

Designing a Standards-Based Master's Program in Educational Leadership: Trends, Contexts, and Adaptations

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ABSTRACT: We present a dialogue about the current context for educational leadership preparation that draws upon worldwide thought and discussion. We examine some of the significant developments and a new conceptualization of educational leadership, and we link these developments to implications for preparation of school leaders for the future. These developments may be categorized as shifts in epistemology and values, concerns about the integration of theory with practice, the rise of the standards movement in education for leadership preparation, the contested role of the academy in addressing these issues, new ideas about program design, and specific features of the Alberta context that inform the orientation of an educational leadership program. Upon reflection of these trends and contexts, we conclude with a structure and content proposal for a Master of Education cohort focus group specializing in educational leadership at The University of Lethbridge, Alberta. Appendix A features a description of topics that each of our courses tackle; Appendix B includes some of the Internet sources we used to scan what others say about educational leadership programming.

Introduction

This article is a cognitive map, outlining the divergent pathways we sourced and investigated in designing a standards-based masters program in educational leadership at a small university in southern Alberta. The authors were asked and encouraged by the faculty's administration to develop such a proposal and we did just that, over the course of three years of reflecting, talking, writing, and working the proposal through the faculty and university committee system. Our particular context was twofold: the main focus of the faculty is on the undergraduate level, teacher education; secondly, the masters program as such had little in the way of a programmatic focus on educational leadership. This second issue is what concerns us here.

Two years ago the University of Lethbridge hosted 49 master's students who had indicated an educational leadership specialization in their program registration. Judging from the feedback

they provided to the faculty, many of these students were frustrated and experienced difficulty in finding ways to complete their programs. Small enrolment, variable entry points, scant course offerings, limited staff resources, and questions about content, all have contributed to the need to rethink the content and organization of the program. Judging from student needs, then, we had a problem. We also heard rumblings from the field S educators in the publicly-funded educational system S that much more could be done to support leadership preparation needs in the face of the growing complexity of roles and the age-driven turnover of much of an entire generation of educational leaders in the province. Even before this process began, Alberta Learning, the provincial authority for education, had already sounded the alarm bells on this issue and had provided seed money for the funding of a position in educational leadership. So the time seemed appropriate for some serious reflection on our part as to what we could do to ameliorate this situation. Having first looked inwards at our faculty and its programming, we then looked outwards to scan and ponder what others have written about a broad range of issues germane to our topic and how similar institutions have adapted to the leadership challenge. This article features a balance of outward and inward approaches. We mean outward in terms of trends, contexts, the academy, and design ideas, and inward as to our interpretation of what all of this means in terms of designing a cohort and standards-based program for educational leadership.¹

On the agenda first is the outward perspective that aims to plumb the literature about the knowledge base in education - a reading that includes: (a) trends that we categorize as epistemological and values-driven; current educational leadership models and frameworks; and the standards movement; (b) the academy problem (the claim that faculties are either indifferent, hostile or unprepared to address school leadership); (c) program design ideas that have emerged over the last decade in educational leadership preparation; (d) the Alberta context and its specific features that informed our thinking (the call for standards, professionalization of the teacher, site-based school management, and restructuring); and lastly, (e) the specifics of our design for an educational leadership program.

I. Trends

The Epistemological And Values Shift And The Search For A Knowledge Base

In the educational literature we found a lively debate about the epistemological underpinnings of educational leadership preparation. For our purposes, the debate contains at least two strands that are woven in the literature. At one level, there is the “what-is-knowledge and how-do-we know” strand that attends to epistemological concerns. As noted by Donmoyer, Imber, and Scheurich (1995): “The epistemological problem can be stated succinctly: Knowledge today is not what it used to be. Contemporary conceptions of knowledge in the social sciences...are radically different...” (p. 3). At another level, there is a growing concern that centers on the ambiguous role of professional faculties in helping to bridge the theory-practice gap, and that queries whether programming for educational leadership preparation functions to close this perceived gap or, alternatively, to widen it. What’s so different about knowledge-in-theory and knowledge-in-use?

In terms of research paradigms, the field of educational administration was once dominated by a positivist and behaviorist bias that attempted to erect a science to guide administrators in their practice, a science that relied on the rules and procedures of rigorous quantitative studies with the

aim of building a substantial theory to guide purposive action. This was the behavioral science era in educational administration studies - a period spanning the 1950s through 1980s, where educational administration studies were characterized by a narrowly defined empiricist knowledge base that ignored agency and values (Greenfield, 1988, p. 147), a neutral posture on moral issues (Culbertson, 1964, p. 311), and where educational practice was largely ignored (Murphy, 1992, p. 73). In the 1980s Thom Greenfield (1988, 1995), of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, played a key and controversial role in undermining the hegemony of the management and behaviorist foundations of the knowledge base for educational leadership with a clarion call for a more subjective, phenomenological approach - starting with the perspective of individuals as they struggle with issues of agency, sense-making, resistance, and value conflicts within organizations. He railed against the reification of organizations, a perspective that treated organizations as dominant organisms that lived outside of the people who worked in them (Macmillan, 2003). In the wake of Greenfield have come alternative frameworks that pose quite different concerns and emphases about the study of leadership. These shape the mission and structure of dedicated programs - which are interpretive, with a focus on the political nature of organizations and conflict issues as well as constructivist views of knowledge - and critical-contextual, with a focus relating to a more radical reading of constructivism (critical-constructivist), concerns about gender and culture. And so, too, grew a body of postmodernist and poststructural perspectives. These newer epistemologies are strongly influenced by continental theorists and their ideas on knowledge and power, the privileging of discourses, and the deconstruction, and perhaps destruction of metanarratives, such as Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan (Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

But while the newer perspectives have attended to issues related to individual agency, values, and resistance, they have also brought into question the efficacy of the academy today as it relates to the field (see the Academy Problem below) as well as putting into play whether a new educational leadership knowledge base is either possible or desirable. Greenfield's current legacy in postmodernist and critical approaches to leadership may also be found in those who seek to subvert and overturn efforts to develop any metanarrative framework of a foundationalist nature for the knowledge base of educational leadership (English, 2003; Gunter, 2001; Macmillan, 2003). In this perspective, the search for a metanarrative knowledge base is rejected because its totalizing impact would exclude other divergent and countervailing discourses in much the same way as the behaviorist, positivist approach was the dominant approach, pre-Greenfield. Metanarratives serve the status quo, the argument goes, because the knowledge base cannot be extricated from the notions of privilege and power and who wields them to what ends. The search for a knowledge base is about philosophical beliefs and understandings, particularly regarding evolving discourses about power, diversity, equity, and gender. For example, Foster (1999) believes that postmodernism makes three significant claims to dispel myths about knowledge and power:

1. Knowledge is nonfoundational...[and] is always produced in specific contexts, which are time and space (spatiotemporal) dependent.
2. ...[T]he agreement that we develop about the meaning of true knowledge is intimately related to the distribution of power in a society.
3. The resulting outcome is the development of what poststructuralists call grand narratives or widely accepted stories that construct reality for most of us and that serve to maintain the existing system of privileges and power. (p. 104)

Foster further suggests that the literature on administration and leadership has become a contested domain with respect to order, metaphysics, representation, and history. Postmodern, feminist, and radical critical theorists, question assumptions about the roles and functions of leadership (seen as instrumentalist manipulation), the goals of education (in whose interests are these goals?), and the role of culture in shaping purposeful action (exploiting emotional lives to serve the interests of the organization) (Gunter, 2001).

Whereas we think there is some merit to some of these arguments, we do note that while these various out-of-the box ways of looking at educational leadership have been scathing in their denunciation of functionalist, behaviorist approaches hitherto dominant in traditional conceptions, they have posed little in the way of a concrete action-oriented vision that could supplant them (cf. Griffiths, 1988). Mitchell (2003) notes that until postmodernists spend more time doing field research and less time theorizing about ideas and picking fights at the paradigmatic level, they cannot produce a credible body of evidence for their claims to influence how others outside of the postmodernist circles think about educational issues.

It is, in short, the illusions of the postmodernists, not their intent to humanize knowledge, that need to be held up to the light of experience. Postmodernism is not stupid in its passion for the progressive realization of social justice, nor is it wrong in its insistence that knowledge is humanly created and authenticated through community validation. The postmodern error lies in their loss of any way to ground their knowledge assertions in experience and thus any way to advance their knowledge beyond the prides and prejudices of their politically situated authenticating communities. (p. 8)

But there are those who remain quite vocal in their support of developing a recognized knowledge base that reflects current realities and needs - arguing that such a knowledge base is a requisite to the very existence and study of a specialized profession (albeit one that draws on diverse traditions and disciplines as an applied art). In this regard, Bredeson (1995) states, "...a knowledge base, by definition, marks off the territory of a given field of study and practice" (p. 48). Griffiths (1988) further expands on this definition by making a distinction between the use of a knowledge base in a professional school and in an arts and science model: "The professional school model should prepare students to act, not merely think about administration" (p. 14). Criterion-based standards that inform program design may be construed as one, significant instrument with the objective of guiding both acting and reflection and lessening the gap between the academy and the field (see the "Standards Movement" p. 14 below).

From a historical perspective Murphy (1992) traces the landscape of leadership preparation from its inaugural efforts in the 19th century to 1992. He categorizes educational leadership preparation into four distinct periods:

Era of Ideology 1820-1900

The Prescriptive Era 1900-1945

The Behavioral Science Era 1946-1985

Dialectic Era 1986-

Murphy (1992) believes that the dialectic era is characterized by reflection, responsiveness, deregulation, and reconstruction. For example, the taxonomies we cite later in this article represent recent examples of soul-searching attempts to define the knowledge base to respond to

educational reforms and societal change. In this view, the Dialectic Era has stimulated a reconsideration of the significant internal and external factors on schooling and subsequently on educational leadership.² From the post-modernist perspective this dialectic is much less inclusive than is claimed and the consensus-seeking synthesis of ideas that should be its fruit is more rhetoric and cant than substance, masking a rift that cannot be mended without a significant uprooting of some core beliefs and values on all sides (English, 2003). We acknowledge that the issue of a knowledge base is an epistemological issue, but it is ideological and political, driven by very different ideas about public values, the nature of society, the purposes of schooling, the roles of educators, and the stances the academy should adopt about all of them.

Reflection On Trends

As academics we might be faced with the choice of which camp to join, pro- or anti-knowledge base, and plan our program accordingly. But the academic context does provide us the opportunity to balance what some would construe as dilemmatic situation. We can do this in a pragmatic sense - by recognizing the growing variety of literature that contributes to a working knowledge base and bringing its core into the program for study, reflection, and ultimately application, and evaluation in an evidence-based fashion. By viewing the knowledge base with wide and permeable parameters and as various ways of looking at people and things, rather than as a canon of doctrinal authority, we need not offer allegiance to any flag of ideology not of our own making. In a professional sense, we also believe that an important way of looking at things is to encourage divergent and sometimes conflicting perspectives, and that masters students need to grapple with some of the epistemological and axiological (values) problems that some ideas present. Our aim is not to educate true believers but rather to help critical individuals explore ideas, and the claims made about them, with some degree of irony - that what they are reading and thinking about is neither the last word nor the final truth on the issue or concept at hand, regardless of ideological camp. We also want to orient our students to think and reflect with a bias for application, that ultimately the test of ideas rests upon individual discretion and a thorough analysis of the contexts where change initiatives may be appropriate - or not. We think a stance of pragmatic irony might help us to bridge the gap in thinking about knowledge bases and also make us feel a little more comfortable about performing a balancing act on the horns of an erstwhile dilemma. On this reflection, the last word goes to American philosopher Richard Rorty (1989), who came to the following conclusions that draw upon an ironic and pragmatic viewpoint in a different yet similar context:

If we could bring ourselves to accept the fact that no theory about the nature of Man or Society or Rationality, or anything else, is going to synthesize Nietzsche with Marx or Heidegger with Habermas, we could begin to think of the relation between writers on autonomy and writers on justice as being like the relation between two kinds of tools S as little in need of synthesis as paintbrushes and crowbars. (p. xiv)

While such a perspective might not satisfy a true believer or an ideologue, we believe it is a defensible position as members of a professional faculty where ideas are tools meant to be used in context and evaluated as to their efficacy and as to fidelity to core values.

Educational Leadership Models

The theories or constructs of leadership have emerged and been reconstructed in the 1990s to reflect the changing role, nature, and responsibilities of educational leadership. (Caldwell, 2000; Elmore, 1999/2000; Foster, 1999; Lambert, et al., 1995; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Murphy, 2002; Murphy & Forsyth, 1999). Various constructs or models of leadership (not exhaustive) that have emerged in this period are referred to as: distributive (Spillane & Seashore Louis, 2002); instructional, with a new twist, (Spillane & Seashore Louis, 2002); transformational, moral, and contingent leadership (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999); constructivist (Lambert, et al., 1995); and emancipatory (Foster, 1999; Ryan, 2000). That being said, a careful reading of leadership models reveals that the notion of what leadership is, as a complex concept, is more often implied than explicitly defined in the literature (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). The answer to the question of what is educational leadership? depends on whom one asks and, in many cases, on the interpretive and inferential skills of the reader.

Many current authors advocate a theory of constructivist leadership, building on a new conception of leadership that incorporates human learning, community, patterns of relationships, and diversity. Constructivist leadership goes beyond supporting a constructivist approach to learning in classrooms. It means facilitating the learning of colleagues who, in a community, together construct meaning and new knowledge. Lambert, et al. (1995), claim that this involves reciprocal processes, namely: building a trusting environment; breaking down old assumptions and myths that get in the way of looking at things differently; constructing meaning together; and finally taking action using new behaviors and purposeful intention.

Most of the recently developed taxonomies of leadership skills include a disposition toward professional learning to build instructional capacity (Spillane & Seashore Louis, 2002), a school improvement focus (Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2002), and collaborative decision-making (Rallis, Shibles, & Swanson, 2001). In addition, leadership is supported and enhanced by the use of technology - as a management device, as a means to develop relevant information to inform decision-making, and as a tool for learning in and out of the classroom (Etzkowitz, Webster, & Healey, 1998; Sandholtz, 2001; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997). Administrators' responsibilities include supporting the efforts of staff to adopt and adapt new technologies to achieve new levels of productivity and achievement. In effect, leaders provide the vision of change that includes empowering teachers and learners in new ways, and then learning how to effectively manage these empowered teachers and learners (Conley & Muncey, 1999; Schlecty, 2000; Warren Little, 2000). Some claim that the traditional schools we have typically built or inherited are no longer relevant (Brubaker, 1995; Yee, 1998). Technologically informed teachers, students, and parents, and the use of the Internet, global learning opportunities, and constructivist strategies of learning prompt the type leadership preparation that responds to these needs and provides the vision and support for educational communities.

Much of the emerging concept of school leadership is grounded in the fundamental practice of recognizing values and actively engaging in moral stewardship (Begley, 1994). Campbell (as cited in Begley, 1994) states:

Contemporary, theoretical, and empirical literature increasingly has addressed the necessity for educators to regard their professional responsibilities as basic moral and ethical imperatives. Moral agency, moral purpose, and the moral authority of accountable practice in education are highlighted (Fullan 1993; Grace 1995; Hodgkinson 1991, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992, 1996). Closely related to this is the growing emphasis on building moral communities in schools (Sergiovanni, 1996) and the demand that schools stand for and reflect valued principles (Cohen 1995; Wynne & Ryan, 1993).

The subsequent debate regarding Whose values? or What virtues? and the interpretation of guiding principles have all added a complex dilemma for school leaders (Hodgkinson, 1999; Willower, 1998). How does the leader weigh, for example, a set of traditional, perhaps outmoded, values of some parents with the challenge to create a system that is “flexible, resilient, and able to anticipate and adapt to what will undoubtedly be a climate of perpetual change” (Alberta Learning Commission, 2003, p. 6)? There are significant philosophical challenges for the school leader to acknowledge - not the least of which are matters of choice and the relativistic perspectives of increasingly diverse communities as well as addressing the public values of excellence and equity in the context of accountability demands from the system and other, more diverse demands, which reside in the community. In a learning community where shared purpose is valued, the leader also has to balance this with the value of individual thought and growth, and learn to honor dissent. According to Murphy (2002) social justice is a powerful construct underlying the leadership profession, and moral stewardship is the metaphor for a role in which the leader has a moral imperative to address the learning, moral, and ethical needs of the entire school community. We argue that leadership preparation programs should provide a forum for an in-depth dialogue about these values, dilemmas, and tensions.

Reflection on leadership models. Ideally, all participants in a community may be expected to practice constructivist leadership. To do this a leader needs to understand grounded knowledge, values, and assumptions about teaching and learning. Such an understanding requires guided reflection, research, and intensive dialogue about the art and craft of teaching and the ethic of care for children and youth. Constructivist-based learning in professional faculties aims to create an open dialogue so that participants, from individual vantage points and diverse contexts, can pose questions about the nature of schooling, learning, and teaching, and about value and ethical concerns, from a variety of groundings and assumptions. Such knowledge is not grounded in claims of scientific rationality, to be transmitted through the use of a stable and mature knowledge base by experts to novices; rather, it is constructed, based on organizational and personal values, professional experience, inquiry, discussion, debate, and application to specific contexts by interdependent actors.

Inquiry, discussion, collective, and individual learning, and appreciation of contexts, are all important to educational leadership preparation because many of the problems in the field require a great deal of reflection and interpretation to guide decision-making, such as: value disputes; problems defined by uncertainty (inadequate information, meanings unclear); problems defined by ambiguity (differing ways of looking at the same information); ill-structured problems (inadequate information, defying pigeon-holing) (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999); and dilemmas that offer no easy solutions. No one model of educational leadership is adequate to provide an inclusive platform to guide the solving of all problems or addressing

dilemmas. While knowledge-as-theory (the base) may offer some guidelines as to how to approach such challenges, knowledge-in-use (the field) requires much professional discretion as to the application of that knowledge, a role that is cognitive, affective, and micropolitical. But the academy can and should assist in meeting these challenges by viewing value articulation, problem solving, and relationship building as skills that should be developed in a number of cognitive and experiential settings.

The Evolving Knowledge Base and the Standards Movement

The knowledge base in educational leadership has been the subject of a great deal of reflection, debate, and thought throughout the past decade, and here we offer a few recent examples of the fruition of this process. Connected with this evolution is the growing interest in performance-based standards as criterion-based criteria to assess practice in the field and as scaffolding to structure educational leadership programs. In addition, we present an overview of converging standards movements in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, and discuss the state of educational leadership standards in Canada. We also pay attention to some unfriendly and friendly criticism directed at the notion of standards.

What the standards share is an orientation to prepare and assess educational leaders around a set of interrelated roles whose core purpose is to improve the learning environments of all children and youth in publicly funded schools. One could construe the standards movement as a response to the development of accountability frameworks during this period that, in a narrow but significant way, raised the stakes of, and public knowledge about, student achievement and how schools measured up in supporting student learning. In the United States, many states use standards as criteria for licensure and certification of school leaders (a process that includes formal testing).

Four recent examples of the search for an acknowledged cognitive base for educational leadership emerge as guiding lights for our program restructuring.³

The initial impetus for reconsidering educational leadership programs resulted from the benchmark report from the National Commission of Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA, 1987), *Leaders for America's Schools*. The UCEA took the initiative on the report's recommendations under the leadership of Patrick Forsyth in 1992 and developed a discussion around knowledge domains of educational leadership. Bredeson (1995) cites the UCEA as having identified seven knowledge domains reflecting the educational administration field, "...and that serve as organizers for mapping educational administration" (p. 52). After extensive research and consultation, and considerable controversy, the UCEA adopted these domains as the basis for the educational administration knowledge base. They are: societal and cultural influences on schooling; teaching and learning processes; organizational studies; leadership and management processes; policy and political studies; legal and ethical dimensions of schooling; and economic and financial dimensions of schooling.

In citing a rationale for developing these domains, the UCEA Plenum Report (1992) states that this was the first comprehensive effort to map and integrate the knowledge base "since the fragmentation and paradigm shifts of the 1970s and 1980s" (pp. 13-14). The report also claimed

that the educational administration curriculum had been the product of “buffeting by social, historical, and political winds; it has never been the product of deliberate systematic, or consensual shaping by practitioners and scholars” (p. 15). These proposed domains were widely debated and, in some cases, were deemed inadequate.⁴

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)⁵ developed the first universal standards for the licensing of school principals in 35 states in the United States (ISLLC, 1996). Murphy and Forsyth (1999) reported that this initiative “sets about strengthening the academic arm of the profession primarily through the manipulation of state controls over areas such as licensure, re-licensure, and program approval” (p. 28). The result was a model of leadership standards designed to enhance an understanding of effective leadership, to reflect the changing nature of society, and to nurture an evolving model of learning community. More importantly, the standards signaled a shift to linking the work of school leadership to improving the learning conditions for the student. The six standards focus on the practical application of leadership in promoting the success of students by:

1. Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community;
2. Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;
3. Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;
4. Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;
5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and
6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.⁶

Yet another standard-defining activity was undertaken by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2000). NCATE’s curriculum guidelines for school administration were developed in partnership with a variety of national level professional associations. Five general areas defining leadership are subdivided into 12 leadership standards and subsequently into many more distinct curriculum outcomes:

AREA I, STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP: The knowledge, skills and attributes to identify contexts, develop with others vision and purpose, utilize information, frame problems, exercise leadership processes to achieve common goals, and act ethically for educational communities.

AREA II, INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: The knowledge, skills, and attributes to design with others appropriate curricula and instructional programs, to develop learner-centered school cultures, to assess outcomes, to provide student personnel services, and to plan with faculty professional development activities aimed at improving instruction.

AREA III, ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP: The knowledge, skills, and attributes to understand and improve the organization, implement operational plans, manage financial resources, and apply decentralized management processes and procedures.

AREA IV, POLITICAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP: The knowledge, skills, and attributes to act in accordance with legal provisions and statutory requirements, to apply

regulatory standards, to develop and apply appropriate policies, to be conscious of ethical implications of policy initiatives and political actions, to relate public policy initiatives to student welfare, to understand schools as political systems, to involve citizens and service agencies, and to develop effective staff communications and public relations programs.

AREA V, INTERNSHIP: The internship is defined as the process and product that result from the application in a workplace environment of the strategic, instructional, organizational, and contextual leadership program standards. When coupled with integrating experiences through related clinics or cohort seminars, the outcome should be a powerful synthesis of knowledge and skills useful to practicing school leaders.⁷

The above standards, versions of which have shaped much of newer leadership programming in the USA for the last decade, are not without critics.

On the unfriendly side, for example, English (2003) scathingly questions the efficacy of ISLLC standards, citing them as examples of job deskilling and deprofessionalization, and he paints their strongest advocates as cult-like priests preaching functionalist-positivist messages disguised as something new and different. From a critical postmodern view, he assails the standards, and their designers, on both political and epistemological grounds:

What makes professional practice different from other forms of work is the autonomy provided for practitioners to define and engage in it. One of the hallmarks of a profession is the presence of a knowledge base as a repository of esoteric information not easily available to talented laypersons. The presence of such a knowledge base creates the boundaries of exclusivity, privilege, and power... When it is encapsulated in the apparatus of state licensure, it cements the political power of those working within it and who benefit by it.

To mask the essential exercise of raw political power leading towards monopoly and hegemony, the ISLLC standards have been shrouded in the mantle of objective science, research, and the “knowledge” produced by it.

The standards represent current beliefs and practices, some of which are research based in the old social science, and others which are little more than vague expressions of faith. As such they are hardly the platform upon which to construct a national licensure exam to certify school administrators. (pp. 121-123)

To English (2003) and those who share his viewpoint, the standards are less the product of new thinking than they are a *mélange* of ideas and beliefs that reflects the assumptions of a paradigm that dialectic era advocates proclaimed were of a bygone (positivist and behaviorist) era - pouring old wine into new bottles - and the standards constitute a framework by which a select hierarchy of academics and state educational officials are co-conspirators in furthering their shared goal of exerting greater degrees of control of how school leaders are prepared and how they will be assessed in the field.

Leithwood and Steinbach (2003) may be viewed as sympathetic yet trenchant critics of the first generation of five sets of standards: “On many different grounds, these standards should be

considered on 'life support.' If something is not done soon, the plug will be pulled and the standards will vanish along with the purposes for which they were designed" (p.232). They urge further work on the standards to develop a second generation of leadership standards. They argue for the adoption of seven standards to improve an impressive yet inadequate set of standards currently in place. The seven second generation standards are:

1. Standards should acknowledge persistent challenges to the concept and practice of leadership.
2. Standards are claims about effective practice and should be justified with reference to the best available theory and evidence.
3. Standards should acknowledge those political, social, and organizational features of the contexts in which leaders work that significantly influence the nature of effective leadership practices.
4. Standards should specify effective leadership practices or performances only, not skill or knowledge.
5. Dispositions should not be included in any standards.
6. Standards should describe desired levels of performance not just categories of practice.
7. Standards should reflect the distributed nature of school leadership.

Not afraid to confront critics, friendly or unfriendly, of the first generation of ISSLC standards, is Murphy (2002), who has played probably the pivotal role in their development and implementation, leveraged through a number of national and regional organizations. He answers critics of first generation standards by discussing at length the perceived issues that academics have raised: (a) The standards lack an empirical base; (b) The standards are based too heavily on nonempirical ideals; (c) The standards do not cover everything; nor do they include "X" concept or examine "Y" concept deeply enough; (d) The standards are over (or under) specified; (e) There is no legitimate place for dispositions in the standards; and (f) The standards are exerting undue influence in the profession (the field and the academy).

In the United Kingdom the standards work has been adopted and defined by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL). These national standards attempt to classify the skills and attributes of leadership at beginning and advanced levels. The College has developed 10 propositions that inform the school leadership task (NCSL, 2002). The propositions attend to the nature, values, development, and support of school leadership, and, they define the "parameters for a framework for school leadership that is firmly grounded in learning as well as transformational" (p. 8). Most of the National College's 10 propositions bear a striking resemblance to recent standards work emanating from the United States. Nine of these state that school leadership must: be purposeful, inclusive, and values driven; embrace the distinctive and inclusive context of the school; promote an active view of learning; be instructionally focused; be distributed across the school community; build capacity by developing the school as a learning community; be futures oriented and strategically driven; be developed through experiential and innovative methodologies; and be served by a support and policy context that is coherent, systemic, and implementation driven. The 10th proposition asserts that school leadership "must be supported by a National College that leads the discourse around leadership" (p. 14).

In like-minded fashion, The Australia Principals Centre (2003) has defined a Leadership Framework that "acts as a focus for guiding and managing on-the-job leadership performance; designing professional development programs; acknowledging career development and

workplace achievement; and developing professional accreditation and certification processes” (p. 1). Importantly this leadership framework acknowledges the dynamic nature of school leadership, is applied to certification processes, and is refined and updated through continuing dialogue amongst principals. Four dimensions of leadership are supported by 20 leadership competencies that describe the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the Australian educational leadership context.

In contrast to the standards movement in the United States, and its strict regulations for licensing principals, and initiatives in the United Kingdom and Australia, there have been no parallel large-scale developments in Canada. Attempts at revising the educational leadership curriculum have been confined to the purview of the individual institutions. Provinces have similarly refrained from getting involved in setting standards, although some do have certification requirements (Hickcox, 2002). Only Ontario requires a master degree or equivalent as a basic qualification for a school principalship as well as specialized certification courses for aspiring principals. There are no certification requirements for the principalship in the province of Alberta, although many local jurisdictions require a master degree for prospective school leaders. A cross-Canada survey indicates “that this formal, ad hoc, essentially scattered and uncoordinated approach to training for school administrators is the case in the majority of jurisdictions” (Hickcox, 2002). Hickcox argues, “systematic training and licensure requirements for school principals increase the chances of high level performance by principals” (p. 4).

Possibly the most defining work in Canada in developing leadership standards within the academy has been undertaken by Begley (1994, 1995) at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (and now of the University of Pennsylvania). Begley’s work has developed into a leadership profile (adapted from Ken Leithwood’s groundbreaking work in this area) that carefully describes five stages of development within each leadership component. The key components include establishing standards for the principal as manager, instructional leader/program facilitator, school-community facilitator, visionary, and problem solver. Other significant Canadian research has attempted to uncover the nature of organizational conditions and student engagement under different types of school leadership Leithwood, Edge, & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Leithwood & Prestine, 2001).

Reflection on the knowledge base and standards movement. One may not share English’s (2003) opinions on standards but we do recognize that when high-stakes licensure requirements are coupled with university programming, there can be little doubt of three related issues: (a) this connection significantly ratchets up the role of the academy as a quasi-state agency and the tightens the linkage between curriculum and state policy; (b) it calls into question values about professional academic autonomy; and (c) ubiquitous licensure requirements, spreading from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, could squeeze out alternative programming. In the context of accountability frameworks, the standards movement has morphed from students, to teachers, and now to (school) leaders. Implicit in some of the more critical discussions on these issues is that the tension between standards (differing criteria of performance) and standardization (the replication of identical programming and procedures).⁸ From the academy perspective, if standards are allowed to morph to a monocultural standardization (and English would claim the American academy is already there) this would pose a serious threat both to the academy and the field, stripping both professional levels of autonomy and discretion, characteristics long

associated as defining some critical features of the nature of professional work (Mintzberg, 1979).

That being said, the idea of a standards-based program appeals to us as mainly in pragmatic terms, providing a scaffolding for the organization and orientation of a program, serving as a bridge from the faculty to the field, and forming a framework for the integration of theory and practice. The absence of licensure and certification requirements for school leaders in Alberta (they may come) means that for now we need not worry about aligning our program with such requirements. We construe the standards as useful ideas that should be developed in a number of interesting ways, to be implemented and evaluated as to their efficacy, as the program evolves.

Regarding Leithwood and Steinbach's critique (2003) of the first generation of standards, we do share their uneasiness about the need to highlight the contested and problematic nature of leadership and to ground standards-based programmatic activities into the growing body of empirical literature that can illuminate best practices. The standards are criteria of practitioner performance, buttressed by dozens of indicators, not the outline of a syllabus. While each of the standards provides ample scope for the incorporation of relevant readings, discussions, and activities, building courses around each standard obscures what remains a large task for program designers: to ascertain what significant parts of the knowledge base (such as it is) still need to be addressed and where they should be placed in the sequence of learning activities.

For example, to deal with concern about the problematic nature of leadership, we think that students need a thorough grounding in the history of the study of educational administration and leadership, a critical look at several models and their assumptions, and a sense of what current research says about leadership and its limitations. The sooner students are introduced to this information, the better. None of this is suggested by the first generation of standards and if one simply backmapped from standards to course design without asking some bigger questions about "what else do we really need to know?" we think that the content of the program would suffer.

Theory, concepts, and axiological grounding (values) remain important concerns for the academy and these may be weaved through a program that attends to standards but is not straight jacketed by them. Regarding axiological issues, we note that the knowledge base of leadership is derived from a number of sources, including (cultural) traditions and a broad range of philosophical concerns (ontology, epistemology, ethics) that do not readily lend themselves to empiricism and the study of best practices - the knowledge base needs to include evidence-based research and literature from outside that corpus.

In the wake of the standards movement in the United States, a burgeoning array of publications attests to the demands of the academy and the field for relevant literature. Both authors of this article have perused a fair amount of publishers' materials and are impressed by some of them, yet we note that many possess a cookbook approach to leadership, chock-full of recipes for success organized around the ISSLC standards. While we think that these resources serve a market and are useful as supplementary resources, as stand-alone publications they are largely bereft of a deep conceptual approach, with a profound bias for action, not reflection, and the problematizing of complex issues. Programs for educational leadership need a judicious balance of reflection and action orientations.

II. The Academy Problem

Many North American universities made changes to educational administration programs throughout the 1990s. The majority of the changes were made to respond to the need to attract students in a competitive market. Some of the changes were made to reflect new interpretations of the knowledge base in educational administration. At another level, with some notable exceptions⁹, we would not want to give the impression that the state of educational leadership preparation is not without significant problems - some would argue even in a state of decline. Such critics would say that much work still needs to be done by the academy to renew a focus on educational leadership and that many faculties have become increasingly detached, if not hostile, to leadership preparation needs. In their survey of knowledgeable who are or were educational administration specialists in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, the conclusions of Hickcox and Robinson (2004) are not sanguine about either the capacity or willingness of the academy to meet the challenges of leadership preparation in the 21st century. They cite a host of reasons, including: changing ideological, political, and epistemological landscapes; evolving stances about the roles and responsibilities of professional faculties and their relationships to the practitioners and field; and department mergers that dilute the focus and capacity of leadership orientations. They note in this regard:

The traditional mandate of departments of educational administration to provide university level training and preparation for individuals seeking administrative positions in schools is falling by the wayside. Many university departments or programs in educational administration do not have a common body of knowledge and instead, are often shaped by the narrowly focused research interests of faculty members. Increasingly, preparation for administration has evolved to a mix of uncoordinated and disconnected university programs, workshops, short courses, conferences, government seminars and the like with no central core of knowledge about educational administration. (p. 1)¹⁰

While some will differ from the generalized opinions expressed above that are skewed towards Canadian respondents, we think that the evidence proffered by Hickcox and Robinson (2004) does raise some serious concerns about leadership preparation programs in general. We, too, query whether the flurry of recent publications and the spawn of new organizations (with a plethora of acronyms) that herald a new age in educational leadership preparation may camouflage a deep and continuing structural and ideological problem about the academy that cannot be summarily dismissed.

In a somewhat similar vein as the reflections of Hickcox and Robinson, Murphy (1992) had earlier concluded that, in general, educational leadership programs across the USA were suffering and struggling. These concerns can serve as cues to reflect on the quality of a leadership program and we have recast them to include generative questions that we asked ourselves as we designed our program (pp. 79-108).

Table 1
Generative Questions Used in Program Design

III. Program Design Ideas

In tandem with a growing knowledge base and the articulation of sets of standards, the literature reveals a number of program design ideas that focus on new ways of teaching and learning, whose aim is to socialize students to work together to identify and address problems, to integrate theory with practice, and to provide experiential settings for situated cognition S learning and its applications in specific contexts presented by the field. Some of the newer ways of teaching and learning include: organizing students into cohorts; organizing curriculum; problem-based learning; mentoring and coaching; field-based experiential learning; and internships.

The literature cites several instances of the cohort approach as an effective way of learning, particularly for practicing administrators (Hart & Pounder, 1999; Milstein, 1993). Murphy (1992) challenged his educational administration survey respondents to cite significant recent developments to the structure of leadership programs and the responses show that the cohort model has grown in popularity:

A [significant] change has been the widespread implementation of cohort programs in universities—a model that, according to the respondents in this study, has moved to center stage in the play known as educational administration reform. ...The cohort model has helped create programs that are more integrated, focused and sequential than those that dotted the landscape in 1987. (p. 61)

From the student perspective, the opportunity to learn in cooperative settings, to collaboratively solve problems, and to dialogue about leadership dilemmas in a safe environment, are a few advantages that are evident in the cohort approach.

Another emerging change in leadership preparation programs has been in curricular organization. In past years programs were organized around functions, disciplinary knowledge bases, and roles associated with school administration. Current emphases suggest that leadership candidates need to apply their understandings of these concepts to real problems of practice (Bridges & Hallinger, 1997). Murphy (1992) believes that curriculum in reconstructed preparation programs should be characterized by authenticity, complexity, and interrelatedness. He cites the following principles to be particularly appropriate for redesign work in educational leadership programs:

- Developing capacity to learn: The program should be designed to help students develop the capacity to learn (as opposed to accumulating information).
- Multisource content: The program should feature multisource, interrelated content (as opposed to a single-source, multidisciplinary approach).

- Generative topics: The curriculum should be constructed “out of generative topics” (Perkins, 1992, p. 6), “essential questions” (Wasley, 1991, p. 42), or around authentic problems of practice (as opposed to being based on roles or academic disciplines).
- Depth of experiences: The emphasis should be on depth of experiences (as opposed to content coverage).
- Original source documents: The program should use original source documents (as opposed to textbooks).
- Single core curriculum: The program should feature a single core curriculum (as opposed to specialized programs).
- Professor choice: Professor choice is a key to developing good curricular experiences (as opposed to prescribed learning sequences).(p. 147)

Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) suggest that both cognition and domain-based learning are important and that a successful leadership development program will reflect an appropriate balance between the two. Caldwell (2000) also sees promise in basing programs on domains in which particular issues arise from time to time. “Such ‘domains of innovation’ include curriculum, pedagogy, school design, professionalism, leader development, resources, knowledge management, governance and boundary spanning” (p. 476).

A further curricular consideration is the sequencing of courses and learning experiences. Given that course offerings are dependent on available faculty at any given time, consideration also needs to be given to sequencing skill development such that participants have the requisite background and experience to scaffold their learning. For example, core experiences in research methods (inquiry) and building professional community provide the base for curriculum, foundations, visioning, and collaboration courses. Group problem-solving experience and internships provide culminating experiences and opportunities for candidates to synthesize their learning and apply their understandings to real applications.

Problem-based learning has its roots in the medical profession and others. Pounder, Reitzug, and Young (2002) address the challenges of cooperative planning and collaborative teaching:

Modular course experiences, problem-solving learning, case method, or administrative simulation teaching approaches could enhance the integration and synthesis of administrative knowledge and skills. These techniques and others should be explored in order to reduce the “silo” structure of many administrative preparation programs and promote a more web-like structure. (p. 282)

Connecting students to the realities and nuances of practice is another important feature of the literature on program design. Caldwell (2000) states:

Almost all innovative programs...are connecting participants to practice in a variety of ways, including the use of mentors and coaches who are experienced school principals, attachment to exemplary schools for a period of time, and school-based projects for assessment of progress or achievement. (p. 480)

The importance of narrowing the theory-practice gap is also addressed by Hallinger (1992), who found, in analyzing the opinions of education leadership graduates about their programs, that the “culture of the local school, prior experience, and the role expectations of others in the local school community were identified as key factors that moderated the transfer of training” (p. 312). Graduate participants in the Hallinger studies also observed that field-centered or sensitive

exercises, which brought them into contact with schools, were considered to be among the most valuable learning activities. “This type of high-risk, high-return activity requires support and assistance in order to obtain the full impact on the individual and the organization” (p. 312). To this end, coaching support and district cooperation are needed to ensure successful implementation of newly learned skills. For this to happen, school districts are asked to accept responsibility for supporting the integration of leadership development into school and district practice. In this scenario, superintendents are expected to support the learning of their school leaders by adapting district personnel policies and promoting meaningful field experiences. New ways of thinking and new skills do not survive without demonstrated support through district norms, policies and practices (Hallinger, 1992; Hallinger & Anast, 1992). To be consistent with the sequential development of the leader, the exiting requirement needs to reflect the candidate’s growth and development in representing knowledge discovery, problem-solving capability, and the use of sound acceptable forms of inquiry. Either an internship-based project or a research-oriented thesis will meet this standard.

Reflection on Program Design

It appears to us that most of the new ideas about program and course design center on the issue of the relationship of theory to practice. This issue is of particular concern to professional faculties and an important demarcation from the approach to learning, say, in the arts and science model (although we recognize there are exceptions to this generalization). Professional faculties serve to provide students a foundational set of knowledge and skills, and to socialize students in professional norms, values, and attitudes, which are to be applied to external working contexts, evaluated, and refined. Professional development and lifelong learning, in which professional associations are usually active, are important design variables necessary to ensure that values, knowledge base, and skills of members evolve to meet changing demands and technologies (Mintzberg, 1979). This is an important difference from nonprofessional faculties, one that we think should encourage the use of design features that explicitly enhance a closer alignment of knowledge-in-theory with knowledge-in-use.

But we think none of these ideas are magic bullets in themselves - unless there is careful planning and care, these ideas can founder. For example, cohort organization can be a powerful tool for socialization in building relationships, collective problem solving, and as a forum for a continuing dialogue about significant and complex issues. It can also be the opposite: where group-think rules and standards erode to the lowest common denominator, catalyzed by self-serving micropolitics. Field-based experiential learning can stretch professional horizons and capabilities or evolve into a prosaic assignment, performing routine tasks with little reflection, play-acting at leadership. Mentoring and coaching offer great potential, and have been used in the teaching ranks for years, particularly in the transition from novice to more experienced teacher. Our reading of this literature, and our experience and contacts in the field, tell us the results of mentoring and coaching are a mixed bag, highly reliant on the interest level of the parties, the conceptual understandings of the task, training needs, the ability to relate and empathize, the time carved out to structure and nurture this process, and the supports and resources available. Several of these variables relate to the emotional side of learning, affect and disposition, something not easily taught to or coaxed from volunteers for whom buy-in may be lukewarm at best. So mentorship and coaching also need careful consideration and monitoring -

and we think professional faculties have a role to ensure that these relationships are characterized by meanings of worth.

IV. The Alberta Context 11

In program design the issue of context is paramount - here we introduce a few of the more important variables of the Albertan context that influenced our thinking about program content: the policy advice of a recent commission that recommended standards-based approaches for educational leadership and preparation; the Teaching Quality Standards; site-based school management; and restructuring.

The recent Alberta Commission on Learning (2003) came to similar conclusions as Hickcox (2002) regarding the need for standards-based leadership preparation and for certification: Most principals in the province have a Masters degree in education, or are pursuing one. The problem is that these programs are not specifically targeted at the knowledge, skills and attributes principals need to be effective. They tend to be research-based and focused on educational theory and knowledge. While this aspect is important, it does not adequately prepare them for complex roles as communicators, supervisors, motivators, and community and business leaders. (p. 125)

The Commission made two recommendations about recognizing and supporting the practice standards, focusing on the identification of the knowledge, skills, and attributes required for principals (p. 122) and the establishment of new program to prepare and certify principals (p. 123). While the minister in charge of provincial authority for education (Alberta Learning) has formally endorsed these recommendations, how the policy implementation may play out on a provincial scale remains to be seen in terms of roles of various players, including the Ministry, faculties of education, superintendents' associations, principals' councils, and not the least, the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA), which in particular has not warmed to these recommendations. A large bone of contention for the ATA is that the Commission also recommended that principals and vice-principals should be removed from local bargaining units, as is the case in British Columbia and Ontario, and that they be governed by their own association. Such an exclusion would decimate the membership of the ATA, and as is the case of British Columbia and Ontario, could induce conflict between teachers and their newly defined managers who are mandated to oversee their work according to increasingly prescriptive designs emanating from their respective ministries of education (Bedard & Lawton, 2000; Lawton, Bedard, MacLellan, & Li, 1999).

In 1997 Alberta's Minister of Education enacted a Ministerial Order that essentially elevated teaching to a professional status overnight. The establishment of Teaching Quality Standards provided a basis for teachers and the public to understand the roles, responsibilities, and standards for teaching practice. In addition the subsequent regulation ruled out the continuance of a cyclical evaluation process to monitor and control the teaching standard. Instead, teachers are now expected to create a professional growth plan in consultation with the school principal, thereby enhancing the role of professional development in the growth and continuing education of the teacher. A further component in professionalizing the teaching ranks requires that the principal adopt a supervision practice that implies a detailed understanding and dialogue about the ongoing teaching practice in the classroom. This practice closely monitors the development of a new teacher, and implements procedures for response to concerns and complaints about

teaching practice. As a result, school leaders now have an enhanced role in matters such as facilitating school improvement, staff development, teacher portfolios, mentorship of new teachers, and empowering teachers to make critical decisions.

Many claim that teacher competency is on the rise (Schlechy, 2000). Enhanced evaluation of learning methods, changes in understanding about pedagogy, multidegreed teachers, and the globalization of knowledge have each contributed to the professionalization of the Alberta teacher. School leaders are no longer the sole brokers of power in Alberta schools, and as a result, leaders need to be highly skilled at sharing leadership responsibilities, at accommodating professional needs (and demands), and at being accountable for facilitating a professional learning community.¹²

When the Alberta government restructured education in 1995, selective decentralization was the key theme. Most of the government supporting documents and policies advocated a locally developed form of site-based decision-making as a way to include stakeholders in the process and to improve education. Studies in the middle to late 1990s suggested that Site-Based Decision-Making (SBDM) was embraced by many school leaders as an effective way to make important decisions about learning in their schools (David, 1995; Guskey & Peterson, 1995; Schlechy, 1992; Short & Greer, 1997). On the other hand, some in Alberta cited the SBDM process as a challenge that struggled under the shroud of public service cost cutting and downloading ushered in by the neo-conservative Klein government in 1992 and which permeated education beginning in 1995. In this scenario, the Klein critics point to a system that juxtaposes tightly centralized funding of public education with decentralized responsibility for professional and student performance at the district and school levels (Aitken & Townsend, 1998; Harrison & Kachur, 1999). Regardless of these perceptions, the evolving model of SBDM to a shared decision making process means that school leaders are required to be skilled at collaborative and inclusive strategies. The underpinnings of learning community call for a responsive and informed disposition to a shared decision-making model. Working with school councils, responding to parent concerns, dialoguing with teachers, collaboratively solving problems, and collaborating with senior administration - all demand skilled leadership. The ISLLC, NCATE, and the UCEA standards each reflect the importance of this component by including it in standards and domains of the knowledge base. Successful leaders share their power with participants skillfully, purposefully, and willingly, such that the educational community not only has many voices, but also a significant stake in the success of the school.

The field of educational leadership in Alberta has also had to respond to a system-wide movement that has become to be known as restructuring. Many of the changes in education in the 1990s were made in the name of restructuring - a broad term that encompasses structural, pedagogical, and community redefinition. Restructuring also refers to the political aspects of addressing cost issues in the mid 1990s that resulted in a move toward a site-based decision-making environment. As a concept, Senge (1990) ushered in the notion of restructuring by suggesting that we needed to promote and develop systems thinking if we were to introduce meaningful change. Barth (1990) implies that the restructuring movement is nothing if not built upon establishing norms of collegiality. These ideas, coupled with the influence of Sergiovanni's (1992) concept of leadership in a learning community, helped inform the restructuring movement throughout the 1990s that ultimately focused on site-based decision-making, shared visioning,

engaged learning processes, assessment practices, and developing learning community. From a leadership perspective, perhaps the central idea underpinning each of these developments is the need for continual learning and improvement coupled with a distributive theory of leadership (Elmore, 1999/2000), a focus that Leithwood and Steinbach (2003) insist should be explicit in standards. This implies a shift from the idea that leadership emanates from a hierarchical, position-power authority to a shared, collaborative and distributive form of leadership (Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

In explaining the complexities of restructuring, Newmann (as cited in Brandt, 1995) states that as few as 10% of schools that undertake improvement initiatives were successful. Successful exemplars focused on teaching that “changed and responded to restructuring as a growth process, pursuing change through a reflective dialogue - as opposed to mandated change - and schools that measured their success by improved learning through changed classroom practice” (p. 71). The school improvement movement in Alberta has clearly established teacher growth and leadership coupled with grass roots involvement as the linchpin to student achievement and positive change (Alberta Learning, 1999). This creates a unique challenge for leaders who are striving to link the school improvement initiatives to school and system goals and to purposeful reflective practice.

In response to the restructuring movement, leadership preparation programs need to include some in-depth study of cognitive development and pedagogy, such that school and system leaders can facilitate professional growth and take part in the dialogue, and support innovative classroom practice from an informed perspective. Disaggregating data, supporting a results-oriented culture, and purposeful visioning are meaningful leadership skills needed to support the school improvement process. One of the ISLLC (1996) standards, for example, goes directly to the need for principals to promote success of students by developing a school culture conducive to staff learning and professional growth.

Akin to the restructuring initiatives has been the development of school improvement projects that speak to reculturing as the essence behind successful school improvement. Fullan (2002) thinks of reculturing as transforming the culture from a change perspective “...changing what people in the organization value and how they work together to accomplish it...leads to deep, lasting change” (p. 59). Fullan further states that only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement. School improvement initiatives have been central to restructuring in many jurisdictions throughout North America, but none has been as purposeful and focused as the Alberta experience. Alberta adopted its school improvement initiative in 1999 and provided considerable financial support for schools and systems that were prepared to identify an improvement project, research the background, identify the resources, plan professional development that focused on the improvement, and to measure the project’s success.¹³ This ongoing initiative responds best to a distributive form of leadership that facilitates and supports a dedicated and committed approach to sustained school improvement - because the improvement initiative and subsequent change is not a mandated one - it is purely a voluntary approach by committed staff who view professional growth to be closely linked to results and improvement. The relationship between school improvement and leadership is strengthened and supported by a constructivist approach (Lambert, et al., 1995), where the

leader's success in involving all the participants in a continual dialogue about school improvement is an integral component of successful change.

In summary, "there seems to be a growing consensus that the processes the educational leader uses must be transformational in nature if an expanded leadership team is to work" (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, p. 6). Skilled leadership is absolutely essential for an effective system-wide focus on improvement, and leadership development programs need to acknowledge this key contextual variable.

Reflection about the Alberta context. Specific features of the Alberta context that informed our thinking about program design included: the policy advice of a recent commission that recommended standards-based approaches for educational leadership and preparation; the Teaching Quality Standards; site-based school management; and restructuring. Each of these, we think, supports the evidence that has been mustered around various sets of standards. Although we came to this conclusion before the Alberta Learning Commission released its report in the fall of 2003, the fact that Alberta Learning has embraced the recommendations around standards, and that the provincial body of school superintendents has been active in developing such standards for more than a year,¹⁴ give us some assurance that our decision to go ahead with a standards-based design is congruent not only with the needs of prospective leaders but also with the current provincial policy environment.

V. Applying The Standard: Purpose And Structure Of The Master's Specialization In Educational Leadership At The University Of Lethbridge

The purpose of the M.Ed. specialization in Educational Leadership at the University of Lethbridge is to provide the knowledge and skills, and to identify and enhance key dispositions, for candidates who wish to develop a leadership focus to their teaching career. The underlying goal and orientation is to produce competent, compassionate, and pedagogically focused school leaders whose work is committed to the success of every child and youth. (See Appendix A for more about content.)

The following guidelines have informed the structure, content, and standards for the M.Ed. Educational Leadership Specialization:

- The courses have been designed to meet the needs of school leaders based on current developments in the field of education and new interpretations of leadership knowledge bases.
- Fall and spring courses will be offered in an online format. Concentration courses will be featured during the summer months on campus. The online component, together with on campus summer components, should help ensure that travel issues in a large province do not pose a large obstacle for student access, and this balance should enhance the ability of the program to attract a larger pool of qualified applicants.
- All students in the program will take a common set of courses in both the core and concentration areas, with some variation in the culminating stage.
- The culminating exercise will be one of: (a) a thesis; or (b), an alternative authentic representation of the leadership development experience - including an in-depth internship and a leadership portfolio.

- Faculty will need to share the teaching responsibilities in the program. The program will need a focused articulation of content and coordination of activities consistent with the special demands of cohort-organized courses in a professional faculty. Adjunct staff with rich field-based experience may need to teach in the program, especially in concentration offerings.
- The program will reflect standards that have emerged from the work of NCAELP, NPBEA, the NCSL, and the APC. Changes will be made to ensure compliance with the emerging Alberta standards.
- The program will be enhanced through a rich partnership between faculty and leaders in school systems. The latter will be asked to endorse candidates, to support an internship program, and to share significant data. Faculty will be committed to collaborating with the field in each of these matters.

The Leadership Series of core courses will be designed for the particular needs of leadership students in terms of perspective and topics. First, there is the issue of perspective. For example, while ED 5500 (Professional Development) has traditionally been designed from the perspective of individual educators who wish to develop a wider framework to view their own professional development, ED 5500 in the Leadership Series will focus on a school wide and staff perspective in the context of school improvement. Secondly, topics will be added or emphasized in the Leadership Series of core courses. By way of illustration, ED 5400, Educational Research, is an introduction to quantitative and qualitative paradigms and methods, with the aim of providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to read and understand research literature. In the Leadership Series, a key topic that should be added is understanding and interpreting school data, especially regarding student achievement. ED 5200, Curriculum Studies and Classroom Practice, is typically an introduction and exposition of the meaning of curriculum. The Leadership Series, while still acknowledging curriculum theory and development, will also address implementation issues such as school wide planning and evaluation.

The following core courses, to be offered online, will be taken by the entire cohort and offered in a series format to include topics germane to a leadership perspective:

- Curriculum Studies and Classroom Practice. (Standard 2)15
- Foundations of Modern Educational Theory and Practice (Standard 6)
- Nature of Educational Research (Standard 3)
- Understanding Professional Practice and Professional Development (Standard 2)
- The following five courses, involving face-to-face interactions, will be considered as concentration courses and will be taken by the entire cohort:
 - Educational Leadership and the Change Process (Standards 1, 5, and 6)
 - School Culture and the Instructional Program (Standard 2)
 - Managing the Organization (Standard 3)
 - Governance, Collaboration, and Community Engagement (Standard 4)
 - Collaborative Problem Solving (Standards 2 and 4)

Non-thesis students will take one graduate elective course from the General Masters Program, to be approved by the leadership coordinators. The following paths will be available for a culminating or capstone experience:

Path A Thesis: four-course equivalent, or

Path B: Leader Internship (A 240-hour program spent on direct, on-site service) - two course equivalents; and an Advanced Seminar in Education Leadership - one course equivalent. It includes developing and sharing the leadership portfolio product (Standard 7).

VI. Summary And Conclusion

School administration has emerged from under the umbrella of the behavioral and management sciences into a new era of development but we are aware of the contested nature of this claim. Traditionally, thinking about programming for educational administration and leadership has evolved around: (a) the processes of administration; (b) the roles, tasks, and functions of administration; and (c) the theoretical models and constructs that underscore the profession. We have cited significant shifts in the epistemological underpinnings of the knowledge base, the new mapping of this knowledge base, including standards, concerns about theory-practice integration, the role of the academy, contextual factors influencing schooling, important changes in teaching and learning, and new forms of decision-making and governance. All of these factors have resulted in a need to ground the preparation of school leaders in relevant and purposeful content, pedagogy, and curricula experiences. We have further argued that leadership preparation programs need to underscore the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions toward school improvement, democratic and collaborative community, and social justice. The most profound challenge we have is to move away from the disciplinary, role-oriented, and administrative function silos to a more holistic, focused, and integrated preparation of school leaders.

Alberta's Learning Commission Report (2003) has made some bold, controversial, and provocative statements and recommendations regarding preparation, certification, and standards for school leadership. The University of Lethbridge specialization in educational leadership is positioned to respond to the directions in the report. It is also based on recent research into educational leadership practices in Australia, England, and the U.S., incorporating a standards approach with new ideas about programming and teaching and learning. The program, with its inaugural launch in summer 2004, will be scrutinized by an outside evaluation process as to whether or not our design and approach match our rhetoric about them.

NOTES

1. Until 2002 a prospective principal or leadership-oriented teacher could register in the University of Lethbridge general education master degree program and declare a focus in educational administration. The student would complete four required courses of core - addressing curriculum studies, foundations of theory and practice, professional development, and research methods. This core could be supplemented by a series of up to seven graduate and general elective courses, coupled with exit requirements in the form of a project, thesis, or comprehensive exam - completing a course equivalency of 12 courses for the program. The core was initially defined in an external review (Barman, Maguire, & Thomas, 1992) and was developed to provide a base of educational theory for all education master's students regardless of their chosen focus. This program review that informed the structure and the subsequent program development occurred prior to new understandings that have dramatically affected education and leadership throughout the 1990s and into the early years of the 21st century.

An examination of this program structure can be framed around questions of content alignment, relevance, and pedagogy. Are the original purposes that guided the conceptual map for the University of Lethbridge education master's program still relevant for the preparation of school leaders? Does the contemporary context demand that faculty consider the relevance of our current leadership program offering? Does the program content and the pedagogy of curriculum delivery match the evolution of educational leadership programs in the past 15 years?

2. From a societal perspective in Canada, the impact of economic, social, and political developments in the 1990s has had a direct impact on how educators think about schooling and its challenges. Chief among these impacts are the widening gap between the rich and poor, an enhanced value on cultural diversity, the ascendancy of market-driven values, globalization, and a broadening of universal access to information. These developments, as well as institutional changes, an emerging form of community and site-based governance, and new understandings about learning and pedagogy, have all informed leadership program reviews and restructuring initiatives in leadership development worldwide.

3. These include the work of the University Council of Educational Administrators (UCEA), the Interstate School Leaders' Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the National Council for School Leaders (NCSL) in the United Kingdom.

4. Whereas the UCEA knowledge base is likely an accurate depiction of the technical and scholarly aspects of educational administration, it also needs to be recognized primarily in the context of a functionalist framework within which it is embedded, with only marginal representation of the critical reconceptualist notions of school leadership.

5. A significant development in the standards movement was initiated by the ISLLC under the auspices of the Council of Chief State Officers (CCSSO) and in partnership with the National Policy Board of Educational Administration (NPBEA).

6. The ISLLC initiative has since expanded these standards to identify the knowledge, dispositions, and performances that are relevant to maintaining and sustaining these standards in school leadership settings (CCSSO, 1996).

7. Most recently, the standards work in educational leadership has taken another step forward in its efforts to further clarify the knowledge base. In 2002 the NCATE, UCEA, and ISLLC work came together under the umbrella of the National Commission for Advancement in Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP). The NCAELP standards essentially mirror the NCATE standards described above (Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

8. In the K-12 domain, Linda Darling-Hammond and Andy Hargreaves have long been vocal on the tension between standards and standardization on the curriculum and assessment front. This logic, we think, does inform the standards debate within the academy.

9. The University of Saskatchewan's Department of Educational Administration has not been merged with other education departments and offers "a full service" approach at the masters and

doctoral levels. Hickcox and Robinson (2004) contend that such mergers have greatly reduced the visibility and capacity of leadership programs elsewhere. Coral Mitchell (2002), in her President's address to the Canadian Association for the Study of Education of Educational Administration, also speaks to the negative impact of mergers:

...[M]any departments of educational administration were written out of existence in the movement toward integrated studies in Canadian universities. This movement further diluted the scholarship of educational administration because, when we tried to talk to the sociologists and philosophers in our newly constituted mega-departments, we were criticized for following what was considered to be an applied field of study rather than a real discipline. In that kind of environment, organizational and administrative topics dropped off the discourse agenda, and educational administration scholars grew silent.

In Alberta, the University of Calgary has unrolled a doctoral program in educational leadership, with worldwide participants. The University of Alberta has launched new cohorts of master leadership students.

10. The sixteen indicators of decline in educational administration were generated by Hickcox and Robinson (2004) based on a literature review and anecdotal data garnered from professors and practitioners in educational administration over the past few years. The sixteen indicators of decline are as follows:

1. There is a general disenchantment among practitioners with university programs in educational administration.
2. Practitioners increasingly question the relevance of training programs to the practice of educational administration.
3. There has been a decrease in the number of masters and doctoral programs in educational administration in universities.
4. Many educational administration departments in universities have lost their individual identities through amalgamation with other departments, for example, educational foundations, etc.
5. Many of the people recruited by universities to work in educational administration degree programs have little or no background as practicing administrators.
6. There has been an emergence of special interest groups among professors of educational administration, for example, ethnic issues, aboriginal issues, gay issues, women's issues which, while addressing important societal and educational problems, serve to circumscribe the focus on the practice of administration in schools, especially when they dominate the agenda.
7. There has been a move in educational programs in universities toward viewing educational administration solely as field of philosophical inquiry thus divorcing itself from the practice of educational administration.
8. Recruiting efforts by educational administration faculty to encourage practitioners with potential for leadership to opt for advanced study have been haphazard at best.
9. University programs in educational administration have made little effort to attract students outside the immediate geographical area of the university.
10. Increasingly many practitioners seek to gain higher credentialing through degree programs offered by foreign universities which have little sensitivity to the cultural context in which practitioners in Canada work.
11. There has been a decrease in the extent to which ministries and departments of education turn to university departments of educational administration for assistance with educational issues.

12. Fewer high caliber applicants are applying for senior level positions in educational administration, for example, superintendent of schools.
13. The position of school principal is viewed as being less desirable than it formerly was.
14. A serious shortage of well-trained educational administrators is looming across the country and neither governments, nor professional organizations, nor universities have shown much concern.
15. A great many of the persons recruited to school positions as educational administrators today are ill-equipped to understand and deal with many of the emergent issues facing schools, for example, accountability, community involvement, shrinking resources, etc.
16. Most school jurisdictions do not follow appropriate personnel practices in the selection of educational administrators.
11. In Canada the provinces have by constitutional design most of the legislative powers regarding the supervision of publicly-funded education, kindergarten to grade 12. The “school system” usually consists of a hierarchy of three policy and decision-making levels: Ministry (of Education), district or division, and schools within districts/divisions. In Alberta, the name of the Ministry is called Alberta Learning. The system is divided into public, separate (Roman Catholic), and francophone, each of which benefit from somewhat equitable funding. Funding and curriculum and assessment policy are highly centralized. There are a number of charter schools that operate semi-autonomously from district supervision as well as thousands of home schoolers who are supported by district outreach. Provincial achievement tests have been in place since 1982. Educators in the K-12 system are members of the Alberta Teachers’ Association, their professional union. The Alberta Commission on Learning released its report in October 2003 and was the first policy advice commission to undertake a provincial study on the state of Alberta education in 30 years.

12. The collegial nature of leadership work is acknowledged and summed up by NCAELP as follows:

In high performing schools and districts, educators experience enormous degrees of autonomy within a professional collegial community that allows teachers to team for learning of all students. The intensity of instruction and the active engagement of all students in learning increase when five conditions are present in schools: (1) teachers perceive their principals as instructional leaders; (2) the educators in schools hold high and uniform expectations for all students; (3) educators in schools frequently monitor student progress and adjust instruction based upon student performance; (4) educators in schools hold a shared vision and common goals for the school; and (5) a nurturing learning climate is present in the school and supported by a collegial community with high levels of professional autonomy. (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, p. 6)

13. Under the umbrella of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI).

14. The College of Alberta School Superintendents developed and published its leadership standards in 2004. These standards are in the document “Quality standards for school principals” available from <http://cass.website>

15. Our references to standards follows the six ISSLC standards introduced earlier in this article. Standard 7, the internship, was added by ISSLC at a later date following NCATE’s (2000)

revision of the knowledge base.

APPENDIX A Proposed Course Content

APPENDIX B Selected Internet Resources for Educational Leadership Development Programs

A. Leadership Profiles and Checklists

School Leadership: A Profile Document is by Svede and Jeudy-Hugo from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (1997). This Web site is based on Begley's (1994) publication, School Leadership in Canada: A Profile for the 90s. The site includes much of the original text and a list of references and Internet resources. Available from <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/~vsvede/>

The North Central Regional Education Laboratory contains the following links to critical leadership information and topics:

New Leaders for Tomorrow's Schools (full-text versions of back issues). Available from <http://www.ncrel.org/cscd/pubs/newlead.htm>

Leadership Audit Tool: A Participatory Management Checklist, School and Family Involvement Surveys, Schools administrators and parents will find links to three parent involvement surveys at this Web site that will help them examine how their school communicates with parents and the degree to which the families at their school believe the school environment is welcoming. In addition to the survey links, the web site provides information and resources to help plan and assess their school's parent involvement efforts. Available from <http://www.ncrel.org/cscd/proflead.htm>

Urban Learners Leadership Institutes. On this Web site you will find a summary of initiatives to utilize stakeholder leadership teams to bridge student achievement gaps. Available from <http://www.ncrel.org/cscd/ulli/>

NCREL's Pathways to School Improvement server has several Leadership Critical Issues; Building a Collective Vision, Building a Committed Team, Establishing Collaboratives and Partnerships, Creating High-Achieving Learning Environments and Leading and Managing Change and Improvement. Available from <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/le0cont.htm>

The Home site is accessed at <http://www.crel.org/cscd/>

B. Principals' and Teachers' Organizations and their Leadership Resources

1. Coalition of Essential Schools. This site is home for the Ted Sizer initiative to acknowledge the principles for developing successful schools. Available from: <http://www.essentialschools.org/>

2. OUTREACH provides a secure, web-based platform for school districts, offering administrators, teachers, students and parents permission based access to a virtual school district. The task of building or managing a school or district Internet is now possible without any programming. Powerful templates allow for rapid, easy development and maintenance of your digital school district. Users and groups are managed through a secure web interface. Access privileges for users and groups are set through an easy-to-use control panel, allowing secure access to confidential information based on permissions. Web Masters can customize each school site to reflect its own image. Available from: <http://www.schoolnet.com/>

3. The Canadian Association of School Administrators. This site provides a platform for CAP and a new service for its members called the School Leaders Listserv which provides regular clippings of research, reports, media articles, and Internet information for administrators and their school staffs. Available from: <http://www.schoolfile.com/cap.htm>

4. The Education Leaders in Middle and High Schools Web site is from the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Available from: <http://www.principals.org>

5. The Principal Online website is from the National Association of Elementary School Principals. It contains valuable links to other research sites as well as perspectives on current topics of interest. Available from: <http://www.naesp.org/>

6. The American Association of School Administrators website includes articles on “Front Burner Issues,” conferences, programs and American legislative alerts. Available from: <http://www.aasa.org/>

7. The Saskatchewan School-Based Administrators’ Professional Development Program is a modular program that was developed in response to a 1991 initiative from the Saskatchewan School-Based Administrators special subject council. Available from: <http://www.stf.sk.ca/>

8. The Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation website outlines many professional growth opportunities in the area of leadership. Available from: <http://www.stf.sk.ca/>

C. University Educational Leadership Initiatives

1. TCRecord is a Teachers’ College of Columbia University online publication featuring articles on leadership and curriculum issues. Available from: <http://www.tcrecord.org/>

2. Leadership 2000-II is a doctoral studies cohort program in Educational Leadership from the University of Central Florida. Available from: <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~educlead/>

3. UCEA The University Council for Educational Administration is a consortium of 67 major research universities in the United States and Canada. The dual mission of UCEA is to improve the preparation of educational leaders and promote the development of professional knowledge in school improvement and administration. Available from: <http://tiger.coe.missouri.edu/~ucea/>

The UCEA website also links out to the following related websites:

American Association of School Administrators (AASA)

American Educational Research Association (AERA)
AERA Division A
AERA Division L
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
Franklin Pierce Law Center (FPLC)
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE)
National Council of Professors in Educational Administration (NCPEA)
National Education Association (NEA)
National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA)
National School Boards Association (NSBA)

4. The National Commission for Excellence in Educational Leadership

5. The National College for School Leadership

D. Provincial/State Level Leadership Resources and Research

1. The Leadership Critical Issue research website, from Pathways to School Improvement is created by the North Central Regional Education Laboratory. It includes the following topics:

Building a Collective Vision
Building a Committed Team
Establishing Collaboratives and Partnerships
Creating High Achieving Learning Environments
Overview: Leading and Managing Change and Improvement

Each topic includes an overview, goals, options, pitfalls, illustrative cases, contacts and references.

Available from <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/le0cont.htm>

2. The Educational Issues and Information web sites from the Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C. School Trustees' Association include a variety of leadership-related topics. Available from <http://www.ssta.sk.ca/> and <http://www.asba.ab.ca/index.asp> and <http://www.bcsta.org/>

3. The U. S. Department of Education Research and Improvement Reports and Studies website includes a variety of leadership and school reform topics. Available from <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/studies.html>

4. The Role of Leadership in Sustaining School Reform: Voices From the Field (July, 1996) is a report from the U. S. Department of Education. "What 'habits of mind and heart' enable some school leaders to guide successful school change over time? Here's what dozens of successful education leaders across the country said in response to that and other questions on The Role of Leadership in Sustaining School Reform." Available from <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Leadership/>

5. The Links to Staff Development and School Improvement Resources website from the

National Staff Development Council website includes the 10 U.S. regional educational laboratories. Available from <http://www.nsd.org/>

6. ATA Follow the links to rich professional development resources and specialist councils representing key curricula and leadership disciplines. Available from: <http://www.teachers.ab.ca/>

7. CASS Available from: <http://www.cass.ab.ca/>

8. ASCD's Educational Leadership. Available from: <http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlead/elintro.html>

9. Learning Theories and Models of Teaching. Available from: <http://www.cloudnet.com/~edrbsass/edlea.htm>

10. A springboard to numerous associations, councils, and other U.S. national educational organizations. Available from: <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/edu/orgs.html>

11. Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium: Standards for School Leaders. Available from <http://www.ccsso.org/pdfs/isllcstd.pdf>

12. The International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning. Available from: <http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~iejll/>

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