizational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, and practices of other organizational members or that are understood by organizational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect, and practices" (p.384). The ability to properly implement distributive leadership requires a consistent emphasis on relationship building and the

training of future principals to be comfortable allowing others to assume leader roles and often get credit for success. This is not the principal as hero model often desired by school boards seeking an individual to make changes by their authority or will. (Jentz & Murphy, 2005) A key skill needed by principals is "to make certain that they can get the leaders in the building to pull in the same direction and focus on the vision and mission of student learning" (Spillane, 2005, p.385). Collins (2001) refers to leadership in a diffuse power structure as "level five leadership which demonstrates an unwavering resolve to do what is needed for long term organizational results" (p. 36). A level five leader relies on inspiring standards and supports the development of others. (Collins, 2001)

Jentz and Murphy (2005) write about the notion of confusion that must be faced by new principals as they take on a new position and seek to learn about their new school setting. They offer Reflective Inquiry and Action (RIA) as a way a new administrator can deal with the confusion and make sense of the multiple expectations faced in a new job role. Jentz and Murphy (2005) offer the concept of an "Entry Plan" using a five step process of organizational self-examination designed to help a new leader gain knowledge, trust, and credibility by using an open process to figure out what they are facing in a new position (p.744). Jentz and Murphy (2005) offer the "Entry Plan" as a technique for slowing things down to counter the pressures faced by a new leader to act to solve organizational problems without knowing the current situation well. Teaching these skills to new principals is designed to provide a tool kit for success when they must deal with multiple demands and expectations in a confusing new job role. If used properly this leadership technique can provide for self-examination that can aid the new leader and the organization in dealing with change. Collins (2005) emphasized that "you must retain the faith that you canprevail to greatness in the end, while retaining the discipline to confront the brutal facts of your current reality" (p. 30). Collins (2005) further states that true leadership in the social sector organizations can be defined as "getting people to follow when they have the freedom not to."(p. 32) Hallinger and Bridges (1997) contend that leaders must be able to envision and anticipate changing contexts and demonstrate the skills to move others to create new organizational designs. Preparations programs have been largely designed to develop organizational managers who work to maintain school structures that exist today, rather than leaders who can guide their transition into the future (Hallinger and Bridges, 1997).

4 Models

Lindsay (2008) provided a positive example of a new preparation model for using the College of Education at the University of South Carolina and their partnerships with local school districts to prepare school leaders. They used input from college faculty and local school district administrators seeking to ensure that the academic preparation efforts were grounded in the practical work of school leaders. School leaders identified faculty with leadership potential from their ranks and then recommended them for the program. Identifying potential leaders rather than allowing them to self-select made a difference. Participants felt special because of the selection by their district and worked together cooperatively and responsibly to honor the commitment made to them. The program also uses an online delivery model which is supplemented by face-to-face sessions. This model has supported six *Grow Your OwnLeaders* cohort groups within South Carolina with more working in 2008 − 09 (Lindsay, 2008).

The focus group members told us that the 21 responsibilities of Waters, Marzano, and McNulty should be a key component of the program. Principals need to be knowledgeable of best practices and able to conduct critical conversations about learning and they must have the ability to grow and learn. The candidates they wanted needed the heart and soul to lead in a manner that provided the care and concern for the students and staff. The newly trained leaders must be able to understand and lead change.

The ideal leader that the members of the focus groups were envisioned must be ethical, moral, with strong core values that can withstand conflict and policy and practice implementation challenges. A future school leader must be able to communicate core values and put them into practice, build relationships and deal with diversity. Kouzes and Posner (2006) contended that leadership is a relationship. Leaders need to build connections with others by listening, coaching, and developing as they work to build trust (p. 48). Fullan (2001) stated that it is the relationships that make the difference (p. 51).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) presented research findings covering a core of leadership practices that serve as basic to success. They provided three key areas that must be learned for success to follow:

1. Setting directions,
2. Developing people, and
3. Developing the organization (pp. 3-5).

These three areas were mentioned often in our focus group dialogue sessions and the literature covering school leadership improvement. Our program needs to focus upon the development and implementation of a vision, shared meanings, and understandings that support cooperation and collaboration in the organizational context. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) add detail to these core areas by stressing intellectual stimulation, support for individuals, and the modeling and reinforcing of expected behaviors to develop others within the school setting. The focus of school leadership must be teaching and learning and our program changes must build upon the well-documented knowledge base and the role of relationship building in student success (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003).

5 Change

The eight step change process presented by Kotter and Rathgeber (2005) aligns with our findings and other research on the change process. They advocate teaching school leaders to:

1. Create a sense of urgency,
2. Select a group to guide the change,
3. Establish a vision of the future,
4. Share the vision,
5. Remove organizational obstacles to the change,
6. Celebrate success,
7. Never let up, and
8. Change the organizations traditions (p. 130–131).

Kotter (2008) emphasized the importance of understanding the sense of urgency that must drive a leader as they seek changes impacting others in the organization to do things differently.

6 Technology

Members of the focus groups agreed that principals will need to provide leadership in use of technology as well as make extensive use of technology for instruction and management. Lefkowits (2008) promotes extensive use of technology by principals and highlighted ways in which individualization and customization stimulated by Internet social networking sites such as Facebook, My Space, and e-Bay will transform education. Trotter (2008) contends that leaders will be forced to find new ways of doing business and using resources such as these. Schools will be expected to deal with the game changer of on-line learning which will expand options for students and parents. Lefkowits and Miller (2007) maintain that programs will need to use virtual learning experiences in coordination with onsite learning. The successful programs will need to find the right mix of virtual learning experiences and face-to-face instruction that will connect with the modern lifestyles of prospective students and the technical innovations available to enhance teaching and learning.

7 Selection Methods

Clark (1998) outlined a few urgent needs for reforming preparation programs: first, admission standards are too often set to ensure quantity rather than quality; second, preparation needs consistent and systematic programs that immerse participants into leadership issues as members of a cohort; third, university faculty need to pay attention to instruction; fourth, the program needs to interact with other departments within

the larger university. Hale and Moorman (2003) stated that university programs in principal preparation getting the highest marks must "deviate from the norm" (p.10). Change oriented and successful programs were using cohort-based models. The programs were more demanding on the participants while employing a more careful screening process for those selected. Collins (2005) presented the importance of getting the right people on the bus. The selection process is essential as a first step in making certain that the best candidates are enrolled in the program. Candidates must have demonstrated the potential for having the right stuff for building leadership. This will require our partner school districts to become active in identifying, evaluating, and mentoring promising educators for program participation. The school district leaders will have to identify those teachers who have demonstrated the potential for building or district leadership and who could benefit from a program in educational leadership. The ideal candidates will be excellent teachers who will commit to a two year program with the understanding that they intend to become school leaders in the near future. The identification must come within the first few years of service to impact our master program in educational leadership. A candidate must have three years of successful teaching and obtain a recommendation and commitment from their local school leaders to seek advanced training. We will extend our vision and mission to identify and prepare a diverse and highly competent group of professionals to become future-oriented, dynamic, change agents who are taught to, and able to see, feel, guide, and transform schooling practices.

8 Program Characteristics

Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, and Porter (2007) believe that research provides eight major dimensions of behavior that characterize leadership for learning that align with recommendations of our focus groups. They find that leaders of high-performing schools have a vision of learning that can be articulated and shared by the school community. Leaders have a strong orientation to learning and teaching. They must take the time and spend the energy to get excellent teachers whose values are consistent with the mission and culture of the school. These leaders are also diligent in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's curriculum program. School improvement focused leaders are knowledgeable about assessment practices and involved in crafting, implementing, and monitoring the practices used in the school. Effective leaders according to the authors must be skillful in creating learning organizations and fostering the development of communities of learning. The leaders are also attentive to the resources needed by teachers to meet school goals. The leaders in high-performing schools work ceaselessly to foster high expectations for performance for themselves, staff and students. School leaders are advocates for students and their families. Stiggins and Duke (2008) state that principals must be trained in graduate programs to use quality assessments to improve student learning. "The well-prepared principal is ready to ensure that assessments are of high quality and used effectively" to improve instruction and student performance (p. 286). Stiggins and Duke further indicate that the principal must be a key player in communicating student achievement issues to the school community.

(Continued in PART 2)

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Should We Revise or Recast Principal Preparation Programs? Part 2[*]

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consisting of a university and a school district for the preparation of principals. The focus groups
of practitioners considered recommendations from researchers and applied it to the context of their
experiences to develop the essentials of a collaborative program that would create a cadre of highly
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1 Requirements for Principals

The focus groups were consistent with the recommendations in the literature when they created extensive lists of requirements for principals. Eck and Goodwin (2008) reference the business world emphasis upon leadership that target "superior execution" (p.2). This translates into giving directions and then monitoring the implementation process. McREL (2003) found that establishing cultures of high expectations and shared leadership was essential for principals to know how to empower teachers. The capacity building aspect of principal leadership is a key element of the work done in professional learning communities. The powerful implications for school improvement provided by professional learning communities as described by DuFour, Eaker and DuFour (2005) must be a formal part of the program to facilitate collaborative efforts. Each principal candidate must be taught to respect the reality that change is hard work and must be sustained by consistent decisions and actions (Collins, 2001). Educational leaders must be taught to:

- Articulate a vision
- Act to make the vision a reality
- Lead with moral courage
- Be role models for students, staff, and others they interact with
- Understand that their decisions and actions have implications (Quick & Normore, 2004, p.345).

Kotter (2008) presents a strategy to create action that is "aimed at winning, making some progress each and every day, and constantly purging low value-added activities- all by always focusing on the heart and not just the mind"(p. 60). Kotter (2008) also provides tactics to increase the sense of urgency needed to move an organization forward and neutralize those who work against the urgency for influencing "attitudes, thoughts, feelings, hopes, dreams, and behavior"(p. 59). Kotter (2008) advocates the following tactics to deal with a real sense of urgency to get change happening in an organization:

1. Bring the outside in,
2. Behave with urgency every day,
3. Find opportunity in crisis, and
4. Deal with the No Nos (pp. 60-61)

Hallinger and Bridges (1997) present that school leaders must be able to:

1. apply theories of teaching and learning in actual practice in school;
2. adapt policies and practices to the needs of a diverse student population;
3. find and solve problems in their schools;
4. make decisions in a group context;
5. apply an understanding of changing political and social context;
6. develop and sustain a humane and effective working environment that fosters the leadership and learning of self and others.

2 Communities

Elmore (2000), states that "people succeed because of their personal characteristics, more than because of effort, skill, and knowledge – and because we like our heroes to have qualities that we think we don't have" (p. 13). Our focus groups highlighted the importance of relationships and the building of collaborative work teams for success in a building leadership role. "Reading the literature on the principalship can be overwhelming, because it suggests that principals should embody all the traits and skills that remedy all the defects of the schools in which they work" (p. 14). Elmore advocates for "distributed leadership which is about enhancing the skills and knowledge of the people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for

their contributions to the collective result" (p.15). Elmore believes that leadership needs to be redefined away from role-based duties toward distributive leadership that can deal with large scale continuous improvement efforts requiring the cooperation, collaboration, and involvement of many individuals. The group nature of the work signals the need for a principal to be able to agree upon processes to be used, allow collaborative teams to work inter-dependently, establish supportive conditions in the school culture, while also building and sharing the knowledge learned along the way toward continuous improvement.

3 Emotional Intelligence

A neglected area in the preparation of principals has been emotional intelligence. The focus groups used a variety of terminology to describe this, but enthusiastically endorsed the need for understanding and effectively using emotion and strong interpersonal relations skills. Ginzberg (2008) states that no professional courses required in educational leadership preparation programs provide a focus on the emotional side of being in charge and responsible for making and then living with difficult policy or school practice decisions. He contends that that the "agony of decision making" (p. 294) requires leaders to be able to deal with their own feelings as well as those of others concerning difficult decisions in personnel and budget matters. Ginzberg highlights three key strategies leaders can use to confront emotional situations that arise from tough decisions:

1. Finding order in chaos;
2. Communication and strategizing are keys; and
3. Following your heart is important (pp. 295-296).

Goleman (1995) writes that leadership is not domination, but the art of talking others into working toward a common vision and goals. Goleman (1995) further indicates that emotional intelligence skills are important in managing a career and one's own satisfaction with work. We must provide emotional intelligence activities in the program courses to build skills to handle the challenges of leadership in the 21st century. Leaders must be clear in their beliefs and able to handle the stress and decision making required of a change agent. The university program must be able to integrate activities that build skills within the cohort group to deal with being the decision maker. Program participants must be taught that "stress makes people stupid" Goleman (p. 149). The current economic downturn and school financial challenges are compounded by the potential for a long-term transformation in educational practices. The economic changes are magnified by related demographic and employment changes to be felt for years to come (SEMCOG, 2008). All of these issues impact on principals as they navigate school community issues, state standards, federal mandates, and student performance improvement challenges. Fullan (1998) states that reculturing actions in the school environment provide changes in norms, values, skills, and relationships and does have a real impact on teaching and learning. Fullan (2001) also writes that the principal must see the big picture while providing energy, enthusiasm, and hope. A master's degree program that prepares future principals should be designed to provide transformative experiences for the participants. The educators selected to the program should understand as they enroll that they will be changed by the work and knowledge gained in the leadership program (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). The focus of the program must be to provide experiential learning that is conducted in safe learning environments while seeking answers to challenges faced by the real world schools. The future principal candidates have to learn to lead, gain knowledge, skills, and attitudes to make a difference while accepting the difficulty of the tasks ahead. A future-oriented principal training program needs to change the participants and their comfort levels so that they understand the urgency and major responsibilities they seek to assume.

4 Moral Leadership

Integrity built on trust was unanimously viewed as absolutely essential for success in school leadership by the members of the focus groups. The principal is responsible for creating a sense of community which includes rituals and traditions that align values and provide direction for the school community (Quick & Normore,

(2004). Moral leadership becomes an important aspect of the role. Our preparation program must provide exposure to moral leadership theory, real world practices, and design safe activities for students to practice taking actions that add to authentic relationships with students and staff while learning to demonstrate the essential nature of integrity, caring, and understanding the implications of decisions and actions. The articulation of a vision of equity and opportunity for all children while providing the technical skills and professional integrity to address the importance of student learning and achievement for the future is a priority. The university and the partner school districts cannot forget that candidates for future leadership positions must be able to establish relationships with a diverse community. O'Hern, Schaming, McNiff, Brogan, and D'Onofrio-DeGeus (2009) advise that in renewing a school leadership program diversity must be valued in a social context, a dedication to leadership must be instilled in participants, life-long learning attitudes are needed, future leaders must learn to act to enhance student performance, collaboration is a must, and knowing the connections with other disciplines and social issues generates more successful results. Individuals selected into the program should have demonstrated strength of character, interest in being a change agent, possess good people skills, be excellent teachers, able to self-evaluate and reflect on personal practices. Master's program cohort members need to want to make a difference in the lives of children, parents, and staff members in their schools. The new type of building leader to be recruited and trained needs to have multiple interests, a life outside the job role, be able to deal with stress, take care of their own health, handle complexity, deal with confusion, laugh, learn, and let go when necessary. If they cannot handle these issues all of the professional technical training and knowledge of the literature on leadership will still not signal success in real world problem solving and school improvement efforts.

5 Revise or Recast?

The focus group activities were designed to assist us in the evaluation of the current master's in educational leadership program at Oakland University and serve as building blocks for an improved program designed and implemented collaboratively with a school district. The focus groups provided excellent insights addressing what leaders need to know and do. The decision to revise or recast is essential to remain relevant, respected, and connected to the realities faced in local schools today. Murphy (1993) contends that "the preparation programs that we currently have simply are not good enough. They need to be made better." (p. 252). Murphy's opinion and call for major reform is very relevant today as the urgency of making program standards, accountability expectations, complex relationships in school community settings, resource allocation and budget pressures, and 21st century learning realities force us to recast and transform or get out of the business. Our challenge is to prepare a next generation of leaders who can and will deal with what is coming. Therefore, a recasting is order and necessary to ensure that Oakland University remains a relevant participant in the training of school leaders.

The recast program must provide a selection process that admits individuals with the potential to really lead. Partnerships between the university and local school districts will enhance the collaboration between the two organizations while serving to improve a process that is currently random and somewhat inefficient. The school district leadership working closely with university department professors must establish an identification process that can highlight, identify, and encourage teachers with leadership skills who may want to take on building or district leadership roles. The recast program with a changed enrollment process must also provide training to understand and use professional or purposeful learning community research to change the school climate and support student learning (Waters, McNulty, Marzano, 2005; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1997). Teacher leaders identified as program enrollees need to be taught to use distributive, collaborative, and supportive leadership behaviors (Collins, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2002). The work of Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, and Porter (2007) and Murphy and Orr (2009) will serve as a foundation for the program recasting process:

a. Stay focused on the right stuff – the core technology of schooling, or learning, teaching, curriculum and assessment and

b. Make all other dimensions of schooling (e.g. administration, organization, finance) work to serve student learning (p. 179).

Murphy (2007) has been critical of the past efforts in university training programs as he makes the case for moving away from the old ways used by research-oriented institutions. "By design and by the accumulated sediment of the decades, current structures in the preparation of school leaders have failed and will continue to do so." (p. 583) Murphy makes the case that "practitioner scholars" need to be used to provide the practical emphasis upon the training to work in turbulent situations (p. 584). Effective programs have been identified as research-based, providing curricular coherence, those working to design experiences in authentic settings, inclusion of cohort designs, a key role for mentors, and real partnering and collaboration with area schools (Davis, Darling-Hammond, Lapointe, and Meyerson, 2005). If we are serious about improving the preparation of school leaders then we must make the major changes required to help school and district leaders deal with the complexity, confusion, and emotional issues faced in a dynamic and sometimes turbulent environment expecting innovative leadership and collaborative behaviors (Murphy, 2007). Hess and Kelly (2007) address keys to school improvement in an era of accountability when they stress that school improvement rests on school leaders to use data, demonstrate skills in site-based budgeting, hiring practices, achieve bottom-line results, and possess leadership skills and knowledge at a higher level that ever before.

6 Partnership

The creation of collaborative programs with school districts for preparing principals was strongly supported by the focus groups. A review of the work done by Harchar, Campbell, and Smith (2006) covering the development of the Southeastern Louisiana Partnership LEAD and the work of Lindsay (2008) have served as a models for looking at organizational matters needed in establishing a university and school district partnership. The Southeastern Louisiana Partnership or LEAD designed a school leadership development program on the knowledge and skills required for leaders to be successful and began seeking answers in 2005. The recruitment and selection process that was used looked at exemplary teachers with at least three years of experience, field-based experiences, face-to-face class sessions in cohorts, team taught classes, and the use of best practices. Our partnership program will be piloted with the Waterford School District hosting our off-campus classes, assisting in the program design and implementation, utilize multiple technology options, function in a cohort grouping, and actively use real world performance-based learning activities and internships . The pilot is designed to have $25 - 30$ participants who have been admitted to the university program through a new selection process which collaborates with $K - 12$ districts to get teachers identified who have demonstrated leadership abilities noticed by their own schools and district leaders. Adherence to ISLLC and Michigan Department of Education standards will drive the program accountability. Duffy (2009) has identified change leadership competencies that must be included in preparing future school leaders. Mitgang (2008) identified weaknesses in university-based school leadership programs:

1. Admission standards have been self-selection rather than based on potential for leadership;
2. Curriculum and knowledge base that doesn't take into account the needs of the schools and districts;
3. Weak connections between theory and practice;
4. Faculty who have little field experience as leaders; and
5. Shallow or poorly designed internships and field-based experiences (p. 4).

Mitgang (2008) highlights the work done in The Finance Project sponsored by the Wallace Foundation that identified four action lessons found in the Stanford research:

1. Successful principal preparation programs are more selective and focused on improvement of instruction;
2. Leadership training does not end when principals are hired;
3. High-quality leader development can make a difference but it can have added costs; and
4. Work needs to be done to help remedy the difficult working conditions faced by principals in schools today (p. $5 - 9$).

The pilot is designed to begin in the fall of 2009 with the Waterford School District hosting the university classes within the school district facilities. Our plans seek to ensure that the right people get into the leadership program and that we provide real world problem solving experiences for participants. Performance assessments used within the program classes will be designed in cooperation with administrative leaders in the Waterford Schools and other partner school districts. The assessments utilized will be aligned to ISSLC, State of Michigan Department of Education standards, and the literature and research on best practices for leadership preparation programs. Our goal is to have university students actively seeking solutions to school improvement problems and student performance issues being faced in partner school districts. Therefore, the partnership will require that our partners allow access and support problem solving using real world assignments. The partnership will be designed to share the teaching expertise of key principals and central office staff. We believe this will enhance the program by building in practitioner active involvement and generate a more genuine support for student leadership skill building. The program vision is to prepare future school leaders who can deal personally with and implement within an organizational setting systemic change that positively impacts student learning. Duffy and Reigeluth (2008) believe that leaders who wish to facilitate systemic transformational change must:

1. Have strong interpersonal and group facilitating skills
2. Have a positive mindset about empowering others
3. Have experience in preK-12 education
4. Understand the complexities of systemic change
5. Possess a personal presence that commands respect
6. Possess a likeable personality
7. Be organized
8. Be flexible about change
9. Possess a positive, can-do attitude
10. Be creative thinkers (p.7).

The impact of transformational change can be seen in the recommendations put forth ina (2007) report from the National Center on Education and the Economy entitled: *Tough Choices or Tough Times*. The report states that "the core problem is that our education and training systems were built for another era. We can get where we must go only by changing the system itself" (p.8).

The challenge for Oakland University and the Waterford School District as we begin this pilot will be to identify, attract, engage, and eventually graduate emerging leaders who can function with a clear vision, support others, develop their organization, handle chaos, learn in real world situations, establish a network of support and contacts, and maintain emotional stability while learning to become an innovative leader and change agent. The plan is to remain consistent with the recommendations of the focus groups and the scholars who have contributed to the literature on the preparation of school leaders for the realities for the 21st century schooling needs and expectations.

CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PART 1 [2]
CLICK HERE TO ACCESS REFERENCES [3]

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[2]http://cnx.org/content/m23151/latest/
[3]http://cnx.org/content/m23168/latest/

SHOULD WE REVISE OR RECAST PRINCIPAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS? REFERENCES[*]

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Abstract

This module consists of the REFERENCES to Should We Revise or Recast Principal Prepration
Programs, PART 1 and PART 2, authored by Thomas Tattan and Eric Follo. In addition, the Focus
Group Questions used in their study are inlcuded.

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2 Appendix A – Focus Group Questions

Group Activity for Masters in Educational Leadership Program

Your time and feedback are most appreciated as we seek continuous improvement and connections to practical and theoretical leadership issues and challenges facing K-12 schools in our global, highly interactive, and interrelated world.

Please respond as a group to the following questions:

1. What do you want your next generation of building leaders to know?
2. What do you want them to be able to do?
3. Does on-line learning serve the purpose of preparing leaders for real world school situations?
4. What new learning is needed that has not been included in the Master's program in the past?
5. Should mentorship experiences be included in the preparation process?
6. Does a partnership relationship with K-12 school districts and the Oakland University Educational Leadership Department make sense? Why?
7. Are you willing to host a site for a cohort off-campus model program?
8. How should Oakland University partner with you to make sure you get what you need?
9. What else would you like us to do to better prepare the next generation of school administrative leaders?
10. How might we best implement the Educational Leadership policy standards: ISLLC 2008 and serve your future needs as well?

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[6] http://www.wallacefoundation.org/

[7] http://www.mcrel.org/

[8] http://www.ucea.org/