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PREPARING A VIABLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

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ABSTRACT

Majority of school administrators complete licensure classes but are not equipped for administrative position. The purpose of this study was to investigate the manner in which school leaders have been trained. Eighteen (18) different journal articles were reviewed from different web search engines on the current practice of training administrators. The study involved reading and deciphering purpose of each of the 18 papers. The study also distinguished where commonalities existed and examined dissimilarities. The findings were as follows: lack of proper communication, and insufficient collaboration among school districts and universities on how school leaders should be trained. To rectify the current anomaly in preparing a viable school administrator, it was recommended that there should be more collaboration between the school districts, and colleges/universities. Planning with all stakeholders should be the first step in performing series of any school administrative functions because it sets the future courses of action in every aspect of the school. In order to produce an efficient school administrator, collaboration, communication and negotiation with stakeholders are imperative.

KEYWORDS: School Administrator, Stakeholders, Collaborating, Communicating and Negotiating

INTRODUCTION

This study is to investigate the manner in which school leaders have been trained for their work within schools. Eighteen different journals were used and a number of observations made. It is a known fact that when majority of school administrators have completed and passed licensure classes, they still remain ill-equipped for their job. In light of this problem, these authors attempt to conduct a study that would examine, identify the problems and seek to find a solution that would assist in alleviating the problem. It is clear that school administrators feel unprepared on their part; they undergo this kind of experience in spite of the nature of training that they undergo. Extensive review of literature reveals that this problem is not only peculiar to the United States but exists in other countries too. The largest percentage of journals reviewed was based on schools in the United States. However,

a minority of these journals were also written in Europe, Belgium and Turkey. A journal with its roots in Taiwan expressed similar concerns. The study sought to answer questions such as:

- What is the current practice of training administrators?
- What can be done to rectify the current job deficiencies?

Problem

The purpose of this study is to identify possible causes of school administrators' not prepared for roles and responsibilities as assigned. Administrators that have graduate course work are given opportunity to take school administrator licensure. Most colleges and universities have not been successful in preparing school administrators.

Method

The theoretical frameworks used were article written by experts regarding school leadership. The conceptual framework included teacher leader, teaching with leading in mind, teaching with integrity, teaching with morality, teaching with ethical leadership concept and preparing teachers for leadership positions. It entailed eighteen (18) different journal articles reviewed from different search engines; using six different key words. The study involved examining 18 scholarly journals and distinguishing where commonalities existed. It looked for common issues.

Theoretical Framework Preparing a Viable School Administrator

The review of related literature consisted of six sections including preparing teachers for leadership positions, teacher leader, teaching with integrity, teaching with leading in mind, teaching with morality and teaching with ethical leadership concept.

Current practice for Preparing Teachers for Leadership

The preparation of teachers as administrators started from the diverse means employed by individual states in pre-service, professional development as well as in-service training to make the would be principals suitably equipped for their leadership roles. In 1987 the National Commission on Excellence in Education identified the major problems in "Leaders for America's Schools". According to different trends exhibited in many states; there was one distinct method that was utilized in the process of making school leaders. In particular this method employs the council of chief state school officers (CCSSO) method which was developed in 1996. The method used was a set of standards for school leaders through a body called the interstate school leaders licensure consortium (ISLLC). The interstate school leaders' licensure consortium (ISLLC) consists of major stakeholders namely: educational leadership inclusive of national associations, states, colleges and

universities. By the year 2003, thirty five states had adopted the use of ISLLC standards and utilized them solely to guide their policy and practice in preparing school principals, superintendents, and other school leaders. The ISLLC works in collaboration with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) which administers its school leadership series tests. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) aligned its accreditation of the educational leadership training programs to ISLLC standards in 2002. The practice as at 2003 was that a clear majority of the states required licensure and that only eleven states had alternate route to principal ship and that a 99.3% of these principals had had teaching experience prior to their appointments.

Epstein and Sanders (2006) maintained that majority of those interviewed recently have a notion that; it is an authentic fact that the principal preparation programs deserve a complete overhaul; if not a serious revamping in order to provide the much needed improvements which are long overdue. Epstein and Sanders (2006) in their paper also revealed that there was inadequate amount of college preparation on the part of teachers as well as administrators in the specific area of working with families and communities. Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson and Orr (2007) stated that: “state and local leaders have begun to develop policy strategies that hold promise for eventually making such programs commonplace rather than exceptional”(Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Orr, 2007 p.24). It recognized the fact that some positive reforms are currently taking place but impacts are still minimal.

Preparing Teachers for Leadership Roles

The practice during the last decade was that where several programs were in place ranging from pre-service programs to in-service programs. There is no indication that changes have been realized in recent years. The practice so far has been theories in coursework instead of fostering analytical and critical thinking skills in problem solving. It is imperative that universities and colleges immerse there students in hands on practicum and practical learning. Hands-on learning would benefit more than lecturing style of instruction that the professors have been using over the years. This is in agreement with Barnett (2004) which stated that:

“...leadership preparation programs are not providing the training needed for today’s public school leaders. With the obvious gap between the readiness of administrators to be instructional leaders and the demands for accountability that school administrators face; in order to be relevant university preparation programs must complete comprehensive programs

analysis, identify content gaps, determine instructional implications and align the curriculum to national standards”(Barnett, 2004, p.122).

Epstein and Sanders (2006) stated that: “there are long-standing facts about the a lack of educator [administrators] preparation to work with students and families” (Epstein & Sanders, 2006, p.82) indeed this is a corroboration of what Barnett had earlier on stated as a lack of preparation on the ISLLC standard number four. It would be an immense help if school leaders are change agents and conscious of environment needs as well as how to improve it. In order to produce efficacy school administrators, collaborating, communicating and negotiating with families are imperative. School leaders ought to be taught in a practical curriculum that in stills the best skills and best practice.

Teacher leader

Martin and Coleman (2011) stated that: “the term teacher leader refers to that set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but also have an influence that extends beyond their own classroom to others within their own school and elsewhere” (Martin & Coleman, 2011, p.6). Haycock (2001) stated also that “what we learn is the value of a relentless focus on the academic core. Clear policy with high standards and assessment are important aspect of a school administrative processes Assessments should be aligned with standards and the mission of the school. Accountability systems should demand results for all kinds of students, which ought to result in intensive efforts to assist teachers in improving their practice and extra instruction for students who need it (Haycock, 2001). Classroom teacher needs an instructional leader for support and encouragement in order to realize set teaching targets and objectives as well as evaluations. School administrators can only perform these tasks if they possess the necessary acumen that could facilitate the teaching processes. In a different study Barth (2007) stated that:

“the more educators who are a part of the decision making, the higher their morale, and the greater their participation and commitment in carrying out the goals of the school. Imagine a school in which every teacher takes ownership for a portion of the entire organization! When many lead the school wins” (Barth, 2007, p.445).

It is inevitable that when stakeholders work as a team of leaders, the school is bound to succeed in every endeavor and the community also succeeds. In writing about a Turkish situation in a separate study, Turkan and Grossman (2011) stated that: “... educational administration course was taken out of the curriculum, which is basically an American influence. In the US, educational administration is a different field; however, in Turkey the case is that experienced teachers become administrators” (Turkan & Grossman, 2011, p.17).

It was revealed that other countries have no need for a separation between leadership licensure and teaching licensure. Experienced teachers are considered to be knowledgeable prior to being appointed to positions of leadership.

Teaching with Integrity

Katz (2008) suggested that: “integrity is associated with a set of moral virtues, in particular honesty, and decency, with one’s being true to one’s value commitments, seldom if ever compromising them, and with being whole, integrated, and undivided”(p. 2). Integrity encompasses two components namely; one that exhibits wholeness and; two the reality that comes about upon one’s realizing and acknowledging who one really is.

Teaching with Morality

In a study Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, and Sanger (2009) stated that:

“...we seem more prepared to say that the teacher is modeling morality whether or not she intends to do so. We believe the difference here has something to do with our general sense that a person who teaches, at least any paid or professional sense of the term, must, in some way, be morally engaged with students. There is a moral aspect to our conception of teaching, such that cultivating the moral dispositions of one’s students is part of what we mean by teaching” (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, & Sanger, 2009, p.9).

The author suggests apparently that one cannot assume a professionalism of teaching without being engaged in some moral ethical behavior with students. In another study Margolis and Deuel (2009) stated that:

“these responses in the early interviews as the five teachers were about to engage in their leadership roles -indicate that part of their motivation to lead involve moralistic stances related to issues of equity, sharing, and helping specifically related to reading, and writing strategies, and sharing and helping more generally (Margolis & Deuel, 2009, p.272).

It is clear that those teachers as leaders have to adopt the method of teaching with morality if they are to go about their daily duty of teaching basic skills such as reading, writing and math.

Teaching with Ethical Leadership Concept

The sense of right and wrong does exist whether or not the teacher is in classroom. Teachers who essentially are leaders of instruction in their classrooms have the responsibility to ensure that fairness, and all the ethical values are adhered to in the classroom. In a different study Haughey (2006) stated that:

“Ethical leadership is thus acting from the principles, beliefs, assumptions and values in the leader’s espoused system of ethics. The moral exercise of leadership is grounded in three virtues: responsibility, authenticity, and presence. Responsibility reflects the ethic of caring

through relationally. Authenticity is based on reciprocity. Presence involves putting the other at the center while being open oneself to personal change” (Haughey, 2006, p.141).

In a Taiwanese situation Hwang (2001) noted a peculiar development that Taiwan was undergoing, and stated that:

“With a better understanding of the core ideas of Confucianism, it is not difficult to see how the ethical leadership of teachers may eventually turn into the high-handed surveillance of student behavior in a traditional Confucian society, leading ultimately to the rising misuse of corporal punishment. Most parents expect teachers to fulfil their roles as strict leaders when educating their children. Such an idea dates back to the popular saying of the Sung Dynasty that ‘it is the father’s fault if the son misbehaves, and the teacher is lazy if not strict enough’. Conceptions like a teacher has to be tough if he wants his words to be listened to ‘or ‘students have excellent performance under strict surveillance ‘endorse parents’ belief that being strict is a major factor when delivering education to students, and corporal punishment is required” (Hwang, 2001, p.328).

In line with the above discussion understanding of culture in Taiwan would be necessary, yet at the same time teachers’ ethical responsibility in general would demand that the right thing be done for students; while maintaining high expectations in place for them as well.

In a separate discussion Higgins (2010) stated that:

“Professional ethics, then, should be distinguished from what I call ‘moral professionalism’, which deals with codes of professional conduct and our role-specific obligations to others. In contrast, the ethics of teaching, as I propose it here, will probe the relation between the teaching life and the good life, connecting the question ‘why teach?’ with the question ‘how should I, live?’ It considers what draws us to the practice of teaching and what sustains us there in the face of difficulty. The ethics of teaching involves questions like these: What constitutes human flourishing, and how does tending to the growth of others nourish my own growth? What do I prize most, and how does teaching put me in touch with such goods” (Higgins, 2010, p.197)?

It is certain from this discussion that the teacher must perform his duty with the concept of ethical behavior.

Teaching with Leading in Mind

It is certain that numerous changes have taken place in education. In particular; issues like immigration of many non English speaking students to the US, the application of the internet and other forms of digital technology in schools today; effects of No Child Left Behind are some of the concerns in the U.S. that school administrators have to deal with in

schools. Other issues that the school leader has to encounter are the disgruntled teachers whose collective bargaining rights are the major focus of debate in the congress and state legislative assemblies, as well as the present economic challenges. Despite all these issues, the school leader must know how to handle and address issues expeditiously. Greenhow, Robelia and Hughes (2009) stated that:

‘This article is a call to education researchers to grasp some of these changes and cultivate online lives (and identities) as part of their own professional development. This would involve modelling, mentoring, and engaging other researchers in practices of social scholarship and participants in collective problem solving regarding the ethical dilemmas that Internet research raises’ (Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2011, p.255).

In this article, the authors focused on the changes in technology that have impacted students’ learning. School leaders must be ready for both internal and external changes, and ought to keep abreast with them and adopt the relations to the school mission and goals. There have been very limited changes in school administrator training and professional development despite cultural, social, technological and economic changes.

CONCLUSION

Changes in administration would have a long term impact on school. Leadership improvement ought to be stressed based on internal and external environmental factors. There should be more collaboration among the stakeholders. States should not be the only deciding factor in decision making but all stakeholders should be involved. Most colleges and universities have not been successful in preparing school administrators. Universities ought to employ best practice methods of assessments instead of utilizing traditional forms of approaches. The practice of adopting a practicum and attaching every trainee to a mentor should be the norm and not the exception. School administrators ought to plan ahead to avoid over utilizing or under utilizing leaders that will not be viable to the school system. The preparation of a viable school administrator would not happen overnight. Stakeholders need to look ahead, examine the overall mission, goals and objectives of their systems when making decisions in collaboration with stakeholders and universities. Planning with all stakeholders should be the first step in performing a series of any school administration functions because it sets the future courses of action in all aspects of the school.

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