

The Good News About the Preparation of School Leaders: A Professor's View

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University preparation of school principals and superintendents has never been better. Based on indicators of academic achievement, such as entrance examinations, grade point averages, and ethnic and gender diversity, the talent pool of graduate students in educational administration improves each decade. While critics abound, most recently Arthur Levine (2005), much remains to be done to increase the number of innovative programs that each year generate higher levels of satisfaction and positive perceptions among current and former students. Positive support of reforms in leadership preparation by both practicing administrators and professors themselves continues to grow in the research literature (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hatley, Arrendondo, Donaldson, Short, & Updike, 1996; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005; Hoyle & Oates, 2000; Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin, & Wilson 1996; Lin, 2005; McCarthy, 1999; Pauls, 2005; Pounder, 1995). The majority of graduates from these successful programs choose careers as public school administrators, while others turn to careers in higher education to conduct research which contributes to improving leadership preparation in departments of educational leadership.

Thus, this paper takes the position that leadership preparation in America's colleges and universities has made significant progress in the past decade and can respond with convincing evidence to critics demeaning current preparation programs. The author will review selected critical reports of leadership preparation programs, follow with notable examples of successful reform efforts in programs across the country, and close with recommendations for improvements that may appease or at least silence critics from both the professoriate and outside pundits.

Attacks on Leadership Preparation

Attacks on school administrator preparation programs and professors has been an art form for some within the profession and for others standing outside peering in. Critical reports began to appear in the 1970s (Farquar & Piele, 1972) and gained steam from other professors in the past 25 years (Achilles, 1988; Cooper & Boyd, 1988; Creighton, 2002; Creighton & Johnson, 2002; English, 2002; Haller, Brent, & McNamara, 1997; Hawley, 1988; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1985; McCarthy, 1999; Miklos, 1983; Murphy, 1999; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987; Peterson & Finn, 1988; Pitner, 1982). In addition, commissions produced reform reports critical of leadership preparation and practices, such as the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEAA) in 1987. According to Catherine Lugg and Alan Shoho (2002) the Commission prepared 30 research papers, six hearings, and involved more than 1,300 people in preparing a 60 page report "Leaders for America's Schools" in 1987. The Commission made

eight recommendations:

1. Educational leadership should be defined.
2. A National Policy Board on Educational Administration should be established.
3. Administrator preparation programs should be modeled on those in professional schools.
4. At least 300 universities and colleges should cease preparing educational administrators.
5. Programs for recruitment and placement of ethnic minorities and women should be initiated by universities, school boards, state and federal governments, and business and industry.
6. The public schools should become full partners in the preparation of school administrators.
7. Licensure programs should be substantially reformed.
8. Professional development activities should be an integral component of the careers of professors and practicing administrators.

It is important to notice that only one of the eight recommendations was fully implemented with the creation of the National Policy Board of Educational Administration (NPBEA). The NPBEA has added prestige to the field and continues to challenge programs to improve to meet the leadership demands for the future. Six recommendations remain under consideration in the profession: recommendation one, definition of educational leadership (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1999); recommendation three, programs modeled on those in professional schools (Carr, Chenoweth, & Ruhl, 2003; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998); and recommendation five, significant progress in the recruitment and placement of ethnic minorities and women (McCarthy, 1998). Recommendation four, reduction in the numbers of preparation programs has been basically ignored, and new programs have been added; recommendation six, public school and universities becoming full partners, is occurring more each year (Edmonson, 2003; Martin, Ford, Murphy, & Muth, 1998; Williamson & Hudson, 2003); recommendation seven, improving licensure programs has been strengthened by requiring more state examinations based on the AASA and ISLLC standards (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005); and recommendation eight, professional development for professors and practicing administrators, has increased in number and quality by NCPEA, UCEA, AASA, and state professional administrator associations (Barnett, Aagaard, & Stanley, 2003).

Along with these eight recommendations, Dan Griffiths, chair of the 1987 Commission, reported that on-going research revealed 10 troubling concerns throughout the field:

1. Lack of definition of good educational leadership
2. Lack of leader recruitment programs in schools
3. Lack of collaboration between school districts and universities

4. The discouraging lack of minorities and women in the field
5. Lack of systematic professional development for school administrators
6. Lack of quality candidates for preparation programs
7. Lack of preparation programs relevant to the job demands of school administrators
8. Lack of sequence, modern content, and clinical experience in preparation programs
9. Lack of licensure systems that promote excellence
10. Lack of a national sense of cooperation in preparing school leaders.

Although much improvement has been made in order to respond to these problems, scholars continue to seek ways to improve in each of the 10 troubling areas. McCarthy (2001) indicated that challenges to preparation programs are greater than they were in 1988 and provides the following suggestions to continue improving programs. She believes that challenges faced by leadership preparation programs include: (1) producing credible evidence that informs practitioners, scholars, and policy makers regarding the effectiveness of leadership preparation programs; (2) deciding whether the standards being adopted for school administrators are the right ones, and if so, how satisfaction with these should be assessed? (3) recruiting highly qualified people to become school leaders; and (4) ensuring that these leaders represent diverse backgrounds and characteristics (Lin, 2005). A related report by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) offered six other strategies for the improvement of school leadership preparation: (1) single out high-performers to enter the programs; (2) recalibrate preparation programs to emphasize the core functions of the high-achieving school; (3) emphasize real-world training by making field-based experiences a high priority and a central focus; (4) link principal licensure to performance by creating a two-tier licensure system for school principals; (5) move accomplished teachers into school leadership positions by creating an alternative certification program that provides a high level of support for accomplished teachers who are interested in becoming principals; and (6) use state academies to cultivate leadership teams in middle-tier schools to promote effective practices that will raise student achievement and concentrate on serving middle-tier schools (Bottoms, O'Neil, Fry, & Hill, 2003).

Thus, criticism and recommendations for the improvement of leadership preparation are plentiful in the literature in educational administration in a wide variety of publications. Due to commission reports and research papers from several leading professors of educational administration, numerous university preparation programs are being altered to respond to the troubling criticisms listed above, including efforts to align course work and field-based activities to meet the standards of the National Council for the Accreditation of Colleges of Education (NCATE, 2002; NPBEA 2002).

Criticism is integral to leadership preparation and important to its progress as a professional discipline. Joe Murphy (1999) created consternation among his

peers when he told the audience at the 1999 Annual Conference of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) that “the practice of educational leadership has very little to do with either education or leadership” (p. 55). While the context of Murphy’s entire Corwin Lecture included several excellent suggestions, this statement is the one remembered because of its negative connotations. Murphy added, “Weaving together threads from practice to form a post-theory tapestry of school administration is a very questionable idea” (p. 55). He concluded that the search to stabilize and establish the center of the field of study should include “scientific inquiry, scholarly insights, and craft knowledge” (p. 55). A common concern among the members of the academy in educational administration is maintaining the important balance between preparing aspiring school leaders to manage a school while focusing on the technical core of teaching and learning. After a thorough review of four leading journals in the field, Murphy and Vriesenga (2004) concluded that “gains are discernable, in the number of professors engaging in research and the amount of their work portfolios devoted to scholarship, but the overall portrait of research in the field is considerably bleaker than most would prefer” (p. 12). Another critic, Fenwick English (2002), calls for educational administration to avoid blind worship of the social sciences to improve leadership preparation and school improvement. English tends to rely on applied technologies and craft knowledge, and he constructs new knowledge through personal observation. He writes, “Educational administration as an applied discipline must free itself from two of its most staple disciplines: organizational sociology and behavioral psychology” (p. 3). While this debate grows, scant evidence is emerging in the literature to support English’s claim that applied field and craft knowledge are the best and only direction for the field of study and practice.

The latest and arguably the most sensational report criticizing leadership preparation, *Educating School Leaders*, appeared in the spring of 2005. The report authored by Arthur E. Levine, the president of Teachers College, Columbia University, was a sweeping attack of all leadership preparation programs. The commission consisted of agency directors, former university administrators, a former NEA executive, and a current college dean. No active professor of educational administration was a member of the writing team. In a personal conversation with Levine, this author asked if his team interviewed any of the leading professors in the field. After several names were mentioned to him, Levine covertly suggested that one of the people mentioned was interviewed. Levine (2005) and his commission called for greater scrutiny in evaluating preparation programs to improve their quality and impact on preparing leaders who can improve public education. The report was on target by attacking weak admission requirements and inadequate institutional support to hire quality faculty to teach the numbers of students admitted. Weak admission requirements and excessive use of adjunct professors led to Levine’s indictment of university administrators using leadership preparation programs as “cash cows.” The most irresponsible

comment was Levine's choice of words when labeling all leadership programs as "inadequate to appalling." This comment revealed a shared ignorance about recent reforms in the field and an inadequate application of survey research methodologies. Professor Leo Pauls (2005), in response to the Levine (2005) report, wrote, "We take umbrage at yet another study that paints all colleges of education with the same broad brush stroke on how ineffective we are—when, in fact, our accrediting agencies and clientele report how well we are doing our jobs and are impressed with the quality of our graduates" (p. 1). Levine reports that his research team visited 28 schools of education and carried out national polls of education school faculty members, deans, students, and alumni. The results from the survey failed to meet the canons of good survey research and the standards demanded by students in most graduate leadership programs. The responses were only 34% for alumni, 40% of faculty, and 42% of principals. According to Young, Creighton, Crow, Orr, & Ogawa (2005), "Such possible methodological abuses threaten the integrity of the findings that they frame" (p. 3). The report charges that preparation programs have been "dumbed down" by low admission criteria, irrelevant course work, unskilled faculty members, and incoherent curricula" (Archer, 2005, p. 18). Even though the report found that more than 80% of college deans perceived that their leadership preparation programs were good or excellent, Levine pointed out only two programs that seemed to be adequate and painted all the others with a critical brush. The paint on the brush was antique since all of the report's six reform recommendations were developed in 1988 by NCEEA and by other scholars in educational administration since the mid 1970s. These reforms have led to increased field-based experiences that mesh with standards-based classroom content. The standards movement, which began in the 1950s through collaboration between AASA and NCATE, gained momentum in 1982 with the publication of the Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators (Hoyle, 1983). These Guidelines became the blueprint for later standards created by NASSP, NAESP, NCATE, AASA, and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). Perhaps the six recommendations are the most naïve section of Levine's (2005) *Educating School Leaders*.

Recommendation one: "School Systems, municipalities, and states must find alternatives to salary scales that grant raises merely for accumulating credits and degrees." While this recommendation calls for the end to the "cash cow" model, it negates the value of selected courses offered in school leadership, courses that improve the professional expertise of classroom teachers. For instance a class taught in one department "Program Evaluation," centers on the state's accountability system and includes study of data disaggregation and learning team strategies for data consumption and application to improve student and overall school test performance. Thus, an arbitrary decision not to reward teachers for taking courses in leadership preparation is short-sighted and not in keeping with building systems leaders by preparing teachers and administrators to share in building stronger data-driven learning communities.

Recommendation two: “Universities must champion high standards for education schools and their leadership programs by embracing financial practices that strengthen their programs.” While inadequate financial support from the central administration is common for colleges of education and leadership preparation programs, some are far more generously funded than others. In recent years leadership preparation programs have not only enhanced graduate enrollment numbers, which generates more dollars for the university, but also education leadership programs attract more minority students than many other academic areas. This increased diversity not only enhances the image of the university, but also becomes a model for other graduate programs seeking to increase its minority enrollment.

Recommendation three: “Weak programs should be strengthened or closed.” This is the same recommendation made by the NCEEA in 1987 (Lugg & Shoho, 2002). This sweeping recommendation is basically ignored by university administrations that depend on student enrollment for financial survival and accept an obligation to improve public education by producing teachers and administrators. Indeed university support to strengthen programs is vital in selecting and developing education faculty to improve the quality of the graduates in education. A blanket recommendation to close a program without knowing its true utility and positive impact of course content and faculty on students’ knowledge base, school district operations, and the place of the programs in the overall mission of the university is mindless.

Recommendation four: This proposal for a new Master’s degree in Educational Administration is illogical because the national standards movement has improved curriculum alignment and strengthened accountability measures advocated by state departments and national professional associations, i.e., AASA, ISLLC, and NCATE. Efforts to revise Master’s degree requirements began in 1995, and the majority of principal and superintendent preparation programs are improving the alignment and the licensure scores of aspiring candidates each year. It is interesting that the commission regards the MBA as a model at a time when Bennis and O’Toole (2005) suggest that the MBA has lost its appeal as a practical approach to preparing business leaders.

Recommendation five: This recommendation calls for the elimination of the Ed.D. professional degree. While the doctorate may have lost some of its prestige since the degree is earned by more educators each year, it is viewed as an important milestone honored by school boards and university hiring committees. In addition, many of the leading scholars in top leadership preparation programs hold the Ed.D. University programs should continue to upgrade the quality of the Ed.D. degree, but ignore the recommendation for its elimination.

Recommendation six, giving only the Ph.D., is of little value since the intent of the Ed.D. and the Ph.D. in educational administration are equal: produce scholarly practitioners, professors, and researchers to improve schools and schooling for all people.

Michelle Young, Executive Director of UCEA, calls the Educating School Leaders report out of date and of little if any benefit to the field. She said, “It’s become rather a tiresome story to say that leadership preparation programs are in dire straits and that there’s been little movement.... That’s not the case for the programs I’m working with” (Archer, 2005, p. 18). Young agrees that inadequate leadership programs should be improved or closed. However, sloppy research procedures and reporting render the report meaningless in terms of improving preparation activities and graduate programs.

In a copycat attack, retired critic Ted Sanders (2005) apparently accepted the flawed research data in Levine’s (2005) report and opined, “We now have more than 600 substandard programs ... mediocre faculties abound, standards remain negligible, and many education schools are willing to accept anybody with a valid credit card” (p. 48). If Sanders accepts the premise that preparation programs are so bad, perhaps he should apply for a teaching position in a department of educational leadership and improve the “inadequate or appalling” preparation programs and conduct his own study rather than parroting questionable findings from Educating School Leaders.

Thus, critics of educational leadership preparation abound, but the good news is that the discipline is important enough to notice. The critics manage to gain some public attention by their tactics. However, most criticism coming from the Levine (2005) and other reports has limited impact on professors who dedicate their careers to producing school leaders with the scholarship, skills, and integrity to improve schooling for all children and youth. In a parallel critical study of colleges of business in America, Warren Bennis and James O’Toole (2005) claim that “Today MBA programs face intense criticism for failing to impart useful skills, failing to prepare leaders, failing to instill norms of ethical behavior—and even failing to lead graduates to good corporate jobs” (p. 1). It appears to be open season on professional schools that focus on “scientific” research to gain favor with colleagues in the hard sciences and place too little focus on skills needed for successful practice in the real world. This writer and his colleagues understand the value of criticism to maintain equilibrium in our dynamic professional discipline. The search continues for improved strategies, funding sources, selection of top candidates, and instructional systems to assure the highest quality. This criticism by those within and outside the field of educational leadership can provide the impetus for professors to reassess program goals, curriculum, teaching strategies, field applications, faculty reward systems, which could lead to solutions for troubling issues in the field. However, America’s public schools are arguably stronger than ever, serving the most diverse population in the world, and existing on inadequate funding. In spite of the perceived faults of leadership preparation, graduates of programs in educational administration have played key roles in assuring success in public education. These graduates have led reforms that increased Advanced Placement courses from 5,000 in 1983 to well over 14,000 today. The number of AP candidates has grown from about 175,000 to nearly

a million. An increased number of students are taking more and increasingly difficult courses (Houston, 2005). Leadership preparation programs play a vital role in these positive trends in America's schools.

Successful Reforms in Leadership Preparation

Although research proving the quality of administrator preparation is limited to student perceptions and expert observations of school principals and systems administrators, notable examples are available. It is interesting, even with the methodological flaws in Levine's (2005) report, that 93% of administrators surveyed rated their own preparation programs as "very" (55%) or "somewhat" (38%) valuable. Thus, this writer reports the positive findings with some caution. However, when protocols for survey research are adequately followed, the findings are valid and legitimate to evaluate the quality of leadership preparation programs.

While survey and other descriptive methods to investigate the quality of preparation programs are an anathema to devoted inferential researchers, perception research can provide valuable data for monitoring program successes and weaknesses. Researchers in public administration, business management, political science, and social work face the same methodological dilemmas (Arthur & Benjamin, 1999; Bennis & O'Toole, 2005). Research to "prove the value" of leadership preparation programs is missing or at least not reported in leading journals. However, survey research blended with qualitative interview data seeking perceptions of the impact of these leadership preparation programs are extremely valuable in conducting formative evaluation and taking corrective action in program improvement (Mullen, 2004; Pitner, 1988; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Thus, this author takes umbrage with Joe Murphy and Michael Vriesenga (2004) and others who call "hard research" the "holy grail" to finding the relationship between preparation and success on the job. Therefore, the effort here is to identify worthy perceptual "testimonials" as key evidence that leadership preparation programs deserve more accolades. Evidence does exist that leadership preparation programs select and prepare talented young people who become both successful practicing school leaders as well as university professors involved in teaching and research. Research assessing opinions about the value of leadership preparation programs has increased dramatically since the 1980s. Some of these studies are presented to remind the reader that perceptions can be more important than facts or empirical research based on inadequate sampling, confusing statistical applications, and conclusions that overreach the data. Thus, perception research conducted primarily through surveys and personal interview are included below.

A recent study reports that urban principals agreed that their university graduate programs successfully provided them with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their demanding jobs. In addition, the principals provided seven suggestions to help make the programs stronger (Lin, 2005). Glass, et al.

(2000) reported that 74% of America's superintendents judged their preparation programs to be excellent or good. Only 22 % rated them as "fair," and fewer than 4% called them "poor." In addition, they reported that preparation programs are being improved to strengthen the "direction and legitimacy of change in the field" (p. 139). Graduates from the University of Missouri and Texas A&M University reported that their graduate programs were very successful in preparing them for roles at the campus and central office levels (Hatley, et al, 1996; Hoyle & Oates, 2000). In addition, data gathered from principals in a Meadows principal preparation program were very positive about the impact of their university experience and their preparation to help them succeed on the job. The Meadows program centered on the 21 NASSP skill domains. Graduates reported that the program centered on the 21 NASSP skill domains provided valuable knowledge and strategies to adapt leadership skills to the real-world of the principalship (Davis, 1997). Reporting on exceptional and innovative programs in educational leadership, Barbara Jackson and Carolyn Kelly (2002) described six programs preparing principals and systems administrators. They discovered a "clear, well-defined curriculum focus reflecting agreement on the relevant knowledge base needed for administrators in their first year, or first few years in the profession" (p. 208). A principal cohort leadership academy at Bowling Green State University has been very successful. One student stated that "The quality of the professors is very high. The learning curve is steep since actual experiences are shared and trouble shooting is done together" (Jackson & Kelly, 2002, p. 225). A five year evaluation of the principal leadership academy ranged from 4.43 to 4.62 on a 5 point scale (Zimmerman, Bowman, Valentine, & Barnes, 2004). June Schmieder and Arthur Townley (1994) reported that 33% of 450 principals and 208 superintendents in California found their university leadership preparation to be very well or extremely well done. The other 66% who perceived their programs to be average were critical of the internship and the lack of time to learn from their mentors. While this research does not reveal an overwhelming endorsement of the leadership preparation programs, it did lead developers to consider more meaningful internship experiences for future students.

Practicing administrators praised the skills they learned in a problem-based learning Ph.D. program developed at the University of Colorado at Denver. The intent was to integrate theory and research as a resource which could be used to solve problems of administrative practice. Program graduates agreed that they became more scholarly in their approach to problem-solving which helped them solve the real problems of administration. The professors found that the graduates were prepared to "integrate reliable formal knowledge with clinical knowledge— theoretical with craft knowledge" (Martin, Murphy, & Muth, 1998, p. 152).

Students who completed the leadership program at Rowan University learned skills in reflective practice and were overwhelmingly supportive of their preparation. One student reported the benefit of his program this way: "Recently, I accepted a position as principal... I empowered my leadership team by giving

them more responsibility and autonomy” (Doolittle, 2003, p. 255). The skills and knowledge acquired during the graduate program helped the graduates understand that teachers needed to develop additional skills and capacities to become fully active members of the learning community. Ron Williamson and Martha Hudson (2003) and Laurie Witters Churchill (1990) reported that graduates of leadership preparation programs valued their time in the field experiences and saw the internship as perhaps the most essential part of their graduate experience. According to Williamson and Hudson (2003), “The field experience in the context of new knowledge and processed in supportive settings that allowed the construction of meaning” (p. 345). The importance of field experiences is more powerful when linked with the knowledge base and professional standards in the study of educational administration. The increase in the number of innovative leadership preparation programs is obvious in the literature, and research findings send a common message that these programs are improving practice for busy school leaders. Suzanne Gilmour, et al (2003) report successful results from a preparation and professional development collaborative among public schools, three universities and four Boards of Cooperative Educational Service (BOCES). The participants in the program honed skills that took them beyond management to true educational leadership. Superintendents found the mentoring and university collaborative very helpful increasing administrative retention and building stronger administrative teams. Sixteen principal interns and twelve doctoral students at East Carolina University reported that their preparation was very helpful to their current and future leadership roles. They learned how theory and administrative skills were helpful in implementing new programs on their campuses and new techniques for teacher observation and development (Bradshaw & Phillips, 2002). Similar research papers appear in a wide variety of journals in educational leadership and in the NCEA Yearbooks published since 1993. A significant study of 42 former and current students of a doctoral program provided the follow positive evaluation. The students’ overall impression of the Professional Studies Model (PSM) at Texas A&M University was very positive with some caveats. The general question regarding the relevance of the PSM doctorate to ongoing professional development and expectation to “prepare for the next level of my career” had a mean score of 3.41 out of 4.00, with only one response below 3.00. Most of the open comments were very positive, such as “Well planned instruction, continuous instructional atmosphere, use of theory and practice...The program places appropriate emphasis on curriculum and instruction” (Hoyle & Oates, 2000, p. 109). These testimonials fly in the face of the comment made by Joe Murphy (1999) at the NCEA convention in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, with the claim that current theory-centered leadership programs fail to develop leaders who can improve teaching and student learning—the technical core. Obviously the PSM described above and other examples in this article challenge Murphy and other critics who apply broad brush strokes of criticism.

Along with the positive support for their leadership preparation programs,

graduates and current students offer suggestions for improvement in student selection, course content, internship, research methods, and collaboration with public schools and agencies. However, there is considerable good news that leadership preparation programs are constantly changing to meet the needs of the profession and conducting research to enhance the practices of school leaders striving to create learning communities for all students.

Recommendations to Make the Good News Better

Rather than rediscover the wheel, which seems to be a habit by some in our field, this author will add to the standards accepted by 73 doctoral granting institutions that make up UCEA (University Council of Educational Administration, 2005), and the eight new recommendations made by Michelle Young, Executive Director of UCEA; Ted Creighton, Executive Director of NCPEA; Gary Crow, President of UCEA; Margaret Orr, Chair of the Teaching in Educational Administration SIG of the American Educational Research Association, and Rodney Ogawa, Vice President of Division A of the American Educational Research Association. The recommendations are as follows:

1. **Develop a Preparation Clearinghouse.** Develop a clearinghouse for gathering and sharing information on model leadership preparation programs. This important information is not extensively available in the field. This author spent considerable time locating the positive examples included above. The field needs to present the good news about the many successful leadership preparation programs to news outlets, i.e., *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Education Week*, public relations manuscripts, websites, and leading research journals that have not always welcomed survey results about successful programs.
2. **Support Research of Leadership Preparation Evaluation.** This author has experienced the bias against leadership research conducted through survey methodologies. Two papers were denied by referees who claimed that the papers lacked the scientific rigor and inferential statistics. The studies were conducted to investigate the validity and perceived value and application of the 1983 AASA Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators and the Professional Standards for the Superintendency (Hoyle, 1983). In the past five years conference and journal referees have accepted more naturalistic evidence about the value of leadership preparation programs in order to tell the complete story about the successes and shortcomings in the field. The addition of the new NCPEA and UCEA journals seeking alternative research procedures is a move in the right direction and the planned *Handbook on Leadership Preparation* that will include 10 domain areas can be a powerful addition to publicize and analyze the field to seek improvement.
3. **Emphasize Competencies.** Since the standards movement in the 1980s, the use of competencies, skills, and dispositions have been drivers for improvement in preparation. To continue refining the standards that

- point to the knowledge base is vital to the growing maturity in the field.
4. **Involve Practitioners in Preparation.** Partnerships between professors and practicing administrators can strengthen preparation programs. Clinical/adjunct faculty make important contributions to full-time faculty and graduate students by uniting theory with practice. Aspiring administrators can gain the skills and profound knowledge required to be successful school administrators.
 5. **Increase Program Resources.** Programs should not be treated as “cash cows,” and leadership preparation programs must be supported by university administration to assure a critical mass of full-time faculty. In addition, resources are needed to attend to the advising needs of students and the recruitment of talented students. Also, the faculty reward system endemic to universities must become more innovative to encourage a balance between research and school-university collaborations. University faculty and school administrators must work together to strengthen professional development, curriculum development, and student testing programs.
 6. **Partner for Development.** Partnerships between public schools and universities must be increased and rethought in terms of selecting the best and brightest students as chosen by the school district leadership and program faculty and developing the theory/practice learning experiences. Leadership programs are charged with providing a foundation of knowledge, research, and experiences closely linked to ongoing professional experiences in schools with outstanding mentoring from practicing principals and central office administrators. These partnerships have proven to be very successful in several states and can provide models for others. If the obvious weaknesses in the quality of administrative internships are to be overcome, the partnership must be increased. The opportunity for aspiring school leaders to observe successful mentors and to have meaningful roles as interns is one that must be taken immediately by all preparation programs.
 7. **Redefine the Ed.D.** The Ed.D. should either be distinctive from the Ph.D. or be eliminated. At Texas A&M University, the original difference between the two degrees was the professional goal of the student. If students planned careers as school administrators and could not fulfill a full-time campus residency, then they choose the Ed.D. Others seeking a higher education career who could dedicate two consecutive semesters for full-time study chose the Ph.D. Also, research paths for each degree were supposed to be different since the Ed.D. required a Record of Study that focused on an actual real-world problem or need and became a form of “case study.” The Ph.D. dissertation was to be a generalizable national study using traditional inferential methods. However, these earlier demarcations between the two degrees have faded as a result of

changing definitions of research and research methods and the definition of “full time” residency. Several students who began the Ed.D. switched to the Ph.D. by merely registering for nine hours two consecutive semesters, which qualifies as full-time, while remaining fully employed. There is a need to clarify the difference between the two degrees or eliminate the Ed.D.

8. Hold a National Conversation on Leadership Preparation. While national conversations have been ongoing in AERA, UCEA, AASA (Conference Within a Conference), and NCPEA, greater collaboration is needed among these organizations. Considerable “wheel discovery” at the separate AERA, NCPEA, UCEA, and AASA conferences. One national conference for all professors would eliminate much duplication of effort and create a stronger community of scholars and practitioners coming together at the national and international levels. In addition to the one national convention, regional conferences linked to websites for chat rooms and other means of small group research and conversation would improve communications, research activity, and the image of the field of educational administration and the role of leadership preparation.

Final Thought

Criticism of leadership preparation is healthy to the extent that workable solutions are linked to the criticism. It is quite one thing to stand on the sidelines as a non-participant and call leadership programs “inadequate to appalling” and follow with outdated or useless recommendations to address the weaknesses. Veteran professors who have labored in the vineyards of leadership preparation continue to produce the sweet taste of success. When the sweet taste occurs, brief celebrations are important, because critics are at the end of each row distributing bitter samples that may require new plantings or new processing. In sum, perfection is the quest in leadership preparation. An old Vermont farmer said it best. “We ain’t where we wanna be, we ain’t where we’re gonna be, but we ain’t where we wuz.”

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