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# **Scan of Programs: Educational Leadership**

## **Background Paper Prepared for Council of Innovative Jewish Education May 1998**

By

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### **Introduction**

Whether they shift us in positive or negative directions, whether they are instantaneous or developmental, paradigm shifts move us from one way of seeing the world to another. And these shifts create powerful change. Our paradigms, correct or incorrect, are the sources of our attitudes and behaviors and ultimately our relationships with others. Stephen R. Covey

This comment by Covey speaks well for the paradigm shift that has been percolating in a minority of the approximately 500 higher education institutions that have programs for the preparation of educational leaders. This report summarizes on what these cutting edge programs are doing and learning. The report encompasses the following sections: background, current trends, emerging trends and best practices, and exemplary programs. It also includes a brief listing of individuals who can be contacted about developments in the field as well as a selected bibliography.

### **Background**

Formal preparation of educational administrators has gone through several phases. For the first half of this century preparation was provided in colleges of education by retired school administrators who shared their professional experiences with novices. During the 1950s major reforms were initiated, with the support of philanthropic organizations such as the Kellogg Foundation and the Ford Foundation. From the 1950s

until the 1980s the emphasis shifted away from preparation dominated by retired practitioners to professors who may or may not have had experiences as educational leaders. Their approach has been to present theoretical models and information derived from the behavioral sciences on the assumption that, given sufficient theory and knowledge, program graduates would be able to their learning to the development and improvement of their leadership practices.

The 1980s was a decade of severe criticism of public education. Criticism of schools was followed by criticism of the way that higher education institutions have been preparing educational administrators as well as other educational professionals. This led to significant debates about what constitutes an appropriate preparation program for educational leaders:

Even those responsible for the preparation of administrators soon began to join the negative chorus. In fact, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, which was supported by the body that represents many of the more comprehensive university-based training programs, the University Council for Educational Administration, played a leading role in this criticism. The commission was particularly critical of the practitioner-related elements of preparation programs, which it said were marked by 'lack of a definition of good educational leadership...lack of collaboration between school districts and universities...lack of systematic professional development for school administrators...lack of sequence, modern content, and clinical experiences" (1987, pp. xvi-xvii, as quoted in Milstein, *et. al.* 1991).

More than ten years after the Commission's report, many of the approximately 500 preparation programs in the United States are still rooted in the behavioral sciences knowledge/theory movement. This approach still dominates thinking, even though "evidence from nearly all fronts led to the conclusion that the focus on the behavioral sciences...resulted in a glaring absence of consideration of the problems faced by practicing administrators" (Murphy and Forsyth, eds., 1998 manuscript). However over that same time period some preparation programs have been reconceptualized based upon



a basic question: What constitutes meaningful preparation for leadership in education? The growing body of evidence of positive outcomes achieved by these cutting edge programs is pressing other preparation programs to reconsider their extensive reliance on behavioral sciences frameworks.

### Current Trends

There is a sense of urgency to rethink the way educational leaders are prepared. This urgency can be traced to several realities, including 1) the rapid economic and social shifts which educational leaders need to understand if they are going to be able to guide the development of vision, direction, and support for their organizations; 2) the unique preparation--practical and problem focused, that is required for effective leadership; and 3) the reality that those seeking this preparation are likely to be under significant time constraints as mature adults with the many family and job-related responsibilities and pressures that typify this life-stage group.

These realities have challenged those who are responsible for designing and managing leadership preparation program to be creative and to be willing to take the risks that are required to break out of the behavioral science/theory focused status quo. Over the past decade an increasing number of universities have taken up this challenge.

The single most important stimulus for this effort has been the Danforth Foundation of St. Louis, Missouri which decided to use its resources (in the form of "seed monies") during the last half of the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, to challenge universities to examine their preparation programs and move toward practical, hands-on, problem focused designs for leadership preparation. Over the time period of 1986 and 1991 the Foundation identified 22 universities across the nation that agreed to change their

programs, focusing particularly on meaningful and in-depth clinical experiences (Milstein and Associates, 1993).

In 1993 the Foundation decided to assess the impact of its efforts. A survey of participating universities was conducted and an in-depth case study was conducted at five of these institutions (Milstein and Associates, 1993). Figure One summarizes the major differences between "traditional" preparation programs and those that have been engaged in the Danforth program redesign experience. (See Figure One at end of paper).

Figure One provides a synopsis of the major shifts that are emerging in the Danforth-related preparation programs. Key elements include:

- **Active identification, recruitment, and support of candidates.** Current educational leaders are being asked to identify exceptional candidates and encourage them to participate in preparation programs. They are also playing more active roles during the time that candidates are involved—e.g., mentoring and teaching. As a result, candidates who complete leadership preparation programs are more likely to be hired for administrative roles because they come from organizations that promote their candidacy and provide laboratory settings for them to test their skills and knowledge.
- **Coordination and articulation of preparation programs elements.** Academic seminars and field experiences are more closely integrated. Rather than the traditional smorgasbord of activities, taken whenever it fits the needs and availability of students, programs are designed to maximize learning by sequencing and interrelating courses, imbedding reflection about clinical experiences in the discourse that takes place in campus seminars, and, conversely, bringing seminar experiences into the schools when feasible and appropriate.
- **Emphasis on cohorts.** Learning in ongoing groups enhances outcomes for students. The bonding and support that develops can make a big difference in the quality of the experience, the probability of completing the preparation program, and, may remain as an important source of strength for most participants long after formal preparation is completed.
- **Program design discussed frequently and openly by faculty members who also actively seek input from educational administrators.** There is a culture of inquiry, an attitude that preparation programs require formative as well as summative evaluation and that changes are likely to be needed as environmental conditions change. For example, during the past few years, some institutions are beginning to include community-based experiences as part of preparation because it is becoming more apparent that schools need to develop positive and meaningful partnerships with their communities.



- Resources are provided by all partners—students, universities, and school systems. Mutual responsibility as well as the mutual benefit is becoming more clearly understood. As a result, there is more effort to establish more equitable resource inputs among the several partners. A side benefit of this effort is that school systems have more potential to impact the way that educational leaders are prepared.
- **Instruction shifting from didactic, lecture style, to interactive classroom dynamics, which are often, initiated by students.** As students work in cohorts and become more involved in clinical experiences that require significant reflection, there is pressure to develop academic seminars that are based on adult learning principles. Professors are being challenged to be “relevant” and join with students in meaningful reflection about site-based experiences.
- **Clinical experiences as central elements of preparation.** Candidates are getting more “on the job” training time, having more diversified experiences, along with more opportunities to reflect with peers, professors, and mentors about their clinical experiences.
- **“Practitioner-scholars,” educators who have extensive experience as leaders and who also can conduct research, publish and teach at the graduate level) provide guidance for students.** Practitioner-scholars have legitimacy on campus and in schools. They also tend to exhibit more enthusiasm for the work of supervision and student advisement clinical experiences than do other professors.

Three other trends are worth noting. First, there is an effort to establish meaningful distinctions between preparation programs for novices (i.e., those without administrative experience who are normally enrolled in Masters or Educational Specialist programs) and those who are more advanced (i.e., those with administrative experience and prior leadership training). The novice requires extensive preparation concerning fundamentals—e.g., budget development, school plant management, instructional leadership, and school-community relations. Advanced level students need opportunities to reflect on their extensive experiences and to develop conceptual frameworks, or mind maps that can enhance their ability to lead. Novices needs to focus on basics while advanced students need to focus on synthesizing their experiences. The novice’s preparation focuses on transactional leadership, while advanced preparation should focus on transformational leadership.

Second, at the doctoral level of preparation, there is a long over-due effort to differentiate the Ed.D from the Ph.D. The Ed.D should include content and experiences (e.g., emphasis on practitioner research and clinical experiences) that make it the degree of choice of educational leaders who intend to stay in practitioner roles when they complete their programs. The Ph.D should include content and experiences (e.g., emphasis on basic research and theory) that make it the degree of choice of students whose career track is the professorship or a policy analysis position in settings such as school districts, state education agencies or the federal government. In the past, this doctoral program distinction has been minimal or non-existent at most universities. As a result of the effort to differentiate doctoral academic offerings by degrees, along with the fact that most candidates are currently in educational leadership roles and intend to stay in this kind of role, the Ed.D is now the most commonly offered degree.

Third, there is more emphasis on continuing professional development once formal preparation is completed. It is becoming more apparent that educational leaders will never be finished with their professional development. In this era of instant communications, rapidly changing demographics, shifting occupational patterns, and global economies, society and communities present educational leaders with a seemingly bottomless array of rapidly changing challenges. As a result, universities are experimenting with a variety of continuing education opportunities for their graduates and for others—e.g., principal centers, intensive seminars designed around cutting edge topics and focused offerings developed in partnerships with school districts.



## Emerging Trends and Best Practices

There are two engines that are driving emerging trends in the preparation of leaders for educational organizations. One is from "outside"—i.e., the field and its governing structure, and one is from within the preparation fraternity itself. At this point in time, it is difficult to identify any widespread agreement about "best practices," but there is a vigorous debate, being driven from both within and without, that may lead a consensus about best practices.

From "outside" a coalition of powerful organizations has formed over the past decade. As a result of the University Council for Educational Administration 1987 study noted earlier, a National Policy Board for Educational Administration was formed to bring the diverse interest groups to the same table. It includes such organizations as the American Association of School Administrators, the elementary and secondary principals associations, and the National School Boards Association, along with the University Council for Educational Administration. Having a shared setting and agenda provided the opportunity to examine priorities and identify skills, knowledge, and behaviors that should be exhibited by the nation's educational leaders. In turn, over the past five years the National Policy Board has worked closely with the Council of Chief State School Officers to develop a common set of standards for educational leaders. In 1996 the Council debated and agreed upon a set of standards for school leaders that is presently being implemented in certification and licensure requirements in states across the country (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). These standards are centered on shifting definitions of leadership that focus on student learning, collaboration, and an emphasis on assessment and



evaluation. Further, the standards are viewed as highly interrelated rather than discrete areas.

From within university preparation program faculties, the lessons derived over the past decade, as well as the increasing expectations by external initiatives such as the standards drive noted above, have helped to shape an agenda for preparation program reform. Restine (1997) has identified six principles that are likely to guide program design initiatives for the foreseeable future:

First, activities and experiences should focus on problems of practice that facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills to workplace settings. Second, instruction by university professors should be supplemented by practitioners to expand learning resources, promote networking with practicing administrators and maintain a connection to current administrative problems. Third, curriculum and instructional methods should encourage students to take increased responsibility for their own learning. Fourth, learning experiences should emphasize cooperation and teamwork among students working toward common goals. Fifth, curriculum and instructional activities should emphasize action, implementation, and evaluation as well as analysis and reflection. And sixth, students should receive diagnostic feedback from multiple sources and should develop the ability to assess their own performance. (pp. 120-121).

Other trends that can be added to the listing include:

- Moving away from residency requirements at the doctoral level;
- Increasing focus on partnerships (e.g., advisory groups, faculty/practitioner team teaching, mentoring);
- Greater uses of technology (e.g., distance learning, e mail, simulations);
- Closer examination of the relationship between leadership practices and student outcomes.

To varying degrees, "cutting edge" preparation programs are engaged in crafting meaningful programmatic responses to the emerging agenda identified from the field and from within the preparation community itself. In addition regional and national conferences are bringing professors from educational administration programs together to explore programmatic priorities and changing design features. Finally, a

growing literature base is being developed to disseminate the principles and goals that are being pursued and the outcomes that are being derived (see reference section for a sampling of this literature).

### Exemplary Programs

What is an exemplary program? As emphasized, there is no single, uniform belief system about "best practices" let alone about exemplary programs. In part this is because leadership preparation reform efforts are still in an early phase of development and in part because of the large number (about 500) of higher education institutions engaged in preparing educational leaders.

From this writer's perspective, "exemplary programs" are those that are shifting their emphasis away from presenting behavioral science methods and findings with the assumption that participants will be able to make the necessary translations to leadership requirements. Instead, exemplary programs are those that emphasize hands-on learning, varying from simulations and case studies to intensive clinical experiences, as well as behavioral science content and methods. There are a growing number of these exemplary programs. A few examples include:

- Stanford, which has pioneered problem-based learning approaches (Bridges, 1992).
- Teachers College, Columbia University, which has pioneered intensive weekend and summer learning experiences. More recently Harvard has also become a leader in this effort.
- The University of Colorado and the University of New Mexico, which have reconfigured their doctoral programs around the development of academic portfolios.
- The universities that participated in the Danforth principal preparation program (e.g., Brigham Young, Central Florida, Connecticut, Alabama, Washington, and New Mexico). These institutions have created partnerships with school districts,



repackaged their instructional designs, brought students together as cohorts, and put greater emphasis on clinical experiences.

The funding base for these programs varies. Some are private and some are public institutions. Some have significant endowment bases. Some have developed partnership agreements with school systems and, occasionally, with foundations. The norm, however, is a combination of student fees and institutional support that comes from state treasuries.

### Contact Persons

There are many individuals who have been involved in the evolution of preparation programs for educational leaders. However, a few stand out as being most directly engaged in the discussion through much of the past decade:

- Bruce Barnett, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Northern Colorado
- Nelda Cambron-McCabe, Department of Educational Leadership, Miami University (Ohio)
- Donn Gresso, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, East Tennessee State University
- Martha McCarthy, Educational Leadership Department, Indiana University
- Joseph Murphy, Department of Educational Leadership, Peabody College of Vanderbilt University

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Figure 1 Traditional and Danforth Field-Based Programs

Categories	Traditional	Field Based
Participant sponsorship	None, other than recommendation forms	Usually by district committee, superintendent and/or principal
Recruitment	None usually	By districts and university
Admissions	Review of file, which emphasizes academic potential and is typically limited to transcripts, recommendations, standard exams	File with academic potential evidence is supplemented by evidence of leadership potential (educational platform, essay on leadership, interviews, assessment centers)
Advisement	Relatively little at M.A. or Ed.S. level, and limited to university faculty members	Extensive by coordinator as well as by field and site supervisors
Coordination	Minimal—usually limited to course scheduling by chairperson	Extensive—includes all stages of the effort, recruitment to placement
Student progression through program	At individual pace and typically over 3 or 4 years	At a predetermined pace and typically over 15 months to 2 years
Student grouping	None except by chance	In cohorts and usually extends beyond classes to include reflective seminars and other settings
Student evaluation	Course grades and sometimes an oral or written exam at end of the program	Course grades, but also regular feedback by coordinator as well as field and site supervisors, student reflection, and end-of-program exams
Program evaluation	Usually when an external review occurs, to comply with requests for information, and done by faculty members	Regularly and involves students, alumni, field administrators, as well as faculty members
Placement	Minimal involvement by faculty, beyond maintaining job-related information	Active advisement and networking by coordinator with program graduates and hiring school districts
Resources	Provided by students (tuition) and university (salaries and overhead support)	Provided by students (tuition, materials, and supplies), university (salaries, overhead support, space, coordinator load reduction), school districts (release time funds)
Partnerships	University dominated if done at all, infrequent meetings	Broad based, toward equal roles in decision making, frequent meetings
Program design and development	By faculty and not typically reviewed often	Done collaboratively and modified on basis of feedback
Academic program	Emphasis on theory and content, deductive approach	Balance between theory and practice, inductive approach
Instruction	Didactic, with professor as knowledge giver and student playing a passive role; professors do most of instructing, usually as individuals	Adult learning oriented with student playing a proactive role; practitioners as well as professors as instructors, often in teams
Field experiences/ internships	Not usually required; vary widely in quality and time on task	Integral part of program, effort to ensure high quality and sufficient time-on-task
Field supervision	Often haphazard and infrequent, responsibility without load reduction and done by junior or adjunct faculty	Planned visits done frequently, usually with load reduction and involving senior faculty members
Site supervision	Usually by chance or circumstances, with little or no preparation for the role	Carefully selected supervisors who are given training and encouraged to act as mentors

Source: Mike M. Milstein and Associates. Changing the way we prepare educational leaders. Newbury Park, California, Corwin Press, 1993.