

Why a Journal of Research on Leadership Education?

By Catherine A. Lugg

Developing and launching a new scholarly periodical in an age of nearly ubiquitous research journals—particularly electronic journals—takes a certain vision, or madness, or perhaps a mixture of both. The research landscape is already chock-full of scholarly journals. Many are admirably rigorous, pushing both the boundaries of the field and the limits of our understandings. Unfortunately, a few slide dangerously toward offering opium for the forebrain. More distressing is that such stuff is often blended into the latest popular panacea for what supposedly ails mass schooling, as well as teacher and leadership education. Consequently, launching a new scholarly journal that aims to be rigorous, accessible, and *actually accessed* by various audiences, into this highly competitive and unstable publishing environment is not for the faint of heart.

Nevertheless, the University Council for Education Administration (UCEA) is deeply committed to addressing a longstanding gap in our own field of scholarship: the dearth of research regarding leadership preparation. In an era of scalding scrutiny regarding university-based leadership preparation programs, we can ill-afford to know so little about a central feature of our profession. In addition, UCEA is seeking to better link scholars, and the leadership education programs in which they work, to developments in the field, globally defined. Furthermore, UCEA is seeking to broaden and deepen the scholarly conversations around leadership education.

The *Journal of Research on Leadership Education* is a very different research venue from what UCEA has traditionally pursued. First, *JRLE* speaks to multiple audiences. From its inception, *JRLE* addresses issues of leadership education from a global perspective. While leadership preparation and development issues in the US remain a central scholarly concern, in a truly global environment, we cannot afford to ignore intellectual and professional innovations that arise far beyond our proverbial backyard. Additionally, *JRLE* pushes the existing disciplinary borders, to examine leadership education beyond the metaphorical school house walls. Like other “helping professions,” educational leadership draws on a host of intellectual traditions and perspectives and *JRLE* is grounded in the *interdisciplinarity* of the field.

Second, consistent with UCEA’s mission and its other publications, the material presented in *JRLE* aims to be intellectually rigorous. Research—or at least the word “research”—has become the political coin of the realm for many schools, including universities, looking to change their educational practices. Yet, too many of these *research-*

based reforms are little more than slick advertising copy or web site blather. By aspiring to become the premier journal dedicated to leadership education, *JRLE* aims to sort out the fanciful from the factual. In an era of pre-packaged, market-tested, and pre-digested policy glop, *JRLE* will hopefully be a much needed antacid.

Finally, given the global context in which we all live, UCEA is committed to ensuring the scholarship found in *JRLE* is free to anyone who has computer and internet access. To be blunt, leadership education is too important to be the sole province of affluent and largely U.S. universities. Particularly for our colleagues overseas, U.S. research journals can be prohibitively expensive for both institutional libraries and individuals. By making *JRLE* truly accessible to all, UCEA is serving multiple scholarly communities while fostering even more research and discussion.

UCEA has established an ambitious agenda for *JRLE* and we are fortunate that our colleagues at the University of Nevada Las Vegas have embraced it. Over the last year and a half, Edith Rusch, who is the founding editor, and her colleagues have made heroic efforts to shepherd this germ of an idea into a full-fledged research journal. Now, a new intellectual journey begins.

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