

MPEA—Part 2
How Preparation Influences
School Leaders And Their School
Improvement:
Comparing Exemplary and Conventionally
Prepared Principals

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Purpose

- To measure effective leadership preparation and assesses its relationship to what principals learn about leadership, their leadership practices, and school improvement progress and improved school climate (particularly for academic press and continuous improvement), using 125 principals who had graduated from one of four exemplary leadership preparation programs and a national comparison sample of 571 principals.

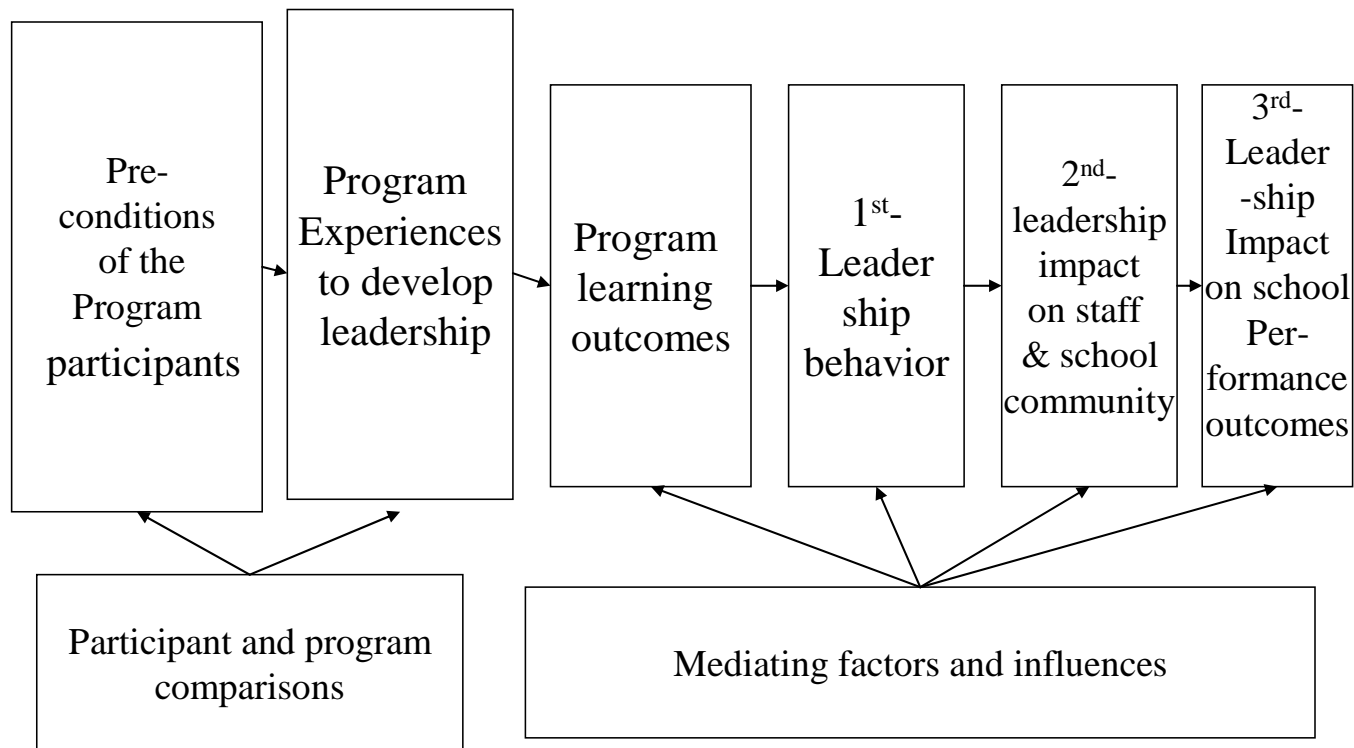
Study sponsorship

- This research is part of the Stanford University School Leadership Study of eight reputationally-exemplary leadership preparation and support programs. The study was led by Linda Darling Hammond and Debra Meyerson and funded by the Wallace Foundation (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2007).

Theoretical background

- **Preparation** Leadership as a set of skills and qualities that can be developed through strategically designed content and active adult theory-based strategies (Dvir, et al, 2004; Jackson & Kelly, 2002; Orr, 2006)
- **Leadership** Transformational/instructional leadership as a mediating influence on school improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999)
- **School improvement.** School improvement research on school practices that are most predictive of positive student outcomes—such as instructional change, professional development, and attention to organizational climate and effectiveness (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2004; Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Luppescu, 2006; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000).

Longitudinal Evaluation Design



Methodology

- Exemplary programs selected by Stanford University School Leader Study
- On-line and mail survey to two samples of principals:
 - 100% of recent (0-5 years) program graduates from 4 exemplary leadership preparation programs who became principals
 - National sample of principals using NAESP and NASSP data resources
- Survey instrument based on survey designed by the UCEA/TEA-SIG Evaluation Taskforce, ELCC standards, Leithwood, et al research, and the federal School and Staffing survey, as well as unique study related items (e.g. costs)

Sample Characteristics

	Exemplary program principals	Comparison principals	Sig.
Diversity			
Being female	72%	47%	***
Racial/ethnic minority	37	9	***
District support			
District pays a portion or all of program costs	51	30	***
Referred by administrator	61	30	***
Educational and leadership experience			
Age	45	50	***
Number of years of teaching	12.6	15.1	**
Initial aspirations to be a	2.0	2.0	--

Measures and analyses

- For this analysis, selected survey items were used and reduced to 11 scales, all of which had robust reliability coefficients (.828 and higher) and good factor loadings (.600 and higher, with most at .750 and higher).
- Statistical analyses
 - Descriptive statistics
 - T-tests for group differences
 - Correlations among measures
 - Multiple regressions on stages of outcomes

Measures	N	N of items	Range	Mean	SE	RC alpa
Instruction leading experience (count-department chair, team leader, instructional specialist, or coach)	695	4	0-4	1.08	.039	--
Leading learning reflection rich quality program	683	11	1.45-5.00	3.73	.030	.929
Preparation: Active, student centered instruction	682	7	1.14-5.00	3.57	.032	.867
Mean quality internship attributes	500	6	1-5	3.74	.043	.865
Learned leading learning, students and teachers	684	5	1-5	3.41	.033	.887
Learned organizational learning	683	6	1-5	3.44	.036	.921
Positive beliefs about the principalship	691	4	1-5	4.74	.016	.819
Effective instructional leadership practices	683	8	1.50-4.00	2.92	.019	.828
School improvement progress	689	6	2.17-5.00	4.08	.019	.840
Effective school climate (coherent academic collaborative)	691	8	2-5	4.15	.018	.834
Challenging school context	689	7	1-5	2.13	.028	.843

Demographic and preparation measures

Measures	Principal Groups	N	Mean	S. E.	Sig.
<i>Personal characteristics</i>					
Female	comparison	567	.46	.02	***
	exemplary preparation	120	.73	.04	
Prior number of instruction leading experience as department chair, team leader, instructional specialist	comparison	571	1.0	.04	***
	exemplary preparation	124	1.3	.10	
<i>Preparation</i>					
Extent preparation emphasized leading learning and reflection	comparison	559	3.6	.03	***
	exemplary preparation	124	4.2	.08	
Extent preparation program offered active, student centered instruction	comparison	558	3.5	.03	***
	exemplary preparation	124	4.1	.08	
mean quality internship attributes	comparison	396	3.6	.05	***
	exemplary preparation	104	4.4	.07	

Measures: <i>Learning outcomes and leadership practices</i>	Principal Groups	N	Mean	Std. Error Mean	sg.
Extent to which principals learned to lead learning for students and teachers in their preparation	comparison	560	3.33	.036	***
	exemplary preparation	124	3.78	.083	
Extent to which principals learned to lead organizational learning in their preparation	comparison	559	3.32	.038	***
	exemplary preparation	124	3.94	.080	
positive beliefs about the principalship	comparison	567	4.72	.019	***
	exemplary preparation	124	4.84	.029	
Frequency of use of instructional leadership practices	comparison	563	2.85	.021	***
	exemplary preparation	120	3.20	.044	

Measures: School Qualities and Improvement Work	Principal Groups	N	Mean	S.E.	Sig.
Challenging school context— seriousness of teacher, student, and parent problems	comparison	566	2.09	.030	***
	exemplary preparation	123	2.33	.075	
Number of students in the school	comparison	565	650	21.24	NS
	exemplary preparation	124	657	35.25	
Percentage of students eligible for free or reduced fee lunch	comparison	528	39.6	1.134	***
	exemplary preparation	120	61.6	2.913	
Number of years as principal	comparison	530	5.77	.220	***
	exemplary preparation	112	3.14	.233	
Extent of school improvement progress over the last 12 months	comparison	568	4.04	.021	***
	exemplary preparation	121	4.27	.047	

Regression analysis for predicting effective leadership practices

	Instructional Leadership			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	1.146	.228		.000
Female	.130	.038	.128	.001
instruction leading experience	.085	.018	.170	.000
learned leading learning, students and teachers	.061	.035	.104	.083
learned to lead organizational learning	.069	.032	.128	.033
Positive beliefs about the principalship	.235	.045	.192	.000
Number of students in the school	.000	.000	.105	.005
percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	.003	.001	.157	.000
Challenging school context	-.061	.028	-.090	.030
r-squared	.226			.000
Adjusted R-squared	.216	.449		

Regression analyses for predicting school improvement progress and effective school climate (academic press and improvement)

	DV: School improvement progress		DV: effective school climate—academic press and improvement	
	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Sig.	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Sig.
(Constant)		.000		.000
Female	.095	.011	--	--
learned organizational learning	.100	.008	.094	.005
Instructional leadership	.285	.000	.117	.001
Positive beliefs about the principalship	.088	.019	--	--
Number of years as principal	--	--	.210	.000
percentage students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	.139	.001	--	--
Challenging school context teachers students parents	-.216	.000	-.285	.000
School improvement progress	--	--	.331	.000
r-squared		.000		.000
Adjusted R-squared			.389	

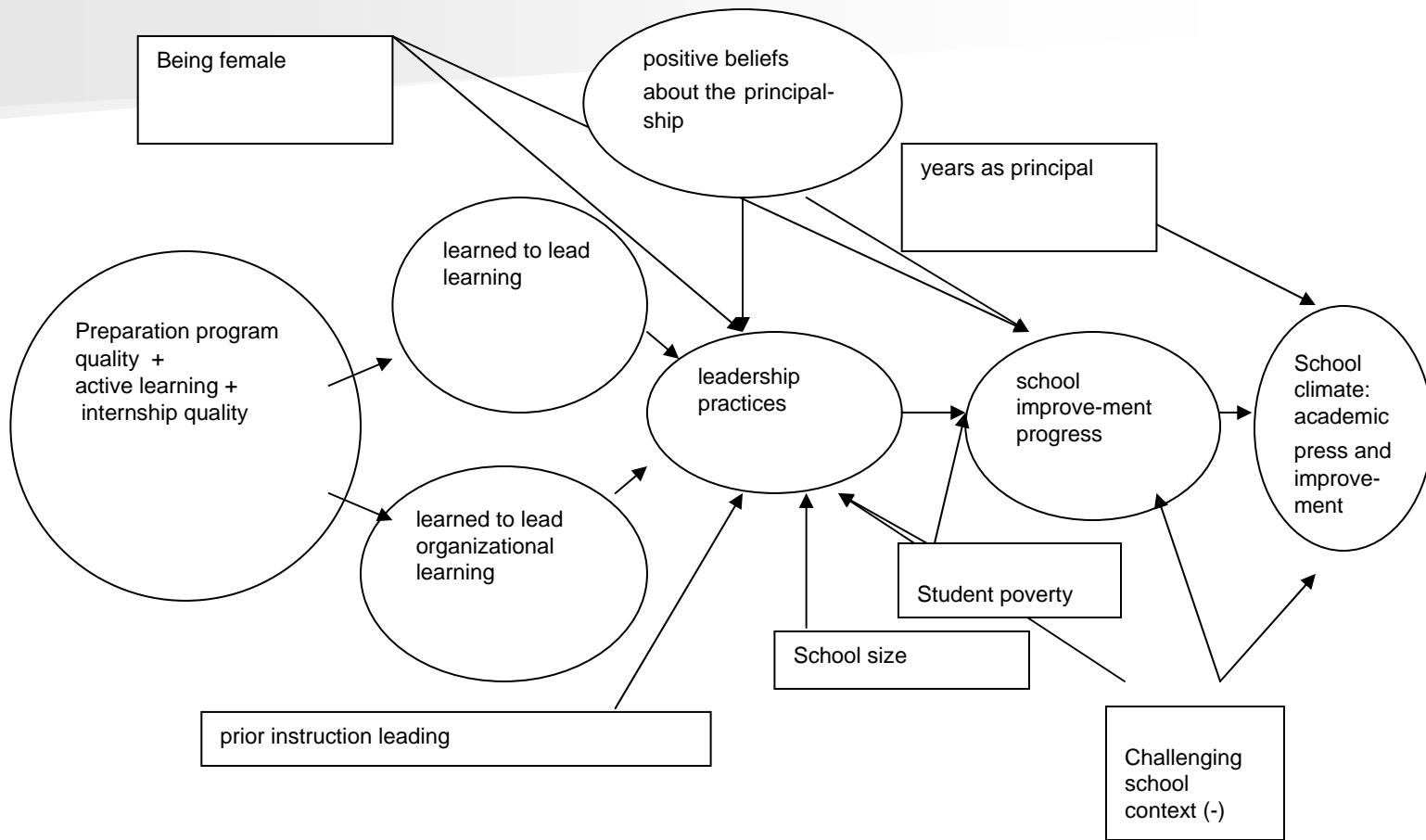
Discussion

- **Hypothesis 1:** *There IS a strong positive relationship between effective leadership practices and school improvement progress and quality school improvement climate.*
- **Hypothesis 1a:** *District support does NOT have a mediating influence on the leadership practices-school improvement progress and quality school improvement climate relationships.*
- **Hypothesis 1b.** *The leadership practice-school improvement relationship IS mediated by the extent of challenging school conditions (percent students in poverty and extent of challenging problems) but not school size.*

Discussion (continue)

- **Hypothesis 2:** *Graduates of high quality leadership preparation programs ARE more likely to report more effective leadership practices than are graduates of conventional programs.*
- **Hypothesis 2a:** *The leadership preparation-leadership practice relationship IS mediated by the extent to which graduates learn instructional leadership and organizational learning leadership.*
- **Hypothesis 2b.** *The leadership preparation-practice-school improvement relationship IS moderated by the extent to which principals are female, but NOT whether they had prior experience leading instruction, such as being a team leader, department chair, instructional specialist or coach.*

Revised Conceptual Model



Conclusions

It appears that of all preparation program features, leadership-focused program content is the most influential, showing both a direct and indirect effect on the school improvement progress outcomes. Program focus matters in how principals focus their work, particularly in fostering school improvement. What graduates learn about leadership is significant for how they practice leadership it, which has a positive influence on their school improvement work, even in more challenging school settings.

Conclusions (continued)

- The results show that program features do promote better learning and leadership practice. These results build on and extend prior, small scale research on the relationship between leadership preparation approaches and graduate outcomes by replicating those benefits and showing the relationship of those benefits to principals' school improvement work.
- Provides a viable model for replication
- More, large scale, diverse and longitudinal research is needed