

AVOIDING A LOOMING CRISIS: NOVICE PRINCIPAL PREPARATION AND RETENTION

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Statement of the Problem

Multiple respected institutions and researchers have tried to quantify the scope of the problem with educational leadership turnover in the United States. Though their numbers differ to some degree, each study described below demonstrates the issue is significant and needs to be addressed:

- In 2008, the Wallace Foundation reported “the average school experiences changes [*sic*] in principals every three to four years, and this leadership churn can do measurable harm to student achievement” (Mitgang & Gill, 2012, p. 5).
- NAESP reported that K-12 principals leaving their jobs each year is estimated at more than 40% (as cited in Johnson, 2005, p. 22).
- (NASSP, 2017) reported that one in five K-12 principals working in schools in the 2011-12 school year had left the position by the 2012-13 year (p. 1).
- One out of every two K-12 principals was not retained past their third year as a building leader (NASSP, 2017, p. 1).
- A recent article (School Leadership Network, 2019) highlighted the impact on a number of specific school districts struggling to retain principals:
 - 64.6% of the principals in the District of Columbia are in their first three years of the principalship, with 19% in their very first year.
 - Researchers reported that across the United States, districts faced leadership turnover rates as high as 15% to 30% each year (NASSP, 2017, p. 1).
- School Leaders Network (2014) reports that 25,000, or one quarter of the K-12 principals in the United States, leave their schools each year (p.1). Their conservative estimate is that if principal retention across the United States were improved to a more manageable level, as seen in affluent school districts, it would save districts \$163 million annually (p. 4).
- Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2011) reported that each year, one-fifth of the nation’s principals leave their jobs, representing 18,000 vacancies in K-12 buildings which the authors called an “unsustainable level” (p. 1).

These stark numbers represent the looming crisis referred to by Riley (as cited in Robinson, 2018, p.1). These high rates of turnover in educational leadership warrant further examination; in order to address the issue however, it is necessary to understand the root causes.

Causes

As in most complex issues, there are often many antecedents to an issue. The problem of leadership turnover and retention also has multiple root causes, but a review of the literature narrows the focus for us. Although there is currently a relatively small amount of literature in regards to novice leadership turnover in education, what are available points to three predominant causes: stress and burnout, a lack of adequate preparation, and minimal ongoing support.

Stress and Burnout

The term “burnout” was first used in the 1970s and was later described as a type of job stress by Maslach and Jackson (1981). Maslach (2003) further refined job burnout by describing it as “a psychological syndrome that involves a prolonged response to stressors in the workplace. Specifically, it involves the chronic strain that results from an incongruence, or misfit, between the worker and the job” (p. 189). Burnout has also been defined by psychologists as a response to chronic emotional strain caused by dealing with the needs of other people (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). Beusaert et al. (2016) further clarified burnout and how it manifests itself. Burnout is,

A syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do “people work” of some kind. Emotional exhaustion entails a lack in energy. Depersonalization refers to a detached attitude towards the job itself and/or the colleagues, sub- and super-ordinates. Reduced personal accomplishment indicates a decrease in feelings of achievement and competence. (p. 349–350)

Sosyal (2013) explained that for school administrators who are experiencing burnout, it manifested itself in multiple ways and was defined as:

A person with occupational burnout feels alienated, emotionally worn out, inefficient, useless, ordinary, and unsuccessful. In such a negative state of mind, it is hard for people to fulfill the professional duties they are expected to meet on a daily basis. (p. 4)

The issue of stressors and burnout is significant across the United States. NAESP reported, “As many as 75 percent of principals experience stress-related symptoms that can affect their physical, emotional, and mental health” (as cited in Queen & Schumacher, 2006, p. 18).

Educational leaders develop burnout as a widening gap is formed between the stressors stemming from their overwhelming responsibilities and an inability to successfully carry out their role (Friedman, 2002, p. 245). Friedman (2002) identified one cause of burnout when an administrator:

...without adequate preparation for adaptation to school reality, enters a highly complex world demanding rapid response to many varied, often conflicting demands. At some point, principals learn that they cannot possibly live up to their own performance expectations regarding various tasks. They become frustrated, exhausted, and feel unaccomplished, in other words, burned-out. (p. 230)

NAESP (2013) cited the main reasons leaders voluntarily left the principalship: (a) a discrepancy between high levels of accountability and their actual ability to influence change, (b) a sense of being isolated as they dealt with challenges, (c) a workload that is undoable, (d) preservice training that did not adequately prepare them for the actual challenges of the job (p. 6). A study by Friedman (2002) indicated that a demanding work setting with a lack of support and resources led to stress. Novice leaders may work to mitigate stress and care for themselves, but the contrast between the developmental stage of their skill sets and the overwhelming demands and stressors of their positions are significant enough that for many “burnout may be the endpoint in unsuccessful coping” (Beusaert et al., 2016, p. 298).

A landmark study conducted by Riley (2018) identified significant areas of concern with stress and burnout in educational leaders. The longitudinal study was conducted over eight years with data collection from 5,934 school leaders representing ~50% of all principals in Australia. Some significant findings included:

- Principals experienced high levels of job demands (1.5 times the general population), emotional demands (1.7 times), and emotional labor (1.7 times), with emotional labor being the highest demands when compared to the general population. This was correlated with higher levels of burnout (1.6 times), stress symptoms (1.7 times), difficulty sleeping (2.2 times), cognitive stress (1.5 times), somatic symptoms (1.3 times), and depressive symptoms (1.3 times; p. 16).

- Of those studied, 31.24% of respondents received a “red flag” indicating they had either reported thoughts of self-harm in the week prior to the survey, had a score significantly low in a Quality of Life measure, or a composite psychological risk score in the high or very high category (p. 16). This was up from 10% of respondents compared to the 2016 report.
- Between 2015 and 2018, there was a concerning upward trend in stress caused by sheer quantity of work and lack of time to focus on teaching and learning (p. 16)
- Between 2015 and 2018, administrators reported significant worries regarding the mental health issues of students, mental health issues of staff, and teacher shortages (p.17).
- Principals experienced a substantially higher prevalence of offensive behavior at work with adult-adult bullying rising 4.4 times higher than the general population (p. 17).
- Forty-five percent of educational leaders received a threat of violence in 2018, with 37% of respondents indicating having had at least one act of physical violence against them (p. 17).
- On average, 53% of principals worked more than 56 hours a week with ~24% working upwards of 61-65 hours each week, and ~40% of these educational leaders worked upwards of 25 hours a week during school holidays(p. 14).
- Work-family conflict occurred at nearly double the rate of the general population (p. 32).

These numbers are staggering and help to quantify the stress and burnout in educational leaders. Stress and burnout alone are enough for the educational field to require significant changes if it is going to create and retain a pipeline of effective leaders. When these factors are coupled with insufficient preparation, professional development, and support, a system is created that becomes untenable for many educational leaders.

Friedman’s (2000) research found that when principals did not realize meaningful levels of professional success as leaders and managers, they doubted their own abilities; furthermore, principals’ sense of their lack of accomplishment raised their stress. Without proper supports, burnout and aloofness (Friedman, 1995, p. 197) is likely to occur. Friedman (2002) further defined burnout as commonly related to “unmediated stress – and a sense of lacking buffers and support systems” (p. 230). In a 2011 report, Phillips and Sen made a concise statement based on their research into the effects of a stressed and burned out leader on their buildings: “If good leadership is at the heart of every good school, then a leader who is both mentally and physically unwell could have a potentially disastrous impact on the well-being of a school and those within it” (p. 180).

Lack of Professional Development and Learning

When contemplating the retention of educational leaders, important questions to consider are (a) how well programs prepare new leaders to meet the demands of today’s educational environment, and (b) is the current state of on-going professional development allocated to new leaders sufficient to meet the challenges they face? Educational organizations and researchers have identified many key roles of building leaders: educational visionary, curriculum leader, assessment expert, disciplinarian, community builder, technology leader, resource manager, public relations expert who brokers the interests of students, parents, staff, law makers, and the larger community; budget analyst; facility manager; special program administrator; administrator of contractual, legal, and policy mandates; personnel manager who hires, fires, provides professional development, and guides teaching; communicator and networker with external partners and parents; provider of a safe and positive school environment; manager of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities; partner to parent associations and teacher unions; overseer of student health and wellness; and all the while the building leader is in charge of improving school outcomes (Beausaert et al., 2016; Lemoine et al., 2018; NAESP, 2013; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Sincar, 2013). One meta-analysis alone, Marzano et al.’s (2005), specifically called out 21 specific behaviors of school leaders that that have direct correlation with improved student achievement (p. 41-64).

With such a diverse field of critical responsibilities, we should be reminded that “on average, states spend less than four percent of federal Title II dollars on principal professional development activities [and] with several states opting to make no investment at all” (NASSP, 2017, p. 1). This is especially shocking because research demonstrated that building leadership is second only to the teachers in improving student performance (NAESP, 2013, p. 2). The Wallace Foundation (2008) observed, “Half-hearted or poorly funded efforts to support principals at any stage of their career-long development are likely to fall short if the goal is to prepare leaders who can significantly enhance teaching and learning” (p. 8). Similar to ongoing professional development for educational leaders, university-based, principal preparation programs have significant issues to be addressed as well. Mitgang

and Gill (2012) reported few of the 500 programs have kept up with the evolving role of the principalship. They identified flaws that included:

Curricula that fail to take into account the needs of districts and diverse student bodies; weak connections between theory and practice; faculty with little or no experience as school leaders; and internships that are poorly designed and insufficiently connected to the rest of the curriculum and lack of opportunities to experience real leadership. (p. 6)

With significant concerns about pre-service and ongoing support for educational leaders, particularly those in their first years, what can be done to address what Riley called the “looming crisis” (as cited in Robinson, 2018, p. 1)?

Problems Downstream

The turnover of novice instructional leaders associated with stress, burnout, and lack of ongoing professional development causes a significant disruption in the personal lives of those who are dismissed or leave the profession; however, the toll is significantly higher as these rates of turnover create even larger problems downstream. In a discussion with other educators at a leadership retreat, an elementary school principal referred to the importance of the principalship:

We need to continue to fill this profession with high-quality people who have the right “why” in place. And if there are people coming out of [a] program who don’t feel like they have that support, they are not going to sustain it for the 10, 15, 20 years that our schools need and so I think there’s a real compelling need, not just in our [state], but in our national community to really empower and support the field of education. And frankly, the principal role doesn’t get nearly as much attention as the teacher role and it’s very important and vital role in sustaining the culture, and the health of the school, and then, in turn, the community.

Without educational leaders who are prepared to move systems forward and have the support they need, schools and districts will not realize their goals of making improvements across a wide array of challenging issues. The importance of effective educational leadership at the building level is significant and has an effect on multiple outcomes. The negative effects of continued leadership turnover in our schools have ramifications on student outcomes and achievement, staff stability and effectiveness, equity and inclusion, and on the increasingly limited candidate pool. To achieve the schools we need, these issues need to be systematically addressed, and retaining new leaders will be a key component of the necessary changes.

Student Outcomes and Achievement

In a joint report, NAESP and NASSP referenced research that demonstrated no cases of a school turnaround without a strong educational leader (NAESP, 2013, p. 3). NAESP’s report further referenced a six-year study by Louis et al. (2010) involving data from 180 schools across nine states that showed leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning (p. 2). Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2011) acknowledged the contributions of all participants in school reform, but highlighted the importance of leadership by stating, “School reform is a highly collaborative process—it does not work to cast the principal in the role of hero. But there is no doubt that effective principal leadership is an indispensable component of transformation” (p. i). They also reported that schools with the highest number of principals over the previous 10 years also manifested the weakest school cultures and curriculum as well as the lowest student achievement (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011, p. 5). In an analysis of longitudinal data covering 400 schools and 352,000 students of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Florida, the fourth largest school district in the nation, Betteille et al. (2011) found “the departure of a principal is associated with . . . lower student achievement gains” (p. 2).

In a substantial study, Waters et al. (2004) found a significant correlation between a building’s instructional leader and student achievement. These results were part of an extensive meta-analysis involving 69 studies, 2,802 schools, nearly 1.4 million students and 14,00 teachers. Waters et al. quantified this correlation as “one standard deviation improvement in leadership practices is associated with an increase in average student achievement from the 50th percentile to the 60th percentile” (p. 2–3). Marzano et al. (2005) further clarified these findings by explaining that an average principal (50th percentile) assigned to an average building (50th percentile) would continue to realize average results in student outcomes. However, if that principal received training that increased their leadership effectiveness by one standard deviation, that same building would go from the 50th percentile to the 60th percentile in average student achievement. This is a significant finding: An increase in a novice leader’s

ability has a profound and measurable impact on student outcomes. It is imperative that resources are provided for novice leaders to perform well in their new assignment and gain proficiency in their roles as instructional leaders. This would help reduce the negative impact of leadership turnover on student outcomes and achievement.

The correlation between effective leadership and positive student achievement is not reserved exclusively for the building level. Marzano and Waters (2009) conducted a meta-analysis that included data from 1,220 school districts over a 35-year period. They found that they could predict a 10-point percentile gain in student academic achievement based on the effectiveness of district leadership. Whether at the building or district level, effective leadership has a significant impact on student outcomes. The development and support of novice instructional leaders at both the school and district levels need to be addressed in order to realize continued improvements in student learning.

Staff Stability and Effectiveness

The significance of effective educational leadership goes well beyond the impact on student outcomes. A Wallace Foundation report authored by Mitgang and Gill (2012) quoted Darling-Hammond, a Stanford University scholar and advocate for national education reform:

It is the work [educational leaders] do that enables teachers to be effective – as it is not just the traits that teachers bring, but their ability to use what they know in a high-functioning organization, that produces student success. And it is the leader who both recruits and retains high quality staff – indeed, *the number one reason for teacher’s decision about whether to stay in a school is the quality of the administrative support* [emphasis added] – and it is the leader who must develop this organization. (p. 3)

In the previously mentioned longitudinal study conducted in the Miami-Dade School District, Beteille et al. (2011) found, “The departure of a principal is associated with higher teacher turnover rates” (p. 2). Further, Beteille et al. found that teacher turnover was not dependent on if the new principal was novice or had years of previous principal experience. They stated, “These results suggest that leadership instability tends to generate greater instability among the teaching force that goes beyond the turnover associated with having a less experienced principal” (p. 17). These studies demonstrate the negative effect of turnover amongst educational leaders on staff stability.

Equity and Inclusion

The report by Beteille et al. (2011) demonstrated the rates of leadership turnover are often highest in schools with our most vulnerable populations: low-income, minority, and low-achieving student populations (p. 20). Beteille et al. stated, “The negative relationship between principal turnover and student achievement is stronger in failing schools and in high poverty schools” (p. 20). In these schools, students have reading and math scores .04 to .06 standard deviations lower in years they experience principal turnover. Beteille et al. then reported that instability in school leadership is “more consequential for high poverty and failing schools, schools which also tend to have more frequent turnover” (p. 20). In the report by School Leaders Network (2019) indicating that in Denver Public Schools, 34 of their 185 schools had three or more principals over the course of a nine-year period, they added additional details that these 34 schools were amongst those who served students with the highest needs and that this turnover had negative consequences on student achievement, school culture, and teacher retention (p. 1). These findings have significant ramifications on equity and inclusion because school turn around only occurs with strong educational leadership.

This “looming crisis” (Riley as cited in Robinson, 2018, p. 1) has a disproportionately larger impact on disenfranchised groups and further perpetuates a system of inequity. Darling-Hammond and Friedlaender (2008) studied five California high schools that had overcome the odds in supporting the success of low-income students of color. Their focus was to look for design features and policies that could be replicated in order to promote exceptional, equitable high schools on a broad scale. Their findings included the need to recruit, support, and provide mentoring internships to dynamic leaders that reflect today’s students (p. 20). Referring to the schools that are successfully meeting the needs of low-income students of color, Darling-Hammond and Friedlaender (2008) stated, “Unless policy systems change, however, these schools will remain anomalies rather than harbingers of the future” (p. 21).

Increasingly Limited Candidate Pool

A growing concern is that increased rates of turnover and decreasing numbers of quality candidates to fill newly opened positions will continue to exacerbate the situation. This is not a new problem and has been a concern for many years. Pounder and Merrill (2001) reported,

There is a shortage of qualified candidates for principal vacancies in the U.S. About half of the surveyed districts reported that there was a shortage of qualified candidates for the principal positions they had attempted to fill. This shortage has occurred among all types of schools (rural, urban, suburban) and among all levels of vacancies (elementary, junior/middle, and high school). (p. 27)

In 2002, Reeves explained that the problem was becoming worse and that 10% of leadership vacancies were being filled with temporary personnel due to a lack of qualified candidates (p. 159). Concern regarding qualified leader shortages in education has spanned many years across multiple national systems (Barty et al., 2005; Goldstein, 2001; Lemoine et al., 2018; Mathis, 2012; Paton, 2011; Topsfield, 2012). Recently, De La Rosa (2020) added another complicating factor to the equation by reporting that over 27% of current principals are over the age of 65. In a season of stress and health risks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we could be facing an even greater turnover as seasoned principals choose to retire and thus open more principal vacancies. This comes at a time when NASSP(2017) has already reported that the need for principals at the elementary, middle, and high school levels will increase six percent due to population growth by the year 2022 (p. 2).

A *New York Times* article reported that as the Obama administration looked to change principals in failing schools, but there were not enough qualified principals to fill the positions needed (Dillon, 2011). Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, an organization that brings together 76 of the nation's largest urban public school systems, was quoted as saying, "This was a human capital problem—these people don't grow on trees" (Dillon, 2011). Lemoine et al. (2018) reported, "Notwithstanding the importance of the school principal, a global crisis faces public schools: a distressing shortage of principals who are willing and qualified to meet the current and future needs of public-school students" (p. 17–18).

Promising Practices

As there are multiple antecedents to the causes of novice leader turnover and retention, current literature also provides some hints for promising practices that could be used to lessen the rates of turnover and support more leaders through their first years on the job; however, the literature in this area is not as robust when studying leaders as it is in studying teacher turnover. These promising practices indicate that changes in how school districts and universities partner together could meliorate high turnover rates and provide a solid base from which new leaders can establish a successful career with greater longevity and higher levels of personal satisfaction. The promising practices include: improvement of preparation programs, creation of collegial networks, and post hire learning.

Improvement of Preparation Programs

The Wallace Foundation released a report by Mitgang and Gill in 2012 titled, *The Making of the Principal: Five Lessons in Leadership Training* that provides direction for districts and universities looking to improve leadership preparation. The report outlined program components the researchers considered essential for leaders facing the realities of today's educational challenges. One recommendation was that preparation needs to go beyond merely teaching how to manage a building; it needs to prepare those leaders to lead improved instruction and school change. This can be accomplished if preservice curricula are focused on the art of coaching teachers, data proficiency, planning meaningful professional development, communicating both internally and externally to stakeholders, and understanding how to use systems thinking to address problems and to master collaborative processes. Recommendations also included coursework that moves students from theory to practice and meaningful, well-designed internship experiences.

Hitt et al. (2012) recommended changes to educational leadership preservice programs by first, having a more robust system for recruiting and selecting the right candidates. This point was reinforced by two additional, and substantial reports concluding that the creation of a pipeline of teachers prepared for future instructional leadership needed to be a well thought out process. This process included systematic candidate preparation and recommendation, rather than the most common pattern where a majority of candidates simply self-select and

enroll in a university program (Barber et al., 2007; Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011). Hitt et al. advocated that after getting the right people into these leadership preservice programs, the next step for meaningful improvement was to focus on a structure and delivery model that focused on (a) the use of social support networks; (b) continual cycles of assessment and feedback; (c) “challenging, relevant and standards-based curriculum”; and (d) improved field-based experiences (p. 2). The right people with the right training will be a significant step forward as districts seek to improve learning while supporting and retaining educational leaders.

The literature on leadership preparation programs revealed another set of themes that are actually two branches of the same problem (Beam, 2016; Mushaandja, 2013). One theme identifies that while candidates are in leadership preparation programs, they are not able to truly anticipate the types of challenges that lay before them as novice educational leaders. As such, they are not able to hone in on specific learning that will be the most beneficial to their preparation. Putting theory into practice becomes a daunting challenge. The second worrisome theme is that many faculty who are preparing these novice leaders have been out of school leadership positions for many years, even decades, and that they likely do not understand the different challenges and pressures now facing today’s novice leaders. These two themes come from the same problem—a need for better, more current situational awareness of the requisite skills of educational leaders and for licensure programs to regularly adjust according to evolving skill sets.

However, to be fair to university preparation programs, it is important to note that of the dozens of roles and characteristics previously identified and listed as requirements for instructional leaders, it would not be possible for a principal licensure program to provide adequate training that addressed such an expansive set of needs. In fact, multiple university-level courses would be required for any one of those skillsets to move the candidate toward proficiency. Schmoker (2016) advocated for the need to “simplify” and “demystify” school leadership by stating:

If we want to bring effective instructional leadership within the reach of all school leaders, we must give leaders permission to focus their limited time and energy on the core of good schooling: a widely acknowledged, empirically established set of fairly obvious practices that have the most direct effect on the quality of education. (p.5)

Beam et al. (2016) acknowledged that not only are evaluations and adjustments to leadership preparation programs needed to help its graduates, there is also a need for formal and informal collegial networks and ongoing post-hire leadership development.

Collegial Networks

Many are familiar with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs published in 1967. According to this hierarchy, a person’s sense of belonging is fundamental to meet their psychological and safety needs. Tomic and Tomic (2008) also highlighted the need, particularly in many modern societies, for more social support. They stated, “Social cohesion has been replaced by individualism . . . [that] brings with it cultural isolation and loss of identity” (p.7). It is anticipated that support networks will be increasingly important as society increasingly shifts away from interpersonal relationships. Celoria and Roberson (2015) found new principals needed a support system that allowed them a safe place, through supporting relationships with experienced colleagues, to deal with the stress and isolation inherent in their roles as instructional leaders. Sosyal et al. (2013) defined social support as the following:

A complex, emotional, functional and social network of relationships. Being in many forms, such as emotional support of an important person, a friend to talk to or get consulted about work related issues. . . . Social support can help people to increase their life quality through a satisfaction driven from these relationships. (p.6)

Sosyal et al. further reported that social support has a mediating effect on burnout (p. 6), and their research concluded that “low perceived social supports correspond with higher burnout rates” (p. 13).

The use of cohorts and networks is an effective key to successful leadership preparation and the continued support of a leader after being hired. These networks can provide the social support vital to new leaders as they attempt to lead a school community while at the same time learn to be a principal. A white paper prepared for the National Policy Board for Educational Administration stated, “Cohorts begin as an assembly of individuals, but through the navigating of shared experiences, peer support and trust is [*sic*] often built and a community of learners and

practitioners emerge” (Hitt et al., 2012, p. 6). Mitgang and Gill (2012) stated, “Exemplary programs often group participants in cohorts that allow them to grow together, share experiences and support each other even after they are hired as leaders” (p. 11). This recommendation is in line with Reeves (2002) who advocated for leadership training programs that are seen as an “investment in the future” and which move beyond traditional practices to more reflection among professional colleagues (p. 160). Support networks are important for educational leaders in their day to day work. Hitt et al. (2012) recommended ongoing networks for instructional leaders after they have taken leadership positions in order to enrich their ongoing professional development and provide support (p. 12). The literature across this topic indicates that an important support for novice leaders are formal and informal collegial networks. Beusaert et al. (2016) reported significant findings for supporting principals through stress and burnout. Beusaert et al. wrote, “When principals lack or lose social support from colleagues, they will be more likely to burnout over time” (p. 359). Their findings also suggested support networks served to buffer burnout over time with recommendations to create principal support networks in order to decrease stress and burnout. Though this is both an effective and inexpensive support that school districts can provide, it is not a common practice across all districts. Beam et al. (2016) highlighted a concern when a district is not taking the lead in providing these networks. Their research showed that many struggling novice leaders will not reach out to a supervisor to ask for these supports because they were “fearful this might be interpreted as a sign of weakness and might jeopardize their new position” (p. 152). A district that is proactive in providing formal and informal collegial networks would be doing a significant service to their novice leaders by removing a potential barrier to supports.

Post Hire Learning

Research by Federici and Skaalvik (2012) indicated self-efficacy in a principal’s role decreases burnout and motivation to quit the job while increasing job satisfaction. The Wallace Foundation report by Mitgang and Gill (2012) highlighted a significant concern of only focusing on pre-service learning, quoting a new principal as saying, “No matter what preparation anyone has, being the principal is not the same. Nothing prepares you for the job” (Mitgang & Gill, 2012, p. 24). NAESP (2013) reported that effective educational leaders combine the skills of both instructional leadership with building and staff management; however, a leader cannot effectively learn these skills without having a building to lead. The importance of on the job training continues to be a need amongst novice instructional leaders. Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2011) pointed out that districts need to consider this training in a manner similar to many successful businesses. These businesses understand that only about 20% of leadership development is able to occur through formalized programs and that the other 80% is learned on the job and through life experience.

In discussing professional development, Fullan (2008) stated that even if a program or course is a good one, if learning does not take place within the context of the actual work, “at best [it] represents[s] useful input, but only that” (p. 86). Fullan advocated that professional learning must occur through meaningful, reflective action (p. 89). True reflective action for novice leaders needs to occur in the context of their new environment, roles, and responsibilities.

Most leaders in new roles, however, receive very little support. Beam et al. (2016) reported that one in five novice principals report that they lacked support from their supervisors (p. 152), and a majority of those who participated in the study indicated a lack of preparation for their leadership roles and a desire for supports such as mentoring programs (p. 158). Among the most significant findings of this research in supporting and retaining novice leaders was the need for applying theory into practice, guiding time and task management, and supporting formal and informal mentors and cohorts. Beam et al. summarized that among the various challenges they studied surrounding novice principals, “the prevailing thread throughout was the need for support” (p. 159). The participants in the study acknowledged that even with changes to leadership preparation programs, the most significant support they could receive in order to face the challenges as novice leaders would be through on-the-job trainings and support (p. 158). A report by Cieminski (2018) reinforced those findings by demonstrating that in districts with high principal retention rates, an important key to their success was providing focused and individualized supports to novice leaders.

In their report, NAESP (2013) recommended ongoing support for leadership development that includes (a) coaching, (b) a cohort approach to problem solving, (c) targeted training to deal with individual needs, and (d) opportunities for reflection and renewal (p. 10). NASSP (2017) had similar recommendations for the development of practicing leaders as school districts and universities collaborate on programs that include coaching, mentoring

and residency programs. Hitt et al. (2012) advised in-service professional development be granted proper time in order to have high-quality, personalized learning that is assessed and adjusted to meet the needs of practicing leaders. Hitt et al.'s research also recommended off-site learning to "broaden thinking by expanding the range of possibilities and providing space for reflection and discussion of new ideas" (p. 10-11). Although the exception rather than the rule, there are school districts that have successfully run programs that have improved the effectiveness and retention of novice leaders. Barber et al. (2007) highlighted such a program in the Boston school district that included pre-service preparation in the form of a fellowship program, followed by very focused post-hire supports and ongoing professional development (p. 34). This type of attention to the needs of novice instructional leaders is possible and research continues to demonstrate the need to greatly increase the time, attention, and resources being provided to support practicing educational leaders in ways that sustain them in the day-to-day practices of building and staff management while increasing the efficacy of instructional leadership.

Lapses in the Literature

Considerable research has been conducted on teacher burnout, preparation and support, but fewer studies have focused on educational leadership in the same areas. Although research exists in relation to educational leadership preparation programs, further study is needed regarding the components and development of successful leadership pipelines. Research by Hitt et al. (2012) and Pounder and Merrill (2001) provided initial starting points for how universities and school districts can partner on successful leadership development. Even less research has been conducted in reference to post-hire support and burnout. This remains a field of study in need of significant attention if we are to understand the needs of novice instructional leaders and how they can best be supported and retained in their crucial responsibilities.

Summary

Riley (2018) stated, "Principals, deputy/assistant principals and teachers are [the country's] nation builders. They need to be well resourced, not just logistically, but also symbolically, emotionally, and intellectually" (p. 29). The role of an instructional leader in K-12 public education systems continues to become progressively more dynamic with increasing demands. It is imperative that school districts and university partners provide a continuum of support for leaders new to these responsibilities. This review indicated key components of these measures should include the improvement of leadership preparation programs, ready to access support networks, and ongoing, focused professional learning opportunities. Devita (2009) wrote, "The bottom line is that investments in good principals are a particularly cost-effective way to improve teaching and learning" (p. 3-4). Not only will this investment help produce more effective instructional leaders better prepared to meet the realities of today's educational environment, it could reduce burnout and turnover and possibly avoid a "looming crisis" (Riley, 2018, as cited in Robinson, 2018, p. 1).

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