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School leadership practice and preparation

Comparative perspectives on organizational learning (OL), instructional leadership (IL) and culturally responsive practices (CRP)

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this paper is to utilize successful leadership practices drawn from seven nations to improve leadership preparation.

Design/methodology/approach – This study used a case study approach to gain a contextualized understanding of successful leadership across seven nations. Data sources primarily featured interviews with principals, teachers, staff members, parents, and students. Cases were analyzed within and then across nations with regards to organizational learning (OL), instructional leadership (IL), and culturally responsive practices (CRP).

Findings – The cross-national analysis of successful leaders indicated emerging policy trends, demographic changes, similarities and differences among leaders, and recommendations for leadership preparation.

Originality/value – This paper draws from successful practices in OL, IL and CRP in seven nations to make recommendations for improving leadership preparation.

Keywords School leadership, Leadership preparation, Organizational learning, Instructional leadership, Culturally responsive practice, Leadership, Schools

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

There is growing evidence that principals play a significant role in developing and sustaining school improvement initiatives and that to be successful school leaders must work with and through others to create the kinds of positive, engaging school climates that increase the likelihood of improved student learning (Leithwood and Louis, 2012). This paper draws on a secondary analysis of findings from the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP), a decade-long study of successful principals that now has perhaps the largest database of case studies worldwide. These international cases reveal that effective leadership practices are shaped and influenced by broad cultural political shifts, educational trends, policies, and demographics (Leithwood *et al.*, 2011). With these factors in mind, we draw upon findings from seven nations – Australia, Cyprus, Denmark, England, Norway, Sweden and the USA – examining how principals addressed organizational learning (OL), instructional leadership (IL) and culturally responsive practices (CRP) and how the skills necessary for success in each area can be translated into improved leadership preparation. Comparative analyses were conducted across three nations in each area,

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specifically, England, Sweden and the USA for OL, Australia, Denmark and the USA for IL and Cyprus, Norway and the USA for CRP[1].

This cross-national examination of OL, IL and CPR began with a set of papers presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) meeting in 2006. After reflecting on their initial cases, members of the US ISSPP team proposed the AERA session because they felt that insufficient attention had been given to these key areas and that a secondary analysis of their data was required. Initial insights gained about OL, IL and CPR from the US cases begged the question, how do these practices vary across contexts? Therefore, in a special 2007 issue of *International Studies in Educational Administration* (Vol. 35, No. 3) three sets of national comparisons, each pairing the US findings with that of another ISSPP country was reported (Ylimaki and Jacobson, 2007). Specifically, findings from the USA about OL were paired with those from England, about IL with those of Australia, and CPR with Norway. The results of those comparisons suggested the need for even broader cross-national analyses (Ylimaki and Jacobson, 2007), which led to the addition of the third ISSPP nation in each of the areas, as noted above. To these analyses Ylimaki and Jacobson (2011) added their implications for improving leadership preparation.

This paper provides a synopsis of those efforts and is organized into four sections: first, a discussion of emerging policy trends and changing demographic contexts affecting leadership practice and preparation across the seven nations, specifically increased public accountability; tensions related to the centralization/decentralization of school governance; and, increasing student diversity; second, a brief overview of the theoretical framework and research methods employed by the ISSPP; third, key cross-national findings regarding OL, IL and CRP; and finally, recommendations for improved leadership preparation in light of these findings.

Emerging policy trends and changing demographic contexts

Accountability, decentralization and demographic change

Increased public accountability has had a major impact on the work of principals across nations since the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) in England. ERA included a framework of national curriculum goals and standards, high-stakes accountability and open enrollments that used neoliberal market approaches to reward schools for increased student counts. Since the early 2000s, schools in the USA have operated under similar accountability pressures because of required and publicly reported annual testing as per No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RttT) mandates. Under this test-driven regime, schools that persistently fail to make adequate yearly progress face consequences including reconstitution and administrator/teacher loss of employment. In Norway and Sweden the accountability movement is more recent, but developments in educational policy and reform are nevertheless raising expectations about school performance. For example, though Swedish schools still rank high in international studies such as PISA, there is an on-going political discussion about that nation's quality of education based on indications that students are not doing as well as in the past. The governing alliance of conservative parties introduced a State Inspection Agency, as well as so-called "free schools," that are free from local school board control, but still required to follow the national curriculum. Embracing both a democratic "citizenship" mandate and the traditional knowledge mandate has placed new demands and expectations on Swedish principals. Similar tensions exist in Denmark, where for the past 20 years the government has decentralized certain administrative responsibilities to local school

authorities, including personnel management and numerous day-to-day financial tasks while, simultaneously, re-centralizing certain instructional tasks by prescribing more detailed adherence to national standards through accountability and evaluation tools like national tests and quality reports. For many Danish principals, these neoliberal managerial competencies are in tension with traditional Danish democratic purposes of schooling known as Bildung (Gurr *et al.*, 2011a).

The Australian schools of the future program (Department of Education, 1993) is a relatively long-standing approach to self-governance focussed on the decentralization of numerous school functions including selection of staff, control over the budget, the articulation of goals in a school charter and the design of a framework for accountability. Victoria was a forerunner in this approach and by 1997 it had been extended to all schools, making Australia's decentralization policies among the most far-reaching worldwide. In the USA, decentralization has always been relatively commonplace with each state maintaining an autonomous educational system, with many states then delegating considerable authority to the local school districts in their jurisdiction (Jacobson, 2005). In contrast, educational governance in Cyprus has long been highly centralized and bureaucratic and only recently has the Ministry begun to promote more local involvement in educational strategic planning.

In the midst of these accountability and decentralization trends, schools in these countries have experienced increased diversity in the racial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural composition of their student bodies. In all seven countries, educators are dealing with waves of immigration, both legal and illegal, fueled by war, social and economic upheaval and natural disasters occurring in less developed nations. Unlike Australia, England and the USA, long known as havens for immigrants, this is also the case for nations that have not historically been seen as magnets for immigration. For example, public schools in Cyprus traditionally served mostly children of Greek and Turkish Cypriot heritage. But more recently there has been a marked increase in immigrants from former Russian and eastern bloc countries. Similarly, Denmark, Norway and Sweden have been changing over the past few decades from being relatively homogenous in terms of their populations to becoming more multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual due to recent waves of immigration.

The policy frameworks implemented in response to these changes have been context specific, with some focussing primarily on culture and language, such as in Norway and Cyprus, while others are more concerned with race, as in the USA (see Ylimaki and Jacobson, 2011 for more detail). As Johnson *et al.* (2011a) note, litigation often has had more to do with how national and state policies are shaped than legislation, especially in the USA. At the same time, accountability policies and immigration-related demographic shifts have affected leadership practice and preparation in all seven countries. Table I summarizes policy and demographic trends across the seven countries.

Leadership preparation

Accountability policies, decentralization requirements, and demographic shifts have affected the content and foci of leadership preparation programs in many countries. For instance, in response to recent accountability policies and pressures, many US and UK leadership preparation programs have renewed an emphasis on IL and assessment literacy. Decentralization trends have also affected leadership preparation and development programs with a strong emphasis on organizational capacity building and learning. As student populations become increasingly diverse, researchers in all seven nations noted a growing interest in developing socially just leaders, with

	USA	England	Sweden	Norway	Denmark	Australia	Cyprus
Accountability	National policies (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001) requires schools to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) on state tests with sanctions for failure	National curriculum standards linked to high-stakes tests, market-driven competition (Education Reform Act, 1988)	Emerging accountability movement; comparisons to PISA; growing trend toward "free schools" (free from school board control; accountable for the national curriculum)	Emerging accountability movement; comparisons to PISA	Emerging accountability movement; tension between adherence to national standards and evaluation tools and democratic values	As part of self-regulation, schools must design an accountability framework (Australian Schools of the Future, 1993)	Emerging accountability movement; comparisons to PISA as of this year, when it will be the first time for Cyprus to take part in the PISA examination
Decentralization	State and district trends toward site-based management	National performance assessments include requirements for decentralization	National headteacher training program includes a focus on democratic practices	Long-standing history of leadership teams	Government has decentralized responsibilities but centralized instruction through standards	Australian Schools of the Future (1993) established self-governance of schools	Highly centralized; recent movement toward local involvement with strategic planning
Demographics	Waves of (legal and illegal) immigration; growing Hispanic Latino/a populations	Waves of (legal and illegal) immigration	Waves of (legal and illegal) immigration; increasingly multilingual	Waves of (legal and illegal) immigration; increasingly multilingual	Waves of (legal and illegal) immigration; increasingly multilingual	Waves of (legal and illegal) immigration	Waves of (legal and illegal) immigration from eastern and Russian bloc countries

Table I.
Policy Comparison by country

backgrounds in CRP. At the same time, there are reports of high caliber school leaders being in short supply in Australia, England and the USA (Jacobson, 2005). This confluence of findings has led governments across these nations to invest millions of dollars in upgrading their approach to leadership preparation. Therefore, we next discuss the various approaches to leadership preparation in these countries and show that there currently exists a continuum of approaches that range from informal, on-the-job apprenticeship models for teachers aspiring to be principals and even sitting principals, to highly formalized pre-service preparation that requires university level course work before an aspiring leader can even get certified to be eligible for a position. Figure 1 illustrates the continuum of informal to highly formalized approaches to leadership preparation across the seven countries.

Starting with the apprenticeship model, we find that Australia has historically relied on this approach in which teachers gain the necessary skills and experience on-the-job if they aspire to move up the ranks to principal. Although credentialing and mandatory programs for preparation are still not regulated or legislated, formalized leadership development has become an emerging trend. There now exist a variety of approaches including formal and informal coaching, mentoring and shadowing programs, regional-based programs, internships, and leaves to attend international conferences. These programs are designed to target various groups – emerging leaders, aspiring principals, beginning principals, experienced principals and leadership teams. There are also sponsored formal qualification programs, including master-level programs for aspiring and current principals. Similar to Australia, there are no formal preparatory requirements for an administrative position in Cyprus. Most Cypriot principals learn their role through an informal apprenticeship as teachers by watching their supervisors on the job. They then decide which practices to adopt or reject when becoming principals themselves (Thody *et al.*, 2007). Principals in position get formal professional development through in-service seminars organized by the Ministry of Education. These sessions are primarily bureaucratic in nature and criticized by some as being inadequate (Michaelidou and Pashiardis, 2009). There are, however, some aspiring school leaders who choose to prepare for an administrator role by completing postgraduate programs in educational administration at public and private universities in Cyprus.

The three Scandinavian nations in ISSPP represent the middle ground on this preparation continuum, having instituted more formalized approaches to leadership development in the recent past. If we take Norway for example, we find that until the 1990s Norwegian universities did not offer formal preparation for school leaders. Although several now provide master programs in educational leadership, there is still not a strong national strategy, because it was always the purview of the municipalities and county authorities to ensure that school leaders had the necessary competencies. These governmental bodies are also responsible for evaluating, developing and implementing leadership programs and courses. Accordingly, preparation and development for school leaders in Norway varies across municipalities and counties.

Figure 1.
Leadership preparation continuum

As a result, there is a growing competition between local and regional authorities on the one hand, and higher education institutions and private consultancy companies on the other, as they compete to provide leadership preparation. To address these tensions, in Quality in Schools (2003), it was announced that the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Education and Research would establish an educational program for principals in order to make the political expectations and demands for school leadership explicit by regulating the contents of the programs.

In Sweden, a National Head-Teacher Training Program was organized to ensure that school leaders have the competence to lead educational activities while ensuring that pupils' and parents' rights are respected. In other words, the goal of the program is to prepare a democratic leader who understands that it is not sufficient to simply import knowledge of fundamental democratic values, but that this work must be carried out using democratic methods that prepare students for active participation in civic life. In 2006, Sweden's new government, an alliance of conservative political parties, attempted to change education back to a more knowledge-centered system. The new national training program has more of a focus on managerial skills, such as policy implementation, management by objectives and leadership intended to bring school development back in line with these knowledge-centered goals.

Similar tensions exist in Denmark, as the government decentralizes administrative responsibilities while re-centralizing instruction, through national standards, accountability, national tests and quality reports. Danish school leaders need to be competent in budgeting, human resource management, labor negotiations and team management skills at the school level, as well as in understanding and interpreting national and local regulations, curriculum content, learning theories and teaching methods. Yet, formal preparation is not a prerequisite for school leaders in Denmark, instead, most formal education targets existing leaders. It is worth noting that many of these programs are delivered to all public sector managers, not just principals, and in 2009, the government established a new diploma in public leadership, targeting middle leaders in all public institutions. More specific to principals, a number of school districts/municipalities have collaborated with education institutions to deliver educational leadership programs. Participants in these diploma programs complete projects in their own schools and their principals serve as mentors. This approach combines theoretical insights with practical knowledge so that teachers will be more skilled and knowledgeable about leadership before taking their first leadership posts.

At the other end of the continuum are England and the USA, countries that have more formalized preparation programs. England has a long history recognizing the value of leadership preparation and is one of four OECD countries to provide pre-service, induction and in-service leadership training. What is relatively new is the alignment of preparation with results-driven policies of standardization and accountability. The National College for School Leadership is now central to policy initiatives intended to increase the supply, succession and standards of all school leaders. National College programs focussing upon inquiry into practice tend to be developed centrally and delivered regionally, and are selectively informed by research. At the same time, local authorities are delivering a range of formal and informal sessions focussed on leadership and management training. These two approaches have led to tensions among preparation providers, because it is felt that by uncritically delivering central government policies the National College diminishes the independent decision-making capacities of head teachers.

Finally, at the far end of the leadership development continuum is the USA, where formal pre-service preparation has a long history, with the first courses being offered in the late nineteenth century. Requirements for preparation and certification are determined at the state level and the USA currently has over 500 leadership preparation programs nationwide. While leadership programs may vary in content, focus and duration, ultimately these programs must develop leadership knowledge and skills relevant to the local school districts that their graduates will serve. Therefore, to try and create a semblance of uniformity across jurisdictions, many programs have aligned their curriculum with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2008). The ISLLC Standards were developed with support from the CCSSO in an attempt to codify what high quality school leadership entails. Each standard addresses the connection between leadership and student success through actions focussed on vision for learning, school culture, organizational management, collaboration, ethics, and the surrounding sociopolitical and cultural context.

Before discussing the findings from the cross-national comparisons, we provide a brief overview of the theoretical framework and research design of the ISSPP.

Theoretical framework and research methods and design of the ISSPP

The ISSPP began in 2001 with representatives from Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Norway, Sweden and the USA agreeing to create a database of case studies of successful principals drawn from each country. The guiding conceptual framework drew initially from four research projects – leading schools in times of change (Day *et al.*, 2000), successful school leadership (Gurr *et al.*, 2003), leadership for school-community partnerships (Kilpatrick *et al.*, 2002), and leadership for OL and improved student outcomes (Mulford *et al.*, 2004). That framework was further informed by a comprehensive review of the literature on school leadership by Leithwood and Riehl (2005) that identified a set of core leadership practices necessary, but insufficient, for success regardless of school context: setting directions; developing people; and redesigning the organization. In order to identify personal qualities and professional competencies that might be common to successful school leaders across contexts, the methodology the ISSPP employed involved interviews with multiple respondents including principals, teachers, parents and students, as well as document analyses of available public accountability reports.

Schools were selected based on documented evidence of student achievement that exceeded expectations on standardized tests, testimonials of principals' exemplary reputations and other indicators of school success. Successful principals were defined as those whose schools had improved under their leadership. The objective of the ISSPP was to determine the role principals play in school success.

Following site identification, interviews were conducted with the principal, 20 percent of the school's teachers, 20 percent of its support staff, and focus groups of parents and students, using a common semi-structured interview protocol developed specifically for the ISSPP using the literature cited earlier. Secondary data were also obtained from official school documents, minutes of meetings, press reports, historical sources, and ethnographic notes taken during visits by the research teams.

In all countries, the initial single nation analyses of ISSPP cases revealed leadership practices consistent with those identified by Leithwood and Riehl, with OL, IL and CRP being emerging themes. As previously noted, cross-national research teams then conducted secondary analyses of the data related to OL in England, Sweden and the

USA; IL in Australia, Denmark and the USA; and, CPR in Cyprus, Norway and the USA. Using deductive coding, the purpose of these analyses was to uncover new contextual understandings about each construct, therefore research teams re-examined case study data first within and then across the different countries. The nations and leadership themes were matched in order to contextualize similarities and differences in policies, demographic shifts and educational trends. For example, we combined Denmark with the USA and Australia because we wanted to compare/contrast the strong Danish emphasis on democratic leadership with the USA and Australian emphases on accountability and mandated decentralization. Similarly, we posited that the contrast among Norwegian and Cypriot diversity policies and US legislation would illuminate interesting perspectives on CRP. Finally, the UK's long-standing devolution policies were likely to provide an interesting backdrop to growing decentralization trends in the USA and Sweden. The USA was held constant as a basis of comparison for each of the three constructs.

We must also recognize the limitations of this research. First, case study research can generalize to a theory, but not populations (Merriam, 1988). Further, our comparative analysis is limited to western perspectives on leadership and by a temporal data collection of school success at the point of recognized school success, often five years after the beginning of a principal's tenure. Additional longitudinal research is needed to understand how successful leaders develop over time from preparation to effective practice. Finally, research is needed to examine the role of cultural diversity (racial/ethnic, gender, poverty, language and intersections thereof) in OL, IL and CRP practice and preparation.

Key cross-national findings

OL

OL is a term borrowed from business to explain the capacity of an organization to learn (Senge, 1990). The term has been modified to fit the aspirations of educational organizations to develop a collective sense of purpose, authentic relationships and principles of practice that can lead to self-renewal over time. How well schools function is therefore related to how well they achieve personal, social and instrumental objectives. OL in schools can thus be characterized by opportunities for capacity building and individual development for teachers at different stages in their careers in relation to changing organizational needs (Day and Leithwood, 2007). To build organizational capacity for learning, school leaders face several challenges: to create conditions that enable everyone in the school to have a sense of individual and collective vision and purpose while feeling a sense of ownership in the change processes in which they are involved and to engage their faculty in processes of learning and development at regular intervals (Day *et al.*, 2011).

Drawing on OL literature, Day *et al.* (2011)found that English, Swedish, and US principals and heads used a similar approach to the development of OL communities with a particular set of strategies introduced over time. More specifically, OL occurred through a layered approach. Success strategies were introduced, developed and expanded in overlapping phases, all of which were founded on the central conviction that focussing on staff and student learning would ultimately lead to tangible rewards, such as improved academic performance. In England, one of the most developed examples of layered leadership occurred in an inner city elementary school in which headteacher Jan began her tenure with a focus on providing a secure environment for pupils and parent involvement. At the same time, she developed teachers' professional

understandings of curriculum, instruction and assessment. Curriculum initiatives were developed and sustained through a gradual redesign of the school organization around professional learning.

In the USA, under the pressure of accountability mandates, principals focussed on building capacity to meet short-term, externally imposed goals established by NCLB legislation. In one of the schools studied, the principal used the core leadership practices of redesigning the organization and developing people to enable OL that, over a 15-year period, transformed her school from being one of the worst to one of the best in the entire district. In other words, by enabling her faculty to meet successive short-term objectives, the school eventually became an organization with the capacity to sustain success and self-renew.

In Sweden, wage negotiations between local authorities and trade unions for principals and teachers at the end of the 1990s forced OL and distributed leadership. The main points of the required change were teachers should work in teams in relation to a group of students; teachers should be in the school at least 35 hours per week during semester time; principals could plan and direct these hours, with17-19 hours typically set aside for contact with students and the rest for planning and in-service training; and teachers should also work ten more hours every week during the semesters on their own preparations. The Swedish ISSPP findings illustrated many examples of how teacher teams created a culture in which the teams and principals worked together to build OL and the capacity to achieve the best possible student outcomes for the common good (for more details see Day *et al.*, 2011).

IL

Studies about IL emerged from the effective schools research as it became evident that the extent of IL is a factor that differentiates high from low achieving schools (Heck *et al.*, 1991; Murphy and Hallinger, 1992). These scholars argued that principals needed to be trained in IL, and many states in the US mandated courses for all aspiring principals specifically devoted to it. More recent conceptions of IL move away from "strong, directive leadership focused on curriculum and instruction from the principal" (Hallinger, 2003, p. 329), to views that include teams and distributed leadership (e.g. Marks and Printy, 2003; Robinson, 2006; Spillane, 2006), views that align with OL (Jacobson *et al.*, 2011). Distributed perspectives on IL also contain numerous references to "democratic" purposes that are most often anchored in leadership concepts stressing the need for school leaders to cultivate the common good (Gale and Densmore, 2003; Lambert, 1998; Ylimaki *et al.*, 2011).

Regardless of whether IL is conceptualized as an individual or shared democratic construct, our findings indicate that recent curriculum and accountability policies have had a profound effect on classroom and school practices. Drawing on the cross-national analysis of IL in the USA, Australia and Denmark, Gurr *et al.* (2011a) suggest that principals across all three countries find themselves in a relatively new crossfire of conflicting expectations that cause new dilemmas. For example, in Denmark, one can illustrate the difference in expectations by pointing to the fact that Danish schools used to live by a traditional vision of "Democratic Bildung," the understanding that schools should take a very comprehensive approach to education. This understanding is challenged by the expectation that schools should focus on basic skills like literacy and numeracy. At one Danish school, the principal reports that the hierarchy has become steeper in recent years. The principal has a new role as the go-between with the local

leadership teams at the school (i.e. the leadership team and the team of department leaders and school directorate). Because of her democratic dispositions she has been working to draw more leaders into the decision-making process, but she finds democratic leadership increasingly at tension with new policies.

Likewise, the US and Australian principals studied must now balance democratic or shared leadership processes (e.g. collaborative decision-making structures and processes) with growing pressures for high academic performance. American principals must simultaneously support the work of living up to external expectations and at the same time respect and care for staff and students. This has become a more challenging task than ever before because principals and teachers often find that, as one US principal described, "Accountability demands have increased dramatically. We have been able to leverage improvements, but I have to say we have had to narrow the curriculum more to reading and math than the arts and multicultural education." Similarly, Australian principals noted the strain of increased accountability pressures on long-standing traditions for holistic literacy instruction. In all three countries, school improvement dilemmas were most intense in culturally diverse schools with large numbers of children living in poverty.

CRP

Johnson *et al.* (2011b) combined two complimentary lenses for understanding policies and leadership practices, using diverse school cases that were developed in previous studies of the ISSPP in the USA, Norway and Cyprus: culturally responsive leadership and leadership for democratic education. CRP are those that incorporate the history, values and cultural knowledge of students' home communities in the school curriculum to develop a critical consciousness among students and faculty to challenge inequalities in the larger society and empower parents from diverse communities. CRP draws on Ladson-Billings' (2005) work on culturally responsive pedagogy with three propositions: students must experience academic success, students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the social order.

Leadership for democratic education arises from research at the intersection of educational leadership, critical theory and critical multiculturalism. Such theories are rooted in social justice and examine institutions that exist for the common good (e.g. Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970). Most definitions of "education for democracy" include themes such as recognizing the basic value and rights of each individual, taking the standpoint of others into consideration, deliberation in making decisions, embracing plurality and difference, and promoting equity and social justice (Moller, 2006). Kalantzis and Cope (1999) describe how schools can work for diversity through an understanding of critical multiculturalism, and their arguments align with democratic leadership. They argue that education is a way to give all students opportunities for social mobility in society (e.g. basic skills like writing, reading and math). Further, Kalantzis and Cope (1999) emphasized that if it is a goal to ensure all students social access and opportunities for mobility the majority's culture and pedagogy have to be explicit. This means that the education itself and its objective ought not to be a means of assimilation. Finally, Kalantzis and Cope argue that students ought to be educated in cultural and linguistic diversity.

ISSPP leaders in demographically diverse American, Norwegian and Cypriot schools exemplified how principals demonstrate strong advocacy for parents and

communities who have been marginalized. While the advocate role for principals was not as crucial in all of the cases, in high-need US schools and the rural schools of Cyprus, it was essential. Although the policy and cultural contexts of Cyprus, Norway and the US differ, all of the cases illustrated a tension in trying to provide students with a multicultural curriculum while meeting accountability guidelines. Also finding a balance between honoring student home cultures and emphasizing student learning does not easily lend itself to normative models and quick fixes in leadership preparation. At one Norwegian school, "respect" was the key term used to describe meetings between majority and minority, or more specifically between people in general. It was shown that the principal, through an explicit discourse of critical multiculturalism based on respect, opened up democratic processes to the development of diversity in his school. At another school, "care" was the key term to describe how the school leaders interacted with minority students and their parents. In three of the US schools, women principals, two African American and one white, worked to create a trusting environment in which parents and community members could feel welcome and comfortable. In the two Cypriot cases, both principals initiated and sustained strong connections between the school and their diverse communities.

Recommendations for improving leadership preparation

While the formal requirements for leadership preparation vary across the seven contexts, our cross-national analyses of ISSPP findings relative to OL, IL and CRP lead us to feel that many of the successful practices we observed could be woven into the fabric of school leadership preparation, and thus, improve it.

OL

The successful principals we studied were analytical, reflective, intuitive, innovative, creative and flexible. They understood the dynamics of organizational structures and cultures, individual and group discussion and the impact of their thoughts, emotions and behaviors on their abilities to enable OL and capacity building. Further, all of these principals drew on strong mental models of school success from a combination of leadership preparation and experience. US principals indicated that common features found in their pre-service leadership programs included: an emphasis on building organizational capacity around curriculum and instruction; a philosophy and curriculum emphasizing school improvement; active, student-centered instruction that integrates theory and practice, stimulates reflection, includes field-based projects, and feedback from peers; faculties who are knowledgeable in subject areas and practitioners experienced in school administration; social and professional support in cohort structure or other forms of networks; vigorous targeted recruitment and selection of leaders with exemplary teaching experience; and well-designed and supervised administrative internships with substantial time and leadership responsibilities under the tutelage of expert veterans. These leadership preparation characteristics echoed recommendations from Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2007) and the goals of the National College in England. Similarly, successful Sweden principals experienced four steps in their training: a recruitment process; an introduction focussed on practical and administrative tasks including how to redesign schools as learning organizations; seminar days to support understanding of the role of the school organization in society and the local community; and continued support and networks following completion of the initial leadership training program.

IL

Many of the principals from the ISSPP cases relied heavily on professional experience and professional development to inform their work in IL. One US principal, for instance, developed her IL expertise as a principal in a prior "turn-around" school, and her professional development in literacy. In particular, she sought professional development activities that helped her create a strong understanding of how children acquire literacy and math. As she described, "I knew that if my teachers could get a strong philosophical understanding about how children develop as readers and writers, they would feel empowered to help all children learn the reading and writing process." Likewise, John Fleming (Australian principal) was recognized as an exemplary instructional leader with a reputation as an excellent former teacher and assistant principal. Teachers also talked about how John exuded "an inner confidence about his teaching knowledge and that gives him credibility as a leader." Danish principals moved from teachers to leaders, participating in a series of leadership modules that built upon strong classroom instructional experience. From personal experience, these exemplary instructional leaders understood the democratic kinds of processes necessary to gain teacher commitment to the curriculum. They were active in seeking expert advice and support, and they acknowledged the support and work of others in the school. Moreover, they recognized good instructional practice in classrooms. In other words, they had mental models of good democratic IL to enhance increasingly restrictive curriculum and accountability policies.

There were several other features that seemed important to their success in IL. First, the principals were able to adapt to the changing educational climates, increased decentralization, high-stakes accountability and increasing diversity (Gurr *et al.*, 2005). Further, these successful principals had a love for continuous learning and participated in whatever formal or informal programs were available. Third, they had an orientation toward equity and they accepted personal responsibility for cultivating democratic participation as well as academic achievement in their schools. Fourth, and closely related, they demonstrated a critical consciousness about needs for student performance and democratic education, working on affective as well as academic outcomes for all children. In certain regards, the principals felt tension about how current policies narrowed the curriculum to a culturally neutral focus on literacy and math. Yet none of these principals explicitly addressed CRP as part of IL, and we suspect this oversight may be due to a gap in current leadership preparation.

CRP

As noted earlier, very different approaches to leadership preparation exist across the countries. In Cyprus, leadership preparation has traditionally been limited to a few in-service courses after an individual has assumed an administrative position. However, given the nation's small number of principals and a centralized educational system, changes enacted by the Ministry of Education and Culture regarding leadership preparation for CRP could have an immediate impact.

Norway has not had a tradition of formal preparation for school leaders, but this is changing as novice principals complete new leadership programs approved by the directorate. It remains to be seen if these will incorporate a focus on CRP in the curriculum. The well-established system of preparation programs in the USA is highly decentralized, so common standards emphasizing CRP for leadership preparation and certification are not immediately likely, although there is some attention paid to issues of social justice and advocacy in the ISLLC Standards. An alternative path would be to

develop a model diversity and social justice curriculum and showcase effective programs through national conferences and organizations for leadership preparation such as the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), which is working on such an initiative called Preparing Leaders to Support Diverse Learners: Curriculum Modules for Leadership Preparation (details can be found at: www.ucea.org/lsdl-preparation-modules-new/).

The ISSPP cases illustrate the significant dilemmas educational leaders have to confront in order to meet the needs and expectations for schooling in diverse contexts. In the face of national policy contexts, traditions and accountability pressures, our findings demonstrate how leadership practices that contribute to the empowerment of all stakeholders can create tensions for culturally diverse schools honoring student home cultures and emphasizing student learning. We found that diversity thrived the most in school environments where language and ethnic minority students were described as equals and all teachers were expected to take responsibility for their education, and the whole school was expected to be responsible for the common good and the development of a diverse society. As one principal from Cyprus argued, "What we want to do is pay attention to the children at all levels of the actions of the school unit without making any attempt to assimilate them, that is make them forget what they used to do. This is important" (Johnson *et al.*, 2011b).

Based upon Johnson *et al.*'s (2011b) findings, principals should be introduced to the concept of "culturally responsive leadership" through programs that emphasize elements such as the critique of social inequities, the incorporation of "cultural funds of knowledge" in the curriculum (Moll *et al.*, 1992) as well as the mobilization of the social capital of a diverse community. With respect to leadership for democratic education, the curriculum should incorporate components such as distributed leadership, participatory decision making, and the empowerment of ethnic minority students and their families. In other words, there is much work to be done to help all candidates "lead for diversity" in the twenty-first century.

Incorporating our cross-national findings about successful OL, IL and CRP into a few key recommendations to improve leadership preparation, we offer the following suggestions recognizing that variations in national policy and tradition that range from informal, apprentice based to highly formalized programs will lead to these ideas being implemented accordingly:

Develop student-centered curricula. This integrates theory and practice with an emphasis on school improvement and a social focus essential to democracy. In other words, successful school leaders must develop the analytical tools to intellectualize problems using local (school) and societal (structural) perspectives. In countries with highly formalized programs (the USA and the UK), coursework should help students examine OL, IL and CRP problems related to school improvement. For countries with apprentice-based preparation (Australia and Cyprus), students need to expand their experiential learning with dialogues drawn from a range of theories. In the Scandinavian countries, students need explicit opportunities to explore theories that illuminate tensions between democratic values and increasing neoliberal pressures.

Provide field-based experiences. This includes well-supervised internships, which allow candidates extended time to engage in leadership experiences under the guidance of an experienced, successful leader. In highly formalized programs, aspiring leaders need extended time to assume the full range of leadership responsibilities, especially those related to OL, IL and CRP. By their very nature, informal or semi-formal programs are grounded in field experiences. Regardless of

where countries fall on the leadership continuum, we recommend the development of case examples distributed through such organizations as UCEA, BELMAS and/or CCEAM. In so doing, aspiring principals will have an opportunity to develop mental models for successful leadership.

Social supports and interactions . As cohort models and professional networks help to prevent professional isolation. A leader's role is often a lonely position to occupy and the development of support networks from the very beginning of preparation is essential. Countries with informal leadership preparation need to create structures for professional networking outside of university coursework and provide job-embedded learning experiences, such as book study groups. In the Scandinavian countries with semi-formal leadership preparation programs, social support networks may be job-embedded as leadership is frequently constructed as teams. The more highly formalized programs of the USA and the UK need to incorporate cohort models in which students stay together for courses and field experiences for the duration of their certification or degree program.

Provide learning experiences that balance the three constructs of OL, IL and CRP

Regardless of where a country fall on the continuum of leadership preparation, today's aspiring leaders need a balanced approach, focusing attention on shared or layered models of leadership, redesigning their organizations around curriculum, learning and participation. At the same time, with increasingly diverse populations, leaders across all seven countries must simultaneously foster democratic values and culturally responsive curriculum in ways that meet accountability requirements for academic achievement. In other words, successful leaders have a critical consciousness about cultural diversity that informs their instructional practice and OL.

The quality of leadership preparation ultimately depends upon the quality of the individuals recruited and selected into such programs, particularly at the pre-service level (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2007). An individual who has assumed a leadership role while on the job or a leadership role in his or her school/community has a sense of what it takes to guide and energize the efforts of others in ways that build OL capacity. Dispositions such as creativity, flexibility, persistence and courage can be improved through training, but if these demonstrated leadership characteristics are used as criteria for leadership selection the entire preparation process would be enhanced.

Conclusions

This paper drew on findings from across seven varied contexts of the ISSPP to consider implications for improved leadership preparation, particularly with regards to OL, IL and CRP. Principals in the seven nations studied experienced increased student diversity, greater accountability and changes in centralization/decentralization governance. As successful principals adapted and responded to these contextual pressures, they distributed leadership in ways that cultivated OL, improved IL, and supported CRP. Although goals and outcomes varied from context to context, these successful principals all advocated a "hands-on" approach to acquiring leadership proficiency. Several noted that their own leadership programs had included problem- and field-based learning approaches that explicitly engaged them in the type of real-world problems they eventually faced in their schools. They also talked about the importance of social and professional support from cohort models and similar networks that helped them develop group facilitation skills, because if leadership is best conducted in teams, then leadership preparation should provide aspiring leaders

with experiences that emulate the work of teams in schools. Moreover, many of these successful principals indicated that their team-learning experiences became a habit of practice that continued throughout their careers, and they actively sought out supportive peer learning networks. These networks and interactions provided social and emotional support as well as a sense of professional self- and collective efficacy for OL and IL development. But, as Johnson *et al.* (2011b) point out, diversity issues and CPR are often not yet adequately addressed or even targeted as distinct areas in many formal and informal leadership programs. Perhaps in response to changing demographics, there is an emerging trend in many countries toward critical dialogues about diversity and meaningful internships that include opportunities for interaction with culturally diverse parents and families. However, leadership development for CRP tends to remain distinct from OL, IL and other more traditional leadership functions. In light of changing demographics, future leadership preparation programs will need to explicitly address CRP and view successful culturally sensitive leadership as complementary to, and not at odds with, successful OL and IL.

Our secondary analysis of ISSPP cases is limited by the fact that all seven countries are grounded in western perspectives. Further, data collection occurred at a particular point in time, most often about five years after the beginning of the principal's tenure. Future research needs to incorporate additional countries with non-western traditions and perspectives on leadership (e.g. South Africa) and longitudinal approaches examining leadership development from preparation to successful practice. Nonetheless, our findings offer contextualized, cross-national understandings about OL, IL, and CRP and preparation. In closing, we hope these cross-national research findings and implications for leadership preparation provide researchers and practitioners with contextualized understandings about the complexities involved in successful leadership development and practice. As the number of ISSPP countries and cases grow, we believe our initial insights will become clearer and findings more robust.

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