

# Identifying and Assessing Dispositions of Educational Leadership Candidates

Teri Melton

Georgia Southern University

Barbara J. Mallory

Georgia Southern University

James Green

Georgia Southern University

The purpose of this study was to identify educational leadership programs' procedures for the identification and assessment of leadership dispositions. The findings of this cross sectional survey indicated that there is little consistency in practice in defining and assessing dispositions of leadership candidates. While findings indicated that the vast majority (72.2%) of participants rely on either NCATE or ISLLC for the definition of dispositions, there is scant agreement on which leadership dispositions are associated with effective leadership.

## Introduction

For those in the profession of training and developing school leaders, educational leadership program standards have been aligned with *knowledge*, *skills*, and *dispositions*, and more recently with *performance expectations* and *indicators* of the profession. Program success in developing *knowledge* of leadership candidates has been demonstrated through passing scores on state licensing tests. Observations of candidates' skills have provided evidences of successful training in leadership programs. However, unlike *knowledge* and *skills*, for which there is some consensus for definition and for which there is growing agreement on experiences in assessing, the term *dispositions* poses a complex set of problems, in part due to the elusive nature of personality traits implied by the term. There is little consensus on answers to the following questions: What dispositions do effective educational leaders possess? What assessment procedures do educational leadership programs employ? What claims to validity and reliability do identified procedures have? Can, after all, program intervention influence a candidate's dispositions?

The 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's (ISLLC) performance standards included "underlying assumptions, values, and beliefs" (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 6), also known as dispositions. *Dispositions*, defined as values, beliefs, and attitudes, invoke concepts of leaders who hold a wide range of values, such as integrity and honesty, and beliefs,

such as a belief that all students can learn, and attitudes, such as a passion for community mobilization to support schools.

Believing, as McGregor (1960) observed, that a leader's dispositions are instrumental to all aspects of organizational leadership, the Georgia Southern University Educational Leadership Program faculty set out to define the term *dispositions* as a first step in designing a valid and reliable system to assess leadership dispositions. It was unclear from a national perspective how university-based principal preparation programs defined and assessed dispositions of school leaders, and few empirical claims to distinguish dispositions essential for effective leadership. Therefore, we utilized a cross sectional survey design to conduct this descriptive study to gain a broad perspective of how educational leadership programs defined the term *dispositions*, developed procedures for assessing *dispositions*, and identified challenges in assessment of candidate dispositions.

## Review of the Literature

In university-based principal preparation programs, much attention has been given to leadership *dispositions*, in part due to accrediting agencies' standards for training school leaders. Standards adopted by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in the late 1990's and early 2000's were delineated in broad areas of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The new Educational Leadership Policy Standards (ISLLC 2008), adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), were actually "designed to serve as a broad set of national guidelines that states can use as a model for developing or updating their own standards. These standards provide high-level guidance and insight about the traits, functions of work, and responsibilities that states will ask of their school and district leaders" (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 5). Although 2008 ISLLC-based guidelines delineated performance-based expectations, the indicators provided opportunities for states to define more specifically knowledge, skills, and dispositions that university-based educational leadership programs were expected to address in training and developing school leaders.

Educational leadership programs have struggled with efforts at identifying and assessing dispositions (Schulte & Koval, 2005). Among the challenges is defining the term *dispositions*. Although definitions of *dispositions* varied, most researchers in the last decade defined *dispositions* as values, beliefs, and behaviors (Combs, 1974; Fullan, 2002; Perkins, 1995; Schulte & Koval, 2005; Wasicsko, 2000). Ritchhart (2002) has contended that "dispositions concern not only what we can do, our abilities, but what we are actually likely to do, addressing the gap we often notice between our abilities and our actions" (p. 18). Wasicsko defined dispositions as "personal qualities or characteristics that are possessed by individuals, including attitudes, beliefs, interests, appreciations, values,

and modes of adjustment” (p. 2). Simply defined, dispositions were viewed as values and beliefs underlying actions and behaviors, or perceptions (Combs, 1974).

NCATE (2002) has defined professional dispositions as “professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities; these positive behaviors support student learning and development” (p. 89). Dispositions basically inform human behavior through values and beliefs held by an individual. NCATE expects assessment of professional dispositions based on observable behaviors in educational settings.

NCATE expects educational programs, as one example of disposition, to ensure that candidates “demonstrate dispositions that value fairness and learning by all students” in Standard 4. This portrayal of expectations from NCATE assumed that universities taught and assessed leadership dispositions. Murphy (2003) attributed the focus on dispositions in ISLLC Standards to the Consortium’s agreement that values, beliefs, and attitudes of effective school leaders should be an outcome of leadership training. School leaders must demonstrate “an explicit set of values and beliefs to shape their actions in leading schools where all students succeed at high levels” (p. 16). One challenge emerged, therefore, and that was for educational leadership programs to develop an operational definition and system for assessing dispositions, if they were to achieve accreditation through NCATE.

## **Legal, Political, and Professional Challenges**

With the national spotlight on quality of school leaders and increasing pressures from legal, political, and accrediting bodies, it appeared that assessment of dispositions of effective educators fell under even more scrutiny. The legal challenge was one area of concern. In one recent court ruling, *McConnell v. Le Moyne College* (CIR Docket Report, 2006), the Supreme Court of New York ruled that McConnell be reinstated to his Le Moyne College as a teacher education candidate. McConnell had been dismissed from the College of Education based on grounds that his dispositions were not perceived by university educators to be those conducive to a teaching professional. Professors based McConnell’s inappropriate dispositions to teach largely on statements written in a course assignment. The court was critical of the lack of a valid system of disposition assessment in its ruling in support of the student.

One of the problems with defining and assessing dispositions is that higher education inherently resists indoctrination of students in any one belief system. Higher education is generally associated with promoting academic freedom and developing an educated population, not teaching one belief system. Thus, one of the central purposes is to submit all belief systems to critical analysis. In the profession of educational leadership, how-

ever, there is a body of research indicating that an educator's attitudes, values, and beliefs about students and about themselves influence the impact they will have on student learning and development (Collinson, et. al., 1999; Combs, 1974). University-based principal preparation programs have the responsibility to assist candidates to develop an explicit belief system that was associated with effective school leadership (Murphy, 2003). Even though the 1996 ISLLC Standards were criticized for endorsing "a doctrinaire philosophy of educational leadership motivated by a particular vision of social justice and democratic community" (Hess, 2003, p. 13), the fact remains that school leadership is a values-based profession. The challenge for those who prepared school leaders was to define what was meant by "dispositions," ground the beliefs and values in the research base, find appropriate measurement tools, and decide on the implications of shaping dispositions in selecting, preparing, and developing future, effective leaders.

When Ron Edmonds (1979) engaged in effective schools research, he always promoted the idea that the starting point to address challenges in schools is the disposition to address the problem, which is an issue of values held by people involved in the problem. Murphy (2003) has viewed educational administration as fundamentally a moral activity, based on values and beliefs. The inescapable moral nature of leadership work, embedded in the form of purpose and vision, required an understanding of values and beliefs held by those aspiring to become school leaders. Sergiovanni (2006) explained that anyone aspiring to be an effective principal needed to have a sense of what he or she values, something to be committed to, and a moral compass to lead the way.

## **Operationalizing the Definition of Dispositions**

Several studies have attempted to operationalize the definition of dispositions. These studies generally focus on an integration of leadership knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions, as dispositions were thought to underlie leadership behavior. Costa and Kallick (2000) have identified actions, such as persisting, listening with understanding and empathy, thinking about one's own thinking, taking responsible risks, etc., as dispositions. In a study to validate an instrument to assess the practice of co-creating leadership, Wasonga and Murphy (2007) delineated two components of the co-creating leadership process, including dispositions and context. Dispositions consisted of eight factors: trust and trustworthiness, humility, active listening, resilience, egalitarianism, patience, collaboration, and cultural anthropology.

In another study of dispositions at a southeastern university, Martin (2008) assessed dispositions essential for successful school leaders through the lens of four domains: professional demeanor and work habits, relationships, intellectual integrity, and moral and ethical dimensions. Through case study analysis of nine dispositions aligned to each of the domains, Martin found

that educational leadership candidates presented as strengths the dispositions of effort, cooperation and collaboration, being reflective and self-aware, and being open-minded and receptive to unique styles and ideas. The operational definition of dispositions used in the study was provided by her College of Education who expected that every graduate from the Educational Leadership program was expected to be able to:

1. Examine and make appropriate professional decisions based on an advanced understanding of ethics and laws;
2. Advocate full and appropriate access to public education and human services for people with special needs and their families;
3. Care for and relate to students, families, and the larger learning community;
4. Appreciate the value of using research to inform practice;
5. Model life-long learning;
6. Promote an appreciation and understanding of diversity in families and society;
7. Advocate for the development of individuals to their full potential;
8. Display overall dispositions/behavior consistent with expectations of the profession;
9. Respect and cooperate with others.

Finally, in another study of principals who impacted positive working conditions in their schools, principals were described as confident, risk-taking, persistent, and driven to learn (Charlotte Advocates for Education, 2004). These principals were described as individuals who exhibited a belief in developing meaningful relationships with others, and they often demonstrated a sense of humor. Although they performed skills and demonstrated knowledge as many principals do, what set them apart was that their faculty members viewed them as authentic in their behaviors, which they perceived as informed by a strong sense of values and beliefs.

### **Theoretical Underpinning of Transformational Leader Dispositions**

With such variance in the list of dispositions, the investigators of this study referred to leadership theory in an attempt to identify values and beliefs related to effective leadership. First of all, given the focus on development of transformational leaders in university-based principal preparation programs, the researchers turned to Burns' views of values inherent in his conceptualization of transformational leadership. While studies of transformational leaders have been somewhat focused on behaviors of effective leaders, Burns conception of transformational leadership is in part grounded in a moral approach to leadership. In Burns' (1998) view of transformational leadership, he clarified three types of leadership values: ethical; modal; and end. He described ethical values as "old-fashioned

character tests, such as sobriety, . . . kindness, altruism,” (p. x) and other rules of conduct. He explained that these values were essential for status quo kinds of leaders who need to maintain good community relations in a stable environment. Modal values (such as integrity, honesty, and accountability) were described by Burns as necessary for transactional leaders who depend on others to live up to promises and agreements. His description of ends values (such as liberty, equality, justice, and community), however, constituted core values of his view of a transformational leader, one who seeks substantive changes in the organization. This view of values yielded some insight into what makes a leader and what makes a leader effective. Human values elevated to action in the realm of democratic values must be considered an important dimension of the transformational leader.

In another theoretical approach to leadership, McGregor (1960) viewed leadership as the human side of enterprise, as he explained assumptions of Theory X/Theory Y. Cunningham and Cordeiro (2009) described leadership based on Theory Y assumptions as facilitating, supportive of efforts by subordinates to develop and express themselves, and to act in the best interests of the school. Bennis (2006) reviewed McGregor’s work on Theory X/Theory Y to conclude that Theory Y is prevalent in 21st century leadership training literature. He summed up the themes of Theory Y in the following propositions:

- Active participation by all involved;
- A transcending concern with individual dignity, worth, and growth;
- Reexamination and resolution of the conflict between individual needs and organizational goals, through effective interpersonal relationships between superiors and subordinates;
- A concept of influence that relies not on coercion, compromise, evasion or avoidance, pseudosupport, or bargaining, but on openness, confrontation, and “working through” differences;
- A belief that human growth is self-generated and furthered by an environment of trust, feedback, and authentic human relationships. (p. xvi)

These propositions, translated as values and beliefs, roughly identified dispositions necessary for effective Theory Y leadership in schools. The problem that remained, however, was the assessment of dispositions.

### **Assessment of Leadership Candidate Dispositions**

If identifying dispositions was the first step, then developing a method to assess dispositions was the second step for educational leadership faculty. As there has been some work in developing valid and reliable measurements of educator dispositions (Wasicsko, 2000), these efforts were in the area of assessing teacher dispositions. One promising approach in measuring effective teacher dispositions was developed by Combs (1974) who found perceptual orientation to be at the root of an individual’s set of dispositions. How one views self, others, purpose, and frame of reference deter-

mined his/her behaviors, as behavior was influenced by perceptions in Combs' theoretical framework (Wasicsko et al, n.d.). Combs' framework led to the development of a teacher disposition index based on perceptual orientation research (Wasicsko et al). Combs researched the notion that the effective teacher could be defined as a unique human being with certain characteristics. Combs found that effective teachers have similar perceptions, or dispositions, about themselves, students, and the task of teaching, including: perceptions of self as able, positive, and identified with diverse groups; perceptions of others as able, dependable, and worthy; perceptions of the purpose of education as freeing, self revealing, and larger; and a frame of reference that is people-oriented, open, and focusing on personal meaning. In his studies, Combs used high inference, clinical assessments to observe teachers and observe behavior backwards to the underlying perceptions. He discovered very high levels of inter rater reliability when raters were trained with perceptual rubrics that were then applied to classroom observations, written human relations incidents (HRI), and interviews. Most importantly, Combs found that perceptual factors could distinguish between effective and ineffective teachers. Although Combs' work proved fundamental to later work in identifying teacher dispositions, there was no consensus about which dispositions were essential or how dispositions might be used for selecting and educating teachers, primarily due to the difficulty encountered in assessing them.

Following Combs' work, Wasicsko (1977) developed and tested self-instructional materials that were used in selecting teachers using perceptual scales. School superintendents were able to make reliable perceptual assessments of teachers and teacher candidates using the instrument developed by Wasicsko, referred to as the Perceptual Rating Scale. This promising work provided insight into authentic assessment methods that may be used in assessment of leadership behaviors and perceptions (dispositions) underlying these behaviors of effective school leaders.

In educational leadership, few instruments existed to assess leadership dispositions. Schulte and Koval (2005) developed the Administrator Dispositions Index (ADI) to assess development of positive dispositions in candidates seeking an administrative endorsement. The ADI, which was developed by aligning the items of the ADI with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, was a 36-item questionnaire, containing a 19-item community-centered subscale and a 17-item student-centered subscale. It had been used in some principal preparation programs as a checklist or self-assessment, followed by a clinical assessment by which to compare scores.

Lindahl (2009) conducted a qualitative study to examine to what extent and how dispositions were taught and assessed in educational leadership programs. From 34 interviews, he found almost all respondents believed that dispositions were a key factor in principal preparation. However, the respondents also reported that colleagues did not hold dispositions in same high regard. Almost all respondents identified familiarity with dispositions

found in 1996 ISLLC standards. Many of the respondents discussed dispositions they described as embedded in their courses, such as courage to care, compassionate judgment, etc. Other respondents cited ELCC standards and a few cited state standards that contained specific dispositions. In sum, Lindahl found that emphasis given to dispositions seemed to vary across programs and were taught by individual professors. Dispositions were most frequently taught in the curriculum through field-based experiences, but most respondents reported that their programs were making an effort to teach and evaluate dispositions.

However, Lindahl (2009) also observed confusion between professional dispositions and professional expectations professors hold for students. Was getting to class on time indicative of a disposition or a professor's expectation? Assessment practices also varied widely, with some programs assessing dispositions at admissions through letters of reference and others assessing with checklists used in coursework. One program described an assessment center used in admission of candidates. However, he found relatively few programs that believed they were identifying and assessing dispositions well. Based on findings of the study, Lindahl concluded that faculty had not considered reliability of an assessment. He advocated for the need for further study of reliable assessment practices.

Rea, Carter, and Valesky (2009) described program development of an instrument to assess educational leadership candidates' dispositions based on the ISLLC 2008 standards. The faculty at their university, after adopting the list of dispositions from the CCSSO Performance Expectations and Indicators (2008) document, developed a self-reporting instrument to assess patterns of dispositions for individuals and groups. They reported initial concerns about self-reporting, and they worked to develop a behavioral reporting measure. In another university program, Williams (2009) also described a self-assessment measure of the dispositions of principal interns, which was aligned with 1996 ISLLC Standards. Even though self reporting was not the most reliable means for assessment, it seemed universities were turning to checklists and self-assessments of dispositions. However, it remained unclear how most universities defined the list and designed and employed assessment that accompanied the list of dispositions.

Decisions made concerning the role of dispositions in educational leadership programs cannot be taken lightly. As there was little literature that provided a comprehensive view of the status of assessment of leadership dispositions, we designed a study to report progress that educational leadership programs were making toward identifying and implementing policies and practices pertaining to dispositions, as well as challenges in the process.

## **Problem Statement**

Accepting that assumptions, values, beliefs, and attitude underlie effective leader behaviors, the central issue that motivated the researchers of this

study was to determine methods of identifying and assessing dispositions, or values and beliefs, currently being used in educational leadership programs throughout the United States. A review of the literature indicates that dispositions are defined and operationalized by a wide variety of descriptors. The literature review also indicated that we lack a common understanding of how to define dispositions. Although much work had been conducted in the assessment of teacher dispositions, little evidence existed that educational leadership programs had designed authentic assessment systems. The purpose of this study was to identify educational leadership programs procedures for the identification and assessment of leadership dispositions.

## Methodology

We utilized a cross sectional survey design to conduct this descriptive study. Several research questions guided the investigation:

1. How do educational leadership programs define the term “dispositions?”
2. What procedures do educational leadership programs utilized for assessing dispositions?
3. What do educational leadership programs perceive as challenges in assessing the dispositions of candidates?

The sample for the study was derived from a list of over 500 educational leadership professors identified through an online directory maintained by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA). From this list, 265 were identified as program coordinators. We then used *SurveyMonkey*<sup>TM</sup> to distribute the survey instrument to 125 program coordinators whose e-mail addresses we determined were current and who agreed to complete the survey after an initial contact.

We then analyzed data from the closed-end items for frequencies, percents, and confidence intervals, which allowed us to describe how educational leadership programs were attempting to assess leadership dispositions. Then, we analyzed the data from the open-ended items to determine patterns and themes regarding how educational leadership professors perceive the challenges attendant to assessing dispositions.

## Findings

A total of 43 program coordinators responded to the survey for a 34.40% rate of response, which is consistent with the average for surveys collected via e-mail (Sheehan, 2001). A sample of this size, of course, will not allow a strong claim of generalizability. However, survey research experts continue to debate the importance of sample size, arguing instead for the importance of the quality of the sample (AAPOR, 2010; Blair & Zinhan, 2006; Keeter et al., 2006; Visser et al., 1996). Given the selection criterion for the sample (i.e., program coordinator) and the institutional characteris-

tics represented by the sample, we are confident that participants were well informed on the issues addressed by the research questions and that their responses are informative to other program coordinators and professors of educational administration.

A large proportion of the participants represented public institutions (73.0%) and were accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (75.7%). Nearly half (42.10%) represented institutions that offered the doctorate in addition to masters and specialists degrees. When asked about procedures for assessing leadership dispositions, a similarly large proportion (70.00%) reported that their programs did, indeed, have a formal procedure. The similar proportion of institutions having NCATE accreditation and also having a formal system for leadership dispositions assessment does prompt one to speculate how much the NCATE standard on assessment is factor in whether a program chooses to have a system at all.

When we asked how institutions defined “dispositions,” responses varied; but a majority indicated that they drew upon NCATE (44.4%,  $N = 16$ ) or Interstate School Leaders Licensing Consortium (ISLLC) (27.8%,  $N = 10$ ). Analysis of the constructed responses, however, revealed that some of the participants were willing to question the theoretical basis for these definitions. One called the expectation that programs assess dispositions “bad science” and questioned whether research on leadership has produced a set of “necessary dispositions.”

The frequency of assessment ranged from once at the beginning of the program to three times—the beginning, mid-point, and end. Nearly half (47.3%,  $N = 17$ ) of the respondents reported that they conducted assessments at least twice. The actual administration of the assessment appears to vary widely. No clear trend emerged when participants were asked who conducts the assessment, except for one: Less than a quarter of the programs (22.2%,  $N = 8$ ) used a panel of faculty. This observation, of course, begs the question of the strength of inter-rater reliability in many of the systems in use.

The issue of inter-rater reliability surfaced again when participants indicated the method utilized for assessing the leadership dispositions of their candidates. A definite pattern was observed, with 61% ( $N = 20$ ) reporting that the candidates’ advisors use an instrument that lists desired leadership dispositions and the advisors scoring the candidates’ on a scale for each disposition. Another 27.3% ( $N = 9$ ) reported the same method, but with practicum supervisors serving as the raters. About a quarter (24.2%,  $N = 3$ ) of the participants reported using standardized instruments, although no single standardized instrument emerged as one of choice. A small proportion (15.2%,  $N = 5$ ) utilize qualitative analysis of candidate responses to case studies, and a smaller proportion utilize interviews conducted with protocols designed for assessing leadership dispositions (12.1%,  $N = 4$ ).

Participants were divided on what they perceived to be the problems associated with the assessment of dispositions. Participants registered multi-

ple problems with their system for assessing leadership dispositions. “Inter-rater reliability” (38.2%, N = 11), “Validity of the instrument that we use” (38.2%, N = 13), “Time it takes to administer the assessment and analyze the data” (32.4%, N = 11), and “Finding agreement on the leadership dispositions that should be assessed” (26.5%, N = 9) were reported with nearly equal concern. Further, several registered skepticism that leadership dispositions could, indeed, be assessed.

Given that “finding agreement on the leadership dispositions that should be addressed” was an aspect that over a quarter of the participants identified as problematic, it is not surprising to learn that participants reported a variety of sources for determining which leadership dispositions should be addressed. Dispositions that appeared in the 1996 edition of the ISLLC *Standards for School Leaders* were reported as the most frequent source (39.4%, N = 13); however, the remainder (60.6%, N = 20) of participants reported that their faculties either created their own list of dispositions or they consulted sources other than ISLLC. Analysis of the responses given as “other” did not reveal any particular trend; sources varied from the *Educational Leaders Constituents Council Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership* to state departments of education standards to academic papers on leadership dispositions. Among the open-ended responses, one participant correctly pointed out, however, that the most recent edition of ISLLC standards no longer includes a list of dispositions for each of the standards. The fact that educational leadership program faculties have difficulty agreeing upon a definitive list, not to mention finding one that is current, underscores the difficulties inherent in assessing leadership dispositions.

Finally, participants were asked to rate how useful they found their system for assessing leadership dispositions. Responses fell into a normal distribution as 19.4% (N = 6) indicated that their system was “very useful,” 61.3% (N = 19) reported rated their system as “somewhat useful,” and 19.4% (N = 6) checked “not useful.” When interpreting this observation, it is important to note that participants were asked to rate their own system; they were not asked to express an opinion on assessment of leadership dispositions in general. Of course, this distribution of responses allows one to take either a “glass half full” or “glass half empty” perspective, and perhaps the only safe conclusion that can be drawn is that participants are willing to acknowledge that there is much more work to be done on the subject of leadership dispositions.

## Discussion

The educational leadership profession has made some progress in the challenges surrounding the definition, assessment, and development of leadership dispositions. Explicit assumptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes of effective leaders are difficult to define, and even more difficult to assess and relate to leadership performance. The findings of this study indicated that

there is little consistency in practice in defining and assessing dispositions of leadership candidates, although some attempts have been made. Accepting that leadership style and leadership behaviors emanate from one's assumptions, values, beliefs, attitudes, and accepting that democratic leadership values cause people to move toward mature behaviors (Burns, 1998; Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009), more work is needed in the understanding of dispositions of effective educational leaders and how dispositions are related to behaviors that create supportive working conditions for teaching and improved learning environments for students.

While findings indicated that the vast majority (72.2%,  $N = 26$ ) of participants rely on either NCATE or ISLLC for the definition of dispositions, there is scant agreement on what are those leadership dispositions associated with school improvement, which has proven to be problematic for 26.5% ( $N = 9$ ) of study participants. Research is needed to identify those assumptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes that support the foundation of positive leadership behaviors, and then to have those dispositions accepted by principal preparation programs nationally. However, that is only the first step in the process of developing an effective leader. It is also essential to develop authentic methods in assessing the dispositions. Findings of this study indicated that the administration of current assessment is problematic in terms of the labor intensity (32.4%,  $N = 11$ ), lack of inter-rater reliability for those who assessed vis—vis multiple raters (38.2%,  $N = 13$ ), and lack of a valid instrument (38.2%,  $N = 13$ ).

While Wasiczko, et al (2009) cautioned that the creation of an integrated dispositions construct is an arduous, multi-year task that requires much thought, effort, and commitment by the faculty, educational leadership programs have begun the work of developing belief systems in their candidates, as evidenced in this study and in the literature. To date, Schulte and Koval (2005) have validated an administrator dispositions index, which they suggested could be used to integrate dispositions of effective school leaders into the curricula of administrator preparation programs. Professors at Georgia Southern University have been working to validate a scenario-based instrument to assess dispositions of candidates enrolled in their educational leadership programs.

We recommend that future work move toward the development of a cost efficient, labor sensitive, valid, and reliable instrument for the measurement of leadership dispositions be created and standardized with psychometric properties. This instrument could be widely used by individuals seeking a candidate who has the appropriate assumptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes essential to school improvement. In addition, such an instrument would be useful for those of us in leadership preparation programs who seek to prepare those individuals who have the dispositions necessary for effective school leadership. With such promising work in development, we are confident that educational leadership professors will meet the challenges of defining, assessing, and further developing appropriate dispositions of effective leaders-in-training.

## Conclusions

In this era of accountability and performance-based standards, aspiring or current school leaders must not only be aware of their dispositions to lead, they must have the positive dispositions that will lead to school improvement. Having knowledge and performing skills and functions of leadership are not enough in today's learning environment. Undoubtedly, dispositions guide behaviors. Just as dispositions guide behaviors of teachers, dispositions also guide the behaviors of principals. However, the question remains: What dispositions are associated with behaviors that lead to the creation and sustainability of an improved learning environment, and how can those dispositions be measured?

Just as teachers' dispositions are assessed and developed, we believe it is possible to meet the challenge of identifying, assessing, and impacting leader dispositions. Being effective as a leader means not only being proficient in leadership performances that lead to effective teaching and learning in schools, but also being a leader who can positively transform education. We contend that the acquisition of knowledge through coursework and the attainment of skills through practice only partly comprise a leadership preparation program. Prospective school leaders may also develop the positive assumptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes associated with effective leadership.

## References

- American Association for Public Opinion Research. (2010). *Response rates—an overview*. Retrieved from <http://www.aapor.org/responserateanoverview>
- Bennis, W. (2006). Foreword to the twenty-fifth anniversary printing. In D. McGregor, *The human side of the enterprise: Annotated edition* (p. xvi). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Blair, E., & Zinhan, G. M. (2006). Nonresponse and generalizability in academic research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Research*, 34(1), 4–7.
- Burns, J. M. (1998). Foreword. In J. B. Ciulla, (Ed.). *Ethics, the heart of leadership*, (pp. ix–xii). Westport, CT: Quorum.
- Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004). *Role of principal leadership in increasing teacher retention: Creating a supportive environment*. Retrieved June 28, 2009, from <http://www.advocatesfored.org/principalstudy.html>
- CIR Docket Report. (2006). *Le Moyne's 'Disposition'—Unlawful*. Retrieved from [http://www.cirusa.org/media/docket%20report\\_summer06.pdf](http://www.cirusa.org/media/docket%20report_summer06.pdf)
- Collinson, V., Killeavy, M., & Stephenson, H. (1999, October). Exemplary teachers: Practicing and ethic of care in England, Ireland, and the United States. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education*, 5(4), 340–66.
- Combs, A.W. (1974). Humanistic goals of education in *Educational Accountability: A Humanistic Perspective*. San Francisco: Shields.

- Costa, A. & Kallick, B. (2000). *Discovering and exploring habits of mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- The Council of Chief State School Officers. Educational leadership policy standards: ISLLC 2008. Retrieved from: <http://www.ccsso.org/publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=365>
- Cunningham, W. G., & Cordeiro, P. A. (2009). *Educational leadership: A bridge to improved practice*. (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Edmonds, R. (1979). Some schools work and more can. *Social Policy* 9(2), 28–32.
- Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16–20.
- Hess, F. M. (2003, January). A license to lead? A new leadership agenda for America's schools. Progressive Policy Institute.
- Keeter, S., Kennedy, C., Dimock, M., Best, J., & Craighill, P. (2006). Gaining the impact of growing nonresponse on estimates from a nation RDD telephone survey. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 70(5), 759–779.
- Lindahl, R. (2009). Teaching and assessing dispositions in principal-preparation programs: A conundrum. In C.M. Achilles, B.J. Irby, G. Perreault, & B. Alford (Eds.). *2009 Yearbook of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration* (pp. 15–36). Lancaster, PA: Proactive.
- Martin, T. (2008). *The relationship between the leadership styles of principals and school culture*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA.
- McGregor, D. (1960). *The human side of the enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Murphy, J. (2003). *Reculturing educational leadership: The ISLLC standards 10 years out*. Retrieved March 19, 2009 from: [http://www.npbea.org/Resources/ISLLC\\_10\\_years\\_9-03.pdf](http://www.npbea.org/Resources/ISLLC_10_years_9-03.pdf)
- National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators (NCATE). (2002). Professional standards for the accreditation of schools, colleges, and departments of education. WA, DC: National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. Retrieved March 15, 2008, from <http://www.ncate.org>
- Perkins, D. (1995). *Outsmarting I.Q.: The emerging science of learnable intelligence*. New York: The Free Press.
- Rea, D. C., Carter, C. F., & Valesky, T. C. (2009, October). *Development of an instrument for assessing dispositions of educational leadership candidates*. Paper presented at the meeting of Southern Regional Council of Educational Administration (SRCEA), Atlanta, GA.
- Ritchhart, R. (2002). *Intellectual character: What it is, why it matters, and how to get it*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Sanders, N. M., & Kearney, K. M. (Eds.). (2008). *Performance expectations and indicators for education leaders: An ISLLC-based guide to implementing leader standards and a companion guide to the educational leadership policy standards: ISLLC 2008*. Retrieved from <http://www.ccsso.org/publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=365>

- Schulte, L. E., & Kowal, P. (2005). The validation of the Administrator Dispositions Index. *Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development*, 17, 5–87.
- Sergiovanni, T. (2006). *The principalship: A reflective practice approach*. Boston: Pearson.
- Sheehan, K. (2001). E-mail survey response rates: A review. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 6(2). Retrieved from <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol6/issue2/sheehan.html>
- Visser, P. S., Krosnick, J. A., Marquette, J., & Curtin, M. (1996). Mail surveys for election forecasting? An evaluation of the Columbia Dispatch Poll. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 60, 181–227.
- Wasonga, T. A., & Murphy, J. (2007). Co-creating leadership dispositions. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 35(2), 20–31.
- Wasicsko, M. M. (1977). Improving teacher selection using perceptual inference in the teacher selection process. ERIC, Item # ED193195.
- Wasicsko, M. M. (2000). The dispositions to teach. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved from <http://www.educatordispositions.org/dispositions/The%20Dispositons%20to%20Teach.pdf>
- Wasicsko, M. M., Callahan, C. J., & Wirtz, P. (n.d.). Integrating dispositions into the conceptual framework: Four a priori questions. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved from <http://www.educatordispositions.org/dispositions/four%20a%20priori%20questions.pdf>
- Williams, H. (2009). An Evaluation of Principal Interns Performance on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards. *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*, 26(4), 1–7. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalforum.com/Electronic%20Journal%20Volumes/Williams,%20Henry%20S%20An%20Evaluation%20of%20Principal%20Interns.pdf>