A Self-Study on Preparing Future School Leaders

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This paper presents a self-study project that goes beyond the surface of praxis to examine the internal academic teaching process of a PK-12 school leader educator. The study systematically relates one professor's intrapersonal struggle and professional challenge in addressing his lived contradiction of teaching aspiring school leaders. Results address salient questions that teachers of leaders must pose for themselves about their work—particularly pertaining to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Self-study, a disciplined professional development practice, lends important insights as a research genre into school leadership preparation.

Learning to lead, and its implications for those who prepare school leaders, has been gaining increased attention for more than a decade. In fact, high-level, rigorous training for educational leaders is now seen as the critical linchpin in systemic PK-12 educational renewal under increasing public policy accountability systems (Elmore, 2000, 2008; Levine, 2005; Resnick, 1998; Southern Regional Education Board, 2006). Some have been critical of school leadership preparation practices (Hess & Kelly, 2007), and others have sought to carefully articulate an agenda for improving pre-service leadership training at the classroom, program area, and institutional levels (Murphy, 2006). The central issue for this research pertains to the necessary shift "in language,

thought, and mental models about leadership preparation" (Silverberg & Kottkamp, 2006, p. 2) operating at the ground-level of the instructor who is charged with teaching leadership in a way that makes their own "learning transparent and the legitimate focus of inquiry…new, deep, and public dialogue about the purpose and ends of our work with aspirants to leadership" (p. 2).

The purpose of this self-study was to reflexively examine the teaching practice of one professor of educational leaders, Author, through an intense exploration of the tensions within his practice by utilizing a dialogical partner, Co-Author, who served to assist him in critically questioning Author's assumptions, beliefs and values about his work. How do we teach educational

leadership? Can leadership really be taught? What is the role of the instructor in developing leaders and consequently shaping the practice of leadership? These are the questions that teachers of educational leaders should be asking themselves, and as a rigorous form of methodology, self-study supports an inquiry process for making such findings explicit. With the empirical literature on educational leadership curriculum and instruction practically non-existent (Murphy& Vriesenga, 2004), it is our responsibility as teachers of future educational leaders to contribute to an increased understanding of the concerns in the field by researching ourselves as leadership subjects and looking closely at our role in the curriculum.

Empirical Literature

Teaching Educational Administration and Leadership

Allowing Murphy and Vriesenga's research for UCEA on preparation programs in Educational Administration (2004) to lead the way, their conclusions are offered as a basis for our claim that more direct light needs to reflect on the intricacies of teaching in this field. Only five empirical studies in four leading academic journals in the past twenty-five years were found to be centered on instructional practice at the classroom level. In the category of instruction, studies examined: experience-based leadership training (Benham & Shepard, 1995); action research (Scribner & Bredeson, 1997); problem-based

learning (Chrispeels & Martin, 1998; Martin, Chrispeels, & D'emidio-Caston, 1998); and asynchronous/synchronous instruction (Wright, Marsh, & Miller, 2000). With these studies, all focused on the *techniques* of teaching, rather than the internal *processes* that are involved in teaching, and from our perspective a great deal of knowledge remains hidden from view.

Self-Study in Teacher Education and Educational Leadership

Unfortunately, no studies have been found to date that seek to inform the field of educational leadership preparation through an explicit analysis of an individual professor's educational leadership teaching practice using self-study methodology. This does not mean, however, that we have to leave the individual educator howling at the moonlight like a lone wolf; rather, relevant empirical literature does provides support from a pack of fellow practitioner/inquirers who hold similar aims for improvement and transparency. Over the past twenty years, action research has illuminated the practice of teaching itself as teacher practitioners have also become inquirers (Riehl, Larson, Short, & Reitzug, 2000). With the researcher as the principal agent of the activity, self-study as a methodology is associated but distinct from action research, and both have found a proper home in teacher education as forms of rigorous practical research genres focused on informing and improving both teacher practices and their academic preparation

programs (LaBoskey, 2004; Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007).

Such a pattern of growth within educational leadership/administration research is less apparent, and self-studies in particular are certainly less common, even though they offer similar potential for revealing the nuances within both leadership education and practice (Manke, 2004). Scholars from New York University (Riehl et al., 2000) asked about this unparalleled predicament and from their findings, they make a strong case for infusing educational administration programs with a curriculum that increases the exposure of students to both conventional and practical research. In seeking to understand, a conscious concern surfaced that academic programs may not be preparing students to value the processes of reflection and inquiry that research entails. Through a programmatic type of self-study, although not specifically identified as such, these teachers of educational leaders (university professors) analyzed student responses and discovered a division on this issue between those preparing for futures in academe and those preparing for futures within school administration. The formation of a more unified community of educational leadership scholars is advocated through an enhancement and focus on research activity in the curriculum.

Since then, Manke (2004) has reviewed the literature for research inquiries on self-studies of administrative practices in teacher education. Acknowledging that teachers may become school administrators and school administrators may become university professors of teacher education, Manke notes that the lines between teachers and administrators are often blurred. As a self-study practitioner herself, Manke reveals the appealing power of the process:

> Researchers who have been drawn to self-study, who have acquired its habits of reflection and of focus on one's own work or the role of self in one's own work, wish to continue to focus in this way on their work as administrators. (p.1368)

A definition of a self-study practitioner is presented as: one who seeks, through reflection [not simply description], [a] deeper understanding of context, practice, and their interaction (p. 1370). Countering concerns that the self-study method could become a solipsistic endeavor, collaboration is seen as essential to supporting the credibility of the work; henceforth, ongoing critique and triangulation of data become a natural part of the self-study inquiry.

Self-studies relevant to Manke's literature review are grouped into three categories: a) practitioners who have become administrators; b) administrative practices at the program level, and c) practitioners engaged in teacher education reforms. Fourteen self-studies, from those teachers and teacher educators who are now serving as administrators, span empirical efforts from 1995 - 2002 and explore related

work roles and efforts within the authors' respective departments, programs, and schools. None of these authors are professors of educational leadership per se, but in examining their teaching role, they are making their related professional work explicit.

The authors of nine of the studies used self-study methodology in an application of investigative reflection on their programs. Interestingly, two of these were professors working within teacher education programs who wrote about their leadership roles with students (Kosnik, 1998 and Johnston, 1997), but again, not about the internal process within their teaching.

Another nine studies were set in the context of leadership efforts for educational reform. Only one of these explores the work of an academic teacher educator (Squire, 1998); however, the exploration is a retrospective examination of her teaching life while in an administrative position and incorporates action research through the addition of data from teacher groups. Manke (2004) further reviews these papers by topics and identifies issues of power, community, social justice, and reform in teacher education/teacher professional development.

In our review of relevant literature, one other study was found, by Gerstl-Pepin, Killeen, and Hasazi (2006) that used self-study regarding the preparation of educational leadership curriculum. This study can be added to Manke's nine previously mentioned studies related to self-studies at the program level and to the topical focus

on social justice. Gerstl-Peplin and others conducted a six-year self-study of their doctoral training program using an "ethic of care" framework regarding their specific curriculum goal of enhancing social justice leadership.

Researcher Self-Disclosure in Self-Study

With Manke's (2004) work running parallel to our purpose, once again, we allow her to guide our appropriate inclusion of self-disclosure through what she identifies as a "tradition of self-study (p.1368)." This scholar shares her professional career development and personal life intersections from the point of entering her doctoral program to her current position as associate dean in a college of education.

With a nascent literature occurring as the backdrop to this study but still missing our central focus when it comes to depicting the internal processes involved in teaching as an instructor of aspiring leaders, we have identified another source, from the sub-field of ethics in education, that comes close to addressing our concern about making professors' learning from their teaching both transparent and a focus of the inquiry. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), leading scholars in the area of ethical leadership, write imperatively about having a sense of who they are and of knowing what they believe. This mutual pedagogical stance is called into their teaching practice through life stories of experience and reflections through journaling and dialogue. They acknowledge that "difficult dialogue

leading to self-disclosure can be a most trying process (2005, p.140) but claim "self-disclosures are needed to assist us in better understanding our pedagogical approaches and how we affect our students" (p.140). In making their teaching practice of school leaders explicit (2005), the chapter on *Ethics, Ourselves, and Our Pedagogy* (pp.139-158) offers self-narratives disclosing the personal and professional historical roots and evolution of each of their own ethical codes of concern. Support for the importance of their research, and ours, is drawn from Starratt (1994), a fellow colleague from the pack of ethical leadership scholars who noted, "we know precious little about the attitudes, beliefs, and personal journeys of educators practicing in educational administration programs" (p.100).

In preface to further explication of our research methodology, process, and results, we now proceed to introduce ourselves through a self-disclosure of each of our professional paths and experiences relevant to the unfolding of this inquiry. Who we are is germane to this research as we seek to shed light on the internal process and preparation of teaching educational leaders.

Professional Self-Disclosure

Author's Background

I, Author, am a junior professor working at a public Research I university in the Midwest teaching coursework for aspiring PK-12 principals seeking both a graduate degree and state credentialing in order to lead a school or school district. I understand the urgency in the profession to train people for instructional leadership roles both from the policy and research perspectives and from my own personal experiences in dealing with the issue of transformative instructional leadership as a former school and district-level administrator. I have worked in the PK-12 sector for approximately 14 years as a teacher, school counselor, assistant principal, principal, and director of curriculum and instruction. These experiences were both formative and practical, and the insights I gained from these practitioner roles are now brought to bear in my current work as a teacher of leaders in academia. Although I would view my practitioner work, at all levels, as essential to the formation of my own leadership ability, I do wonder about the time required in my own professional life to acquire the proclivity and corresponding ability to lead. In many ways I wonder about how much of my current leadership ability is largely a product of my life circumstance, or even accident, rather than any kind of formal education. For me, this very notion becomes a matter of urgency—how can my teaching be something different than what I experienced as a professional educator aspiring for larger leadership roles in schooling?

I am extremely concerned that the profession is losing valuable time because the public purposes of mass schooling are increasingly in jeopardy. I feel a great sense of stewardship about my labors as a teacher, especially in the

sense of multiplying my efforts to effectuate larger changes in a perilously situated public institution by developing future leaders who are wise and brave enough to do the good work of preserving our collective interests in ultimately effectuating high-level teaching and learning. I committed to this self-study not knowing exactly what would come of it: understanding, hopefully, that my dedication to the investigation would reveal important aspects about myself, my professional work as a school leader educator, and my understanding of students.

Co-Author's Background

I, Co-Author, am a doctoral candidate in adult and higher education with an emphasis in faculty development, and I am Author's Graduate Research Assistant. I was asked to assist in this self-study project, and specifically, to serve as Author's dialogical partner to provide critical questioning and promote reflexivity: a role that he believed was necessary to make the inquiry explicit. My research interests have focused on new faculty adjustment and the integration of their personal and professional development as well as spirituality in education and transformational learning. Professionally, I seek to expand and implement academically supportive personal services for faculty through college and university programming. Not knowing how the process would evolve, or how my role would contribute, I accepted the invitation to participate as the dialogical partner in

this self-study of Author's leadership teaching practice.

Of particular pertinence to the outcome of this project has been my twenty years of experience as a clinical social worker and psychotherapist, which undoubtedly infused the methodological approach and dialogical process. Specifically, the use of an existential gestalt technique called *voice dialogue*, developed by two clinical psychologists Stone and Stone (19891993) who were trained in Jungian psychoanalysis, was utilized to assist Author in his self-study reflections. My suggestion that Author use this technique in this academic and non-therapeutic context was supported and balanced by my research on transformational learning from a psychological depth perspective. According to Dirkx, who writes specifically on this aspect of Transformational Learning theory, "Learning is understood as a process that takes place within the dynamic and paradoxical relationship of self and other" (1997, p.83). Finally, my scholarship within the area of spirituality in higher education and the importance of *nurturing soul* (Dirkx, 2001) seemed to bring both my skills in psychodynamic techniques and the potential for transformative learning together through my role as dialogical partner in Author's self-study.

Self-Study Methodology

This self-study evolved over one semester in the fall 2007 academic year as an intense exploration of the

consciously emergent lived contradiction of one academic teacher of leaders through both conventional (texts, teaching observations, and student feedback) and innovative (reflective journal writing, dialogical partner conversation, and psychodynamic exploration) methods. Self-study methodology commonly employs both conventional and innovative approaches (LaBoskey, 2004) while exploring the "living contradictions" experienced between one's values about their work and actual practice (Whitehead, 2000). In a unique teacher-as-researcher-as-researched investigation, the intertwining of teaching and researching alters both practices (Loughran, 2002).

According to LaBoskey (2004), self-study as a methodology is said to have five definitional characteristics. Although varied in design, they are: a) self-initiated and focused; b) aimed at improving practice; c) collaboratively interactive in challenging assumptions and reframing interpretations; d) primarily qualitative using multiple means, and e) made publicly explicit as a professional research practice. Collaborative dialogue has been found to be a crucial element for exploration as a research stance within self-study and has been examined extensively by Placier, Pinnegar, Hamilton, and Guilfoyle (2005). These authors identify dialogue as the process of coming to know one's claim for action about practice and describe it as the tool that supports an authority for such claims. Although coming to know about one's teaching practice and one's self requires

critical reflection (LaBoskey, 2004), it is only through reflexivity with critical partners that practitioners push beyond ego reactions and into transformative learning.

The use of dialogue that was employed in this self-study came about because of the combined backgrounds and readiness of this research team: Author, Co-Author, and ultimately, Author's critical conscience, which we dubbed Author's "alter ego". A psychodynamic approach was incorporated within the self-study to support the internal dialogue that transpired within Author, as reflected in his journals and conversations, regarding his lived contradiction about whether or not leadership can actually be taught. In support of including this aspect of Author's critical conscience, Tidwell and Heston (1998) present the use of practical argument in self-study and explain the dynamic involvement of voices from the teacher and the Other, which they define as those who are familiar with the professional education practice and the self-study teacher/researcher's work. We believe, in this case, there to be no one better than Author's critical conscience—that of he, himself. They state, "The voice of the Other provides important prompts at crucial moments to allow the teacher opportunities to think about actions by forcing the teacher to examine the reasons behind specific actions" (p.46). Throughout this investigation, Author and his alter ego "argued" about the realities of teaching leadership, and in the beginning they were quite polarized in their views. By the end of the study, a

resolution of the tension occurred through an appreciation and acceptance of their dilemma.

This special form of intrapersonal dialogue exploration arose from Co-Author's prior practice as a psychotherapist and the use of the voice dialogue (Stone & Stone, 1989, 1993) technique. As Author began to articulate his lived contradiction in the self-study meetings with Co-Author, it became clear that an emergent internal dialogue started taking place about the philosophical effectiveness of teaching leadership at all. Author recognized this as his true lived contradiction and expressed doubt that it would have been examined so thoroughly without the rigor of the self-study commitment.

In the interest of validating the study, cross-verification of data was accomplished by including student voices and teaching observations during the semester of research. Two class observations were conducted by Co-Author of Author's teaching as well as two student focus groups from two current classes that were confidentially convened by Co-Author (without Author) to obtain feedback about his teaching. A letter of informed explanation was offered to the students to protect their confidentiality, and care was taken to continually ensure them of the voluntary nature of their assistance. Primary data was collected between Author/Subject and Co-Author/Dialogical Partner from nine regularly scheduled meetings, scheduled every other week, over the 16 week semester. Extensive notes were taken and transcribed for each of the

self-study research sessions, which were focused on examining, questioning, and processing Author's journals through dialogical conversations of critical inquiry about his work and internal life.

Findings and Review of the Data

Students Voice their Experiences

Two observations of Author's teaching were conducted by Co-Author early in the study through two of his graduate classes both taught within the preparation program. Obtaining this data supported the integrity of the study by providing important knowledge of Author's teaching practice to Co-Author in preparing to serve as his dialogical partner in the self-study research. It further facilitated Co-Author's role in convening reliable student focus group discussions, which occurred mid-semester; with all students enrolled in these courses.

All students from the two courses, n = 22, participated in sharing their feedback with Co-Author either through one of the three focus group sessions or privately by email—as all students were encouraged to do. Protocol for the sessions involved: a) distribution and discussion of Informed Consent for this Exempt Research, and b) one open-ended question focused on their experience with Author's teaching practices and related behaviors as it applied to their learning experiences and participation in class. The following narrative excerpts reveal both positive and negative reactions regarding their shared experience with this professor's

teaching of school leadership. Specifically, students addressed issues of his passion, teaching style and mannerisms, experience in the field, course curriculum and activities, evidence of his caring, and underneath it all, possibly a sense of awareness that hinted at Author's struggle with his lived contradiction.

Five students used the term "passion/passionate" in describing Author's teaching and mention its impact on their learning. One said, "He's passionate about the subject matter and I enjoy him, however, it's hard when it's so late at night. I wish he'd calm down a little bit." Another commented: "He's extremely passionate, and it goes along with those facial expressions. Sometimes we just look at each other and smile about it." While another added, "For being as young as he is, he is very educated and up on the latest research; very passionate—he encourages me." Yet one admitted, "I can see how he went into adult education because of his passion—it was probably very intimidating to those he worked with. Gosh, if he were my principal..."

Author's teaching style and mannerism were a consistent topic across all student groups, and their discussions went something like these. Class #1: "He's very blunt." "I like blunt." "He's kind of distracting though."/ "I agree with everything they said; they did a good job—except I don't find him distracting. Last semester, before signing up for this class, I'd heard people say, 'if you can get past his mannerisms.' It was kind of a negative

impression, actually. I've had a total opposite experience and told my husband that after the first night. That stuff didn't bother me at all." And in Class #2: "And he's very animated, which is awesome. It sucks me in." / "Even lecture; even for the boring ones." / "At first, though, I thought 'he's just a nerd' with his facial expressions."/ "I like the facial expressions. He's like a Jim Carey movie. I love Jim Carey."/ "I think he's a good teacher." / "He's eccentric but you know what you get."

A number of students were explicitly appreciative of his experience in the field and shared these remarks: "I like the fact that he's really experienced…doesn't deviate like other professors I've had. I also like the discussions a lot, especially readings when I don't really understand them very well on my own" / "It's evident that he has a lot of experience to draw from […] as a teacher [and] that helps him in voicing these things to us." / Not just research but experiences. [He's] not one of these people to say I've done this and that, but over several classes with him it's come out and I think, 'Wow' he's had some major experiences, and we benefit from it." / "The personal details are always pertinent to his teaching. I feel like I don't know him personally, but I know his career well."

Regarding the course curriculum and activities, several students commented on Author's teaching in conjunction with the readings. This student's comment addresses their classmates' sentiments overall:

I had him this past summer and now this fall, and the readings are kind

of heavy but relevant, especially [the summer readings], they all speak directly to what I would be doing as an administrator. I'm all about scope and sequence and they are. What I'm saying is, I have a lot of faith in the readings, although I may not always be finished (because they're so heavy). The material builds very professionally—all relevant. I appreciate that in a teacher.

In a related topic, many of the students highlighted Author's skills at facilitating class discussions: "He's a model facilitator too. If there are tangents to go off on, he gets us back on focus and doesn't let us go off" / "He doesn't seem to be bound by unnecessary formalities and traditional rules about how to behave and speak as a professor, or conduct the class" / and "He has a way of pulling to get at the right words to steer the direction of the conversation."

This student summarized their class discussion experience and reflected on their future role, as well:

> I feel like Dr. Author is very prepared and organized for class, yet he is very flexible and willing to stray from the original plan if the class discussion goes that way. He seems very perceptive to the way the students are responding and guides the discussion in a very experienced manner. He uses strategies not typically found, or maybe just not utilized very well, in my other graduate level courses. He expects the students to read and re-read assigned

texts and to respond to them in a dialogue fashion. He expects us to think and reflect; something the people we will be supervising and guiding to grow will need to learn to do if change is to truly take place.

Another student, new to the program, offered a comment about the impact of class activities on her learning:

> One of the things I did like, I guess because I'm unfamiliar with the campus in general, we've been [to] places—to the library looking at LORA, study groups, et cetera—have been awesome! I think that aids in the class, and it started the class building a momentum. We started off getting a little piece at a time and now it's rolling—I'm starting to understand the bigger picture.

Evidence that these students experienced Author as a caring teacher and mentor are reflected in these particular comments: "I tell you one thing I like. If you have something going on in school (or work) he is open to doing whatever we need to do because I've had a lot. It impacts my learning because you know where you stand with him" / "He's a personal professor, caring & nurturing. He's my advisor. He's encouraged me and is very present on a totally different level than others I've experienced before" / "He's also a good mentor because he gave me good advice. I talked to him once about my

specialization and he said, "What'll best suit you", which was what I had in mind anyway. So, he helped me a lot" / "I think with him, students are number one. He lets it be known his students come first", / and "You feel comfortable talking to him; like calling him by his first name, "Author". I like it."

One student offered this impression and personal experience:

> Dr. Author is genuinely concerned about the success of each and every student. Last semester he made special arrangements for me since I have to commute, and I had to petition and all. Whatever he told them, it saved me a couple thousand dollars. And last semester, he told us we were to write research papers of publishable quality but said he'd help.

In addition to the richness of these specifically shared experiences, a subtle awareness may have been emerging that seemed to hint about the struggling edges of Author's lived contradiction: a dynamic that even he was not clearly aware of at the time. Such an impression may be indicated in the following student remarks: "He's different than in other classes I've had—very intense, *really* focused on the subject", and "No matter how hard you work though, he'll ask for more. Oh yeah, he gives complements but then asks for more."

And it may also be displayed in the following conversation from one of the focus groups: "But very intense; I was worn out after the first couple of classes."/ "I've enjoyed his classes more than any other. They're active and engaging – not lecture."/ "He prepares more than any other professor I've had. Last year with those centers deal; oh, that wore me out!"/ "I've often wondered if he has a life outside of here."/ "He's a constant learner, too."/ "And that I appreciate."/ "He's always wanting to learn more."/ "In my experience, there are those who don't want to learn more."/ "Do you guys get the feeling that he's frustrated, that no one else works as hard as he does?"

While not guessing wholly accurately, it seems this last student may have been intuitively sensing Author's growing tension and conflict between his intense dedication and belief in the critical importance of preparing quality school leaders and his mounting concerns about the futile reality of the educational process and its outcomes—substantial professional and personal issues that were all subconsciously feeding into the roots of his blossoming lived contradiction.

Emergent Process and Related Findings

In attempting to make this self-study explicit, we concur with Elijah (2004) that the use of our own subjective voice is important to conveying the emergent nature and process of the study; therefore, in dialogical fashion, the following is written from the first person perspective of each of us, the researchers, Co-Author and Author, in turn. We have attempted to sequentially

summarize the events as they evolved throughout this self-study-inquiry semester.

Researcher Vulnerability and Dialogical Partner Trust

Co-Author: As I recall from reviewing my notes, it was in our initial research meeting, before even embarking on this scholarly journey together, that the vulnerable nature of Author's position as the subject of the research was discussed. According to Kelchtermans (1996), as cited in Hamilton, it is when teachers experience living contradictions as they teach that they particularly reveal their vulnerabilities (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington 2007). By committing to this self-study examination and intending to make this research explicit and public, Author's teaching practices and beliefs would inevitably be exposed. The bottom line—he told me he trusted me to be his dialogical partner in this, so both of us committed to begin the research while acknowledging complete uncertainly about the process or any eventual outcome.

Articulating Author's Lived Contradiction

Author: From the very beginning of this work, two texts assisted me in unearthing tacit assumptions and provided a framework for the values I hold about my work in teaching leaders: "Can Leadership be Taught?" In *Work, Education, and Leadership: Essays in the Philosophy of Education* (Howard & Scheffler, 1996) and *The Lessons of*

Experience: How Successful Executives Develop on the Job (McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988). These texts, in no uncertain terms, indicate that leadership cannot be taught! (At least in the formal sense of classroom instruction and traditional modes of training and preparation they cannot.) Leadership is developed over time through challenging life experiences. Leadership is the wisdom of life, and wisdom primarily derived from discovery and corresponding achievement cannot be directly taught. With this firm belief rising to conscious awareness, I struggled to both justify my work as a teacher of aspiring leaders and critically examine my instructional practices. I was bothered with the notion of teaching declarative knowledge about leadership, technical procedures, skills and processes related to leadership, *in situ* leadership forms, but not teaching leadership *per se* and students not "getting it." I felt that even though I believed that leadership *could not* be taught, the ideal vision of teaching leadership forced me to confront how my beliefs inhibited or even excused me from trying to reach an important ideal through my teaching.

Encountering Author's Critical Alter Ego

Co-Author: In examining Author's journal writing, it became apparent that a critical voice from his consciousness was emerging. As his ideal vision of teaching leadership began to be expressed, an internal alternate voice emerged that said leadership *could* be taught and that, in

essence, Author just wasn't trying hard enough. He described this ideal as a "nagging, haunting, pestering, disturbing thought, and a real problem" as a supposed teacher of leaders. As Author's dialogical partner, I suggested he delve into this further by conversing with this "alter ego" part of himself through journal writing to see what discoveries could be found. Author seemed very irritated with himself during this stage of the research but agreed to pursue and process further. Author's journal reflected on his experience with this at the time:

> Even though I intellectually ascribed to a view that leadership really cannot be taught, something within me arose to force an issue with what I knew to be true. With the help of my dialogical partner, Co-Author, I began to recognize these counter thoughts as an argument that was occurring between me and my alter ego. Internally, I was pushing against myself by asking questions about the beliefs I held and the instructional practices that ultimately follow from those beliefs.

Protecting Author's Teaching Passion

Author: I furthermore realized I am guided by my belief in the truth that the testament of my teaching will be manifested in the professional practice of students who will be leaders at some point in the future. This view about the power of my teaching felt like the "weight of the world" on me, especially

since I knew, from my two guiding texts, that leadership could not be taught directly, although as a teacher of leaders I found myself situated in a larger program area that focused on traditional approaches to leadership preparation. The issue became whether or not the "ideal" was in any way achievable for me without either burning myself out trying, giving up on naïve notions of an achievable ideal, or flat-out losing the professional drive to continue teaching aspiring school leaders. With this disturbing contradiction now perpetually bothering me, it was a serious distraction, thoroughly unhelpful, at times disabling, and at worst crippling. How could I protect myself—maintain any form of professional integrity in my own work as a teacher of leaders—against the voice of my critical alter ego hounding me about an ideal?

Including Author's Alter Ego in the Dialogue

Co-Author: One of the most profound developments within this self-study was Author's willingness to allow us to bring his alter ego into the dialogue through the use of psychodynamic techniques. It seemed that an internal antagonistic voice and dialogue had developed within his self-awareness as he wrestled with the living contradiction about his beliefs and ideals for teaching educational leadership. Initially, this critical voice seemed willing to push Author to the breaking point in proving that leadership *could be* taught and criticized him for not trying harder to make it

happen. As Author confronted and eventually conversed with his alter ego through his journals about this pedagogical difference of opinion between them, it became clear to me that shifting their exchanges from a "haunting" to a "helping" relationship could be crucial to my role in assisting Author to explore and resolve this tension. As the self-study evolved, Author agreed to engage in the process of voice dialogue within our meetings by verbalizing the conversations out loud between him and his alter ego in an attempt to better understand each other and reframe their relationship on this issue. I suggested Author focus on an appreciation of the intent of his alter ego and on the common concern between them regarding the crucial importance of quality preparation of educational leaders. An intense transformational personal unification transpired.

Transforming Author's Teaching for **Leadership**

Author: I have moved from a sustained existential wondering to a schizophrenia-like intrapersonal haunting in the form of confrontation with my alter ego/self to salient discovery about how my teaching practices can and should change in ways that can improve the learning and experiences of those who invest themselves in formal leadership preparation. The prophetic conceptualization of teaching *for* leadership was a profound awakening for me. Coming to recognition of, communication with, and mutual

dependence on the two aspects of my teaching self—the ideal alter ego and the pragmatic instructor—provided an avenue to explore and commit to instructional practices that better approach teaching leadership. This work will involve figuring out how to create more experiences for students to lead within the context of the courses I teach. The work will involve engineering activities and experiences in my courses that will give students an opportunity to actually lead: experience the lead, feel what it is like to lead, and reflect on perceptions and possible discoveries of having led.

Analysis and Implications

Interpretation and Conceptual Argument

These findings are similar to other self studies (teacher education preparation as opposed to educational administration and leadership preparation) in that the methodology employed encourages reflective practice in teaching and results in discoveries that, prior to engaging in a systematic investigation, remain elusive or hidden from the researcher. With respect to self study in school leadership preparation, this study forges new ground. To confirm this claim, a recent review of the literature was conducted through multiple databases focused on publications from 2000 to 2009, as well as, an exhaustive search through all related 2008 AERA Special Interest Group conference presentations for any professorial self-study research in the school leadership preparation field.

Simply stated, none were found. As indicated earlier, there is a dearth of extant empirical literature on educational leadership instruction. This self study, possibly the first published in the sub-field of leadership preparation, provides one of a number of avenues to consciously and systematically examine school leader educators' pedagogical practices. The process of "study, plan, act, reflect, refine" (Speck, 1999, p. 5) is clearly manifested in PK-12 teacher classroom-based professional development, whole school and district practices under the leadership of insightful administrators, and formal self-study investigations by teacher educator faculty. But at present, it is entirely neglected as a formal and explicit research process dealing with the teaching professorate in university-based leadership preparation programs.

The self discoveries enumerated in this study primarily deal with a single, profound pedagogical insight and related teaching philosophy and practice. Learning as apprenticeship, a principle of teaching and learning, involves both a belief system of the teacher and a life-process that students engage in because of that belief system. Through this self-study research, Author discovered the need to focus on activities, projects, and experiences where students get a chance to live out some of the following issues: a) dealing emotionally with tough situations, b) making decisions under risk and uncertainty, c) being responsible for the acts of others, d) demonstrating interpersonal competence and dealing with people's problems, e) promoting people, firing people, persuading people, f) living out a vision for positive change, g) setting an agenda and making choices with corresponding consequences in real time, and h) learning how to think and act for the realization of wide-scale instructional improvement that leads to increased student achievement.

Apprenticeship is essentially a Vygotskian (1978) socio-cultural constructivist view of how learning takes place and how teaching can support that learning. In this investigation, the self-discoveries that Author identified clearly hint at this kind of pedagogical awakening. There are features and indicators of "Learning as Apprenticeship" that support the findings in this study, some of which include: "a) students create authentic products and performances for interested critical audiences, b) experts critique and guide student work, c) finished work meets public standards of quality, and d) learning strategies are modeled" (The principles of learning, 2006).

Recognizing that as a teacher one should provide opportunities for leadership aspirants to get a chance to live out tough and emotionally-laden situations, make decisions under risk and uncertainty, be responsible for the acts of others, deal with people through interpersonal competence, persuade and inspire people to do things they would not normally do, and live out a vision for positive change, among other important leadership qualities, is one thing. Actually engineering a course with relevant activities that simulate

apprenticeship and expose students to these experiences is quite another. Although ISLLC/ELCC Standards (1996, 2008) are quite clear about educating school leader aspirants in such a way that addresses both knowledge, skill, and disposition acquisitions—as if these things were poured into students heads in traditional university-based programs. This study illuminates the profound difference between teaching managers content knowledge and technical skills and developing a socio-cultural space where students can discover leadership in themselves: a discovery and awareness of the inner person (Speck, 1999), which is the kind of leadership that accrediting agencies and professional boards want to specify through standards.

Standards are fine in that they constitute a broad curricular framework illustrating a consensus within the profession (both practitioner and academic), but what about the pedagogy at the classroom or program-area level to address those standards well? Although there are studies about useful activities for classroom instruction ("problem-based" learning, the "case study" with a corresponding protocol, film, technology enhanced content or skills acquisition, self-reflective activities including "action research"), what about the importance of the teacher? What does the teacher do with her or himself along with her or his designed activities to enhance and improve the socio-cultural dimension of self-discovery through apprenticeship? Teaching is so hard that it can never be

perfect, yet based upon relevant research in the field this premise appears to be wrong. We stand by the premise and suggest a steady stream of studies that focus on the teacher and what she or he does with students within each course (whether that course is about an introductory survey of the profession, finance, law, staff development, politics, or any other course) that constitutes a program of study for leadership preparation.

The multidimensional role of the principal as manager, administrator, educator, leader and inner person demands that school leader educators examine whether their instructional approaches are addressing real life with aspirants before they assume their official roles in the schools. Apprenticeship experiences embedded within courses can begin to achieve this aim. Not simply field work or field hours attached to course requirements, but an apprenticeship principle that obligates the teacher of aspiring leaders to design and construct leadership discovery activities and processes within and around explicit content and its delivery modalities.

Discussion

Self-reflection can bring about transformative change in pedagogy. Just as learning can be transformative (much of what we have been trying to describe as the goal of good teaching practice for the field of leadership preparation), so can measured, systematic, and procedural self-reflection (Schön, 1991) in the form of self-study. A rigorously employed self study research method

can be transformative for the individual professor conducting it and ultimately for the educational leadership preparation profession at large. A teaching practice theory is necessary for the field of educational leadership, especially in university sponsored programs. The viability and legitimacy of university preparation is currently being questioned and there are growing numbers of programs being developed outside of traditional higher education sanctioning that appear to be meeting the needs of local schooling contexts. This being the case, the profession needs an articulated, publicly accessible professional practice (Elmore, 2007) that clearly addresses pedagogical approaches for preparing aspirants to lead in schools.

Conclusion

Reflecting on Teaching Leadership

This self-study was an invaluable experience for Author as a teacher of potential and aspiring leaders of PK-12 schooling. He has come to realize how important it is to critically question his own teaching practices in light of the tacit assumptions and views of reality he holds for his work and what he wants and hopes to accomplish as a teacher. That said, this study was not solipsistic or designed to benefit only Author. The purpose of the study is much larger, one that focuses on a theory of practice for teaching and what we can do as a profession to move our professional teaching practice forward under increasing institutional environment pressures.

Self-study as a research method served as a process for Author's own transformation by exploring a lived contradiction that existed within him as a teacher of future leaders within a traditional educational leadership program. The self-study did not "fix" Author or the central problem that presented itself as a basis of the investigation, but the study provided an outlet to authentically explore the lived contradiction—the profound tension—Author felt and knew to exist in his work. There will always be a level of incongruence between Author's values and beliefs as a teacher in his practice—the planning, content, activities and attitude he brings to his instructional methods. But, nonetheless, the central issue of whether or not leadership can truly be taught was critical to his work as a teacher who cared about his responsibility for actually teaching leadership.

Author believes his teaching practices (pedagogy, planned activities, and approaches to learning *for* leadership) can and must change. The phrase "learning *for* leadership" is important because this idea was a prominent aspect of the reframing of the Author's thought process regarding what he does as a teacher. It was a process of cognitive restructuring; henceforth, the belief about the necessary changes that must take place in his teaching and his reformulation about the relationship between formal teaching and learning leadership is a result of the self-study. The methodologies employed in the self-study assisted him in identifying where

his professional teaching practices were hampered by the ideological tensions and contradictions he struggled with, and continues to grapple with, as a teacher of aspiring leaders. Author's next steps are driven by the belief that his practice can and must change. That professional teaching practice will involve engineering his instructional delivery for students to look more like the actual work they must do to be leaders in schools, so that, hopefully, at some point in their future they will, based in some part on their learning experiences, discover themselves as a leader and fully experience the outcomes that make them so.

Answering the Questions

So how do we teach for educational leadership? This study suggests that efforts at structuring the learning environment inside a classroom that mirrors the work environment, in some way, can be authentically instructive to those who aspire to lead, under any professional circumstance. The apprenticeship principle is pedagogically necessary for leadership education.

Can leadership really be taught? No, but the careful engineering of learning activities can assist in the discovery of leadership by committed and engaged students within the context of individual courses within a larger program of study leading to administrative credentialing. The role of the instructor for developing leaders, in other words, teaching *for* leadership, and the consequent shaping of leadership practice, involves the

thoughtful and careful engineering of content, teaching methods, and learner activities to simulate or mirror the actual work school leaders will do on the job. By doing so, learning to lead becomes a discovery: an acquiring of the wisdom of life. This wisdom-getting, primarily derived through experiential discovery and corresponding achievement, cannot be directly taught, but contexts that encourage it can be created.

Can instructors teaching courses, or preparation programs educating and training aspirants, really enact the kinds of changes being recommended by this research? We would argue that instructors and programs not rely too heavily on the internship or practicum to "deliver the goods," so to speak. Although an important component to preparation studies, the internship or practicum can make short shrift of discovering what leadership is or practicing what leadership is like. Logging hours and describing tasks are fine too, but all too often, depending on a school site cooperating administrator (sometimes remunerated and sometimes not) to "expose" an aspirant to the work can actually preclude lessons for discovering the wisdom of life. If leadership is not learned from trade magazines, books about theory, or teacher talk, but learned in the crucible of practice, what can we do to prepare a practice environment that builds leadership of a particular kind, one suited for an open, publically permeable and accessible, democratic and compulsory government-sponsored institution like mass schooling? We do

not think it is achieved by the ease of traditional banking notions of education (Freire, 2000), but rather by systematically examining our teaching (and program area) practice and exposing it for what it is and what it is not. Some of Author's students have said, "If I can read, talk, and write, I'm doing well." This statement is motivating to us. We want aspirants to experience and feel something deeper than the surface stuff of learning.

What can be done? Are there practical suggestions for leadership preparation teaching practice? How can this idea of teaching *for* leadership be accomplished without having a network of lab schools for aspirants to do the work and consequently discover? Some fortunate aspiring teachers in select teacher preparation programs can engage in professional development schools where they learn the work of teaching, in profound and life-changing ways, outside formal classroom instruction (Polizzi, 2007). Of course this is the exception, not the rule.

Practice Strategy for Leadership Preparation

In conclusion, one strategy that tangibly describes teaching *for* leadership in ways that might conform to a theory of practice for school leadership preparation involves the designing of courses with activities and objectives that serve to simulate apprenticeship and initiate a close-to-authentic testing of the waters prior to students' school leadership immersion as newly credentialed novices. A focus on creating activities, projects, and

experiences where students get a chance to live out school leadership experiences early would be more related to what a professor does with the socio-cultural space of the teaching encounter—arranging and engaging a leadership life-process with learners—rather than specific techniques or teacher moves.

Consistent with adult learning theory principles and strategies (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999), perhaps drawing from students' own professional and personal life experiences in creating these types of embedded learning activities should be key. Students in educational leadership preparation programs are often teachers or educationally related professionals who, if assisted by the professor to feel comfortable within the college classroom community, could share in teams to create role-play scenarios based on their own experiences with difficult real-world school leadership problems. These problems would be presented without resolution so that through enactments within the same class session, students would be forced to improvise and ad lib, using their own leadership intuition. Activities such as these could promote a better understanding of the perspective of the school leader, as well as all parties involved, and assist each student in recognizing the impact, strengths, and limitations of their leadership attempts. In reviewing the data from Author's students regarding their experience with his teaching on their learning, the issue of perspective taking was addressed in this student statement, "He's trying to look at real world opportunities with an

application to administrators and teachers and outside connections those people have as well. He wants us to really look at all perspectives."

With constructive feedback as the standard and the known instructive purpose to strengthen one another's skills, class feedback could be incorporated into individual reflection assignments further serving to enhance each student's own learning goals concerning their leadership capacities. The following student comments indicate an apparent appreciation for the intent of Author's developing yet contradicted, teaching philosophy and approach: "He makes us responsible for our own learning. And he learns with us. He's here to facilitate our learning." And also, "I appreciate the way Author

challenges me to stretch myself. I always am a little more diligent and careful when preparing an assignment. He has very high expectations, but supports [students] in [their] quest to meet them."

As a result of this self-study inquiry, a teaching *for* leadership paradigm emerged representing a profoundly humanistic and constructivistic shift in conceptualizing the formation of school leader development for the professor in this study, one that will forever impose itself on his course designs, and as a progressive notion for the educational leadership field as a whole. We can only hope our academies will further examine it themselves and that our schools will soon benefit.

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