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## What the Research Says About the Delivery of Educational Leadership Preparation Programs in the United States

### Comments

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**WHAT THE RESEARCH AND LITERATURE SAY ABOUT THE DELIVERY OF  
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION PROGRAMS  
IN THE UNITED STATES**

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The University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) and the Teaching in Educational Administration Special Interest Group (TEA-SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) recently formed a joint taskforce to study the preparation of leaders in educational administration. The taskforce has drawn together scholars in the field of educational leadership to assess the availability and quality of research on pre-service principal and superintendent preparation. It is also charged with establishing standards for research and recommending future directions for research in this area.

While other members of the taskforce addressed issues of curriculum, pedagogy, and theories of educational leadership preparation, the work of Domain 7 of the taskforce was to examine the literature on current delivery models of educational leadership preparation programs, and to determine which aspects of delivery have been studied. We reviewed all available articles and chapters that dealt with the aspect of program delivery—both in educational administration at the PreK-12 level and in some selected other fields to provide instructive comparison. In this report we first synthesize the literature, then we make recommendations for further study.

Defining good leadership and good leadership preparation have been challenges for those who have educated and guided generations of school administrators for more than 100 years in the United States. Although the principalship, as a profession, did not begin to formalize until after the Civil War, some evidence of training school leaders dates back to the early part of the nineteenth century (Murphy, 1998). For school superintendents, formal preparation specific to educational leadership did not come until after the 1920s, given the emphasis on a business model of school leadership during the Industrial Era (Callahan, 1996). Most of the extant literature on leadership preparation in education deals with master's or doctoral degree programs designed to prepare principals and assistant principals. This literature review focuses on examples of delivery models and discussions of delivery of principal preparation programs since there has been very little research on delivery of superintendent programs. No distinction is made in the literature between doctoral programs and master's programs though, in practice, we are aware that different principles may guide such programs.

Numerous factors can influence delivery of educational leadership preparation programs. In some states, the state has a great deal of influence on program design, while in other states; major universities may be the guiding force for development (Behar-Horenstein, 1995). In most cases, state licensure requirements underlie the basic components of a program, although they have more influence on curriculum than structure (Grogan & Roberson, 2002; Harle, 2000). The market is another influence that has taken on greater significance in recent years. Students seeking licensure or an advanced degree by way of a leadership preparation program often shop for programs of convenience – those that are not selective, are delivered over a relatively short period of time, and have few academic requirements (Levine, 2005).

The article is organized into the following sections: (1) Examples of Delivery Structures and Components of Various Delivery Models, (2) Cohort Models of Leadership Preparation, (3) Course Delivery Through Distance Technology, (4) Partnerships Between Schools, Universities, and Communities, (5) Educational Leadership Preparation Outside of Higher Education, (7) Leadership Program Design and Delivery in Fields Other Than Educational Leadership, (8) Suggestions for Further Research, and (9) Conclusions.

### **Examples of Delivery Structures and Components of Various Delivery Models**

While each educational leadership preparation program is unique, many contain similar elements. Most are university-based and organized around courses that prepare students for administrative licensure within a degree program. In some cases, students who already have master's degrees are able to gain licensure by taking a certain set of courses. Most programs include components of practice, such as internships or field-based learning experiences, and are commonly divided into two distinct components: instructional leadership coursework and internship (Hess & Kelly, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Milstein & Krueger, 1997). Within the coursework, many programs emphasize case studies, problems-based learning (PBL), and hands-on learning experiences (McCarthy, 1999; Milstein & Krueger).

Most educational leadership preparation programs range in length from 1 to 3 years and require 18 to 36 credit hours for completion (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Harle, 2000; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Average class or program sizes include 9 to 25 students (Goldring & Sims; Harle; Hess & Kelly; Whitaker & Barnett, 1999). Finally, portfolios or other methods of authentic assessment are now typical within educational leadership preparation (Clark & Clark, 1997; Hess & Kelly; Milstein & Krueger, 1997).

We found that these program features were characteristic of most leadership preparation programs mentioned in the literature. However, while individual features of certain programs have been highlighted as effective in the research literature, very little has been written about what constitutes good or effective models for delivery.

Innovations that break from conventional delivery structures include course “modules” that are not restricted by the university standard of 45 clock hours being equal to 3 credit hours (Clark & Clark, 1997; Glasman, 1997; Milstein & Krueger, 1997). Online course offerings and weekend class meetings that can also be web-assisted are viewed as effective ways to better accommodate working professionals (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Hughes, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Other features tailored to the working professional include summer institutes or other intensive, time-condensed workshops (Harle, 2000; Jackson & Kelley). Anecdotal evidence tells us that many preparation programs use a variety of these delivery structures – coursework delivered in intense units of one or one-and-a-half weekend days three or four times a semester combined with summer intensives of 3 or 4 weeks of full-day meetings.

By far, the most studied delivery mechanism is what is generally described as “a cohort model,” though there are a number of versions of such models. In addition, despite the growing number of programs offered entirely or partly online, a limited amount of literature has surfaced that examines this method of delivery. While we often refer to “traditional models” of delivery of leadership preparation programs, research and theory have not explored the effectiveness of this approach as a particular type of model. Therefore, it is the cohort model and the distance learning model which we will address in detail in this article.

### **Cohort Models of Leadership Preparation**

Barnett and Muse (1993) define "cohort" as a group of students who begin and complete a program of studies together, engaging in a common set of courses, activities, and/or learning experiences" (p. 401). The use of cohorts in leadership preparation programs is growing in popularity because it is believed to be both responsive to "consumer" needs, and to address some of the criticisms of leadership preparation of the past. Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, and Norris (2000) identified cohort programs from as early as the 1950s; however, the incidence of cohort models has increased since the 1987 NCEA study "Leaders for America's Schools" which called for a change to leadership preparation programs. The Danforth Foundation grants are most frequently identified with the growth in the number of cohort-based programs of educational leadership preparation (Barnett & Muth, 2003). Most estimates today claim that over 50% of leadership preparation programs use the cohort model (Barnett et al., 2000).

Cohort models are often characterized by their common external features such as a standard size (from 10-25 students) and a common schedule (Barnett & Muse, 1993). In defining a cohort leadership preparation program, proponents argue that the cohort is more than a structure for delivery of a program. Instead, they think of it in terms of a learning model for adult students (Barnett & Muse; Norris, Barnett, Basom, & Yerkes, 1996). According to proponents of the cohort model, the success of the model is impacted by the degree to which faculty embrace the program at their university and are effective in working with adult learners (Barnett et al., 2000; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2003). However, since there is scant literature focused on other delivery models, this finding might be equally applicable to all leadership preparation models.

Since adult learners are self-directed and have strong internal motivation, it is argued that cohort models engage them in a meaningful way (Diller, 2004; McCabe,

Ricciardi, & Jamison, 2000). Adult learners have a larger frame of reference from which to draw upon for learning, and in turn want to learn about things that are significant and directly applicable to their professional lives (Diller, 2004; McCabe et al., 2000). Donaldson and Scribner (2003) offer "structuration theory" as a frame for a cohort model where the delivery structure is shaped by the expectations, experiences, and beliefs of the members of the cohort.

### ***Strengths of the Cohort Model***

Several studies have reported the benefits of cohorts as perceived by both students and faculty. Engaging in a common curriculum with a fixed group of students was cited most frequently as a benefit for students (Barnett et al., 2000; Barnett & Muse, 1993; Diller, 2004). Students in cohorts view themselves as more than a collection of individuals. They frequently refer to the support, mutual respect, and lifelong relationships they build within the cohort (Norris et al., 1996; Bailey, Ruhl-Smith, & Smith, J. M. 1999). Barnett and Muse and Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2003) wrote that students felt a strong sense of community which they attributed, in part, to taking the same set of courses together. While the cohort model may seem to some to be too closed or rigid, most cohort students maintain that the structure creates a safe and trusting environment for adult learners (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth; Norris, et al.; Milstein, 1995).

Acknowledging that critics might be concerned about sacrificing content, to enhance the learning experiences of students who must take all courses together, Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2003) encourage continual group development activities that maintain a positive and emotionally safe environment. While Twale and Kochan (2000) found that women rated the interpersonal aspects of the cohort as more important than men, many students note the appreciation of peer support and the opportunity to learn from others in similar circumstances (Milstein, 1995; Tucker,

Henig, & Salmonowicz, 2005). In Diller's (2004) study of Duquesne University's Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders (IDPEL), some respondents reported learning more from discussion among the cohort members than from the actual content itself. In addition, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) reports the positive impact of peer tutoring within the cohort, particularly between the more and less experienced members of the group. Not only are the peer relationships within cohorts strengthened, but a good cohort model can increase faculty/student connections and develop stronger working relationships (Barnett & Muse, 1993; Barnett et al., 2000).

One of the drawbacks in traditional course-by-course program delivery is the high number of students who do not complete the degree (Barnett et al., 2000; Barnett & Muth, forthcoming; McCabe et al., 2000; Milstein, 1995; Twale & Kochan, 2000). Milstein and Krueger (1997) found that cohort students appreciated the peer support throughout their program, and a significant positive effect of the cohort model is the increasing number of students who persist in the completion of the degree (Barnett et al.; Barnett & Muth, forthcoming; McCabe et al.; Milstein; Twale & Kochan).

Instructional techniques are believed to be another key to the success of the cohort model. Faculty must consciously plan instruction that will be effective with adult learners in a group setting – particularly in a group that will develop over time (Norris et al., 1996; Barnett & Muse, 1993). Barnett and Muth (2003) wrote that problems-based learning (PBL) is a strong foundation for authentic assessment, and Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2003) reported on the appropriateness of PBL in cohort leadership preparation programs because it contains a good balance of individual and group work, although anecdotal evidence suggests that PBL can be effective in non-cohort programs as well. Studies of cohorts indicate that the extended opportunities for group work that are characteristic of the cohort model do not

distract from individual accomplishment; in fact, often the opposite is true. The benefit is reciprocal: individual successes contribute to the strength and achievement of the cohort, and the cohort provides a resource and support network for the individual (Norris et al., 1996; McCabe et al., 2000; Twale & Kochan, 2000). Additionally, small group projects create a sense of obligation and commitment to other team members; no one is isolated from the group or left behind (Donaldson & Scribner, 2003). When working both individually and as a group, students have time for reflection and consideration of the applications of what they have learned (Barnett & Muse, 1993). Furthermore, cohort curricula are often dependent on discourse among members, a key skill in effective leadership. The ability of students to communicate what they are learning both solidifies their own understanding and can aid in the learning of others (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2003).

A well-developed cohort provides its members with learning that is authentic and relevant to their work and life (Barnett et al., 2000; Barnett & Muth, forthcoming; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Tucker et al., 2005). If the curriculum includes opportunities such as action research, field-based learning, and investigation of problems of practice to help students make sense of the theoretical concepts that are being taught in the program, research suggests that the intensity of the cohort model enhances professional learning (Barnett and Muth, forthcoming; Browne-Ferrigno). Continued networking with members of the cohort also benefits the students even after their program is completed (Bailey et al., 1999; Barnett et al.; Barnett & Muse, 1993; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2003; McCabe et al., 2000; Milstein, 1995).

### ***Concerns about the Cohort Model***

While numerous advantages of the cohort model have been documented, a few issues may still inhibit the cohort model from reaching its full potential. Some of

the difficulties lie in the continued need to improve the structure of the model, while other issues needing resolution involve further development of the theoretical foundation undergirding cohorts and strategies for addressing the personal dynamics within cohorts.

Tightly structured cohort models that do not allow students to exit and enter along the way pose problems for some students (Barnett et al., 2000). Furthermore, a typical cohort model may limit academic freedom and individual exploration. Some cohort participants have cited this as a disadvantage (Diller, 2004). Universities tend to let scheduling convenience and enrollment increases be the driving force behind implementing a cohort model, which overshadows the value of cohorts as a curricular model (Horn, 2001; Norris et al., 1996).

Additionally, when a cohort program includes a predetermined full course load, it may be too burdensome and therefore impractical for students with full-time careers (Barnett et al., 2000; Tucker et al., 2005). Yet, while the course loads may be heavy, in some cohort structures, class meetings are often infrequent, and Tucker et al. found that students early in their program said they regret the limited contact they had with faculty. Donaldson and Scribner (2003) noted that practical constraints embedded within a program that keeps every student on the same schedule (e.g., time, other commitments, personal issues) restricted the depth in which students were willing to, or could, explore the concepts covered in the curriculum. Also, when students were preoccupied with the final product of their group work, creativity or divergent ideas were suppressed by other members of the cohort.

Barnett et al. (2000) also noted drawbacks for faculty involved. Some universities consider participation in a cohort program an overload rather than part of faculty workload. In addition, faculty must be comfortable being in the role of facilitator rather than the single leader (Norris et al., 1996). Barnett and Muse (1993) and Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2003) determined that the bond that forms

within cohorts may have a downside in that often the students will become more demanding, even engaging in power struggles with the faculty. Horn (2001) found that since cohort models are so highly structured, students are put into subordinate positions with regard to the faculty who do not encourage democratic decision-making processes. Horn poses the question: How do we guarantee the quality control of content that a closed cohort model offers, but still be able to empower students in a more democratic structure? When cohort participants return to their schools, they are inclined to regress into the same traditional power structure that always existed. "The current modernistic power arrangements that are ubiquitous in our educational communities are ineffective in promoting just and caring communities, and in many cases actually reinforce oppression" (Horn, p. 324).

Other interpersonal relationships can be detrimental to the effectiveness of the cohort experience that depends so much on group dynamics. Donaldson and Scribner (2003) and Horn (2001) interviewed some women who felt that the men in the cohort attempted to assume a role of authority over the women in the group. Women in both studies felt that to some degree they had been given lesser roles within the group. Cohorts also risk becoming cliquish and isolating to both fellow cohort members and non-cohort members pursuing the same degree. In a few instances, cohort members have even reported feelings of insecurity in comparison of themselves to their fellow cohort members, particularly if they were entering the same job market (Barnett et al., 2000; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2003; Horn, McCabe et al., 2000). Additionally, the potential exists for the "one rotten apple" syndrome to negatively affect cohorts (Barnett et al.; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth; Horn; Norris et al., 1996). Horn noted that any negative social interaction is magnified in a group setting such as with a cohort. The complaints of one can quickly become the complaints of all (Barnett et al.).

One recurring criticism of cohort-based leadership preparation is that no conclusive scientific research exists to substantiate a positive impact on the leadership abilities of the cohort participants versus non-cohort participants (Barnett et al., 2000). Our literature search uncovered more conceptual pieces than empirical research studies on cohort models in general. Twale and Kochan (2000) reported that their study could not demonstrate an impact of the cohort training on leadership practices after the completion of the program. However, directing all of the criticism to the quality or structure of the program may be inappropriate. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) found that students who did not *enter* cohort programs with clear expectations and individual goals were not as likely to feel a sense of accomplishment at the completion of the program.

Most of the literature on cohort and non-cohort programs refers to programs that have been delivered mostly or entirely face-to-face with instructors and students together in the same room. However, with increased student access to the Internet and home computing, many leadership programs, both cohort and non-cohort, have begun to incorporate at least elements of electronic course delivery.

### **Course Delivery Through Distance Technology**

As the number of Internet users has multiplied, universities have experimented with the use of computer technology within the traditional on-campus classroom environment. Until recently, *distance education* was a term used to denote paper-based class correspondence, as well as traditional courses held at off-campus locations, where the instructor goes to a location more convenient for specific groups of students, but where the instruction is still face-to-face. More recently, however, computer technology has become a vital part of distance education; thus prompting the birth of the new term *distance technology*. To clarify, *distance education* focuses on either the distance between instructor and learner (as in a paper-based class

correspondence) or the distance between classroom setting and both the instructor and students (as in traditional course delivery offered in an off-campus location). In contrast, *distance technology* focuses on both the distance between instructor and learner *and* the use of technology in a course delivery format alternative to the traditional classroom setting. Therefore, we are careful not to confuse *distance education* with *distance technology* because the two are not synonymous (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005).

### ***Leadership Preparation Through Distance Technology***

The use of distance technology has the potential to lead the way in developing more competent technology leaders as well as reforming preparation and reaching a more inclusive population of administrator aspirants. Proponents argue that distance technology fosters leadership styles that are less traditional and more transformative and relational. The use of distance technology offers opportunities for improvement in the teaching and learning process, an expansion in geographic reach, and more effective service (Broskoske & Harvey, 2000). It breaks from tradition in terms of social dynamics, and with further research, may prove to be a gender, race, and disability equalizer because there may be less potential for bias (Belcher, 1999; Opsal, Brunner & Virnig, 2005; Savicki, Kelley & Lingenfelter, 1996; Sullivan, 2002).

Boone (2001) discussed the development of a standards-based superintendent program in Texas in which technology played a significant role in the preparation of school leaders. Utilizing a constructivist approach to learning, technology became a "virtual partner with the learner as he or she began to construct knowledge" viewing technology as the "intellectual tool kit that enables the learner to build more meaningful personal interpretations of new knowledge" (Boone, 2001, p. 17). Technology in this circumstance served as the environment in which to

engage learners in cognitive learning strategies and critical thinking skills (Jonassen, Peck & Wilson, 1999). Smith-Gratto (2000) found that integrating technology in this manner contributed to the social interactions critical to constructivist approaches to learning.

The increasingly global society in which we operate has in many ways demanded a shift in the way individuals construct career paths, problem-solving teams and intellectual circles. Consequently, the development of a strong and diverse network of peers is an important part of an educational leader's career. In an effort to connect graduate students from two distinct regions of the United States, Borsa, Klotz, and Uzat (1998) utilized distance technology to create a cohort of scholars. A case study design was adopted to facilitate the problem-based approach to learning. Instructors from the two programs collaborated in the planning phase in order to develop an appropriate curriculum, desired instructional outcomes, and a case study that incorporated elements of organizational behavior, legal, curricular, and financial implications that an educational leader might face in a school improvement effort. Students were connected through a listserv and instructed to brainstorm possible courses of action, gather data, and develop a plan as a cohort through the sharing of information via the listserv. Recognizing the importance of considering a less regional perspective when developing a plan for educational change, Borsa, Klotz and Uzat (1998) created a model that allowed students from the Midwest and Deep South to connect socially and intellectually in an effort to create a broader cohort of scholars than is usually found in one program.

Opsal, Brunner, and Virnig (2005) extend Foster's (1986) work in the field of educational administration and focus on attitudes in leadership preparation toward members of marginalized groups through their description of a technology-based pedagogical process in a school leadership course. Their technology renders students anonymous to one another and allows them to communicate through a chat room via

the Internet and collaborate on projects before ever meeting one another in person, allowing for the demonstration of leadership skills *before* any judgment occurs on the basis of gender, disability, or race.

Sherman and Beaty (2007) conducted an exploratory study of how University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA) member institutions utilize distance technology in the preparation of educational leaders. They found that in all institutions and at all levels (Ph.D., Ed.D., Ed.S, M.Ed.), traditional face-to-face program structures were the most prevalent forms of distance technology in use. However, respondents did indicate that many programs were beginning to utilize hybrid program structures that combine face-to-face delivery and distance technology. The most widely used forms of distance technology were: asynchronous Internet programs; synchronous Internet programs; and two-way interactive video and audio. One-way video technologies and audio-only technologies were less frequently utilized indicating that when video and audio are used in delivery, universities prefer to offer two-way interaction for their students.

When asked to describe goals that were focusing efforts toward change in regard to the use of distance technology, Sherman and Beaty (2007) found that most UCEA member institutions rated the following as most important: to increase student access by making courses available at convenient locations; to reach a new student audience; and to increase student access by reducing time constraints. Furthermore, when implementing distance technology, the most frequently encountered problems were reported to be technological in nature, such as equipment malfunction or failure. Survey responses indicated that managing adjunct faculty, forced lecture formats, or standardized course "shell" effects were problems to a lesser extent. Finally, when asked to select and rate contributing factors perceived to prevent, *to a major extent*, the expansion of distance technology in their leadership programs, UCEA member institution representatives indicated that

the following were most prevalent: concerns about quality control; lack of faculty interest; and program development costs. Equipment failures, lack of support from the institution, and lack of fit with the program mission also joined the above as reported factors that inhibit expansion.

Carr-Chellman and Duchastel (2000) warn that despite many positive outcomes that distance technology might provide, its use also runs serious risks of tempering original instruction so that it becomes ineffective. Furthermore, courses that utilize distance technology should not look like traditional courses in sheep's clothing – they should indeed provide something different. Carr-Chellman and Duchastel go on to caution that we not let the desire for advertising and promotion of alternative programs and delivery structures threaten quality assurance. The over-reliance on adjuncts, the lack of faculty member interest, technical training and expertise (Myers, Bennett, Brown & Henderson, 2004), the absence of sufficient scaffolding for students working from home in terms of the modem connect time and high-band width needed for successful online experiences (Foshay & Bergeron, 2000), and inadequate access to technology in general (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000) also serve as factors that inhibit quality online environments. Further, Broskoske and Harvey (2000) warn that consideration must also be given to the budget (high start up costs) and marketing (concern with negative reputation associated with the use of distance technology).

Concerns about the use of technology to deliver or help deliver leadership preparation notwithstanding, the traditional models of delivery, *are* being challenged by new approaches. We need to think about effective uses of distance technology, envision what successful distance technology courses look like, and understand how it might transform both the preparation and practice of educational leaders.

Other new approaches include the idea of pooling expertise from higher education and from the PK-12 arenas. Partnerships between districts, universities

and other professional or community agencies are being created all over the country particularly since practitioners and others (see Levine, 2005) have criticized the university-centric approaches.

### **Partnerships Between Schools, Universities, and Communities**

Partnerships between schools and universities have the potential to bridge the gap between theory and practice that has often been a criticism of educational leadership preparation offered by universities (Barnett, 2005; Sherman, 2006). They also offer more options for program delivery. A challenge to forming partnerships is that the organizational structures of universities and schools may sometimes seem incompatible (Goldring & Sims, 2005). However, successful partnerships involve collaboration and cooperation at all levels of each participating organization, even if not every level will be directly involved (e.g., university chancellors) (Grogan & Roberson, 2002; Whitaker & Barnett, 1999). Many successful university-school district partnerships have had advisory, development, or redesign committees where all parties were well represented and had input on the structure and expectations for the partnership (Goldring & Sims). In addition, to be successful, all partners must share a commitment to the partnership and respect what the other partner has to contribute (Whitaker & Barnett).

Strong collaboration between schools and universities open up opportunities for collaborative delivery models. For instance, practicing administrators can lead seminars or team-teach with university faculty (Aiken, 2001; Clark & Clark, 1997; Milstein & Krueger, 1997). Effective veteran administrators are also incorporated into program design by serving as mentors for those in leadership preparation (Aiken, 2001; Whitaker & Barnett, 1999). In addition, a number of university programs offer courses on-site within school districts or teach the entire program on-site (Grogan & Roberson, 2002; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Whitaker, King, &

Vogel, 2004). Such collaboration allows the partner districts to have as much say in determining what gets taught, how, and when, as the university faculty has.

Several partnerships go beyond universities and school districts and may involve Colleges of Business or Management, State Departments of Education, corporate leaders, and community organizations. These have not been researched to date, but we provide the following information on some of the new approaches to help map the terrain for where the field may be headed.

The Chicago Leadership Academies for Supporting Success (CLASS), the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement, and the Arkansas Leadership Academy are a few of the leadership preparation programs with extensive partnerships (CLASS; Georgia's Leadership Institute; Arkansas Leadership Academy). CLASS operates four different leadership preparation models depending on the needs of the individual and the stage of career. CLASS partners with the Chicago Public Education Fund, as well as Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy and the Kellogg School of Management (CLASS). Georgia's Leadership Institute for School Improvement partners with the University of Georgia system, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, and the Georgia Department of Education in addition to several other government agencies and business organizations (Georgia's Leadership Institute). Georgia's Leadership Institute lasts approximately 3 years, and most costs are paid by the Institute. The program emphasizes performance-based outcomes with an electronic portfolio used in the first phase of assessment (Georgia's Leadership Institute). The Arkansas Leadership Academy has a total of 44 partners statewide which include universities, government agencies, corporations, and not-for-profit organizations (Arkansas Leadership Academy). This program is divided into three phases with the last two being optional and requiring additional applications. The Arkansas Department of

Education covers all of the participants' expenses except travel (Arkansas Leadership Academy).

Partnerships provide multiple perspectives and bring together a number of professional strengths that have strong potential for enhancing the depth and quality of educational leadership preparation. The Kentucky Department of Education collaborates with Western Kentucky University and the Kentucky Alliance of Black School Educators to offer The Minority Superintendent Internship Program. Participants intern in a school district for one year while learning about the responsibilities of a superintendent (Kentucky Department of Education). The city of Boston, in conjunction with Northeastern University and the Fenway Institute for Urban School Renewal, offers the Principal Residency Network through the Center for Collaborative Education. Students in this 12-15 month program will be immersed in field experiences while participating in seminars and completing writing exercises and will produce a portfolio of their work by the end of the program (CCE-Principal Residency).

To cast more light on recent departures from traditional educational leadership preparation, we turn now to available research on programs being delivered outside of institutions of higher education.

### **Educational Leadership Preparation Outside of Higher Education**

In recent years, for-profit and not-for-profit leadership preparation programs have emerged and begun to secure their place in the market of leadership preparation for educational administrators. These programs outside of higher education are not limited by the constraints inherent in a university setting. Some researchers argue that these alternative programs are more willing to break from tradition and take risks with new ideas and approaches (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Hess and Kelly examined the New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) program for leadership

development. NLNS recruits applicants from all professions, but only accepts a select 5% to 7% of all applicants. Instructors in NLNS include leaders in both education and business (Hess & Kelly). NLNS develops curriculum with input from educators across the country so that their curriculum does not reflect the perspective of only one institution. However, this can also be a liability for NLNS as they try to adapt their programs by state to accommodate each state's licensure standards (Smith, L., 2005). NLNS self-evaluates, at least in part, through data collected on student achievement in schools led by their graduates (Hess & Kelly).

While some researchers have acknowledged the strengths of various characteristics of programs delivered outside of Colleges of Education, an interesting dilemma exists for many of the programs' graduates. School districts still control the market on educational administration and have demonstrated apprehension at hiring administrators trained outside of an educational environment (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Even programs identified as successful and innovative such as the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) are seeking partnerships with universities so that their training can be translated into academic credits in a doctoral degree program (Hughes, 2005; Neville, Sherman, & Cohen, 2005).

Indeed, the affiliation with higher education has been developed most fully in educational leadership preparation in the United States. Fields outside of education do not have the tradition of tying university credit to the notion of preparation or development of leaders.

## **Leadership Program Design and Delivery in Fields**

### **Other than Educational Leadership**

Although there is not a lot of research on leadership programs in other fields, there is some information on what is valued and why in fields such as community

college leadership; business administration; leadership in the health care professions including nursing; military leadership; and library leadership.

Although described as leadership preparation, most of the programs mentioned in this section of the review were designed to develop employee leadership skills while on the job. In other words, instead of pre-service preparation, most of these programs provide professional development for employees. In their study of leadership preparation in several different professions, Neville, Sherman, and Cohen (2005) noted that education was the only profession that required an individual to gain both an additional degree and additional licensure in order to be promoted into administrative positions. Many professions offer employees opportunities for advancement through professional development programs, which are often shorter and more focused than university degree programs (Neville et al.). Several articles mentioned that organizations now liked to promote from within in order to fill leadership positions. Training/development approaches included seminars/workshops on leadership competencies such as: strategy, innovation, team building, collaborative decision making, visioning, personal development, and good communication (Alldredge & Nilan, 2000; Allerton, 2002; Awad, Hayley, Fagan, Berger, & Brunicardi, 2004; Leslie et al., 2005; McDougal, Brooks, & Albanese, 2005; Salopek, 2002).

The delivery mechanisms were varied, but the most common ones mentioned were in-house workshops or seminars held a number of times over a period of a year (Allerton, 2002; Greenwood, 1999; McDougal et al., 2005; Scott & Caress, 2005; Watkins, 2002; Winston & Hazlin, 2003). But some programs were delivered either in conjunction with an outside partner (for example a university) or by an organization that provides leadership training, such as the Brookings Institute's Center for Public Policy Education (Zauderer & Ridgway, 2003); Pediatric Leadership Alliance (Leslie et al., 2005); American College of Physician Executives (McAlearney,

Fisher, Heiser, Robbins, & Kelleher, 2005); Army Management Staff College (Salopek, 2003); or Blanchard Valley Health Association (Salopek, 2004).

Several of the programs emphasized the use of technology as in online coursework (Allerton, 2002; Salopek, 2003; Smith, J.M., & Murray, 2002; Watkins, 2002), interactive software (Hartley, 2004; Salopek, 2002), teleconferencing (Hess, R. H., 1988; Woltring, Constantine, & Schwarte, 2003), and web-based programs (Leslie et al., 2005). But few of these programs seem to be based on a cohort model. Two exceptions are programs offered by the Public Health Leadership Institute, which is a partnership between the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and the University of California (Woltring et al. 2003), and the program, Mastering the Art of Public Leadership, offered by the Brookings Institute's Center for Public Policy Education (Zauderer & Ridgway, 2003).

A few programs highlighted particular competencies such as a military leadership approach. There are some corporations where the role of the leader is to state the operation's purpose, direction, and resources, then get out of the way (Salopek, 2002). Another example is in the field of library and information science where, because of radical changes in the field, new leadership competencies such as marketing are being identified as necessary (Winston & Hazlin, 2003). In these programs, participants experience different kinds of activities than those designed to prepare more traditional leaders.

One program stands out as seeking to transform its approach to leadership. This is a leadership training program to train nurse leaders to work with a particular population of patients—children with special healthcare needs. Designers of this program identified multicultural competency, human development and diversity, social-political responsibility, and activism as necessary for leadership in that arena (Magyary, 2005). Similar to many educational leadership preparation programs that

have heeded the call to reform, this program also incorporated projects in real-world situations and invited community partners to be involved in the delivery of activities.

Another group seems to be interested in developing more targeted leadership among their members. The American College of Physicians now offers a Medical Leadership Program course that is designed to facilitate the development of leaders who can better connect medical preparation with administration (McAlearney et al., 2005). Courses are interactive and use case-based problems. Collaborative decision making is emphasized.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

We were disappointed to find so little empirical research on the efficacy of different models of program delivery. The exception to this would be the cohort model where there has been an adequate amount of research that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of this model. However, more substantive research on cohorts is still needed, and we include more detailed recommendations for that research in the next subsection. For those of us who are working to redesign programs, the lack of research has made this a challenge. Current research on leadership preparation programs has centered on how participants, employers, and faculty *perceive* the effectiveness of the program, and the way it was delivered. However, as more attention is turned toward program outcomes and a greater demand for accountability at all levels, educational researchers must work to *demonstrate* the effectiveness of leadership preparation programs and to inquire into best delivery practices. We must first determine our criteria for effectiveness and then design research studies, which will identify delivery methods that meet those criteria. In addition, given the development of new instructional technologies, research is needed on how best to use technology to enhance delivery.

***Suggestions for Further Research on Cohorts***

Though some of the problems raised with cohort models may be inherent in any system or training model dealing with group dynamics, some would suggest that programs could reduce the likelihood of this by implementing more extensive applicant screening (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2003). During the admissions process, Browne-Ferrigno and Muth recommend that programs look for evidence that applicants will function well as part of a group. Open door admissions processes may provide programs with the number of applicants they need, but this does not provide any incentive for programs to actively seek a highly qualified and diverse group of candidates (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Milstein & Krueger, 1997). Universities would benefit from working with school districts in order to actively seek candidates with strong leadership potential and academic ability (Hale & Moorman; Milstein & Krueger). Some researchers have reported that the requirements for principalships, such as licensure and previous teaching experience, may be hindering the recruitment of high-quality, non-traditional candidates though they admit that identifying those candidates will not be easy in the current context (Hale & Moorman). Programs must be designed to attract and serve those emerging leaders who are dedicated to going beyond the status quo and embracing a new vision of leadership grounded in social justice (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). In fact, as accountability moves to the forefront on every level, closer screening of applicants in general will become more critical (Barnett & Muth, 2003).

Our current definition of success in cohorts may be too limiting and superficial. With the exception of an increase in degree completion, success of cohorts is often established more through successful social interactions among group members than academic success or increased leadership capacity (Barnett et al., 2000). Institutions and faculty are conscious of and attentive to how students

experience their program, but do not always follow up to determine how or if their learning affects what they do on the job (Barnett et al.; Muth & Barnett, 2001).

In addition to curricular concerns, which will not be dealt with here, cohort programs have not been unaffected by the trend toward a more market-driven system in higher education. Cohort programs may feel pressure to become more responsive and accommodating to the practical needs of the adult learner as well (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2003; Twale & Kochan, 2000). This responsiveness may, in turn, affect delivery options, which can result in very brief face-to-face interactions and fewer demonstrations of learning. Students risk sacrificing quality in pursuit of the easiest and quickest means to a degree or certification. Providers of programs risk catering too much to the demands of the consumer in order to grow or maintain programs, potentially taking shortcuts that could compromise quality (Glasman, Cibulka, & Ashby, 2002). Research into the most effective methods of delivery should not be overshadowed by market influence.

Finally, recent research on the effectiveness of cohorts is limited because it is primarily qualitative, self-reported impressions of participants. To address the lack of research on cohort effectiveness beyond this will require carefully constructed and executed longitudinal studies (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2003; Diller, 2004). The data must demonstrate the effectiveness of cohort leadership preparation programs through the academic gains of the schools the leaders serve (Barnett & Muth, 2003).

What currently exists with most cohort leadership preparation programs is a theoretical and structural foundation by which to train effective school leaders. Those programs that follow the closed cohort model are also based on theories of collaboration and group dynamics. The research on leadership and adult learning suggests that cohort models will produce successful, reflective, and collaborative professionals. But, further research studies are needed to verify those intuitions as

well as to examine other models of leadership preparation programs in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of best delivery practices.

### ***Suggestions for Further Research on Distance Technology***

Sherman and Beaty's (2007) research indicates that the majority of the research-oriented institutions studied continue to rely heavily on face-to-face course delivery. In fact, out of 49 UCEA universities, each with multiple program offerings in the area of educational leadership, only 4 reported a program that was fully on-line (all at either the Ed.S. or M.Ed. levels). If we wish for transformation, then we must concern ourselves with how distance technology can improve course and overall program quality. Several questions those of us involved in the preparation of school leaders must ask include: Why do we prefer more traditional methods of delivery? Is it because that is the way we have always prepared leaders? Or, have we not had enough time or resources to become comfortable with distance technology? Further, is there anything to be said for the superiority of the use of distance technology? Or, are we simply trying to make licensure and degree programs more convenient for students?

It is clear that some opportunities for change lie within distance technology. However, what we must do as a collective field is decide how these opportunities can be seized to transform leadership preparation and, ultimately, lead to student achievement. In accordance with the initial and ongoing efforts of NCAELP, research needs to be extended to investigate how distance technology is being and can be used to transform leadership practice. This literature review gives those involved in leadership preparation a reference point from which to consider making changes to the delivery of programs. We encourage ideas for further research that might include exploring: how distance technology may be associated with effective school leaders; comparisons of student success with traditional and distance technology courses;

student preferences in delivery format; whether the use of distance technology is indeed an equalizer; and the possibilities and potential of global partnerships.

### **Conclusions**

While cohorts and distance technology hold the greatest potential for new research on the delivery of leadership preparation, additional areas also warrant further study. Indeed, there needs to be much more empirical research on program delivery in general. Moreover, the separation of structure from program design and underlying theoretical foundations of leadership preparation is a somewhat artificial one. It is useful for the purpose of discovering what research has already been conducted in the area, but it is not especially useful for redesigning preparation programs. Still, to understand more fully what delivery means to designers of preparation, we do recommend more micro research on structure.

For instance, if research indicates that approximately half of all educational leadership preparation programs use some type of cohort model (Barnett et al., 2000), we should investigate further to determine what other structures are in place with the other half of the programs. Also, as the various district/agency/university preparation partnerships multiply, we must look more closely at the delivery structures of those collaborations. In addition, the growth in the number of programs offered outside of higher education provides as yet untapped opportunities for research examining the differences between these programs and university programs. Further, more in-depth studies of non-university programs would help to assess the impact of market influence on the delivery of educational leadership preparation. And we must learn from studies of program design and delivery in other countries. We, in academe, have work to do.

The need for change in educational leadership preparation, particularly delivery, is questioned by few. Rather, disputes lie in proposed methods for

improving the field (Cambron-McCabe & Cunningham, 2002). We need to highlight exceptional programs, spread the word, and create plans for change that are driven by pre-defined “valued ends” (Murphy, 2002). We need to stay focused on what leadership preparation is for – enhanced life chances for *all* students in *all* our schools. Together with our partners in the field, we need to be ahead of the curve in planning new models of leadership preparation. If we can more purposefully identify good candidates for the next generation of school and district leaders, and what it is that these leaders must do to challenge the status quo effectively, we can work backwards to shape excellent learning experiences for them.

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