

2012

## Educational Leadership Program Effectiveness: Evaluation From Graduates and Their Principals

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### Recommended Citation

Patterson, Judith; Jiang, Binbin; Chandler, Mary; and Chan, Tak Cheung (2012) "Educational Leadership Program Effectiveness: Evaluation From Graduates and Their Principals," *Georgia Educational Researcher*. Vol. 9: Iss. 1, Article 3.

DOI: 10.20429/ger.2012.090103

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/gerjournal/vol9/iss1/3>

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# Educational Leadership Program Effectiveness: Evaluation From Graduates and Their Principals

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of an educational leadership program through the perceptions of its recent graduates and their school principals. Graduates who obtained leadership positions after graduation were surveyed and interviewed regarding their perception of their program preparation. Principals of these graduates were also interviewed by the researchers to solicit their feedback regarding essential program components of an educational leadership program to meet future challenges. Findings of this study highlighted program areas that met the educational demands and identified program areas that needed improvement.

## Keywords

Educational leadership, Practicum experience, Leadership practicum experiences, Educational leadership program

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## **EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS: EVALUATION FROM GRADUATES AND THEIR PRINCIPALS**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of an educational leadership program through the perceptions of its recent graduates and their school principals. Graduates who obtained leadership positions after graduation were surveyed and interviewed regarding their perception of their program preparation. Principals of these graduates were also interviewed by the researchers to solicit their feedback regarding essential program components of an educational leadership program to meet future challenges. Findings of this study highlighted program areas that met the educational demands and identified program areas that needed improvement.

*Keywords:* educational leadership, practicum experience, leadership practicum experiences, educational leadership program

### Introduction

The Master of Educational Leadership Program at a state university in the southeast U.S. is established with the purpose of offering high quality education to prepare educational leaders to meet administrative challenges of public schools today. It is designed to be a 32 credit hour program to include nine courses of three hours each plus two semesters' practicum experiences and two semesters' portfolio development courses. Most of the faculty in the program has doctoral degrees in educational administration and previous public school administrative experiences. The program is designed to meet the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards engaging candidates in a face-to-face instructional setting with emphasis on case studies, simulations, field projects and practical activities. Contents of the program cover major educational leadership areas including current issues of educational leadership, curriculum and instructional leadership, personnel, school finance, educational facilities, school law, ethics, multiculturalism and educational research. Practicum leadership experiences are offered to program candidates in collaboration with public schools. In addition, the program is strongly supported by availability of updated technology at the university. After four years of operation, some of the program graduates are beginning to assume leadership positions as administrative assistants, assistant principals and principals in public schools. It is important to track program graduates and to monitor their professional growth because graduates' perceptions of the adequacy of their program

preparation combined with their respective employers' responses on program practicality will provide valuable feedback to program developers.

### Conceptual Framework

#### *Educational Leadership Program Improvement*

The body of professional literature continues to grow with information suggesting ways to improve educational leadership preparation programs. Researchers note that emerging and promising practices for program improvement begin with engaging in thorough and honest program review (Gupton, 1998). Additional promising trends for program improvement include: becoming amenable to both nontraditional and innovative approaches (Hoban, Neu, & Castle, 2003), understanding how adults learn (Daresh 1997; Kraus & Cordeiro, 1995; Restine, 1997), fostering the development of appropriate dispositions (Lee & Keiffer, 2003; Richardson & Lane, 1994; Roberts, Lindsey, & Jones, 2003; Sorenson & Machell, 1996), and becoming more outcome based (Brogan, 1994; Laing & Bradshaw, 2003). The utilization of portfolio assessment (Creasap, Peters, Uline, 2005; Marcoux, Brown, Irby, & Lara-Alecio, 2003; Milstein, 1996; Wilmore & Erlandson, 1995) is also viewed as a significant part of program reform. Additionally, many experts speak of the importance of mentoring (Coleman, Low, Bush, & Chew, 1996; Creasap, Peters, & Uline, 2005; Gordon & Moles, 1994; Jacobson, 1996; Kraus, 1996), networking (Parkay & Currie, 1992), integrating technology (Sherman & Beaty, 2007), and cultivating more transformative and relational leadership styles (Preis, Grogan, Sherman, & Beaty, 2007).

#### *Professional Standards as Guidance for Program Development*

The use of state and national standards as a way to strengthen educational leadership programs (Lashway, 1997) has been commonly practiced. One example of such use of standards can be seen in Georgia where the ELCC Standards have been adopted (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002). These standards have become part of the foundation for the newly adopted state standards from Georgia's Professional Standards Commission (PSC) in 2007. Other standards include the Georgia Board of Regents' newly developed Ten Strands that mandate the contents of educational leadership programs (Georgia Board of Regents, 2007). Regional agencies, such as Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), urge educational leadership program developers to respond to criticisms and suggestions from the field to redesign course contents and programs that meet the needs of principals, and to ensure that essential knowledge and skills are mastered (Fry, O'Neil, & Bottoms, 2006).

In the recent Race to the Top Application for Georgia, the document indicates that Georgia has completely redesigned its standards and programs for leadership preparation under the new Educational Leadership rule 505-2.300. The new guidelines replace outdated approaches with those that are research-based and place importance on characteristics found in exemplary leadership programs that include a rigorous candidate selection process, a blend of theory and practice, real-world guidance from practitioners,

and well-designed and supervised internships (Georgia's Race to the Top Application, 2010, p. 182). In addition, the University System of Georgia and the PSC have emphasized their support for leadership preparation programs to include systematic and diverse clinical experiences (Georgia Race to the Top, 2010, p. 132).

### *University and School District Collaboration*

Collaboration between university educational leadership programs and school districts proceed in various formats. Joint effort in program design is common (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Simmons, Grogan, Preis, Matthews, Smith-Anderson, Walls, & Jackson, 2007). Collaboration in instructional delivery takes formats such as: practicing administrators team-teaching with university faculty; seminars offered by school or district administrators (Aiken, 2001; Clark & Clark, 1997; Milstein & Krueger, 1997); and university courses or entire programs offered on-site within school districts (Grogan & Roberson, 2002; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Whitaker, King, & Vogel, 2004).

### *Practicum Experiences as Significant Program Activities*

Most programs commonly design instructional leadership coursework and internship into two separate components (Hackmann & Price, 1995; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Milstein & Krueger, 1997). In the internship component, effective veteran administrators serve as mentors to leadership preparation program candidates (Aiken, 2001; Whitaker & Barnett, 1999). Krueger and Milstein (1995) suggest that internship experiences allow students to integrate practice with new knowledge while being mentored by practicing administrators. Research indicates that first-year principals with an intern experience were not only statistically better at the critical tasks related to the principal's role, but also significantly more confident than those without an internship experience (Jean & Evans, 1995; Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin, & Wilson, 1996). In addition, in the study of Jiang, Patterson, Chandler, and Chan (2009), collaboration among supervisors, mentors and candidates was highly recommended to achieve truly effective practicum experiences.

### *Stakeholders Help Program Improvement*

Researchers (Crews & Weakley 1995; Van Berkum, Richardson, & Lane, 1994) submit that listening to the participants and attending to their individual needs as a path to program improvement is worthwhile. Bartell (1994) surveyed 2,500 stakeholders of educational leadership programs in California to seek program improvement recommendations. In pursuit of the same effort, Jiang, Patterson, Chandler, and Chan (2009) solicited the perceptions of stakeholders (practicum supervisors, mentors, and candidates) in a Georgia educational leadership program and disclosed many otherwise unknown facts to better manage leadership practicum activities. In a study by Chan (2009), university faculty was surveyed to examine their perceptions of a performance-based educational leadership program, whereas Lovette (1997) describes leadership program improvement through the professional perspectives of current school principals.

On the other hand, recognizing the challenges and difficulties in the transition of first-year administrators (Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1994; Henderson, 2002; Lyons, 1992) provides valuable feedback to better educational leadership programs. Meanwhile, educational leadership program graduates were also surveyed to provide feedback for program improvement. Chan, Richardson, and Pool (2003) ask what graduates actually learn in the program. Specific areas of the educational leadership program were also investigated through the perceptions of the program graduates such as preparations in diversity (Chan, 2006), technology (Redish & Chan, 2007), and special education (Angelle & Bilton, 2009).

### *Summary of Conceptual Framework*

In a brief review of current literature, the researchers found that program developers of educational leadership programs continue to seek for ways to better the programs in content and delivery. One of the best ways is to involve the stakeholders of the program since they all play respectively responsible roles in the entire process of educational leader preparation. The literature reviewed above has provided a solid conceptual foundation on which this study is based. How perceptions of stakeholders can be transferred to the improvement of educational leadership program has yet to be studied further.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how effective an educational leadership program was in fulfilling the educational needs of local school systems. Facing real world issues in their leadership positions, program graduates could honestly reflect on how well their program had prepared them for effective performance. Additionally, principals who hired these graduates as beginning administrators were in unique supervisory positions to identify graduates' strengths and areas needing improvement as a result of program preparation. Findings of this study would confirm program areas that met the educational demands and areas that needed improvement.

### Research Questions

1. How do educational leadership graduates perceive their program preparation in meeting the challenges of their first leadership position?
2. Do gender, ethnicity, current position, and school level make any difference in graduates' perceptions of their preparation in an educational leadership program?
3. What are program graduates' specific suggestions and feedback regarding the program offering and content effectiveness?
4. What do school principals perceive essential components that a successful educational leadership program should entail?

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

The study was designed to take both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Program graduates were surveyed and a selected group of graduates and their employers were interviewed. The researchers believe that the use of both approaches will present a more holistic picture of the program quality and the specific areas needing improvement as identified from the different perspectives. This mixed methodology approach allows researchers to obtain an overall picture of respondents' perceptions while providing them an opportunity to elaborate their point of views (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

### *Participants*

Educational Leadership Program graduates of this university in the last four years were contacted and surveyed (390) with 150 of the graduates completing the survey (38.5%). Twelve of the responding graduates who had assumed leadership positions in public schools (from K-12) were interviewed. In addition, the twelve school principals of the respective graduates were also interviewed in this study. Selection of interviewees was based on school level and school system where the graduates and their principals were located. They were administrators from six elementary schools, three middle schools and three high schools in six different school districts in the metro-Atlanta area.

Of the 150 participants completing the survey, 78 (51.7%) were from elementary schools, 34 (22.8%) from middle schools, 28 (18.8%) from high schools, and 10 (6.7%) from district offices. A majority of the participants were female (82.5%) and most of them were either Caucasians (78.4%) or African Americans (14.8%). Academically, 140 of the participants (93.2%) held a Master's degree in Education and 10 of them (6.8%) held either Doctoral or Education Specialist degrees. Seventy-six participants (50.7%) had teaching experience of 6-10 years. In their current positions, 103 participants (68.5%) were classroom teachers, 13 (8.7%) were administrative assistants, 14 (9.4%) were assistant principals, and 20 (13.4%) were either at the district level or on special assignments.

### *Research Instruments*

A survey instrument based on the ELCC Standards was designed by the researchers to solicit the graduates' perception of their program preparation (see Appendix A). The first seven questions related to demographic variables regarding the survey respondents. The next 34 items were related to participants' perceptions of the extent to which they were effectively prepared by the program. ELCC Standard 1 (school vision of learning) was reflected in Items 1 and 2. ELCC Standard 2 (student learning and staff professional growth) was reflected in Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. ELCC Standard 3 (fiscal business and safe school environment) was reflected in Items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 26. ELCC Standard 4 (community relations and diversity) was reflected in Items 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, and 33. ELCC Standard 5 (professional ethics) was reflected in

Items 27, 28 and 30. ELCC Standard 6 (political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context) was reflected in Items 31, 32, and 34. All the 34 items were designed to be rated on a continuous 4-point Likert scale to solicit program graduates' perception of how well the program prepared them for their school leadership jobs (1 = Not Prepared; 2 = Somewhat Prepared; 3 = Adequately Prepared; 4 = Exceptionally Prepared). The last part in the survey was open-ended to solicit qualitative comments from the graduates regarding the appropriateness of the program.

The instrument was professionally examined in content, format, and language by a panel of ten school principals and university faculty in education. The panel of judges was selected because of their familiarization with the ELCC Standards and their involvement in the educational leadership preparation program. The panel's constructive recommendations were incorporated in revising the instrument. Revisions included reshaping the language used in the survey, an addition of two more questions and the deletion of one. It was then pilot-tested with 17 graduating candidates. Internal consistency of the instrument was determined using a Cronbach Test, resulting in an overall alpha value of .693.

Follow-up interview questions (see Appendix B) for both the selected graduates and their respective principals were designed to solicit respondents' direct input on the pros and cons of the educational leadership program and a request for improvement recommendations. These interview questions were focused on five major areas that researchers determined to pursue further after reviewing the results of the quantitative survey. These five areas were: essential elements of an educational leadership program, suggestions for course additions or deletions, program areas needing most improvement, improvements to educational leadership practicum experiences, and workshop suggestions.

### *Data Analysis*

Graduates' response as their perception was the dependent variable in the study. Individual item responses were summed to a total overall response to be analyzed by descriptive statistics: percentages, means, and standard deviations. Graduates' responses were also analyzed by a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if independent variables (gender, ethnicity, current position, and school level) made any difference in the perceptions of program preparation. Qualitative data from graduates and their principals were analyzed by categorizing the data into five major leadership themes: essential program requirements, suggested course additions or deletions, areas needing most improvement, ways to improve practicum, and workshop suggestions. Consistencies and patterns of responses from graduates and principals were closely observed and monitored. The researchers continued to look for other themes that could possibly emerge in the data analysis process.



## Findings

Findings of this study are reported below in the order of the research questions, followed by a summary:

*1. How do educational leadership graduates perceive their program preparation as adequate in meeting the challenges of their first leadership position?*

Results of data analysis indicated that educational leadership program graduates rated their program preparation to be above average (3.01 out of a 4 point scale with  $SD=.49$ ). Graduates' preparation in areas of Standard 1 (school vision of learning), Standard 2 (student learning and staff professional growth), Standard 3 (fiscal business and safe school environment), Standard 4 (community relations and diversity), Standard 5 (professional ethics), and Standard 6 (political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context) were rated 3.20 ( $SD=.72$ ), 3.17 ( $SD=.51$ ), 2.62 ( $SD=.63$ ), 2.73 ( $SD=.70$ ), 3.56 ( $SD=.53$ ), and 3.26 ( $SD=.55$ ), respectively. While all areas were rated to be above average, Standard 5 received the highest comparative rating and Standard 3 received the lowest comparative rating.

Findings from the interviews with principals indicated that they would like to see more course content relating to school budget and finance, teacher allocation, and school operations. As one of the principals stated, "Additional preparation in the business operation of schools would be helpful." Another principal also expressed similar opinion: "School budgeting and accounting seem to be weak in the graduates' background. More training in this area is needed." The quantitative findings are in agreement with the qualitative findings in that Standard 3 received the lowest rating from candidates. The open-ended item in the candidate survey also revealed the need for more preparation in these areas.

*2. Do gender, ethnicity, current position, and school level make any difference in graduates' perception of their leadership preparation program?*

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if gender, ethnicity, current position, and school level make any difference in graduates' perception of their program preparation. Separate procedures were conducted for each independent variable. Results of the analyses indicated that no significant difference was found in the graduates' perception among the classifications of gender, ethnicity, and current position at the .05 level. However, graduates' perception of their program preparation was found to be significantly different among school levels ( $F_{(3,117)} = 5.97, p < .01$ ). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between the school levels. This analysis revealed that graduates working in high school expressed significantly higher in perception ( $M = 3.19, SD = .41$ ) than graduates working in the district office ( $M = 2.50, SD = .69$ ). Graduates working at elementary schools ( $M = 3.08, SD = .42$ ) and graduates working at middle schools ( $M = 2.81, SD = .49$ ) did not express their perceptions differently than graduates of the other two levels (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1  
Analysis of Variance – Comparing Graduates’ Perception of Program Preparation by School Level

		Sum of Squares	df	F Value
School Level	Between Groups	4.831	3	5.870 **
	Within Groups	24.072	117	
	Total	28.903	121	

\*\* p = or < .01

Table 2  
Descriptive Statistics – Graduates’ Perception of Program Preparation by School Level

Level	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.
1	61	1.94	4.00	3.08	.42
2	28	1.65	3.62	2.81	.49
3	24	1.91	3.76	3.19	.41
4	8	1.24	3.44	2.50	.69

Level 1 = Elementary Schools      Level 2 = Middle Schools  
Level 3 = High Schools              Level 4 = School District Office

3. *What are program graduates’ specific suggestions and feedback regarding the program offering and content effectiveness?*

Graduates’ responses from surveys and interviews were analyzed and organized in the following five areas:

- a. Program areas which would have been helpful to candidates in their current position and should have been addressed:

There was no area that should have been addressed in the program for graduates from all three levels of schools—elementary, middle, and high school. However, graduates working in high schools and middle schools pointed out two common areas of need: training in how to handle discipline; and implementing a more consistent and uniform practicum experience that would benefit all candidates. Some of the graduates’

comments are displayed in the following: “School discipline was covered superficially in several courses.” “More organized and focused instructions are needed.” “Students in the program may benefit more if it is divided into elementary, middle, and high school strands with well-coordinated internship experiences.”

b. Courses that should be added to or deleted from the leadership program of study:

Graduates focused on courses they found helpful or not helpful as well as specific course contents they would like to see included, emphasized, or deemphasized in the program. The one course considered very helpful was the Law class and suggestions included offering two law classes. The only course that was mentioned by graduates from middle school and elementary school as either “not helpful” or needing improvement was the Curriculum Leadership course. Some of the graduates’ reflections are included in the following: “School laws basically cover all areas of school administration.” “Every course should cover school law in its perspectives.” “A second law course may be helpful.” “A school curriculum class in a leadership program, though helpful in leadership preparation, may be more beneficial to Curriculum and Instruction majors.”

c. The area of the leadership program that most needs improving:

Portfolio was the area about which graduates had the most concerns and was considered not as valuable as projected. The graduates’ next highest level of concern related to the practicum experience. Graduates from all three school levels shared that the experience was not as effective as had been expected. Comments by graduates included the following: “The college professors and the school administrators do not seem to have a good communication.” “Students’ practicum experiences were different depending on who supervised our work.” “We were asked to sit in and observe most of the time.” “Very few hands-on activities to participate.”

d. Ways to improve the practicum experience for our candidates:

Program graduates made several practical suggestions to improve practicum activities: implement consistent requirements and expectations from supervisors; increase the support from school and/or school district office to ensure that all candidates in the program have access to a quality practicum experience; provide release time for experience at an additional site for practicum; and develop a linkage between practicum and portfolio.

e. Topics for future workshops for program graduates as follow-up opportunities:

Graduates from all three level schools suggested seminars or workshops on the current legal issues related to students such as “legal requirement for special education students from a principal’s perspective.” In addition, some graduates in high school and middle school settings suggested workshops on time management training and student discipline issues.

4. *What do school principals perceive as essential components that a successful educational leadership program should entail?*

School principals the researchers interviewed provided fruitful feedback for outlining a successful educational leadership program:

- a. School principals made several suggestions for course additions and deletions. Data analysis for school improvement and issues related to NCLB were identified as important parts of the leadership program. As one principal said, “Achieving the demands of NCLB is an essential focus of principalship.” This was echoed by another principal stating that “data-driven is the approach to improving student achievement. This is what NCLB wants.” They also indicated that “more experience with in-basket and case studies would be helpful to better prepare candidates for similar encounters in the real world.” Additionally, principals suggested that involvement in the teacher allotment process, class scheduling, and school business operations would provide practical experiences to program candidates. Politics of education at the state, district, and community levels was also mentioned as “an area with which graduates have little experience.” Furthermore, a course that addresses community relations, dealing with the media and county governmental agencies (health, fire, and police department) was confirmed as essential. One principal simply stated that “a school principal needs the support of his/her community for survival.” A senior principal also confirmed that “I spend quite a bit of my time communicating with parents and community leaders.”
- b. School principals agreed with program graduates that practicum and portfolio development experiences were the areas of needed improvement. Generally, principals thought that the portfolio was not as valuable as it could have been. Some representative remarks by principals are expressed in the following: “The portfolio needs to be focused on examining students’ leadership experiences in school rather than to simply document what they have learned.” “We have very little participation in planning for practicum experiences for leadership students.”
- c. To improve practicum activities, principals said that “a pre-determined set of experiences for all candidates was needed to provide program consistency.” When principals were asked to suggest particular experiences they felt would be beneficial to candidates, they gave examples such as working with budget development, school improvement plan, master schedule, teacher recruitment, data analysis, administrative taskforce, and working with diverse populations. As one principal said, “they need to get their hands on the real administrative work.”
- d. Principals’ suggested topics for future workshops for graduates’ professional development to include communications with members of diverse cultures, data analysis, problem solving skills, and school legal issues.
- e. As to the importance of educational research to field administrators, principals did not seem to have a general consensus. However, they did remark that, “educational research should be practical and directly related to school improvement.” One principal was in

support of research in his school by stating that, “action research in school provides me the answers I want to know about program effectiveness.” This particular question was not in the original design of interview questions, but it emerged as a point of interest during interviews with principals.

### Summary of Graduates’ and Principals’ Perceptions

Graduates identified school business operations and diversity as program areas that are most in need of improvement. Principals agreed and further elaborated on the point to include specific contents in the program, such as data analysis for school improvement, teacher allotment process, class scheduling, public relations, and school budgeting. They also suggested similar topics for future enrichment workshops for program graduates. On the other hand, program graduates expressed their need for workshops in the areas of legal requirements for special education, time management, and student discipline issues. The program areas most in need of improvement were commonly identified by both graduates and principals as practicum and portfolio. They recommended program improvement through strategies such as consistent, unified practicum experiences, support from mentors, and consistent feedback from university supervisors.

### Discussion

The rationale of this study purporting that program graduates can best assist in program improvement echoes studies by Chan et al. (2003), and Van Berkum et al. (1994), who took a similar approach by soliciting feedback from program participants. The findings of this study strongly support the general viewpoints summarized in the review of literature. Graduates and principals in this study shared the same viewpoints as Marcoux et al. (2003), Milstein (1996), and Wilmore and Erlandson (1995) in recognizing portfolio as a valuable program assessment instrument. Like Parkay and Currie (1992), Aiken (2001), and Whitaker and Barnett (1999), results of this study strongly endorse an educational leadership practicum experience as a result of university-school system collaboration. Graduates and principals have repeatedly expressed their support for program revision to reflect a practical program for site-based school administrators.

Results of data analysis indicated that the educational leadership program graduates rated their program preparation to be above average. Standard 5 received the highest comparative rating and Standard 3 received the lowest comparative rating. This indicated that graduates considered themselves not as prepared in performing their administrative duties related to Standard 3 as they did in the other five Standards. Therefore, program activities in this area need to be strengthened by initiating a field-based orientation that emphasizes the daily operational responsibilities of site administrators. Regarding the need to improve the practicum experience, graduates and principals in this study called for consistent and uniform program activities that would validate its purpose. Their recommendations are in alignment with the spirit of employing state or professional standards to help strengthen educational leadership programs (Georgia Board of Regents, 2007; Lashway, 1997; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002).

Results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that no significant difference was found in the graduates' perceptions between the classifications of gender, ethnicity, and current position except for the graduates' school level. In other words, graduates' perception of their program preparation was found to be significantly different among school levels ( $F = 5.970$ ) with the highest perception ( $M = 3.19$ ) detected in high schools and the lowest perception ( $M = 2.50$ ) at school district level. However, the researchers did not find any specific qualitative data from their interviews with graduates to support these ratings. Further investigation is needed to examine the underlying issues contributing to the high and low perceptions of graduates working in high schools and district offices, respectively.

Enthusiastic responses from graduates and principals in offering suggestions for workshop topics for graduates' professional development are particularly exciting. As educational leadership program developers, we acknowledge the need to provide continuous professional support to our program graduates to ensure their success particularly in their initial years as beginning school administrators. A follow-up program is necessary to monitor their performance so that needed assistance can be offered to them.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study identified program areas that met the needs of graduates and their principals while at the same time highlighted areas that needed improvement. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the Georgia's Race to the Top Application (2010) push for many educational issues that address improving the effectiveness of leadership preparation programs that include diverse clinical experiences as well as other areas in the design of exemplary leadership programs fully addressed by the findings of this study. This study contributes to the knowledge base by confirming once again that feedback from both program graduates and their principals plays a significant role in contributing to the improvement of educational leadership programs. Clearly, recent program graduates employed as beginning school leaders are in the best position to discuss their program preparation in light of the challenges they are facing in real educational settings. Responses from school principals about program improvement are equally valuable because they have first-hand knowledge of these young administrators whose performance is a reflection of their program preparation.

In the design of this study, the mixed method approach in evaluating and improving program effectiveness proved to be most fruitful. Results from quantitative and qualitative data analyses serve as solid documentation for each other to achieve a triangulation purpose. As this university is working on redesigning its educational leadership program, suggestions and feedback from both the principals and the program graduates prove to be critical in generating a truly field-based program for preparing effective educational leaders for future generations.

### Recommendations for Further Study

The development for the design of educational leadership programs has been rapid and innovative in recent years, especially with the integration of technology. University-school system collaboration, district “grow-our-own” plan, practitioner orientation vs. academic preparation, online program, field-based approach, and performance-based endeavor are some of the popular models employed today. Research of design effectiveness needs to be taking place to assess what model works better under certain conditions. Experimental and/or comparative research methods have proved from time to time to be yielding realistic results. Further studies should also take into consideration of involving stakeholders of this educational leader preparation process to solicit perspectives from different representatives. Researchers should also draw their attention to identifying a focus for each degree level of educational leadership preparation to provide justifications for its existence. The development of educational leadership programs in the United States are in the middle of crossroads. Well-designed studies in educational leadership program will yield meaningful results to guide directions for continuous growth.

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Appendix A  
Survey of Educational Leadership Program Graduates

Demographics: Please complete the following items by checking one of the choices.

1. School Level:  Elementary  Middle  High  District Office

2. Current position:

Teacher  Principal  Assistant Principal

Administrative Assistant  District Office Position  Other Position

3. Years in leadership position:

0  
 Less than 1 year  
 1-2 years  
 Over 2 years

4. Years as Classroom Teacher:

1-- 5  
 6 – 10  
 11 – 15  
 16 – 20  
 over 20

5. Highest Degree Earned:

M.Ed.  
 Ed.S.  
 Ed.D.

6. Gender:

Male  
 Female

7. Ethnicity:

Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)  African American  
 Hispanic  Asian American  
 Native American  Other

Please check one of the choices provided for each of the items to evaluate how well the XXSU EDL Program prepared you in enhancing your knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the following school leadership areas. The following rating scale is used:

1 = Not Prepared

2 = Somewhat Prepared

3 = Adequately Prepared

4 = Exceptionally Prepared

No.	Survey Item	Not Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Adequately Prepared	Exceptionally Prepared
1	Collaborating with faculty and community to develop/revise school vision				
2	Implementing school improvement plan				
3	Inspiring staff and students to higher performance				
4	Integrating technology into instruction				
5	Providing academic support to students				
6.	Conducting action research				
7	Using data to improve instruction				
8	Providing appropriate services to students with special needs				
9	Addressing professional development needs of faculty and staff				
10	Conducting teacher observation and evaluations				
11	Using current research to guide leadership decisions				
12	Hiring competent teachers				
13	Developing school budget				
14	Monitoring school cash management				
15	Supervising food services				
16	Working with supervisors to manage student transportation				
17	Adhering to purchasing procedures				
18	Participating in school facility planning				

19	Developing school maintenance plan				
20	Addressing school safety issues				
21	Integrating technology into administration				
22	Working effectively with PTA				
23	Participating in civic organizations				
24	Working with community social service programs				
25	Partnering with Businesses in the Community				
26	Obtaining external funding for educational programs				
27	Practicing professional code of ethics				
28	Developing a caring school community				
29	Recognizing and appreciating diversity in the community				
30	Applying ethical principles to decision making				
31	Understanding laws, policies and procedures				
32	Understanding the impact of governmental entities upon schools				
33	Ensuring diverse representation on faculty and staff				
34	Responding pro-actively to outside influences				

Question: From your perspective, what could we do to make our EDL program better?

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Appendix B  
Interview Questions with Graduates and Principals

1. XXSU is very interested in offering follow-up opportunities such as workshops, consultations or seminars in specific leadership areas for our graduates. If such workshops or seminars were offered, what topics would be helpful to workshop participants?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. As you consider the requirements for the job of a beginning administrator, can you identify areas of preparation that the XXSU leadership program should have addressed but are not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Can you suggest courses that should be added to or deleted from the XXSU leadership program of study? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What do you consider to be the area of the XXSU leadership program that most needs improving?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What suggestions, if any, can you make that would help us to improve the practicum experience for our candidates?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Additional comments or recommendations: