

Symposium on International Links: Research on Leadership Preparation in a
Global Context

Variation in Leadership Preparation around the Globe: A Paper Presented in conjunction
with the symposium

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Variation in Leadership Preparation

Abstract

This paper is drawn from a chapter in a forthcoming book entitled *The Handbook of Leadership Preparation* and focuses on the importance of an international perspective on educational administration. In that chapter, Lumby et al., explore how including an international perspective helps the practice and profession of educational administration guard against cultural blindness and national narcissism, both possible outcomes in an era of educational globalization.

This paper seeks to demonstrate, albeit incompletely, the variety that exists in how leaders are chosen, developed and educated in the different parts of the world. In addition to reporting on what others have discovered about preparation programs, I offer a description of some of the basic properties of educational leadership selection and development such as selection processes that are particularistic in nature and development processes relying on pre-service learning.

This paper also joins the others in this symposium by advancing an argument about the benefits of an international perspective. That argument is this: American and western educational systems have demonstrated decade after decade that education is a powerful resource for social, political, and economic development. Better education leads to better life opportunities. But, there is a substantial variety in how schools systems in the west operate. Furthermore, there is a substantial variety in how well children learn in the various systems. Since we know, or believe we know, that good leaders make for greater student achievement, there is much to be gained by looking at the variations in order to find alternative ways of producing educational leaders. And, to the degree that we understand the unique local conditions that surround the preparation and selection of educational leaders, we will be able to evaluate whether or not alternative approaches might have transportability to our own practices, particularly those conventional approaches developed in western systems of education.

Variation in Leadership Preparation

Until lions have their own story-tellers, tales of a lion hunt will always glorify the hunter.

Introduction

This symposium addresses the question as to whether or not an international perspective is vital for the health of leadership preparation around the world. Is an increasing familiarity with the challenges and successes associated with variation in how educational leaders are appointed to and prepared for schools important to the future of schooling? This particular contribution to the symposium will speak to the value that is created by an awareness of diversity and the generative potential that results when one understands multiple ways of doing and knowing. The focus is on variation in leadership preparation.

Educational Leadership and Educational Outcomes

Generally, scholars who have examined educational leadership and management have found their disciplinary peer group in universities and in western or western oriented nations. In that domain, much has been learned and promulgated about leadership preparation. For example, the relationship of educational leadership to school performance has been studied for decades. Joe Murphy, one of the most prolific scholars to examine and write about educational administration and leadership, wrote recently:

For much of the last quarter century, academics and practitioners have been engaged in an unbroken quest to understand the school improvement algorithm. That is, there have been ongoing efforts, sometimes systematic and often ad hoc, to isolate the variables in the school performance equation and to understand how they work, both as individual components and as parts of the system of schooling. Research throughout the last quarter century in education has underscored leadership as a critical theme in the school improvement narrative. Indeed, evidence from nearly every realm of investigation beginning with effective schools studies through the most recent work on comprehensive school reform confirms leadership as an explanatory variable in schools where all students meet ambitious achievement targets. (Murphy et al. (In Press)

Accumulating evidence documents that there are educational leadership practices that do contribute to student learning and achievement (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Hallinger and Heck, 1999; Spillane et al., (2001). Research has indicated, for example, that the principal has a key role in school reform efforts. Others have found that educational leadership in developing professional learning communities, fostering collaborative learning cultures, and promoting distributed leadership accompany school improvement (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Fullan, 2001; Cheng, 2001; Hallinger, 2003; Huber, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2004; Southworth, 2005; Walker and Chen, in press).

In an international of leadership preparation, Huber (2004) wrote:

The pivotal role of the school leader as a factor in effective schools has been corroborated by findings of school effectiveness research for the last decades. Extensive empirical efforts of the quantitatively oriented school effectiveness research—mostly in North America, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, but also in the Netherlands and in the Scandinavian Countries—have shown that the (sic) leadership is a central factor for the quality of a school. (p. 1)

Huber cited many scholars in support of this claim: Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, and Wisenbaker (1979); Creemers (1994); Edmonds (1979); Huber (1999); Levine and Lezotte (1990); Mortimore et al. (1988); Reynolds (1976); Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, and Ouston (1979); Sammons, Hillman, and Mortimore (1995); Scheerens and Bosker (1997); and Teddlie and Stringfield (1993). Grady, Wayson and Zirkel (1979) published a review of research on effective schools for UCEA's monograph series adding to the chorus of those supporting the relationship of effective leadership with effective schools. More recently, scholars at the National College for School Leadership (2001), and Bush (2003) have argued for the relationship of successful leadership and effective schools. The weight of this scholarship is convincing.

If these findings are generalizable across educational systems and cultures, one should want to conclude that expanding this concept internationally does indeed make sense. That is, no matter where one looks in the schools of the world, enhanced leadership will lead to school improvement and greater levels of student achievement. Policy makers should be mindful that in developing and improving school systems, educational leadership is a critical component.

But, if good leaders help make good schools and if we see evidence of this in many places, we can arrive at several conclusions: First, there must be multiple ways to prepare and develop educational leaders who positively impact schools, and second, given local conditions and constraints, there must be some ways that are better adapted to local conditions than other ways. South Africa may find relevance in what takes place in Scotland; Scotland may find relevance in what is done in Hong Kong. What appears bold and unrealistic in the United States may be an essential element in educational reform in the Republic of Georgia.

It is important to indicate at the outset that most of the attention on educational leadership is focused on public education as provided and managed by a state, regional or local agency—by a government. Leadership in private unaffiliated or religious schools may be a significant force in different parts of the world and may even be controlled by a state government, but educational leadership in the private sector is not addressed in this paper.

A Selection of Existing Studies

While one may be able to claim that certain leaders and their practices aid student achievement, it is by no means clear how to find and develop those leaders. The preparation of school leaders has been judged problematic for many years. (Griffiths, 1987; McCarthy, 1999; Bryant, 2002; Hess, 2003; Broad Foundation, 2004; Orr, 2003; Orr, 2007; Elmore, 2007; English, 2008; Murphy et al., in press). Generally this critical literature indicates that the pre-service model of educational leadership preparation demonstrates no clear relationship to factors known to directly impact student learning. Perhaps because it is a more diffuse approach with a

limited presence in higher educational institutions, in-service models of preparation have not received the same degree of critical scrutiny.

In Lumby, et al., (forthcoming) scholars discuss the landscape of educational leadership preparation internationally, including descriptive information about different ways of preparing and appoint educational leaders to schools. As might be expected, there is a significant variety in how school administrators/managers are chosen and how they are developed into their roles as organizational leaders. There are many places in the world where those who manage schools receive little training. John (2002) in a study of administrator preparation in Pondicherry, India; Sommerbakk (1994) in a study of Norwegian training programs; Ogunu (1999) in a study of preparation in Nigeria; and Rakhshani (1981) in examining principal education in Iran, all argued that these approaches to preparing educational leaders were inadequate and did so to varying degrees by contrasting their systems with those in other countries.

Huber (2004) studied programs in Europe, Asia, Australia/New Zealand, and North America. He categorized systems of preparation, giving labels to the core distinctiveness of the different national approaches. He arrayed the nature of preparation systems according to a number of dimensions: centralization vs. decentralization; full time versus part time training; national vs. local standards; state vs local responsibility for selection.

Watson et al. (2003) produced an edited volume of case studies of how 23 European countries selected and developed educational administrators. Each chapter covered the selection, professional development, and appraisal and accountability practices associated with placing school heads in the respective nation's schools. Watson observed tensions in preparation approaches. Where once a head teacher was just that, a head teacher, Watson suggested that this position now carries with it far more responsibility for curricular and regulatory oversight. Watson asked: "Is training to be related to the needs of individuals, to those of the school or to the needs of the national system?" (p. 11). The case studies in this edited volume reveal significant variety in selection and development.

Cisneros-Cohernouri, Adler, Young, and Muth (2004) conducted a comparative study of administrator preparation across national boundaries. The abstract of this study reported that little is known about leadership preparation practices across national boundaries. Ratliff (2006) reported that preparation of teacher and administrators in Latin America Countries (LAC) generally fell far short of what was needed in order to improve the quality of schooling. Bottoms and O'Neill (2001) argued that across the (LAC) region, principals are needed who "understand school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement" (p. 8). Borden (2002) added that "on the one hand, it is clear that principals have an important role to play in assuring school effectiveness and success. Yet at the same time, most principals do not assume the leadership and management functions that are required to contribute to the improvements in learning and teaching that lead to the school's success" (Borden, 2002, p. 23). From what one can learn about leadership preparation in Latin American countries, there are initiatives to improve the levels of knowledge that principals possess relative to teaching and learning. Borden (2002) cites a number of these in her commissioned study of administrative training in LAC. She concluded that large systemic changes would be needed before principals could really attend to instructional and curriculum improvement.

There are two facets associated with placing a leader in a school: (a) selection practices; and (b) development practices. There is substantial variety in each of these two aspects of locating the

principal or head-teacher *rector* or *directeur* in a school. Selection can be based on a competency that may be demonstrated in various ways: a test (France, Germany); performance on the job (Sweden, China); a formal preparation program (UK and Austria) or on personal considerations (Africa). Appointments can be made in an orderly and merit based manner done by a central authority (France); by a municipal or regional authority (Sweden, China); or by a local authority (Norway, Denmark). Appointments may be predicated on the certification of participation in a program (Hong Kong, Germany) or the certification of mastery (New Zealand, France, Ontario,). Induction or development may occur prior to the assumption of a position (pre-service) or afterwards (in-service or on the job) or both, (US and England). We discuss each of these elements of leadership preparation-selection, appointment, and development-in turn and provide examples of how different countries achieve these elements.

Selection Practices

Two basic patterns exist in the selection process: (a) school leaders are selected based on criteria that have little to do with the position (kinship, filiations, partisanship, favoritism); and (b) school leaders are selected based objective criteria that emanate from some merit based assessment (prior performance, satisfaction of pre-established criteria, completion of a pre-service or in-service program; participation in a carefully constructed mentor program). Variation in the selection process can be understood in terminology developed by Charles Perrow: Particularism vs. Universalism.

Particularism

When the selection of an employee is based on elements of ascribed status—family background, religion, political affiliation, social status—scholars may refer to this as particularism. Perrow (1979) held that “particularism means that irrelevant criteria (e.g., only relatives have a chance at a top position) are employed in choosing employees” (p. 8). But, one may argue that it is not necessarily the case that particularism in selection means that irrelevant criteria are used. The criteria may be extremely relevant for the cultural context of the system of education. The social structure and stability of a country or region or locale may be quite dependent upon social forces that arise from particularism in selecting individuals for positions. Still, particularism means that individuals are hired based on factors that may have little to do with personal competence or promise as educational leaders.

While almost any system will select educational leaders based in part on an individual’s connections and sponsorship from well placed authorities, a system that emphasizes particularism will use key non-job related factors in making appointments. One example was noted by Johnson (1995) who wrote about South Africa: “over the years there has been increasing evidence that political considerations influenced the selection process” (p. 224). Or, when a teacher in Azerbaijan, for example, is able to pay a fee for a position that exceeds what other individuals are willing to pay, that is often sufficient for an appointment (Aghammadova, 2006; Bryant, Aghammadova, Krupenikava, Dutta, & Hu, 2006). When an individual in Nigeria is selected because of kinship in an important and powerful clan, particularism is at work. Bush and Oduro (2006) noted that personal characteristics, including gender, are often used in the selection process in Africa. The great majority (93%) of primary school principals in Kenya are male and they also dominate in both South Africa and Ghana (Bush & Oduro, 2006). And it should be noted that this male dominance is also found in other regions, notably Latin America (Borden, 2002).

Particularism as a selection practice may be masked, leading to the theoretical construction developed by Gouldner (1964)-- the *mock bureaucracy*. The official public practices in such systems appear to be based on transparent processes and criteria related to performance. But in fact they are not. Thus, some former Soviet block nations describe their selection process in universalistic terms (see below) but may practice particularism (Bryant et al., 2006; Krupenikava, 2006). To a degree, parallel selection processes are at work. An aspirant must look officially qualified and also have the personal resources to secure the favor of hiring authorities. And, to a degree one must recognize that there are times when cultural conflicts cause individuals to dissemble and publically commit to a course of action they have no intention of honoring.

Universalism

The opposite of *particularism* is what Perrow (1979) referred to as *universalism*. Under universalism, selection is made by attempting to match the talents and capabilities of the individual with the requirements of the position. This approach is the more dominant approach in developed nations and is common to those systems in which some formal educational requirements are mandated as a condition of selection. A universalistic system first establishes educational criteria and expectations for those who wish to become school leaders or who will be nominated for leadership positions. These criteria are then applied in making selection decisions. Those criteria normally include experience as a teacher and either the completion of some program of learning prior to appointment or participation in a program while newly on the job. Most developed and many developing nations subscribe to a selection process that is universalistic in nature. Educators must complete a pre-service program of instruction in an approved program of study. Or they must be enrolled in an induction or in-service program as a condition of their selection. Or they must pass a test or assessment certifying their competence to be appointed to a position of leadership in a school.

For example, South Africa is one of several African countries moving towards a universal *process*. Aspiring principals will soon (in 2009) need to acquire an advanced certificate of education (Management) before appointment (Bush & Odoro, 2006). The critical factor is that under the conditions of universalism, the selection process is objective. Individuals are selected after they have successfully responded to a set of external demands grounded in what the system claims are indicators of competence. In some countries these indicators are captured in standardized assessments such as the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (Bryant, 2002) currently being developed in the US.

Under the banner of globalization, universalistic practices appear far more compatible with rational and scientific values than is particularism.

Development Practices

What are the core characteristics any system may exhibit in developing individuals for administrative roles in schools? It is important to note that systematic programs for developing school administrators through formal educational efforts are relatively recent phenomena. While all systems have some way of selecting school heads, not all have formal processes for developing or training those individuals. And, certainly the comprehensiveness of training varies significantly across countries. The following appear as common elements in the development of educational leaders.

Authorities—some agency or association establishes requirements that individuals must meet prior to their appointment to a position or as a condition of an appointment to a position. The authority may be a national ministry or a state, regional, municipal, or local agency.

Providers—some entity is charged with developing and delivering classes or workshops or supplemental experiences aimed at broadening the individual. Often, a public authority will contract with a university or college or other academic agency to design and deliver a program.

Processes—Development programs will have an articulated set of learning experiences that may be done in formal classroom settings or in mentoring relationships or in organized peer learning groups. Participants may be required to master a body of knowledge that has been accumulated through research and scholarship or they may be expected to grow develop their own knowledge through a less structured inquiry process. Mentoring, coaching, action learning are all processes that have joined more formal schooling.

Timing—One of the common approaches in the United States, Canada, and in some European countries is that the development experience is a pre-service experience. An aspirant applies to a university or college and completes a program prior to eligibility for a position in a school. Conversely, a number of places first identify and appoint an individual and then require development as a condition of the appointment. This is the in-service approach.

There are advocates of both positions. Educational leadership preparation has been criticized in the United States for being too removed from practice and for insisting that aspirants learn material of little relevance to practice. Supporters of pre-service preparation point to a record of school leadership that has consistently elevated the quality of schooling. There is no doubt that this approach has a role in the enormous research literature that has accumulated at an ever increasing pace over the past century. Pre-service education requires established curricular content that focuses the learning of aspirants on such topics as educational leadership and management, educational law, and instructional leadership.

The practitioners of in-service training claim that only when the new leader is in a position does she or he begin to understand the type of new knowledge they need. Grounded more in theories of adult learning and the importance of practical relevancy, in-service training can be adapted to the needs of the individual learner and can be more easily provided independent of a third party institution like a university or government institution. Certainly in countries that lack a well-developed tertiary system that can provide pre-service training, the approach that develops administrators through in-service training may offer benefits. Pre-service development is expensive.

Content—what do new administrators or aspirants learn

The content of training and development activities varies widely as well. Bush and Jackson (2002) claimed that the main components of leadership preparation programs appear across national boundaries. Drawing on a study of 11 leadership centers in 7 countries (Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden, and the US), they noted that:

The content of educational leadership and development programmes has considerable similarities in different countries, leading to a hypothesis that there is an international curriculum for school leadership preparation. Most courses focus on leadership, including vision, mission, and transformational leadership, give prominence to issues of learning and teaching, often described as instructional leadership, and incorporate consideration of the main task areas of administration or management, such as human resources and professional development, finance, curriculum and external relations. (Bush & Jackson, 2002, p. 421)

Huber (2004) also examined the content of development programs and found similarities across national contexts. However, in instances where countries rely far more on local resources, the provision of standardized curricula from international resources is less pronounced.

Knowledge base—extent of and process for the dissemination of knowledge about school leadership.

An important part of the training and development of new administrators has to do with providing these educators with linkages to a growing body of research based knowledge pertaining to student learning, development and educational attainment. In most developed countries, a rich network of research based associations, practitioner organizations, scholarly and professional journals, conferences and meetings of educators at all levels serves as a necessary resource of knowledge that informs school leadership. In developing countries, however, leaders have limited access to such resources and those that are available tend to be Anglo-American rather than being grounded in the specific cultural context where development activities are being forged.

Adapting Expert Knowledge

The reality of leadership development globally is that western approaches dominate. Individuals from developing countries are sent to study at universities in Europe, the United States, Australia, and Hong Kong. Educational policy makers turn to the experts in these countries for information about preparation programs and approaches. This conference is an example of how expert knowledge is disseminated around the world.

This leads to the claims made at the beginning of this paper about the place of leadership as critical in the algorithms that predict student learning. But while this knowledge can be developed in the abstract, adapting it to all conditions and places proves problematic.

Accommodating Tacit Knowledge

In a similar way, simply accommodating tacit knowledge, the knowledge that is created from the immersion in the experience of working in a school and local culture is typically given limited space in most leadership development programs. This may be positive in the sense that often such tacit knowledge means a high level of comfort with the status quo.

Conclusion

We focus this symposium on a central question—why is an international perspective on educational leadership essential? This contribution demonstrates that there are a diversity of approaches that allow different cultural traditions to influence and shape the values and

behaviors of those who educate future generations. In recent decades, scholars can point to trends that suggest the tension between a model of education predicated on western systems and the indigenous and local cultural traditions that seek influence and voice may be lessening. Inglehart, Norris and and Welzel (2003) wrote: “ we have been witnessing a global trend toward gender equality that is intimately linked with a broader process of cultural change and democratization”. While this movement to greater tolerance and democratization is due to the forces of globalization with its attendant problems, this same openness gives voice to all sorts of cultural forces. These voices may appear most forcefully in the arts—in works of fiction, in visual imagery, in theater. A long list now exists of those who have shown us how different the world can look from different lenses. Here are just some random examples:

Albert Wendt—*Leaves of the Banyan Tree* creates a powerful image of the life and cultural of the Pacific Samoan people and how their native culture struggles to announce its own place in the world. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2008) wrote a recent short story about a remarkable African woman who, after a life of struggle and failure, finds a way to pass on her native traditions in the face of the hegemony of western Christian power. Achebe’s famous fictional representation of the impact of Christianity on an Ibo village has recently been reissued. Just about every traditional group that has been marginalized by various social and economic and political forces has found spokespersons.

As the quote which begins this paper reminds us, we won’t hear the stories of others unless the others are allowed to tell their stories. In the same way, we won’t be able to develop and select individuals to lead schools if we

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