A leadership preparation program for educational administrators

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Abstract

The central role of the educational administrator in successful schools has been well established. In Mexico, few school administrators receive formal preparation before beginning their positions. Although recent regional and national efforts have provided more professional development opportunities, formal preservice preparation is still lacking on a nationwide basis. This article briefly describes the historical paradigm of education administration programs in the US and offers a model for the preparation of school leaders. The model, utilized by the Education Administration Program of California State University, Fresno, focuses on instructional leadership, taking students from theoretical underpinnings to practical knowledge and application of concepts. The program foundations, design, and attributes are described in detail.

Key terms: <Research> <administrator education> <leadership> <higher education> <public universities> <USA>

Sinopsis

El papel central del administrador educativo en las escuelas está bien establecido. En México, pocos administradores escolares reciben preparación formal antes de empezar sus cargos. Aunque los recientes esfuerzos regionales y nacionales han proporcionado oportunidades de desarrollo más profesionales, aún falta una preparación previa al servicio de manera formal en todo el país. Este artículo describe brevemente el paradigma histórico de los programas de administración de la educación en los Estados Unidos y ofrece un modelo para la preparación de líderes escolares. El modelo, utilizado por el Programa de Administración de la Educación de la Universidad Estatal de California, en Fresno, se enfoca en el liderazgo educativo que toma a los estudiantes desde las bases teóricas hasta el conocimiento práctico y la aplicación de conceptos. Se describen en detalle las bases del programa, el plan y las características.

Términos claves: <Investigación> <formación de administradores> <liderazgo> <enseñanza superior> <universidades estatales> <Estados Unidos de América>

Introduction

The central role of the educational administrator to school effectiveness and ongoing improvement is well established in the US and internationally (Bezzina, 1994; Firestone and Wilson, 1995; Morabito, 1998; Murphy and Louis, 1999; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001). School principals must be trained not only to manage, but also must be leaders of the instructional process (Ubben and Hughes, 1997). The purpose of this article is to present a model for the preparation of school administrators that develops the leadership, management, and interpersonal skills necessary to bring about successful schools.

School administrator preparation in Mexico

In Mexico, there is relatively little research on the preparation and role of school administrators (Cisneros-Cohernour and Merchant, 1999; Cuellar, 1989). However, it is known that most school administrators in Mexico begin their responsibilities with little or no formal training for the position. The lack of training in leadership and managerial skills necessary for the successful school administrator has serious implications for the educational system of Mexico. Additionally, there is evidence of the need for the Mexican school administrator to develop not only a particular body of knowledge and skills, but also the development of interpersonal relations skills (Gonzalez and Aguilar, 2001).

A national effort was undertaken in 1996 under the "Programa Nacional de Actualizacion Permanente de los maestros de Educacion Basica" (PRONAP) to improve the educational system and was addressed to teachers, supervisors, and administrators. However, while this large-scale effort provided professional development in pedagogical approaches and methodology, inclusion for students with disabilities, and content knowledge of specified curricular areas, no training was provided in leadership or management.

Another effort, developed in 1996 in a five state area, was "La Gestion en la Escuela Primaria". This program stressed the role of school principals on the "…influence and improvement of school climate and the creation of teacher teams" (Gonzalez and Aguilar, 2001, p 5).

More recently, a national level program for elementary school principals was implemented during the academic year 2000-2001, utilizing the teaching centers established by PRONAP. The main areas of this program involve: a) the mission of the school and management functions, b) the philosophical basis of education and its representation within the Ley General de Educacion, and c) the education reform in basic education and the challenges confronted by public education (Gonzalez and Aguilar, 2001).

The emerging National Agenda for the Preparation of School Administrators is consistent with the major objectives of PRONAP and offers further evidence of efforts in the direction of providing specific and structured preparation programs. However, while the aforementioned programs and other recent endeavors provide much needed professional development, there is little in the way of formal programs of preparation for school administrators. For example, in 1998, there were a total of 154 master's degree programs in Mexico. In a regional study of the 54 master's degree programs in the northeast region, only six (11%) were educational administration programs. The regional study is fairly indicative of the whole of Mexico and presents a panorama of the need for more formal preparation programs (Loera and Gallardo, 1998).

A definition of education administration was synthesized from the study of programs in Mexico at the master's and doctoral level. It is defined as, "The knowledge, methods, techniques, and strategies, whose purpose is that the very highest goals and objectives of an educational organization are reached satisfactorily. The area is integrated by content related to educational planning, evaluation, and supervision, administrative theories, educational legislation, human resources

administration, organizational development, leadership, educational management, and related content" (Loera and Gallardo, 1998, p. 25-26).

Although there is a growing recognition in Mexico of the need to provide preparation for school administrators, participation in formal programs is voluntary. While the importance of ongoing professional development for those in school administration positions is a vital link to school improvement and there are currently local, regional, and national efforts focusing on providing such programs, the need for formal preservice university preparation is not diminished.

Mexico is just beginning to prepare school administrators on a much larger scale than ever before. Much can be learned from the successes of emerging programs and from programs that have been found to be successful elsewhere. In contrast with Mexico, the United States for decades has required specialized university preparation for school administrators through a licensing process. While an overarching definition of educational administration in the US is similar to the definition utilized in Mexico by Loera and Gallardo (1998), there are programmatic differences in well established programs in the US that may provide useful models for Mexico as it develops preparation programs throughout the nation. The following sections briefly describe the historical paradigm of educational administration preparation and present a specific model that has proven successful for the past decade in the United States.

Historical paradigm of education administration programs in the United States

In the United States, university preparation programs of educational administration have traditionally followed and adapted theoretical designs adopted by business and industry. School administrators first studied Classical Organizational Theory which included Scientific Management, developed by Frederick W. Taylor (1911) just before the turn of the twentieth century. Scientific Management was an exacting design which provided explicit guidelines for managers to manage individual workers. Classical Organizational Theory also included Administrative Management, with primary contributors such as Max Weber (1947) and Henri Fayol (1949), which concentrated on the management of an entire organization.

The Human Relations Approach had its roots in the classic Hawthorne studies (Mayo, 1933) that took place in the late twenties, but also drew from important contributions from Kurt Lewin's theory of group dynamics (1951).

The Behavioral Science Approach was born in the late thirties and focused on the individual and the way in which he/she relates to the organization. Frederick Barnard (1938), Abraham Maslow (1954), Douglas McGregor (1960), Chris Argyris (1993), and Frederick Herzberg (1993) were important contributors to this approach among others. More recent contributors to the Behavioral Science Approach, especially with regard to leadership, include Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (1994), Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard 1997), and Warren Bennis 1989). A very recent branch of this approach is Systems Theory with Edward Deming's Total Quality Management design (1989) having a major impact, as well as Peter Senge's, *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), which provides important insights into how educational administrators can transform schools into learning organizations. It can be fairly stated that with the exception of Scientific Management, most preparation programs for educational administrators in the United States draw from all of the theories and theorists mentioned (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 1999; Leithwood and Duke, 1999).

A Model for the Preparation of School Leaders

However, the educational reform movement that swept across the United States in the 1970's and eighties finally reached education administration programs in the late 1980's. The reports of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA)(1987) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) (1989) fueled discussions about the actual and desired conditions of preparation programs

throughout the country. As a result of the two reports and ensuing discussions, the Danforth Foundation (Murphy, 1992; Milstein, 1993; Leithwood and Duke, 1995) provided start-up funding to a handful of programs around the United States to recast preparation programs in light of the need to provide instructional leaders rather than educational managers.

One of the experimental programs originally funded through the Danforth Foundation began in 1991 at California State University, Fresno, and continues today. It is the program at this university that will be described.

Underlying foundations

The program design was based largely on the report of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989) which recommended, "that a common core of knowledge and skills in preservice programs be defined to include the following: societal and cultural influences on schooling, teaching and learning processes and school improvement, organization theory, methodologies of organizational studies and policy analysis, leadership and management processes and functions, policy studies and politics of education, and moral and ethical dimensions of schooling. The content of these areas is to be grounded in the "problems of practice" and supported by an increased emphasis on clinical experiences" (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 1989, p. 32).

The program design also recognized that leading and managing are both important in school administration and the two are actually interrelated. "While leadership may describe dynamic efforts, such as translating into action a vision for the organization, creating change, and developing new policies, management emphasizes a supportive status quo to provide people stability and balance in the workplace so they can work in relative comfort" (Achilles, Keedy, and High, 1994, p. 32). Despite the importance of both the leadership and management functions, the program design has deliberately chosen to emphasize the role of instructional leadership, which literally means, "a leader of the instructional

process", implying specific and practical knowledge of how to improve instruction in each classroom with each teacher. Instructional leadership also implies that the school leader can no longer manage the school from the office. The leader must spend considerable time in classrooms helping teachers to continually improve their instructional skills (Creighton, 1999).

In 1991, the education administration program received approval and funding from the Danforth Foundation to provide a program of preparation for educational leaders based on the preceding foundations along with an emphasis on "hands-on, high involvement, participative learning in seminars" (Milstein, 1993, p. 127).

Program objectives

The mission of the Education Administration Program is reviewed every five years through a collegial process involving faculty, students, and members of the community representing the clientele of the program. The mission statement, as of 2000 is: "Providing educational leadership for Central California, the state, the nation, and the world." The overarching goal of the program is to prepare students to become school administrators that are instructional leaders and that have a well-formed philosophy of educational leadership based on a deep theoretical/knowledge base as well as practical on-site experience. Specifically, the candidates completing the program will be expected to:

1. Educational Leadership: Articulate a vision consistent with a well-developed educational philosophy and is able to lead individuals and groups toward the accomplishment of common goals and objectives.

2. Organizational Management: Demonstrate understanding of the organization, structure, and cultural context of schools and is able to lead others in the development and attainment of goals; comprehend basic principles of organizational theory.

3. Instructional Program: Demonstrate the ability to design, implement, and evaluate instructional programs.

4. Management of Schools: Plan, organize, implement, facilitate, and evaluate daily operations in ways that achieve organizational goals and lead to the safe, productive operation of the organization.

5. Human Resource Administration: Demonstrates understanding of the importance and dimensions of human resources administration and the need to attract, retain, develop, and motivate personnel in ways that enhance the operation and professional development that lead to a positive and productive organization.

6. Fiscal Resource and Business Service Administration: Develop an understanding of the effective and efficient management of fiscal resources and business services.

7. Legal and Regulatory Applications: Understand the federal, state, and local educational laws, regulations and other policies that govern schools, and knows how to act in accordance with these provisions.

8. Policy and Political Influences: Recognizes the relationship of public policy, governance, and schooling and is able to relate policy initiatives to the welfare of participants in responsible and ethical ways.

9. School-Community Collaborations: Collaborate with parents and community members; works with community agencies, foundations, and the private sector; and responds to community interests and needs in performing administrative responsibilities.

10. Use of Technology: Manage the various uses of technology for instructional and administrative purposes in the educational setting.

Each of these ten major objectives are then broken down into approximately four to six minor objectives and distributed among the courses and fieldwork in a logical manner.

Sequence of coursework

Under the regulations of the State of California, the entire preparation program for educational administrators is divided into two sections, or tiers. The first tier, which qualifies candidates for the Preliminary Administrative Services Credential and the Master's Degree in Education (Administration and Supervision Option) consists of 31 semester units. A person must complete this first section of the program to be eligible to obtain a position as an educational administrator. The eligibility is valid for life, thus a person does not have to seek a position immediately.

However, when a person has obtained a position as an administrator, he/she has five years in which to complete the second tier, which qualifies the candidate for the Professional Administrative Services Credential. The second tier requires 24 semester units. Figure 1 illustrates the sequence of the two tiers.

Figure 1: Sequence of Administrative Credentials
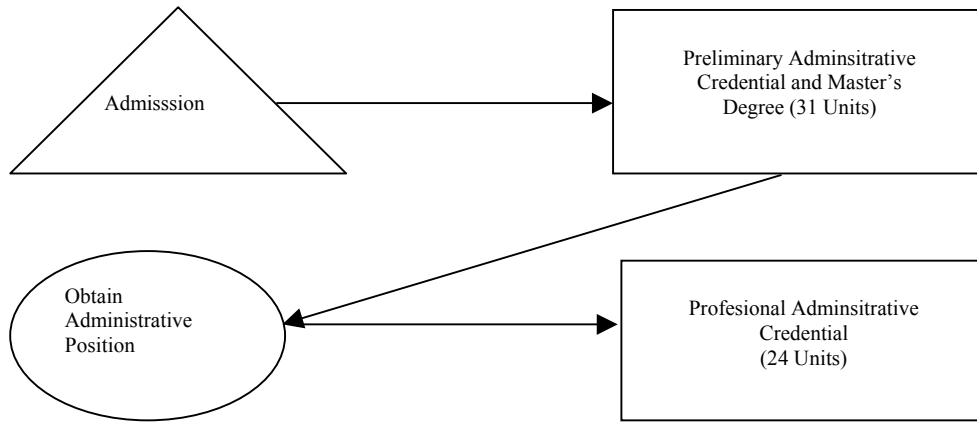
First tier.

Preliminary Administrative Services Credential and Master's Degree in Education: As a general overview of the program design for the first tier, the first courses present a theoretical framework within which the student should become fluent before undertaking the practical aspects of the profession. This theoretical framework is known as the knowledge base and includes the following courses: Advanced Educational Psychology, Managing Educational Organizations, Educational Leadership, and Seminar in Advanced Curriculum Evaluation and Development. A deep theoretical knowledge base in each of these areas is considered as essential for all educational administrators. As the student develops an understanding of the knowledge base, a fieldwork component, consisting of a total of 240 hours (Education Administration Fieldwork I and II), is introduced to begin the linkage of theory to practice. The following course in the sequence prepares students to supervise teachers and to improve instruction in each classroom, Seminar in Instructional Supervision.   Concurrently, the student learns to effectively use the process of action research in the

course Research in Education. The final course in the first tier of the program seeks to bind the theoretical to the practical and to draw together the learnings from the entire program and is titled Site-Based Leadership. The master's degree project is written under the guidance of faculty and presented as the culminating requirement.

The first tier of the program takes four semesters to complete. All program coursework is offered in the late afternoon and evening hours, since virtually all students in the program are full time teachers or school counselors who take the courses after their workday. Students follow an established sequence of courses with six to nine semester units being taken each semester. The sequence and a brief description of each course follows for the Preliminary Administrative Services Credential/Master's Degree. Semester 1:

• Advanced Educational Psychology (3 units) (The psychological foundations of education; nature and characteristics of development, learning processes, and forces which affect educational growth.)

• Managing Educational Organizations – 3 units (The development of knowledge and skills central to managing educational organizations.)

Semester 2:
• Educational Leadership – 3 units (The development of knowledge and skills essential to organizational leadership.)
• Seminar in Advanced Curriculum Evaluation and Development – 3 units (The nature and scope of curriculum development and curriculum evaluation.)
• Education Administration Fieldwork I – 3 units (120 hours of supervised administrative practice on-site to introduce required competencies.)

Semester 3:
• Seminar in Instructional Supervision – 3 units (Supervision and evaluation of teaching, techniques for helping teachers in their credential fields, and clarification of educational philosophy.)
• Research in Education – 3 units (Research methodology, data gathering and processing, and writing a research report.) (Note: Three units of graduate level statistics is a prerequisite for enrolling in this course.)
• Education Administration Fieldwork II – 3 units (120 hours of supervised administrative practice on-site to complete required competencies.)
Semester 4:
• Site-Based Leadership – 3 units (Essentials of site leadership: law, finance, community relations, personnel, and support services; restructuring; and improving student achievement in culturally diverse schools.)
• Master's Thesis or Project – 4 units (Preparation, completion, and acceptance of an acceptable thesis or project.) (California State University, 2001)

Theory to practice.

Figure 2 provides a schematic view of the first tier, demonstrating the design sequence and relationship of the various components. As can be seen in Figure 2, theory to practice takes place in three coexisting tracks. In track 1, the coursework in the first two semesters leads to the Supervision of Instruction course, which is a practice-based course, involving a number of observation and conferencing strategies that take place in classrooms. The knowledge base gained in the first four courses are all foundational to the skills taught in the supervision course and to the Site-Based Leadership course, which seeks to provide further theory to practice by dealing with school-based issues. The second track linking theory to practice takes place in semesters two and three through the fieldwork component described later in this article. The third track of linkage is that of research to practice by learning how to conduct action research in the research course through the development of a project, which is similar to a master's thesis. A master's degree project is a three chapter research project, generally based on the needs of a particular school site or school district, culminating in a series of recommendations or a handbook that will be used to improve the educational program. One typical example of a project would be to review the literature on effective teaching, develop an instrument to measure teaching effectiveness at a student's school site, and finally to provide a series of recommendations based on the literature and on the results of the data gathered by the instrument. It is expected that students will put their research findings to work in their school.

Figure 2. Sequence of Coursework Leading to the Preliminary Administratives Services Credential and the Master's Degree in Education.

Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3	Semester 4
Advanced Educational Psychology ERF 285 (3 Units)	Advanced Curriculum EAD 272 (3 Units)	Research Methods EAD 220 (3 Units)	Master's Projects EAD 298 (4 Units)
Track 1 ->	Educational Leadership EAD 262 (3 Units)	Supervision of Instruction EAD 263 (3 Units)	Site – Based Leadership EAD 269 (3 Units)
Advanced Educational Psychology EAD 261 (3 Units)	Fieldwork I EAD 267 (3 Units)	Fieldwork II EAD 268 (3 Units)	
Track 2 ->			

Fieldwork component.

The fieldwork component is considered to be the most crucial link of theory to practice in the first tier. All students are required to participate in 240 hours (120 hours per semester) in supervised administrative activities. At the beginning of the fieldwork experience, a site supervisor, usually the principal of the school where the student works as a teacher, is assigned to the student. The site supervisor works closely with the university supervisor to ensure that the student is provided administrative duties of gradually increasing levels of responsibility. The university supervisor, the site supervisor, and the student meet several times during the fieldwork component to review the student's progress. There are ten areas of fieldwork that the student must complete successfully in the 240 hours allotted over the two semesters. The areas are aligned with the ten program

objectives described earlier. Most of the students in the education administration program are teachers, thus the time that they have available for the administrative duties is largely limited to before and after school, or during lunch or class preparation time. However, this can be accomplished when administrative tasks are assigned that can be undertaken outside of class hours. One example of such a task would be for a student in fieldwork to plan a faculty professional development activity, including establishing objectives, obtaining the presenter, developing a budget, implementation, and evaluation, all under the guidance of the school principal. Such a task could conceivably take the student 20-30 hours to accomplish and would provide a wide range of skill development and practice.

A clear role definition for the site supervisor to guide the students and ongoing communication with the university supervisor are both essential in order to maximize the success of the fieldwork component of the program.

Completion of the first tier.

Upon completion of the first tier, the student has completed all requirements for the Preliminary Administrative Services Credential and the Master's Degree in Education. The student is now eligible to apply for an administrative position, based on the premise that he/she has the knowledge and experience to begin an entry level educational administrative position. Most graduates of the program become vice principals or a similar position in which they have at least one other person above them at the school site. However, occasionally, a student will apply and be named directly to a position of principal.

Second tier.

Professional Administrative Services Credential: Upon obtaining employment as an administrator, the student has five years to complete the second tier, which consists of 24 semester units. Each course in this tier contains largely practical knowledge and corresponding activities. Little theoretical knowledge is presented and no fieldwork

component is included, since the student now has full time practical experience at the school site. The program design and all coursework of the second tier are aimed at fortifying the practical knowledge and experience of the practicing administrator.

The sequence of courses for the second tier, leading to the Professional Administrative Services Credential follows:

• Professional Development Induction – 2 units (The student develops an individualized diagnostic plan for coursework and needed professional growth during this course.)

• Transformational Leadership – 2 units (Includes interventions for restructuring aimed at transforming schools into learning organizations.

• Legal Aspects of Education – 2 units (Case study approach involving legal issues related to schools.)

• School and Community Relations – 2 units (Interacting with communities, media, political agencies, and minority groups.)

• Seminar in School Finance and Business Administration – 2 units (Economic perspectives and practices of school finance and school business administration.)

• Seminar in School Personnel – 2 units (Human resources management for school administrators.)

• Ten units of electives (These student selected courses or activities are linked to the diagnostic plan for professional growth.)

• Professional Development Assessment – 2 units (Final course consisting of development and evaluation of portfolio and long-term professional development plan.).

Induction into the second tier.

The first course in the second tier serves as the basis for the subsequent coursework. The student in this induction course gathers three data sets. The first set of data is derived from an eight-hour Assessment Center that simulates a day at a school. Each student in the group participates in individual and group sessions. The sessions are videotaped and the videotapes and accompanying written exercises are scored by a team in Washington, D.C. affiliated with

the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). The NAESP evaluators rate each student on eighty different competencies and a complete, computer generated diagnostic is provided to the student consisting of 25 to 30 pages. On a different date, the student is administered an extensive examination on the knowledge base of the entire profession. Evaluation data is provided to each student including his/her individual results as well as group norms. The third data set is obtained from an evaluation of the student by his/her immediate supervisor.

The student analyzes the results of each of the three assessments and develops an inventory of professional strengths and weaknesses. The student then develops a professional development plan to meet any weaknesses identified in the assessments. This plan includes the required courses plus the equivalent of 10 elective units in areas needed to meet the perceived weaknesses. This individual plan becomes the template for coursework in the second tier. The assessments and the resulting plan also form the foundation for the portfolio that is developed throughout the entire second tier.

Second tier coursework and electives.

During the second tier, the student is required to take 10 elective units. These units may be taken through the university or through other means. The education administration program offers varied weekend courses (Friday evening and Saturday all day) as electives each semester with course titles such as Special Education for Administrators, Using Technology Effectively, Conflict Resolution, Standards-based Assessment, Data-driven Decision Making, Alternative Education Programs, Micropolitics, Planning and Organizing, Systems Analysis, Change Theory, Educational Facilities, Communication Skills for Administrators, and so on. Electives are varied according to need as perceived by a program advisory committee of school superintendents.

The students may also choose to take up to eight of the elective units through activities offered by other entities such as the school district and state and local organizations. The student must receive advance approval for any non-university activities from the university advisor. Unit credit is assigned as one unit for each 15 hours of approved activity. Students will often take a combination of university electives and non-university activities to complete the 10 units of electives.

Upon completion of all required courses and electives, the student enrolls in the final course, Professional Development Assessment (or Exit Assessment), which involves a thorough analysis of the learnings gained throughout the entire program, demonstrated through a portfolio presentation, including a five-year plan of ongoing professional development. While the student will have fulfilled all university requirements upon completing this course, a strong philosophical foundation of the program is that all educators should be involved in continual learning and development throughout life. Upon completion of this course, the student receives the Professional Administrative Services Credential.

Figure 3: Sequence of the Second Tier

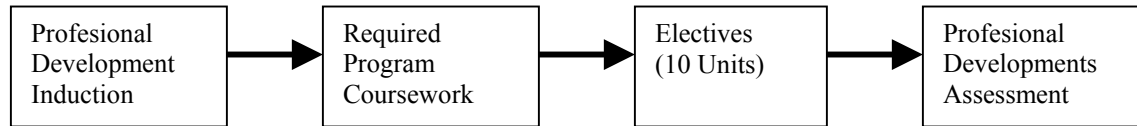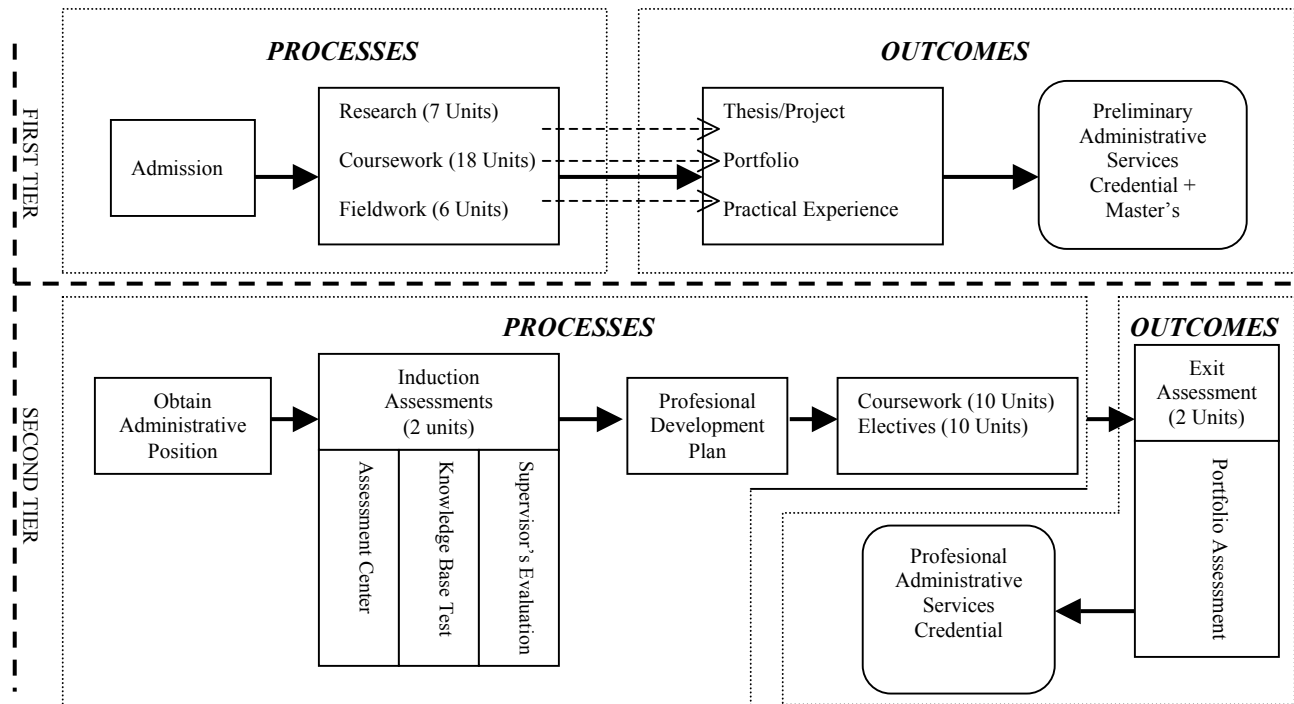| Profesional Development Induction | → | Required Program Coursework | → | Electives (10 Units) | → | Profesional Developments Assessment |

Figure 4. Provides a more detailed view of the processes and outcomes involved in the first and second tier of the program.

Program benefits

        There are a number of benefits the program, besides those referred to earlier, that have proven to be quite effective, thus meritorious of further explanation. One of the most important characteristics of the program, already mentioned, is the recognition of the importance of leadership, and more specifically, instructional leadership. Another program attribute is the use of the cohort model. Simply stated, students attend all courses in the sequence with the same group (cohort) of individuals. Thus, 20-25 students take the same courses together during the entire sequence. Research has found that students in a cohort participate more actively, share more with their colleagues, and perceive the experience as more positive than those who have not been part of a cohort (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000; Hebert and Reynolds, 1998; Teitel, 1997). In a study of the first cohorts completing the program at CSU Fresno, Milstein (1993) found that, "…cohort members report a sense of enthusiasm about the program effects" (p. 131). Survey data from students recently completing the program also reveals the positive impact of being members of a cohort (Wise, 2002).

        Yet another benefit of the program is the requirement for each student to develop a portfolio. Each of the courses requires the addition of one or more elements to the portfolio, leading to a collection of significant professional documents representing the development of the student. In the early courses, students write their autobiography and develop a resume. Later, they write a statement of their educational platform, summarizing their core beliefs about education and leadership. Finally, they include evidence of major learnings throughout the program. The portfolio is collected by professors at the end of various courses, evaluated, and returned to the students with a critique aimed at improving the portfolio contents. The portfolio is used not only to collect the important learnings, but also to be used by the student for job interviews. The use of such a portfolio has been shown to be effective in not only representing an assessment of the student's progress, but allowing flexibility to actively engage the students themselves in the assessment process (Gottesman and Villa, 2001).

        Dr. Mike Milstein performed an extensive study of the program design and results shortly after the Danforth model was incorporated into the education administration program. He found several additional benefits, mainly related to the involvement and collaboration of local schools and school administrators in the program. The schools reported that they gained from the students during the fieldwork experiences and the administrators gained from the interaction with the students, with innovative preparation, and with university faculty. Additionally, the university faculty gained from the constant interaction with the practical reality of the local schools and administrators (Milstein, 1993).

Program outcome assessment

        In order to periodically review the effectiveness of the program, several processes take place. Each professor is evaluated by students each semester and the quantitative results as well as student comments are fed into a master data bank, to be provided to the professor at the end of the semester. This is especially important for the persons supervising fieldwork and those teaching the final course Site-Based Leadership, since these are generally part-time employees. The program interviews and selects the highest quality persons available from a pool of current and retired school administrators. Those not achieving the high standards of performance desired are assisted in bettering their teaching and/or not offered contract renewal.

        Twice a year, the entire program faculty meets with a group of 20 local school district superintendents to present aspects of the program and to receive feedback from the superintendents. The members of this group, named the Superintendents' Advisory Group, represents over 200 schools with 150,000 students.

        The program faculty meets each year to review the entire program, to analyze emerging research in the field and new legislation regarding

education. Each year, adjustments to the program are made as a result of the review. Additionally, all courses are evaluated by students and the results are shared with faculty members. Every five years, the program undergoes a thorough review by the state licensing agency, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), which plays a large role in determining overall program objectives. The program is also reviewed every five years by the regional accrediting agency, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). These reviews may be carried out concurrently or separately.

However, the most important outcomes are those of the students graduating from the program. In spite of the fact that there are several other university preparation programs for school administrators in the immediate area, the graduates from this program are sought after by local schools. Almost all of the graduates seeking administrative positions are contracted for such a position immediately upon graduation. Fully 25% of the students in the program obtain school administration positions <u>before</u> graduating, thus they must obtain an emergency license from the state, called an Administrative Intern Credential, in order to work as an administrator.

Challenges for the Future

A great challenge for any current program of education administration in the US is to meet the changing needs of schools as standards-based educational practices spread throughout the nation. As schools are coming under intense scrutiny and pressure to perform well on standardized tests, so too is the profession of education administration again coming under pressure to provide new leadership to guide our schools.

A second challenge, possibly larger than the first, is the changing landscape of diversity in the US. No longer can the US continue to educate its youth without taking into account their cultural and linguistic heritage. Teachers need to learn skills how to educate children from homes where English is not spoken, and school administrators need to help teachers learn those skills quickly. The education administration program at California State University, Fresno, faces these same challenges, however, with ongoing program evaluation, research into effective teaching and leadership practices, and a continued commitment to link theory to real world practice, these challenges can be met.

Conclusions

Research has shown that the effective school administrator in today's schools must first be a leader of instruction. The education administration program at California State University, Fresno, has designed and implemented a highly successful program that is firmly grounded on that basic tenet. At present, it represents the largest graduate program in California State University, Fresno, with over 360 students enrolled. The students graduating from the program are currently building the foundations for an ever-improving educational system in the central California region. Components of the program can serve as a useful model to produce leaders not only for California, but for Mexico as well.

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