

# A Voice at the Table: The Role of Florida Association of Professors of Educational Leadership (FAPEL) in Advancing the Preparation of School Leaders in Florida

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership (ICPEL) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



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*Educational leadership faculty from Florida state-accredited educational leadership programs formed the Florida Association of Professors of Educational Leadership (FAPEL) in 1995 to provide a means through which they could effectively communicate and work together on issues of mutual interest, and for twenty-five years members have collaborated to raise the profile of the profession. FAPEL works to effect change by serving as experts in a broad range of statewide issues that affect principal preparation, facilitating informed advocacy, and developing communication pathways with state regulators, and legislators. FAPEL presents a model for collective interactions among educational leadership faculty to improve the quality of their programs and influence state and regional issues related to principal preparation.*

**Keywords:** Educational Leadership; Higher Education; Principal Preparation; Masters Programs; Principal Preparation; Florida; FAPEL

In 1993, Block described the educational environment as being characterized by accelerating and turbulent change, complexity, confusion, and conflict in comparison to previous decades focused on control, consistency, and predictability of the educational process. Nowhere was this turbulence felt more than in the state of Florida where until the 1980s, the graduate program in educational administration was the predominant method of principal preparation. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) granted certification in administration and/or supervision which qualified a person to hold positions as school principal, assistant principal, or district level administrator depending on the specified qualification established by the school district. To obtain certification in administration or administration and supervision, an applicant completed a master's degree in education administration from an approved program or completed a specified number of graduate hours as an add-on to another graduate degree from an approved graduate program (Florida Board of Education Rules and Regulations, 1980). But in the 1980's due to state legislation, there was a systemic change in how principals should be prepared.

During this period educational leadership faculty leading Florida programs had no unifying voice and no leverage at the state level. Early in 1994 Peter Cistone (Florida International University), Bill Bozeman (University of Central Florida), and representatives from Florida Atlantic University, Florida State University and the University of Florida (W. Bozeman 2018 & R. Taylor, 2019, personal communication) met to consider the establishment of an association that would enable Florida educational leadership professors a voice in the development process of legislation on educational leadership programs and certification (P. Borthwick, 2018, personal communication). In 1995 articles of association were drafted and the Florida Association of Professors of Educational Leadership (FAPEL) was formed.

This study examines the origins and impact of a state association representing educational leadership faculty. It draws on (a) empirical data; (b) conceptual analysis; and (c) the conceptualization of intellectual histories. First, the literature is reviewed. Second, the study's methods are described and the findings of the analysis presented. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings concerning the extant literature and offers implications for both leadership preparation programs, educational leadership faculty, and state associations. Insights will be beneficial to states in the process of creating a professor of educational leadership association.

## **Conceptual Framework and Review of Relevant Literature**

The emergent conceptual framework examines the view that an association can better be understood by a consideration of power and influence, and how members participate in the association. The literature review is divided into two sections. First, social network theory and urban regime theory are conceptualized. Second, the political environment is reviewed with a specific focus on state legislation relating to principal preparation. The intent is to give the reader a snapshot of the ever-changing landscape of principal preparation in Florida and to provide a rationale as to the important relevance of a state association for ensuring high-quality principal preparation.

### **Social Network Theory**

Social networking is defined as the process of developing relationships with other individuals, based on mutual interests, friendship, interdisciplinary knowledge, learning information, and

other beneficial reasons (Cote, 2019). The theory is founded on Barne's (1954) seminal research on social relationships in a small parish in Norway in the 1950s. Barne's analyzed the relationships of individuals in a social class and is believed to be the source for phrases such as "networking" and "social networking" used today (Cote, 2019). The impact of Barne's (1954) research has provided the framework for social network theory grounded on organizational structures with a focus on social relationships, including the influence of hierarchy, centrality, and power in an organizational structure (Liu & Moskvina, 2016, Cote, 2019). Barne's (1954) concluded that diverse relationships between acquaintances, friends, and followers provide an arrangement of strong and weak ties intertwined between individuals in a social setting. Borgatti and Halgin, (2011) explain a connection between ties of a given type constitutes a social relation, and each connection of actors defines a different network with connections referred to as a networking relationship.

In the formation of networking relationships with other individuals, the exchange of information and knowledge provides networking opportunities that will evolve and develop over time (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). A network is described as a structure of actors or "nodes" connected by ties or connections (Cote, 2019).

Kasushin (2002) emphasizes the pivotal nature of networks in facilitating social capital by drawing on resources controlled by individual network members thereby increasingly developing knowledge, influence, and power. Hausman and Goldring (2001) stress that network building is necessary to cultivate partnerships with both the private and public sectors. The most productive social networks are horizontal/egalitarian (Gamarnikow & Green, 2000) with a stable balance of power (Bonachich et al., 2001).

## **Urban Regime Theory**

In the last three decades, urban regime theory has become the dominant theory for the study of local politics (Imbroscio, 1998; Davies & Blanco, 2017). The theory clarifies the nature of local power structures and their importance for political decision making (Davies & Blanco, 2017). It emphasizes the need for pragmatic actors to build alliances to get things done thereby sharing collective power horizontally rather than vertically (Davies, 2002; Davies & Blanco, 2017). Power is perceived as fragmented and regimes as the collaborative arrangement through which local government and private actors assemble the capacity to govern (Stone, 1989, 1993, 1998; Davies, 2002; Davies & Blanco, 2017). The way people organize, according to Stone (1989), is in pursuit of small opportunities, comprising selective incentives, small purposes, and accomplishments. Most of the time, actors pursue immediate opportunities and respond to immediate threats (Stone, 1989). Stone (1993) describes the regime concept as originating from a political economy perspective that rejects assumptions that government authority is adequate to make and carry out policies. Although regimes represent how local actors mediate external pressures, the focus in regime analysis is on the internal dynamics of coalition building, and on who has the power to set the agenda.

Stoker and Mossberger (1994) identified five steps in regime building: purpose; motivation of participants; the sense of common purpose; quality of coalition; and relationship with the wider political environment. Crowson and Boyd (2001) take a broader view of regime theory by asserting that the theory is a culturalist interpretation of politics and that the prime source of power in a community's development is grounded on the community's overall ecology i.e. the essential culture; social institutions; local history; values, expectations, and local markets.

## Political Environment-Historical Context

### *State*

In 1979, the Florida Legislature passed the Management Training Act (FS 231.086) (MTA), which outlined a new process for ensuring Florida schools were managed efficiently and effectively. The Act stated that the management of schools required professionals with "unique blends of skills, experience, and academic background which is rarely provided through typical programs in education" (p.1). The Act intended to develop a uniform post-secondary training program for school leaders. The Act created the Florida Council on Educational Management (FCEM) with the power to generate the 19 Florida Principal Competencies, which became part of all administrative training programs. In section four of the statute, the Florida Academy for School Leaders (FASL) was established to upgrade the quality of management in the Florida public school system. The fifth section provided that the school board of each district should design its own program for training aspiring principals.

The MTA system involved three major partners—State University System (SUS) institutions, school districts, and the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). Each partner was assigned a specific role. Universities were tasked with teaching the knowledge base associated with the field of educational leadership (Level 1). The state also required that educational leadership programs (formerly known as administration, or supervision and administration programs) offer the following eight core curriculum areas: public school curriculum and instruction, organizational management and development, human resource management and development, leadership skills, communication skills, technology, educational law, and educational finance plus six credit hours in one of the following areas of emphasis: elementary, middle, secondary or exceptional student education (FAPEL White Paper, 1999). School districts were required to develop a Human Resource Management Development plan for recruitment, selection, certification, training, assessment, and compensation of all school administrators (Management Training Act, 1979, Florida Statutes 231.095; State Board of Education Rule 6A-4.0082). The FDOE was tasked with developing and adopting guidelines for approving university program curricula, a program review process, procedures for initial and continuing program approval, and the administration of the Florida Educational Leadership Examination (FELE).

Partly in response to three influential reports describing the way administrators should be prepared: *The National Commission in Educational Administration, Leaders for America's Schools* (1987); *Time for Results* (National Governors' Association, 1991); and the Southern Regional Education Board report, *Effective School Principals* (1986) a major shift occurred as the locus of educational policymaking moved from the federal government and local governments to the states (Ravitch, 1990). The state increased its influence on leadership preparation programs, setting policies related to certification and licensure requirements, approving programs, and providing resources to universities through state budgets (Reyes-Guerra & Lochmiller, 2016).

In 2001, Florida Statute 231.0861(2) reduced the certification requirements needed for an individual to obtain licensure as a principal (Archer, 2002). This opened the pool of prospective candidates who could lead a school. Following this legislative change, educators from the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and the National Association of Elementary Principals met to provide a framework for leadership development.

In 2005, a list of ten principal standards was produced in Florida as described by Florida Statute 1012.986. Using the leadership standards adopted by the State Board of Education, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the National Staff Development Council, this statutory requirement mandated support for the human resource development needs of principals, principal leadership teams, and candidates for principal leadership positions. Each of Florida's 67 school districts created a unique program and was individually approved by the Florida Department of Education. The Florida Principal Leadership Standards were updated in 2011. The most significant changes from the 2005 version of standards were in content, focus, and specificity as the new standards emphasized instructional leadership and student achievement. Mountford and Acker-Hocevar (2013) found that policies aimed at introducing new educational leadership standards in Florida failed to involve university preparation program faculty in their development and yet faculty were later mandated to comply with a policy with which they felt no ownership.

In 2020 the FDOE continues to review and approve each submitted Level 1 Educational Leadership Programs every 5 years. A postsecondary institution, school district, charter school, or charter management organization may apply to the department to establish a Level I school leader preparation program (Florida Statutes 1012.562.2(a), 2019). Currently, 24 universities have an approved Level 1 Educational Leadership Program, and one school district (FDOE, 2020). Effective December 2016, educational leadership programs seeking initial or continued program approval rating from the state (Florida Statutes 1012.562), were required to submit an electronic folio that contains a description and supporting evidence of the design, delivery, curriculum content, evaluation of the specified program, and explicit description of a partnership agreement between the institution's principal preparation program and the school district(s) (Florida Statutes 1012.562(2)(a)2.).

### ***School District***

Emergent literature and practice continue to support the notion that high-quality preparation programs come from partnerships between universities and school districts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Jacobson et al., 2015; Fry et al., 2007). Formally established partnerships between school districts and universities are mutually beneficial as the outcome is the design of a principal preparation program tailored to the local context and need (Reyes-Guerra & Lochmiller, 2016). Districts can influence curriculum and course content to align with district reform priorities; offer support for prospective candidates; and identify excellent practitioners to collaborate with university faculty in delivering the program (Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Reyes-Guerra & Lochmiller, 2016). Universities can support district leadership decision making by providing evidence-based research and data to ensure that limited resources are best utilized to support the community they serve.

### **Methodology**

For twenty-five years, FAPEL has been a leading professional association for the field of educational leadership preparation in the state of Florida. This study conducted over a period of two years (2017-2019) examines the origins of FAPEL and in doing so draws on (a) empirical data; (b) conceptual analysis; and (c) the conceptualization of intellectual histories from individual narratives (Cresswell, 2013). The procedure consists of gathering data through a collection of stories, individual experiences, and chronologically ordering the meaning of those

experiences (p.70). The study is a contribution to filling the historical and archival gap in the association's history, and a blueprint for young ICPEL affiliated state associations.

Historical research attempts to arrive at an account of what has happened in the past by systematically examining association documents, extant documents, and collected individual narratives. It is conducted to uncover the unknown; to answer questions; to identify the relationship that the past has to the present; to record and evaluate the accomplishments of individual, agencies, and institutions, and aid our understanding of the culture in which we live (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, p.425). This study followed Johnsen and Christensen's (2016) five steps for historical research: (1) research topic identification, (2) data collection, (3) data evaluation, (4) data synthesis, and (5) report preparation. Data were collected through individual narratives and semi-structured interviews with key FAPEL leaders (past Presidents), and members. This study capitalized on qualitative methods to identify and examine the reactions, feelings, and opinions of FAPEL leaders and members related to FAPEL's development and sustainability, impact in the field, and the state of Florida.

The aims of this historical study were to (1) identify the factors contributing to the origin of FAPEL (2) identify key FAPEL and state events from 1995 to 2020, (3) describe key contributions of FAPEL to the educational leadership field during this period, and (4) identify potential future directions for FAPEL. Key leaders (past presidents) ( $n = 10$ ) and members ( $n=10$ ) participated in narrative and semi-structured interviews. Results from the thematic analysis revealed several themes in three areas: FAPEL development growth and sustainability; accomplishments; and possible future directions for FAPEL to explore.

At the time of writing, there have been 14 FAPEL presidents, eight males, and six females. Elected presidents have come from both public and private institutions: five presidents were faculty at the University of Central Florida; three presidents were faculty at Florida Atlantic University; and one president from each of the following institutions- Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida International University, Nova Southeastern University, St. Leo University, Stetson University, and the University of South Florida.

## **Findings**

### **The Catalyst for Educational Leadership Faculty Transitioning from Isolation to Collaboration**

The emergence of the 1980s critical reports of school leadership preparation combined with Florida MTA requirement for review, continuing approval of all educational leadership preparation providers in the state (State Board Rules 6A-5.081 and 6A-5.080), and development of the Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE) were the catalyst in bringing together professors of educational leadership programs in Florida to form FAPEL. Up to this time networking among (and even within) the State University System (SUS) institutions was almost nonexistent. Compounding the issue was the factious relationship between many regional programs and local school districts (past president narrative, 2018).

### **Association Growth**

In 1997, there were six institutional members i.e. Florida Atlantic University, Nova Southeastern University, Stetson University, University of Florida, University of North Florida, and the

University of Central Florida. By 1998 there were seven institutional members with a total of 58 individual members (FAPEL minutes and narratives). Attendance at recent meetings has risen to representation from 20 institutions with seven institutional members (FAPEL minutes). The Association's goal is to have representation from each university in Florida that provides a Master's degree and/or certification program in Educational Leadership (FAPEL website).

Association minutes suggest that membership continued to grow in the early years. For example, in 1997, FAPEL and UCF hosted a hospitality reception at the annual convention of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), and at the Southern Regional Conference (SRCEA). Early meetings (1997 & 1998) were co-sponsored by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS), and since 2013, Pearson has sponsored meetings (narrative and minutes).

Florida Department of Education (FDOE) and the Florida Association of School Superintendents (FASS) attend and participate in meetings (minutes). In May 1998, a panel of principals shared with FAPEL members what they believed principals needed to know to lead and manage successful schools in the future. A second panel discussion focused on Educational Leadership Program Approval. The FDOE made a presentation focused on the Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE). This trend of involving practitioners from the field, state policymakers, and FLDOE administrators in association meetings has remained constant.

In May 1998 a motion was approved by members enabling the President to attend one of three national organizations' annual meetings (UCEA, AERA, & NCPEA), not to exceed \$300. FAPEL Board members now attend the following conferences in an association/institution/individual capacity: AERA, NCPEA/ICPEL, UCEA, UCEA with association funding for the President to attend the annual meeting of ICPEL (narrative and minutes).

The association met annually with Orlando proving to be a favorite location because of its state centrality. The later shift to twice a year occurred in 2010-2011 when the association began holding one meeting a year in Tallahassee at the Florida Department of Education Building (winter/spring) and also a fall meeting in the current President's hometown (narrative and minutes).

In July 2013, the FAPEL Board held their first-day retreat in the Orlando home of Rosemarye Taylor (2012-2014). The retreat's goal was to substantively plan for the 2013-2014 FAPEL year including fall and spring meeting agendas. The Board's retreat has since become a scheduled event held at the President's university. An outcome of the retreat is that the association's planning is strategic, and that board members have an understanding of their roles and responsibilities (narrative and minutes).

## **Advocacy**

Either the Education Commissioner, Chancellor of Florida Colleges, Chancellor of Public schools, or a representative from the Office of Safe Schools is invited to attend FAPEL meetings and to give the opening address. The invitation for the fall meeting at Tallahassee held in the education building is generally accepted. This strategy raises the profile of the association and engages members in critical conversations that might not otherwise occur.

*Policy Liaison Committee* (2011) adopted a service orientation with a general membership agreement that it would advise the association regarding policy issues. In 2016, the committee was renamed *The Policy and Advocacy Committee* as part of a strategic effort to develop a strong, positive relationship with FLDOE and to become a voice for policy and

legislation related to our field. The committee has crafted several White Papers with approval from members. The first White Paper was a concept paper on Principal Preparation in Florida submitted to FDOE and the second prepared for the Teacher Leader Preparation Implementation Committee (TLPIC, 2015) giving recommendations for a future leadership preparation program accountability model. More recently FAPEL has been discussing the impact of student trauma on learning, and the implications for schools.

*Legislative Liaison Committee* (2011) creates talking points about current legislation; meets with legislators or more typically aides during the spring meeting in Tallahassee; and ensures that legislators know of the association and Florida universities with FAPEL members.

### **Florida Education Leadership Exam (FELE)**

The FELE is a recurrent item meeting agenda whether to review data presented by FDOE, Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement, discuss program issues or to share the best test-taking strategies and practice (meeting agendas, minutes, narratives, and website).

The reforms in leadership preparation policy that resulted in various iterations of the Florida Education leadership Exam (FELE) evolved into a problematic process with empirical limitations and practical issues (Storey & Johnson, 2017). Success on the FELE is a requirement in order to graduate from any state-accredited principal preparation program.

The current FELE, known, as FELE 3.0 was developed to align with the State Board of Education-approved FPLS, adopted into a rule (6A-5.080) by the State Board in 2011 (Canto, 2013). FAPEL members were involved in the FELE 3.0 developmental process e.g. item writing committee, item review for bias and sensitivity committee, validation committee, standard-setting committee, and pilot testing. Before FELE 3.0 statewide pass rates were generally at or near 90% (minutes & narratives). With the implementation of FELE 3.0 came a marked decrease in pass rates. In 2015-16, the two years since the implementation of FELE 3.0 with the new cut scores, pass rates across the four examination areas ranged from 52% to 63% for first-attempt and from 71% to 75% for the best attempt (Canto & Olgar, 2017). FAPEL pushed for data to be first disaggregated by race and later by the institution as increasingly evaluation of leadership preparation programs was based on outcomes that largely reflected FELE results. FAPEL recommended that attention be paid to nurturing demonstrable competencies rather than completion of multiple-choice questions and to utilizing modern technology to assess aspiring administrators (minutes & narratives). An electronic portfolio and clinical simulation are recommendations made to FDOE (minutes & narratives).

Meeting feedback forms constantly highlight the value of presentations by the FDOE focused on the FELE, and the opportunity to discuss the test in an open forum with colleagues.

### **Program Design**

Early meeting agendas highlight the concern of members in transferring from a focus on individual courses in educational leadership to a focus on knowledge, and competencies, needed for success. FAPEL members collaborated on the redesign of their program concerning the sequence of courses compliant with state legislation (minutes and narratives). Generally, Introduction to Educational Leadership was the first course, followed by core courses such as law, technology, personnel, finance, leadership, community relations, and curriculum. Courses in the program of studies recommended for inclusion toward the end of a student's program were



Curriculum Innovations, Decision-Oriented Research, and Applications of Leadership Theory (Cox et al., 1999).

## **Partnerships**

Effective partnerships continue to be seen as essential to navigate through change and meet the ever-growing and changing demands of stakeholders, and policy-makers.

*State*-FAPEL has worked with the FDOE first in creating higher standards for educational leadership program approval, developing a Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE) that is rigorous, and providing feedback to policymakers and the FDOE. Members have participated as subject matter experts, item validation sessions; standards development, competencies/skills development, and item development. Second, by advocating for the need for greater emphasis to be placed on school safety in both the Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) and the FELE.

*International*- Since 2016, FAPEL has worked with a recently created UK research interest group (RIG), focused on Leadership Preparation and Development, launched by British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS).

## **Professional Learning**

Through meeting breakout sessions members can engage each other in the professional dialogues and discussions that will lead to a stronger profession in Florida (Reyes-Guerra, 2016).

## **Aspiring Administrator's Program**

In 2010, the board added a graduate student membership category and developed a program aimed at mentoring and helping those doctoral students in school leadership programs who wished to be exposed to the issues faced by educational leadership faculty in Florida. Special mentoring sessions have been developed for graduate students before and during meetings. The goal is to provide networking opportunities with faculty across the state. Graduate students are also invited to shadow Legislative Committee members during the spring meeting and to accompany them when they visit legislators on the hill.

To connect with the school leader profession, FAPEL has associated itself with the Florida Association of School Administrators (FASA) to help bridge the area of theory to practice. Since 2014, FASA has offered and given scholarships to graduate students to attend their summer conference. These opportunities have included transportation costs, free registration, free hotel stays, and special sessions designed for the aspiring assistant principal.

## **Research Alliance (FRA)**

The seeds for the FAPEL Research Alliance (FRA) were sown at the Spring 2018 meeting during a discussion between FAPEL members, Eileen McDaniels (FDOE), and Philip Canto (FDOE). To date the University of Central Florida, University of South Florida, University of North Florida, Florida State University, and St. Thomas University have contributed abstracts from graduate students in their Educational Leadership doctoral programs (EdD & PhD) to the FRA

database. The database can be accessed through the FAPEL website (narrative, minutes, past president report).

*The intent is to*

1. Develop an open-access database containing educational leadership doctoral program dissertation abstracts from all FAPEL member institutions with an educational leadership doctoral program (EdD & PhD).
2. Raise awareness of quality research currently being completed in Florida
3. Enable FAPEL institutions to build upon research completed by FAPEL members.
4. Sustain collaborative research engagement leading to graduate work in cross-institutional teams.
5. Contribute valid, relevant, and contextual research to state conversation about K-12 education reform.
6. Facilitate meta-synthesis of the database to the benefit of the state of Florida.

## **Discussion**

Overall, participants ( $n = 20$ ) believed FAPEL will likely continue to adapt and change to meet the needs of educational leadership faculty, school leaders, the Board of Education, and legislators. One past president highlighted this theme stating, "Some challenges for both FAPEL and university programs is how we ensure that we are constantly responding to changes in the national landscape." Narratives highlighted the many opportunities for networking and learning from others. Half of the participants ( $n = 10$ , 50.00%) described resources provided through the biannual meetings, and leadership opportunities.

The majority of past presidents ( $n = 8$ ) referenced the willingness of FAPEL and its members to work with Florida's Department of Education and other Florida organizations, and specifically emphasized with pride FAPEL's extensive involvement in advocacy initiatives. Past presidents also discussed how FAPEL has built a solid organizational infrastructure with a dedicated, elected board. Overall, past presidents believed that FAPEL has emerged as a leading professional organization. Furthermore, many believed FAPEL has advanced the preparation of school leaders in Florida.

Members highlighted the need for the organization to maintain its momentum and continue to expand the resources made available to members. Several interviewees mentioned the need to extend the mentoring program for current doctoral students.

Throughout the interviews, professional members, student members, and leaders in FAPEL highlighted similar benefits to membership such as networking, access to resources, and the organization is tailored to member needs. However, more past presidents and members discussed the member-centered nature of the organization. Many similarities in perceptions of future directions were seen across the type of interviewees related to the need to continue to strengthen the association, maintain the relationship with the FDOE and legislators, increase the visibility of the organization, and continuing to guide the profession.

Past presidents rather than members pointed out that it was faculty from public institutions that saw the need for a state association representing educational leadership faculty. But in recent years their role in preparing aspiring school leaders within the state has decreased with the growth and availability of out of state online options (Baker, 2012). Several online universities with a presence in Florida have sent a representative to meetings.

In summary principal preparation in Florida has been shaped by state policies implementing federal education initiatives (Manna, 2015; Fusarelli et al., 2019), foundations such as Wallace (Murphy, Young, Crow, & Ogawa, 2009), and commercial organizations such as Pearson who are active in the test development market (Storey, 2019). Whilst the locus of control concerning principal preparation remains at the state level, FAPEL provides an open communication pathway for educational leadership faculty to both state legislators and the state department of education.

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

FAPEL's involvement with FDOE concerning quality assurance and credentialing has allowed educational leadership faculty to present state-based research and best practice at the highest state level. The importance of having a professional association representing the voice of educational leadership faculty should not be underestimated. Many of the future directions described by interviewees in this study apply to the field overall. For example, interviewees describe the need to adapt to the local landscape, build partnerships, and share best practices. This includes being aware of research needs, identifying and obtaining research funding, and ensuring that educational leadership research is connecting evidence to practice.

### **Limitations**

There are some limitations to this study. First, not all past presidents that served during the study period participated in the study; therefore, the results may not represent the views of all those who served between 1995 and 2020. A convenience sample was used to select individuals for member interviews, which may not be representative of all FAPEL members.

### **Recommendations**

State educational leadership associations provide the forum for educational leadership faculty to be informed, enter into a dialogue, and develop solutions to the challenges facing our profession. All involved in the preparation of future school leaders have a responsibility to continually focus on improving our profession. Collectively, a state association has the opportunity to influence policy and legislation governing our profession, programs, and the role of school leaders; confront proposed legislation impacting our profession; engage in professional learning to improve our practice; and stay relevant and connected to those that we serve. Programs continuing to work in silos without state representation are unlikely to have a place at the state level table, and individuals will have little leverage with legislators and the state's department of education.

### **Conclusion**

For twenty-five years, FAPEL has been the state association for educational leadership faculty, identifying and addressing the key issues facing the preparation of school leaders in Florida. Over the years FAPEL has continued to redefine its priorities, improve its governance structure, and expand its relationships with other organizations. Events and themes highlighted in this study have shown how FAPEL has a role to play in the development of policy that governs the profession and to ensure that program design and faculty professional development is grounded

on a common understanding based on research and best practice. A willingness by board members to constantly review and reflect on the role of the association in current times has led to significant changes to the financial infrastructure of the association and an engaged membership. Although there will be many challenges to face in the future, FAPEL seems well-positioned to meet these challenges.

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