Preparation and Training of Hungarian School Directors

by

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Abstract

Our fast-paced and seemingly ever-changing world is reflected in the transformations that are occurring in our school systems. Meeting the dynamic needs of all stakeholders in a school building's ecosystem falls on the shoulders of the school principals. Employing capable leaders in this role is vital yet many countries do not require candidates for the position to have special qualifications. In addition, training programs that do exist have been subject to much criticism. Recently, suggestions for reform have been implemented and this study explored a newly mandated school leader training program to assess its perceived effectiveness.

This qualitative research study contributes a missing link to current research into educational leadership training programs world-wide which tends to focus on educational reforms in Canada, the United States and Australia. Twelve Hungarian school principals, or directors as they are termed in their native land, were interviewed for this research and asked to share their personal formal and informal pre-service preparation and training experiences. The directors were also asked to provide their opinions regarding the relative value of different components of their compulsory School Leaders' Training program. Findings support the theories presented in existing literature regarding effective school leader training programs using methods specifically targeted toward adult learners and add to the call for mandatory school administrator training and preparation.

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Chapter One: Background To The Study

Introduction

Educational systems throughout the world are in various stages of reform related most strongly to the changing social nature of our world. For example, schools in many countries are dealing with the effects of changed family dynamics that see more single parents and a significant increase in the number of mothers working outside the home (Leithwood, Chapman, Corson, Hallinger & Hart, 1996). Other countries are facing considerable racial, linguistic and cultural changes in their populations. Owing to these and other factors, the profiles and needs of school children have become increasingly diverse and schools are reacting to them with a plethora of governmental and local change reforms.

Leithwood, Begley and Cousins (1994) eloquently situate the role of school administrators in the school reform process through their declaration that "(i)f education, in general, and schools, in particular, are seen as tools for social change, educational leaders are assumed to be among the most critical artisans" (p. 5). Effectively preparing individuals for this multifaceted position is, therefore, a central element to most school reform plans (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Capresso & Daresh, 2001; Leithwood et al., 1996; Levine, 2005; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987; Normore, 2006).

Unfortunately, much of the literature regarding educational administrator preparation agrees that school leaders are not receiving suitable pre-appointment training (Hess, 2003; Huber & Kiegelmann, 2002; Levine, 2005; Murphy, 2006; United States Department of Education, 2004). To address this concern, educational leadership development programs worldwide are in various stages of development and restructuring.

The current methods employed vary greatly across the world, from countries that do not require their school administrators to have any formal pedagogical training to countries that require the completion of detailed higher educational studies. In order to design and utilize effective leadership preparation and training methods, stakeholders in education are trying to determine what should be included in leadership training and preparation. These discussions frequently begin with criticisms about existing strategies and proceed to recommendations for reform.

This study addresses one of the primary criticisms of current administrator preparation and training: the significant lack of research in school administrator preparation and training outside of the United States, Canada and Australia (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995). This narrow focus in the majority of the research on this topic is unfortunate since some innovative concepts have recently been implemented in European countries such as Great Britain and the Ukraine. The specific purpose of my study was to contribute to a missing link in educational leadership research through an analysis of the pre-appointment training and preparation of school administrators in Hungary. The partnership between the University of Manitoba and the University of Szeged in Hungary in conjunction with my Hungarian heritage led me to explore the possibility of conducting research in Hungary.

Research Questions

This study determined the preparatory steps taken by twelve Hungarian school principals during their quests to obtain their administrative positions. Comparisons were made between the official accreditation guidelines to become a school administrator outlined by the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture and the actual paths

followed by current educators in Hungary before they were appointed to their

administrative positions. An analysis of two subgroups representing (a) elementary and

secondary administrators; and (b) administrators from the western and eastern regions of

the country was performed. The research also determined the perceived value of these

preparatory steps and the suggestions Hungarian directors have to improve educational

leadership development in their country. The following research questions were

addressed:

1.   a) What are the formal requirements to become an educational administrator

in Hungary?

b) Are there any discrepancies between the formal preparatory requirements

and what actually happens in practice? If so, what are they and under what

circumstances do they occur?

2. What types of informal and formal administrative preparation exist for

prospective administrators?

a) What administrative training or preparation is viewed as most beneficial

and why?

b) What administrative training or preparation is viewed as least beneficial

and why?

3. What elements do current administrators think need to be incorporated into an

effective training and preparation program?

a) Issues/topics (content)

b) How might these best be structured? (process)

Significance of the Study

An analysis such as this has multiple merits for educational systems in Hungary and throughout the world. It provides a supplement to the current literature concerning administrator preparation by adding the practices of a traditionally underrepresented country. As well, a study of this nature supplies a basis for further research of similarities and differences among training and preparation programs and offers relevant information regarding the educational reform planning that has figured prominently in educational literature since the early 1980's (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Orr, 2007; Leithwood et al., 1994; Miltsein, Bobroff & Restine, 1991; Perrault & Lunenburg, 2002).

In their review of leading educational journals, Murphy & Vriesegna (2006) found evidence that "there is not an overabundance of scholarship in the area of administrator preparation" (p. 187). Their quantitative analysis found that:

> only 8% of the 2000 plus articles in these journals from 1975 to 2002 dealt with pre-service training programs. Between 1975 and 1990, approximately 3% of the articles in some of our leading journals addressed administrator pre-service training. Since that time, over 11% of the articles have attended to training issues. During the earlier time period, less than 1% of journal space was devoted to empirical work on preparation programs" (p. 187).

This percentage grew between 1990 and 2002 to a 4% representation. While this is an increase, it is valid to conclude that the topic of school administrator pre-service training is underrepresented in educational journals.

In Hungary, aspiring educational administrators may find that this research serves as a valuable tool in guiding their pre-service preparation. As well, these administrators

would benefit from a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the formal and informal opportunities in practice across primary and secondary schools, and/or eastern and western areas of the country versus what are commonly understood to be the generic requirements of administrative preparation. Such an understanding may provide schools and administrators with ideas for supporting the growth of local administrators. The Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture has recently designed a School Leaders' Training Program. Therefore, the Ministry may find the results of this study a useful aide for considering what is occurring across the country, what seems to be of most benefit for current directors and perceptions of those who have completed the training.

As Glasman and Glasman (1997) state, "(m)ore research is needed concerning what is done in practice so that this information can be incorporated into leadership programs" (p. 17). The identification of strategies employed by the Hungarian educational system may serve to benefit the restructuring initiatives of educational administrator preparation programs worldwide.

The potential benefits listed above are intended to assist in the continuous process of school reform leading to the ultimate goal of meeting children's dynamic educational needs.   One of the key elements in meeting this objective is to have effective individuals in charge of establishing the learning environment in the schools. The results of this study may contribute to meeting this challenge. The conclusions drawn from this research have the potential to contribute to the theory, practice and policies regarding educational leadership training and preparation throughout the world.

Definition of Terms

Hungary is a land-locked country located in central Europe. Its bordering nations are Austria, Slovakia, the Ukraine, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, and Slovenia. Various terms used throughout the research will be employed in their local context. 'Western' is used in the Hungarian perspective referring to all countries that have never been under communist rule. Primary school will indicate kindergarten to grade eight while secondary school will refer to grades nine through twelve.

Western Hungary denotes the regions of Central Hungary, Central Transdanubia, Western Transdanubia, Southern Transdanubia, and the Southern Great Plain. The regions of Northern Hungary and the Northern Great Plain will compose Eastern Hungary.

Figure 1. Map of Hungary and its regions.
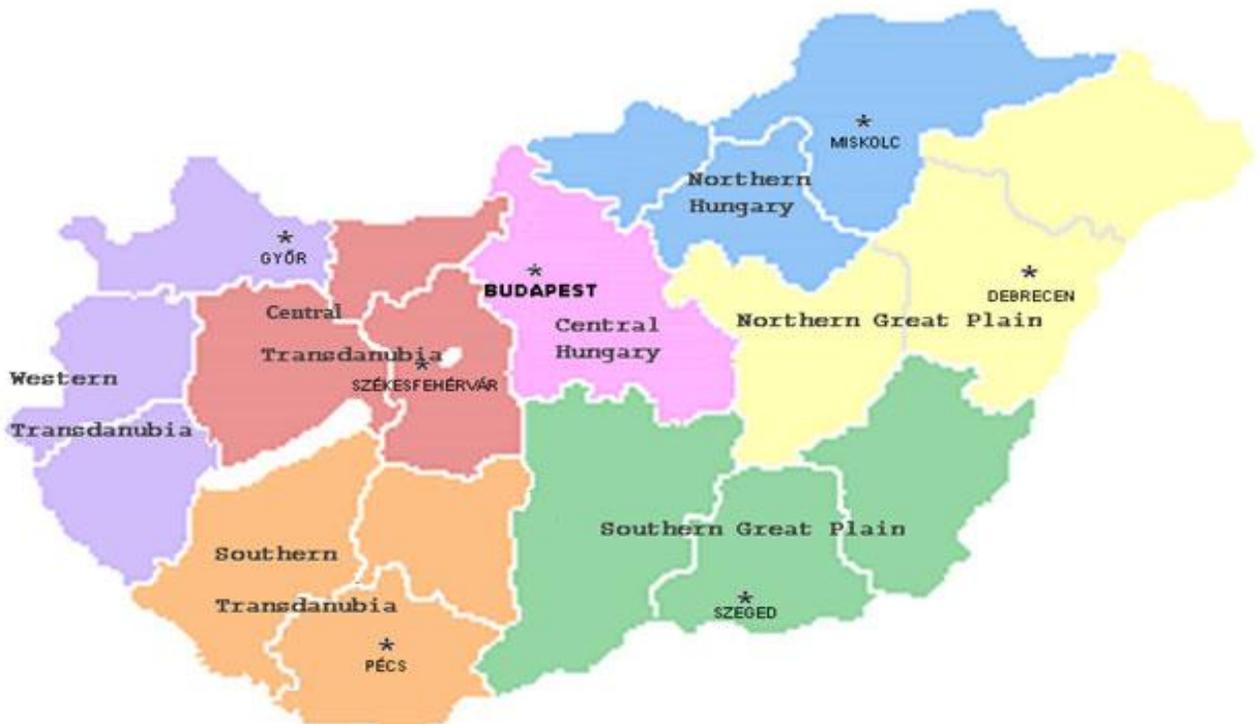
There are certain terms that should be clarified to provide their contextual meaning within this research. The first term, leadership, is central to this study. Daresh (2006) provides a comprehensive definition of the word 'leadership' as "providing purpose and direction for individuals and groups; shaping school culture and values; facilitating the development of a shared strategic vision for the school; formulating goals and planning change efforts with staff; setting priorities for one's school in the context of community and district priorities and student and staff needs" (p. 177). For the purpose of this study, leadership will follow this definition, and "leader" will refer to an individual with leadership responsibilities. The terms administrator, educational administrator, in-school administrator, school leader and educational leader will be defined similarly, and may at times be used interchangeably. The terms 'director' and 'head' are used in certain European countries with a meaning synonymous to the North American title of 'principal.'

The expressions 'training' and 'preparation' are used frequently throughout the research. These words are not synonymous. 'Training' is used to refer to official, written requirements that are established by a governing body as necessary in order to obtain a specific position of employment. 'Preparation' encompasses both formal training and any other informal steps taken by an individual pertaining to the attainment of a specific position of employment.

There are variations in spelling and meaning of the word 'program" used in this thesis. 'Programme' refers to the Hungarian Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme (KOVP) and 'Program' is used in reference to its English translation of School Leaders' Training

Program. These two words are essentially synonymous as they both refer to the Hungarian directors' mandatory training program. The third use of this word is in the term "pedagogical program" which refers to the locally established curricula in Hungarian schools.

Limitations

The reaction of each participant to a foreign researcher was unpredictable. It can be assumed that the majority of the participants grew up under the communist regime and the impacts of this upbringing still exist. Traditionally, the Hungarian people are guarded and somewhat suspicious of the intentions of others. This may have affected the answers they provided to a female Western researcher. Some participants were reserved at the beginning of their interviews but began to feel more at ease as our conversations progressed. It was distinctly noticed that some participants felt both flattered and intrigued that a Canadian educator found value in learning about the Hungarian system and in turn felt a sense of pride in sharing their stories. It is unknown how these factors may have affected their responses.

Language proficiency affected the ability of some respondents to accurately portray their opinions. English was not the first language of any of the participants; it may have been a second or third language. Interviews were conducted in English and all participants were informed prior to the interviews that the researcher speaks conversational Hungarian. Respondents were encouraged to use Hungarian terms or phrases if they were unable to comfortably articulate their sentiments in English. In such situations, translations were performed by the researcher.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to an examination of twelve school directors in Hungary who voluntarily agreed to participate in this study after being contacted directly by the researcher. This group included principals from primary and secondary schools, and in eastern and western Hungary. The study took place between February 2007 and May 2007.

Organization of the Report

This first chapter has provided an introduction to the research including the specific questions that were studied, the significance of the study, definitions of terms to be used, limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter two will consist of a review of literature beginning with an overview of the roles of educational leaders in today's schools. External and internal factors which have altered the responsibilities of school administrators and underscore the need for effective preparation will be identified. Subsequently, elements of administrative preparation and training in various countries throughout the world will be outlined. These will be followed by universal criticisms of the current models and a series of recommendations to improve training and preparation for educational leaders. Factors relating to the Hungarian context will be woven into the chapter and a specific analysis of the environment in Hungary where this research was conducted concludes the chapter.

An explanation of the research methodology employed will be presented in chapter three. Specifically, the selection of data collection methods, the data sources, the methods of participant selection, the researcher's personal positioning, and ethical considerations will be conveyed.

The fourth chapter will detail the findings of the research study. Chapter five will provide a summary and findings of the entire project that will be gleaned from the data analysis. The conclusions drawn in this chapter will lead to implications for theory, practice and research. Stemming from these, questions for further study will be presented.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides the literature review upon which the research is based. The changing role of the in-school administrator is first outlined to support the need for leadership preparation and training that reflect the changing social contexts and skill sets necessary for effective administration. Second, the elements of effective preparation common around the world are described. This is followed by a summary of frequent criticisms of current forms of preparation and suggested reforms to administrative training and preparation conclude the chapter. In addition to references throughout chapter two, a particular focus on Hungary is delineated at the end of this chapter, as this context is the focus of the research.

The Role of the In-school Administrator

There is an abundance of research and literature dedicated to the topic of educational reform as it relates to the preparation and training of effective school leaders (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Capresso & Daresh, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Leithwood et al.; 1996; Levine, 2005; Murphy, 2006; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987; Normore; 2006; Pritzker, 2010). In fact, the vast majority of school reform efforts in Western societies have as their focus the preparation of effective school leaders who can meet the challenges of an increasingly diverse and complex school environment. School leaders today are asked to lead in ways much different from leaders in the 1950's who were expected to "manage" schools. Principals in the 21st century experience increased accountability for student achievement, school budgets, and identifying and restructuring programs to meet the needs of all students. In addition, Sergiovanni (2001) reports that

principals now have markedly increased responsibilities for marketing and politics "to generate supports for school and education" (p. 17).

Over the past five decades, significant changes around the world have affected the lives and schooling needs of children. Many of these changes have occurred externally to the school environment, while others have occurred within the school systems themselves; yet all have repercussions for effective leadership.

External Impacts

In terms of external impacts, "profound shifts in societal demographics, communication systems, technology, and accountability precipitate the call for leadership reform" (Bingham & Gottfried, 2003, p. 11). Changing cultural dynamics, increasing minority populations and English as an additional language, urbanization, governmental reform mandates and calls for stronger accountability systems all impact the ways in which administrators must deal with the social, cultural and academic capital within a school. In addition, it cannot be disputed that "students come (to school) with very different attitudes, motivations and needs than students of generations past" (Normore, 2006, p. 47).

For instance, technological advances such as cellular phones and the internet have opened new realms of information and communication to students, teachers and administrators. While there are many useful applications of the world-wide web, the incorporation of the internet also necessitates that leaders be aware of potential misuse of computers, students' (and teachers') inappropriate site access, create appropriate usage agreements and scheduling opportunities, maintain budgets for software and hardware

needs, hire and supervise technology staff, and keep up with the quick changes in technology development and usage that may impact teaching pedagogy.

Another external threat that has gained much media attention is the increase in school violence. In today's schools, administrators find themselves learning about proactive threat assessment methodologies in order to deal with potential situations that could pose bodily harm to their students, staff and themselves. Since the horrific shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999, multiple instances of school shootings have occurred in elementary, middle and secondary schools. None of the literature regarding educational reform prior to these incidents thought to prepare school leaders for this reality.

Government allocated budgets are another significant outside factor that affect the decisions made by school administrators. In addition, government mandates can impose significant external impacts to school programs. For example, in Manitoba, the 2005 introduction of *Appropriate Educational Programming* (Bill 13), which promotes inclusive education and supports children with disabilities, began a change in the profile of school populations, programs, and staffing requirements in all Manitoban schools.

The complexion of the adults in the lives of school children today has also changed. In general, adults today have attained a higher level of education than did their counterparts in the 1950's. This has resulted in an increased expectation of schools to prepare children to attain, at minimum, the same level of success as their parents achieved. The higher level of education among parents has also led to an increase in the number of families with two working parents. Also, there has been an increase in the divorce rate since changes to the *Divorce Act* in Canada were passed in the mid 1980's.

This has resulted in more students living in single-parent homes. There are also many children who don't live with either of their parents. These changes to family dynamics are yet another factor affecting school leaders in the 21st century who must be cognizant of the external factors that affect the lives of those who are taught, and who work, within the school community so that they can respond appropriately.

The external influences to schooling in Hungary are unique from those faced by most other countries. The educational system in Hungary has been very unsettled since the fall of communism sixteen years ago. There have been multiple changes in government over this period resulting in fundamental changes to education after each election which have had the effect of creating a dangerously destabilized educational environment. The last change in ruling party occurred in April 2010. While the current government is primarily occupied with establishing an accurate account of the country's current debt load, educational policies have remained stable.

The previous government abolished comprehensive national curricula; replacing it with a National Core Curriculum which "specifies the obligatory and common objectives of the educational/teaching work performed in the phase of establishing general knowledge…It focuses on the acquisition of lifelong learning key competences" (European Commission, 2009, p. 5).   The National Core Curriculum provides the grounding for the Local Curriculum that is developed by the individual school principal and approved by the teaching staff and local government. Teachers are provided the latitude to choose content, method, textbooks (from an approved list provided by the Minister of Education) as well as the aids and tools of teaching in accordance with the pedagogical program.

Another external influence on the Hungarian educational system is the country's declining birth rate. It is, therefore, not surprising that the document *Education in Hungary 2003* reports that "(o)ne of the greatest challenges for the Hungarian public education system is the permanent large-scale decrease in the number of children, which has been a noticeable factor since the late 1990's" (p. 11). This statistic has resulted in underutilized school facilities and the inability of smaller settlements to maintain secondary schools.

In addition, the Hungarian school system is facing challenges dealing with rising expenditures through new legislation that has increased teacher salaries and the need to improve infrastructure (Lannert & Halasz, 2003). The effects of external forces such as "budget restraint and continuous changes in the economic and labour market" (Lannert & Halasz 2003, p. 11) are magnified in the eastern side of Hungary. Administrators from this less prosperous area face special challenges in providing appropriate education to children who come from environments with high-transiency rates, receive insufficient nourishment and have parents who are either unemployed or frequently work evening and night shifts. It is difficult to attract qualified, dedicated administrators to schools facing such difficulties (Eurydice Database, 2005).

Internal Factors

In addition to the external forces impacting the role of educational leaders, there are strong change forces affecting the inner structures of school systems. Decentralisation has led to a dissemination of decision-making responsibilities from central superintendents to in-school administrators. In addition, decentralisation also serves to

empower teachers and forces principals to assume increased administrative duties that were previously completed at the board office level.

There is no doubt that there exist benefits to decentralization, as in-school administrators are allowed to make their own decisions regarding budgets and personnel issues, and teachers are empowered to make their own decisions to best suit the needs of the children in their classes. However, with decentralization, the empowerment of local schools has led to increased public demand for accountability and change initiatives. This accountability stretches from increased responsibilities as curriculum leaders to justifying controversial decisions to parents (Normore, 2006). The increased level of responsibility and workload for school leaders has undoubtedly resulted in an increase in the complexity of their jobs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Orr, 2010; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992).

The movement to site-based management is not limited to North America, but in fact "[d]ecentralisation is at the heart of nearly every school restructuring effort unfolding throughout the world" (Murphy & Hallinger, 1992, p. 78). This truth extends to the Hungarian educational system (European Commission, 2008; Fretwell & Wheeler, 2001; Lannert & Halasz, 2003) where teachers are afforded vast autonomy regarding educational and operational decisions. Hungarian teachers are even empowered to establish the learning content of their classes. Conversely, school principals must "continuously seek the approval of their staff, since in strategic issues they only have the right to submit proposals for decisions" (Lannert & Halasz, 2003, p. 32). It is evident that principals have limited authority; however, it is widely accepted that they have the

most substantial workload in terms of both "volume and significance" (Lannert & Halasz, 2003, p. 32).

In analyzing the ramifications of decentralisation to the role of principals, Murphy (1994) highlights the concern that with increased flexibility, enhanced autonomy and shared decision-making come an increased set of worries for school leaders. He reflects on a common lament of principals that "while expectations are being added, little is deleted from the principal's role" (p. 95). Hess (2003) speaks to the additional expectations on principals by specifying that "in the world of 21st century schooling, leaders must be able to leverage accountability and revolutionary technology, devise performance-based evaluation systems, reengineer outdated management structures, recruit and cultivate non-traditional staff, drive decisions with data, build professional cultures, and ensure that every child is served" (p. 4). Given this complexity, the effective preparation of school leaders becomes increasingly necessary.

Need for Effective Preparation

Because of the increasing diversity of the role of in-school administrators, serious effort must be paid to effective ways in which to prepare people entering the position. Effective leadership preparation is essential today for two primary reasons: (a) to prepare new leaders to replace the large number of current administrators approaching retirement (Bingham & Gottfried, 2003; Normore, 2006; Pritzker, 2010; Phillips, 2003); and (b) to prepare leaders to face what has become a perpetual state of educational reform. The necessary preparation for this challenge can be acquired through both formal training programs and informal networking, observations, socialization activities and personal reflection.

On the more formal front, the drive for revision and/or reconceptualization of administrative preparation programs began in the United States in the late 1970's during a period when the economy was slumping toward recession. Schools were effectively "blamed" for not preparing graduates capable of sustaining a vibrant economy. The release of an open letter to the American people entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* (1983) focused on the poor quality of teaching and the inadequate credentials of the teachers (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Normore, 2006). By the mid-1980's, in-school administrators were identified as the key to success in educational reform at the local building levels. A number of reports (*National Commission for Excellence in Educational Administration,* 1987, cited in Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; *National Policy Board for Educational Administration*, 1989, cited in Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995) confirmed the widely held belief that improved leadership could "arrest the economic decline, assist recovery, and contribute to achieving excellence" (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 12). The sentiment that without the assistance of effectively prepared school administrators, significant and lasting reform will be unlikely receives continued supported in research conducted since that time (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Normore, 2006; Peterson, 1987).

The underlying premise of most of this research is that educational leaders remain key actors in promoting schools as venues for social change. As Leithwood et al. (1994) write, "developing school leaders, therefore, is one of the most promising avenues available for successfully addressing the changes which will challenge future schools" (p. 6).

Somewhat ironically, it has become an expectation for school leaders to direct reform in their own buildings while concurrently undergoing constant reform of their own role. It is therefore not surprising that leadership preparation researchers suggest that "[g]iven the probable continuation of formal programs and their significant potential for leadership development, program quality should be a primary concern" (Leithwood et al., 1994, p. 166). Obviously, the assumption underlying this concern is that leaders tend to lead in ways that reflect how they were prepared. If such is the case, it stands to reason that the content of preparation programs must reflect the kinds of skills, abilities and competencies necessary for leaders in today's social and educational climate.

Educational leadership training programs worldwide are in various stages of development and restructuring. Greenfield (1985) suggests that formal training is the primary vehicle for developing the technical knowledge and skill which administrators require. Leithwood et al (1994) acknowledge this yet caution that "their quality and impact are extraordinarily uneven" (p. 164). There is much debate about what should be included in leadership training and even more criticism about existing strategies.

The majority of research literature focuses on formal training programs; however, there is significant value to be recognised in less formal methods of administrative preparation. Leithwood et al. (1994) employ the term 'socialization' in reference to "those processes by which an individual selectively acquires the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to perform effectively the role of school leader" (p. 148). This knowledge is frequently acquired through a blend of formal and informal methods. Informal preparation may include simple activities such as observing administrators, being members of school committees and progressing to chairing a committee.

Networking with peers and participating in personal reflection are further useful forms of informal preparation for aspirant administrators (Leithwood et al., 1994; Milstein, Bobroff & Restine, 1991; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987).

These informal pieces of leadership preparation are important because they allow aspiring administrators to direct their own learning using personalised best-method approaches. For example, informal interactions such as observations of practicing administrators or discussions with school leaders such as department heads or coordinators perform different functions for different individuals. For some, they may act as an introduction to the roles and responsibilities of educational administration while for others the informal activities may fill gaps in their knowledge base or serve as a logical continuum to existing information. These informal activities, which are frequently designed and initiated by the prospective administrator, are also effective as they permit each individual to choose both who and what they observe and discuss in order to create their own image of the realities of administrative positions.

There are also instances where current administrators will use informal methods to "shoulder tap" prospective administrators in whom they identify leadership capacity to informally mentor and socialize them into the profession. In certain countries, such as Hungary, these informal methods are the primary vehicle used for the informal preparation of aspirant administrators.

Common Elements of Educational Administrative Preparation and Training

Educational leadership training methods and their levels of formality vary greatly across the world. Many countries do not require formal preparation for beginning administrators and few mandate a purposefully crafted program. However, highlights of

educational administrator training programs and requirements from a sample of North American and European countries suggest that many programs contain common elements that are outlined below.

Canada

In Canada, education is under provincial jurisdiction; therefore, each province and territory has exclusive decision-making power regarding local educational administrator training programs. Two provinces and two territories require formal certification for school principals. The other provinces and territory require only a teaching certificate for appointment to the principalship. Preparatory programs and training programs are offered, but not mandated, either pre- or post-appointment, in these locations.

Provinces, which have mandated training, include New Brunswick, which requires a Principal's Certificate including a practicum and a minimum five years teaching experience. In Nova Scotia, the majority of districts require "an advanced degree and participation in three provincial modules offered by a leadership consortium" (Phillips, 2003, p. 2).

By far the most sophisticated and longest standing principal certification program is The Principal's Qualification Program in Ontario. In this province, successful completion of Part I and Part II of the Principal's Qualification Program is a requirement to be a vice-principal or principal. The program focuses on five Leadership Domains; Vision, Relationships, Collaboration, Learning Outcomes and Conditions for Student Success. In Part I, candidates are introduced to these elements during a 125 hour course of study (Phillips, 2003; Wallace, Foster & da Costa, 2007).

Completion and evaluation of a practicum component including observation and practical leadership must be completed after Part 1. The expected duration of the practicum is a minimum of 60 hours and is assisted through the mentorship of a current vice-principal or principal (Ontario College of Teachers, 2009). Upon completion of the practicum, candidates have the opportunity to apply their grounded perspectives in more profound study of the same domains as in Part 1 for a further 125 hours.   This program has consistent content, is carefully monitored, and is required by Ontario law before assuming the principal's role. Many school divisions also require that candidates possess a Master of Education degree.

The Northwest Territories and Nunavut also have mandatory certification plans similar to the Principal's Qualification Program. In these territories, however, candidates are not required to hold a Master's degree and certification is permitted to be completed within two years of appointment as a principal (Phillips, 2003).

British Columbia and Alberta are "actively working towards the development of principal certification processes" (Wallace et al., 2007, p. 189). Quebec mandates the completion of thirty university credit hours within five years of administrative appointment (Phillips, 2003) but this province does not require school administrators to be certified teachers (Wallace et al., 2007).

In Manitoba, teachers may attend accredited professional development seminars and take graduate level university courses in order to attain administrative certificates offered by Manitoba Education. There are two levels of administrative certification in this province. The Level 1 School Administrator's Certificate is awarded to an individual holding a valid Manitoba Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate who has a

minimum of three years of teaching experience and has completed 120 hours of

accredited professional development in the domains of leadership, instruction,

management and personnel or a prescribed combination of professional development and

graduate level university courses. The Level 2 Principal's Certificate is earned upon

completion of at least two full years as a vice-principal or principal and an additional 90

hours of accredited professional development from the four domains listed above and

nine credit hours of approved university coursework in educational administration or

eighteen hours of university coursework in educational administration. Unfortunately,

there is a recognized inconsistency in the content for these credit hours so that although

people may receive certification they do not have the same type of knowledge base or

skill set. A Master's degree in Educational Administration receives recognition as having

satisfied all requirements for both certificates (Manitoba Education, 2009). Although they

are frequently included as preferred qualifications, neither of these certificates is required

for vice-principals or principals in Manitoban schools and many appointments are made

to individuals who do not possess either one.

The United States of America

Based on the enormous geographical territory of the United States of America

(USA), its diverse cultures and socio-economic classes and the fact that education is

under the jurisdiction of individual states, it is not surprising that the entire country does

not follow a uniform program for training its educational leaders. Hess (2003) reports

that 47 states require principals to obtain accredited licensing before they are eligible to

apply for a principalship. On average, this certification requires a minimum of three years

of teaching experience, completion of an approved program in educational administration

and an internship. Roberts (2008) reports that "more than 75% of the states require that school principals hold a Master's degree or its equivalent. Just over half of those that require a master's degree specify that it must be in educational administration" (p. 6).

In response to national recognition of significant weaknesses in educational leadership training programs (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Hess, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1996; Levine, 2005; United States Department of Education, 2004) some attempts at reform have been made. Some conformity has been injected into the process through the establishment of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards which were established in 1996 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). These standards were "forged from research of productive educational leadership and the wisdom of colleagues" (ISLLC, 1996, p. iii) and attempt to provide a flexible framework of ideal characteristics for all school leaders, not only principals. By 2002, the ISLLIC standards, which provide a set of guidelines for developing the program content of principal preparation programs, were incorporated by 35 states (Hess, 2003). These standards have formed a conceptual basis for many restructured administrator training programs in the USA. According to the creators of the ISLLIC standards, their flexibility allows states to tailor the details of preparatory programs to suit their individual needs while maintaining a consistent national vision. The ISLLC standards are presented below:

> *Standard 1-* A School Administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Standard 2 - A school administrator is an educational leader who

promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and

sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student

learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3 - A school administrator is an educational leader who

promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the

organisation, operations and resources for a safe, efficient and effective

learning environment.

Standard 4 - A school administrator is an educational leader who

promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and

community members, responding to diverse community interests and

needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5 - A school administrator is an educational leader who

promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and

in an ethical manner.

Standard 6 - A school administrator is an educational leader who

promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and

influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context

(ISLCC, 1996, p. 12-22).

In many states, schools seeking state approval are judged against the standards of the

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (Levine, 2005). These standards were

subject to review to examine their effectiveness, to ensure that they were underpinned by

a research base and to be considered for possible revisions. As a result, they were

renamed Educational Leadership Policy Standards in 2007. The revised Standards contain only minor variances.

Another new approach to educational leadership training in the USA was presented in 2004 when The U.S. Department of Education published *Innovative Pathways to School Leadership*, the sixth publication in the American Innovations for Education series which presents new strategies to train successful school leaders which strive to provide "intensely focused preparation programs that strategically recruit and rigorously screen potential candidates, then immerse them in authentic coursework and integrated field experiences that prime candidates for success in challenging and demanding school settings" (p. 5). This document chooses to highlight six of over sixty accelerated principal certification programs in Boston, Massachusetts, Cleveland, Ohio, Chicago, Illinois, Munroe Township, New Jersey, Pike County, Kentucky and a program offered in New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Memphis, Tennessee, and the San Francisco Bay Area. The unique aspects of these programs include their aim to recruit candidates with successful leadership experience; but not necessarily in the educational field, and their administrative preparation focused on specific contexts such as urban or rural schools. The cost of these programs is high, and participants can expect to pay up to $65 000.00 for the training they receive (United States Department of Education, 2004).

Western and Central Europe

Figure 2, on the next page, outlines the training requirements for school heads (principals) throughout western and central Europe. It can be clearly seen that there is a wide variance from teaching qualification only to professional experience in teaching in

conjunction with administrative experience and special initial training in certain

countries.

Professional experience in teaching
Professional experience in teaching and administrative experience
Professional experience in teaching and training for headship
Professional experience in teaching, administrative experience and training for headship
Teaching qualification only
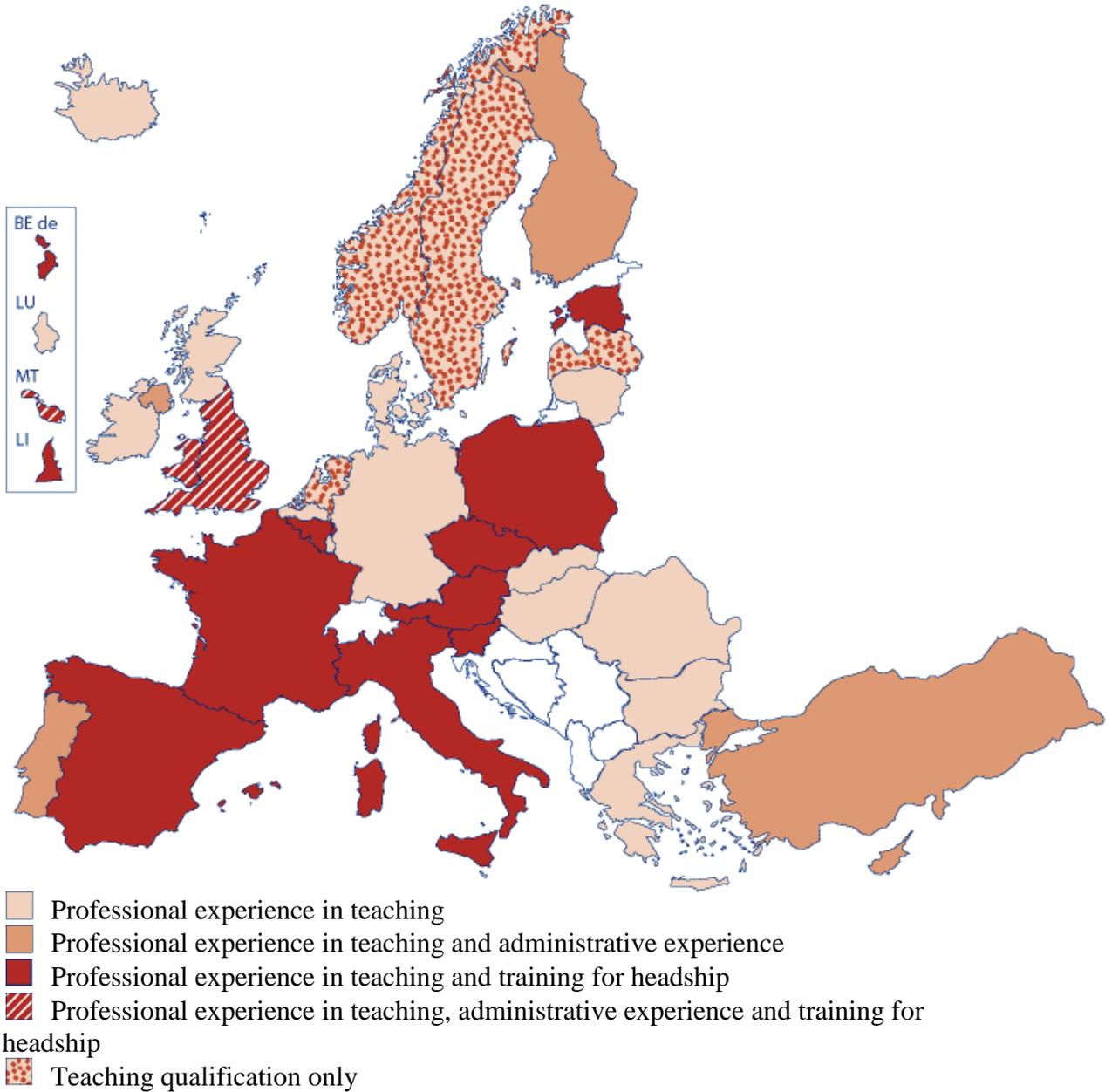
Figure 2. Professional experience and special training for headship officially required in

order to be a school head in primary, general lower, and upper secondary education,

2006/07 (Eurydice Database, 2009)

European school leaders face similar challenges as their North American counterparts since "with growing school autonomy in many countries, school heads are confronted today with more tasks concerning management of the teaching staff, funding and curricular content. Selection criteria are therefore crucial and a number of different preconditions are considered in appointing someone as a school head" (Eurydice, 2009, p. 189). The selection criteria and training format vary per country. Some countries quote the length of their training programs in hours while others present them in terms of days or years so it is difficult to precisely compare their length; however, it appears that Spain has the shortest training period of only a few hours while Malta and Liechtenstein mandate the lengthiest programs at one year of full time study (Eurydice, 2009, p. 190).

It is also worthwhile to note that among the 12 countries; Austria, Belgium (French), the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom, shown in Figure 2 as requiring compulsory training, the Czech Republic alone permits its completion after appointment to headship. Another unique point of interest is that school heads in Latvia, the Netherlands, Sweden, Iceland and Norway do not require any professional teaching experience in order to obtain this position. However, in practice, those who become school heads often do have such experience. Some countries also seek candidates with informal leadership preparation obtained through their job duties as well as their reputations as respected and competent teachers.

In many western and central European countries, school heads receive training after they have been appointed. Such training is rarely compulsory and its content and length vary from country to country. All countries providing pre-service training for

school heads include instructional, administrative, financial and human resources management components.

United Kingdom

The well-designed and intricate program offered in the United Kingdom merits special discussion separate from other western and central European countries. Since April 1, 2004, it has been mandatory for all first-time head teachers (in-school administrators) in England to either hold the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) or be working toward it. As of April 1, 2009, it has become a requirement that all new head teachers successfully complete the program prior to appointment.   The detailed NPQH is a highly individualized program in that it focuses training to peoples' specific situations. There are routes geared toward administrators of rural, urban, small, religious, and even nursery schools. The starting point and exact route a candidate takes through these stages is based on individual leadership experience.

There are two stages to the NPQH: development and final. The initial developmental phase lasts approximately fifteen months and is composed of the study of vision, financial and human resources management, and community and school visits. Following this stage, a summative assessment is performed before candidates are permitted to proceed to the two to four month long final stage which begins with a forty-eight hour "residential" program which is designed to extend professional networks. This session provides inspirational input from keynote speakers, including current head teachers, and opportunities for group and individual tutorials.   The final stage continues with a focus on vision and adds components of future schools, national priorities and personal effectiveness.

A one-day skills assessment concludes the NPQH. This assessment is composed of a hands-on exercise where candidates are required to demonstrate their skills in simulations of situations faced by head teachers and participate in an in-depth interview (Government of the United Kingdom, 2010; National College for School Leadership, 2004).

The National Professional Qualification for Headship has been touted as one of the clearest conceptualizations of a framework capable of bringing about school improvement (Huber & West, 2002; Levine, 2005). This exemplary program has been adopted in Wales and Northern Ireland as well (Eurydice, 2009).

Ukraine and Russia

The former Soviet states of Russia and the Ukraine employ a different approach in administrator training than their westerly neighbours. The distinctions begin with the selection process where outstanding teachers are nominated, based on experience, reputation and subject knowledge, by their peers to become teacher leaders. In this position, future administrative candidates are assigned duties such as designing workshop presentations and leadership tasks. All the while, the school director observes their performance. This is a form of informal training that serves as valuable hands-on preparation. After two or three years, if the school director (principal) and teaching peers are satisfied with the aspiring administrator's work, he or she is invited to take university courses in areas of school problems, psychology, economics and advanced study in his or her teaching specialty. During this time, an individual is eligible to receive an appointment as assistant school director. Eventually, after gaining experience, an assistant is eligible to vie for directorship positions.

Among the notable distinctions between the Ukrainian and Russian training scheme and the western and central European programs are the lack of training in organisational management and the prominence of instructional expertise in the east in comparison with the west. As well, the Ukraine and Russia incorporate an element of informal preparation through the mid-level leadership roles of workshop facilitation and teacher leader responsibilities that do not exist in the western models (Arrenando, 1994).

Hungary

Since the Eurydice 2009 publication of the map displayed in Figure 2, Hungary has also introduced mandatory pre-service training of its school directors. Previously, the stipulated criteria were proof of a clear criminal record, capacity for independent decision-making, university qualification to teach and at least five years of teaching experience (Eurydice database, 2005). An additional variable is added by *Education in Hungary 2003* when it references Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education which regulates the Hungarian educational system. This legislative Act declares that school administrators must be recognised "experts" and provides the following details regarding administrator training:

§ 101(1) The National Register of Experts includes the name, address, technical field and workplace of people who are authorised to act as supervisors at educational/teaching institutions.

(3) A person will be registered in the National Register of Experts if he/she has a clean record, and has obtained relevant higher education qualifications for his/her specific field and has minimum ten years of experience in his/her field and is an acknowledged representative of the field (Government of the Republic of Hungary, 1993). Part of the

research undertaking in this thesis was to find out more about the formal training

programs in Hungary and the extent to which they are required and/or enforced.

Summary

In comparing the training programs among the countries, many similarities are

noted. Most commonly, candidates who have a minimum number of years of teaching

experience complete a prescribed set of course work. Some programs have a practicum

component assigned. Recently, cohorts, longer internships and formal mentoring

arrangements have formed elements of updated programs. However, current research

literature demonstrates clear consensus in the position that existing preparation programs

are not preparing effective school administrators (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Huber

& Kiegelmann, 2002; Levine, 2005; United States Department of Education, 2004).

Initial attempts at restructuring training for this vital position have been initiated but their

degrees of success are yet unknown.

Criticisms of Educational Administrative Preparation and Training

Although literature repeatedly underlines the importance of the principal in

leading school reform, "(g)raduate training in educational administration has been

severely admonished as having little or no effect on the success of principals and their

ability to improve schools" (Normore, 2006, p. 53). *Educating School Leaders*, a

controversial report based on a four year study led by Arthur Levine (2005), identifies

problem areas in formal school leadership programs in the United States. The majority of

the specific criticisms cited by Levine are the same as those that have been identified by

many other researchers over the past decade (Bingham & Gottfried, 2003; Darling-

Hammond et al., 2010; Hess, 2003; Leithwood, et al., 1996; Murphy, 2006). These specific deficits in formal school leader training programs are discussed below.

Low Standards for Admission and Graduation

The first criticism relates to low standards for admission and graduation. Customarily, teachers interested in pursuing an administrative position initiate enrolment in educational leadership programs; however, in some cases, teachers are looking for further accreditation in order to garner a salary increase. Recruitment tends to consist of an informal "shoulder tap" by a senior level administrator to a preferred teacher. The document, *Innovations to Leadership Training*, 2004, voices a concern that "selection procedures in these programs rarely include a screening to determine candidates' leadership experience and potential along with other preferred qualities and dispositions (e.g., belief that all students can learn, ability to handle pressure, commitment to excellent teaching)" (p. 3.) and Leithwood et al. (1996) state that "the common method of recruitment and selection of candidates tends to be haphazard, and generally is oriented toward the identification of candidates heavily invested in the status quo" (p. 256). This is unlikely to create an administrative corps with a strong sense of vision for the future and the ability to implement and face the social, demographic, and cultural change that are needed in today's schools. Further, once candidates are involved in their studies "standards for knowledge acquisition, skill development, and performance outcomes are abysmally low" (Leithwood et al., 1996, p. 256).

An Irrelevant Curriculum

There are two significant problems with the curricula of current educational administration training programs. The first is the subject matter studied. Much of the

content is not relevant to the practical roles and responsibilities of administrators

(Leithwood et al., 1996). Since the curriculum is considered not relevant to the actual job

responsibilities, candidates do not feel that they are being prepared for the challenging

job ahead. For example, in a national study of 1400 middle school principals in the USA,

52 percent reported that their "university coursework was of moderate or little value"

(Hess, 2003, p. 17).

Because they are focused on the day-to-day challenges of the role, many aspiring

administrators do not see the value in courses focussing on theoretical perspectives in

educational administration. This may be due, in part, to the second criticism of curricula -

the incongruent sequence in which courses are studied. In most instances, students are

permitted to select the order in which they take courses. Therefore, a logical sequence in

the courses taken throughout an advanced degree in educational administration does not

exist, thus making it difficult for individuals with little experience in the field to form

mental links between the theoretical and practical components. In most programs, there

are compulsory and elective courses. Murphy (1990, in Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995)

contends that owing to an excessive freedom in choosing courses, prospective

administrators are not able to develop a clear conceptualization of the roles and

responsibilities of the principalship.

Weak Faculty and Course Delivery Methods

Most professors in educational administration programs are unfamiliar with the

current realities of life in schools and of principals' responsibilities. In some instances,

professors may not be teaching in their area of expertise while for others, their practical

experience in a school building was conducted in a different era. Therefore, many faculty

members are unequipped to suitably prepare candidates to flourish in such positions

(Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Leithwood et al., 1996; Levine, 2005).

In addition, there are many concerns raised regarding the quality of instructional

approaches employed by instructors in educational leadership programs. Analysis of

instructional strategies shows that "instruction (is) provided in formats and approaches

least conducive to adult learning" (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 16). Lecture methods are

most commonly used despite research regarding best-practice methods that indicate that

this is not an effective delivery mode. Adults respond better to teaching methods

incorporating elements of discussion, inquiry, self-directed learning, and immediate

practical application of theory (Murphy & Hallinger, 1987).

Inadequate Clinical Instruction

The opportunity for valuable hands-on learning is rare in most traditional

leadership training programs. Aspiring administrators do not feel that they have the

chance to apply the theoretical knowledge that they read in their textbooks to real life

situations. It is common for coursework to contain a practical component but this activity

rarely amounts to more than another assigned course requirement to be completed in

order to receive course credit.

There is a flagrant lack of opportunity for pre-service administrators to connect

theory to practice by working alongside practicing administrators in mentoring or

internship programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Levine, 2005; Murphy 2006). This

is owing to a number of factors such as the difficulty for interns to obtain permission to

be away from their regular job responsibilities for prolonged periods of time, the

extensive effort, collaboration and planning that must occur between university and

school personnel, the cost of running such a program and the recognition of the value of such on-the-job experiences.

Poor Research

A fifth criticism of leadership programs relates to the inadequacy and limited amount of research in the area. Levine (2005) provides a clear example of this by pointing out that researchers cannot agree on whether or not formal school leadership programs affect student achievement. A remarkable lack of research in school administration outside of the United States, Canada and Australia is also noted by Bjork and Ginsberg (1995). This is a valid concern given the diversity of cultures whose programs might have to be crafted quite differently, and/or the differences in priorities placed on education throughout the world. It would be arrogant to assume that the three Western countries listed above employ the world's best methods for the preparation of school leaders; in fact, they likely have much to learn from different systems. Globalisation is virtually shrinking the distance between countries that are physically far apart but electronically right next door. This creates an increased ease and opportunity for countries to share and learn from one another without promoting a standardization of programming.

Informal Educational Administrative Preparation

Informal preparation alone does not provide sufficient preparation for the demands of school leadership as it only offers surface exposure to the roles and responsibilities associated with the position. Informal preparation uncoupled with formal training leaves gaping holes in a prospective administrator's knowledge base as there is a

lack of exposure to the theoretical basics of educational leadership which are essential to the establishment of understanding and meaning of pedagogical practice.

In Germany, where formal training for prospective administrators does not exist, a study of 800 principals conducted in 2001 discovered that only 5% of these acting administrators awarded the highest rank of "very good" to their own qualification for leadership (Huber & Kiegelmann, 2002). Given the complexities of the position, the consequent finding that these principals "feel that further training is urgently necessary" (Huber & Kiegelmann, 2002, p. 1) comes as no surprise. It is unfortunate that in many schools in both North America and Europe, informal preparation is the only training option for entry-level school administrators (Eurydice Database, 2005b; Phillips, 2003). The types of informal preparation, the extent to which they are employed and the sentiment of local administrators regarding this issue in Hungary was one of the foci of this research study.

Summary

Rather than being viewed solely as discouraging, the overwhelming disapproval ratings of current formal training programs offered for educational leaders should be utilised constructively as an opportunity to guide reform. Just as there are commonalities found in the analysis of criticisms to current training, this is equally the case when studying suggestions for components that should be incorporated into their restructuring.

Recommendations for Achievement of Successful Educational Administration Training and Preparation

When it comes to designing effective training and preparation activities for in-school leaders, the basic questions of *Who?* (stakeholders and admission requirements),

What? (curriculum content), *When?* (course sequence) *Where*? (site of

training/preparation) *How?* (instructional strategies and informal preparation) and *Why?*

(morals, beliefs and values) provide the framework for the following presentation of

reform recommendations. It should be noted that all of the reforms for both formal and

informal training utilize effective instructional styles for adults that involve learning

through "discussion, discovery, observational learning, modeling, and self-direction

(Pitner, 1987).

Coordination Among Stakeholders –Who?

The first recommendation is to increase collaboration among students, active

school administrators, senior school division staff, universities and other associations

offering accredited educational leadership training (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Darling-

Hammond et al., 2010; National Association of Secondary School Principals Consortium,

1992; Normore, 2006). This is an essential element to successful implementation of each

of the following recommendations as coordination in planning injects relevance and

cohesion into the program. Huber and West (2002) lend support to this recommendation

through their findings from a research project that compared "school leader

development" (p. 1075) in ten countries in Europe, Asia, Australia, and North America.

Their analysis demonstrates that partnerships among these groups assist in "resolving the

key issues of curriculum content and structure, of training methods and also of the timing

and sequencing of the programmes" (p. 1096).

Admission Standards-Who?

A second recommendation responds to the call to elevate admission standards for

educational administration programs and to extend selection criteria past the frequently

used method of admitting almost everyone who applies. In order to broaden the range of candidates, programs need to be advertised better and a rationalized recommendation for individual candidates should be solicited by universities from school division personnel.

As well, formal recruitment plans should be established. Milstein et al. (1991) present an example of a three step recruitment process. The first step is to identify a promising candidate through examination of personal qualities, reputation, experience, and academic preparation; the second is to make direct contact with the candidate; and the third step is to conduct an initial interview. Of course, it is impossible to devise a fool-proof scientific model for this process as personal qualities are difficult to assess during an initial screening process; however, universities and schools sharing information and working together enhances the recruitment of highly qualified candidates (Carver, 1988, cited in Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995). Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) support the position that "recruitment and selection are central to program design, not incidental activities. The knowledge and skills of those who enter the program determine to a great extent what kind of curriculum can be effective and what kinds of leader will emerge" (p. 21).

Curriculum-What? and When?

A prescribed sequence for core courses in educational leadership training programs must be instituted in order to create a solid knowledge base and establish a context for learning (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987; Olson, 2007). Bjork and Ginsberg (1995) advocate "organising subject matter around problems" (p. 16) in order to create immediate and direct ties between theory and practice.

While research literature repeatedly calls for curriculum reform in educational administration programs, there are few concrete suggestions regarding specific courses that should be included. Levine (2005) is one author who proposes a comprehensive list of subjects to be studied. He stipulates that the programs should consist of "both basic courses in management (e.g. finance, human resources, organizational leadership and change, educational technology, leading in turbulent times, entrepreneurship, and negotiation) and education (e.g. school leadership, child development, instructional design, assessment, faculty development, school law and policy, school budgeting, and politics and governance)" (p. 66). These suggestions fall in line with other domains that have been suggested to encompass the essential knowledge necessary for school administrators (Bredeson, 1996).

Instructional Approaches-How? And Where?

Program delivery must advance past the traditional methods of lecture and worthless practicums. A fourth recommendation for improvement to formal administrative preparation addresses the common criticism that "(u)niversities have traditionally focused on introducing latest trends and theories in educational leadership but provide few practical skills for applying that knowledge to the real world" (Normore, 2006, p.53). A variety of approaches have been suggested to tackle this problem. Each one is designed to create opportunities for students to experience the real life of an administrator through a learner's lens.

The concept of internships (also known as performance based learning and on-the-job leadership training) is designed to build a tangible link between theory and practice. Successful internship programs begin with a collaborative effort that sees

program staff, school administrators and students participating in the planning of the
internship experience. The student's high level of involvement from the outset develops
a sense of ownership and motivation. A specific example of internship presented by
Milstein et al. (1991) involves field experiences in conjunction with university
coursework and weekly internship seminars. The university coursework presents the
theory; the field experience in the schools allows students to see how this theory is
applied and the internship seminars allow time for reflection and networking with others
with similar career goals. Effective internship programs prove to the students that they
are obtaining knowledge relevant to real practice and give them the opportunity to start
developing their own administrative intuition through critical analysis of real situations
(Capresso & Daresh, 2001; Carver, 1988, in Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Normore 2006;
Snyder 1994; Vitaska, 2008; Waler & Stott, 1994).

During internships, it is common for a student to be paired with a veteran
administrator who adopts the role of a mentor. The mentor acts as a non-judgemental
confidant to the novice intern, provides encouragement and support, presents alternative
perspectives to consider; is candid, open and accessible (Capresso & Daresh, 2001).
Aarons (2010) reports on the idea of a three year long mentorship program for newly
appointed principals in the United States that was presented to Congress in early 2010.
The demonstrated value of such a partnership is maintained by Aarons' (2010) quotation
from a principal who felt "the most striking differences happen when a budding principal
who has not yet been placed works under a principal who has been successful" (p. 3).

These mentorships may occur as a component of a formal internship program or
they may evolve from an informal association between an aspirant and a practicing

administrator. The power of mentorships is illustrated through an example from

Capresso and Daresh (2001) in which a new principal shares that owing to his mentorship

experience, he "suddenly saw how all the 'parts' of administration that he had learned in

classes fit together on a daily basis" (p. 101). This personal reflection validates the

assertion that intern and mentorship experiences create a valuable link between theory

and practice.

While internship and mentorship provide authentic learning experiences in school

buildings, they have limitations owing to personnel, time and financial restraints. It is,

therefore, important to recognize that useful problem-based knowledge can also be

garnered in the classroom setting through role-playing and simulation of real situations

(Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987; Normore, 2006) Presenting

common school-based scenarios in a classroom setting creates a non-threatening

environment for students to explore and build their leadership capacities, and to debrief

the learning immediately with a group of peers to see alternate viewpoints and different

ways of handling leadership situations.

Morals, Values and Beliefs —Why?

The fifth recommendation for successful educational administrative training and

preparation centres on the establishment of morals, values and beliefs. It has been said

that "although the management function of school leadership is important, theorists now

suggest that a distinguishing characteristic between effective and ineffective school

leaders is the presence of a set of beliefs that guides their work" (Pounder, Reitzu, &

Young, 2002, cited in Bingham & Gottfried, 2003, p. 11). Educational leaders can lean

on their belief system to guide them through the continual and fast paced changes in

society that invariably affect their schools, students and staff members. To this end,

increased attention is being paid to the establishment of a solid base of morals, values and

beliefs in educational administrators (Bingham & Gottfried, 2003; Greenfield, 1985;

Huber & West; 2002; Leithwood et al., 1994; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992; Sergiovanni,

2001).

The development of morals, beliefs and values cannot be accomplished through

simple means. Usually, the informal evolution of an individual's personal belief system

occurs in natural fashion through life experiences. Currently, there are few university

courses that attempt to tackle the affective side of school administration. Yet Hallinger

(1995) insists that the emotional side of leadership "should be reflected in the practices

and processes as well as in the content of leadership development programs" (p. 3). Since

morals, values and beliefs usually change only if one is involved in deliberate ongoing

reflection, it is important to create school environments which routinely integrate

reflection.

In addition to sharing their expertise, skilled mentors can assist this process by

helping develop "the protégé's strengths and abilities by deliberately compelling him or

her to engage in accurate and productive self-reflection" (Hall, 2008, p. 451). This

process of reflection should become a component of the life-long learning process to

which teachers are committed. Practically, it can occur in the form of deliberations

regarding a shared vision and mission or planning the restructuring of an aspect of the

formal organisation of a school. Other avenues leading to reflection are activities which

enhance staff discussion, collaboration, decision-making and communication about

teaching (Hallinger, 1995). In essence, activities which create participants, rather than simply observers, in the operation of a school encourage thought and reflection.

Informal Aspects of Administrative Training and Preparation-How?

The importance and wide-spread employment of informal educational leadership preparation must be acknowledged. A study of principals and vice-principals in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and British Columbia conducted in the early 1990's analysing school leaders' socialization experiences demonstrated that 70% of participants felt that formal training "was the least helpful preparatory experience they had" (Leithwood et al., 1994, p. 161) while forms of informal preparation such as networking with peers and having a mentor were ranked high in their level of usefulness to prepare for the position.

Leithwood et al. (1994) recommend a number of informal preparatory steps for aspiring administrators such as being "exposed to models of effective school administration,… ha(ving) many opportunities to assume leadership roles with peers on school-wide and district issues influencing schools (and) develop(ing) a network of peers sharing aspirations for the principalship" (p. 149). Personal reflection and the development of a strong system of morals, values and beliefs are other worthwhile types of informal preparation that aspirant administrators may use to complete their scope of understanding about the world of educational leadership.

Summary

The above recommendations, whether they are formal or informal, carried out in a classroom setting or in school buildings, address the principal criticisms of educational leadership training and preparation while advocating for effective adult learning strategies such as self-directed learning and immediate application of theory to real-life

situations. The research conducted for this study endeavours to determine the specific

reforms that have been employed in the Hungarian educational system, the manner in

which they were implemented and the level of success they have experienced. As well,

any further effective strategies for improvement to educational administrative preparation

and training that have been successful in Hungary are identified.

Description of Environment

Three key facets of the local environment in Hungary are of interest in this study

as they have direct implications on the role of Hungarian school administrators and the

subsequent research methodology. These factors are the socio-economic status of the

citizens, the political position of the government and the overall educational system. The

relevance of each to the position of school administrator and by extension, to this study is

explained in order to contextualize the field in which this research occurred.

Socio-economic Environment

Economic trends in Hungary indicate a gradual increase in Gross Domestic

Product (GDP); however, the country's economic growth rate still places it in the bottom

third when compared with other central-Eastern European countries. Disparity among

regions is clear. Calculated on a per capita basis, Northern Hungary achieves only 34.6%

of the average GDP of European Union (EU) member countries while Central Hungary

achieves 83.5% of the EU average in this area (Lannert & Halasz, 2003). In 2002, the

official budget deficit climaxed at an alarming 10% of the GDP (Lannert & Halasz,

2003). The extremely large deficit poses many problems in the country since government

attempts to reduce it are eliminating funding to many traditionally state funded services

such as health care and university education, thus requiring people to pay for services that were formerly free of charge. Many are not able to afford this expense.

The Hungarian unemployment rates demonstrated a steady rise throughout the last decade; rising from 5.7% in 2001 to 10% in 2010. Significant regional differences have been a constant in this category. In 2003, Lannert and Halasz reported the eastern regions of Northern Hungary and the Great Plain had unemployment rates of 15.8% and 13.7% respectively while Western Transdanubia and the central region, including the capital, Budapest, had dramatically lower unemployment at 4.9% and 2.6% respectively.

The results from a similar study in 2008, represented in Figure 3, on the following page, provide a visual representation of similar disparity in unemployment rates. The best circumstances continue to be in Budapest and the northern region of western Transdanubia bordering Austria (white areas) where unemployment rates are approximately 4.4%. The worst unemployment figures come from areas in Northern Hungary (black zones) where unemployment ranges from 16.7%-19.1%. The light grey areas in the western Transdanubia and the western area of the great plain have moderate unemployment rates of 5.5%-9.8%. The area of Southern Transdanubia which borders Croatia as well as the mid-east portion of the Great Plain sees unemployment at a rate of approximately 9.8%. The noticeable increase in unemployment rates moving from the western regions of the country to the eastern sectors of Hungary is evident (Cseh Papp, 2008).

Figure 3.

Unemployment rate by counties (Cseh Papp, 2008)
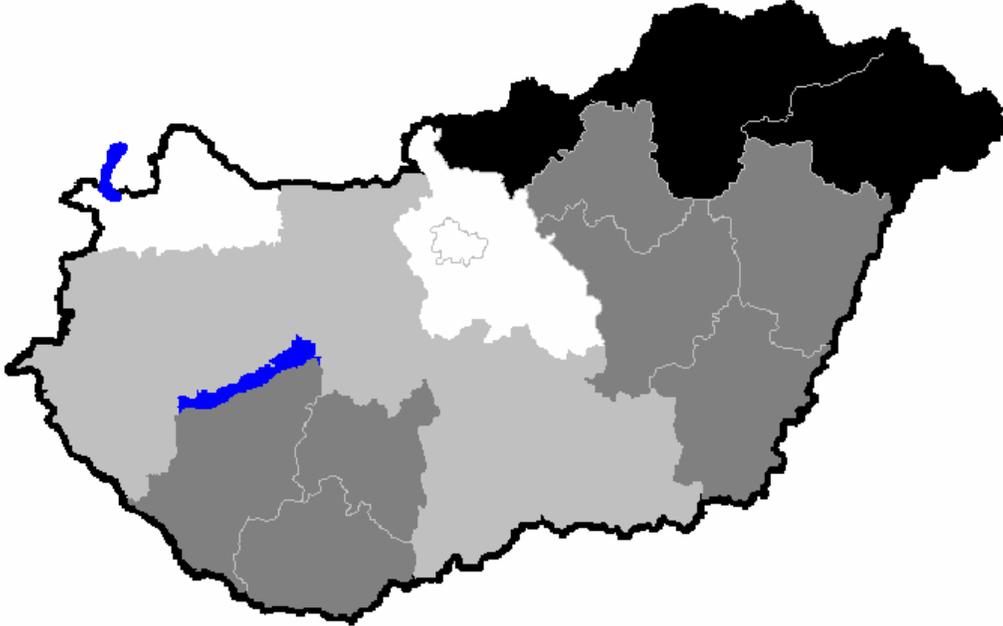
Changes in the labour market during the restructuring of the country in the post-communist years have contributed to these figures as there has been a significant decrease in employment in the agricultural sector, located in the fertile farming land of the east, and increased job opportunity in the service sector which has traditionally been located in the industrial western part of Hungary.

Positive trends are noted in the overall educational level of the population. Hungarian children are staying in school longer and the percentage of the population having completed grade 12 has increased. In 1990, only 30% of Hungarians over the age of 18 had completed secondary school but by 2001, this figure had increased to 39.5% (Lannert & Halasz, 2003, p. 16).

One of the most discouraging trends in Hungary indicates that families with children tend to have a below average per capita incomes (Lannert & Halasz, 2003). The

socio-economic status of students has an impact on the priorities of the schools they attend. A principal of a school in a low socio-economic neighbourhood, or in the Hungarian context, village, must be aware of the deficits faced by the students and make the required adjustments to provide optimal education for these children.

Political Environment

While Hungarians rejoiced at the fall of communism in 1990, the country and its citizens have had difficulty adjusting to democracy. In some areas of the country, especially in the Eastern regions close to the Ukrainian and Romanian borders, citizens find themselves in dire poverty. Free enterprise and entrepreneurialism have not been as successfully implemented and embraced in this region as in the Western territories that have the benefit of modeling from their wealthy Austrian neighbours. In fact, judging by the results of elections over the past 16 years, it seems that Hungarians are unable to decide whether they prefer a right leaning or socialist governing body.

Federal elections are held every two years. Over the seven elections that were held during the first fourteen post-communist years, Hungarians voted to change their Prime Minister and governing party each time they went to the polls. They teeter-tottered evenly between the former communist party which had renamed itself the Reformed Socialists (MSZP) and the newly established Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ). This cycle was broken in April 2006 when the socialists were re-elected for a second consecutive term. Stability was not meant to be as in September 2006, Prime Minister Gurcsány admitted that his party lied about the economic state of the country in order to win the election. April 2010 saw the FIDESZ return to power. An unsettling subsidiary result of this election was that an extremist right party, called the Jobbik, became the

official opposition. Each shift in federal power since 1990 has resulted in considerable reforms to education; many of which were simply reverted back two years later.

Evidently, the political state in Hungary is tumultuous. The following excerpt provides a clear example of the confusion imposed on the educational system owing to changes in government: While there has not been a true opportunity to establish consistency within the educational policies within this relatively new democratic society, there are a few post-communist reforms which have been implemented.

> The content of the education system began to change under the effect of the National Core Curriculum based on the core curriculum concept, taking six years to complete, and replacing the central curriculum of 1978, prescribing the teaching content in detail. That brought about a two-pronged control as the National Core Curriculum meant that by 1998 the institutions of teaching and education had to design their own pedagogical programmes, and their local curricula as well. In 1999 the Ministry of Education, in office for one year at the time, decided on the introduction of framework curricula that meant to reassume control over 80% of the teaching content, thereby moving toward the re-centralisation of the content, and in 2002, following another change of government, the National Core Curriculum underwent its statutory review. The result was a real core curriculum that exercised even less control than the one before, and prescribed no teaching content (Eurydice Database, 2009).

Since the most recent election in April 2010, the new government has been predominantly focused on debt control and considerable changes to education have not occurred.

Educational Environment

The public education system in Hungary has numerous markedly different aspects than that of North American schools. These will be described briefly in this section. In Hungary, so-called "pre-primary" education is available for children aged three to seven years. A minimum of one year in pre-primary school is compulsory prior to entering primary school. Children in Hungary do not begin their primary studies at a specific age, but, rather, when they are deemed "school-ready" between the ages of five and seven years. This determination is made according to the physical, mental and emotional maturity of each child (Lannert & Halasz, 2003). Compulsory education follows an "8+4" model consisting of eight years of primary school and four years of secondary studies.

There is a similar number of overall teaching days in Hungary, but school holidays are distributed somewhat differently than in North America as there are week-long breaks incorporated into each of the fall, winter and spring terms in addition to the 10-11 weeks of summer holiday time. The school day varies in length according to grade level and in-class time increases with age.

Class size averages are comparable to those found in North American schools and since September 2003, the opportunity for "severely and multiply disabled children to participate in developmental education and training from the age of six" has been compulsory. Rather than being integrated into mainstream classrooms, special needs students are "grouped according to their disabilities, their needs and also to their state of development" (Eurydice, 2009, p. 81).

A very unique aspect of the Hungarian school system is its lack of precise curricula. The National Core Curriculum, which is revised every three years, presents development related tasks and general key competencies but does not prescribe any detailed requirements (OKM, 2009). The website of the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM) explains that "(b)ased on a central definition of each discipline, the schools and the local teaching staff can define and adopt local curricula and syllabi for each class and each subject" (OKM, 2009). An interesting further detail is that the implemented teaching methods are chosen by the teachers, parents and relevant stakeholders. Principals are conspicuously omitted from this list. Perhaps this is because their role is viewed primarily as managerial and not as that of instructional leader.

Assessment methods in Hungarian schools have recently been revised. The former long-standing system awarded each student a position from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) on a marking scale without any detail or support. Now, students in grades one to three receive exclusively anecdotal comments in order to identify areas of difficulty and develop an intervention plan to address deficits. Starting in the fourth grade, in addition to their traditional numerical assessment (on the scale of 1-5), all students must receive written analysis of their performance. Pupil retention may not occur within the first three years and if, after this time, a student must repeat a year, teachers, superintendents and parents are involved in formulating a detailed plan for the future success of the pupil. Again, the principal is excluded from this group of key decision-makers.

Educational Administration in Hungary

In Hungary, the maintainer (superintendent) appoints a school administrator after soliciting opinions from teaching staff, the school board and student government

members; however, the maintainer is not obligated to follow any external recommendations and has sole discretion in making the final choice of successful candidate (Eurydice Database, 2009). The principals of these institutions have a long and complex set of responsibilities including classroom teaching, assuring high quality programming, financial management, maintaining health and safety standards for students and staff and arranging regular medical examinations for students. However, as detailed in the previous section, the actual requirements have a history of changing drastically whenever a new government is voted into power; creating difficulties in maintaining consistency in management practice and culture in a school building.

The challenges posed by socio-economic, political and educational factors to school administrators in Hungary are both evident and diverse. It was therefore the purpose of this study to determine the type of training received by school leaders to prepare them for these situations, and school leaders' perceptions regarding the value and relevance of that training.

Conclusion

This chapter began with an overview of the roles of educational leaders in today's schools. External and internal factors that have altered the responsibilities of school administrators and underscore the need for effective preparation were identified. Subsequently, elements of administrative preparation and training in various countries throughout the world were outlined. These were followed by universal criticisms of the current models and a series of recommendations to improve training and preparation for educational leaders. The chapter concluded with a description of the environment in Hungary where the research study will took place.

The next chapter will detail the methodological perspective to be employed in this study. Specifically, the selection of data collection methods, the data sources, the methods of participant selection, the researcher's personal views and ethical considerations will be presented.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter introduces qualitative study as the basis for the research methodology used in this study. The components of qualitative study are presented in conjunction with the rationale for its appropriateness to this research investigating informal and formal preparation and training methods for educational administrators in Hungary. The chapter continues by stipulating the sources of data, participant selection methods, my personal position as the researcher, data analysis and steps taken to minimize concerns with respect to confidentiality and ethics. Within this description, I will address the key issues pertaining to enhancing validity and reliability.

Methodological Perspective

As an introduction to qualitative positioning, Patton (2002) provides the concise definition that "qualitative and naturalistic approaches are used to inductively and holistically understand human experience and construct meanings in context specific settings" (p. 69). Qualitative methodology is used in research methods that involve data collection directly from people or documents (McMillan & Wergin, 2006). This raw data consists of richly detailed narrative descriptions mirroring individuals' perceptions of their own realities. An inductive process is utilized to funnel the information obtained and identify common patterns and themes.   The overall intent is to search for understanding and meaning through individual's perspectives on a subject.

Rather than begin with a specific theory or hypothesis, qualitative research uses grounded theory wherein data obtained in the field creates the basis and "grounding" of

the theory that is eventually established. Patton (2002) explains "(q)ualitative inquiry is especially powerful as a source of grounded theory that is inductively generated from fieldwork, that is, theory that emerges from the researcher's observations and interviews out in the real world rather than in the laboratory" (p. 11).

These tenants of qualitative study are well suited to the purpose of my research since I interviewed school administrators in Hungary to inquire about their informal and formal leadership training. Therefore, qualitative methods were employed in this study. These qualitative interviews served to "capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn their terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of their individual perspectives and experiences" (Patton, 2002, p. 348). I asked the Hungarian administrators to reflect upon and share their opinions regarding the value of various components of their preparation.

The theoretical precepts of phenomenology also embrace the essence of this study. Phenomenology acts as the philosophical basis for all qualitative research (McMillan & Wergin, 2006). Specifically this theory explores "how people experience some phenomenon, perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it and talk about it with others" (Patton, 2006, p. 104). This is precisely what I hoped to achieve through my interviews with school administrators in Hungary. The phenomena in this situation are the elements of in-school administrator preparation and training. My goal was to illicit personal "truths" about the effectiveness of their preparation and recommended readjustments to training.

Sources of Data

According to Patton (2002), "(q)ualitative data consist of quotations, observations, and excerpts from documents" (p. 47). There were two primary sources of data for this study. The first is the literature pertaining to educational administrator training and preparation in Hungary; including Hungary's 1993 *Public Education Act*, information from the Eurydice database on European education systems and further pertinent documents obtained from books obtained while in Hungary and the Government of Hungary's Education and Culture website.

The second primary source of data is the information obtained from the recorded interviews conducted with current school administrators. The primary data collection method of interviewing strives to elicit "in-depth responses about people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge" (Patton, 2002, p. 4). The content of these interviews was transcribed verbatim.

Interview Approach

A semi-structured interview strategy was used to collect data from the Hungarian administrators. Specifically, this approach involved a set of questions regarding a primary topic that are presented in a logical sequence beginning with simple, straight-forward questions and progressing to more complex inquiry. An advantage of semi-structured technique is its format which ensures that each participant receives the same line of questioning. Consistency is important in this respect since "(t)he accuracy of a method comes from its systematic application" (Fielding & Fielding, 1986, p. 35, cited in Silverman, 1993).   This permits for transferability of results and translatability during data analysis. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain "(t)he degree of transferability is a

direct function of the similarity between two contexts…If context A and context B are sufficiently congruent, then working hypotheses" (p. 124) are applicable in both settings. Ensuring that the interviews of the Hungarian administrators followed similar questions also enhanced translatability which depends on clear explanations of research methods.

In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer and interviewee are encouraged to elaborate in their answers to the pre-determined list of initial questions. This serves to "keep the interactions focused while allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge" (Patton, 2002, p. 344). While the initial questions were the same for each participant, they were designed to call for opinions on certain facts, thereby allowing interviewees to express their personal perspectives on issues of administrative preparation. Follow-up questions based on responses received were added by the interviewer. According to Patton (2002), this "offers the interviewer flexibility in probing and determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth or even pose question about new areas of inquiry that were not originally anticipated in the interview instrument's development" (p. 347). The exploratory nature of semi-structured interviewing served my purpose of learning about elements of school leader preparation and training in Hungary that have not appeared in any of the literature that I have studied and current innovative reforms that are being suggested for implementation.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, validity and reliability must be established and maintained throughout the data collection process and subsequent analysis of the data. Validity, basically, refers to testing what one intended to test. In order to establish validity, credibility, trustworthiness and usefulness must be demonstrated. In qualitative research,

credibility is dependent upon the "skill, competence, and rigour of the person doing the fieldwork" (Patton, 2002, p. 14). Therefore, it was my responsibility to ensure that I presented myself as a credible interviewer when I met with the Hungarian administrators. In order to prepare for this challenge, I ensured that I had solid background knowledge of the Hungarian context but was prepared to divulge that it has been difficult to obtain many reliable details of the current local condition. I believe that this show of honesty promoted trust with the interviewees. As well, I honed my interviewing skills through my current coursework toward my Master of Education degree at the University of Manitoba where I conducted a smaller version of this study as an assignment for my Qualitative Research course. My experience as an administrator in Canada also lent credibility to my position as a researcher as I was able to ask informed follow-up and probing questions that demonstrated that I understand the details of the position.

The usefulness of a study regarding in-school administrator training in Hungary can be extrapolated from the preceding literature review. There is a clear consensus that school leaders are not receiving effecting pre-service training. Many attempts are being made throughout the world to restructure preparatory methods and some of the more innovative concepts have appeared in European countries such as the United Kingdom and the Ukraine. One of the primary criticisms of current administrator training is the poor research in the field including very limited research outside North America and this research reduces this void.

In Hungary, the results of this research may prove to be useful in numerous situations. Aspiring educational administrators may find this research provides practical information to assist in their pre-service preparation. As well, current Hungarian

administrators may incorporate the findings to foster the aspirations of administrative candidates. A third party that may find this research valuable is the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture which has recently implemented a new administrator training program. Therefore, the Ministry may find the results of this study a useful aide for considering what is occurring across the country and what seems to be of most benefit for current administrators.

In a qualitative study, reliability "is the extent to which what is recorded is what actually occurred in the setting" (McMillan & Wergin, 2006, p. 96).   Reliability is enhanced through consistency in answers from difference participants. Trustworthiness and credibility were also established through triangulation of the data during comparisons of the information obtained from documents, interviews and through member checks where interviewees had the opportunity to review the contents of the interview transcripts and make any adjustments they felt were necessary to represent an accurate view of their sentiments. In addition, I maintained a journal recording my personal impressions after each interview. In order to provide accurate, detailed information regarding the data, I recorded my reflections with sixty minutes after the completion of each interview.

Participant Selection

A contact from the University of Szeged's Juhász Gyula Teacher's Training College provided me with contact information for a few school principals. I had originally expected a more expansive list from this source but was left to my own devices to locate other participants. I did so by obtaining a comprehensive list of schools from the Hungarian schools' website www.sulinet.hu. This list provided me with a wide range

of administrators to choose from to meet the criteria that I had set out; as described further in this section.

In order to conduct the interviews for this study, I needed to travel across Hungary. For the practical purpose of reducing time and costs associated with travel, an efficient travel plan was necessary. Before contacting prospective participants, I created an ideal interview schedule that reduced my travel as much as possible. I produced this schedule in a logical flow-chart form.   Prospective participants were contacted by telephone and invited to participate in this study in the order proposed on this schedule. This process worked very well as only one director declined to participate.

I interviewed twelve Hungarian school administrators. This relatively small sample size is common in qualitative research and does not compromise the validity of the study. The knowledge garnered from qualitative methods "has more to do with the richness of the cases selected and the observational and analytic capabilities of the researcher than with the sample size" (Patton, 2002, p. 245). Once again, this underscores the importance of my role as a capable interviewer and processor of the data obtained. Patton (2002) highlights the virtues of small, diverse samples in yielding two types of findings; "high quality, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful in documenting uniqueness, and…important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity. Both are important findings in qualitative inquiry" (p. 235).

A sample was selected through purposeful sampling. Specifically, maximum variation sampling, which involves purposefully picking a wide range of cases to represent participants with different characteristics, was employed. The twelve

administrators constituted the first unit of analysis for the purpose of studying

administrator training and preparation in the entire country of Hungary. In order to

obtain a diverse sample I was sure to include male, female, primary, secondary, rural and

urban school administrators.

The method of maximum variation sampling created a heterogeneous sample to

make the analysis and conclusions credible and trustworthy. If people from different

backgrounds from different parts of the country said the same thing, the data becomes

more reliable.

From the main sample, two further units of analysis were drawn. These samples

within the main sample were chosen through stratified purposeful sampling. The first

consists of six primary level and six secondary level administrators. The second strata is

geographically focused; composed of six administrators from the eastern region of the

country and six administrators from the western region. The purpose of this second form

of sampling was to compare the homogeneous groups and identify differences and

commonalities between them. Specifically, in addition to establishing preparation and

training trends around the entire country, this research determined the variations between

Hungarian administrators dependent upon the level of school in which they work and

their geographical location.

I chose to divide the participants in this manner since literature indicates that

owing to a decline in the school populations, many smaller settlements are only able to

maintain primary schools and secondary students travel to a nearby town or city for their

studies. As well, there is a marked difference between socio-economic status between the

east and west sides of the country (Eurydice Database, 2005). I was, therefore, curious to see if this transferred in any way to the preparation of their school administrators.

Researcher Positioning

Certain aspects of my background have relevance to this study and should be presented in order to draw attention to any potential biases in my position as a researcher. These include my cultural background, first-hand experiences in Hungary and with Hungarian people, and my professional experiences.

My mother and father were both born in a small village in eastern Hungary very close to the Ukrainian border. My father came to Canada as a refugee after the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. In 1965, he was able to return home for a visit at which time he met and married my mother. They returned home to Canada and have been living in Winnipeg since then. The primary language spoken in my house was Hungarian. In fact, I did not learn the English language until the summer before I began kindergarten. As a child, my family was very involved with the Hungarian community in Winnipeg and I have voluntarily continued this tradition as an adult. I am proud to say that many of my son's first words were spoken in Hungarian and that he is fully bilingual.

Given my background, I know many Hungarian people in both North America and in Hungary. This assisted me as a researcher because I am well-versed in their culture and traditions. I am quite familiar with Hungary as I have had the good fortune to visit the county on nine occasions. Frequently, these were for extended family visits of two or three months in duration. Therefore, I have had experience living the life of a true Hungarian and witnessed the many changes that have occurred in the country over the past thirty years. For example, when I first visited my relatives in the village where they

live, they did not have indoor toileting facilities. Today, it is not only advancement in plumbing that evident as there is even an automatic banking machine in the village. As well, I recall that during the years of communism, only items manufactured in the Eastern European communist countries and the Union of Social Soviet Republics (USSR) were available, whereas today many 'western' brands line the store shelves. I was cautious to avoid bias created through my natural sympathy toward the people of eastern Hungary since I am aware of the economic challenges faced by my relatives who live in this region.

My professional background also merits consideration in my positioning as a researcher in this study. I have nine years of experience as a school administrator. During this time, I have become familiar with all aspects of the roles and responsibilities of a vice-principal and principal in Manitoba. As well, I know the available training and preparation opportunities for prospective administrators in this province. In addition to my work experience, my professional background has been impacted by my studies toward my Master of Education degree with an emphasis in Educational Administration. The coursework that I have completed in partial requirement of this degree has undoubtedly affected my personal paradigm of what constitutes an ideal school administrator.

As a researcher, I was cognizant of potential biases created by virtue of my background. The credibility of my research could have been affected if biases were permitted to affect my judgment. McMillan and Wergin (2006) caution that one of the greatest threats to the credibility of a qualitative study is researcher bias. In an effort to recognize these biases and avoid any impact they may have on my findings, I used

member checks to verify that I accurately interpreted the data from participants, employed constant comparisons in my data analysis in order to identify bias and created a personal journal to enhance self-reflection and remain objective. Patton (2002) cautions that "becoming too involved…can cloud judgement, and remaining too distant…can reduce understanding" (p. 50). I endeavoured to achieve a position of empathetic neutrality wherein the researcher maintains a middle ground.

On the positive side, my background enhanced the richness of my findings. Since I speak the language, I was able to greet interviewees and participate in some introductory dialogue in their native tongue. In most situations, my school administrative experience, proficiency with the language and a certain feeling of kinship since I am a pure-blood Hungarian created a comfortable tone prior to the formal interview and led to 'thicker' data being divulged.

Data Analysis

Triangulation

The data collection methods for this research study were designed to permit the testing of validity through triangulation. Initially, triangulation stemmed from "the idea that to establish a fact, you need more than one piece of information" (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007, p. 115). However, Bogdan and Bilken (2007) explain how this definition evolved into a more meaningful application of the term in qualitative research, by referring to the utilization of multiple sources of data to "lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena" (p. 115-116) being studied. Through triangulation, credibility is strengthened as "every method…reveals slightly different facets of the same symbolic reality" (Berg, 2007, p. 5). Specifically, I collected data through a review of relevant

documents and literature, in-depth personal interviews, member-checks to assure accurate

interpretations of the interviewee's perspectives and the maintenance of a personal

journal of reflection. In analysing the data, the information obtained through these

various sources was compared to gauge reliability.

Content Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the interviewer. Observer comments

were included during the transcription. A constant comparative approach whose purpose

is to generate theory systematically by using coding and analytical procedures (Glaser &

Strauss, 1967) was used to identify similarities and differences in the perspectives of the

participants.

I performed a line-by-line analysis to identify categories in which to group the

data. As Berg (2007) recommends, during the coding process, I added comments and

theoretical notes as I recognised tentative emergent patterns and themes. The coding of

all transcripts was completed before formal analysis begins since, as Berg (2007) states,

"the most thorough analysis of the various concepts and categories will be best

accomplished after all the material has been coded" (p. 317).   I relied further on the

experience of Berg (2007) with his words of guidance that "as researchers move through

the coding process they begin to see the puzzle pieces come together to form a more

complete picture" (p. 311).

Once the data was organised and sorted, I recognised and interpreted the existing

patterns that emerged. The use of a comparative matrix assisted in the funnelling of

information and systematically narrowed and focused the meaning of the data. The grid

permitted comparisons of both informal and formal preparation of primary, secondary,

eastern and western school administrators in Hungary to be viewed in a clear manner. This systematic analytical induction method also helped to identify negative cases which are important to note since their omission seriously affects the credibility and validity of the findings. Strauss and Corbin (1998, cited in Patton, 2002, p. 454) state that by this stage, there is a transition from a descriptive to a conceptual mode of analysis.

Phenomena Recognition

At this point, the recognised commonalities and differences in each comparison group were synthesized to develop the phenomena of: (a) the informal and formal training and preparation received by educational leaders in Hungary; (b) variances in training and preparation for administrators in primary versus secondary schools; and (c) variances in training and preparation for administrators in the eastern versus western regions of the country.

Confidentiality and Ethics

This was a minimally invasive study as each step was completely transparent to all participants and there were no elements of deception. The letter of consent to participate in this study, which was signed by all participants, provided interviewees with the option of having their real names or pseudonyms used during transcription and in the final research report. In order to ensure confidentiality for those participants who wished to remain anonymous, I assigned pseudonyms which were not shared with any other person. As well, I transcribed all of the interviews myself and erased the recordings of the interviews once the transcriptions had been completed.

This study satisfied all ethical considerations though approval from the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) before participant solicitation began.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented background information supporting the use of qualitative research for this study. It also related that grounded theory was employed to build the theory and that phenomenological perspectives were used in establishing the final findings. Following this, the sources of data to be used in the research were described. The methods of participant selection were also detailed. These were followed by my personal position as the researcher, the data analysis methods and details regarding the care taken to ensure confidentiality and ethics in this study. Chapter four will present the results of the implementation of the methodology presented in chapter three.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the preparatory steps taken by current school directors in Hungary, assess their individual perceptions of preparedness and solicit their recommendations regarding optimal methods of training school administrators in this country. Twelve school principals, or directors as they are called in Hungary, were interviewed. As planned through purposeful sampling, six of the participants were from the western region of the country and six from the east. An additional subset was established during participant selection that yielded six principals representing each of the primary and secondary school levels. In this chapter, I share the findings from the interviews with the twelve Hungarians principals and recognise phenomena discovered during subset analysis. Official information from the Hungarian Department of Education and Culture was incorporated into this report of findings in situations where directors' replies to factual questions were inconsistent.

In order to collect information to address my query, the following questions were posed to each administrator as a framework for our discussion:

1.   a) What are the formal requirements to become an educational administrator in Hungary?

b) Are there any discrepancies between the formal preparatory requirements and what actually happens in practice? If so, what are they and under what circumstances do they occur?

2. What types of informal and formal administrative preparation exist for

prospective administrators?

> a) What administrative training or preparation was most beneficial to you and

> why?

> b) What administrative training or preparation was least beneficial to you and

> why?

3. What elements do you think need to be incorporated into an effective training and

preparation program?

> a) Issues/topics (content)

> b) How might these best be structured? (process)

These foundational questions were elaborated upon based on answers provided by the

administrators.

A detailed analysis of the coded transcripts produced clear themes in response to

my research questions. Further information from the Hungarian Public Education Law

provided further details and clarification in situations where the interviewees provides

varied responses to fact-based questions.

Formal Requirements to Become a School Director

An individual with aspirations to become a school principal should become

familiar with the prerequisite requirements of his/her potential employers. In Hungary,

prospective school directors must:

1. not have a criminal record;

2. have a minimum of five years teaching experience;

3. possess accreditation to teach at that level of school (primary or secondary);

4. submit a detailed application to the maintainer of the school; and,

5. have completed a special School Leaders' Training Program called the
   Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme (KOVP) (European Commission, 2008;
   Szudi, 2006)

In addition, the maintainer may add further requirements to a specific job posting. The initial two qualifications are straight-forward; however, the latter three are quite different from the standard North American system of school administrator selection and merit detailed explanation.

Appropriate Teaching Accreditation

In Hungary, there exists a tiered level of teacher training. Those wishing to teach primary school, from grades 1 to 8, study for three years at a Teachers' Training College and receive their Bachelor of Education degree. Individuals who desire to teach at secondary school, grades nine to twelve, enrol in a five year integrated course of study toward a Bachelor of Education and another Bachelor's degree corresponding with their areas of teaching specialty. Applicants with a college degree may apply only for directorships at primary schools while teachers with university degrees can apply for positions at either the primary or secondary level.

The Application Process

School directors in Hungary are mandated for a specific period of time. When a current director's cycle is almost complete or in a situation where a director resigns from his or her position, the maintainer must invite interested applicants to vie for the position. This posting may appear in a governmental educational bulletin and/or in the newspaper.

Each application consists of a personal resume and a ten to fifteen page pedagogical program outlining a proposed five year direction for the school. In this document, each applicant is to demonstrate that he or she has knowledge of the school's past and present as well as a vision for the future; taking into account the current school personnel, facilities, educational programming and outside factors. All applicants' programs are distributed to the teaching staff which is provided approximately one month to review the materials. After this time, each applicant verbally presents his or her program and plans for the next five years to the teachers who are provided with an opportunity to ask questions. A secret ballot vote is then conducted where the teachers indicate whether or not they accept this candidate and the program. All applicants also meet with the non-teaching staff, parent association and student government of the school who also vote on the individual but not on the pedagogical program.

The details of this process vary minimally from region to region and all school directors participating in this study were well versed on the process. One particularly helpful director from a secondary school in western Hungary provided the following succinct summary:

> A committee must be formed, whose task is to go to each member of the staff, to talk to them and to collect their opinions. These opinions are then put into a written form and are read out at the meeting. After that there might be some questions and answers at the meeting, or some additional remarks may be added. Then there is a vote whose results are recorded in the minutes. It is the minutes that actually record the meeting.

A percentage is stated. What percentage of the staff supports or does not

support the candidate and what percentage has abstained from voting and

it is given for each candidate individually. But it is only giving opinions.

This process is conducted for each applicant. Teachers may vote in support of more than

one applicant. They are basically saying "yes, I can accept this program and could work

with this person" or "no, I don't care for this person and/or the presented program."

The results of all the votes are provided to an education committee composed of eight to

ten politicians who discuss the candidates further and make a recommendation to the

maintainer.

This arduous process culminates with the maintainer who makes the final decision

and is not obliged to follow the indicated desires of the local stakeholders. As one

western director stated, "the problem is that in the case of the local government schools,

the local government has a right to veto, and this is paradox. It is not always that the

mandate will go to the one who is the choice of the teachers' board." During my

interviews, each principal was able to think of at least one example where the maintainer

used veto power to appoint a candidate who was not the recommended choice. As

another western interviewee stated, "the maintainer does not have to take this vote into

consideration and I could tell you examples from other schools and from other districts,

where it was actually neglected."

In fact, one of the western principals interviewed received her first appointment in

this manner. She shared that "(i)n the first time, was interesting. It was absolutely on

political basis, but it seems that my work of five years was showed its values and in the

second time, my support was 100% from everyone." It also appeared, based on the

interviews, that some people are able to accept receiving their appointments against the wishes of the majority of the staff while one primary school director from western Hungary felt strongly that if "one wants to cooperate with the staff – and I cannot imagine working in any other way – the support of the staff is important."

Exceptions

An exception to the process outlined above is granted when the incumbent director is within five years of retirement. Given that the mandatory age of retirement for Hungarian teachers is currently fifty-nine years of age, this means that directors who are fifty-four years old do not have to go through the application process. The maintainer has the authority to adjust this guideline and can extend the length of this pre-retirement grace period to a maximum of ten years.

School Leaders' Training Program

At the time of the interviews for this study, it was not yet mandatory for all newly appointed directors to complete the Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme but all of the interviewees were aware of the upcoming mandate. They reported official dates varying from 2008 to 2013 for its implementation; however, the official literature published by the Hungarian Department of Education and Culture states that this Program became an official requirement for Hungarian directors on January 1, 2010. Current school directors who have not yet completed it need to do so if they have intentions of reapplying for the position since, as a school director from western Hungary stated, "a headmaster's appointment is only valid for five years…so, when the appointment is over, she…will have to meet the requirements in the same way as the others." While they weren't uniformly certain of the effective date of implementation, all participants knew of the

impending law. Everybody has to finish the Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme if he or she would like to be a director. Prior to January 1, 2010, the Hungarian educational laws stated that applicants for a director's position who have completed the KOVP would be given precedence in the selection process.

The School Leaders' Training Program (Program) is studied by various teachers and school directors in different locations throughout Hungary. The curricula vary slightly but the fundamental components include strategic management, school finance, personnel development and management, educational law, leadership theory, conflict resolution, educational history, evaluation/quality control of an institution and pedagogical theory.

This is a two year program consisting of four terms with course content offered predominantly through distance education. There are scheduled group weekend retreats of varied frequency; from biweekly to bimonthly. Evaluation takes the form of tests, essays and bi-annual exams. There is a cumulative final exam at the end of the course.

While the majority of students in the KOVP are current or prospective school directors, the principals interviewed for this research indicated that some teachers enrolled in these studies do not have aspirations toward school administration. One western director said that she encourages her teachers to take this course as she feels "it is very important that my colleagues be well educated. They need to learn about the school and the teaching things. The salary is a little bit higher, too, I think 5000ft (approx $30 CAD) per month." While not having their sights currently set on a career as a school director, it is nonetheless believed that the added knowledge garnered from the Program

will lead teachers to have a broader and more profound perspective and understanding of the role and duties of the director and overall functioning of the school.

In conclusion, all of the participants in this study were aware of the fundamental requirements to become a school director in Hungary. They were knowledgeable in the details of the application and selection process and eager to share their personal stories and experiences.

Administrator Career Paths-Formal and Informal Training and Preparation

The directors who participated in this study followed various paths en route to their current positions. The proceeding sections will present details of the participants' individual training and preparation for the principalship. Delineation will be made between formal and informal training with an integrated comparison of preparation for directors in western and eastern Hungary and in primary and secondary schools.

Formal Training

Regarding formal training for school directors, the participants in this study spoke only of the School Leader's Training Program. Even though at the time of my interviews it was not yet mandatory for directors to have this training, all six of the principals from the western areas of Hungary had voluntarily completed this program; some up to fourteen years ago, while four of the six principals from the east had finished this extra training. The two who had not, one from the primary and one from the secondary level, were planning to begin within a year. The primary level director stated that owing to family commitments she was unable to take the course yet but planned to do so before her appointment expired. The director at the secondary level shared "I have just started here from the 1st of September (2007) and I must do this training. I will still have to

graduate. Not now, but from 2010 on. This first year will be too busy with work. Next year, then it will be compulsory for me to start." This director was one of the few who had an accurate understanding of the correct implementation date for the Program and knew that in order for him to complete the two year course by 2010, he would have to start in 2008.

Comparative data analysis revealed that five of the six western participants completed this training prior to becoming directors. The sixth became a director prior to the advent of the Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme but completed it at that time. In contrast, none of the eastern directors had completed it before receiving their administrative appointments. As previously noted, however, four of them have now completed the training.

Informal Preparation

The school directors who participated in this study had a wide range of informal preparation prior to obtaining their current positions. They had gained informal leadership experience through multiple prior assignments such as subject area department heads, program consultants and coordinators, union representatives, vice-directorships and co-operating teachers for teacher candidates.

While never serving as an official assistant, one director from a western Hungarian primary school was given many administrative jobs by her former director from whom she also learned "the work…for administrative duties and educational pedagogy programs." In addition, she had experience as a department head and union representative. Another participant from the west:

was the leading teacher in Hungarian grammar and literature. I had three elementary school classes, six to twelve years; I really liked that age group. I also had between eight to twelve college students who were future Hungarian teachers. They were practicing teachers in my class.

Half of the western directors had also been vice-directors where they had responsibilities for assigning teacher workloads, hiring staff, school finances, and the organisation of examinations and graduation ceremonies. As one western participant revealed:

> I was relatively young when I became a deputy headmaster and I was working with the same headmaster for fifteen years, and I followed him. So, he retired, did not apply again, and I applied. As a deputy headmaster, I had to deal with most of the important issues such as financial matters, organising competitions and examination, the tasks in connection with the matriculation exams and entrance exams, so I dare say I really did get experience during the fifteen years, and the school did not have any parts that I did not know.

Another from the west spoke of her experience in the following way:

> From my director, I learned how to organise a planning of teachers with classes *(teacher workloads)* and whom you should employ and how. My point of view is that everybody should teach what he likes. If somebody has a degree in History and Hungarian literature and grammar but likes History better, then I will not force him to teach Hungarian. If in a high school that has eight classes *(grades)* someone likes to teach younger kids because he finds the way to them better, then I will place him there. I pay

respect to the need of the teachers although my former leader, from whom I learned a lot and I am very grateful to him, did not take notice of this and there were conflicts because of this. So we also learn from the negative examples. We learn how we should not work. He was too rigorous and did not take notice of personal problems. It is very nice to look at the needs of the school and the children but you cannot neglect the problems of the teachers. They are people too.

These directors from the west also cited ongoing professional reading, attendance at conferences and participation in national and international committees as informal preparation for their current positions.

The six eastern principals had markedly less informal preparation than their western counterparts. In fact, three of them had no informal pedagogical preparation whatsoever. One of these eastern directors, who prior to her appointment had seen the director's job only through the eyes of a classroom teacher, had been overwhelmed at time by the position and felt:

> (i)t was practically impossible to live up to the expectations of headmaster as a simple teacher…it involves such far-reaching tasks that it is hard to follow. I could do it on a small scale but as the school was growing, I felt that I really needed special knowledge.

Realising the deficit in her knowledge, this director from a primary school in eastern Hungary proceeded to enrol in the School Leaders' Training Program during her second year in the position.

Another director from the east received informal practice for director's duties through work in the North American equivalent of a subject area department head. In her words:

> I was the leader of the working community. It means that I was leading other teachers. For example, when I was the leader of the Natural Sciences working community then I was helping the work of Geology, Physics and Biology teachers. I was for a while the leader of the district working community leader. Here, I was looking at the work of the headmasters of the schools.

A different eastern participant had garnered experience writing educational programming as a district consultant and holding summer professional development sessions for teachers in her district. This individual also held positions of subject area department head and leader of district-area department heads. She felt that she was able to make good use of the skills she learned through these assignments in her job as a school director. The third eastern participant who reported having informal preparation was a secondary director who had been the director of a high school dormitory. She felt:

> I came here with leading experience and that was a very good practice for me. I can say those four years that I have spent there *[in the dormitory]* were harder for me, but it was a time of learning. Then I have realised the management tasks and how to manage an institution."

There was one participant from a primary school in the east who did have some unique leadership experience; albeit not in the field of education. He is a consecrated priest and as such "the management of the parish was (his) task to do and the leading as well."

There was no notable variation with informal preparation between the primary and secondary level Hungarian directors; however, regional discrepancies were noted during the data analysis. The directors from west Hungary had a wider range of experience and longer periods of informal training to ready them for the director's post than those from eastern Hungary. Three of the western directors had held vice-director positions yet none of the eastern participants had this type of informal preparation.

The nature of the preparation received by the directors in eastern Hungary was primarily focussed on being a teacher leader or professional development facilitator for specific curriculum content areas. While these duties provided experience in leading small groups of teachers and organising in-services, they provided a narrow insight into the wide range of school directors' duties and responsibilities. In contrast, the pre-service preparation of the western directors contained elements such as hiring new teachers, working on the school budget and designating classes to be taught by individual teachers which provided real practice and insight into many aspects of the directorship.

Most Beneficial Training or Preparation

All of the Hungarian school directors who had completed the School Leader's Training Program found it to be a valuable experience and 80% of them indicated that it was the most valuable piece of training for their current jobs.   More specifically, this group included all four eastern directors who completed this training and four of the six western directors who had done the same; once again noting that the western directors had completed the School Leaders' Training Program before being named to this position and all of the eastern directors were trained after receiving the appointment.

It is significant to recall that the eastern participants had markedly less informal experience to familiarize themselves with the practical side of the job's duties and responsibilities prior to obtaining the position. Perhaps this contributed to the great preparatory value they found in the KOVP. When asked about the merits of the Program to her, one director from the east said:

> It was very useful. My opinion is that I would not let anybody to apply for a
> director's position without having done that training, but even a deputy *[vice
> principal]* or the leader of the working committee should need to make it. When I
> have done this training, I already had five or six years of practice behind me but it
> gave a system for my knowledge and there were leaks. Of course, to those I got
> the answers. I think that everybody starting in a job like this should take part on
> this training. Even for me, it would have been useful to have started my work with
> knowing these things, but at that time this training did not exist yet.

One principal who didn't have any informal preparation for the position simply stated "special training you must complete." Recognising that she faced a steeper learning curve at the beginning due to her lack of informal preparation, she added that "it is also a very good thing if one can become a headmaster after being a deputy headmaster or a head teacher." Another eastern director from a primary school gave the endorsement that "(i)n my opinion, everybody who wants to be a school director should possess the exam in public education leading."

There were two western participants who found the School Leader's Training to contain many useful components but did not cite it as the most beneficial element of their training. One of these individuals had been a vice director at a secondary school for an

extended period of time prior to becoming a director and therefore had the benefit of
years of on-the-job training. She felt that:

> you can learn the best as a vice director. I watched what the director did; the
> organisation of the school and that is a very good thing. I actually learned a lot on
> his side. I took part in many trainings but what you have to do day-by-day, that
> you can learn the best as a vice director.

The second of the two western directors in this category had been a director for 19
years and completed this Program with ten years of experience. He still found some
useful elements and felt that "such a course is always a good occasion to meet people you
have not met before; with different experiences and from different settlements" and has
"never regretted doing the course even though it was not compulsory." He believed that
this type of training is most beneficial for those who are preparing to enter the position,
recalling that "(w)hen I started it, I didn't know what I was undertaking and today it is
even more so for anyone who becomes a headmaster. That's why I think it is a good idea
that you have to complete this course." This sentiment of support for the need for pre-
emptive training through the School Leaders' Programs was echoed by all of the
directors.

While there was overall consensus regarding the positive value of the School
Leaders' Training Program, upon elaboration, the personal worth of various components
came to light. There were two clear themes that presented themselves from the analysis
of coded interview transcripts in response to the specific elements of the School Leaders'
Training Program that the directors found most beneficial: certain aspects of the

curricular content and the opportunities to dialogue and share experiences with people from various school levels and different regions of the country.

The directors found value in different curricular components of the School Leaders' Training Program. After listing educational law, finance and teacher evaluation as valuable elements of the Program, one western director from a primary school issued the simple concluding statement "I loved it." Another western participant talked about the new perspectives he gained through the Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme in the following words:

> Looking back at my training, I must admit that it has broadened my view in spite of the fact that I had been working as a leader for ten years *[as a vice director.]* My approach has become completely different. It helped me overcome everyday conflicts and problems. This so called 'helicopter-view;' you rise above the problem and look down at it from above…it was useful that there were leaders from all kinds of schools so it was wonderful to hear about the lives and problems of other schools; about how things work there.

The opportunity to learn about the most up-to date theories regarding pedagogy, child psychology, and effective leadership strategies were also valued. A director from a secondary school in the east found that she "learned the methods of leading and that was one most useful part of the training." A director from the western region of Hungary particularly appreciated learning techniques regarding public relations and marketing.

Eighty percent (8/10) of the participants who had completed the School Leaders' Training Program indicated that one of the things they appreciated the most was the

opportunity to learn more about and gain a better understanding into the somewhat convoluted and seemingly ever-changing Educational Laws in Hungary. One of the directors from a western primary school felt that "the law has not even come into force when it is already amended." She added, "(w)e have to go to the town hall to learn about new educational laws and it's terrible. Every month we have new educational laws from the government." This was a sentiment echoed by the other directors who also valued learning about how to interpret the laws in order to implement them effectively and explain them to staff and parents.

Another content area frequently recognised as beneficial by participants in the KOVP was financial matters pertaining to budgeting, particularly in relation to applying for grants which are relied upon heavily for supplementary funding in Hungarian schools.

The second, and most frequently mentioned, benefit of the School Leaders' Training Program was the clear appreciation for the networking opportunities that were afforded to the participants. All but one of the directors who had completed this Program talked about the value of learning in groups of people with shared interests and somewhat similar, yet unique, backgrounds. One individual from a primary school in eastern Hungary stated:

> I may repeat myself, but I consider the most useful thing the public-education leading course. The course was kept every weekend in Budapest, so we had to be residents at the courses. As a result of this, we could exchange experience and gain new experiences from each other. Furthermore, at that time I had made good friends and models at the same time of whom opinion I could ask every time I needed.

While this man valued the opportunity to dialogue with other directors when he completed this course in the early part of his career, a western principal who completed the Program after ten years of experience enjoyed the opportunity to gain insight into the perspectives of members of his heterogeneous group, which included directors and teachers from all levels, including kindergarten teachers.

The creation of mentor-mentee and peer-mentor relationships was also noted. Two of the directors for the west spoke of ongoing relationships with certain course instructors who they still feel comfortable calling for assistance, when necessary. Four others spoke of establishing cohort groups who still remain in touch and act as sounding boards to one another; sharing ideas and solutions to common dilemmas and approaches to sensitive topics. For example, a director from a primary school in western Hungary said that when faced with quandaries such as if:

> there is a teacher from the school I have to send away because he is not a good teacher and how do I solve it? What can I do if somebody didn't deal with a student of a lesson and the parents come to the school, how do I solve it?

she consults other directors with whom she bonded during their study in the School Leaders' Training Program. In addition, a secondary director from western Hungary shared these details regarding his experience:

> We began cooperating; which was not a common thing at that time. All the three of us became headmasters at a relatively young age and we had a demand for cooperating so that we could have a common strategy and to help one another. And ever since then we also have been members of the National Association of Training Schools which gives us an excellent opportunity to see the problems

other schools have to face, to share our views and ideas, and this is very important, indeed.

The interviewee who is also an instructor of the Program in his region held the quality of the Program in high regard. He has clearly been an integral part of the design team organising this rendition. He offered the following details of the collaborative course that he helps deliver:

> This is a good distance education system. In a semester, we meet with the colleagues three times. Two of these are whole day long consultations. We get the literature and say what should be learned and read and what they have to prepare for...and every semester there is a three day long training that I think is the best. There, we 'lock in" 100 people. We put them in groups so that they do not know each other and in a group there should be ones with different qualifications to see the vertical and horizontal organisation of public education and understand from where the child comes and where it should arrive. We work on projects and cooperative methods so we are not giving speeches but they are working.

This excerpt is markedly different form the comments or descriptions provided by many of the other participants as this director is the only one who talked about child development as part of the School Leaders' Training Program. Five others, including all four from the east who had completed the KOVP, spoke of students with challenging behaviours or the need to learn about child psychology but not of the child as a student who is the central focus of education.

When asked about the benefits of the School Leaders' Training Program, replies reflecting the personal connections that were established included a western primary school director who said "it was very good and sometimes we had meetings with the other directors and we discussed the problems" and an eastern secondary school principal who appreciated hearing about "other leaders' work with a different eye; how they are working, what (he) would do the same way, what (he) would not." These replies valuing the opportunity for discussion demonstrate congruence with effective adult learning strategies that were discussed in the literature review for this study.

Learning alongside their peers yielded meaningful discussions and rich learning opportunities. A primary school director from western Hungary found it was "very useful that there were leaders from all kinds of schools so it was a wonderful opportunity to hear about the lives and problems of other schools; about how things work there." The directors were able to self-direct their learning during these dialogues to target personal areas of need and expand their repertoire of strategies to be used for tackling future dilemmas. The high significance placed on the opportunity to dialogue and learn collaboratively was common to directors at all levels from all regions of Hungary.

In conclusion, the two themes that came to light regarding the areas of the Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme that participants found most beneficial were the instruction of pertinent curricular topics such as educational law, school finance and leadership strategies and invaluable collaborative networking opportunities afforded to participants. Comments were overwhelmingly positive regarding the extensive curriculum. It was evident throughout the interviews that the directors felt their jobs to be quite intense and fraught with enormous, growing responsibility. The opportunity for

discussion with others who truly understand the position was voiced by eight of the ten

directors who had completed the Programme.

Least Beneficial Training or Preparation

When the discussion turned to less beneficial components of the School Leaders'

Training Program, the directors spoke of concerns regarding content and course delivery.

Most directors felt that the curricula were comprehensive and relevant. One of the areas

that was singled out by two western directors as redundant was educational history. One

director put it this way: "Historical theory was not necessary. On the one hand, you

already knew most of it from your previous education; on the other hand, you cannot

profit much from it." Another director from the west felt that studying psychology and

conflict management wasn't beneficial. In his opinion, it was inauthentic to generalise in

these areas "because these things are always related to particular individuals involved in

the situation." These are both, however, areas specifically mentioned by five other

directors as being valuable.

Notably more comments were made about the delivery and evaluation methods

used in the Program than about curricular content. There were numerous tests and four

examinations to be completed during the course of the Program and there was a feeling

that this is an ineffective method for long term retention of material. According to one

western director, "(w)hen we went for the exam everyone was very exciting and we

learned five or ten tests and then we forgot it."

In addition to concerns about the assessment tools employed, directors spoke of

the difficulties posed by the distance education format of the Program. In fact, one of the

eastern directors identified this as the reason she has not yet started the Program. The

opinion of another eastern director was that "(t)his long distance training has disadvantages. They are meeting rarely and they get six books to learn. There are not many classes and I was looking for a more practical education." While three directors found this to be a negative aspect of the course, it should be mentioned that an equal number thought it was a positive feature since it brought people together in a focused environment for collaborative study. One of the participants, who is also a teacher in the School Leaders' Training Program, is a proponent of the format. He said that "you do not need a cooperative thing to learn law regulations. Those you have to read." Instructors decide which content areas are conducive to being learned from books and which are better suited to group sessions. Invariably, the School Leaders' Training Program has different faces dependent upon where a director studies the course and the instructor assigned to it.

Elements of program delivery that were noted by five directors as needing improvement were the quality of lecturers and the sequencing of courses. These directors voiced that situations where there were multiple instructors led to disjointed content delivery and the assessment format further magnified the breaks in learning. One eastern participant who was satisfied with the content but concerned with the flow of the Program believed:

> it is complex; it is complete. It provides information about all the aspects of managing a school: planning, organising, finances, education programmes, etc. Everything is included but it is hard to see everything as a whole. One lecturer gives his lectures, we take the exam and then there comes another lecturer who

gives his lectures and so on. So it is rather a mass of information. The art is to

make it all work in practice.

The potential for missing valuable learning was also addressed through a concern

regarding the lack of opportunity to ask questions from instructors who simply arrive,

give their presentations and leave immediately following. All four of the eastern

directors spoke of this disjointed program delivery.

The credibility of some instructors was also called into question by six

participants. When discussing his concern, a director from western Hungary said:

He could be a very good lecturer but it is very important to 'live' the situations. I

can tell you from my own experience and from other colleagues' experience as

well, that the situations we have to cope with today are completely different from

those ten years ago. Things have changed a great deal.

Once more, all four eastern directors who had completed the School Leaders' Training

Program were among those who felt that, at times, their instructors were out of touch

with the current realities facing school administrators as were, therefore, unable to

provide them with relevant presentations and topics for discussion. The directors

reported that in some cases, private companies are hired to run pedagogical trainings.

They felt particular dissatisfaction with these sessions. A primary school director from

western Hungary thought:

These trainings should be filtered better. The people who do these trainings, it is

a good money earning from them but they want to get over it fast. It does not

give you anything. Today, usually the supplementary trainings have good quality

but there are bad ones among then, too. I would not let private persons or

companies to organize or run supplementary pedagogy trainings. The problem is

that the state takes responsibility of them but gives out a lot to other people and on

the bad quality of those you can see. If the public education is the main role of

the state, then they should take responsibility for these professionals.

Overall, the directors had less criticism than praise for the School Leaders' Program. The

relative value of a few curricular components was called into question, but it is should be

noted that only directors from the western regions of Hungary found irrelevance in any

parts of the course content. More often than content, it was the delivery of the material

that was subject to criticism as there were concerns regarding long lasting retention of

knowledge tested through written examinations and the quality of presentation of the

material. The lack of continuity among sessions and perceived ineffectiveness of some

instructors raised serious concerns, predominantly from the eastern directors who relied

heavily on the KOVP to prepare them for the demands of their positions.

What Should be Included

In addition to discussions pertaining to elements of the School Leaders' Training

Program that were less beneficial to the participants, all directors were asked to highlight

elements which would be useful to add to the curriculum and suggest areas of

improvement to current practice. There were a few suggestions regarding having greater

emphasis on certain areas of curricular content, but the prevailing theme in the responses

to this question was the strong desire for more practical components to the School

Leaders' Training Program.

Since a comprehensive central curriculum does not exist in Hungary, each

school must write its own school 'program' (local syllabus) specifying what will be

taught in each grade. This is a complex task that falls on the shoulders of the director and

is shared with the faculty during the director selection process. Three of the interviewees

indicated that there should be considerable time spent outlining the procedures to follow

when writing a school program. Simply being given the assignment of writing a program

does not provide enough guidance to an individual who does not have any educational

leading experience. Two directors suggested that it would be beneficial to take a look at

former programs as part of the School Leader's Training Program.

A similar perspective on learning from effective models was given by one of the

eastern directors who underscored the importance of learning budgeting and school

finance. She felt frustration when she "had to do a budget, but nobody told *[me]* how, just

to make a document, but nobody told *[me]* how." She indicated that the opportunity to

examine some exemplars would be a useful component in the preparation of school

directors. Budgeting and financial concerns were addressed by ten of the twelve directors

in this study.

Hungarian schools nation-wide continue to suffer funding cuts and therefore, the

participants recognised that it is a necessary skill for Hungarian directors to have

competency in writing sound grant applications. Like making a budget or writing a

pedagogical curriculum for all grades in an entire school, grant writing is not an inherent

skill and directors felt that explicit instruction on this topic should be included in their

prescribed learning program. A director from eastern Hungary expressed the pressure of

obtaining external funding in the following way:

> A big difficulty that we have is that the financing and possibilities of funds we
>
> can only obtain through application…it is hard work for us to find them and to

apply. This is another professional (skill) that should be learned but we are

learning by doing again because we learn as we prepare the application.

While financial concerns were raised by all of the eastern principals, four of the six

western participants also chimed in on this topic; feeling that they should have learned

more about financial issues.

During the interviews, it was revealed that Hungarian schools are facing similar

dilemmas as North American schools regarding increased liabilities. One director shared

his reasoning for being particularly concerned about this since school directors are

certified teachers but:

> are neither economists nor lawyers, not safety experts; however, (we) must have
> some knowledge of all these topics…if they say it is a leader's responsibility.
> Either you do them yourself or you put someone else in charge but you should
> always know that they are your responsibility.

He felt that the School Leaders' Training Program should include instruction on this topic

since Hungarian directors can be held personally liable and issued fines for legal

infractions.

This director from a secondary school in western Hungary was not the only one to

raise this issue. Eight of the ten directors who had completed the School Leaders'

Training Programme felt that the content regarding legal regulations, including labour

and education law, was among the most beneficial to them; yet nine of the twelve

directors interviewed for this study mentioned the need for increased knowledge in this

domain. Their experiences have confirmed the importance of this issue and recognise the

practical importance of remaining current with the nation's laws. This group also

included a director from a primary school in eastern Hungary who felt that "practically you have to be a lawyer and a manager at the same time to fulfill effectively the post of director." This aligns with the previously stated comments regarding the rapid rate of changes to laws in Hungary. These directors indicated being very pleased that the KOVP taught them about relevant legal matters; however, it is suggested that the curriculum be regularly updated to reflect relevant new legislation.

Another clear theme that presented itself during the interviews was a strong call to incorporate more practical elements into the School Leaders' Training Program. Specific examples of what the directors would like to see in the delivery of the Program included having instructors who are exemplary directors, providing opportunities to brainstorm solutions to challenges faced by school directors and the inclusion of a practicum where participants visit schools and have the opportunity to shadow an experienced director.

The suggestion of having instructors with first-hand knowledge of the challenges facing current Hungarian schools was raised in six interviews. One western director expressed:

> I would rather have people with practical experience rather than theoretical experts who only see schools when they go there to give lectures. I think a lot more practicing headmasters should be involved; those who have already completed the course and who have good qualities to give lectures, and they could give examples from their practice for each situation and give practical advice to those who have not done this kinds of work before.

The value placed on problem-solving in a collaborative environment was also addressed. A participant from western Hungary stated:

I would make the training more practical. This (current program) is only good for

a theoretical background, as far as the structure of a school or the theory of

education is concerned, and whatever is worth remembering from the history of

education. One could find all those things in the course, but it should be made

more practical, and I think it would be quite important. We could take a daily

problem or situation to start with and take a look at it; what the legal background

of the issue is, what our opportunities are and how far we can go, what can be

done -usually nothing, but it does not matter- and in what ways we can handle the

situation. Let us mention some possible solutions, let's see how the lecturer with

experience sees things, and he could tell the students at the end how he sees

things, and in this way it would be easier for the students to give their opinions. In

my opinion, the whole thing could be made up of these little but important details.

The opportunity to dialogue with others who grapple with these same questions was

deemed as a highly valuable component that is currently lacking from the School

Leaders' Program.

A third practical component that ten directors felt should be incorporated into the

Program is an on-site practicum that affords the opportunity to work alongside a veteran

director and gain insight into daily pace and responsibilities of the position. A director

from a primary school in western Hungary felt the Program should:

have practical training in another school which is working well. To have an

insight into another institution to see how it is working. This is what I am missing

from the Public Education Management training. There is some – some minimal –

practical training. We have to go to Balatonfüred for two weekends. It is rather

exhausting, lectures, lectures and lectures, some situational exercises, but real life

is different; so, practice in the school. It is a very good thing if one can become a

headmaster after being a deputy headmaster or a head teacher. He or she will

learn things step by step. So I am missing the practical training. We would need

more practical training.

As one western interviewee stated, the opportunity to work alongside experienced

directors would allow novices occasion to "discuss together with the director to see how

do they work and what do they do every day and what kind of law is important and what

kind of rules are important." This interviewee reflected: "Sometimes I get good ideas

from other directors." This is, once again, in accordance with the literature regarding

effective adult learning modalities which support opportunities for discussion, inquiry

and practical application of theory (Murphy & Hallinger, 1987).

In conclusion, the Hungarian directors shared specific ideas for improvement to

the current School Leaders' Training Program. They felt a need for more targeted

instruction in curricular areas such as grant application writing, budgeting, financial and

current legal matters. While most of the suggestions regarding improvement to the

Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme were uniformly raised among the subsets analysed in the

study, it was predominately the directors from the eastern regions of the country who

proposed increased attention be paid to the preparation of grant applications.   The

supplemental income from these grants is likely necessitated by additional stresses due to

the low socio-economic levels in the eastern region of Hungary.

The most prevalent need identified by all of the Hungarian directors was an

increase in meaningful practical components to the School Leaders' Training Program.

They cited their desire for experienced instructors who could offer credible advice regarding current challenges faced by directors and the incorporation of a practical component that would involve beginners learning through real situation in schools alongside seasoned veterans

Conclusion

This chapter reported the findings of this research study based on the interviews with twelve school directors in Hungary; six from the eastern region of the country and six from the west as well as subgroups of six primary and six secondary directors from each of the geographical zones. An analysis of the replies to the research questions was presented and themes were identified. The directors' responses to factual questions were supplemented by official information from the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture which issues all educational laws in Hungary.

Chapter five will provide a summary and findings of the entire project will be gleaned from the data analysis. The conclusions drawn in this chapter will lead to implications for theory, practice and research.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Implications

Introduction

The twelve interviews with Hungarian school directors provided answers to the targeted questions of the research and provoked ideas for further exploration. This chapter provides a summary of the findings from the entire study and outlines implications for theory, practice and research based on the conclusions drawn from the responses and themes identified through data analysis.

Summary of Findings

Data analysis of the interview transcripts and official literature provided clear answers to the research questions. The responses from the Hungarian directors led to the recognition of necessary requirements to become a Hungarian school director, insight into various pre-service forms of training and preparation, common elements that are found to be beneficial and others thought to be less worthwhile in their current School Leaders' Training Program. In addition, it was discovered that directors from schools at all levels throughout the country uniformly value the opportunity to participate in training designed to prepare school directors and wish to have certain components added to enhance their pre-service Program.

In addition, the results of this study address a concern raised in the literature review regarding the lack of research into educational leadership programs from around the world and especially from countries other than Canada, the USA and Australia by adding information on the Hungarian process.

Response Question One

The first question in the interviews sought to determine the official requirements to become a school director in Hungary. It was learned that an applicant for this position must have a clear criminal record, a minimum five years of teaching experience, possess accreditation to teach at the level of school (primary or secondary) to which s/he is applying, submit a detailed application to the maintainer of the school and have completed a special School Leaders' Training Program called the Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme (KOVP). The last requirement was newly implemented on January 1, 2010. At the time that the interviews were conducted, ten of the twelve directors had voluntarily completed the course. An exemption to these requirements is provided to directors who are within five years of retirement age at the completion of their current contract. The maintainer has the latitude to extend this grace period to a maximum of ten years.

With this mandatory school principal certification process, Hungary joins a growing number of countries world-wide recognising the need for pre-service training in this profession and acknowledges the call from research that obligatory school principal training programs are essential to student success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Roberts, 2008)

Response to Question Two

In response to the second question inquiring about each director's informal preparation, it was noted that only three of the six eastern directors had any informal educational preparation while all six of the western directors had some type of informal pre-service introduction to the job requirements. In addition, the western directors benefited from broader exposure to multiple elements of the job. For example, the list of

informal preparation for western directors included roles as co-operating teachers for teacher candidates, responsibilities for assigning teacher workloads, hiring staff, school finances, the organisation of examinations and graduation ceremonies, ongoing professional reading, attendance at conferences, participation in national and international committees, and long time vice-director positions. In contrast, eastern directors had markedly less preparation in both quantity and diversity such as facilitating summer professional development sessions, acting as subject area department heads, program consultants, coordinators and union representatives.

The lack of informal preparation in eastern Hungary raises concerns since these directors step into their roles without a concrete sense of the vast responsibilities of the position. It is possible that while the new director acclimatises, certain aspects of the school such as staff moral and student success might suffer. Schools such as this may also have difficulties in retaining directors who feel overwhelmed by the unexpected demands of the job. Evidently, frequent turnover in directors has a negative impact on the school environment.

Regarding formal training for the directorship, the participants spoke uniquely of the School Leaders' Training Program. The pre-service completion of this Program was a newly added requirement that became mandatory on January 1, 2010; after these interviews were conducted. With newly implemented mandatory training, it is no longer possible for individuals to become directors without any preparation; however, with the lack of practical aspects to the current training regime, new directors without informal preparation are still less prepared than their contemporaries who have had the benefit of sampling various aspects of the position.

Since completion of the School Leaders' Training Program is now compulsory in Hungary, new directors from all parts of the country will have this introductory exposure to the position but other forms of informal preparation would provide added knowledge and experience that might reduce the time needed to adapt to the job. The application of one of the research recommendations that well designed mentoring programs be implemented to facilitate successful transitioning into the position would be beneficial to all new directors but particularly to these eastern directors who feel secluded and unprepared for their new jobs.

Ten of the twelve directors who participated in this study had completed the Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme. This included all six of the western directors and four of the eastern directors. All of them spoke positively about the experience with eight of the ten citing it as the most beneficial training for the position. The two directors who had not yet completed the Program were both from eastern Hungary. The timing of registration in the KOVP is noteworthy. Five of the six western directors completed the Program before becoming a director yet all of the eastern directors embarked upon these studies when they were already in the position. The training did not exist when the sixth western director received his appointment but he did complete the programs shortly after its inception.

Understandably, the individuals found relative personal benefit from particular areas of the training. The elements that came to light as most valuable were the opportunity for discussion with their peers and study of the broad curriculum. The first theme that appeared in response to this question was the appreciation of the chance to dialogue and create a network with other people in the same profession. The Hungarian

directors were very positive, welcoming people but they clearly felt their jobs to be increasingly demanding and stressful. They appreciated the time to talk with others who truly understood their daily challenges and could offer support and credible suggestions. These sentiments are consistent with the research regarding elements that should be included in school leader training programs.

During analysis of the transcripts, it became evident that the eastern directors had greater difficulty at the beginning of their careers owing to a lack of preparation and found their learning from the KOVP to be a lifeline that provided answers to a number of their questions. The opportunity to network with other directors may also have been particularly appreciated since there are less settlements and therefore greater distances between schools in the eastern part of Hungary which is not conducive to incidental encounters with other directors. Compounding this challenge may be the lack of funds in this area of the country to finance regular directors' meetings that were mentioned in some of the interviews with western directors.

Given that only 25% of the participants had been vice-directors, they certainly appreciated exposure to a comprehensive list of job-related knowledge including educational law, finance staff evaluation, conflict resolution, effective leadership strategies, child psychology, best pedagogical practices, public relations and marketing.

When queried regarding elements of training or preparation that were not beneficial, one variable and one consistent theme came to light. A few directors from the west suggested that educational history, psychology and conflict resolution were unnecessary elements to study but there was a greater number of directors who specifically referred to these as worthwhile topics of study.

Despite the discrepancy in opinion regarding these curricular elements, consensus was evident with respect to the directors' dissatisfaction with the assessment, specific delivery methods and certain instructors. The assessment format of tests and examinations was not favoured as some felt it led to short-term memorization and regurgitation that did not yield practical long term benefits. The directors deemed course content presented in a stand-and-lecture format ineffective. They commented on the missed learning opportunities to ask questions and probe certain topics for elaboration. This sentiment is consistent with effective adult learning theory as well which underscores the need for adults to personalize and self-direct their learning (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987).

The eastern directors, who were evidently less prepared for a director's tasks, valued the comprehensive curriculum and had strong criticism of jagged course delivery, poor instruction and the lack of a practical component; all of which prevented them from becoming better equipped to meet their job demands. The criticism regarding irrelevant curriculum, unqualified instructors and weak delivery methods parallel those from existing administrator training programs in other countries (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Levine, 2005).

Response to Question Three

As a follow-up to less desirable elements of the School Leaders' Training Program, the directors were asked to suggest components that should be included. Their responses followed the previously established themes of importance: curriculum and course delivery. While overall satisfied with the curricular matter, participants felt an increased emphasis should be placed in the areas of writing grant applications, school

finance and educational law. These topics of importance to Hungarian directors suit their

situated needs but differ from those that school principals in other countries would find

valuable. This serves as a reminder that effective school leadership training programs

must be designed to serve their local audiences.

Regarding course delivery, the directors spoke in unison for their desire to have a

practical piece incorporated into the delivery of the Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme and

the need for credible instructors who were up-to-date with the current scope of school

directors' responsibilities. They suggested current successful directors as prime

candidates for this role. The opportunity for special pre-service training was identified as

extremely useful by the Hungarian directors, particularly in small schools that do not

have vice directors since the opportunity for informal preparation is limited in these

situations. The clearly stated desire of Hungarian directors to have a practical component

as part of their training program aligns with suggested reforms in many administrator

preparation programs and follows the research grounded in effective adult learning

strategies (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987). One proposed format

included time to discuss specific situations and resolutions in class and then transfer this

theoretical knowledge to an in-school situation where the students would have the

opportunity to work with and observe an experienced director. The second half of this

suggestion is in concert with the position of Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) who assert

that "learning and attitude shifts by adults are likely to be promoted by programs

that…provide strong content and field experiences in leadership preparation that are

intellectually challenging and offer comprehensive, coherent, and relevant experiences

and high-quality internships" (p. 17-18). Throughout the literature research for this study,

training programs with elaborate internships and quality instructors are lauded for their effective design while those without meaningful practical components are criticised for the omission of this component (Levine,2005; Huber & West, 2002; Mulford, 2003; Murphy, 2006).

A coincidental finding from this research was uncovered through the identification of a prevalent theme in the responses to the third question. At times, questions had to be re-worded to help the participants understand their true intent. This happened a few times with the question that asked, "What should be included in the KOV programme?" When participants provided responses such as 'what is in the KOV' or 'what I just told you' or 'all of this,' I rephrased the question to ask, "what would be helpful for someone to know" or "what would you recommend to a colleague who approached you looking for advice on good ways to prepare to become a school director?" The primary response from directors contained a perceptible degree of astonishment that a teacher would be so bold as to self-select for candidacy as a school director. This falls loosely in line with the support for recruitment as opposed to open registration in training programs. While there aren't specific selection criteria in place for participation in the School Leader's Training Program, most often Hungarian directors identify colleagues with strong leadership qualities and invite them to pursue an administrative path.

Implications for Theory

The findings in this research study support many elements of current theory regarding effective school administrator training and preparation. Based on their individual comments and the 100% support from the Hungarian directors of their School

Leaders' Training Program, this study supports the theory of necessary mandatory school administrator training.

The literature and research related to certain weaknesses in current administrator training programs are also reinforced by the findings of this study. The Hungarian directors spoke of dissatisfaction with weak instructors and course delivery methods, incoherent course sequencing, and inadequate clinical instruction; all of which are criticisms found in current research into the ineffective nature of school leader preparation programs.

Implications for Practice

There are five implications for practice that can be derived from the findings in this study. The conclusions support the need to facilitate the growth of aspiring directors while providing direction for their pre-service preparation. Aspiring administrators should be encouraged to proactively assume various informal leadership roles within their current positions and to complete the Közoktatási Vezetõ Programme to enhance their informal preparatory experiences and as a vital preparatory step for their intended future positions.

The second implication for practice encourages those assessing the efficacy of the current Program to use the findings of the study as guidance for future revisions. The common themes that were identified based on first-hand feedback from participants who have had the opportunity to apply their learning in a real setting provide authentic evaluative feedback and direction for effective reforms. The timing of the research is ideal since the mandatory program is still in its infancy and it is likely that there has been limited external research conducted to gage its effectiveness. A review would be in order

and should be conducted to ensure that school directors are being successfully prepared to face their diverse responsibilities.

Curricular content directed at preparing directors for particular environments is the third implication for practice. Some countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, recognise the diverse needs of school communities and provide targeting training for directors of specific types of schools; ie parochial, nursery, rural or urban communities. Differences in the challenges faced by eastern and western Hungarian directors were revealed during the data analysis. It would be beneficial for the Hungarian School Leaders' Training Program to incorporate some elements to specifically prepare directors dependent upon their situational needs.

The fourth implication for practice involves purposeful selection of candidates for leadership training. Formalised recruitment would strengthen the administrative corps in Hungary. While useful in all regions, sustained, targeted recruitment of candidates with natural leadership characteristics would particularly assist eastern schools by providing them with well-trained, competent and knowledgeable leaders.

A fifth implication for practice involves a shift in mindset regarding the role and responsibilities of Hungarian school directors. It is recommended that current school administrators, instructors of courses in the School Leaders' training program and representatives from the Ministry of Education and Culture attend international conferences and read about principals as curricular and pedagogical leaders in their schools in order to expand their primarily managerial positions and become leaders of change and school reform.

Implications for Research

This introductory research into educational leadership formation in Hungary uncovered four additional domains for further study. First, further research regarding the progressive development of the Hungarian School Leaders' Training Program would be worthwhile to see if any of the improvements recommended by the participants in this study were also identified by the organisers of the Program, to follow its future satisfaction rating and monitor the effectiveness of any implemented changes. Research comparing the development of the Hungarian program with the reforms initiated in other countries would be interesting as well to see if they follow parallel, convergent or divergent paths.

Second, since the Hungarian directors would like to see a practical component incorporated into the KOVP, research into school administrator training programs that incorporate effective practical training would be beneficial as a base on which to model their own program.

The third topic for further research stems from the eastern Hungarian directors particular dissatisfaction with the quality of their instructors and choppy flow of the course while studying in the School Leaders' Training Program. It would be valuable to conduct further research into the unique needs of the eastern directors and whether there are other inequities in the leaders' training and resulting student education provided in various parts of Hungary. If differences are recognised, identification of locally applicable content could be pursued.

This study used subgroups organised by geography and school level. The findings showed that the school level did not impact the training levels of the directors but the

location of the school did have an effect. It seemed that the more secluded schools in eastern Hungary had directors with the least amount or opportunity for preparation. The fourth suggestion for further investigation is to conduct research to examine if the dependant variable of settlement size impacts directors' formal and informal pre-service preparation and training.

Questions for Further Study

Reflection upon the topic and results of this study has led to three areas worthy of subsequent questioning. First, given that experienced directors also found that they were able to expand their knowledge and gain new perspectives through the School Leaders' Training, would it be logical to have a the program composed of two phases; one to be completed prior to becoming a director and the second phase as a course of study for newly appointed directors in, for example, their second year of service?

The second topic that yields unanswered questions is the impact of European Union standards on its member nations. The heavily managerial nature of a Hungarian school director's job became evident during the interviews and analysis of the transcripts. Hungarian directors seem to be somewhere on the continuum between survival and mastering managerial tasks and student behaviour concerns. The directors spoke predominantly about administrative responsibilities such as school finance and law. A few talked about developing staff potential and the well being of their teachers. However, only one director spoke of developing student potential.

There was a notable lack of comments regarding being instructional leaders and fostering student learning. In fact, a director from a primary school in eastern Hungary commented that pedagogy has little to do with a director's role. Would there be a forced

paradigm shift in the advent of school administrator training program qualification standards to be upheld by all members of the European Union? Would this direct the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture to look past the managerial responsibilities of the school director and focus more on the child as the central priority of all educational practitioners, including the school director? What is the European Union's position regarding school leadership and credentials for school directors?

After focussing the majority of this research on educational systems in other countries, the third question returns us to Canada. This study led to the discovery of yet another country that has formalised the preparation of school principals. With growing recognition and research to support the value and necessity of such programs, will additional Canadian provinces follow suit?

Conclusion

This research was conducted prior to the implementation of a significant change to school director training in Hungary. The twelve participants in the study represented a heterogeneous group of directors from primary and secondary schools throughout the country. The majority of the interviewees had voluntarily completed the School Leaders' Training Program and provided personal critiques of their experiences. Their feedback was very closely aligned with the existing research concerning criticisms of some current administrator preparation programs and descriptions of effective school leader training programs. The opinions of all twelve directors regarding the elements they felt should be included in a successful training program were also closely tied to the research.

Many of the needs identified by the Hungarian directors are in-line with the suggestions from the review of literature from Canada, the United States and the United

Kingdom. Based on the similarities, it can be extrapolated that school leaders worldwide have parallel pre-service preparation needs. While the specific curricular content will and should be unique to meet the needs of the population to be served, the structure of successful school leader training programs should recruit master teachers with strong leadership potential and employ qualified instructors who follow a well laid out, locally relevant curriculum that includes opportunities for participant dialogue and contains a practicum component that sees future school administrators putting theory into practice during a internship under the guidance of an experienced mentor.

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