ISLLC/ELCC Standards Implementation: Do Educational Administration Faculty Practice What They Preach?*

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Abstract

Both the 1996 Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and the 2002 Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards, adopted by preparation programs nationwide have a strong emphasis on democratic ideals. By aligning their programs with these standards education administration faculty have taken a step in the right direction. This paper, as part of a larger mixed method study examines the degree to which faculty's perception of the change environment, the attitudes and dispositions they exhibited during the implementation process, and their choice of program-standard alignment strategies reflected the democratic ideals they wish to instill in graduates of their programs. The findings of this study confirm that a collaborative, collegial atmosphere prevailed. While the attitudes and dispositions that faculty exhibited demonstrated democratic ideals, this was not always evident from their choice of strategies. Much of the work was done by faculty, or by committees comprised primarily by faculty. Group differences were observed in strategies used and found to be beneficial, when compared across accreditation and Carnegie classification status. To ensure that the program modification process is both democratic and inclusive, faculty should adopt a more proactive approach in engaging graduates of the program, current graduate students, superintendents, principals, and teachers in the actual process of program review, evaluation, and development.

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1 Introduction

A major challenge facing professors of educational administration is the critical task of designing programs that bridge the gap between theory and practice and prepare school leaders and policymakers who can foster quality teaching and promote student success. Scholars confirm that this gap can be bridged by collaboration among prospective school leaders, universities, and district-level personnel (Bellamy & Goodlad, 2008). The Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, which were launched in 1996 and adopted by programs nationwide, had a strong emphasis on democratic leadership. By aligning their programs with the ISLLC or theEducational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards themselves – or through state certification requirements that incorporate the ISLLC or ELCC standards faculty have taken a step in the right direction. This paper, as part of a larger mixed method study, evaluates the degree to which faculty's perception of the change environment, the attitudes and dispositions they exhibited, and their choice of program-standard alignment strategies reflected the democratic ideals they wish to instill in graduates of their programs.

2 Rationale for the Study

Democratic leadership is premised on the idea that human differences, including differences in fundamental beliefs, can be accommodated through "mutual tolerance, commitment to resolving disagreements by means of open dialogue, and acquiescence to majority decision making with constitutional protection for individuals and minority rights" (Bellamy & Goodlad, 2008, p. 566).

Literature on the value of the ISLLC standards reflect both support (Lovely, 2004; Murphy, 2001; Shipman, 2001) and criticisms (Achilles & Price, 2001; Anderson, 2001; Berry, 2004; English, 2000; Hess, 2003; Horn, 2001) for their use among practitioners, professors, and scholars. If the democratic ideals embedded in the ISLLC/ELCC standards are to be achieved, it is important that the evaluation and modification of preparation programs be accomplished through open dialogue between all stakeholders: school leadership faculty (both full time and adjunct), superintendents, principals, teachers, graduate students, program graduates, and employers of program graduates.

Pettigrew, McKee, and Ferlie (1988) and Fullan (2000) attest to the collective process of change. However, consensus can never been assumed; it has long been recognized that some degree of resistance is to be expected. A close association between higher education and resistance to structural change has been observed by researchers over the years (Bess, 1988; Fullan, 2000). Tension and turf-protection behavior is often present in institutions of higher education (Akmal & Miller, 2003). This especially holds true in higher education institutions where the norm of autonomy and pluralistic sub-cultures makes it difficult to achieve consensus (Palmer, 2002).

Scholars engaged in studying the phenomenon of change point out that change efforts can be won and lost based on the contribution of the change agents (Hagerott, 2004) and their attitudinal and behavioral growth during the change process (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). The primary change agents involved in the program-standards alignment process were faculty; as such, their perceptions of the change had the potential to greatly influence their responses and their willingness to translate the changes into action (Hagerott, 2004; Jaffee, 1998).

[1] http://www.ncpeapublications.org/latest-issue-ijelp.html

Recently, faculty in school leadership preparation programs have been responding to the new *Educational Leadership Policy Standards 2008* that were presented and approved by the NPBEA Executive Board on December 12, 2007; like the ISLLC standards, these standards have a strong emphasis on democratic leadership. If faculty is to design programs that nurture leaders who can communicate and collaborate effectively with community members and respond to diverse community interest and needs, it is imperative that faculty practice the same principles that they wish to transmit to their students. An understanding of current practices, as reflected in the climate that prevailed within the academy while the ISLLC/ELCC standards were being implemented and the degree to which faculty engaged other stakeholders in the implementation process, will aid us in ensuring that future practices are congruent with the ideals that we value and wish to work towards.

3 Research Questions

A mixed method sequential exploratory design was used to answer the following research questions:

1. How did school leadership faculty describe the atmosphere that prevailed during the program-standard alignment process?
2. What attitudes and dispositions did school leadership faculty exhibit during the program-standard alignment process?
3. To what extent did the school leadership faculty's choice of program-standard alignment strategies reflect the democratic ideals they wish to instill in graduates of their program?

4 Methodology

The subject matter under investigation was both new and underdeveloped; as such, a mixed method approach was used for data collection. This approach enabled the researcher to build in methodological flexibility and counteract the inherent weaknesses of one approach by offsetting it with the strengths of the other approach (Creswell, 2004; Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2004).

4.1 Instrumentation

The face validity of the interview protocol was established with the help of a panel of experts. The survey instrument underwent the multi-phase process of refinement recommended by Ellis (1994): the self-test phase, the informed pre-subject phase, the uninformed pre-subject phase, and the early actual subject phase (p. 108). The informed pre-subject phase comprised of a panel of six well published experts in the field of educational administration and policy.

4.2 Population, Sampling Procedure and Data Collection

There are currently over 500 colleges and universities throughout the United States that offer principal preparation programs (Tareilo, 2004). A total of 394 programs and 1,374 faculty are listed in the *24th edition of the Educational Administration Directory* (National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, 2004). Of the 394 school leadership preparation programs listed 379 comprised both the population and sample of this study; Canadian institutions and institutions that did not meet the program participation criteria were excluded. Professional programs that award degrees other than masters' degrees and doctorates were not taken into account.

The data collection approach consisted of two phases. The first phase was characterized analysis of qualitative data collected through interviews' this was followed by the second phase of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. While the qualitative nature of the first phase helped define terminology and identify relevant variables and underlying constructs for inclusion in the survey instrument, the quantitative and qualitative nature of the secondary phase served the purpose of expansion of the qualitative findings

(Seale, 1999) and measurement of the size of sample segments and how they distribute in relation to other variables (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Sampling Procedure during First Phase. Casey and Krueger maintain that "the quality of the study is not dependent on the size of the sample, the intent is to reach theoretical saturation" (2000, p.205). Initially, a simple random sample of 15 names and contact information was drawn from the *Educational Administration Directory* (NCPEA, 2004).This list included both departmental chairs and faculty. People who refused to participate or could not be located were replaced by random selection. During the first phase of data collection, data saturation was reached after the eighth interview, therefore, additional interviews were not required (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2003; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Sampling Procedure during Second Phase. During the second phase of data collection department chairs of each of the 379 institutions were asked to administer three surveys to faculty who had been active in the program-standard alignment process. As evident from Table 1, the 222 survey respondents were representative of the population in terms of both affiliation status (public and private) and Carnegie classification status (doctoral extensive, doctoral intensive and masters' level programs).

Table 1
Population Sample Matrix

		Public institutions		Private institutions	
Carnegie Classification	NCATE accreditation status	Population [a]	Sample [b]	Population [a]	Sample [b]
Doctoral/ research – extensive	A& I	60	36	10	3
	P & C	5	3	1	0
	None	23	10	9	5
	Total	88	49	20	8
Doctoral/ research – intensive	A & I	33	34	10	5
	P & C	4	3	2	1
	None	8	5	9	2
	Total	45	42	21	8
Masters I	A & I	103	71	29	12
	P & C	8	4	3	1
	None	36	9	23	4
	Total	147	84	55	17
Masters II	A & I	1	-	-	-
	P& C	-	-	1	-
	None	1	-	-	2
	Total	2	-	1	2
Total		282	175	97	35

5 Analysis, Findings and Discussion

Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data reveals that the change process in school leadership preparation programs unfolded in three stages: the information seeking phase, the program evaluation and im-

plementation phase, and the program modification phase. Analysis of the action steps taken reveal that the alignment process for all institutions was generative, non-liner, collaborative, and time consuming in nature.

5.1 Faculty Perceptions of the Change Environment

High levels of collaborative problem-solving and decision-making, which are the hallmarks of democratic leadership, are possible in an environment that is characterized by trust, accountability, absence of conflict, sound leadership, attention to results, commitment, direction, shared vision, and resources (Connolly, Jones & Jones, 2007; Lencioni, 2002). The leader plays an important role by identifying and bringing legitimate stakeholders to the table (Gray, 1989). Table 2, which presents faculty perceptions of the change environment in descending order of means, reveals that faculty believed that a congenial, rather than a threatening environment prevailed during the program-standards alignment process. The mean scores range from 1.67 to 2.47, with an overall mean of 2.16 (SD = .61). The standard deviations range from .78 to 1.06 which suggests that there was some variance in the opinions of the respondents collectively.

Table 2
Faculty Perception of the Change Environment

Rank	Perception of the change environment	M	SD
1	Absences of trust	2.4717	.78139
2	Avoidance of accountability	2.4393	.78934
3	Fear of conflict	2.3785	.79417
4	Lack of sound leadership	2.3615	.84998
5	Inattention to results	2.3333	.82225
6	Lack of commitment	2.2617	.85948
7	Lack of direction from accrediting agencies	1.9763	1.03021
8	Resistance to change	1.9535	.89530
9	Conflicting philosophies	1.8326	.89644
10	Lack of adequate resources	1.6682	1.06908

Note. (1) 0 = Substantial evidence 1 = Moderate evidence 2 = Some evidence 3 = No evidence (2) A high mean of 3 suggest 'a congenial environment' and a low mean of 0 suggests 'a threatening environment.'

Contrary to the literature that highlights resistance to structural change in higher education (Bess, 1988; Fullan, 2000) and the presence of tension and turf-protection behavior (Akmal and Miller, 2003), this study revealed that there was very little evidence of a hierarchaial, command and control orientation within the academy. Instead, as evident from Table 2, the change process was characterized by high levels of trust, accountability, commitment, attention to results and sound leadership. Goals were set and achieved through flexible structures with the networked, team-oriented management advocated by scholars (Axelrod, 2000; Chaleff, 2003).

5.2 Attitudes and Dispositions Exhibited by Faculty during Program-Standards Alignment

The attitudes and dispositions that were exhibited by faculty reflected the democratic ideals that they wish to transmit to their students. A large number of faculty, 87.1 percent, indicated that they were tolerant of temporary disruptions and/or ambiguities during the process. An equally large number, 82.5 percent,

indicated that they sought help when needed, and 78.5 percent revealed that they tried to overcome change related difficulties.

A series of one way ANOVAS revealed that group differences existed in faculty attitudes and dispositions across rank, contract classification status, and K-12/district experience. There was a significant difference [F(2, 185) = 2.706, p = .032] in faculty attitudes and dispositions based on faculty rank. The average score of assistant professors (M = 2.04) was higher than that of full professors (M = 1.78). This finding is not surprising. Assistant professors who are on the tenure track probably aspire to be promoted to full professor and would be eager to prove themselves. On the other hand, full professors have already established themselves in the department. Negative attitudes and dispositions would have more severe repercussions for an assistant professor than a full professor.

There was a significant difference [F(3, 181) = 2.871, p = .038] in the attitudes and dispositions of faculty with varying years of K-12/district experience. The average score of faculty with 21-30 years of K-12/district experience (M = 2.09) was higher than that of faculty with 0-8 years of experience (M = 1.83). This phenomenon could be explained in several ways. One explanation could be that faculty with 21-30 years of K-12/district experience probably entered higher education at the end of their K-12 careers. Their non-tenured status could be the reason why they displayed more positive attitudes than their tenured counterparts. Another plausible explanation could be that, having spent more time in the field, they probably had a greater understanding of the evolving nature of school leadership and the changes that school leaders face on a day-to-day basis. As such, it is possible that when the occasion arose to make a real difference in the design of their programs, they rose to the challenge and engaged themselves more fully in the process than their less experienced counterparts.

5.3 Faculty's Assessment of Program-Standard Alignment Strategies Employed

Interviewees identified a wide range of strategies that were used to align their programs with the standards. Survey respondents rated each strategy in terms of the degree to which they contributed positively to the alignment process. Faculty perceptions are presented in Table 3, in descending order of means. The mean scores range from .80 to 2.53, with an overall mean of 1.62 (SD = .59) which suggests that faculty perceived that only a few strategies contributed substantially to the process, while others were perceived to have less of an influence. The three strategies that had a mean score above 2.00 and contributed moderately to the program-standards alignment processes were: program evaluation by faculty, committees, and program evaluation by graduates of the program.

While the process did seem to be collaborative, on the surface, with more than half of the survey respondents reporting that program evaluation by faculty (63.0%) and their work on committees not more than half (49.4%) contributed substantially to the alignment process, the same did not hold true when it came to engaging other stakeholders in program evaluation and modification. Table 3 confirms that much of the work seems to have been done by faculty, or committees comprised primarily by faculty.

Only a very small proportion of survey respondents felt that input from external consultants (14.7%), current graduate students (15.1%), focus groups (16.5%), adjunct faculty (19.85%), graduate student employers (20.7%), input from school districts, principals and superintendents (28.4%), and program evaluation by graduates (33.0%) actually contributed to the standards implementation process. The survey instrument was not sophisticated enough to identify why these faculty felt this way. However, qualitative data elicited by another item of the survey instrument did confirm that some faculty, in retrospect, felt that they would have benefited from the use of focus groups and exposure to other departments who had successfully aligned their programs with the standards.

Table 3
Ranks, Means and Standard Deviations of Program-Standards Alignment Strategies

Rank	Program-standards alignment strategies	M [a]	SD
1	Program evaluation by faculty	2.5333	.71306
2	Committees	2.2429	.96000
3	Program evaluation by graduates of the program	2.0047	.90022
4	District, principal and superintendent input	1.8815	.91036
5	Guidance from state certification/licensure	1.7746	1.00748
6	Graduate student employer's input	1.6934	.92637
7	Professional development provided by/for faculty	1.6698	1.04606
8	Graduate student input	1.6415	.85641
9	Guidance from NCATE [b]	1.6256	1.04522
10	Adjunct faculty input	1.5634	1.01031
11	Focus groups	1.2087	1.09550
12	Input from external consultants	1.1469	1.07890
13	Input from successfully aligned departments	.8199	.79029
14	Availability of additional resources	.8019	.93302

Note. [a] 0 = Definitely not, 1 = Somewhat, 2 = Moderately, 3 = Substantially; [b] Some of the survey respondents (n =38; 17%) worked at institutions not accredited by NCATE; these figures are subject to multiple interpretations.

A series of one-way ANOVA tests were run to determine if group differences existed for each of the strategies when compared across accreditation and Carnegie classification status. Table 4 shows that, based on accreditation status, there was a significant difference in faculty perceptions of the effectiveness of the following four strategies: committees [$F(2, 203) = 3.957$, $p = .021$], program evaluation by graduate students [$F(2, 205) = 3.627$, $p = .028$], input from external consultants [$F(2, 204) = 4.222$, $p = .016$], and guidance from NCATE [$F(2, 204) = 9.949$, $p = .000$].

Table 4

One-way Analysis of Variance of Accreditation Status on Program-Standards Alignment Strategies that Yielded Responses that were Significantly Different

Source	df	MS	F-Ratio	F Prob.
Committees				
Between Group	2	3.572	3.957	.021*
Within Group	203	.903		
Total	205			
Program evaluation by graduate students				
Between Group	2	2.853	3.627	.028*
Within Group	205	.787		
Total	207			
Input from external consultants	2	4.765	4.222	.016*
Between Group	204	1.128		
Within Group	206			
Total				
Guidance from NCATE	2	9.832	9.949	.000*
Between Group	204	.988		
Within Group	206			
Total				

* $p < .05$

Post-hoc multiple comparisons using the Tukey HSD test (with 95% confidence intervals) show no significant differences between the institutions that had probationary/conditional accreditation with institutions that had either full NCATE accreditation or institutions that were not accredited by NCATE. However, as evident from Table 5, on average, faculty who worked at institutions with full NCATE accreditation perceived that the three strategies were more effective than those who worked at institutions that were not accredited by NCATE. This is not an unexpected finding. NCATE has very stringent requirements; faculty who work at institutions with full NCATE accreditation have to meet these requirements in order to retain their status. They have more at stake, and more reason to modify their programs than do institutions that are not accredited by NCATE.

Table 5

Tukey HSD Multiple Comparisons of Accreditation Status on Program-Standards Alignment Strategies that Yielded Responses that were Significantly Different

Program-standards alignment strategy	Full NCATE accreditation M	Not accredited by NCATE M	p
Committee	2.3503	1.9487	.050
Program evaluation by program graduates	2.1076	1.7179	.039*
Input from external consultants	1.2803	.7949	.030*

* $p < .05$

Table 6 shows that there was a significant difference in program evaluation by program graduates [F(2,

204) = 4.696, p = .003] based on Carnegie classification status. Post-hoc multiple comparisons using the Tukey HSD test (with 95% confidence intervals) revealed a statistically significant difference between the degree to which this strategy was perceived as useful in aiding the process of program-standards alignment by doctoral-extensive and masters' level institutions (p = .003). The average score of faculty at masters level institutions (M = 2.22) is between .15 and .84 scale points higher than that of faculty at doctoral extensive institutions (M = 1.73).

Table 6

One-way Analysis of Variance of Carnegie Classification Status on Program-Standards Alignment Strategies that Yielded Responses that were Significantly Different

Source	df	MS	F-Ratio	F Prob.
Program evaluation by graduate students	2	4.696	6.118	.003*
Between Group	204	.768		
Within Group	206			
Total				
Program evaluation by faculty	2	3.133	6.408	.002*
Between Group	202	.489		
Within Group	204			
Total				

* p < .05

There was a significant difference in program evaluation by faculty [F(2, 202) = 3.133, p = .002] based on Carnegie classification status. Post-hoc multiple comparisons using the Tukey HSD test (with95% confidence intervals) revealed a statistically significant difference between the degree to which this strategy was perceived as useful in aiding the process of program-standards alignment by doctoral-extensive and doctoral- intensive institutions (p = .021) and between doctoral-extensive and masters' level institutions (p = .002). The average score of faculty at doctoral-intensive institutions (M = 2.61) is between .04 and .69 scale points higher than that of faculty at doctoral-extensive institutions (M = 2.24). Similarly, the average score of faculty at masters level institutions (M = 2.65) is between .13 and .69 scale points higher than that of faculty at doctoral-extensive institutions (M = 2.24).

The short-answer section was included in the survey instrument to extend, illustrate, and deepen understanding of the research questions. Although "program evaluation by faculty" topped the list of preferred strategies, group differences were observed across Carnegie classification status, faculty at doctoral-extensive institutions did not perceive this strategy to be as valuable as faculty who worked at masters' levels and doctoral- intensive institutions.

Faculty did report the use of strategies that involved other stakeholders, but these were found to be less useful. "Program evaluation by graduate of the program," which ranked third on the list, and 'input from external consultants,' which ranked much lower on the list of preferred strategies were valued by faculty who worked at NCATE education institutions to a greater degree than those who work at institutions not accredited by NCATE. When compared across Carnegie classification status, faculty who worked at masters' level institutions rated "program evaluation by graduates of the program" more favorably than doctoral-extensive institutions. Given the rigorous standards imposed by NCATE, it is possible that faculty who work at NCATE accredited institutions hold themselves to higher standards. Additionally, a greater

proportion of the institutions with full NCATE accreditation are public masters' level institutions, which are larger, and serve all socio-economic classes of society; this too, could account for their willingness to employ strategies that involve other stakeholders.

6 Conclusion

Aligning programs with standards is a constant, ongoing process that involves flexible planning and coordination, as well as extensive vision building, culture building, communication, and collaboration among and between stakeholders. The success of the change depends, to a large extent, on faculty attitudes and dispositions. This study confirms that a congenial work environment prevailed during the program-standards alignment process. It also confirms that faculty were tolerant of both ambiguity and temporary disruptions. It would be unwise to assume that this will always be the case. Rather than making any assumptions about faculty readiness to make additional program modifications, steps should be taken to provide faculty with the information and support they might need to accomplish subsequent program evaluation and alignment initiatives.

The problems that we have in K-12 schools today can only be addressed if all stakeholders have a place at the decision-making table. This includes program development in higher education. Data confirms that there were group differences in the types of strategies preferred across NCATE accreditation status and Carnegie classification status. Although collaborative planning, problem-solving and decision-making did take place; the work of aligning programs with standards was done primarily by faculty, or in committees comprised almost entirely by faculty. Institutions with full NCATE accreditation status were more inclusive, and attempted to include program graduates in the process as compared to institutions that were not accredited by NCATE. Similarly, master's level intuitions and research-intensive institutions sought input from program graduates and external sources. Higher education faculty should not lose sight of the fact that collaboration among prospective school leaders, universities, and district-level personnel has the potential to bridge theory and real-world problems.

The time has come for education administration faculty to stop "pretending not to know what we know" (Glickman, 1991) and accept the challenge of making program-standards alignment a collaborative process that extends beyond the walls of the ivory tower. To ensure that programs actually prepare democratic educational leaders who can enhance academic excellence, equity, and social justice faculty need to adopt a more proactive approach in engaging graduates of the program, current graduate students, superintendents, principals, and teachers in the actual decision making process that leads to the creation of programs that are dynamic and fluid in nature.

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[2] http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?knlgAreaID=110&subsecID=135&contentID=251239
[3] http://www.teacheruniverse.com/techplanning/features/standards_tests.htm