

SUMMARY

Educating School Leaders

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- Critics blame education schools for intractable social problems that they did not create and cannot solve, while **education schools do business as usual, refusing to acknowledge the real problems that confront them.**
- **The job of school leader has been transformed by extraordinary economic, demographic, technological, and global change.**
- Principals and superintendents no longer serve primarily as supervisors. They are being called on **to lead in the redesign of their schools and school systems.**
- The findings of this report were very disappointing. Collectively, educational administration programs are the **weakest of all the programs at the nation's education schools.**
- **The curriculum seems little more than a grab bag of survey courses.** If the class on principalship were removed, it would be a real challenge to guess the purpose of the program.
- **Nine point template to examine the programs. (See page 13)**
 - Purpose
 - Curricular coherence
 - Curricular balance
 - Faculty composition
 - Admissions
 - Degrees
 - Research
 - Finances
 - Assessment
- **Nine-point template applied to University-Based School Leadership Programs. (See page 47)**
- Educational administration has turned away from professional education in favor of the arts and sciences model of graduate education, and has **attenuated its ties with practitioners and practice.**
- **Recommendations of Report (See pages 63-69)**
 - **Elimination of pay increases for degrees not used in practice; committed financial support; weak programs strengthened or closed; challenging and rigorous curriculum; elimination of EdD; and PhD for researchers only.**
- If the academy proves unwilling or unable to clean its own house, replacing inadequate programs cannot be permitted to occur by slow attrition over many years.

Recommendations

To improve educational leadership programs, the report recommends that universities, policy makers and school systems:

1. School systems, municipalities, and states must find alternatives to salary scales that grant raises merely for accumulating credits and degrees. The most desirable alternative would be to tie raises to attaining the specific skills and knowledge that administrators need to do their jobs. This would shift the focus from simply acquiring credits to learning and then demonstration – on the job and through examinations – that one has the skills that are necessary for leading schools and promoting student achievement.

2. Universities must champion high standards for education schools and their leadership programs by embracing financial practices that strengthen those programs. When university administrators use education schools as cash cows or systemically underfund them, they are in essence acknowledging that the program is weak or unimportant to them and giving their approval for the program to remain marginal and low in quality. The fact of the matter is that many institutions will need to increase funding, though, they must also raise accountability standards to ensure quality in educational schools and their leadership programs.

3. All leadership programs should be rigorously evaluated, and weak programs should be strengthened or closed. Every leadership program should be evaluated to determine whether it is viable. The nine criteria used throughout this report – covering program purpose, curriculum content and balance, admission and graduate standards, faculty, research, resources, and degrees offered – provide a potential template for such evaluation.

4. The current grab bag of courses that constitutes preparation for a career in educational leadership must give way to a relevant and challenging curriculum designed to prepare effective school leaders. A new degree, the Masters in Educational Administration, should be developed. Educational administration programs need to equip graduates with the skills and knowledge necessary to lead today's schools, not yesterday's. Toward this end, it is recommended that the program for aspirants to school leadership positions should be the M.E.A., masters of educational administration, consisting of both basic courses in management and education. The M.E.A., rigorously combining the necessary education subject matter and business/leadership education, should become the terminal degree needed by an administrator to rise through the ranks.

5. The doctor of education degree (Ed.D.) in school leadership should be eliminated. Today, it is a watered-down doctorate that diminishes the field of educational administration and provides a back door for weak education schools to gain doctoral granting authority. An Ed.D. is unnecessary for any job in school administration and creates a meaningless and burdensome obstacle to people who want to enter senior levels of school leadership.

6. The doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) in school leadership should be reserved for preparing researchers. The current ambiguity in the Ph.D.'s meaning – the degree is being awarded to both practitioners and scholars – should be eliminated by redefining this doctorate as a rigorous research degree reserved exclusively for the very small number of students planning on careers as scholars of school leadership.

Levine, A. (2005). Educating school leaders. Washington, D.C.: The Education Schools Project.