Continuing to Hold the Test Maker Accountable: The ISLLC Standards and the New York State School District Leadership Licensure Assessments

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of school leadership candidates' perceptions of their level of training in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC) with their scores on Parts I and II of the New York State School District Leader (SDL) licensure assessments. The New York State assessments were based on the ISLLC Standards. Seventy-One graduates of a K-12 school leadership preparation program from a large public university in New York State were included in this study. A survey collected school leadership program graduates' perceptions of their level of coursework and internship training in the ISLLC Standards and their scores on the SDL licensure assessments. The results of this study largely showed an absence of relationships between preparation for the ISLLC Standards and scores on the New York State School District Leader assessments. Internship preparation for ISLLC Standards One and Four had statistically significant relationships with scores on Part II of the SDL licensure assessment. However, the strength of these relationships were weak.

I. Purpose

The Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards have become the most widely used standards for the training, licensing, and professional development for K-12 school leaders. As of 2006, 43 states were using the ISLLC Standards in the licensing requirements for its school administrators (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008). The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) used the ISLLC Standards for college or university K-12 school leadership preparation program evaluations (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO] 1996; CCSSO, 2008). In 2009, the New York State Education Department instituted a series of licensure examinations as part of the certification requirements for school building and district leaders to practice in the state. The New York State School Building Leader and School District Leader assessments were based on the ISLLC Standards (Frey, 2008; New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2008a; NYSED, 2008b). Prior research studies have found an absence of relationships between preparation for the ISLLC Standards and scores on the New York State School Building Leader assessments (Markson & Inserra, 2013). These School Building Leader assessments have since been revised (New York State Education Department, 2013). To date, the School District Leader assessments have not been revised and there was no mention of any upcoming revisions to these assessments on the New York State Education Department's Teacher Certification Examinations website ("NYSTCE Program Update," 2014). As a result, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of school leadership candidates' perceptions of their level of training in the ISLLC Standards with their scores on Parts I and II of the New York State School District Leader (SDL) licensure assessments.

II. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical bases for the ISLLC Standards emerged from several decades of research on the most effective strategies for school leadership. To be sure, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) analyzed hundreds of articles from national and international educational leadership research journals which included: the Journal of School Leadership; Educational Administration Quarterly; Educational Management and Administration; and the Journal of Educational Administration. Their analysis identified 20 different leadership concepts which they distributed into six broader but distinct leadership theories. These six school leadership theories included: "instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent leadership" (p. 7). The broad school leadership categories identified by Leithwood et al. (1999) were the theoretical underpinnings for the six ISLLC Standards (Cornell, 2005).

ISLLC Standard One was "An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 14). ISLLC Standard One was further defined by 29 "Knowledge," "Dispositions," and "Performances" (CCSSO, 1996, pp. 10-11) descriptors as well as five "Functions" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 14). According to Cornell (2005), ISLLC Standard One emerged from transformational leadership theories.

ISLLC Standard Two was "An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 14). ISLLC Standard Two was further defined by 39 "Knowledge," "Dispositions," and "Performances" (CCSSO, 1996, pp. 12-13) descriptors as well as nine "Functions" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 14). According to Cornell (2005), ISLLC Standard Two was based on instructional leadership theories.

ISLLC Standard Three was "An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 14). ISLLC Standard Three was further defined by 38 "Knowledge," "Dispositions," and "Performances" (CCSSO, 1996, pp. 14-15) descriptors as well as five "Functions" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 14). According to Cornell (2005), ISLLC Standard Three emerged from managerial leadership theories and organizational development (Cornell, 2005; Fullan, Miles, & Taylor, 1981).

ISLLC Standard Four was "An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 15). ISLLC Standard Four was further defined by 29 "Knowledge," "Dispositions," and "Performances" (CCSSO, 1996, pp. 16-17) descriptors as well as four "Functions" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 15). According to Cornell (2005), ISLLC Standard Four was based on contingency leadership theories.

ISLLC Standard Five was "An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 15). ISLLC Standard Five was further defined by 29 "Knowledge," "Dispositions," and "Performances" (CCSSO, 1996, pp. 18-19) descriptors as well as five "Functions" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 15). According to Cornell (2005), ISLLC Standard Five was derived from theories on moral leadership.

ISLLC Standard Six was "An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 15). ISLLC Standard Six was further defined by 19 "Knowledge," "Dispositions," and "Performances" (CCSSO, 1996, pp. 20-21) descriptors as well as three "Functions" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 15). According to Cornell (2005), ISLLC Standard Six was based on participative leadership theories.

According to one of its chief architects, the ISLLC Standards were "what practitioners and researchers have told us are critical aspects of effective [school] leadership" (Murphy, 2000, p. 412). The ISLLC Standards were derived from the feedback of numerous stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and researchers over a period spanning several decades and have become the premier standards in the training, licensing, and professional development for K-12 school leaders (CCSSO, 2008; Derrington & Sharratt, 2008).

III. Data Sources

The data for this study originated from a larger study, written by Craig Markson for a doctoral dissertation at Dowling College (2013). Permission to conduct the study was obtained through both the Internal Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) of the doctoral program and the university in which the study was conducted. The setting for this study was a large public university in New York State and the participants were graduates of this university's K-12 school leadership preparation program from May 2009 through August 2012. The New York State Education Department mandated its School District Leader licensure assessments for school leadership candidates, effective February 1, 2009.

The May 2009 through August 2012 list of graduates was generated by the participating university, and represented the most recent period of graduates required to take the New York State School Leader assessments during the writing of the Markson (2013) study. The list included the mailing addresses of 638 graduates, 593 of which were still valid as confirmed by the 45 returned as undeliverable by the U.S. Postal Service. Of the 593 surveys sent to the valid mailing addresses, 87 completed surveys were returned, resulting in a response rate of 14.67 percent. Out of the 87 respondents, 71 were included in the current study, based on their reporting of scores on the School District Leader licensure assessments. Those who did not report scores on the School District Leader examinations were excluded from this study.

IV. Method

Each prospective participant was sent a letter informing him or her about the research study, stating it was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. The survey was returned in non-identifiable mailing envelopes. The participants were provided a cover-letter with instructions for completing the survey and a debriefing letter, which thanked respondents for their participation. A self-addressed, stamped return envelope was also provided. To ensure a high rate of return, the survey mailings were preceded by an email from

the program director and Dean of the school from which the participants graduated. This email encouraged graduates to participate in the survey, the results of which might guide the program for future enhancements.

The survey included three parts. For the purpose of this study, parts II and III of the survey were utilized. Part II of the survey asked participants to self-report their test score results on parts I and II of the New York State School District Leader Assessments. Part III of the survey included 44 questions with Likert response 1-5 options, regarding participants' reported attitudes toward school leadership preparation training in their program coursework and internship. Part III of the survey instrument was adapted from the 1996 ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 1996); and the 2008 ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008); Green (2009) and a survey created by Impagliazzo (2012). The respondents were presented with an item in the form of a statement that describes an event related to learning an ISLLC Standard leadership skill in the coursework and in the internship. For each statement, respondents were asked to express their levels of agreement that they learned the behavior in their coursework and their internships. The 5-point Likert scale consisted of the following possible responses: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) slightly agree, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree (Impagliazzo, 2012).

Four correlation analyses were conducted to determine if any of the selected variables in coursework and internship preparedness in the ISLLC Standards were related to participant scores on Parts I and II of the School District Leader licensure assessments. A Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis, with a 95 percent confidence interval, was used to analyze the relationships between the variables.

V. Results

Table 1 illustrated the relationship between coursework preparation for the ISLLC Standards and scores on Part I of the New York State School District Leader (SDL) Assessment.

The results illustrated in **Table 1** showed that there were no statistically significant relationships between school leadership program graduates' coursework preparation for the ISLLC Standards and their scores on Part I of the SDL exam, $p>.05$. Although not statistically significant, preparedness in ISLLC Standards Two, Four, and Six actually had an inverse relationship with scores on SDL Part I. Coursework preparation for ISLLC Standard Two accounted for the greatest degree of variance on scores for Part I of the SDL examination.

Table 1

Correlations for Coursework Preparation in ISLLC Standards with Scores on SDL Part I (N=71)

		SDL Part 1	ISLLC 1 Coursework	ISLLC 2 Coursework	ISLLC 3 Coursework	ISLLC 4 Coursework	ISLLC 5 Coursework
ISLLC 1 Coursework	r	0.033					
	r^2	0.11%					
ISLLC 2 Coursework	r	-0.203	0.685**				
	r^2	4.12%	46.92%				
ISLLC 3 Coursework	r	0.018	0.524**	0.566**			
	r^2	0.03%	27.46%	32.04%			
ISLLC 4 Coursework	r	-0.087	0.854**	0.716**	0.564**		
	r^2	0.76%	72.93%	51.27%	31.81%		
ISLLC 5 Coursework	r	0.13	0.698**	0.576**	0.48**	0.778**	
	r^2	1.69%	48.72%	33.18%	23.04%	60.53%	
ISLLC 6 Coursework	r	-0.021	0.659**	0.62**	0.635**	0.651**	0.652**
	r^2	0.04%	43.43%	38.44%	40.32%	42.38%	42.51%

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2

Correlations for Internship Preparation for ISLLC Standards with Scores on SDL Part I (N=71)

		SDL Part 1	ISLLC 1 Internship	ISLLC 2 Internship	ISLLC 3 Internship	ISLLC 4 Internship	ISLLC 5 Internship
ISLLC 1 Internship	r	0.021					
	r^2	0.04%					
ISLLC 2 Internship	r	0.005	0.676**				
	r^2	0.00%	45.70%				
ISLLC 3 Internship	r	0.108	0.577**	0.596**			
	r^2	1.17%	33.29%	35.52%			
ISLLC 4 Internship	r	0.01	0.82**	0.706**	0.612**		
	r^2	0.01%	67.24%	49.84%	37.45%		
ISLLC 5 Internship	r	0.09	0.673**	0.629**	0.499**	0.722**	
	r^2	0.81%	45.29%	39.56%	24.90%	52.13%	
ISLLC 6 Internship	r	-0.02	0.608**	0.535**	0.654**	0.626**	0.559**
	r^2	0.04%	36.97%	28.62%	42.77%	39.19%	31.25%

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3

Correlations for Coursework Preparation in ISLLC Standards with Scores on SDL Part II (N=71)

		SDL Part 2	ISLLC 1 Coursework	ISLLC 2 Coursework	ISLLC 3 Coursework	ISLLC 4 Coursework	ISLLC 5 Coursework
ISLLC 1 Coursework	r	0.123					
	r^2	1.51%					
ISLLC 2 Coursework	r	-0.153	0.685**				
	r^2	2.34%	46.92%				
ISLLC 3 Coursework	r	-0.061	0.524**	0.566**			
	r^2	0.37%	27.46%	32.04%			
ISLLC 4 Coursework	r	0.078	0.854**	0.716**	0.564**		
	r^2	0.61%	72.93%	51.27%	31.81%		
ISLLC 5 Coursework	r	0.072	0.698**	0.576**	0.48**	0.778**	
	r^2	0.52%	48.72%	33.18%	23.04%	60.53%	
ISLLC 6 Coursework	r	-0.113	0.659**	0.62**	0.635**	0.651**	0.652**
	r^2	1.28%	43.43%	38.44%	40.32%	42.38%	42.51%

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

However, it accounted for only 4.12 percent of the variance, which was not statistically significant and there was an inverse relationship.

Table 2 illustrated the relationship between internship preparation for the ISLLC Standards and scores on Part I of the New York State School District Leader Assessment.

The results displayed in **Table 2** showed that there were no statistically significant relationships between school leadership program graduates' internship preparation for the ISLLC Standards and their scores on Part I of the SDL exam, p>.05. Although not statistically significant, preparedness in ISLLC Standard Six had an inverse relationship with scores on SDL Part I.

Table 3 illustrated the relationship between coursework preparation for the ISLLC Standards and scores on Part II of the New York State School District Leader Assessment.

The results depicted in **Table 3** showed that there were no statistically significant relationships between school leadership program graduates' coursework preparation for the ISLLC Standards and their scores on Part II of the SDL exam, p>.05. Although not statistically significant, preparedness in ISLLC Standards Two, Three, and Six actually had an inverse relationship with scores on SDL Part II. Coursework preparation for ISLLC Standard Two accounted for the greatest degree of variance on scores for Part II of the SDL examination. However, it accounted for only 2.34 percent of the variance, which was not statistically significant and once again, there was an inverse relationship.

Table 4 displayed the relationship between internship preparation for the ISLLC Standards and scores on Part II of the New York State School District Leader Assessment.

The results illustrated in **Table 4** showed that there were no statistically significant relationships between school leadership program graduates' internship

Table 4 *Correlations for Internship Preparation for ISLLC Standards with Scores on SDL Part II* (N=71)		SDL Part 2	ISLLC 1 Internship	ISLLC 2 Internship	ISLLC 3 Internship	ISLLC 4 Internship	ISLLC 5 Internship
ISLLC 1 Internship	r	0.261*					
	r^2	6.81%					
ISLLC 2 Internship	r	0.107	0.676**				
	r^2	1.14%	45.70%				
ISLLC 3 Internship	r	0.154	0.577**	0.596**			
	r^2	2.37%	33.29%	35.52%			
ISLLC 4 Internship	r	0.249*	0.82**	0.706**	0.612**		
	r^2	6.20%	67.24%	49.84%	37.45%		
ISLLC 5 Internship	r	0.178	0.673**	0.629**	0.499**	0.722**	
	r^2	3.17%	45.29%	39.56%	24.90%	52.13%	
ISLLC 6 Internship	r	0.035	0.608**	0.535**	0.654**	0.626**	0.559**
	r^2	0.12%	36.97%	28.62%	42.77%	39.19%	31.25%

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

preparation for ISLLC Standards Two, Three, Five, and Six, and their scores on Part II of the SDL exam, p>.05. Internship preparation for ISLLC Standard One and the internship preparation for ISLLC Standard Four had statistically significant relationships with scores on Part II of the SDL licensure assessment. However, the strength of these relationships were weak, accounting for only 6.81 percent and 6.2 percent of the variance on scores for SDL Part II.

VI. Conclusions

While the New York State School District Leader assessments were based on the ISLLC Standards, there were no statistically significant relationships between school leadership program graduates' coursework and internship preparedness in the ISLLC Standards and their scores on Part I of the School District Leader assessment. Although not statistically significant, there was the presence of inverse relationships among several of the ISLLC Standards and scores for Part I of the SDL exam. These findings were consistent with the findings of the Markson and Inserra (2013) study, which analyzed scores on Parts I and II of the School Building Leader assessments. Findings on Part II of the SDL exam were less consistent with the Markson and Inserra (2013) study. While coursework training in the ISLLC Standards had no statistically significant relationships with Part II scores, internship training for ISLLC Standards One and Four had statistically significant relationships. However, the strength of these relationships were weak, accounting for only 6.81 and 6.2 percent of the variance respectively. The school leadership preparation program where this study took place had its course syllabi aligned to the ISLLC Standards well prior to the establishment of the licensure assessments (Markson, 2013). As a result, the lack of statistically significant relationships among graduates' ranking of their ISLLC Standard preparedness and assessment scores was surprising.

The New York State Education Department had contracted with a foreign corporation to create, implement, and grade both the School Building Leader and the School District Leader licensure assessments (Pearson Education Inc., 2009; "PSO Profile | Pearson, Plc Common Stock - Yahoo! Finance," n.d.). While the School Building Leader assessments have been revised after the publication of the Markson and Inserra (2013) study, there were no plans for revisions to the School District Leader examinations (New York State Education Department, 2013; "NYSTCE Program Update," 2014). As a result, future studies should continue to investigate the relationship between school leadership program graduates preparedness for the ISLLC Standards and their scores on the School District Leader licensure assessments.

VII. Implications of the Research

If the results of this study remain consistent with future studies, then state education departments need to reassess how they contract with corporations to produce and implement school leadership licensure assessments. The findings of this study, as well as the Markson and Inserra (2013) study, suggested a disconnect between licensure assessments created by corporations and preparation program curricula of higher education institutions. As a result, the colleges or universities responsible for delivering the program curricula might need to be more involved in the development of the licensure assessments to ensure greater alignment.

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