Linking Principal Preparation to Teaching and Learning: Lessons Learned through a Multiple Case Study*

Susan Korach
Julia Ballenger
Betty Alford

Abstract

Principal preparation programs have long been criticized across the nation by policy makers, school leaders, scholars, and professional organizations. These experts have raised concern about the lack of relevance between theory and practice, and a lack of collaboration with school districts (Pounder & Young, 1996); lack of coherent and rigorous curriculum content (McCarty, 1999; Murphy, 1993), and lack of substantial clinical experiences (Levine, 2005). In 2001, Terry Orr and the University Council of Educational Administration/Learning and Teaching in Educational Leadership (UCEA/LTEL) Taskforce on Evaluating Educational Leadership Preparation began an investigation into the preparation of school leaders and developed a survey, School Leadership Preparation and Practice Survey (SLPPS, formerly UCEA/LTEL Survey of Leadership Preparation and Practice) and a companion Teacher Survey. Two institutions in different regions of the United States fielded the Teacher Survey within schools where their program graduates served as principals. Both principal preparation programs emphasized developing leadership skills for the improvement of teaching and learning. The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine how teacher voice can inform the continuous improvement efforts of principal preparation programs. Specifically, the research question was: How do the perceptions of teachers and program graduates about principal and teacher actions inform principal preparation? The findings add to the knowledge and practice base of program evaluation and provide a stronger link in the chain of factors from preparation to practice that influences school improvement in teaching and learning.

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1 Sumario en espanol

Principales programas de la preparación han sido criticados mucho tiempo a través de la nación por fabricantes de política, por líderes de escuela, por los eruditos, y por organizaciones profesionales. Estos expertos han levantado preocupación acerca de la falta de aplicabilidad entre teoría y práctica, y una falta de colaboración con distritos de escuela (Mazo & Jóvenes, 1996); falta de contenido coherente y riguroso de plan (McCarty, 1999; Murphy, 1993), y la falta de experiencias clínicas substanciales (Levine, 2005). En 2001, Terry Orr y el Concilio de la Universidad de Administración/Aprender y Enseñar Educativos en el Liderazgo Educativo (UCEA/LTEL) Destacamento Especial a Evaluar Preparación de Liderazgo de Educativo empezó una investigación en la preparación de líderes de escuela y desarrolló una inspección, Preparación de Liderazgo de Escuela e Inspección de Práctica (SLPPS, anteriormente Inspección de UCEA/LTEL de Preparación de Liderazgo y Práctica) y un compañero Maestro Inspección. Dos instituciones en regiones diferentes de Estados Unidos sortearon la Inspección de Maestro dentro de las escuelas donde sus egresados de programa sirvieron como directores. Ambas principal preparación programa acentuado desarrollando liderazgo habilidades para la mejora de enseñar y aprender. El propósito de este método mezclado que múltiples caso fue de revisar cómo voz de maestro puede informar los esfuerzos continuos de mejora de principales programas de preparación. Específicamente, la pregunta de investigación fue: ¿Cómo haga las percepciones de egresados de maestros y programa acerca de acciones de director y maestro informan principal preparación? Las conclusiones añaden a la base del conocimiento y la práctica de evaluación de programa y proporcionan un lazo más fuerte en la cadena de factores de la preparación para practicar que influencias educan mejora en enseñar y aprender.

NOTE: Esta es una traducción por computadora de la página web original. Se suministra como información general y no debe considerarse completa ni exacta.

2 Introduction

Connections are needed between the university and schools in strengthening the preparation of principals who can support student learning and school improvement (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Although research supports the vital role of teachers in promoting student learning, the principal is instrumental in strengthening a school culture that supports and sustains quality teaching and learning (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). In addition, principals are primarily responsible for creating conditions that support school improvement (Bellamy, Fulmer, Murphy, & Muth, 2007).

Both high-quality teachers and principals are needed in today's schools. Hopkins (2008) argued, "Our nation is facing crises in terms of recruiting, preparing, and retaining high-quality teachers in its public schools" (p. 727). In addition, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2006), 56% of current principals are age 50 or more and will be retiring in this decade. Linking the university and partner schools in the recruitment and preparation of future teachers and principals can strengthen the pipeline of qualified educators for 21st century schools. As Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr (2010)

[1] http://www.ncpeapublications.org

stated, in their study of successful principal preparation programs, "The exemplary programs were more likely than others to recruit excellent teachers who have strong instructional backgrounds and leadership potential and who better represent the populations of their communities" (p. 187).

3 Theoretical Framework

Changing needs within public schools of increased demands of accountability systems have called for leaders who would transform schools to foster increased learning as a primary responsibility (Donaldson, 2006; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson & Wahlstom, 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Matthews & Crow, 2003; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). As Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) suggested, "New expectations for schools-that they successfully teach a broad range of students with different needs, while steadily improving achievement for all students-mean that schools typically must be redesigned rather than merely administered" (p. 1). To accomplish the goal of improving achievement for all students, distributed leadership and collaborative, shared decision making is needed (Kochan & Reed, 2005; Lashway, 2006; Quantz, Rogers, & Dantley, 1991; Spillane, 2006).

Principals are charged to serve as facilitators of learning and school improvement creating democratic cultures of academic excellence and equity for students of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (Dantley, 2005; Furman & Shields, 2005; Prestine & Nelson, 2005) and to model moral, authentic leadership (Dantley, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2007). With these responsibilities, principals often assume roles as change facilitators for sustainable, systemic improvement (Duffy, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Schlechty, 2008).

Common elements of effective program design features identified by Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) included a coherent curriculum aligned with state and professional standards; curriculum emphasizing instructional leadership and school improvement; active, student-centered instruction; knowledgeable faculty who were experienced in school leadership; social and professional support through a cohort structure; vigorous, targeted recruitment; and a well-designed, supervised administrative internship. Although these common elements of effective principal preparation programs have been identified, an understanding of ways that school improvement efforts to improve teaching and learning are impacted by principal preparation programs with a clear focus on instructional leadership and school improvement is needed. As Levine (2005) emphasized, "Today, principals and superintendents have the job not only of managing our schools, but also of leading them through an era of profound social change that has required fundamental rethinking of what schools do and how they do it" (p. 5). Part of the problem for university-based programs has been that there is little empirical evidence that they have a significant impact on graduates' ability to lead schools (Achilles, 1994; Brent, 1998; Brent & Haller, 1998). Research is needed that helps to illuminate the impact of principal preparation programs on school improvement (Young, 2008).

University-based principal preparation programs have been the subject of criticism for well over 20 years (Achilles, 1994). The need for structural and strategic reform around principal preparation became paramount in the 1990s (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Donmoyer, Imber, & Scheurich, 1995; Hallinger, Leithwood, & Murphy, 1993; Hannaway & Crowson, 1989; McCarthy & Kuh, 1997; Milstein & Associates, 1993; Mitchell & Cunningham, 1990; Mulkeen, Cambron-McCabe, & Anderson, 1994; Murphy, 1992, 1993; Murphy & Forsyth, 1999). This criticism hit a boiling point when two influential reform reports, *A License to Lead? A New Leadership Agenda for American's Schools* (Hess, 2003)and *Educating School Leaders* (Levine, 2005), called for more aggressive reforms and questioned the capability of university-based programs to meet the needs of 21st Century school leaders. Levine expressed urgency for this reform asserting, "the quality of leadership in our schools has seldom mattered more... Today, principals and superintendents have the job not only of managing our schools, but also of leading them through an era of profound social change that has required fundamental rethinking of what schools do and how they do it" (p. 5). Since then, the university's monopoly on principal preparation has been dissolved due to deregulation and choice. Several states no longer require principal certification and an increasing number of states have allowed alternative and non-traditional providers into the principal preparation landscape. This climate makes it imperative for university-based programs to gather data about their effectiveness and impact on graduates. To date, external evaluative measures most often consist of anecdotes and surveys of superintendents and principals.

These self-reporting measures are wholly inadequate because the essence of principal preparation resides in what graduates are able to do in the practice of school leadership.

Similar to most forms of professional development, existing evaluations of principal preparation programs have consisted mainly of post-program surveys of graduates and short-term job placement results (Jacobson, 1998; Murphy& Vriesenga, 2004; Orr & Barber, 2007; Orr & Hung, 2002). Guskey (2000) identified three major mistakes in evaluations of professional development: (a) they merely document what was done;(b) they consist of participants' perceptions, attitudes, or beliefs; and(c) they are too brief and fail to document long-term effects. An evaluative process consisting of multiple measures has the potential to inform developing pedagogies that link context, practices, and thinking. Research designs should start with a chain of variables linking leadership preparation to leader practices and ultimately to student learning, so the effects of preparation and leader actions become more evident.

3.1 Evaluation of Principal Preparation

In 2001, Terry Orr and the University Council of Educational Administration/Leading and Teaching in Educational Leadership (UCEA/LTEL) Taskforce on Evaluating Educational Leadership Preparation began an investigation into the variables of the preparation of school leaders and developed a survey, the *School Leadership Preparation and Practice Survey* (*SLPPS*, formerly *UCEA/LTEL Survey of Leadership Preparation and Practice*). This survey was the foundation of a comparative study of public and private leadership preparation programs from 17 university-based leadership preparation programs in 13 institutions (Orr, 2010). Program graduates were asked to rate program features, their learning about leadership, their career intentions and beliefs, program satisfaction and advancement into leadership positions. The survey items and scales were drawn from the federal *School and Staffing Survey* of teachers and principals, and research studies on leadership effectiveness in school improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Marks & Printy, 2003). The survey has been field tested with a wide variety of programs and institutions nationwide, has demonstrated strong content validity, and its scales have robust measurement reliability (Orr, 2010).

The *SLPPS* gathers the perceptions of program graduates about their learning, leadership skills, and transitions to leadership positions, but what happens once these graduates become principals? The UCEA/LTEL-SIG Taskforce began to work on extending their learning about the effectiveness of principal preparation from the perceptions of program graduates to an assessment of leadership actions and school conditions of program graduates as principals. The *UCEA/LTEL-SIG Teacher Survey* aligns with the *SLPPS* and is designed to assess teachers' assessments of (a) the principal's leadership practices; (b) their school improvement practices and recent accomplishments; (c) organizational contexts in the schools; and (d) their own demographic and educational experiences. The *Teacher Survey* has been fielded in three distinctly different settings (Alford & Ballenger, 2010 & Korach & Newmann, 2010) to gain a greater understanding of how this survey tool could be used to validate principal self-report data and add to the chain of variables linking leadership preparation to principal practice.

4 Purpose of the Study

Two institutions that participated in Orr's study (2010) of the nature of 17 leadership preparation programs across the United States fielded the *Teacher Survey* within schools where their program graduates served as principals. Program A is a private university-urban district partnership program in a western state and Program B is within a south-central regional university that has been engaged in a collaborative university school partnership with four school districts for over a decade. Both of these principal preparation programs shared an identified focus on instructional leadership and school improvement and collaborated with partner districts. The results of the 2007 *SLPPS* revealed that program graduates of both of these institutions ranked their principal preparation programs as highly effective in preparing them to be instructional leaders (Orr, 2007).

The impact of these two university principal preparation programs on school improvement in teaching and learning was illuminated through a multiple case study. The purpose of this study was to pilot the

administration of the *Teacher Survey of* and provide perspective on the importance of adding teacher voice to evaluation of leadership preparation. Specifically, this study is an examination of teacher and principal perceptions regarding principals' actions as a means to investigate how the principals' preparation programs influenced the conditions of teaching and learning at their schools. The research question was: How do the perceptions of teachers and program graduates about principal and teacher actions inform principal preparation?

5 Methodology

The *School Leadership Preparation and Practice Survey (SLPPS)* contained approximately 50 items using a five-point Likert scale. This survey was used to assess program graduates' experiences and perceptions, and provide a source of evidence on program outcomes. Also, the *Teacher Survey* was administered to the teachers of these program graduates.

The researchers fielded both the *SLLPS* and the *Teacher Survey*. Completion of the survey was voluntary, and teachers were reminded that the purpose of the survey was not to evaluate the principal but to gather their perceptions about principal actions that would be used to inform the principal preparation program. The teachers were instructed to consider the survey as a draft and to provide written or verbal comments about survey items. The researchers observed the administration of the instrument on 6 of the 11 campuses to observe length of time in taking the survey and teachers' overall responses. The researchers also interviewed the principals concerning comments that were shared concerning the instrument's readability, length, comprehensiveness, and redundancy. The researcher administered the *Teacher Survey* for Program A and the principals assumed responsibility for administering the surveys to the teachers for Program B.

After all surveys were fielded and collected, the quantitative data were entered into an Excel Spreadsheet and later imported to the SPSS 17.0. The SLPPS and *Teacher Survey* data were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 to generate descriptive of means and standard deviations.

5.1 Program A

For the western university, the researcher selected four schools in one urban public school district including three elementary schools and one K-8 school. The principals of each of these schools were administered the *SLPPS* and the teachers were administered the *Teacher Survey*. The purposive sample consisted of 123 teachers who were currently serving as teachers in the identified schools; all teachers completed the questionnaire, yielding a 100% return rate. Of the 123 respondents, 16 were males and 107 were females. They were 60% White and 40% non-White. Their average years of teaching were 9.3. Table 1 provides demographics for the sample of teachers by school.

Table 1

Teacher Demographics (Program A)

School	N	Teaching Experience	% Male	% Non-white	School Type
School A	39	8.8	8%	49%	ECE-8
School B	30	11.5	20%	47%	K-5
School C	31	9.3	13%	29%	ECE-6
School D	23	7.7	13%	36%	ECE-6

[2]

The *Teacher Survey* was administered to the teachers in the four schools over the course of three months by the researcher during faculty meetings. The principal of each school that participated with the *Teacher Survey* took the *SLPPS*. Each of these principals graduated from the same principal preparation program.

Items that directly corresponded with the *Teacher Survey* were pulled from the *SLPPS* and an average score was generated and compared to the results of the *Teacher Surveys* from that principal's school. The

[2] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table1.png/image

survey was administered to the schools in the following order: School D, School A, School B and School C. Table 2 provides a snapshot of the schools and their respective school principals.

Table 2

Teacher Demographics (Program B)

School	Principal Years of Experience	Year Graduated	Gender	Ethnicity	School Type
School A	2 at school; 4 total 2 as AP	2004	F	W	ECE-8
School B	1 at school and total	2009	F	W	K-5
School C	1 at school and total	2009	M	H	ECE-6
School D	6 at school and 6 total	2004	F	W	ECE-6

[3]

5.2 Program B

In the south central university, the researchers selected three districts, and at these sites, seven principals were administered the *SLPPS* in addition to field testing the *Teacher Survey* as requested by the UCEA/LTEL-SIG Taskforce. The *Teacher Survey* was field tested with teachers in four districts including seven campuses where the principals had graduated from the same principal preparation program at a regional institution of higher education during the last six years who had served as principals for at least three years. The purposive sample consisted of 102 teachers who were currently serving as teachers in the identified schools.

Of the 102 deliverable questionnaires, 101 were returned, yielding a 99% return rate. Of the 101 respondents, 20 were males and 76 were females with 5 not responding to this question. They were 89% White, 7% African American and 4% Hispanic with the remainder not identifying their race/ethnicity. Their average years of teaching were 13.8 while the average years teaching at the current school were 9 years.

Table 3

Teacher Demographics (Program B)

School	N	Teaching Experience	% Male	% Non-white	School Type
School 1	17	10.2	5%	6%	Rural Elem
School 2	19	18.4	0%	33%	Rural Elem
School 3	14	10.4	13%	7%	Rural Elem
School 4	9	18.4	0%	33%	Rural Elem
School 5	7	10.4	43%	0%	Rural Middle
School 6	21	9.6	50%	4.8%	Rural High
School 7	14	14.6	43%	7%	Rural High

[4]

5.3 Data Analysis

After all surveys were fielded and collected, the quantitative data were entered into an Excel Spreadsheet and imported to UCEA and its affiliate, the Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC), who analyzed the data. In addition, the data from the *SLPPS* that was administered to the principals were compared to the results of the *Teacher Survey* to identify similarities and differences between principal and teacher perceptions regarding: (a) the principal's leadership practices, (b) their school improvement practices and recent accomplishments, and (c) organizational contexts in the schools.

6 Results

Research Question: How do the perceptions of teachers and program graduates about principal and teacher actions inform principal preparation?

[3] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table2a.png/image
[4] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table3.png/image

The UCEA/LTEL-SIG *Teacher Survey* has three broad types of items: those that describe principal actions, (e.g., provides and engages teachers in professional development activities), those that describe teacher actions and efficacy, (e. g., observe another teacher teaching) and those that describe the school environment (e. g., curriculum, instruction, and learning materials are well coordinated across the different grade levels at this school). These three categories relate to how leaders influence student learning by setting directions, developing people and making the organization work (Leithwood, et. al, 2004). The following table displays the alignment between the twelve constructs of the UCEA/LTEL SIG *Teacher Survey* and the three categories.

Table 4

Teacher Survey Categories and Constructs

Principal Actions	Teacher Actions and Efficacy	School Environment
Principal Instructional Leadership	Teacher Policy Influence	Purpose and Direction
Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision Making	Teacher Collaboration	Coordination and Availability of Materials
Principal Supporting the Learning Environment	School Achievement, Assessment, and Data Use	Parent Involvement
	Teacher Efficacy	At-Risk Behavior
		Student Engagement

[5]

The *SLPPS* focuses on characteristics of principal preparation programs, and two of its constructs (Instructional Leadership and Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision Making) are aligned with the items on the *Teacher Survey*. Two other *Teacher Survey* constructs (Teacher Policy Influence and Teacher Collaboration) examine teacher perceptions of their own actions regarding their level of engagement and collaboration at the school. Due to this study's focus on the links between principal preparation and teaching and learning, the survey results reported by each institution will include the following constructs: Principal Instructional Leadership, Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision Making, Teacher Policy Making and Teacher Collaboration.

6.1 Principal Actions

Principal actions set the tone or direction for the school. Respondents were asked to rate how effectively the principal facilitates various conditions at their school on a scale of 1-5 with *1 = Not at all effective, 2 = Slightly Effective, 3 = Somewhat effective, 4 = Very effective, and 5 = Extremely effective.* The descriptive statistics for Principal Actions as perceived by teachers on the *Teacher Survey* are presented for the constructs Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making and Instructional Leadership.

Principal collaboration and shared decision making

Characteristics of Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision Making were divided into collaboration with school staff and collaboration with parents and individuals outside of the school. The following *Teacher Survey* items made up the respective collaborative categories:

Collaboration with staff:

- Takes staff opinion into consideration when facilitating change (10l)
- Supports professional collaboration among teachers (10m)
- Engages staff in decision making (10o)
- Works with staff to solve school or department problems (10p)

Collaboration with parents and individuals outside of the school:

- Works with parents to support their students' learning (10q)
- Collaborates with others outside the school for assistance and partnership (10r)

[5] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table4b.png/image

As illustrated by Table 5 below, in Program A average ratings for collaboration varied by school as well as by the population group, with overall averages for schools A and B between *somewhat* and *very effective*, and overall averages for schools C and D between *very* and *extremely effective*.

Table 5

Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making Scores by School (Program A)

	Collaboration with Staff			Collaboration with Parents and Community			Overall Collaboration		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
School A	38	3.21	.85	38	3.91	.72	38	3.43	.72
School B	29	3.84	.61	29	3.71	.73	29	3.80	.56
School C	31	4.28	.72	30	4.00	.69	31	4.18	.61
School D	22	3.92	.56	21	4.31	.54	22	4.04	.49

[6]

The following table presents the principals' responses on *SLPPS* items regarding their evaluation of their preparation to collaborate and share decision making with teachers.

Table 6

Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making Scores by School (Program A)

Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision-making	**School A**	**School B**	**School C**	**School D**
The educational leadership program prepared me to support professional collaboration among teachers (15d)	4	5	4	5
The educational leadership program prepared me to develop broad agreement among staff about the school's mission(15h)	3	3	4	5
The educational leadership program prepared me to engage staff in shared decisions making and responsibility taking (15o)	4	4	4	5
The educational leadership program prepared me to engage staff in comprehensive planning for school improvement (15p)	4	4	4	5
The educational leadership program prepared me to support professional collaboration among teachers (15d)	4	4	4	5
***SLPPS* Mean**	**3.8**	**4.0**	**4.0**	**5.0**
***Teacher Survey* Mean**	**3.21**	**3.84**	**4.28**	**3.92**

[7]

[6] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table5.png/image
[7] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table6.png/image

The results from the *SLPPS* indicate that the principals felt well prepared to collaborate with staff, and the ratings of teachers at their schools seemed to correspond to their promotion of collaboration. The results from the principal at School D reflected the largest gap between the principal's perception of her preparation to promote collaboration and her teachers' rating of her effectiveness.

The results were similar in Program B. As illustrated by Table 7 below, average ratings for collaboration varied by school as well as by the population group, with overall averages for schools 1, 4, 6, and 7 between *somewhat* and *very effective*, and overall averages for schools 2, 3, and 5 between *very* and *extremely effective*.

Table 7

Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making Scores by School (Program B)

School	Collaboration with Staff			Collaboration with Parents and Community			Overall Collaboration		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
School 1	9	3.76	0.24	9	3.80	0.27	9	3.78	0.23
School 2	17	4.52	0.09	17	4.45	0.25	17	4.49	0.15
School 3	19	4.45	0.13	19	4.50	0.32	19	4.48	0.18
School 4	14	3.52	0.33	14	3.30	0.71	14	3.41	0.41
School 5	14	4.58	0.12	14	4.50	0.16	14	4.54	0.12
School 6	7	3.90	0.25	7	3.35	0.30	7	3.63	0.38
School 7	21	3.96	0.23	21	3.75	0.66	21	3.86	0.36

[8]

The following table 8 presents the *SLPPS* responses from the principals' who graduated from Program B regarding their evaluation of their preparation to collaborate and share decision making with teachers.

Table 8

Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision Making Scores by Principal (Program B)

Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision-making	**Overall Principal Mean**	**SD**
The educational leadership program prepared me to support professional collaboration among teachers (15d)	4.3	.52
The educational leadership program prepared me to develop broad agreement among staff about the school's mission(15h)	4.0	.63
The educational leadership program prepared me to engage staff in shared decisions making and responsibility taking (15o)	4.0	.89
The educational leadership program prepared me to engage staff in comprehensive planning for school improvement (15p)	4.2	.75
The educational leadership program prepared me to improve staff sensitivity to diversity(15e)	4.3	.52
SLPPS Mean	**4.16**	

[9]

For Program B the results from the SLPPS were combined to reveal an overall Principal mean rather than a report by school. Even without a school by school comparison, these results indicate that the principals felt well prepared to collaborate with staff, and the ratings of teachers at their schools seemed to correspond

[8] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table7.png/image
[9] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table8a.png/image

to the effectiveness of their promotion of collaboration.

Principal instructional leadership

Instructional Leadership was measured by the following items on the *Teacher Survey* :

6.1.1

- Improves the school's organization to enhance teaching and learning (10a)
- Evaluates curriculum for its use and effectiveness (10b)
- Evaluates and provides instructional feedback to teachers and other staff (10c)
- Provides and engages teachers in professional development activities (10d)
- Works with teachers to change content and instructional methods if students are not doing well (10e)

The results from Program A as illustrated by Table 9 reveal that the respondents at School A felt their principal was *somewhat effective*, while schools B–D felt their principals were *somewhat* to *very effective* at elements of instructional leadership.

Table 9

Principal Instructional Leadership Score by School (Program A)

School	N	Mean	SD
School A	38	3.08	.88
School B	29	3.59	.58
School C	31	3.70	.63
School D	22	3.83	.72

[10]

The following table displays Program A principals' responses on the *SLPPS* that represent the program components of instructional leadership according to the scale *1 = not at all, 2 = poorly, 3 = to some extent, 4 = well, 5 = to a great extent.*

Table 10

Instructional Leadership by Principals (Program A)

Instructional Leadership	**School A**	**School B**	**School C**	**School D**
The program content emphasized instructional leadership (6a)	4	5	3	5
The program content emphasized leadership for school improvement (6b)	4	4	4	5
The educational leadership program prepared me to create a coherent educational program across the school (15b)	3	4	3	5
The educational leadership program prepared me to evaluate instructional methods for their use and effectiveness (15c)	3	3	3	4
The educational leadership program prepared me to evaluate and provide instructional feedback to teachers (15e)	3	3	3	5
SLPPS Mean	**3.4**	**3.8**	**3.2**	**4.8**
***Teacher Survey* Mean**	**3.08**	**3.59**	**3.70**	**3.83**

[11]

[10] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table9a.png/image
[11] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table10.png/image

These responses indicate that the principals in Program A perceived their preparation to be *moderately* to *well* aligned with instructional leadership and their teachers seemed to perceive that the principals *somewhat* to *very* effectively possessed these skills. It is also interesting to note that in all but one case (School C) the principals responded that they were more highly prepared than the teachers rated their performance.

The results from Program B as illustrated by Table 11 reveal that respondents at School 4 felt their principal was *slightly tosomewhat effective*, while schools 1, 6, and 7 as *somewhat to very effective* at elements of instructional leadership, and schools 2, 3, and 5 at *very effective*.

Table 11

Principal Instructional Leadership Score by School (Program B)

School	N	Mean	SD
School 1	7	3.66	0.19
School 2	17	4.00	0.06
School 3	19	4.24	0.17
School 4	14	2.96	0.37
School 5	14	4.26	0.09
School 6	7	3.40	0.12
School 7	21	3.60	0.23

[12]

The following table displays Program B principals' responses on the SLPPS that represent the program components of instructional leadership according to the scale *1 = not at all, 2 = poorly, 3 = to some extent, 4 = well, 5 = to a great extent.*

Table 12

Instructional Leadership by Principals (Program B)

Instructional Leadership	**Overall**	**SD**
The program content emphasized instructional leadership (6a)	4.7	.52
The program content emphasized leadership for school improvement (6b)	4.3	.82
The educational leadership program prepared me to create a coherent educational program across the school (15b)	4.2	.75
The educational leadership program prepared me to evaluate instructional methods for their use and effectiveness (15c)	3.8	.98
The educational leadership program prepared me to evaluate and provide instructional feedback to teachers (15e)	4.2	.41
SLPPS Mean	**4.24**	

[13]

For Program B the results from the *SLPPS* were combined to reveal an overall Principal mean rather than a report by school. Even without a school by school comparison, these results indicate that the principals perceived their preparation to be well aligned with instructional leadership.

6.2 Teacher Actions

The second area of analysis on the *Teacher Survey* looked at whether the principal has helped develop an environment where teachers feel empowered to influence school policy (Teacher Policy Influence) and one in which faculty and staff collaborate with each other (Teacher Collaboration).

Teacher policy influence.

[12] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table11.png/image
[13] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table12.png/image

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the amount of influence teachers have on school policy at their school in six areas on a scale of 1–5, with *1 = No influence, 2 = A little, 3 = Some, 4 = A moderate amount, and 5 = A great deal of influence.* Respondents were asked to rate the following areas, which are included in the *Teacher Empowerment and Influence* score:

- Determining the content of in-service professional development programs (9a)
- Establishing curriculum (9b)
- Hiring new full-time teachers (9c)
- Setting discipline policy (9d)
- Deciding how the school budget will be spent (9e)
- Mentoring new teachers (9f)

Table 13 displays the score for each school with a principal from Program A. The average ratings at schools A and B indicate that respondents feel teachers have a *little* to *some* influence over school policy, while respondents at schools C and D indicate teachers have *some* to a *moderate* amount of influence over policy.

Table 13

Teacher Policy Influence Mean Score by School (Program A)

School	N	Mean	SD
School A	38	2.58	.80
School B	29	2.72	.70
School C	31	3.34	.67
School D	21	3.24	.85

[14]

Table 14 details the score for each school with a principal from Program B. The average ratings at schools 1, 4 and 6 indicated that respondents feel teachers have *no influence to a little* over school policy, while respondents at schools 2, 3, 5, and 7 indicated teachers have *a little to some* amount of influence over policy. It is interesting to note that this contrast indicates that teachers have little influence on policy although teachers had rated their school as collaborative.

Table 14

Teacher Policy Influence Mean Score by School (Program B)

School	N	Mean	SD
School 1	9	1.90	0.61
School 2	17	2.70	0.49
School 3	19	2.80	0.81
School 4	14	1.90	0.54
School 5	14	2.40	0.84
School 6	7	1.90	0.47
School 7	21	2.50	0.64

[15]

Teacher collaboration.

[14] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table13.png/image
[15] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table14.png/image

6.2.1

Respondents were also asked a question concerning how teachers interact with each other in their school to help understand the environment for collaboration. Teachers were asked to rate how frequently they engage in specific activities on a scale of 1–5, with *1 = Never, 2 = Once a year, 3 = A few times a year (monthly), 4 = A few times a month (weekly) and 5 = Almost daily.* The following activities make up the *Teacher Collaboration* score.

- Observe another teacher teaching (13a)
- Discuss with other teachers what you/they learned at a workshop or conference (13b)
- Share and discuss student work with other teachers (13c)
- Discuss particular lessons that were not very successful (13d)
- Discuss how to help students having problems (13e)
- Meet formally to discuss common challenges in the classroom (13f)
- Work together to develop teaching materials or activities for particular classes (13g)

On average, respondents at all four schools with a principal from Program A engage in these activities between *monthly* and *weekly* (see Table 15).

Table 15

Teacher Collaboration Score by School (Program A)

School	N	Mean	SD
School A	36	3.20	.63
School B	29	3.23	.79
School C	30	3.39	.63
School D	22	3.30	.68

[16]

The teachers with principals from Program B seemed to respond that they participated less frequently with collaborative activities than those with principals from Program A. On average, respondents at schools 1, 4, 6 and 7 engage in these activities *once a year to a few times* a year *monthly* and schools 2, 3, and 5 engage in these activities *a few times a year monthly to a few times a month weekly* (Table 16).

Table 16

Teacher Collaboration Score by School (Program B)

School	N	Mean	SD
School 1	9	2.80	0.92
School 2	17	3.10	0.82
School 3	19	3.80	0.67
School 4	14	2.70	0.41
School 5	14	3.10	0.88
School 6	7	2.70	0.80
School 7	21	2.80	0.60

[17]

[16] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table15.png/image
[17] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table16.png/image

6.3 Teacher Perceptions of Principal and Teacher Actions

There were no questions on the *SLPPS* that corresponded to preparing principals to empower teachers to influence policy or collaborate with each other. The items on the *SLPPS* that correspond with collaboration and shared decision-making are all from the perspective of the principal taking action (e.g., the educational leadership program prepared *me* to engage staff in shared decision making and responsibility). The *Teacher Survey* results from both Program A and B indicated a difference between how teachers perceived the actions of the principal and the overall nature of collaboration at the school and their own levels of engagement and collaboration as teachers. This discrepancy is visible in the following summary tables (Tables 17-19) of *Teacher Survey* mean scores by category and school.

Table 17
Summary Table of Scores for Each Category by School (Program A)

Category	Mean *(SD)*			
	School A	School B	School C	School D
Principal Actions—Setting Directions				
Principal Instructional Leadership	**3.08** ***(.88)***	**3.59** ***(.58)***	**3.70** ***(.63)***	**3.83** ***(.72)***
Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making	**3.43** ***(.72)***	**3.80** ***(.56)***	**4.18** ***(.61)***	**4.04** ***(.49)***
School Conditions for Teachers—Developing People				
Teacher Empowerment and Influence	**2.58** ***(.80)***	**2.72** ***(.70)***	**3.34** ***(.67)***	**3.24** ***(.85)***
Teacher Collaboration	**3.20** ***(.63)***	**3.23** ***(.79)***	**3.39** ***(.63)***	**3.30** ***(.68)***

[18]

Table 18
Summary Table of Mean Scores for Each Category by School (Program B)

Category	Mean *(SD)*			
	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
Principal Actions—Setting Directions				
Principal Instructional Leadership	**3.66** **(.19)**	**4.00** **(.06)**	**4.24** **(.17)**	**2.96** **(.37)**
Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making	**3.78** **(.23)**	**4.49** **(.15)**	**4.48** **(.18)**	**3.41** **(.41)**
School Conditions for Teachers—Developing People				
Teacher Empowerment and Influence	**1.90** **(.61)**	**2.70** **(.49)**	**2.80** **(.81)**	**1.90** **(.54)**
Teacher Collaboration	**2.80** **(.92)**	**3.10** **(.82)**	**3.80** **(.67)**	**2.70** **(.41)**

[19]

Table 19
Summary Table of Scores for Each Category by School (Program B continued)

[18] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table17.png/image
[19] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table18a.png/image

Category	School 5	School 6	School 7
Principal Actions—Setting Directions			
Principal Instructional Leadership	**4.26 (.09)**	**3.40 (.12)**	**3.60 (.23)**
Principal Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making	**4.54 (.12)**	**3.63 (.38)**	**3.86 (.36)**
School Conditions for Teachers—Developing People			
Teacher Empowerment and Influence	**2.40 (.84)**	**1.90 (.47)**	**2.50 (.64)**
Teacher Collaboration	**3.10 (.88)**	**2.70 (.80)**	**2.80 (.60)**

[20]

In general, the results of the *Teacher Survey* revealed that the teachers in program graduates' schools from Program A and B see their principals as instructional leaders who collaborate and share decision making with them. They rated their principals' actions more highly than they rated the conditions present in their school that allow them to influence policy and collaborate with each other.

The needs of today's schools are so diverse that it is essential for principals to be able effectively distribute their authority and empower accomplished teachers to become leaders. The principal serving as the sole instructional leader is not a model that can easily be sustained when leadership changes. Principals need to be prepared to develop teachers as leaders; "sustainable leadership is a two-way street" (Fullan, 2005). The teachers who had at their school the longest-tenure program graduate as principal (School D) did not rate their level of empowerment or collaboration higher than those with shorter tenures. This seems to indicate that the preparation program might not effectively prepare its graduates to develop teachers as leaders within their schools.

7 Conclusions

We know that effective school leaders make a difference (Leithwood, Reidlinger, Bauer, & Jantzi, 2003; Silins, 2003). However, there has been little evidence showing that preparation programs make a difference in the field (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004). Designing studies that examine school leader practice in the field and the connection between programs and school leader practice is imperative. The engagement of teacher voice about their principals' and their own actions connects the work of preparation to practice. The teacher dimension contributes to studies about the effectiveness of principal preparation that examine graduates' perceptions about their leadership learning from their programs.

We used the *Teacher Survey* to better understand school leader practice from the perspective of those who work closely with them - teachers. In examining school leader practice, teachers are in a unique position to provide evidence about school leader practice and they are often left out of the line of inquiry. The results of these two pilot studies provide some perspective on the importance of adding teacher voice in the variables evaluating the effectiveness of school leaders, and ultimately the connections between school leader practice and preparation programs.

In many respects, the study included both good news and bad news. Principal surveys revealed that principals perceived strong preparation in instructional leadership and school improvement. The teacher surveys revealed a contradictory finding. The teachers perceived that their principals facilitated collaborative environments; however, when asked about their own involvement in collaborations with teachers or decision making their responses were lower. This indicates that teachers see their principals as collaborative

[20] http://cnx.org/content/m41462/latest/table19a.png/image

instructional leaders, but they do not seem to see themselves as instructional leaders who are empowered to collaborate and make decisions outside of their classrooms. Weak teacher responses in the areas of teacher empowerment and collaboration could indicate an area of improvement for the preparation programs. How do aspiring principals learn how to distribute authority and empower teachers? This finding also suggests a consideration of the context of principals' work.

Orr (2009) stated, "What the principal does can have a huge effect on what the teacher does and the quality of learning experiences for the students" (p.1). However, the researchers identified that the context within which principals worked varied across multiple factors in the environment of the school and these contextual factors might also contribute to principals' ability to impact school improvement. These factors that did not necessarily occur due to the principal preparation program were: (a) school setting (rural or urban), (b) style and influence of school superintendent and district leadership, (c) experience level of the teachers in the school, and (d) school resources available to support learning in the school. Since context does matter, then research and principal preparation should focus on how context impacts the effectiveness of leader behaviors. Context is pivotal in understanding the situation that principals encounter and experience. The issue of context was evident in terms of how the *Teacher Survey* itself could be interpreted and used.

The two instruments (*SLPPS* and *Teacher Survey*) differed greatly; an exact comparison of the questions could not be made. Therefore, it may have been useful for the principals to complete a version of the *Teacher Survey* with minor changes in the stem from "To what extent does the principal facilitate the conditions" to "To what extent do you facilitate the conditions." The instrument could be more useful in providing comparisons between the principals' and teachers' responses.

Overall, in both settings, teacher perceptions were related to principal perceptions especially regarding the actions of principals. Establishing the validity of graduates' leadership practice as school leaders is an important first step in linking programs with practice. The survey allowed us to understand teacher perceptions of school leader effectiveness in several areas including: instructional leadership, collaboration and shared decision-making, and purpose and direction. In addition, the survey allowed us to examine teacher perceptions of other aspects of the school environment and organizational context; however, we recognize that there are many factors that influence perceptions of the school context in addition to the school leader.

8 Limitations and Future Research

First, the fielding of the survey to program graduates of Program A and Program B was conducted with very small samples, so it is not appropriate to generalize any findings. Secondly, the survey instruments varied in item content and scale so comparisons of principal and teacher perceptions could not be made through statistical methods. In addition, future studies would benefit from fielding the teacher survey in schools where the principal did not graduate from a university preparation program in order to examine whether or not teacher perceptions are more or less favorable, and if principals possess more or less of the effective leadership behaviors when prepared at a university preparation program. In addition, these pilot studies only utilized descriptive statistics. Further research should test the relationship between leadership practices, teacher empowerment, collaboration, teacher performance, and student outcomes. Furthermore, it is possible that other factors in the school context influenced teacher perceptions of the school environment; therefore, future studies that consider those factors would strengthen a research design.

9 Recommendations

A Teacher Survey and Principal Survey could be paired as multi-source feedback tools about the leadership within the school. This feedback could assist preparation programs with program improvement and development of performance assessments for program participants. It might also be beneficial to administer the survey at the end of the first year and then several years later to understand whether or not and how principals' leadership behaviors and influence change over time. Finally, these surveys should be used as

formative information rather than evaluation. Listening to the perspectives of teachers will contribute to a preparation program's ability to help its participants obtain the desired leadership attributes and skills.

10 Scholarly Significance of the Study or Work

Recognizing the need to prepare principals who could lead school improvement efforts, Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) identified the importance of collaboration between principal preparation programs and area schools in the development of school leaders. However, researchers (Browne-Ferrigno, 2001; Norton, 2002) have suggested that there is little evidence that connects principal preparation to school improvement practices on the job suggesting that research that would begin to make these connections is a missing link.

Two diverse regions of the U.S. provided distinctly different settings to gain understanding of how leadership preparation programs that emphasize development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to lead school improvement efforts impact the actions of school leaders. A comparison of the findings and processes of these two regions adds to the knowledge and practice base of program evaluation and provides a stronger link in the chain of factors from preparation to practice that influences school improvement in teaching and learning.

This study supports the impact of principal preparation programs that emphasize leadership skills and dispositions for leading school improvement in teaching and learning on improvement processes and practices. The study has implications for all university preparation programs in supporting that these programs' areas of emphasis mattered in transferability to school improvement. These two universities maintained a strong focus on school improvement as a central theme in principal preparation courses, and this impact was evidenced by the positive results that were achieved.

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