Restructuring Principal Preparation in Illinois: Perspectives on Implementation Successes, Challenges, and Future Outlook

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IERC Symposium
October 8, 2015

Funded by The Robert R. Foundation and The Wallace Foundation
National Context for New Policy

- Prior to reforms, many felt principal preparation was inadequate.
- Shift from managerial to instructional leader.
- Paradigm shift from “candidate as consumer” to “district as consumer”.
- At least 46 states have adopted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards.
Illinois Context for New Policy

- Illinois is among a few others that has enacted legislation for statewide comprehensive reform.

- Previous principal preparation programs:
  - Training too broad for level of quality needed for principal preparation
  - Insufficient practical training about what is needed to be a principal
  - Minimal input from districts concern their needs for newly trained principals
Goal of Illinois’ New Policy

• “Prepare individuals to be highly effective in leadership roles to improve teaching and learning and increase academic achievement and development of all students”

• Requirements
  – Increased admission requirements with in-person interview
  – Curricula that addresses student learning and school improvement at all grade levels and with diverse student populations
  – Meet ISLLC and IL Professional Teaching Standards
  – Performance-based internship in all grade level settings and in diverse cultural and economic conditions
  – More collaborative partnerships
  – Support from both faculty and mentor principals
Purpose of the I-PREP Study

• Describe how the new policies are being implemented

• Identify which aspects of the implementation have been challenging and how programs are addressing challenges

• Designed to capture the early implementation of the policy and to determine where improvements could be made for the future
Study Design

• Mixed-methods approach
  ➢ Statewide scan interviews
  ➢ Site visits
  ➢ Document review
  ➢ Online survey

• Today’s focus: Statewide scan interviews
  ➢ Program representatives (n=23)
  ➢ Key Illinois education stakeholders (n=22)
    ➢ State education agencies and policy groups, professional education organizations, regional offices of education, and partnering school districts
Findings
Perceptions of New Policy

View of Policy Goals

Current Implementation

Future Outlook

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Benefits

- More rigorous programs and selection of candidates
- More authentic and practical principal preparation
- Better preparation to work with all students
- Deeper, more collaborative partnerships
- Consistently higher standards statewide

I think that’s been the biggest plus: the inclusion of all of our kids, and requiring our candidates to have those experiences, and also embedding those [components] in our courses.
Challenges and Concerns

- Reduced enrollments in nearly all redesigned programs
- Reduced racial and gender diversity in candidates
- Resource limitations at program, district, and principal candidate level
- Increased number and specificity of requirements

On the internship level, that is much more intense and I’m going to say it’s almost unwieldy in the requirements that are being set forth. Not only in what we’re asking the students to do, but in documenting that and finding a way to document it.
Future Outlook on Policy

• Positive outlook on the short- and long-term impacts
  – Better prepared school leaders and improved student achievement

• Concerns about narrowing principal pipeline

• Concerns about program sustainability

• Shift from academic to practical, applied principal preparation training
Implications

• Debate: Will new policy lead to shortage in principal pipeline?
  – Many concerned about shortages, while others believe Type 75 certificate holders will fill gap
  – Potential decrease in number of available programs
    • Problematic for rural areas

• Potentially difficult for many districts to maintain partnerships
  – Resource-strapped, high-accountability environment
Conclusions

• In spite of concerns, majority of program representatives and statewide stakeholders support new policy’s goals and are positive about its future impact
  – Better prepared school principals
  – Improved student achievement and more successful schools

• Efforts continue to find solutions to challenges
  – Illinois School Leadership Advisory Council (ISLAC), LINC Advisory Council, ISBE, IL-PART study on internships
Comments & Questions

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