



Lifeworld or systemsworld: what guides novice principals?

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to contribute to the literature on principal preparation by examining the experiences of novice principals and what their experiences mean for principal preparation in the USA.

Design/methodology/approach – The researchers employed qualitative methods to examine the experiences of four novice principals over a two-year period.

Findings – The findings suggest that the current climate of efficiency and accountability is contributing to the socialization of principals who focus on the technical aspects of administration over the of relational aspects leadership.

Originality/value – This study focuses on the link between preparation programs and the practice of novice principals, an area that has not been fully explored in the literature.

Keywords Principals, Socialization, United States of America

Paper type Research paper

In the USA, most school principals are trained in formal preparation programs housed at four-year colleges and universities. These programs tend to be classroom-based, frontloaded systems with the majority of training occurring prior to participants assuming an administrative position (Crow, 2006; Jackson and Kelley, 2002; Peterson, 2002; Tirozzi, 2001). Recently, both the content and the structure of such programs have come under fire for allegedly failing to adequately prepare principals for the realities of today's schools (Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy, 2005; Elmore, 2006; Hess and Kelly, 2007; Murphy and Vriesenga, 2004; Tirozzi, 2000). One of the most notable criticisms comes from Arthur Levine, President of Teachers College at Columbia University. Based on a study of US principal preparation programs, Levine (2005, p. 23) concluded that the quality of most traditional principal preparation programs ranges "from inadequate to appalling" and that many university-based programs "are engaged in a counterproductive 'race to the bottom,' in which they compete for students by lowering admission standards, watering down coursework, and offering faster and less demanding degrees" (p. 24). Further, Levine asserts that education schools are in denial about the dire state of their principal preparation programs and are resistant to the call for improvements. Not all scholars agree with Levine's conclusions, noting that many university-based programs have initiated improvement processes in recent years (Young and Peterson, 2002; Young *et al.*, 2005). Nonetheless, the question of how best to prepare school leaders is an important one, and one that has not been thoroughly studied.

Although, there is a growing body of literature about what successful principals do (Leithwood, 2006; Walker and Qian, 2006), the literature is notably sparse in regard to what effective principal preparation programs do to develop such leaders (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2007) and how this preparation affects principals in the first years in the post (Stevenson, 2006). This study, which is part of the International Study of Principal Preparation, contributes to the discourse on principal preparation by



exploring the experiences of novice principals in Texas (USA). Specifically, this study examines the type of preparation school leaders received, how useful they perceived their training to be, and what type of problems they encountered in their first years on the job.

Participants were identified through a survey of school district superintendents in the central Texas region who were asked to provide a list of the first-year principals in their districts. From those lists, a total of seven principals agreed to be part of the study. Each of the participants was individually interviewed during the course of his or her first year as a principal. Four of the principals elected to continue with the study and were interviewed again after the conclusion of the second year on the job. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. A constant comparative approach was utilized to analyze the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The data represent the perceptions the participating principals have of their preparation programs. We made no attempt to gather other types of data to verify participant perceptions. Perception alone is an important consideration as the level to which principals feel prepared for the job is a significant factor in principal commitment (Winter *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, principal perception of preparedness is an initial indicator of the impact of the preparation program (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2007).

In this paper, brief case studies of the four principals who participated in the research project over two years are presented. These mini case studies illustrate both the unique and the common needs of novice principals and offer evidence of how well the principals were served by the preparation programs they attended. What the analysis of these case studies reveals has implications for those of us in principal preparation programs as we consider the criticism of our programs and how best to respond.

Case studies

Case study 1: Ann

Background. Ann, a 35-year old white female, is the principal of a unique urban elementary school. The school is located in the downtown area of a large city, surrounded by commercial buildings and high-rise condominiums. The school has no designated attendance zone. All of the students who attend the school do so because their parents elected to enroll them there rather than in neighborhood schools. In most cases, parents selected the school because of its proximity to places of employment.

The lack of a defined school community presents challenges for a principal. Nonetheless, Ann's school has many assets and is considered a "good" place for a principal to work. Ann feels fortunate to head this school rather one of the more challenging schools in the district. She believes, she was appointed to head such a desirable school because she attended a preparation program with an excellent reputation and because her former principal supported her leadership roles that gave her visibility among upper level administrators.

Challenges. One of the first challenges Ann faced was putting systems into place. As she described it, "The principal before me was a great guy, but was not very organized." Ann indicated, for example, that the school had no student discipline system and little instructional consistency. Ann provided professional development for faculty and worked with them to create processes and strategies in these areas. She believed that acting quickly to address these concerns helped her establish trustworthiness with faculty.

Another area in which Ann viewed herself as having gained credibility is in dismissing ineffective staff. Ann spoke at length about having to take action with teachers and paraprofessionals who were “not working out for the best interest of the children or campus.” Though she viewed herself as having succeeded in this arena, it was quite challenging for her. She found the administrative requirements and the act of interacting with “difficult” personnel problematic. She indicated that the policy requirements for rectifying poor performance and the associated paperwork were cumbersome. “You write up a plan; you follow up, hoping they will grow. But then it does not work out and you’ve spent all this time.” She suggested principals would be better served with fewer personnel regulations.

As much as she did not like this aspect of the work, she indicated the importance of quickly attending to personnel issues to avert further problems:

It is difficult to manage people that are negative. I try to call them on it right away – don’t want the negativity to spread [. . .]. I try to be consistent, being upfront and honest, making them realize it’s not personal but professional.

Ann emphasized a benefit to school climate in resolving personnel matters:

I feel it is important to deal with it head on [. . .][but it] was stressful dealing with problematic staff. However, it lifted staff morale when they saw that someone [. . .][who is] not good for kids is finally gone.

In spite of her belief in the need to address employee performance and her success in doing so, Ann submitted that this remained one of her greatest challenges and she viewed this as a subset of the general issue of developing relationships. Ann repeatedly spoke of the barriers to cultivating positive relationships. She seemed to suggest that developing strong relationships with students, families, and staff is a common challenge among novice principals and requires “setting boundaries” and “building trust.” She believed her work was made that much more difficult because the previous principal was very personable and had close relationships with many key stakeholders. By the end of her second year, Ann felt she had learned how to better negotiate relationships, but still saw this as an area for continued growth.

Assessment of the preparation program. Ann spoke highly of her preparation program. She asserted that although she attended a program at a major research university, it was very practical. She described her preparation program as including “a lot of reading, questioning about research, and data analysis.” The program was structured in a cohort model, which allowed Ann to develop skills in “the politics of group work,” one of the aspects that best prepared her for the job as a principal:

[We were] dealing with politics of different types of people [. . .]. Discussions in class could be intense-issues of diversity and race [. . .]. Though this was a very good opportunity to be in situations that I later encountered as a principal.

In terms of recommendations for improving preparation programs, Ann emphasized the importance of a focus on practice. She stated, “Research is important, but everything should be practical” and suggested making “the program geared to real life situations.” Additionally, she wished her program had taught her more about school budgets. She said that she received little instruction on budgeting in her preparation program and had little to do with the budget as an assistant principal. As a result, she was unprepared when it came time to create a budget for her school. Ann cited budgeting as one example

of the kind of on-going professional development that principals need. She maintained that it is impossible for a preparation program to give principals all the knowledge and skills they need at the onset. For this reason, Ann believes that principals ought to have access to continued professional development at least in the first few years and perhaps throughout their careers.

Case study 2: Leonard

Background. Leonard, a 37 year-old white male, is the principal of a small intermediate school (Grades 3-5) located in rural central Texas. He is the lone administrator on this campus. Leonard became the head of this school following the unexpected resignation of the former principal. Leonard had 12 years of teaching experience and had been an assistant principal in another rural district located not far from his current school. He earned a master's degree in educational administration and principal's certificate from a local university.

Challenges of the position. The challenges Leonard faced in his first days as a principal stemmed from assuming his duties at mid-year, after the school had been without a principal for four months and after a rapid succession of principals in previous years. Leonard noted that he had to repeatedly reassure teachers he would be at the school "tomorrow and next year" and that problems would be confronted rather than ignored.

Discipline was another immediate challenge Leonard had to address. Without the consistent presence of a principal, teachers were compelled to handle their own discipline and ignore situations that were not considered major threats to student or teacher safety. The situation gradually improved as teachers came to realize that Leonard would attend to student discipline. After taking over the post, Leonard made himself visible to students and teachers in classrooms, hallways and the lunchroom, and initiated a program to address student behavior. He maintained that while discipline was far from perfect in the school, it was much improved and teachers were able to spend more of their time teaching rather than correcting behavior.

Leonard identified personnel issues as another challenge he faced. For example, he had to "write up" an instructional aide for "yelling at kids." He has also had to confront one teacher who failed to perform assigned supervision duties and another for inappropriate expressions of anger. Leonard described these confrontations as "heavy duty" but noted that he learned from them:

I am finding out that it starts with good conversation, and you just stand your ground. You don't have to be an ogre about it, but you tell teachers your expectations of them, why they're here for kids, and why shirking duties, or losing it [isn't acceptable]. I had really just heard about stuff like that [...] but it came my way, and no matter how professional you think somebody is, they have bad days. So that was something for sure that I learned.

Leonard also spoke of instructional leadership and budgetary considerations as continuing challenges. He noted that, because of the impact on programs, he put "more time and effort into understanding how a campus and district budget work" than he had anticipated. He was also concerned that, with the absence of an assistant principal, he lacked the time "I'd like to be a better instructional leader." He was finding it difficult to be in classrooms observing teachers and working with them on instructional issues. At the same time, Leonard discovered that there were many attractive aspects of his job, especially "the growth that you see when [the students] come into our campus."

Assessment of the preparation program. In reflecting on his preparation program, Leonard stated that his professors were “flexible” and the courses contained a good mix of theory and practice. Leonard also appreciated that many of his professors had been practicing school administrators who not only maintained contact with the field, but also who used those contacts to draw others from the field to talk with students. The writing assignments in his graduate courses were especially significant; they made him think for the first time about “what he wanted a school to look like.” Leonard noted that his internship was a valuable experience in that it gave him the opportunity to work closely with professors and apply theory to practice. The internship was “all about practice.”

On the other hand, Leonard wished that he had had more instruction on how to build and manage the campus budget. He confessed that he was essentially learning that skill on the job through trial and error. Leonard also believed that it was vitally important for principals to be knowledgeable about curricula and curricular issues. Before becoming an elementary principal, Leonard served a high school teacher and then worked with middle school students. At the beginning of his second year, Leonard was still struggling to learn the details of the elementary school curriculum. “When I look back at how I went through the ranks,” he said, “I felt that I was a good teacher . . . but I didn’t know the curriculum.” Now as a principal his knowledge of the elementary curriculum and what teachers were teaching is critical for having a “meaningful conversation with teachers” about learning. Leonard noted that the superintendent and the district curriculum specialist were very supportive of his learning in this area. But Leonard was especially grateful to the teachers in his school. Early in his tenure, Leonard admitted to the faculty, “One of my challenges right off the bat is going to be learning elementary curriculum.” The teachers responded positively and have helped him gain a better understanding in this area. This is evidence, he said, of the most valuable understanding he took away from his preparation program – being a principal is “a work in progress” that is never completed.

Case study 3: Samantha

Background. Samantha, a white female in her late 30s, serves as a principal in an urban middle school. Before becoming a principal, Samantha worked as a teacher at elementary and middle level schools. She also worked as a grant writer for a middle school. It was when she was serving as a grant writer that Samantha had her first school leadership experience. Unexpectedly, the principal of her school took a post at another school. Samantha, who lacked administrator certification, became the interim principal. Within a few months, a new principal was named. However, he resigned after only one day on the job. Samantha continued serving in the interim role until a permanent principal was appointed the following semester. Because of her effectiveness as interim principal, the superintendent encouraged Samantha to return to school to obtain administrator certification. Samantha entered the program and before finishing was hired as an assistant principal. Three years later, her school was again searching for a principal. Though Samantha did not feel she was prepared to be a principal, and was not even sure it was a position she ever wanted, Samantha applied and was assigned to the position.

Challenges of the position. One of Samantha’s concerns during her first year was addressing relationships with teachers and staff. She mentioned, “One of my biggest

challenges in my first year has been identifying teachers who are not what it is best for kids.” She wanted to have only the best teachers in her school and wanted to match the teachers with the students in the best possible way. She did not care to have an excellent teacher if the teacher was not assigned to the right position. For this reason, Samantha reassigned several teachers at her campus. She considered this decision a great success but it was confrontational.

Samantha also found that it was very difficult to end a teacher’s employment. This has continued being one of her biggest challenges. She said:

Letting go people is also a problem. By nature people in general are not confrontational. One must simply stick to the facts and keep feelings aside. It is still difficult.

Although, she finds this aspect of the job difficult, Samantha is considered a strong manager of personnel. Upper level administrators have praised Samantha for her ability to address poor teacher performance.

Another challenge Samantha mentioned was negotiating the district’s politics and bureaucracy. During Samantha’s second year, there was a change in superintendents, which affected her work as a principal:

Some problems that I encountered were, for instance, a change in upper administration. Our district’s leadership was changing and that is always hard, especially when you love and respect those people.

Without providing details, Samantha indicated that after the change in superintendents she thought it would be in her best interest leave her school. The new superintendent granted her request to transfer to another school in the district.

Assessment of the preparation program. Over all, Samantha spoke favorably of her preparation program. In particular, Samantha appreciated that her coursework required her to engaged in critical reflection, which helped her think through situations she encountered in her work. Her program included an action research project, which she found useful in helping to address the issue of student discipline. When asked what recommendations she has for preparation programs, Samantha responded by providing advice to educational leadership students:

I would tell them that the first year is always the hardest. Time management and making lists is a good thing so that you can stay on top of things. Having a good AP and secretary in which you can trust is a must. You must also remember that you cannot do it all by yourself either. Disseminating tasks out and keeping up with those leaders will help you survive.

Case study 4: Albert

Background. Albert, a white male in his early 1940s, works as a principal in an urban elementary school. He has 18 years of teaching and administrative experience combined at the middle and high school levels. He became a school administrator at the insistence of his former principal who recruited him from the classroom to work as an assistant principal. After serving in that role for several years, Albert was appointed to head an elementary school, although, like Leonard, he had no previous elementary experience.

Albert went through a formal training for his principal preparation. He had a mentor as he completed his internship at a small middle school. He mentions that the

reason he became an administrator was mainly due to sequence of events – a natural progression. About his move to the elementary level, he indicated:

It has been a good change; I have had no experience what so ever, my Mom was an elementary school principal, my grandfather was a principal and a superintendent, and I just think that is in my blood.

He also added that being a father of two young children has helped him to understand better the elementary level.

Challenges of the position. Albert shared that one of the main challenges during his first year was switching from the secondary to the elementary level. He emphasized that relationships were very important and without them he could not have gotten through his first year. In contrast, during the second year he had a serious negative experience that he named as his greatest challenge:

I had a very serious personnel issue that I had to work to resolve. It took many hours of my time and was very stressful. All of the issues that grew out of this situation were not completely resolved until this fall. It made me seriously reconsider my decision to become a principal.

He added that he did not know how to deal with the problem, and that only made it worse. However, even while acknowledging the challenge this experience posed for him, Albert maintained that relationships were a source of strength for him and one of the most enjoyable aspects of the job. He commented, "I am blessed with a wonderful staff. I enjoy my interactions with them. I trust them and I feel this trust is reciprocated."

Assessment of the preparation program. Albert gave recommendations for the principal preparation programs. He stressed the importance of serving as an assistant principal before becoming a principal. "You need to be in positions where you are being taught. It was the ultimate experience where I had a principal who was teaching me." He valued the fact that he had several people mentoring him throughout his path to principalship. He shared that there is a big leap from the classroom to the principal's chair and warned, "Nothing will completely prepare you for the actual job, so be ready." He also cautioned new principals about not letting personal feelings interfering with what is best for the campus.

Analysis and discussion

What the data from this study suggest is that while the principals perceived that they were well served by their preparation programs, there were clearly aspects of the job for which they were not adequately prepared. In examining the challenges the principals identified, two categories emerge: challenges due to lack of a particular knowledge related the technical aspects of school leadership; and those due to the complications of relationships. Each of the principals identified a lack of understanding in one or more discrete knowledge and skill areas such as special education law or curriculum. The participants indicated that not having sufficient knowledge in the identified area resulted in the principal making mistakes or having to spend an inordinate amount of time on a task. Interestingly, while each participant named at least one underdeveloped area of knowledge, there was considerable variance in what those areas were, even from participants who attended the same preparation program. The only area named by more than one participant was budgeting, which was identified by three of the

four participants. Ironically, the fourth participant cited budgeting as the one area of her preparation program she felt was unnecessary because the rapid changes in this area quickly made knowledge obsolete.

Though, there was seemingly little overlap among the participants in terms of the areas in which they lacked sufficient knowledge, there was considerable consistency among the principals in regard to the challenge of negotiating relationships. Across both years of interview data, relationships emerged as the only common theme. Each of the principals indicated that relationships served as both a source of angst and a well of support. The principals describe the difficulty they encountered when conflict was at the center of a relationship, particularly when the conflict occurred early in the tenure of the principal. The principals also expressed the necessity and benefit of having positive relationships throughout the school community.

These data, which seem to suggest that what novice principals need is both more technical information and a better understanding of the human-relational aspects of leadership, call to mind Sergiovanni's (2004) work related to systemsworld and lifeworld of school leadership. Adapting terms from Habermas' (1984) Theory of Communicative Action, Sergiovanni uses systemsworld in referring to "instrumentalities" (e.g. policies, processes, procedures) that are designed to increase effectiveness and efficiency in schools. The lifeworld, on the other hand, refers to the aspects of the school that are reflected in culture, values, and relationships. The lifeworld is about developing human capital within the school community and is what gives purpose to the organization. Other researchers have described this essential component of effective leadership as direction setting, people development, and organization redesign (Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood and Riehl, 2005). Systemsworld provides the means to achieve this purpose through "the management know-how, the operational systems, and the technical support". In this way, the lifeworld and the systemsworld are symbiotic. That is, in the proper balance both are essential in creating effective schools.

An important aspect of balance between the two worlds is directionality of the relationship. One world must necessarily lead the other, and which leads matters greatly in terms of the type of school that develops. As Sergiovanni (2004, p. 7) asserts:

Either management systems are uniquely designed to embody and achieve the purposes, values, and beliefs of parents, teachers, and students in a particular school or the purposes, values, and beliefs of parents, teachers, and students will be determined by the chosen (or more likely state- or district-mandated) management system.

When systems emerge in response to the values, beliefs, and purposes identified by the school community, a meaningful and unique school culture develops and the systemsworld facilitates the organic growth of the organization. Conversely, if what is fundamental to the systemsworld-management strategies, evaluation systems, and control mechanisms—is placed at the center of the work, the spirit of the community and individuals who live and work there is displaced and the school becomes a lifeless institution. Habermas (1984) refers to this phenomenon of systemsworld dominating lifeworld as "colonization," a notion Sergiovanni submits has taken hold in far too many schools, driving out hope and diminishing the institutional character that is the hallmark of a successful school.

The data from this study supports the notion that colonization of the systemsworld over the lifeworld is, indeed, occurring in at least some schools. All four of the principals seemed to view the technical aspects of leadership, or the systemsworld, as

the focal point of their work. This can be seen in both the types of challenges they named and what they believed they needed to address the challenges. For example, each of the principals named multiple systemsworld issues as among the greatest challenges in the first two years. Time management, lack of policy knowledge, timely completion of paperwork, curriculum knowledge, and budget management were among the issues the principals identified. Interestingly, even when discussing challenges that occurred in the human relational aspects of their work, the principals characterized the challenges in terms of the systemsworld. All four of the principals indicated they saw conflicts with faculty and staff as “personnel issues” that needed to be addressed “head on” and by being “consistent, upfront, and honest” and following policy. One participant underscored this by indicating the one recommendation she would make to any administrator is:

Take some sort of documentation course on how to write directives, how to follow through with directives, how to establish insubordination, how to put a teacher on a growth plan.

In a similar way, three of the principals named student misbehavior as a challenge. Each of the three indicated instituting a school-wide behavior plan to provide “consistency” and “make expectations and consequences clear” could solve this problem. One principal indicated it was a matter of “training the teachers and training the children,” which suggests that for this principal this issue was one of compliance.

In describing how they addressed concerns related to faculty and students, the principals provided further evidence that the systemsworld is guiding their work. The suggested solutions indicate that the principals see relationships as “social contracts,” a notion associated with institutions driven by the systemsworld. Social contracts are relationships in which teachers and parents “invest their talents and energy in the school and its children in exchange for certain benefits” (Sergiovanni, 2004 p. 60). Children act similarly when they:

[...] endure the rituals of schooling to get gold stars and praise they covet from teachers, the attention they want from their parents, and the grades they need to be admitted to college (p. 60).

In this study, the social contract relationship is seen in the student behavior plans the principals sought to put in place. All of the plans were based on a system of tangible rewards and consequences, the assumption being that students will only adhere to behavior expectations if incentives and sanctions are sufficiently motivating. Similarly, though the principals talked about the importance of developing authentic relationships, in describing how they worked with teachers and staff, what appeared to be most important was getting teachers to comply. Although, the principals tended to couch compliance in terms such as getting “buy in” or “getting the right people on the bus,” the intention was seemingly to motivate teachers to do what it was the principal believed needed to be done rather than to engage teachers in a collegial discussion about their work.

Sergiovanni (2004) submits that schools with lifeworld at the center of the work do not subscribe to the narrative of social contracts. Rather, schools where the lifeworld is the generative world create social covenants to guide relationships. Whereas contracts are tenuous, conditional, and rule-based, covenants are based on shared values, norms, and purpose. Covenants engender deep commitment and bind people in such a way that the relationship is not broken simply because conflicts or differing interests arise.

In fact, in social covenant relationships, conflict is viewed as natural and expected and self-interest is often sacrificed for the good of the community.

Implications for preparation programs

Sergiovanni's (2004) assertion that the lifeworld should be the guiding force in schools aligns with the large body of research that suggests instructional leadership should be at the heart of school improvement (Glickman *et al.*, 2005; Leithwood *et al.*, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2008). Like the lifeworld, instructional leadership is concerned with interactions that enact and build human, cultural, and social capital (Spillane *et al.*, 2003). Moreover, in a comprehensive study of exemplary leadership preparation programs, Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2007) found that one of the key similarities among effective programs was a focus on instructional leadership and school improvement. In describing how a focus on instructional leadership manifests itself in these programs, the importance of the lifeworld over the systemsworld is evident:

Whereas many traditional programs focus on school management, these exemplary programs seek to develop the ability to coach and support teachers, to share a vision for reform, and to lead a team to implement that vision for improved teaching and learning (LaPointe and Davis, 2006, p. 4).

Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2007) caution that many preparation programs purport to emphasize instructional leadership but lack a strong philosophical grounding in leadership. Graduates of such programs may practice instructional leadership as surveillance and compliance rather than coaching and support. That is, graduates of such programs may allow the technical skills of the systemsworld to drive their practice. This appears to be the case with the principals in this study. Though all of them graduated from preparation programs that claim to have a strong instructional leadership component and the participants themselves described the programs as having such, the accounts the principals provided of their attempts to improve instruction suggest the principals' practice is grounded more in management than leadership.

This study supports the notion that a program focus on instructional leadership does not ensure graduates will practice instructional leadership as intended. Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2007, p. 145) indicate effective programs include "a program philosophy and curriculum that emphasize leadership of instruction and school improvement." In other words, effective preparation programs teach students not only about instructional leadership, they also teach them how and why. Moreover, effective programs place instructional leadership at the center of school improvement and provide support for principal socialization in the early career stage (Crow, 2006).

The experiences of the principals in this study illustrate how challenging it is to practice instructional leadership. In the current policy environment, which emphasizes accountability and efficiency, school leaders face increasing pressures to focus on the systemsworld (Crow, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2004). As novice principals enter the field, they are shaped by these conditions. Our study suggests some are succumbing to it. For principal preparation programs this raises the question of how we prepare educational leaders to respond to this environment. Some (Hess and Kelly, 2007) have suggested that preparation programs should help school leaders develop more technical management skills. And while the principals in this study and others (Levine, 2005) indicate they would have benefited from such, a deeper analysis suggests the issue is not one of gaining more technical skills. What seems to be a greater challenge

is negotiating the tension between the systemsworld and the lifeworld so instructional leadership remains at the center of the principal's work. The literature provides frameworks for how educational leadership programs might be restructured to accomplish this task (Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy, 2005; Murphy, 2002; Young *et al.*, 2002). More importantly, the literature provides evidence that some are already working in this way (Bredeson, 2004; Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2007; Mohn and Machell, 2005). The challenge, then, is for all of us to respond to the criticism of principal preparation programs by resisting the call to produce more technical school leaders and instead do the hard work of creating programs that produce competent lifeworld leaders.

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