

## **Special Issue Forward**

Michelle D. Young  
*UCEA Executive Director*

Educational leadership preparation has long been one of the most important but invisible of American institutions. I would prefer not to count the number of people I have spoken to who have been surprised to learn that principals, superintendents and other educational leaders require further development beyond their initial teaching certificate. Educational leaders manage and lead society's most important organizations, and their influence is expansive. Effectively preparing and developing them could not be more important.

It is widely understood that educational leaders play a pivotal role in the school improvement process (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). School level leadership influences school culture, teachers' perceptions of their work environments, the quality of the teaching staff (Papa, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2002), and student learning and achievement (Brewer, 1993; Strauss, 2003). The influence of district level leadership is even more expansive (Rorrer, Skrla & Scheurich, 2008; Spillane & Thompson, 1997).

Within the field of education, there is growing understanding of the importance of effective leadership preparation to high quality practice, and over a decade of research and innovation has enhanced our understanding of the features and characteristics of leadership preparation that positively influences leadership practice (Young, Crow, Ogawa, & Murphy, 2009). Not only does leadership education shapes the identity, assumptions, and aspirations of those who provide leadership for schools and districts, but they also build the knowledge experiences and skills needed for successful practice.

In recent years, many education leadership faculty members have capitalized on the research and development work in the field to redesign the content and delivery of their preparation programs to have a stronger influence on their graduates' leadership practices and school effectiveness. Indeed, significant attention has been directed to innovation and best practice in leadership preparation programs, both university and non-university-based (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; McCarthy, 1999; Milstein, 1993; Orr, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2005; Young, et. al, 2009)

The driver for these program innovations emanated from a variety of sources, including requirements associated with standards, certification and accreditation, the work of national professional associations like UCEA and the LTEL special interest group, and a variety of other factors (Sanders & Simpson, 2005). In fact, across the

nation, many scholars, policymakers, policy analysts, school leaders, professional associations, and foundations have been working to support improvements and innovations in educational leadership preparation (Young, Crow, Orr, Ogawa, & Creighton, 2005). This special issue of the *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, edited by Matthew Militello and Jennifer Friend, provides excellent examples of such innovations in educational leadership preparation, particularly with regard to the use of advanced technologies.

The focus on advanced technologies in the preparation and development of leaders is significant, not only because it draws attention to both the tools and the pedagogy used to develop leadership capacity, but also because it represents a significant leap in the use of digital technologies to support adult learning and development. The short history of preparation for educational leaders is punctuated by research and development activity around the issue of pedagogy. UCEA archives are full of simulation and case study materials dating back to the late 1950s. Simulations and cases were considered to be the state of the art in the 1950s, just as problem-based learning and the use of district data-sets was considered cutting-edge in the late 1990s (Bridges & Hallinger, 1997; Copland, 2000). These achievements notwithstanding, some have questioned whether the pedagogy used within educational leadership preparation and development enables leadership candidates to connect knowledge and theory to practice (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Bridges & Hallinger, 1997; Young, Crow, Ogawa, & Murphy, 2009). Such questions have to some degree spurred the efforts charted in this special issue. Authors have sought to identify pedagogical practices that connect educational leadership theories and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions identified by national standards to field-based or “real-world” experiences. Moreover, they have explored how advanced learning technologies can be used to realize this important work.

The majority of pieces included in this volume of JRLE are co-written between educational leadership faculty members and graduate students, who are also practicing educational leaders. Their collaborations began with the following two questions in mind: “*What do emerging leaders currently learn using technology and what do they want to be able to do to be informed and conscious technology-rich school leaders?*” and “*What do faculty members need to know and be able to do to infuse technology into their teaching and learning practices?*” The resulting articles chart important advances in the use of technology in the preparation of educational leaders. Furthermore, each article provides a user-friendly description of the technology used, an explanation of how it is used, and how the technology can be adapted for use in a variety of contexts. Authors also provide rich descriptions of their use of the technology in their own teaching.

The technologies featured include an online interactive case study methodology designed to develop students’ decision making skill as well as self-efficacy, confidence and certainty about the decision making process; digital story telling which can be used as both a powerful tool for learning and a strategy for assessment; on-line tools such as Wikis, Google Docs, and Discussion Boards with audio and video capabilities used to mediate some of the key variables evident in the learning experience, including

distance, time restraints, mutigenerational perspectives, and differences in knowledge experience and perspectives; Blackboard, digital portfolios, and online communities of practice used to deliver a blended online program; digital videos used to facilitate principal and student reflection by recasting reflection as a collective process in which individuals co-construct meaning through reflective discourse; video simulations delivered through a web-embedded framework that incorporate the pedagogy of problem-based learning; video-based simulations and portfolios used to provide leadership candidates with a “looking glass” to advance their learning; and asynchronous discussion forums (ADFs) designed to promote rich thinking and discussion and to enhance student learning.

Even five years ago, the field would have looked to experiential learning, reflective practice, structured dialogue, problem-based learning, and case study as the most innovative and dynamic learning experiences available for the development of educational leaders. While these strategies undoubtedly enable faculty to foster student reflection on their roles as leaders and to enable them to incorporate new knowledge and skills into their practice, the innovative teaching approaches described in this special issue, *Principal 2.0: Preparing Educational Leaders with Advanced Technologies*, compliment and expand the tool box available to educational leadership faculty. The contribution made to this literature by this special issue, thus, is noteworthy. Contributors provide important and helpful insight into how advanced technologies can enhance the learning and development of educational leaders, the specific tools, resources and knowledge faculty need to incorporate such technologies into their work, and the significance of such learning opportunities to educational leadership practice. The issue brings together some of the latest practice and thinking on how to use advanced technologies in educational leadership preparation programs to advance candidates’ acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and as such serves as a “just in time” high quality resource for the field.

### References

- Black, W. R., & Murtadha, K. (2007). Toward a signature pedagogy in educational leadership preparation and program assessment. *The Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 2(1). Retrieved from: [http://www.ucea.org/jrle\\_2007\\_2\\_1/](http://www.ucea.org/jrle_2007_2_1/)
- Brewer, D. J. (1993). Principals and student outcomes: Evidence from U.S. high schools. *Economics of Education Review* 12(4), 281-292.
- Bridges, E. M., & Hallinger, P. (1997). Using problem-based learning to prepare educational administrators. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 72(2), 131-146.
- Copland, M. A. (2000). Problem-based learning and prospective principals’ problem-framing ability. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(4), 585.

- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980-1995. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 32(1), 5-44.
- Hart, A. W. (1993). Reflection: An instructional strategy in educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 29(3), 323-338.
- Jackson, B. L., & Kelley, C. (2002). Exceptional and innovative programs in educational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 192.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2000). The effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement with school. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 112-129.
- McCarthy, M. M. (1999). The evolution of educational leadership preparation programs. In J. Murphy & K. S. Louis (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational administration: A project of the American Educational Research Association* (Vol. 119-139). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Milstein, M. M. (1993). *Changing the way we prepare educational leaders: The Danforth Experience*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.
- Orr, M. T. (2006). Mapping innovation in leadership preparation in our nation's schools of education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(7), 492-499.
- Papa, F. C. Jr., Lankford, H., & Wyckoff, J. (2002). *The attributes and career paths of principals: Implications for improving policy*. University of Albany, SUNY.
- Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational administration quarterly*, 44(5), 635-674.
- Rorrer, A. K., Skrla, L., & Scheurich, J. J. (2008). Districts as institutional actors in educational reform. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(3), 307-358.
- Short, P., & Rinehart, R. (1993). Reflection as a means of developing expertise. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 29(4), 501-521.
- Spillane, J. P., & Thompson, C. L. (1997). Reconstructing conceptions of local capacity: The local education agency's capacity for ambitious instructional reform. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 19(2), 185-203.

Strauss, R. P. (2003). *The preparation and selection of public school principals. A Paper for the 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of the American Educational Finance Association. Orlando, FL.*

US Department of Education (2003). *Innovative pathways to school leadership.* Washington, DC: Author.

Young, M. D., Crow, G., Ogawa, R., & Murphy, J. (2009). *The handbook of research on leadership preparation.* New York: Routledge.

Young, M. D., Crow, G., Orr, T., Ogawa, R., & Creighton, T. (2005). An educative look to educating school leaders. *UCEA Review*, 47(2), 1-5.