

# Faculty Perceptions: Where Do Education Administration Programs Stand with the ISLLC/ELCC Standards?

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Since they were launched in 1996 and 2002 respectively, the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards, either directly, or through state accreditation requirements, have been perpetuating programmatic change in school leadership preparation programs nationwide. This paper, as part of a larger mixed method study conducted in 2007, highlights the degree to which professors of educational administration in the United States perceived that their programs were aligned with the ISLLC/ELCC standards and describes the work that can be done to ensure a higher level of program-standard alignment.

While education administration faculty perceived that their programs, on average, are well aligned with all seven standards, group differences were observed in the degree to which faculty perceived that their programs were aligned with the different standards, when compared across NCATE accreditation status and affiliation status but not Carnegie classification status. Given the fact that schools are more inclusive and diverse places than they were 50 years ago, this study challenges education administration faculty to align programs more effectively with all standards

## Statement of the Purpose

The new *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008* (see Appendix A) retains the footprint of the ISLLC 1996 standards and continues to challenge faculty to enhance leaders' capacity to improve teaching and learning for all. If we, as educational administration faculty are to respond to these standards it is imperative that we move beyond 'meeting the standards' to actually 'embracing' them. To accomplish this we need to reflect on where we are in terms of standards implementation, redefine priorities, and identify strategies that will get us to where we want to be in the years to come. This paper, as part of a larger mixed method study conducted in 2007, identifies when educational administration faculty aligned their programs with the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and/or the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards. It highlights the degree to which faculty perceived that

their programs are aligned with each of the standards. Finally, it describes group differences in faculty perceptions across National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation status and affiliation status, and identifies steps that preparation programs can take to ensure that their programs reflect the ideals of the standards more fully.

### **Rational for the Study**

Twenty-five years ago, in April of 1987 the National Commission on Excellence in Education challenged educators to rescue America's educational system from drowning itself in a sea of mediocrity. Given the close link between the quality of school leadership and school performance (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen, 2007) stringent state accountability systems have started holding principals accountable for the success of *all* students. Accreditation and regulatory standards are challenging education administration programs to redefine the profession (Murphy, 2001) and re-conceptualize "both the knowledge base and the processes that are included in university-based programs for aspiring leaders" (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, p.244).

Given the changing demographics of the US, the importance placed on inclusion, and the fast paced changes in technology school leaders have to be prepared to support the breadth, depth, and quality of education that students need for survival in a linguistically and culturally diverse environment. Now more than ever, school leaders have to be skilled at managing and analyzing information, applying knowledge to solve complex, novel problems and communicating and collaborating effectively with members of the community to promote the success of every student. With this end in view, and the desire to move towards greater efficiency, accountability, and economic viability, education administration faculty, over the last decade, have been using the ISLLC and ELCC standards to evaluate and modify existing programs.

The success of ISLLC/ELCC standards implementation rests to a large extent on the degree to which faculty succeed in creating programs that reflect the ideals of the standards, both in theory and practice (Machado 2008). There has been little empirical research that carefully examines the degree to which faculty perceive that their programs align with each of the standards. Our study seeks to bridge this gap. Knowledge of the degree to which faculty perceive that their programs reflect each of the standards will aid faculty in redefining priorities and identifying innovative ways of responding to the new *Educational Leadership Policy Standards 2008*.

### **Methodology**

The validity and reliability of this study were enhanced by employing a mixed method approach. Qualitative data collected from eight faculty members during the preliminary phase of the study were used to develop

the survey which generated both qualitative and quantitative data. The survey instrument underwent the rigorous four step procedure recommended by Ellis (1994) to establish face, construct, and concurrent validity. A Cronbach Coefficient Alpha score of .91 indicated that the survey was reliable. Data were analyzed using *Statistical Program for Social Sciences* (SPSS, v.14) and *Atlas ti*.

The survey instrument was administered to faculty at 379 school leadership preparation programs listed in the *24th edition of the Educational Administration Directory* (NCPEA, 2004). The 222 survey respondents were representative of the population in terms of both affiliation status (public and private) and Carnegie classification status (doctoral extensive, doctoral intensive and masters' level programs). However, in terms of accreditation status the sample was comprised of a greater number of institutions with full NCATE accreditation status than the population; the proportion of programs with probationary/conditional NCATE accreditation for the sample was representative of the population, even though it was slightly smaller.

### **Findings and Discussion**

School leadership programs, nationwide, were aligned, either directly or indirectly with the ISLLC or ELCC standards. In the case of the latter interview participants indicated that their programs were congruent with state standards, which in turn, were congruent with the ISLLC. This study reveals that the program-standards alignment process unfolded gradually over a period of time and took anywhere between six months to several years. One tenth of the respondents claimed that the process began as early as 1996 when the ISLLC standards were launched; approximately three fourths of the respondents indicated that program-standards alignment at their institutions began between 1998 and 2003; for approximately 15% the process began in 2004 or later. As many as a fifth of the respondents reported that, to date, their departments had made between three to five attempts to align their programs with the standards. A little over one third of the respondents reported that review and modification of program-standards alignment is an ongoing process within their departments.

Six of the eight interview participants reported a very high degree of program-standards alignment; the others reported moderately high degree of alignment. The quantitative data revealed a similar trend. More than four-fifths of the survey respondents reported that they felt that there was moderate to substantial observable evidence of program-standards alignment. Interview participants justified their claim of 'high degree of alignment' either by the fact that their programs were approved by the state or because they successfully attained and/or retained their NCATE accreditation status.

Table 1 shows that faculty perceived that their programs were better aligned to standards 7 (internship) and 3 (management of organizational

**Table 5**  
Ranks, Means and Standard Deviations of Item Three (Scale One):  
Perceived Degree of Program-Standards Alignment.

Rank	Standards	M	SD
1	Std.7 Internship	2.6959	0.63802
2	Std.3 Managing organizational operations and resources	2.6802	0.56544
3	Std.2 Sustaining school culture and instructional program	2.6636	0.60263
4	Std.1 Developing a shared vision	2.6359	0.57025
5	Std.5 Acting with integrity, fairness and ethics	2.5880	0.65531
6	Std.6 Influencing larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context	2.5833	0.64879
7	Std.4 Collaborating with families and community	2.5484	0.65171

Notes:

(1) 0 = No evidence 1 = Some evidence 2 = Moderate evidence 3 = Substantial evidence

(2) The greater the item's mean, the greater the perceived degree of program-standards alignment.

operations and resources), followed by standard 2, 1, 5, 6 and finally 4. There was a high degree of agreement between faculty perceptions for all standards, especially standard 1 (developing a shared vision) and standard 3 (management of organizational operations and resources). These findings corroborate Cornell's (2005) and Cox's (2007) findings that standard 3 and standard 5 (acting with integrity, fairness and ethics) were more strongly emphasized as compared to standards 4 (collaboration with families and communities) and standards 6 (influencing the politics and cultural context). Given the powerful connection between home and school in promoting academic success (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Rowe, 1995) it is crucial that we strive to embed standards 4 and 6 more effectively into the curriculum.

NCATE Accreditation status, affiliation status, and Carnegie classification status were chosen as grouping variables. The researchers operated under the assumption that NCATE accredited institutions are more likely to enforce implementation of the standards than those institutions that are not accredited. Similarly, it was assumed that the size and breadth of programs could influence not just programs receptivity to change and reform initiatives, but also the manner in which standards are implemented within the programs. A series of one way Analysis of Variance between group (ANOVA) tests were run to test the validity of these assumptions.

Based on accreditation status there was a significant difference in the degree to which faculty perceived that their programs were aligned with standards 5 [ $F(2, 209) = 3.649, p = 0.028$ ] and standard 6 [ $F(2, 209) = 3.303, p = 0.039$ ]. On average, faculty who worked for institutions that were not accredited by NCATE perceived that their programs were better aligned to

standards 5 (acting with integrity, fairness and ethics) and 6 (influencing larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context) than faculty at NCATE accredited institutions. This phenomenon can be explained in a number of ways. One plausible explanation for this is that institutions who wish to maintain their full accreditation status have to undergo rigorous external and impartial reviews by professionals and community representatives. Given this scrutiny by an external representative and enforcer of the standards it is highly probable that faculty who work at institutions with full NCATE accreditation evaluate their programs a lot more critically than do faculty who work at institutions that are not accredited by NCATE. Another explanation could be that faculty who work at institutions that are not accredited by NCATE have greater flexibility, can experiment more and therefore feel more confident about the degree to which their programs align with the standards. Either way, dialogue between institutions that are accredited by NCATE and those that are not could lead to an exchange of ideas and further enhancement of program-standards alignment.

Based on affiliation status there was a significant difference in the degree to which faculty perceived that their programs were aligned with standards 1 [ $F(1, 208) = 6.564, p = 0.011$ ], standards 5 [ $F(1, 207) = 7.338, p = 0.007$ ] and standard 6 [ $F(2, 207) = 5.104, p = 0.025$ ]. Faculty employed by private institutions perceived that their programs were better aligned to standard 1 (developing a vision), 5 (acting with integrity, fairness and ethics), and 6 (influencing larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context) than faculty at public institutions. This difference in perception could be explained by the difference in the resource base of public and private institutions. "The sources of base budget revenue—for hiring faculty and staff—for public and private institutions are exactly the same: tuition, state support and endowment income (Wiley, 2007, p. 6). "However, state funds average 31 percent of the support at public universities and only 0.3 percent at the private schools. Conversely, private endowments supplement private schools by about 31 percent and public schools at only 0.9 percent" (Wiley, 2007, p. 7). It stands to reason that private institutions may have had greater access to resources that could have been used to prepare faculty for the change, hire external consultants, and align their programs with the standards.

Doctoral/research institutions are more visible nationally because they have the widest span of academic programs and grant the largest array of degrees. In addition, they hire prominent scholars and educators who pose the most far-reaching issues of funding and policy. As such, it was assumed that the perceived degree of program-standards alignment would be higher for faculty who worked at doctoral/research institutions when compared with masters level institutions. However data reveal that there was no significant difference in perceived degree of program-standard alignment for faculty who worked at institutions with varying Carnegie classification status. This finding was surprising. It is possible that although masters' level institutions do not have as strong a research and resource base as doc-

toral/research institutions they do have fewer faculty members and can establish higher levels of coordination that the program-standard alignment process demands.

### Summary and Conclusion

Over the last decade the ISLLC or ELCC standards, with their competing challenges and opportunities, have triggered awareness; followed by programmatic change in school leadership preparation programs, nationwide (Cornell, 2005; Crawford, 2004; Cox, 2007; Harpin, 2003; Morrow, 2003). This study confirms that education administration faculty perceived that their programs are well aligned with all seven ELCC standards. The internship experience, which is critical to the success of any program, appears to be more robust and tightly interwoven with practice. While this is encouraging, especially because the gap between theory and practice was so apparent prior to standards-based reform, additional research studies will help measure success by determining if a positive causal relationship exists between these modified internships experiences and student achievement in K–12 schools. Group differences in perception across NCATE accreditation and affiliation status suggest that greater attention must be paid to embedding standard 4 (collaboration with families and communities), 5 (acting with integrity, fairness and ethics) and 6 (influencing larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context) into the curriculum. School leadership preparation programs must continue to diligently assess the relevance of their programs by engaging in ongoing program review and modification. In addition to seeking feedback from program graduates, principals and superintendents, preparation programs should devote more time and energy to adopting strategies that have worked for other institutions. A collaborative approach that extends across institutions will lead to success for all.

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## Appendix A

### Educational Leadership Constituents Council (ELCC) Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership

*Standard 1:* Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a district vision of learning supported by the school community.

*Standard 2:* Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by promoting a positive school culture, providing an effective instructional program, applying best practice to student learning, and designing comprehensive professional growth plans for staff.

*Standard 3:* Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students

by managing the organization, operations, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

*Standard 4:* Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by collaborating with families and other community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

*Standard 5:* Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairly, and in an ethical manner.

*Standard 6:* Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

*Standard 7: Internship.* The internship provides significant opportunities for candidates to synthesize and apply the knowledge and practice and develop the skills identified in Standards 1–6 through substantial, sustained, standards-based work in real settings, planned and guided cooperatively by the institution and school district personnel for graduate credit.