

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICUM COURSE IN THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP/ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

By

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“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Proverbs 9:9-11). I would like to dedicate this effort to the Lord and to say thank you to Jesus Christ, my source of strength and my refuge. Without His Grace and Mercy, I would not have been able to do this. I would also like to dedicate this to my wife, my best friend, and to my children. I am blessed more than I know and I appreciate the support and encouragement I have gotten from each of them along the way. Finally, I would like to dedicate this to my parents, the first educators in my life. Thank you all for your continued support.”

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I explored the overall efficacy of the Master of Science in Educational Leadership/Administration (MSEL/A) program at Florida State University (FSU), by examining the introductory course, Practicum in Educational Leadership (the Practicum), as well as the final assessment, the student e-portfolio. The MSEL/A at FSU is an educational leadership program intended to prepare students to pass the Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE) and to become school administrators in the Florida public education system. Since 2004, the program has undergone change, first becoming a blended or hybrid program, then moving completely online in 2007. The Practicum is the first course taken in the overall MSEL/A program and is made up of several components, including the Discussion Board, the Leadership Development Plan, FELE preparation, and the Mentor Journals. Overall student achievement is evidenced by the collected works found in the online portfolio at the end of the program. The practicum course, as is the overall MSEL/A program, is a fully integrated on-line course using Blackboard for group discussion postings and assignment submissions. Other than a pre-semester on-campus orientation, students interact with each other and the instructor fully at a distance using internet and/or phone. This study included a content analysis using a mixed methods approach. Surveys and interviews were used for a more in-depth analysis of content. Descriptive statistics were used to collect demographic data.

CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Master of Science in Educational Leadership/Administration (MSEL/A) program at Florida State University (FSU) is an educational leadership program intended to prepare students to pass the Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE) and to become school administrators in the Florida public education system. The FSU program is recognized as a quality program by the State of Florida and works in conjunction with the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) to train, equip, and certify students to become school leaders in an environment of accountability and technology. Since 2004, the program has undergone an institutional change, first becoming a blended program, meeting face-to-face, yet submitting assignments online; then, eventually, moving to a completely online delivery format. Throughout these changes in content delivery methods, the curriculum has been changed to reflect alignment with state standards in educational leadership.

The first course that each cohort of students takes in the MSEL/A program is the Practicum in Educational Leadership. The Practicum introduces students to the leadership standards, competencies, and skills that the FLDOE expects school leaders to know and have, as well as preparing them for success on the FELE. By the end of the course, students are expected to have a plan of action for their continued growth in the field of educational leadership, to master certain critical skills necessary for leading schools, and to establish a mentor in the field that will work with them throughout the length of the MSEL/A program and beyond. Lessons learned and processes established in the Practicum are designed to guide students through to completion of the MSEL/A at FSU and to success as school leaders.

Recent changes to the Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) have also brought on changes to the content of the practicum. In exploring how to best align the course with state expectations, the question arose as to how successful the course, and the program it introduces, has been in the past. This study was an exploration of the recent history of the Practicum course and its efficacy in helping students become educational leaders. I examined past semesters of the online version of the Practicum to determine who takes the course, what they know when they enter, how well the course design helps them meet the course objectives, and what they have learned by the end of the overall program. For the post-program analysis, I explored the e-portfolios available and compared them with data collected from the student work performed in the practicum. For full disclosure, I have been the online class mentor (graduate/ teaching assistant) for the current and most recent semesters, although my research was not limited to the semesters of my involvement with the course.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how well the practicum prepares educational leaders for Florida schools. I looked at the semesters of Fall 2008 through Fall 2012, as these students would now all be finished with the practicum (a total of thirteen semesters) and many would have had opportunity to take the FELE. The study was conducted at the suggestion of Dr. Judith Irvin and in support of Dr. Rhonda Blackwell-Flanagan, lead developers of the MSEL/A program, in an effort to determine its overall success.

The original program was a fully face-to-face program designed to meet the state standards in place as early as 1989, when the program was recognized for its “innovative restructuring efforts and its collaboration with local Florida school districts” (EDA History and Mission, 2008, p. 6). New Florida Principal Standards were “presented to the State Board of Education for

consideration for adoption into State Board Rule on November 15, 2011” (FLDOE: FPLS, n.d.). Since then, revisions have taken place on course assignments in the Practicum to align to the new standards. The overall approach and curriculum design have stayed basically the same, with some adjustments in assignments in various semesters.

The changes made to the course, however, also brought a new focus on the course and its efficacy in preparing students for the two year program that it introduces; success on the end product, the e-portfolio; and a career in educational leadership. In this study, I analyzed the content of the course for the thirteen semesters covering the practicum starts and portfolio finishes. This time period covered the time since the last major change, an institutional change to a fully integrated online program, but stopping just short of the newest change, which includes adjustments in the curriculum to align to the new state standards.

Research Question

According to Sanders, “Education and training programs are evaluated in order to determine their quality and gain direction for improving them” (1994, p. 1). Although the Practicum has gone through significant changes in some areas, its overall purpose, and its overall functionality, has remained unchanged. Is it working? Are students prepared to pass the FELE and become educational leaders? The curriculum in the practicum should be geared toward helping students to gain critical skills and meeting course objectives without superfluous activities, or “busy work,” as most students are working adults who are already in the field of education and, thus, whose time is at a premium. Students should master the skills presented to them in the course and be prepared for the following phases of the overall MSEL/A program.

The question addressed by the research was how well the practicum at FSU is fulfilling its purpose of preparing students for the overall MSEL/A program; the FELE; and thus eventually,

to become administrators for schools, specifically in Florida. The research question for this study explored three areas of interest: Student perception of growth through the practicum; student perception of growth by the end of the program; and student satisfaction with the learning experience in the program. The overarching research question included the following questions:

- Are there any discrepancies between the stated outcomes of the course and the actual outcomes as demonstrated by the students and evidenced in the e-portfolios?
- What perceived growth has been made in student knowledge and skills due to participation in the practicum?
- What is the overall student satisfaction with their learning experience in the MSEL/A program?

Data were collected through content analysis of historical documents, as well as through surveys and interviews with former students. A content analysis of the assignments and comments submitted by students explored perspectives on leadership and changes in those perspectives from the beginning of the practicum experience through the end of the course. The data were also compared to data from the e-portfolios of students who completed the course. Surveys were sent to the total target population to explore student perspectives on the class itself, as well as the fully online delivery format, and a sample of the population was interviewed.

Significance of the Study

The full impact of technology on education is yet to be determined, but the pace of technological growth in society is faster than it has ever been in human history. The laptop computer that this study was written on has more technological advances than the rocket used to carry the first men to the moon (Gaudin, 2009). As technology becomes smaller, cheaper, and

more available to larger segments of the general population, schools, at all levels, will have to find ways to keep up with students who have access to more knowledge than ever before from the comfort of their own homes.

Institutes of higher learning appear to be scrambling to become more accessible to the online learner. Yet there is a lack of research in the field of educational leadership and online learning (McLeod, 2011; Sherman, 2011). Both the institutes as organizations, and the faculty members as individuals, have had to adapt to this brave new world of education without the solid evidence of what works best, or even what works at all. Increasing access to the internet has resulted in more available students and greater competition between universities to increase enrollment, causing many traditional universities to move ahead with online courses before they might otherwise have done so (Sherman, 2011).

This study informs the fields of distance learning and educational leadership on the success of an online educational leadership program. The educational significance of this study was to investigate the online program and explore it for data on what has been successful and what has not. While the actual differences between traditional, hybrid, and fully integrated online work have become a moot point in this study by virtue of time and institutional change (Halal, 2005; Scott, 1999), I believe that the fact that this is a fully integrated online course affects the overall performance of students by default, as many online courses are equal in content to traditional classes.

For this study, I used a mixed methods approach that incorporated quantitative descriptive statistical analysis of demographic data with qualitative content analysis of historical documentation of student work, as well as an analysis of student online portfolios (e-portfolios).

The data were coded and analyzed, and reported to my committee members. For a complete glossary of technological terms, and other terms, see Appendix A.

Evolution of Educational Leadership Standards

According to the FLDOE website, in 1985, Florida Statutes outlined 19 Principal Competencies in the Management Training Act. With the sunset of the law in 1999 requiring Human Resources Management and Development (HRMD) programs based on the 19 Competencies, the state was required to develop new leadership standards. In April 2005, the Florida Principal Competencies were replaced by the Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS). They serve as the state's standards that Florida school leaders must demonstrate in preparation programs and in school administrator evaluations and were adopted by the State Board in 2006-07. Educational Leadership and School Principal Certification programs were redesigned to implement the new standards in 2008.

The FPLS currently form the basis for all of Florida's leadership preparation programs and establishes the core practices for leadership appraisal systems under the state's Race to the Top (RTTT) plan. Recently, Florida's RTTT Teacher and Leader Preparation Implementation Committee (TLPIC) was responsible for revising the FPLS. The FLDOE and the TLPIC held a rule development workshop in Fall 2011. According to the website, and as stated earlier, the proposed draft FPLS was scheduled for adoption into State Board Rule on November 15, 2011 (FLDOE: FPLS, n.d.). Ten Standards are grouped into categories, which can be considered domains of effective leadership (See Appendices B and C). Each Standard has a title and includes, as necessary, descriptors that further clarify or define the Standard, so that the Standards may be developed further into leadership curricula and proficiency assessments in fulfillment of their purposes (Florida School Leaders, 2011).

MSEL/A at FSU

Since 2004, the FSU program has undergone changes, first becoming a blended or hybrid content delivery program, meeting face-to-face, yet submitting assignments online; and eventually moving to a completely online content delivery format (J. Beckham, personal communication, November 15, 2011). The tenets of instruction, leadership, and research are central to the core of the MSEL/A program. Faculty have prided themselves on the quality and rigor they have brought to a program that is aligned with the leadership standards of the FLDOE, and is meaningful for students in coursework and field experiences. The mission of the program is to develop dynamic, high-performing leadership for Florida schools and school systems, equipping leaders who can translate their values, beliefs, and passions into practice in a diverse and inclusive educational system. The goals of the program are to train highly qualified leaders for positions in schools throughout the state; to continually improve the leadership program; to increase the rigor and quality of the web-based program, thus making it more flexible and accessible; to continue to work with local districts; and to work with other university Educational Leadership programs toward the promotion of overall school improvement in Florida.

History of MSEL/A at FSU

Since the early 1980s, FSU has played a significant role in the development and growth of the educational leadership programs of Florida. After Dr. Judith Irvin developed the initial grant proposals and designed the initial web-supported courses, Dr. Lynn Wicker joined the program in 2004 to coordinate the effort to deliver a hybrid Master's program in Monroe County, Ocala, and Panama City. Using the Blackboard platform, FSU offered a hybrid Masters program at these three sites. In 2006, the program transitioned into fully online Masters and Modified (certification) programs. The MSEL/A degree program has been in its current form since 2000.

The program in Educational Leadership/Administration has demonstrated over the years an ongoing commitment to program and professional improvement.

Educational Delivery Platform Change (EDPC) Timeline

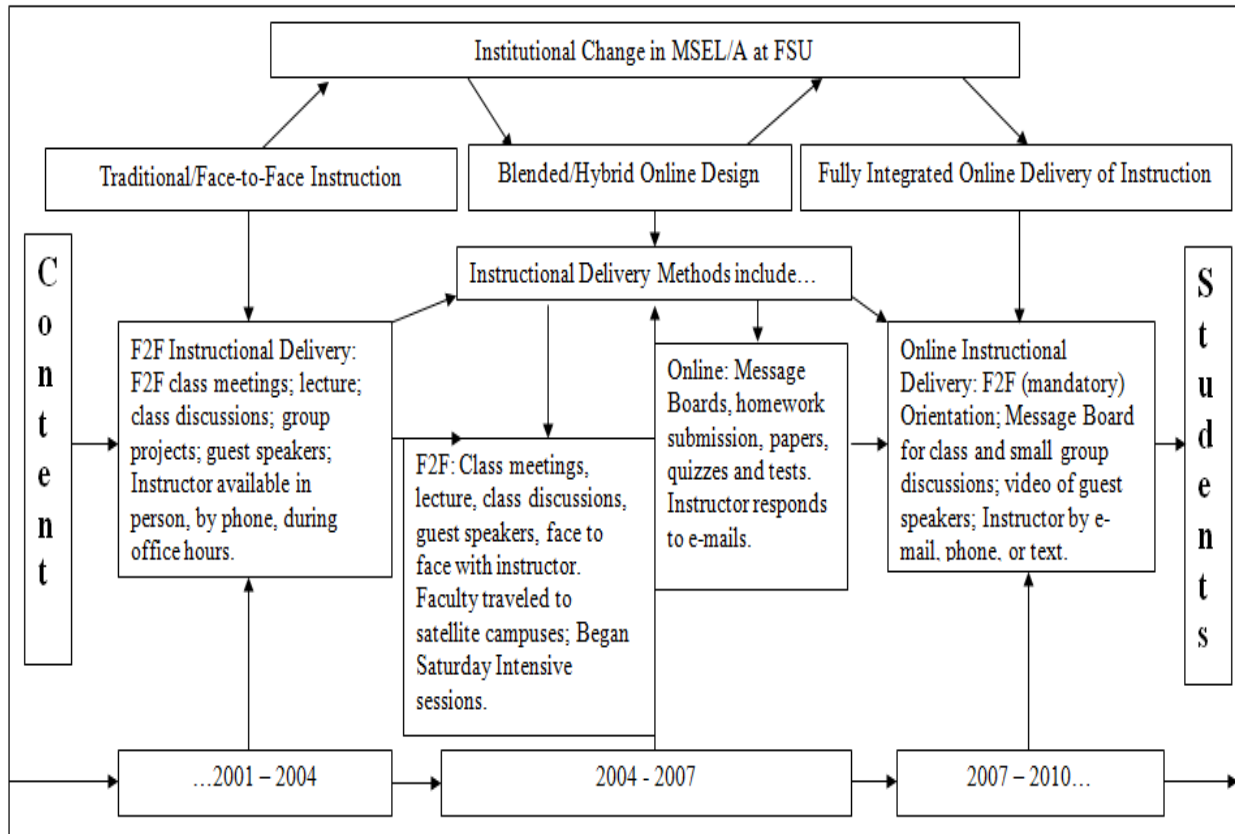


Figure 1. Educational Delivery Platform Change (EDPC) Timeline. This figure shows the progression of the MSEL/A program from a f2f to an online program from 2001 to 2010, the end of the first full online cohort.

Assumptions

Necessary documents would be obtainable and available. Demographic data would give a clear picture of students in the program; by gender, grade level taught, race, age, and experience. A content analysis would provide sufficient data on the efficacy of the curriculum in preparing students to meet course objectives, complete the program, pass the FELE and be placed in an educational leadership position. I assumed that the data would show a comprehensive and

successful program which has made the transition from face-to-face to fully integrated online delivery format.

I assumed students would respond to surveys sent via e-mail and would give an honest opinion of their learning experiences in the course, and in the overall online program. I also assumed some students would be willing and available to give more in-depth analysis in interviews conducted via e-mail, phone, or over the internet using a program such as Skype, Google plus, Gotomeeting, Adobe Connect, or FaceTime. The interviews and surveys helped to triangulate the data on the efficacy of the course, and of the overall program.

Limitations

In this study, I explored the Practicum course in the MSEL/A program at FSU. This was a single case study, focusing mainly on the practicum, the introductory course to the MSEL/A program at FSU, and the final e-portfolios of the participants. Courses in-between the practicum and the final e-portfolio product were discussed, but not studied in-depth. The findings are not generalizable to other programs at FSU, or to programs of other universities (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). This study examined the stated objectives of the course and the success and growth of students as evidenced by their coursework, and the work found in their individual e-portfolios, as well as success on the FELE and in job placement. The study looked at the course as a fully integrated online delivery format by default, but did not compare online programs to traditional content delivery formatted programs.

Delimitations

I did not examine each individual course in the two year MSEL/A program in-depth, but gave a brief discussion of the courses for continuity between the practicum and the e-portfolio. I used only the data collected from the practicum course and the e-portfolios for analysis. I did not

compare past versions of the course with the current course curriculum in this study, but may make such a comparison in a future study. When initially exploring practicum syllabi gathered from other universities in Florida, I did not make in-depth analysis of other programs, nor compare statistical demographic data at this time. I analyzed only the data available from the thirteen semesters of the practicum ranging from Fall 2008 to Fall 2012.

Chapter Summary

The MSEL/A program at FSU is an educational leadership program intended to prepare students to pass the FELE and to become school administrators in the Florida public education system. It is recognized as a quality program by the FLDOE and has been such since 1989 and through several adjustments and changes, now as a fully integrated online program. The first course, the practicum, is meant to introduce students to the expectations of being an educational leader, and prepare them for both the remainder of the program, the FELE, and eventual service in a Florida school.

How well is the practicum at FSU fulfilling its purpose? This mixed methods content analysis gives insight to the efficacy of the practicum as an introductory course to the MSEL/A and to the results found in student e-portfolios. Surveys and interviews helped triangulate the data to give a more in-depth analysis of the success of both the practicum and the overall program. This study is not generalizable to other programs or other universities. It does, however, add knowledge to the fields of educational leadership and distance learning, as the practicum, and the overall MSEL/A program, are available only in a fully online delivery format.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Significant changes to the Practicum course over the years include not only the creation of a practicum course as an introduction to the MSEL/A program in the first place, but changing it from a face-to-face format to a blended or hybrid format, and eventually to a fully integrated online delivery format. With this change came the use of portfolios, and, eventually, electronic portfolios, for assessment of student achievement in the overall program. This literature review covers several aspects of the current literature available that impact the efficacy of the practicum and this study: online education, practicum courses, and portfolios as a demonstration of student competence, as well as literature on content analysis and evaluation.

Overview of Related Literature

First, I present an overview of online education and the online learning environment. It is important to view the overall MSEL/A program, beginning with the Practicum, as being fully integrated online courses. Although a comparison of the traditional model of the MSEL/A and the online version is no longer practical, I believe that an understanding of the atmosphere and current cultural environment of distance learning via online courses is vital. The literature speaks to the nature of both the content and the learner, the Digital Native (Prensky, 2001).

I also present a review of the literature on practicum courses and their usefulness. A practicum is often considered essential in preparing practitioners for real world experience. As a stand-alone course, the practicum would offer potential educational leaders an understanding of the rigors and inner workings of school leadership. As a starting block to the MSEL/A program, the practicum lays a foundation on which to build for success in the program.

For further clarification, I include a review of the literature on portfolios and e-portfolios, and how they are used as an assessment tool for these programs. As a former teacher and administrator in the K-12 schools, speaking purely anecdotally, I saw the popularity of portfolios, or saving student work for assessment and review, in many schools and at all levels. Additionally, in conjunction with the literature supporting online learning, e-portfolios are not only popular, but practical for the Digital Native, and thus, the Digital Immigrant (Prensky, 2001), as well.

Finally, I provide a review of the literature supporting my approach, both as a content analysis, and as an overall evaluation model. Understanding how data are analyzed is as important as understanding why it is analyzed. The approach and the evaluation model that guided me in this study were chosen for their specific attributes as applied to my specific research questions.

Online Education

The Online Environment. The development of the internet and the relative affordability of personal computers and internet access have made distance learning, once confined to correspondence schools and the postal service, a vehicle for the masses to higher education and better opportunities (Ansell, 2008). The cultural shift to more computer-based, online and, thus, distance, learning is both driven by and mirrored in the proliferation of online non-educational activities and social networking sites and opportunities that keep students engaged (Rosen, 2011). As the current generation of students, often referred to as Digital Natives, or the Net Generation (Prensky, 2001), comes of age, more and more, online classrooms and virtual lives are taking the place of physical interaction and face-to-face contact. Facebook, Myspace, and Youtube, among others, have taken the place of the malt shop, the afterschool parking lot, and

the mall for social gatherings. Kindles, iPads, and iPhones make the need for a quiet corner at the library and a backpack full of books nearly obsolete.

“On-line learning tools and techniques—including fully on-line courses, blended learning, mobile learning, game-based learning, and social networking—are some of the newest and rowdiest children in the family of higher-education resources” (Milliron, 2010, p. 1). According to Parry (2010), having some part of the educational process on-line is not only becoming mainstream, but unavoidable. The percentage of students across the nation taking at least one on-line course per semester rose from 12% in 2003 to 25% in 2008, while the University of Phoenix’s on-line only campus boasts 400,000 students in attendance. When included with UOP’s numbers, the top 10 on-line only programs enroll approximately 854,000 students combined.

Other universities have adopted a mixture of on-line and traditional, or face-to-face classes. The University of Central Florida “has become a hybrid university” with over half of the 56,000 students taking at least one on-line or blended class (Parry, 2010, p. B5). At the beginning of the 2004 academic year, a total of more than “2.35 million students were enrolled in on-line courses” (Bangert, 2008, p. 35). With more and more students seeking this alternate path to a degree, universities are embracing mixed approaches to education and are moving toward “the classroom of the future” (Parry, 2010, p. B4).

According to Lee and Nguyen (2007), “Cyber education was born in the United States in the 1970s” and gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s. Studies beginning in the mid-1990s suggest that “internet-based education was in fact mutual-beneficial to both students and educators” and still offers an array of advantages which include, but are not limited to, “effective learning and time savings” and “lower indirect-costs such as commuting and housing expenses”

while giving students a feeling of satisfaction with their “educational attainment” and creating “strong support to the cyber academic system” (p. 1).

In the wake of the explosive growth of the University of Phoenix (UOP, 2010) and their eventual expansion to an all on-line university format, even the oldest traditional schools such as the University of North Carolina, chartered in 1789 (UNC, 2007), and the University of Georgia, incorporated in 1785 (UGA, 2012), have a variety of on-line degrees available (UNC, 2007; UGA, 2012). In Florida, there are 11 state funded public universities and many more private universities, all of which offer courses and up to full degrees on-line (State University System of Florida; Yahoo! Directory), including Florida State University, established in 1851 (FSU, n.d.).

In the modern age of technological advances, a personal, portable laptop computer can be carried in a student’s backpack. The technology it carries, which is more advanced than the rocket used to carry men to the moon (Gaudin, 2009), may have already been outdated while it was “still on the shelf” (D. W. Norman, personal communication, October 20, 2011), or even made obsolete by the purchase of an iPhone. “The 21st Century has seen technology firmly plant itself into our everyday lives” (Braun, 2008, p. 64) in everything from the Global Positioning Systems in our cars to the cell phones, iPads, and laptops we carry. Dykman and Davis (2008), suggest that the “ability to use information technologies effectively is one aspect of achieving success in today’s society” (p. 11).

Online Students. More than just a change in technology has taken place, though. The Digital Natives have gone through the K-12 systems and colleges and are now becoming teachers and school leaders. Recognizing the fundamental differences in delivery systems and the tools used for teaching today is a significant change, but, according to Prensky (2001), the students, themselves, have radically changed as well. “Today’s students are no longer the people

our educational system was designed to teach” (p. 1). How students think and process information is fundamentally different than ever before. The Net Generation is in school and the wave of technology sweeping the globe has already placed high quality audio and video, the sound and the fury as it were, literally in their hands in the form of cell phones, iPods, iPads, iTunes and Youtube. The move, then, from technology *in* the classroom to technology *as* the classroom is not only inevitable, but practical. Students of the Net Generation, the Digital Natives, are forcing the move to technology on the go for all. The “classroom of the future” (Parry, 2010, p. B4) is on-line, no matter where the teacher is.

Research on Online Programs. While the number of students seeking and enrolling in on-line courses has grown tremendously over the last decade, there is still a lack of research on the move from face-to-face instruction to hybrid or fully integrated on-line instruction for Master’s level and certificate level educational leadership programs. In addition, educators need to know more about the effectiveness of on-line instruction. (McLeod, 2011; Sherman, 2011). Many of the institutes of higher learning that belong to the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) have explored this type of move, but very little research has been conducted to date. Moreover, according to McLeod and Richardson (2011), the union of school leadership and educational technology has created a new field of study, school technology leadership.

McLeod and Richardson (2011) conducted a meta-analytic content analysis of the available research surrounding educational leadership and educational technology and found that the field of school technology leadership is lacking research. Their study indicates that although this is a new field, it combines many well-established fields, technology being the common denominator.

The sorts of revolutionary shifts that these authors described under-score that being a technology leader is not simply a responsibility to add on to a school leader's job....A technology leader must foster and develop for oneself, staff, and students a unique set of skills and competencies that move beyond the traditional school leader's role. Such transformations to these new roles and responsibilities require a solid research base and ongoing dialogue. (p. 217).

Most of the interest in creating online programs in general, as well as for educational leadership, has been market driven as increasing access to the internet by more and more people has resulted in greater competition between universities to increase enrollment. For this reason, distance learning has emerged as a greater force in higher education than ever before. Beckham (personal communication, November 15, 2011) indicated that market share was a driving factor in the move for FSU. Sherman (2011) indicated that, right or wrong, many of the decisions to change instructional delivery formats were made based on the market, and were not researched fully, or at all, before moving ahead.

Many schools have decided to go ahead with more online courses and degrees, whether market driven, culture driven, or otherwise. Yet, even with the great technological advances of the last few decades, face-to-face interaction is still often considered superior to education at a distance. Early advances in online education were often met with skepticism, and degrees from online schools were often viewed as inferior or even fraudulent, much like early correspondence school diplomas (Morris, 2011). No matter the rigor of a course or a program presented online, there is still a perception by many in education that online degrees are inferior to degrees earned in the traditional way from traditional brick and mortar schools (Richardson, McLeod, & Dikkers, 2011). Traditional brick and mortar schools that do offer online degrees, such as UNC,

UGA, and FSU, gain more acceptance from K-12 school district personnel than fully online universities.

Technology is the key to online learning, but it often suffers from an innovation diffusion gap that obstructs new ideas and new technology from use by practitioners. An Innovation Diffusion Gap (IDG) is the time that may pass between an innovative new invention or idea and its widespread adoption by practitioners in the field (Szabo, 2002). While current educational practitioners struggle with adapting to cell phones and Facebook, the IDG between education and technology goes far back. According to Szabo, a patent existed for the forerunner of the fax machine as early as the 1840s, and there was almost 100 years between the invention of the pencil and its widespread use in schools. Fortunately, however, as more school district personnel are exposed to distance learning themselves, their perceptions of online coursework, and thus degrees, become more positive. “It is perhaps with the passing of time and the felt need by stakeholders that a perceptual shift will occur” (Richardson, McLeod, & Dikkers, 2011, p. 392).

As stated earlier, distance education does not seem to be going away (Milliron, 2010). Sherman (2011) stated that distance education gives us more educational leadership training opportunities and makes it possible for more people to pursue leadership roles in their schools. Yet, again, the research is lacking. “Though some indicate that there are hundreds of studies that examine whether outcomes of on-line programs match those of traditional programs, there is little to no research on outcomes in educational leadership” (Sherman, Crum, Beaty, Myran, 2010, p. 593). McLeod echoed Sherman’s (2011) call for more research and extended it to a call for more practical application, citing the current state of technology and on-line learning as “the largest transformation in learning that ever has occurred in human history” (McLeod, 2011, p. 4).

One report on the topic indicated that students, as consumers, did indicate that they were comfortable with the level of interaction between fellow classmates and their instructors in the online classroom setting. The study also dispelled notions that students would not be able to connect theory and practice (Sherman, Crum, Beaty & Myran, 2010). The study, which was not generalizable, found that students indicated they felt more responsible for their own learning in a distance learning environment. Students also felt that, overall, distance learning was as effective as face-to-face learning, though not necessarily more effective.

As educational leadership continues to grow and evolve as a course of study, states continually discuss, debate, and decide how best to prepare school leaders for their schools. Equal to the question of what to teach new leaders is the question on how best to deliver that information. According to Sherman and Beaty (2007), it is as important to decide how good leadership preparation is delivered in this age of increased internet activity and social networking as it is to decide what good leadership actually is and what it looks like. “As we continue to define and refine what good leadership is...and what types of transformation we are envisioning in schools, we should also delineate how the delivery of leadership preparation coincides” (p. 616). Sherman and Beaty suggest that quality distance learning programs will not only be needed to prepare future school leaders, but can and should be used as a leveler in social justice issues for students who might otherwise be unable to obtain the education they are seeking.

In a study that included the uses and usefulness of technology in educational leadership preparation, vignettes of successful collaborative efforts offered insights to the benefits of virtual teamwork and distance learning modes. Virtual teamwork and successful collaborative efforts occur when people, separated by time, space, and location, can come together on ideas and topics aided by computers and the internet to work toward achieving common goals. An educational

administrator can collaborate online for any number of reasons, from raising awareness of a student's wellness needs, to creating better lines of communication with peers and parents, to gaining new insights and knowledge, learning from other administrators in a global environment. "Computer-mediated collaboration is an important way to enhance the application of knowledge, performance skills, and construction of caring relationships for educational administrators" (Calabrese, et. al, 2008, p. 709).

Teaching Online. With this transformation in learning comes a transformation in teaching. Traditionally, instructors at the level of higher education have played a role of the "sage on the stage" (Dykman & Davis, 2008, p. 12), a person of more knowledge who is sharing that knowledge with the seeker, the student. This changed, however, with the change in instructional delivery method. "When compared with face-to-face discussions in which comments would typically be directed to the instructor, on-line conversation proved to be much more learner-centered because the on-line discussion moved to whoever logged on next" (Conceição, 2006, p. 29). In an on-line class, the instructor becomes more of a facilitator than a lecturer, a "guide at the side" (Dykman & Davis, 2008, p. 12). "The challenge is for faculty members to modify conventional teaching behaviors and to gain the skills necessary to become effective on-line instructors" (Conceição, 2006, p. 29).

According to Allen and Seaman (2011), 65% of reporting institutions see on-line learning as a critical part of their long term strategic growth. Over 6.1 million students took at least one on-line course in the fall of 2010 and 67% of academic leaders rated learning outcomes in on-line classes as equal to or superior to face-to-face classrooms. Reports show that most on-line programs are still growing or are at least steady in enrollment numbers. From the perspective of the institution, on-line learning has become and will remain a critical part of school growth.

For faculty and students, distance learning can be a way to elevate equity as it provides access to those who would otherwise be without access. According to Sherman (2011), this includes the mother with a full time job trying to put dinner on the table and having to juggle the needs of the family. In a UCEA blog interview, Sherman stated that the “students are out there and they are ready for it, they just want their professors to be skilled and skillful at delivering on-line methods.” She further stated that schools have to have the infrastructure to support this, and that even though much of this change is market driven, schools and faculty have to get on board and they have to push for more research.

Current Online Programs in Place. As stated earlier, on-line programs are being implemented in many schools throughout the country. In Florida, on-line degrees are offered at almost all 11 schools in the State University System of Florida (SUSF: BOG, 2010), New College of Florida being the exception. For this study, I focused on programs that are as closely equivalent to the MSEL/A at FSU as possible. Private schools and out of state schools were beyond the scope of this particular study, but may be researched in a future study. Of the 11 state universities in Florida, 10 universities offer an equivalent or similar program to the leadership and administrative training that includes the FELE preparation and field work that the MSEL/A at FSU includes. The lone exception, again, is New College of Florida, which is an honors college that caters solely to undergraduates. Of those 10 universities, six offer no equivalent on-line educational leadership program, two offer a blended/hybrid, or partial on-line program, and two offer fully integrated on-line educational leadership programs.

The University of Florida, for instance, offers an on-line degree for the Master of Education Curriculum and Instruction, with a specialization in Teacher Leadership for School Improvement. The program does require one face-to-face, or f2f, meeting, which technically

makes it a hybrid program, but, at this time, is not an administrator program. UF also offers an on-line doctorate in Educational Leadership, again, with the f2f component, making it a hybrid program as well (UF Distance Learning, 2012), but is a doctoral level program.

The University of South Florida offers several fully on-line education programs, but the Master of Education in Educational Leadership program is only offered as “partially on-line” and offers no further explanation on their website (USF College of Education, 2009). The University of North Florida offers on-line courses in educational leadership at the Masters level, but not a full degree (UNF Distance Learning, 2011).

The following schools in the State University System of Florida offer no on-line equivalent to the MSEL/A program at FSU: Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), Florida Atlantic University (FAU), Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), Florida International University (FIU), University of Central Florida (UCF), University of Florida (UF). Only two universities in the state system offer a fully integrated on-line Masters degree in Educational Leadership, including training on the FELE and field work: University of West Florida and, of course, Florida State University (University of West Florida Graduate School, 2011). UWF offers a Master of Education degree (M.Ed.) and FSU offers the MSEL/A program.

Measuring Success Online. Whatever degree is offered, students must still meet rigorous standards and be assessed for their individual success in the program. While the sage may not be on the stage anymore, he or she is still responsible for student learning. Accountability in an on-line program must also be adjusted to fit the new format. In the former f2f program, accountability included student portfolios, mentoring and field experience, and student familiarity with the Florida Educational Leadership Exam, or FELE. These areas of accountability have all been translated into an on-line component.

A practice test for the FELE is currently available on-line through the Practicum Course, the first class in the MSEL/A program at FSU. The FELE, itself, is no longer a paper-based test, but must be taken on-line. “As of December 2009, all FTCE/FELE tests are available on computer, and as of January 2010, paper-based testing (PBT) is no longer available” (FLDOE: FELE, 2005). According to a Department of Education memorandum dated January 5, 2010, the current trends indicated that the majority of test takers were taking the on-line exams. This led to the decision to discontinue paper-based testing (PBT) completely (FLDOE: Memorandum, 2010).

Another important component to student assessment in the f2f MSEL/A program was the mentoring and fieldwork experiences. In the f2f program, students were not in the classroom for field work or with their mentors, but reported back to the class with their individual experiences. This component easily translated to the on-line program. As with any other assignment, the student presents the written results as an attachment on-line, as opposed to documentation handed to the instructor directly, in a classroom setting. The assignment and the assessment are the same in both programs. Only the system of delivery is different.

The current research on educational leadership and technology is still a small body of work. The research that is available indicates that on-line education has become a mainstream part of higher education and that it is equal to or even superior to face-to-face instruction in rigor and outcomes. Although market driven in the move to more distance learning, universities and their faculty members need to recognize that there is a student body out there that is willing and eager to learn from the comfort of their own homes. To be effective, schools need the necessary infrastructure and faculty need training and ongoing support.

While schools seem to be embracing the move to on-line academics, there are actually very few educational leadership programs within in the State University System of Florida that are available to the on-line learner as of this date. Earning an educational leadership degree online means having to submit all assessment material online. Many state resources and exams have already moved to an online format.

Practicum Courses

Programs in educational administration are under increased scrutiny from education organizations to make sure that prospective school leaders are prepared to help their schools meet performance-based standards (Melton, Tysinger, Mallory & Green, 2011). One way that this is done is through the use of a practicum course. The Practicum is the first course in the MSEL/A program at FSU. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a practicum is “a course of study designed especially for the preparation of teachers and clinicians that involves the supervised practical application of previously studied theory” (practicum, n.d.). The practicum prepares the students for many different aspects of the role of school leader, including a familiarity and mastery of Florida Leadership Standards, resiliency, and professional and ethical behavior. The FSU MSEL/A practicum course lays the foundation for the coursework of the overall program.

According to Shulman (1998), a knowledge base is not professional knowledge until it is enacted in the field and meets the requirements of practical application. Professions are about practice, even if that practice is based on theory. “While the theoretical is the foundation for the entitlement to practice, professional practice itself is the end to which all knowledge is directed” (p. 518). Practicum experiences provide a supportive academic arena to practice for entry into the profession. Shulman argues that the concept of a profession includes six universal features:

service, theory, practice, judgment, learning from experience, and community. These six features are found in the practicum course and are the basis for preparing educational leaders in the MSEL/A program.

A key to learning in a practicum setting is reflection on experience. According to Ethel and McMeniman (2000), students in a practicum setting need to gain access to the “knowledge-in-action” (p. 99) of the experts being observed. While this study dealt with teachers, the students in the educational leadership have the same, or similar, benefit from working with an experienced mentor. “(T)he opportunity to gain access to the thinking underlying the practices of expert practitioners represented a pivotal point in their (the participants) understanding of the existence and nature of relationships between the theory and practice of learning to teach” (p. 99). Students who are able to reflect on why decisions were made have a better understanding of their role and of how theory and practice align outside of the classroom.

One aspect of educational leadership preparation that the practicum addresses is the concept of bridging the gap between theory and practice. By having students who are both in the classroom studying theory and working with a mentor, completing Critical Task Assignments, and having on-going discussions of their experiences in the field, the gap between theory and real world can become smaller. In educational research, as in any field, researchers and practitioners alike must take equal responsibility for the gap between them, realizing that the difficulties do not belong to one group only (Heid, et al., 2006). Teamwork, involvement, communication are all recurring themes in the various fields where research and practice are at opposing ends of the same spectrum. “Participatory research includes closer consultation, if not engagement, of practitioners or other end users in the research enterprise” (Green & Ottoson, 2004, p. 17). In the practicum course, students, who are already practitioners, learn the

reasoning behind many of the decisions that are made in leadership, as well as learning to become researchers themselves.

According to Tubbs and Holliday (2009), the practicum experience is needed, not only to fulfill set requirements in an Educational Leadership program, but also “to expose program candidates to real-world school leadership experiences” (p. 28). Practicum strengths found in their study suggested that students appreciate both hands-on experience and flexibility, as well as a high level of support from the course supervisor. The study also showed that “approximately 42% of the participating candidates perceived the role of the supervisor as very important because they guided the overall experience....Another group of candidates (15%) considered mentioned mentor's role was more important because they were at the school site” (p. 23).

Ralph (2003) called the practicum, “a key component of pre-service teacher preparation” (p. 28), and addressed the importance of the supervisor’s/mentor’s role in the classroom setting by using a Contextual Supervision model. Rodolfa, Owen, and Clark, (2007) considered the practicum in psychology to be “an essential component of the preparation and training” of psychologists (p. 64). Their study addressed the requirements for practicum hours. While quality of practicum experience is vital, the quantity of practicum experience is “an important element in the debates of practicum experience” (p. 64). The number of hours required for licensure must be met, but was inefficient for training purposes without some set guidelines on what makes them quality hours. Both studies support the concept of the practicum as a necessity in a quality training program.

The syllabus for the Practicum for the MSEL/A program at FSU states that the purpose of the course is “to provide students an experiential orientation into the components for fulfilling certification requirements in Educational Leadership/Administration toward Level I Educational

Leadership Certification” (See Appendix D). According to the syllabus, the practicum will help the student establish a mentoring relationship, prepare for the FELE, give the student access to leadership resources, develop an overall plan of action, reflect on discussion topics, and demonstrate mastery of a number of essential skills. The practicum is a distance learning course, although there is one pre-semester face-to-face orientation meeting for the whole cohort. The practicum course begins the required 120 hours of field experience that was carried over a span of three semesters. The mentoring initiative will include 40 hours of interaction with a chosen mentor within the semester of the practicum.

Portfolios

The final component for assessment in the MSEL/A program that I explored here was the use of student portfolios. “Portfolios can help students in educational administration programs not only to earn graduate degrees but also to become successful in their professional education careers as school administrators” (Vyortkina, 2003, p. 3). The portfolio system of assessment is, itself, a relatively new practice in the MSEL/A at FSU, and yet has become a major component in measuring student achievement. Portfolios are a valuable means for leadership students to apply theory to practice by taking program content and applying it to their real world situations (p. 2).

According to a study by Vyortkina (2002), faculty members were “dissatisfied with their traditional comprehensive exam and were looking for a more authentic assessment” (p. 114) such as a portfolio of student work. Faculty also wanted to “link program curriculum to current school practices and assessment of school leadership team members” (p. 114) so that new principals would be able to more readily demonstrate their competencies. The program instituted

a portfolio system as a graduation requirement to both measure student achievement more accurately and give students something to show perspective employers.

The “versatility, flexibility, and individuality” (Valeri-Gold, Olson & Denning, 1991, p. 299) of portfolios means they can be used at any level of education. They allow students to “demonstrate knowledge and skills gained through prior learning and experience” and can be useful placement tools (p. 299). Portfolios are not, however, simply folders full of student work, but “a compilation representing students’ breadth of reading and writing experiences over time” (p. 299). The use of portfolios goes beyond the snapshot of a student grade based on a single test, or a single learning style assessment. The portfolio captures “the essence of each student through the use of authentic tasks” (p. 304). Through reflections in the portfolio, students can be reminded that learning is an on-going process.

Vyortkina (2003) cites two SUSF schools that use portfolios in graduate level educational leadership programs. As mentioned earlier, the University of Central Florida “has become a hybrid university” with over half of the 56,000 students taking at least one on-line or blended class (Parry, 2010, p. B5). UCF also uses portfolios as an assessment tool. “Emphasis on reflection and personal growth through the use of portfolios was one of the key aspects of academic content and delivery” (Vyortkina, 2003, p. 39). Students in the educational leadership program at UCF are told to prepare their portfolios “for their own benefit, use, and reference in the future” (p. 40). Likewise, according to Vyortkina (2003), Florida Gulf Coast University students prepared a professional portfolio that included a resume, cover letter, and “artifacts which demonstrated mastery and accomplishments” (p. 42) to be better prepared for the job search after completing the program.

According to Hackmann and Alsbury (2005), several different formats exist for portfolios, but an effective portfolio contains three components: biographies of student work; a variety of work; and student reflections (p. 37). Biographies show depth and variety shows breadth in a student's work. Reflections and self-summaries allow student and faculty to evaluate work in a systematic way. Through portfolio use, students can explain mastery of skills and personal growth.

Another study showed that when using portfolios in an educational leadership program, the "views of leadership moved from an authoritarian style of leadership to a more inclusive, collaborative style of leadership" (Miller & Salsberry, 2005). Skills gained by using portfolios included collaboration; identification of personal strengths and weaknesses; information literacy; and use of technology, as well as research, and communication. These studies focused primarily on the portfolio, itself, and did not explore the online uses of portfolios.

With the shift from f2f classrooms to online classrooms, the paper portfolio has now been replaced by the virtual folder and files. The virtual portfolio can be as simple as a folder and word documents in Microsoft Office, or an equivalent word processor type program, or as sophisticated as an actual electronic portfolio, or e-portfolio, as provided by several different software companies. "E-portfolios, which emerged in the early 1990s, employ a combination of technologies to create and publish a collection of student work, which is stored in digital formats, either online or on disks" (Waters, 2007, p. 28). With the access to social networking and smartphones, more and more work is going online, including professional portfolios, resumes, and curricula vitae. This move makes sites such as Linked-in, and other professional networking sites popular.

Evaluation Model

The purpose of an evaluation is to see how a program is working and if the activities of the program are helping the program reach its goals. “In program evaluation, outcomes are given meaning by the program activities – they have little meaning in isolation. Thus, a clear understanding of the actual implementation of program initiatives is essential for the outcome assessment to be of value” (Strudler, Archambault, Bendixen, Anderson & Weiss, 2003, p. 48).

According to Sanders (1994), the purpose of an evaluation depends on the objectives and intended uses of the results of the findings. The purposes and procedures should be recorded at the beginning and referred to throughout the process. At the end of the evaluation, the evaluator can then more accurately describe what actually happened and what the results were.

Provus’ Discrepancy Evaluation Model (DEM), within the Objective Oriented Evaluation Approach (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004; Sampong, 2009), guided the evaluation component of this research. DEM was developed for use in large public school systems, but has also been effectively applied to state and federal programs. The objective-oriented approach examines discrepancies between performance of the program and the standards set for that program. Information about discrepancies is then used to decide whether to improve, maintain, or end the program being evaluated.

This approach was used to determine the efficacy of the program in meeting the stated outcomes of the program. The evaluation methodology, including instrument development and instrument use, accentuated the efficacy of the curriculum and determined areas that may need to be strengthened or adjusted. Under the DEM, evaluation is defined as the comparison of an actual performance to a desired standard (Ahmad, n.d.). Primarily a problem-solving set of

procedures that seeks to identify weaknesses (according to selected standards) and to take corrective actions with termination as the option of last resort.

Sampong (2009) used an adaptation of the DEM to evaluate a distance teacher education program being used by the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, West Africa. Sampong's research explored how well a large distance education program was fulfilling the purposes for teacher education in Ghana. "Specifically, are there discrepancies between the standards for the design of the distance teacher education program in Ghana and the actual performance in the field?" (p. 2). Sampong used two survey instruments assigned at random and found that there were discrepancies in the program. Even so, the program, overall, was fulfilling its purpose, upgrading the performance of a large number of teachers in the K-12 schools in Ghana.

Polikoff, Porter, and Smithson (2011), studied instructional coherence by evaluating the alignment of state assessments of student achievement with state mandated core content standards. They found that clear definitions of alignment and of evaluation measures was vital to their research. Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980) agree, pointing out that even the idea of "use" is a rather ambiguous concept. "Officials interpret using research to mean anything from adoption of the recommendations of a single study all the way to a general sensitivity to social science perspectives" (p. 305).

As Weiss (1979, 1998) indicates in evaluation studies, the research must be relevant and useful to the needs of the stakeholders. Sustained interactivity with stakeholders and a variety of venues and arenas for dissemination of information will increase successful implementation and close the gap between researchers and practitioners. Weiss (1998) suggests that evaluators do work that is "responsive to the concerns of those whose programs they evaluate, and...do their best to communicate results in multiple ways to ensure that program people know the results and

see their relevance for program action” (p. 22). The way to make evaluation more effective in improving daily practice is to “maintain contact with users...after the study ends” and to make sure that the “evaluator listens to what...people have to say...” (p. 30). As with research, the evaluator has to find ways to communicate findings to the field, through conferences, workshops, interest groups, “whatever it takes to get important findings into circulation (p. 32). The practicum is a venue of disseminating information by including it in the formal preparation of future practitioners.

Chapter Summary

Online education is no longer a trend or a fad, but has become a mainstream approach to content delivery even in traditional higher learning institutions such as FSU. Students have more computing power in just their cell phones than most desktop computers had a decade ago. Students, themselves, are more technologically advanced than many faculty members, and the way classes are conducted has changed and is continuing to evolve. Offering a class as important as the Practicum, as well as the whole MSEL/A program, as an online only class is a significant change in institutional character.

The Practicum, as an online course, offers students from around the state an opportunity to pursue a career in educational leadership. While a practicum is only one course in an overall program, it is an essential experience, a key component to preparing students for leadership. As the introductory course in the FSU MSEL/A, the Practicum introduces students to leadership concepts, a mentorship relation, and to an inside look at what it actually means and what it takes to be an ethical, successful educational leader. It is one component of the overall program, but it is an essential component.

Program accountability is vital to long term success. The MSEL/A at FSU uses student portfolios to measure students success. Since the program is fully online, the portfolios are also online in the form of e-portfolios. The e-portfolios have many advantages, allowing students to access their portfolios from virtually anywhere so they may begin to apply classroom theory to real world scenarios. Online portfolios allow for a broader range of more in-depth work to be stored for students to refer back to later on in their careers as educational leaders.

As educators across the state of Florida seek avenues through which to pursue higher degrees and leadership opportunities, online education has quickly become a mainstream venue that offers full access to the learning opportunity without the drive time, seat time, or loss of prime time that regularly scheduled, centralized, traditional classrooms demand. The MSEL/A program at FSU has become a fully integrated online program in an effort to reach more students seeking advancement in their careers. The practicum, as an introductory course to the program, is vital for preparing these students for the rigor of the two year program, as well as for the career choice itself. The use of online portfolios provides evidence of growth and mastery of skills and allows students to apply theory to practice in their roles as educational leaders.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative research can be tightly structured or loosely structured, but much of it “lies somewhere between these two extremes” (p. 17). Often, data collection and analysis are concurrent in qualitative research. For this study, I collected the majority of data, and analyzed it, according to the principles of qualitative research (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1984). Using a qualitative approach, I looked for common themes in pre-program beliefs and practices of students. I compared student work from this beginning course to student work found at the program’s end in the student portfolios. I used quantitative methods, descriptive statistics, to analyze data on who begins each cohort and who completes the program. This showed the level of diversity in age, gender, race/ethnicity, experience, grade level, and geographic region in the demographics of the FSU MSEL/A students.

Population

This study included student work from the practicum course cohorts ranging from the fall semester of 2008 through the fall semester of 2012. This sample included classes that are all online only and prior to the newest revisions to the principal leadership standards. These cohorts have all had time to complete the practicum, and many would have had opportunity to take the FELE and secure a position as an educational leader in a Florida school.

Instrumentation

The study was a content analysis of the student work completed in the practicum course and the available student work found in the student portfolios at the end of the program. For this study, I used Microsoft Office 2010 Word, and NVivo 10, a software program designed for qualitative and mixed methods research, to collect, organize, and analyze my data. I used

Blackboard to access and sort data from each individual semester. All work was done on my personal laptop computers, the HP 2000, which replaced the Dell Vostro 380, and the iPhone 4S, and was backed-up on my home desktop computer, a Dell Vostro 200. Dropbox, a file sharing software program, was used to move files between devices.

After securing IRB approval for Use of Human Subjects in Research (See Appendix E) and creating a Letter of Informed Consent (See Appendix F), I sent a survey to the total target population to obtain data on student perspectives of the Practicum and the overall MSEL/A program. The survey was a modified version of the survey that was used by Sherman, Crum, Beaty and Myran (2010) in their research on student perspectives of online courses (See Appendix G). The survey included a Likert scale, multiple choice and open ended questions, as well as demographic questions. I also created a set of questions for interviews with a sample population of the overall target population, using this survey as a guide (See Appendix H). Interview questions were open-ended and subjective.

Table 1. Data collection and analysis matrix

	Data Collection			Data Analysis		
Research Question	Interview	Survey	Document Analysis	Descriptive Statistics	Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods
R.Q. 1	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
R.Q. 2	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
R.Q. 3	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Research Question	Satisfaction	Growth	Success: FELE/Jobs	Descriptive Statistics	Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods
R.Q. 1	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
R.Q. 2	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y
R.Q. 3	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y

Interviews were conducted either by e-mail or via the most convenient and available online communication software for the interview, including Skype, Google plus, Gotomeeting, Adobe Connect, or FaceTime. Interviews conducted live were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Data were collected on each of the three research questions through multiple research tools, as indicated by the following charts (also see Appendix I). Data also showed what each research question measured and how it was analyzed.

Materials

As I explored the data, I used NVivo 10 and Microsoft Office (Word 2010 and Excel 2010) to categorize initial comments of participants. I used a Qualtrics chart to graph demographic data to show participants by age, gender, experience, grade level, and geographic location. All hard copy data collected were stored in a locked cabinet when not in use. Virtual data stored on my personal devices were password protected by file, as well as by device, itself, at all times. I had sole access to all data I collected.

Tasks and Procedures

My first task was to gain Blackboard access to all thirteen semesters, first by gaining the required permissions from the course instructor of record for that period, Dr. Blackwell-Flanagan, and then by contacting Technical Support for the FSU Blackboard site. This included access to both the Practicum, EDA-5931 (also designated in different semesters as EDA-5945, -5946, -5947, and currently as -5942), and the portfolios in the end of program course, EDA-8966. I then began a review of Week One Discussion Board postings. This gave me some of the demographic information I needed to collect. I reviewed each pertinent Blackboard posting for each semester, collecting data on student perspectives on leadership, ethics, and other areas of the practicum. My main focus, however, was on the Leadership Development Plan (LDP)

assignment. A content analysis of each student's LDP provided insight into student perspectives of leadership and education. These data were collected, analyzed and categorized. Demographic data were also collected, analyzed and categorized. Results were written up and reported to my committee.

I used Qualtrics surveys, a software program used and available through Secure Apps on my FSU Blackboard site. I sent links to the survey by e-mail to all students who were enrolled in the MSEL/A program for the semesters of Fall 2008 through Fall 2012. I asked participants to return surveys as quickly as possible. Surveys were initially sent out in early March. I sent out several reminders at regular intervals. Since the surveys are kept on the FSU Qualtrics site, I was able to analyze responses as they arrived.

I assigned each student in the target population a number starting with the Fall 2008 semester. Going by alphabetical and chronological sequence, a student whose name starts with A in the first semester would be number one and a student whose name starts with Z in the last semester, Fall 2012, would be the final number of all totaled students, Student #100. Using a random number generator such as the one found at RANDOM.ORG (Random.org, 2012), I created a random sequence of student numbers (Creswell, 2005). Due to the length of time it took to get the initial survey responses, I chose the first ten students that responded to contact for interviews. I then used the mixed methods software program, NVivo 10, to categorize, organize, and analyze data. Once all data were analyzed, I wrote up my findings and reported them to my committee.

Research Question

As stated earlier, the overall question addressed by the research was how well the practicum at FSU is fulfilling its purpose of preparing students for the MSEL/A program; the FELE; and

thus eventually, to become administrators for schools in the state of Florida. Within the scope of this overarching research question I explored the following questions:

- Are there any discrepancies between the stated outcomes of the course and the actual outcomes as demonstrated by the students and evidenced in the e-portfolios?
- What perceived growth has been made in student knowledge and skills due to participation in the practicum?
- What is the overall student satisfaction with their learning experience in the MSEL/A program?

Research Design

This was a single case study of the history of the Practicum of Educational Leadership in the MSEL/A program at FSU for the semesters ranging from Fall 2008 through Fall 2012 using content analysis within a mixed methods approach. Most of the data were collected through a qualitative content analysis of historical documents, focusing on student work found in the practicum and in the end of program portfolios. A content analysis of the assignments and comments submitted by students explored perspectives on leadership and changes in those perspectives from the beginning of the practicum experience through the end of the course, and the overall program.

My main area of focus was the Leadership Development Plan (LDP) assignment as found in its initial stage in the Practicum compared to the final LDP product found in the e-portfolio at the end of the program. I also compared reflections and notes on mentor and field experiences from Practicum and e-portfolio. Finally, I examined student comments on the practice FELE taken in the Practicum and comments on post-program FELE results, as well as available post-program job placement data.

Quantitative research methods included descriptive statistics to explore participant demographics. This provided an overall picture of the reach of the program for diversity in several areas, including geographic, grade level participation, age and experience, as well as gender, race/ethnicity, and experience with online learning. This gave me a better picture of the students who participate in the MSEL/A at FSU.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection began in February of 2013 and continued until completed in May 2013. I used document analysis of a sampling of student work, including Blackboard postings, essays, research papers and other portfolio work to examine the extent to which students met course objectives and to explore the changes in student perceptions from beginning of the course to end of the program. I sent out Qualtrics survey links via e-mail to the target population and followed up with numerous reminders at regular intervals.

Qualitative data analysis is defined as concurrent, with data collection and analysis happening continuously, simultaneously (Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1984). The data collected and coded during content analysis of documents were analyzed using qualitative methods as soon as possible. I conducted periodic reviews of all collected data throughout the process, exploring the data for patterns of recurring perspectives of student perceptions of educational leadership, both at the beginning and ending of the practicum course, as well as in the portfolios at the end of the program.

Chapter Summary

For this study, I examined student pre- and post-work, perspectives, perceptions, ideals, and beliefs about educational leadership by exploring the practicum course of the MSEL/A at FSU. I looked at the semesters of Fall 2008 through Fall 2012, as these students would by now have had

the opportunity to complete the practicum (a total of thirteen semesters) and many would have also had the opportunity to take the FELE. I reviewed and analyzed postings and assignments looking for patterns of student thought and perceptions on educational leadership throughout the practicum course. I then compared the overall findings with the student thoughts and perceptions on educational leadership as evidenced in their work in their portfolios at the end of the program. I used quantitative methods for descriptive statistics to show who is taking the course by age, gender, grade level, geographic location, and race/ethnicity as available.

I used qualitative methods to analyze the data, exploring students' pre-program perceptions on educational leadership and comparing them with post-program perceptions. Analyzing the data showed what changes students made from the time they started to the time they exited the program, what type of students take the program, and where they are from. Comments on available FELE scores and job placement results indicated the success of the program.

I accessed Blackboard for available student documents for a content analysis of the data. I used Microsoft Office 2010, Qualtrics Survey, and NVivo 10 on my personal laptop and desktop computers to collect, analyze, store, and catalog data, as well as for creating necessary charts. This was a single case study, with a mixed methods approach. Data were analyzed as soon as collected, and reviewed periodically. Data collection began in February 2013 and research was completed at the end of the Spring 2013 semester.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the Practicum course for the Master of Science in Educational Leadership/Administration (MSEL/A) program at Florida State University (FSU) for its ability to prepare educational leaders for Florida schools, and to add to the knowledge base of online education in the area of educational leadership. The focus of this study was the Practicum course as an introduction to the process of becoming an educational leader and/or administrator in the state of Florida, as well as how the course fits into the overall MSEL/A program. Specifically, I explored students' growth in the Leadership Development Plan (LDP), their mentor journals, and their overall perceptions of educational leadership and administration as evidenced in their course reflections, as well as class discussions, and their work toward the Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE). To gather data, I used the semesters of Fall 2008 through Fall 2012, focusing on cohorts starting in Fall 2008 and ending in Summer 2010 through cohorts starting in Spring 2011 and ending in Fall 2012, as these students would now all be finished with the practicum (a total of thirteen semesters) and many would have had opportunity to complete the overall program, take the FELE, and secure positions in Florida schools. In total, I looked at student work from 8 Cohort groups including: Cohort A (Fall 2008 – Summer 2010), Cohort B (Spring 2009 – Fall 2010), Cohort C (Summer 2009 – Spring 2011), Cohort D (Fall 2009 – Summer 2011), Cohort E (Spring 2010 – Fall 2011), Cohort F (Summer 2010 – Spring 2012), Cohort G (Fall 2010 – Summer 2012), Cohort H (Spring 2011 – Fall 2012).

Although quantitative methods were used, primarily to gather student demographic data, the study required primarily qualitative methods to gain insights into the overall efficacy of the practicum course and its components. This chapter focuses on the analysis of the data generated

from the content analysis of student coursework and other relevant documents, as well as from the students' responses to the surveys and interviews. The findings in this study were limited to the perceptions of the students who actually entered the program and completed it within the given timeframe.

This chapter contains two sections. The first section provides quantitative data from the survey and gives a demographic overview of the participants of the study, and of their thoughts on the program, academically and as an online program. The second section describes the findings based on the research questions and student perspectives via comments gathered from student work, surveys, and interviews. The following coding system was used to identify the various data sources from which data was acquired: Content Analysis (CA), Student Surveys (SS), Student Interviews (SI), Cohorts (A, B, C, D, etc.), and individual student participants (#1, #2, #3, #4, etc.).

Overview of Program, Cohort Groups and Participants

The MSEL/A program at FSU is an educational leadership program intended to prepare students to pass the FELE and to become school administrators in the Florida public education system. The FSU program is recognized as a quality program by the State of Florida and works in conjunction with the FLDOE to train, equip, and certify students to become school leaders in an environment of accountability and technology. Cohorts of students begin the program and students progress through the two year program together, taking each class in order, as a group, from start to finish. Three different tracks make up the program: Master's students, Advanced Master's students, and Modified (Specialist) students. These students progress through the core classes as a cohort, but have somewhat different electives, and may finish in a different semester than the cohort they started out with.

The first course that each cohort of students takes is the Practicum in Educational Leadership. The Practicum introduces students to the leadership standards, competencies, and skills that the FLDOE expects school leaders to know and have, as well as preparing them for success on the FELE. By the end of the course, students are expected to have a plan of action for their continued growth in the field of educational leadership, to master certain critical skills necessary for leading schools, and to establish a mentor in the field that will work with them throughout the length of the MSEL/A program and beyond. Lessons learned and processes established in the Practicum are designed to guide students through to completion of the MSEL/A at FSU and to success as school leaders.

The Practicum has undergone several changes since Fall 2008, though mostly slight changes, minor adjustments, additions and subtractions of various assignments. In Fall 2008 (Cohort A), the objectives, per the syllabus, were as follows:

...an introduction into the Florida Department of Education's leadership standards, competencies, skills and exam. Students will conduct a self-assessment profile to guide their Leadership Development Plan; establish an on-going mentoring relationship with an expert in the field; participate in seminar discussion topics; and develop a plan for the final Practicum Project. The Project focus will originate from a leadership competency that students would like to develop as they move through the program.

From Spring 2009 (Cohort B) through Fall 2010 (Cohort G), the Practicum class was divided in to three 1 credit sections, Practicum I, Practicum II, and Practicum III. In Spring 2011 (Cohort H), the sections were again combined into one 3 credit class. The syllabus objectives for Spring 2011 added "... establish an on-going mentoring relationship with an expert in the field where they will satisfy course field experience expectations; and participate in seminar

discussion topics via a Colloquium Series and Book Study.” These were the only significant changes to assignments on the syllabus within the timeline of the research.

Description of Quantitative and Demographic Survey Data Findings

In total, there were 100 possible participants for this study. This number reflects students who started and finished within the time frame of this study and accounts for students who showed up in more than one cohort due to unknown reasons, possibly following and/or changing from or to a Specialist track. Of the 100 on-line surveys sent out (See Appendix G), I initially collected 8 responses from former students. After further research, I found that FSU email addresses were deactivated 6 months after graduation or withdrawal of students. (I mention this here as an aspect of the online component. School e-mails, as with e-mails in general, may not be as reliable as permanent addresses and the postal service for tracking students in the long term.) I then researched personal e-mail addresses of former students through the LDP assignment, which included a resume with personal information. From here, I gathered 53 non-FSU e-mails, as well as addresses and phone numbers of the remainder of the target group.

Of the total of e-mails sent out to FSU and non-FSU e-mail addresses, 20 participants eventually responded to the survey request. Of those 20, I contacted and conducted e-mail based interviews with 5 participants, all via internet. The 5 participants interviewed were chosen based on convenience as they were the first 5 to respond and time limitations were becoming a factor. Of the surveys collected, 8 (40%) were from men and 12 (60%) were from women (See Figure 2). Of those responding, 1 (5%) identified as American Indian, Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1 (5%) identified as Asian, 2 (11%) identified as Black or African American, 15 (79%) identified as White, and 1 (5%) did not mark any ethnic identity (See Figure 3). Of those, 3 (15%) were between the ages of 20 – 30, another 9 (45%) were between 31 – 40,

a total of 6 (30%) between 41 – 50, and 2 (10%) between the ages of 51 – 60 (See Figure 4). In years of overall experience as an educator, 1 (5%) had 4 – 5 years of experience; 6 (30%) had 6 – 8 years of experience, 1 (5%) had 9 – 10 years of experience, 6 (30%) had 10 – 15 years of experience, and 6 (30%) had over 15 years of experience (See Figure 5). Students were divided by grade level assignment as follows: 5 (26%) served the elementary schools, 7 (37%) the middle schools, 5 (26%) the high schools, 1 (5%) on a K-12 campus, and 1 (5%) in a District Central Office (See Figure 6). Of these students, 10 (50%) came from the Florida Panhandle, 3 (15%) came from Northeast Florida, 4 (20%) from Central Florida, 2 (10%) came from South Florida, and 1 (5%) student came from outside of Florida (See Figure 7).

When responding to the prompt, “My online learning experiences were as rigorous as face-to-face courses,” 1 (5%) student said that they, “Strongly Disagree” with the statement; while 1 (5%) student neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement; 7 (35%) of the students agreed with the statement and 11 (55%) of the students said they, “Strongly Agree.” When responding to the second prompt, “I feel my online course(s) successfully prepared me to serve as an educational leader,” 3 (15%) disagreed, 5 (25%) agreed, and 12 (60%) strongly agreed (See Figure 8 and 9).

Survey prompts Three and Four explored student satisfaction with the online interaction. When responding to the prompt, “I felt connected to my professors/I had a high level of interaction,” 1 (5%) of the students strongly disagreed, 1 (5%) disagreed, 2 (10%) neither agreed or disagreed, 7 (35%) agreed and 9 (45%) strongly agreed. When responding to the same question about their peers, “I felt connected to my classmates/I had a high level of interaction,” 4 (20%) disagreed, 2 (10%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 9 (45%) agreed, and 5 (25%) strongly agreed (See Figures 10 and 11).

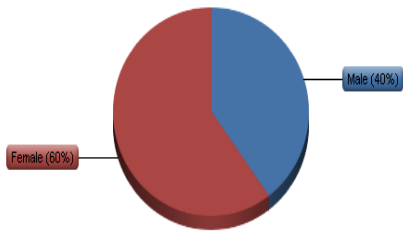


Figure 2. Gender: This figure shows the breakdown of gender of the 20 survey respondents.

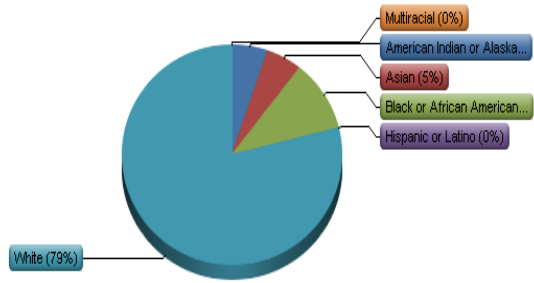


Figure 3. Ethnicity: This figure shows the breakdown of the ethnicity of the 20 survey respondents.

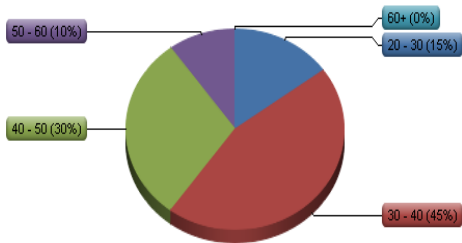


Figure 4. Age: This figure shows the breakdown of the age of the 20 survey respondents.

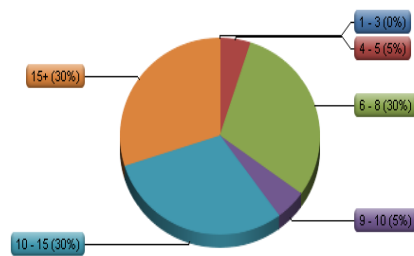


Figure 5. Experience: This figure shows the breakdown of the experience of the 20 survey respondents.

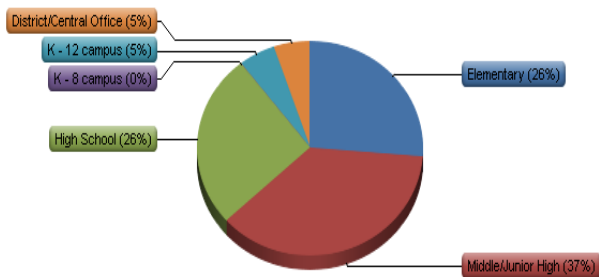


Figure 6. Grade Level/Campus Assignment: This figure shows the breakdown of the different grade levels or campuses represented by the 20 survey respondents

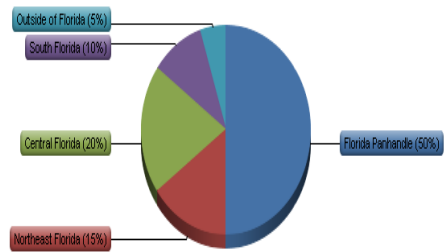


Figure 7. Geographic region: This figure shows the various regions of Florida represented by the 20 survey respondents

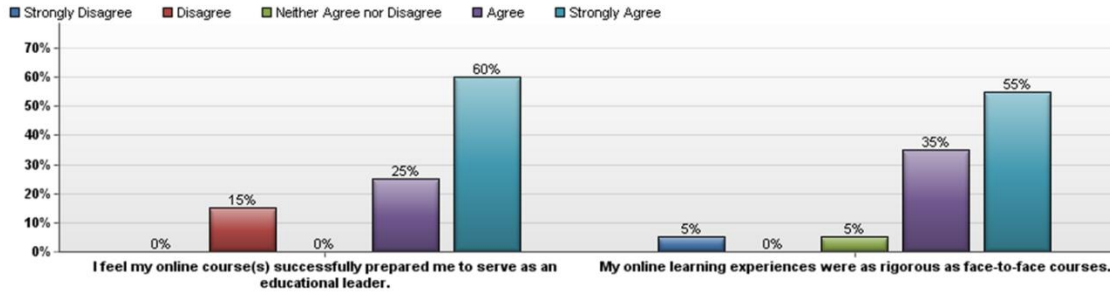


Figure 8. I feel my online course(s) successfully prepared me to serve as an educational leader

Figure 9. My online learning experiences were as rigorous as face-to-face courses

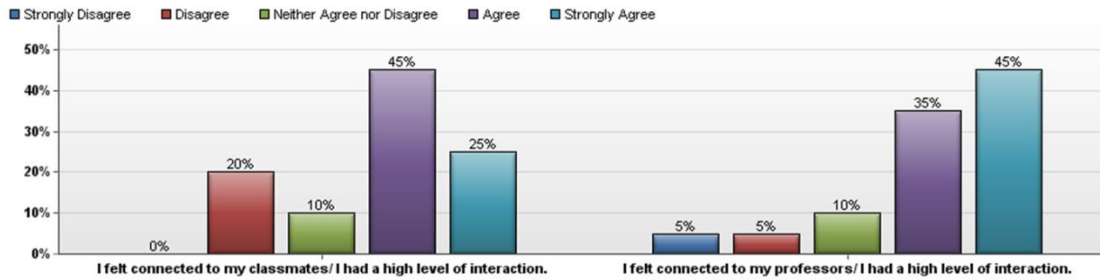


Figure 10. I felt connected to my classmates/ I had a high level of interaction

Figure 11. I felt connected to my professors/ I had a high level of interaction

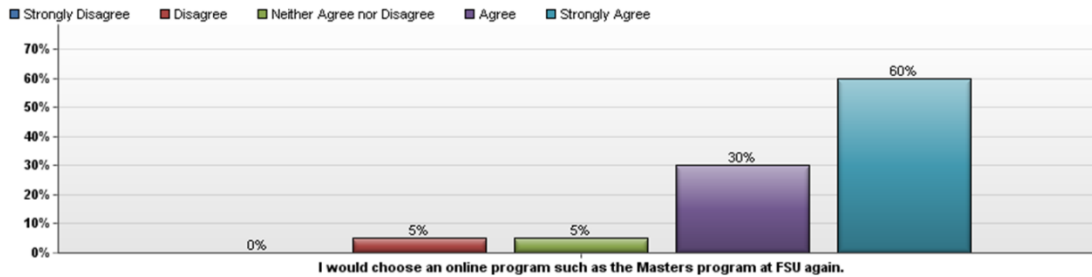


Figure 12. I would choose an online program such as the Master's program at FSU again

The final prompt for the online satisfaction participation, "I would choose an online program such as the Master's program at FSU again," was also more positive than negative. For this prompt, 1 (5%) student disagreed, 1 (5%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 6 (30%) agreed, and 12 (60%) strongly agreed (See Figure 12).

The final section of the survey explored student satisfaction with the MSEL/A program itself, including the practicum and the portfolio. On the first prompt, "The Practicum course set

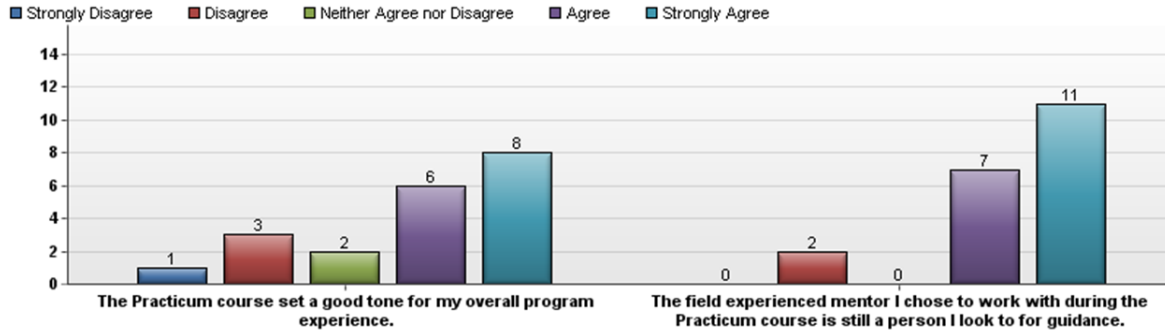


Figure 13 The Practicum course set a good tone for my overall program experience

Figure 14. The field experienced mentor I chose to work with during the Practicum course is still a person I look to for guidance

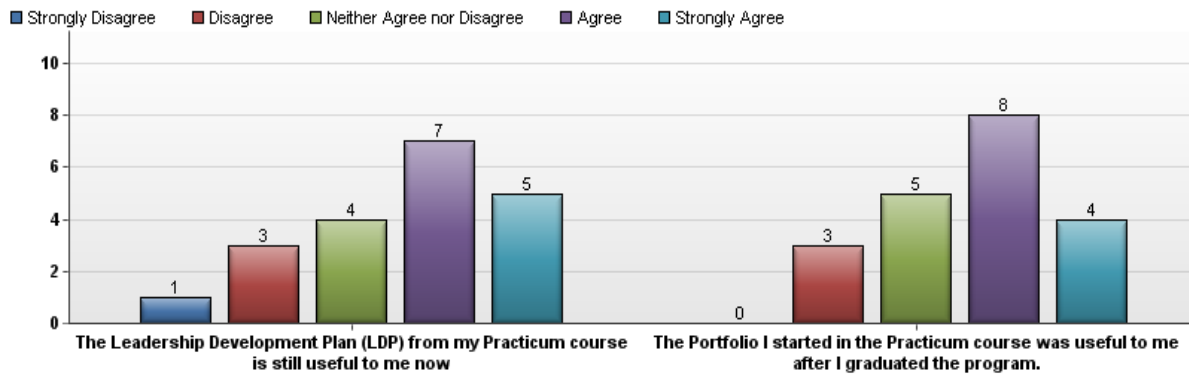


Figure 15. The Leadership Development Plan (LDP) from my Practicum course is still useful to me now

Figure 16 The Portfolio I started in the Practicum course was useful to me after I graduated the program

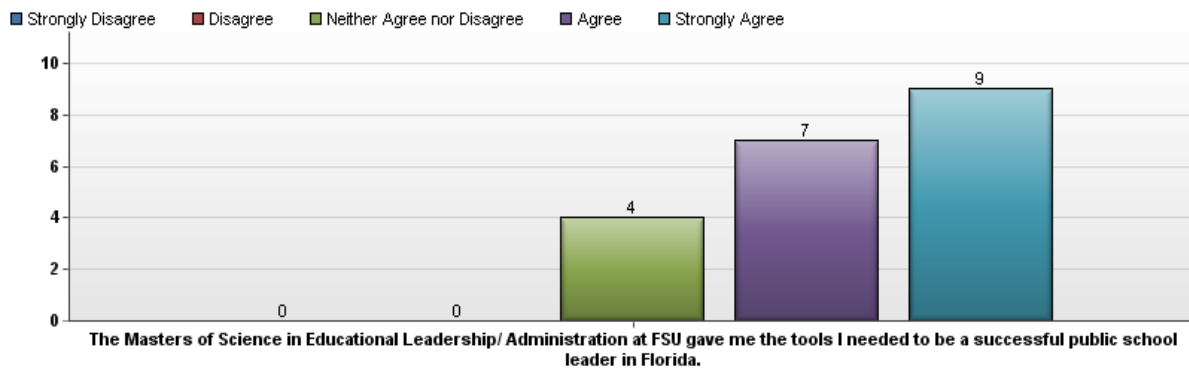


Figure 17. The Masters of Science in Educational Leadership/ Administration at FSU gave me the tools I needed to be a successful public school leader in Florida

a good tone for my overall program experience,” 1 (5%) strongly disagreed, 3 (15%) disagreed, 2 (10%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 6 (30%) agreed, and 8 (40%) strongly agreed. On the second prompt, “The field experienced mentor I chose to work with during the Practicum course is still a person I look to for guidance,” 2 (10%) disagreed, 7 (35%) agreed, and 11 (55%) strongly agreed (See Figures 13 and 14). The third prompt was also specific to the practicum assignments. On this prompt, “The Leadership Development Plan (LDP) from my Practicum course is still useful to me now,” 1 (5%) strongly disagreed, 3 (15%) disagreed, 4 (20%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 7 (35%) agreed, and 5 (25%) strongly agreed (See Figure 15).

The prompts on the portfolio and the overall course both gathered positive results overall. On the portfolio prompt, “The Portfolio I started in the Practicum course was useful to me after I graduated the program,” 3 (15%) disagreed, 5 (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 8 (40%) agreed, and 4 (20%) strongly agreed (See Figure 16). On the prompt for the overall program, “The Masters of Science in Educational Leadership/Administration at FSU gave me the tools I needed to be a successful public school leader in Florida,” 4 (20%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 7 (35%) agreed, and 9 (45%) strongly agreed (See Figure 17).

Summary of Quantitative and Demographic Findings

Of those participants who responded to the survey a majority were female, white, between 30 and 40 years of age. The majority had a minimum of 6 years of experience, and most taught in middle schools, though elementary and high schools were well represented. Although all areas of the state were represented, the majority lived in the Florida panhandle during their time in the MSEL/A program.

Of those who responded, 19 (90%) had over 6 years of experience, 12 (60%) had over 10 years of experience; 12 (60%) were female and 15 (79%) were White. While 9 (45%) were 31 –

40 years of age, the majority had a minimum of 6 years of experience; 6 had 6 – 8 years (30%), 6 had 10 – 15 years (30%) and 6 had over 15 years (30%). There was a drop off at 9 – 10 years, which was 1 participant (5%).

When responding to prompts based on student satisfaction with the online component of the MSEL/A program, an average of 17 (84%) of survey participants responded favorably to the online program, with either an agree or strongly agree. This included satisfaction with both teacher interaction and peer interaction. When asked if they would choose a similar online program again, 19 (90%) respond positively.

When responding to prompts based on student satisfaction with the overall academic program, an average of 14 (72%) survey participants responded favorably to the MSEL/A program, including the practicum, the portfolio, and the overall program. Specifically as to whether the MSEL/A program adequately prepared them for an educational leadership position, 16 (80%) survey participants responded favorably.

Description of Qualitative Research Findings

Data collected through online surveys, interviews, and content analysis revealed various findings that are presented in the form of responses to the research questions. The findings are grouped in three categories correlating to the three research questions. These include areas of “discrepancies” between the stated outcomes of the curriculum and the actual outcomes; “perceived growth” in students’ knowledge of educational leadership issues; “satisfaction” for the students with the course and overall program.

Sample comments were chosen by random selection of available student work from the practicum and portfolios. As often as possible, work was chosen by using an online Random Number generator. When student work was unobtainable, a new number was generated and

matched to a different student. In reviewing student work for discrepancies, certain themes developed as to the various assignments. For Research Question #1 (RQ#1), these themes included *Usefulness of the Assignment*, and students' *Self-Awareness of Growth*. Student comments chosen from assignments reflect these areas.

Research Question 1: Are there any discrepancies between the stated outcomes of the course and the actual outcomes as demonstrated by the students and evidenced in the e-portfolios?

Discrepancies in outcomes exist when a stated objective is not met or is met in a less than effective way. When objectives are written in quantitatively measurable terms, then outcomes can be more easily measured. If a course objective states that students will memorize and recite the 10 Leadership Standards, quantitative research methods can be used to measure how many standards a student has memorized and can recite. Qualitative research is used to gain a better understanding of objectives written with less concrete definitions, such as “explore,” “describe,” and “understand.” The syllabi for the practicum courses use more abstract objectives and concepts, such as these. I used qualitative methods in content analysis to find evidence that students had “explored” and “understood,” “created,” “identified,” “reflected,” and “engaged,” as well as being able to “develop,” “establish,” “analyze,” and “build.”

According to a compilation of the Practicum course syllabi and addendums (see Appendix D), stated outcomes for the course in general include: A.) an exploration of established resources through the William Cecil Golden School Leadership Development Program (WCG) website, which is coordinated through the FLDOE; B.) the creation of a Leadership Development Plan that is meant to help students grow in their “professional knowledge and skills in relation to the Florida Leadership Standards” and be useful to them throughout the program and beyond; C.)

understanding of the ten Florida Leadership Standards; D.) exploration of the FELE and exposure to the 93 competencies covered by the exam; E.) identification of, and the beginning of a long-term relation with, an experienced mentor who will have oversight of “growth and development to the end of a practicing school leader” including any formal and informal conversations, meetings, and shadowing opportunities; F. & G.) discussion board posts relating to assigned readings (Objective F) and to the colloquium series of videos introducing students to experts in the field sharing their experiences with the class via recorded conversation with the instructor (Objective G). I combined Objective F and G as they are both Discussion Board post and response assignments.

Outcome A: Resources at WCG Website

Outcome A, the exploration of the WCG website, is accomplished early in each Practicum class, usually in Week 2 of the coursework. This outcome is measured through use of an assignment called the Scavenger Hunt. The Scavenger Hunt asks students a series of questions that can be answered by exploring the WCG website thoroughly and writing out the answers on a Scavenger Hunt assignment form (see Appendix J). Students work in pairs, sharing the majority of their answers, and answering some open-ended critical thinking questions individually. Student scores indicate that 100% of students had a passing score on the Scavenger Hunt, thus meeting the objective of exploring the WCG Leadership website as an established resource. Following are student comments on the use of the WCG website (added emphasis is mine).

Usefulness of Assignment. *I learned a plethora of information over the past two weeks.*

Thank you for this activity....I question, however, how many current administrator’s use this wonderful resource. I asked a principal I knew and they had never heard of the William Cecil Golden Website nor any of the modules. I’ve learned a vast amount of

knowledge in reference to administration and resources available. I am SO glad that we were able to conduct this scavenger hunt. *What an invaluable source to keep in my repertoire*” (Student #28, Cohort D).

Another student example follows here:

First and foremost, I learned that this website even exists. I think it is amazing! Florida leaders have one centralized location in which they can have access to so much information and to many different tools. By exploring the WCG Website Resources I took great interest in the time management analysis tool and to the Individual Leadership Development Plan tool. I think that both of these resources will be very beneficial in the future. It is great to have a framework at the tip of my fingers. I also learned that there are online courses that can be taken to improve professional knowledge (Student #2, Cohort H).

Self-Awareness of Growth. Students often found their knowledge levels challenged and became more aware of their needed areas of growth, as in the example that follows:

As I completed the Principal Leadership Standards Post Inventory, I found myself frustrated that my scores were not higher...my frustration came from having to choose between more than one answer that I felt answered the question sufficiently. Therefore, I feel that I learned even more by completing the post inventory because I spent considerable time dissecting and contemplating each answer to determine the best answer, and then if I chose incorrectly I went back to try to decipher why the other answer was the best choice.... I feel confident that my knowledge in these areas will continue to grow..., but my confidence also comes from the fact that I know that I can always go back to the William C. Golden website for Florida school leaders if I feel the need to expand my knowledge in any of the leadership standards (Student #40, Cohort F).

Further in-depth analysis on this particular objective revealed little deviation from the basic standardized answers to the questions. I have personal anecdotal experience with the Scavenger Hunt assignment, having personally graded 36 out of the 100 available assignments, those from Cohorts G and H, as well as having created the answer key for the updated version of the assignment. I also reviewed another 15 total randomly chosen assignments from all cohort groups. In the 51 total Scavenger Hunt assignments I reviewed (including those graded), 100% of students agreed that the assignment was helpful and that the WCG website would be useful now and in the future, and 100% made some type of comment on how much they had learned and how much they hoped to grow by the end of the course and/or program. Of those students, 100% made some type of comment on their surprise at their initial performance on the Principal Leadership Standards Inventory (PLSI) within the website and their assurance that future attempts would be more successful. References to the website that were found in portfolio assignments were related specifically to the PLSI exam, which will be explored in more depth under the heading of Outcome C: Principal Leadership Standards Inventory.

Outcome B: Leadership Development Plan

Outcome B is the creation of a Leadership Development Plan that can be used throughout the program and as “a springboard for...continued professional growth and development beyond...matriculation through the program and into an entry level position as an educational leader.” The development of a plan is an assignment that stretches over a three week period, around Weeks 6, 7, and 8 in the coursework, and is worth 25 points out of a possible 100 points for the class. At 25% of the overall grade, and with the expectation that it will be referred back to and used in other courses within the program, all students complete this assignment before moving on to the next course, thus meeting the basic requirement of the stated outcome, to

“develop a plan” for leadership. (A brief overview of the other courses in the overall program will follow at the end of this chapter.)

Following are student comments on the LDP:

Usefulness of the Assignment. Creating my Leadership Development Plan was eye opening. Prior to the assignment, my plan was to take classes, pass the FELE, and get a position as Assistant Principal. Developing the plan caused me to think about what I need to do not only to meet the requirements, but to prepare myself to be the best administrator possible (Student #35, Cohort H).

Self-Awareness of Growth.. I am proud to say that one of the areas I needed the most improvement with on my Plan was in the area of Community and Stakeholder Partnerships, but as I addressed this concern with my mentor, we discussed the opportunity to have me head a new program called I-Moms for all mothers (or female family members of our students), to come to campus and become more involved in their child’s education (Student #4, Cohort H).

Student perspectives on the LDP give an indication of how well the objective was met, that students did, indeed, create a Leadership Development Plan. To that end, the objective was met without discrepancy. The LDP, itself, however, provides more opportunity for analysis and is discussed in more depth throughout this chapter.

Outcome C: Principal Leadership Standards Inventory

Outcome C is for students to gain an understanding of the ten leadership standards that are required knowledge for all Florida administrators. To help gain this understanding, students are presented with a self-assessment quiz on the WCG website, the Principal Leadership Standards Inventory (PLSI). These standards were last revised in 2011 and the WCG PLSI quiz is aligned

to the standards. Students are encouraged by the website to take the inventory at the beginning of their program and then again after a year of working with the resources of the WCG website

4. You have been the principal of Special City Elementary School, a midsized school, for two years. You are concerned with the lack of improvement in student achievement in reading and math. Although the school test results have indicated satisfactory performance, increases have been minimal and the faculty believes this is sufficient. What steps will MOST likely increase student achievement in reading and math for your school?

A. working with the faculty to analyze student academic performance data, brainstorm problem definitions, collaborate on possible solutions, and develop an action plan that identifies priority instructional processes and academic content targets to improve student achievement in reading and math.

B. present historical student data to the teachers for review and suggestions, prioritize the areas of concern, identify strategies to improve student achievement, and monitor student progress.

C. tell teachers that the school improvement goals are to improve student achievement in reading and math, recommend professional development, and monitor classroom instruction and student progress in those classes with high percentages of under-performing students.

D. hire a consultant to identify the area of need and make suggestions of strategies that

Figure 18 Sample Question from the PLSI

The quiz is made up of multiple choice questions which give in-depth coverage of all ten of the standards. A sample question from the inventory is seen in Figure 18. The inventory tests students on all ten standards, including: Student Learning Results; Student Learning as a Priority, Instructional Plan Implementations; Faculty Development; Learning Environment; Decision Making; Leadership Development; School Management; Communication; and Professional and Ethical Behaviors. The quiz is only offered online at the WCG website and it is scored and stored automatically for future reference by students.

Following is an example of student comments on experiences with the PLSI quiz.

Usefulness of the Assignment. I have taken to viewing the PLSI as an on-going tool for honing my skills as a school leader. In the words of Stephen Covey, I will continue to use the PLSI to “Sharpen” my saw, even after I become a school leader. I’ve found the William C. Golden site to be a great resource, easily accessible and available 24 hours daily. The training modules are extensive and a valuable tool for rising and current school leaders (Student #24, Cohort F).

Self-Awareness of Growth. I found my first experience taking the PLSI both interesting and disappointing....Many times I found myself vacillating back and forth trying to decide between two possible answers, with slightly different wording. The disappointment is that unfortunately many times I choose the wrong answer....I scored 75% on the remaining eight standards. While this is not too bad, it is still annoying. I would like to score 100% in each of the ten areas. I believe that my actual knowledge exceeds the scores I got on the inventory test. I will endeavor to continue learning more about each of the ten leadership standards so that I can be an effective instructional leader (Student #66, Cohort A).

The student continued with an examination of the results from the second PLSI test at the end of the program, in the e-portfolio.

For the most part I saw increases in all scores from pre to post tests. I was happy with the overall positive results but not pleased at all with my lowest score. The Instructional Leadership strand remained the same at 75%. The initial score for Managing the Learning environment was 100% which decreased to 75% on the final. I attribute this to the fact that I found some of the questions confusing. The Learning Accountability and Assessment strand showed no gains remaining at 75%. The Decision Making Strategies strand showed a marked increase from 50% to 100% on the final. Likewise, the Technology strand increased from the initial test score of 50% to 100% on the final test. On the Human Resource Development strand I am proud to say I scored 100% on pre and post tests. The score for the Ethical Leadership strand increased from 75% to 100% on the final test. On the Vision strand I made great strides increasing from 50% to 100%. Conversely on the Community and Stakeholder strand I actually showed a decrease in scores from 75% to 50%. I attribute this to rushing through the test and not reading the questions thoroughly. I increased my scores on the Diversity strand from 75% to 100% on the final test (Student #66, Cohort A).

Answering the question of discrepancies as presented in Research Question #1, a random sampling of student comments indicated that students did gain an understanding of the ten leadership standards that are required knowledge for all Florida administrators. Of 25 random student samples analyzed, 100% indicated an understanding of the ten leadership standards. Along with the preceding comments, certain themes appeared in the students' work. These themes indicated the PLSI helped students identify strengths and weaknesses they were

previously unaware of (*“the PLSI helped me identify...strengths and weaknesses in reference to the ten Florida leadership standards”*) and that, after taking the exam, students did gain an understanding, increasing their knowledge of leadership skills needed (*“This was the first time that I had taken the inventory, and I already feel more knowledgeable of the standards now.”*).

The PLSI results also indicate growth in student knowledge from the beginning of the Practicum through its conclusion as well as through the end of the overall program. Comparison of the results of the PLSI exam from the different phases of the program consistently indicate student growth. This finding is explored in more detail under Research Question #2.

Outcome D: Florida Educational Leadership Exam

Outcome D is exploration of the Florida Educational Leadership Exam, or FELE, and exposure to the 93 competencies covered by the exam. The approach to exploring the FELE has evolved over the semesters. The Fall 2008 instructions for exploring the FELE directed students to “take a tour of the EDA Student Center on Blackboard” and to browse links on the “proposed new FELE exam,” competencies and skills, proposed test configuration, application deadlines and fees, test information guide, and both “draft” and “current” FELE references. The Week 9 and 10 assignment also directed students to complete a FELE Crossword as a group project, and to discuss the FELE with their field mentors. The FELE Crossword was used through the Fall 2009 Practicum I session.

Beginning with the Spring 2010 semester, the crossword was replaced by a FELE Study Guide. The study guide consisted of 10 questions and emulated the Scavenger Hunt format. Question topics ranged from standards assessed to costs of taking the test (See Figure 19). In Spring 2011, an actual Practice version of the FELE itself was added. Since Spring 2011, students have taken the practice FELE toward the latter half of the semester. While students

were not graded on their actual answers, the Practice FELE was used to give students the feel of the FELE and the questions that would be asked. Students' grades were based on participation, earning points for each question answered, whether answered correctly or not. Questions from

2. What is the process and stipulation for requesting that your test be manually scored or verified?

Do I need to register for a session? Yes, score verification sessions are provided by appointment only, and walk-ins cannot be accommodated. See "How do I register for a session?" below for more information.

How do I register for a session? You can register for a score verification session on the FTCE/FELE contractor website, www.fl.nesinc.com, by selecting "Register Now." If you do not have an online account, you will be guided through creating one during registration. When your registration is complete, you will receive an admission ticket by e-mail confirming the exact date, time, and location selected during registration.

Is there a fee for a score verification session? You must pay a nonrefundable \$25 charge at the time of registration, using a credit card (VISA or MasterCard only) or a debit or check card that carries the VISA or MasterCard logo and that can be used without the entry of a personal identification number.

When can I register? What is the deadline for registering or attending a session? You will not be able to register until your official score report is released. You have 30 days from the date of score release to register for a session. Sessions must be scheduled for a date no more than 45 days after the date of score release.

How do I change the date of my session? If you need to reschedule your session date or time, visit the FTCE/FELE contractor website, www.fl.nesinc.com, log in to your account, and select the new date or time. Registrations for your session can be changed as many times as you wish but cannot be scheduled beyond the allowable registration window. You must make changes to scheduled sessions at least 24 hours in advance.

Figure 19. Sample Question from the FELE Study Guide

the Practice FELE included the example seen in Figure 20. Student’s perceived growth on the FELE questions is explored in more detail under Research Question #2.

Question 2

Smith Elementary School is an urban school with a large minority population. Over the last 2 years the percentage of African American and Hispanic students scoring at Level 3 or above in reading and mathematics has dropped by 30% and test scores for nonminority students remain below the district. In an effort to improve student achievement, the principal wants to engage the faculty in a student-driven approach to professional development. The best method to achieve this goal would be through

Answer

- A. mathematics department meetings.
- B. action research teams.
- C. textbook committee meetings.
- D. classroom walk-through training.

Figure 20. Sample Question from the FELE Practice Exam

Outcome E: Mentor Experience

Outcome E is the identification of, and the beginning of a long-term relation with, an experienced mentor currently in the field. According to the course syllabus, the purpose of having a mentor, “an expert in the field” is to assist students in understanding appropriate goals, sharpening leadership skills, and shaping a positive disposition at becoming an educational leader. “The time spent with the mentor will include but not be limited to discourse, activities,

observations and meetings that amount to 40 hours of interaction each semester for the next 3 semesters.” Students were required to submit a completed mentoring log at the end of each semester that detailed the mentoring activities they were involved in. Examples of comments from those mentoring logs are as follows:

Usefulness of the Assignment. My mentor and school principal have been more than willing to take the time to sit with me and discuss assignments or personal goals. *These exchanges have given me the confidence and support to initiate change within my department.* My principal demonstrated his support when he said, “I believe in you and your abilities so do whatever you need to for yourself, don’t let the others in your department challenge your efforts” (personal communication, July 30, 2009). This type of support has stemmed from the exchanges required by this course (Student #34, Cohort C).

Another student wrote the following:

The mentoring experiences were incredibly valuable. I can’t imagine simply taking classes and truly being prepared to take on an administrative role. The assigned discussion topics were excellent starting points which opened my eyes to some things I had not thought about previously. In addition to those conversations, my mentor provided many examples of actual situations and we’ve discussed how I think I would have handled them and how they were actually handled. *These are the real experiences* I will be able to reflect upon not only when I interview, but also when I am an Assistant Principal” (Student #35, Cohort H).

Following is a third sample of student comments.

Self-Awareness of Growth. I had difficulty choosing one mentor, as I have several people that I work with on a frequent basis that already mentor me in many ways....This is the reason that I had three people fill out the mentor form. Although I focused on only one of

these mentors for the purpose of my practicum experience, all three have provided much encouragement and guidance and will continue to....*This has been a great experience in learning the process of what happens at the Administration Center and how it translates to what takes place in the schools.* It has made me appreciate all that goes into an administrative decision and the various details that follow, even when the decision appears to be a simple one....*This has been invaluable to me both personally and professionally.*

(Student #14, Cohort E).

Student mentor logs, from both the practicum and the portfolios, were explored in more detail under Research Question #2.

Outcomes F & G: Discussion Board

Outcome F and Outcome G are combined as they are the same outcomes for two separate media. One is a Blackboard discussion on textbook readings and the other is a Blackboard discussion on videos watched. Both discussions are based on what students learn about leadership and practical application of leadership theories. The syllabus states that students should “Reflect upon and analyze seminar discussion topics observed in a Colloquium Series; and Reflect upon and analyze concepts learned and discussed in a book study.” The Colloquium series consisted of pre-recorded interviews with experts in the field of educational leadership discussing their own experiences, philosophies, and advice on school leadership (See Appendix K). The readings centered around a main textbook, but also included other articles and various assigned readings. Students were given discussion prompts and were asked to respond to those prompts, and to their peers, on the Blackboard Discussion Board.

Here are some student comments, showing reflection and analysis, from those discussions.

Usefulness of the Assignment. Book Discussion: Coble (2005) states that if you are a leader who wants to be there, you will be preoccupied with making your organization a higher performing organization. This is the way I treat my classroom. I strive to meet the needs of all my students, and set high expectations and do not let anything get in the way of doing that. *I was challenged to create and implement the kindergarten inclusion class.* At the beginning of the year, my student with Autism was not reading, writing, or expressing himself in an age appropriate manner. By the end of the school year he was meeting all grade level expectation, having no melt downs over communication barriers, and was promoted to first grade (Student # 31, Cohort G).

Book Discussion: The reading made a clear distinction between words and actions and the perceptions of observers. “What you do as a leader is a living testament that influences others. Mission statements and other written documents pale in significance to a lived sense of direction – your moral vision in action” (Brubaker & Coble, 2005, p. 173).

“Understand that a leader’s behavior, whether perceived to be positive or negative, sets examples for those in the organization who are watching” (Brubaker & Coble, 2005, p. 175). *Leader’s actions are perceived as either positive or negative depending on the point of view.* Coworkers and I sometimes have different perceptions about our administrations actions. The perception is dependent on your point of view. It is hard to please all the people all the time, and *according to my principal you have to keep the students’ academic achievement as the number one priority* and go from there (Student # 1, Cohort H).

Self-Awareness of Growth. Video Discussion: One of the first things that resonated with me was Lang’s discussion about *how we are still learning about how to meet the needs of all students in schools* (Blackwell-Flanagan & Calzado, 2009). As a practicing school

psychologist, *I struggle with this reality every day as I collaborate with teachers, principals, reading coaches, and others to develop evidence-based interventions that will make meaningful differences for children.* Hansen's statement that "the leader has to know enough to know what they don't know" is very important and consistent with last week's reading that highlights the value of self-analysis, questioning, and self-reflection (Student # 37, Cohort H).

Video Discussion: One of the questions posed by Blackwell-Flanagan caught my attention because *I have wondered lately what a school leader is to do when a teacher lacks motivation to truly facilitate student achievement.* Recent legislative moves have caused me to reflect upon the role of an administrator in selecting highly effective teachers. Pinholster commented that he tries to find the place the teacher fits best, whether it is a grade level or subject area (Blackwell-Flanagan & Colzado, 2009). *I have found this to be true in my own teaching; I am much more comfortable with certain grade levels than others, and therefore, tend to be much more effective teaching at that level.* Rahming explained her strategy of allowing a faculty panel to talk to interviewees during the hiring process to give them an opportunity to highlight the importance of commitment to the job at her school and what would be expected of them if hired (Student # 47, Cohort H).

The discussion board assignments served not only as an opportunity for students to reflect and analyze the assignments, but to share their thoughts with the class as a whole, or at times in smaller groups. This objective was met and exceeded in providing a network for students to interact with each other in a way that asynchronous online classes would otherwise lack. While it was not physical face-to-face interaction, students commented on similarities in life situations, commonalities in work experiences, and shared understandings of leadership and education.

Summary of Research Question #1 Findings

Discrepancies in outcomes exist when a stated objective is not met or is met in a less than effective way. Objectives for the practicum course direct students to explore, understand, create, identify, reflect, and engage, among other equally ambiguous directives. To the extent that those terms can be measured, evidence shows that students did meet the objectives of the course. Student documents from both the Practicum course and the Portfolio course were examined, and outcomes were analyzed. All participating students in each semester met stated outcomes before being allowed to continue. In some cases, students started with one cohort group and ended with another cohort group, and occasionally, individual assignments were not completed, though never to the extent that a student would fail the course, or fail to meet the overall objective (e.g., Exploration of the WCG was evidenced and a PLSI exam taken, but no second PLSI exam was found). Students who did not end in a cohort within the timeframe of this study were not included in the study. Content analysis of student material from multiple semesters indicates that, as written, there are no discrepancies between stated outcomes and actual outcomes.

Research Question 2: What perceived growth has been made in student knowledge and skills due to participation in the practicum?

The focus of this research was specifically the Practicum, itself. For this reason, RQ#2 explored the PLSI exam results, the LDPs, FELE preparation, and the Reflections at the end of the course. Comparing comments made in these assignments with comments made in the earlier versions gave an indication of students' growth within the semester. I compared the data with later PLSI results, the final program versions of the LDPs and Reflection assignments in the Portfolios, and student perceptions on FELE results to understand overall program experience.

Growth in the Principal Leadership Standards Inventory. Of the 100 available PLSI Summaries, 10 were initially chosen at random for more in-depth analysis. A random numbers generator chose 2 students from Cohort A, 2 students from Cohort B, 2 students from Cohort D, 3 students from Cohort F, and 1 from Cohort H. Unfortunately, 8 of the 10 summaries that were randomly chosen were incomplete or did not have a matching component in the Portfolio (in one case, the initial results were missing from the Practicum). These summaries were later replaced by other summaries, but the results are shown here. This provided results from two events, the initial inventory and the follow up, from which to make a comparison. Using 10 summaries with 10 categories each, I had 100 results to analyze per event, a total of 200 results to compare. The range of the results included increments of 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% proficiency in each category. Categories remained the same from the initial test through the later attempts for each cohort.

Initial results are as follows: Student #51F showed an increase in 5 of 10 areas, a decrease in 2 areas and no change in 3 areas in initial results. Student #87F showed an increase in 1 of 10 areas, decrease in 1 areas and no change in 8 areas in initial results. Student #55D showed an increase in 6 of 10 areas, decrease in 1 areas and no change in 3 areas in initial results. Student #88B showed an increase in 6 of 10 areas, decrease in 1 areas and no change in 3 areas in initial results. Student #52B showed an increase in 5 of 10 areas, decrease in 0 areas and no change in 5 areas in initial results. Student #24F showed an increase in 4 of 10 areas, decrease in 2 areas and no change in 4 areas in initial results. Student #46H showed only one attempt and, therefore, had insufficient data for an intra-practicum comparison. Student #28D showed an increase in 3 of 10 areas, decrease in 5 areas and no change in 2 areas in initial results. Student #80A showed an increase in 3 of 10 areas, decrease in 5 areas and no change in 2 areas in initial results.

Student #66A showed an increase in 5 of 10 areas, decrease in 2 areas and no change in 3 areas, initially.

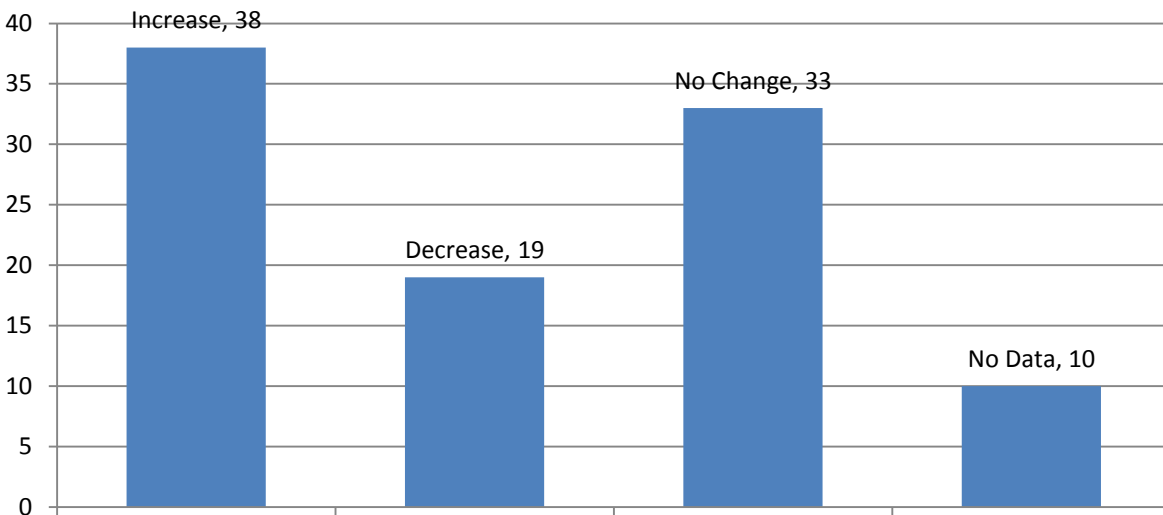


Figure 21. Random Results Comparison Pre-Portfolio: Student work chosen at random for comparison

This shows results of the 10 randomly selected summaries for Pre-Portfolio Comparison. The aggregate scores show an increase in student proficiency of 38%, compared to a decrease in proficiency of 19%. There was no change in performance for 33% of the questions, and no data for 10%. Overall, student proficiency on the PLSI increased from the initial results of the scores at the beginning of the Practicum.

Randomly chosen summaries that were not used for comparison with results from the Portfolios due to insufficient or missing data included the following: Student #55D, Student #88B, Student #52B, Student #24F, Student #46H, Student #28D, Student #80A, and Student #66A. Using these students for intra-program comparison resulted in an increase of 4%, and decrease of 1%, no change in 5%, and 90% missing data. Students #51F and #87F were kept in the second round and other summaries were selected at random until eight suitable data sources

were identified. In a comparison of the aggregate initial results with the aggregate Portfolio results, there was an overall increase.

1. Student #51 showed an increase in 5 of 10 areas, decrease in 2 areas and no change in 3 areas in initial results; but showed an increase in 4 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 5 areas, with overall scores higher, including 0 at 25%, 2 at 50%, 5 at 75%, 3 at 100% in the initial first round vs 0 at 25%, 1 at 50%, 6 at 75% and 3 at 100% in the second round.
2. Student #87 showed an increase in 1 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 8 areas in initial results; but showed increase in 4 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 5 areas, with overall scores higher, including 0 at 25%, 0 at 50%, 6 at 75%, 4 at 100% in the initial first round vs 1 at 25, 2 at 50%, 4 at 75% and 3 at 100% in the second round.
3. Student #15 showed an increase in 5 of 10 areas, a decrease in 2 areas, and no change in 3 areas in initial results; but showed increase in 5 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 4 areas, with overall scores higher, including 0 at 25%, 4 at 50%, 4 at 75%, 2 at 100% in the initial first round vs 0 at 25%, 1 at 50%, 2 at 75%, 7 at 100% in the second round.
4. Student #4 showed an increase in 4 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 5 areas in initial results; but showed increase in 6 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 3 areas, with overall scores higher, including 0 at 25%, 1 at 50%, 4 at 75%, 5 at 100% in the initial first round vs 0 at 25%, 1 at 50%, 1 at 75%, 8 at 100% in the second round.

5. Student #73 showed an increase in 4 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 5 areas in initial results; but showed increase in 3 of 10 areas, a decrease in 0 areas, and no change in 7 areas (all 100% to 100%), with overall scores higher, including 0 at 25%, 2 at 50%, 3 at 75%, 5 at 100% in the initial first round vs 0 at 25%, 0 at 50%, 1 at 75%, 9 at 100% in the second round.
6. Student #35 showed an increase in 4 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 5 areas in initial results; but showed increase in 3 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 6 areas, with overall scores higher, including 4 at 25%, 0 at 50%, 1 at 75%, 5 at 100% in the initial first round vs 0 at 25%, 2 at 50%, 1 at 75%, 7 at 100% in the second round.
7. Student #61 showed an increase in 4 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 5 areas in initial results; but showed increase in 3 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 6 areas, with overall scores higher, including 1 at 25%, 1 at 50%, 5 at 75%, 3 at 100% in the initial first round vs 0 at 25%, 1 at 50%, 2 at 75%, 7 at 100% in the second round.
8. Student #38 showed an increase in 4 of 10 areas, a decrease in 2 areas, and no change in 4 areas in initial results; but showed increase in 4 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 5 areas, with overall scores higher, including 1 at 25%, 1 at 50%, 2 at 75%, 6 at 100% in the initial first round vs 0 at 25%, 0 at 50%, 2 at 75%, 8 at 100% in the second round.
9. Student #89 showed an increase in 1 of 10 areas, a decrease in 3 areas, and no change in 6 areas in initial results; but showed increase in 0 of 10 areas, a decrease in 1 area, and no change in 9 areas (8 at 100%), with overall scores higher,

including 0 at 25%, 0 at 50%, 3 at 75%, 7 at 100% in the initial first round vs 0 at 25%, 0 at 50%, 2 at 75%, 8 at 100% in the second round.

10. Student #49 showed an increase in 3 of 10 areas, a decrease in 2 areas, and no change in 5 areas in initial results; but showed increase in 0 of 10 areas, a decrease in 0 areas, and no change in 10 areas (8 at 100%), with overall scores higher, including 1 at 25%, 2 at 50%, 3 at 75%, 4 at 100% in the initial first round vs 0 at 25%, 1 at 50%, 1 at 75%, 8 at 100% in the second round.

Intra-Practicum Results

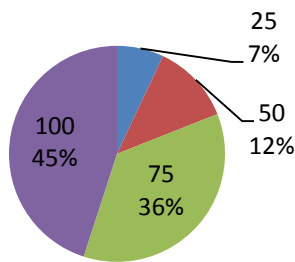


Figure 22. Intra-Practicum PLSI Growth Results

Portfolio Results

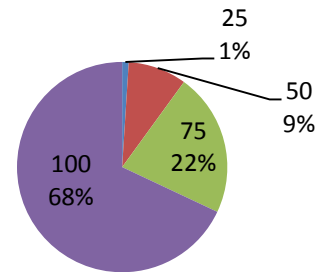


Figure 23. Intra-Portfolio PLSI Growth Results

PLSI Result Comparison Pre-Portfolio

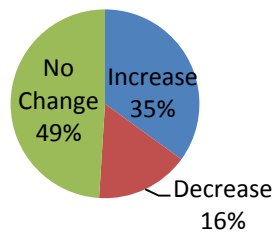


Figure 24. Aggregate scores for Practicum PLSI Results

PLSI Result Comparison Portfolio

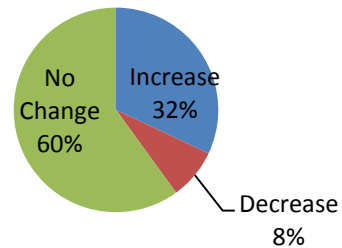


Figure 25. Aggregate scores for Portfolio PLSI Results

The comparisons show both an overall increase within the influence of the Practicum and in a comparison between Practicum and Portfolio course scores. According to the data, students showed growth in the area of the Principal Leadership Standards from the beginning of the practicum course to the end of the same semester, the conclusion of the Practicum. The data also indicate continued student growth in knowledge and skills over the course of the program as evidenced in the same student scores on the same inventory exam in the portfolios collected at the of the program.

Growth in the Reflections. Comments in the Reflection assignment at the end of the Practicum indicate a change in awareness, an awakening, as it were, to the idea that administration is not the same as teaching, and may be more of a challenge than many expected at the beginning of the class. Further comments, gleaned from the end of program Portfolio course, show a more healthy respect and better understanding of the requirements of an educational leader, and the differences between teaching and administration.

For coding student reflection exercises, I used a descriptive coding system that denotes data sources and student perceptions. To identify the various data sources from which data were acquired I used the following codes: Content Analysis (CA), Student Surveys (SS), Student Interviews (SI), Cohorts (A, B, C, D, etc.), and individual student participants (#1, #2, #3, #4, etc.). Within the Content Analysis, I coded comments that indicated student perceptions toward leadership pre-Practicum (SPtL-Pre), student perceptions toward leadership post-Practicum (SPtL-Post), and student perceptions toward leadership in the Portfolio (SPtL-Port).

A review of introductory posts on Blackboard in Week 1 indicated that students were excited about the program. In comments for pre-Practicum perceptions of leadership, I found a recurring theme of what I have termed “natural progression.” Students entering the program

often made some type of comment that indicated their belief that becoming an administrator was a natural progression, a “next step” in their educational career (e.g. *“I also know that I cannot stay in the classroom as a teacher forever, but I am not ready to leave yet”* and *“I have no idea if administration is what I want to do, but I agree that it is the next eventual step.”*). A second theme that emerged was one of “preparedness,” or a common belief that serving as a leader on a school committee, organizing activities, and coaching sports was naturally a precursor to the role of administrator (e.g. *“Since I have a variety of experiences in a leadership role, I thought I would be more familiar with all of the requirements of leadership as well as my own leadership style.”*).

A sample population of 10 students was chosen and reflections were analyzed from the end of the Practicum, as well as from the end of the program. Of those reflections analyzed from the Practicum course, 70% commented on natural progression, 20% made no comment of that type in the overall course reflections, and 10% were missing the reflection assignment. Of those reflections analyzed from the Practicum course, 60% commented on preparedness, 30% made no comment of that type in the overall course reflections. Again, there were 10% missing the reflection assignment.

When comparing student perceptions on leadership from their initial blackboard postings and introductions to comments in the reflections in Week 16, I believe growth can be seen. Student comments in the end of course reflection assignment indicated that students no longer considered administration as simply a “next step” in their teaching career, but as a different role, or set of roles, as one student put it, wearing “a lot of different hats.” Students indicated a new level of respect for the position of educational leader, as opposed to an educator who takes on leadership roles in various activities (e.g. *“The experiences this semester have really broadened*

my appreciation for the role of the administrator. I've gained a better understanding of many of the challenges of being principal, and the visionary skills required of an instructional leader," and *"I find myself defending the actions of administrators at my school when others are complaining."*

Natural Progression

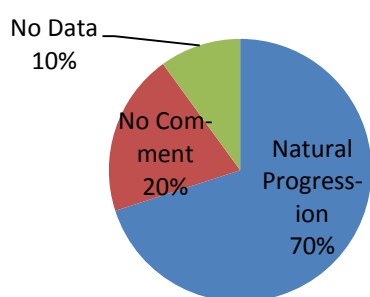


Figure 26. Natural Progression: Administration is next step up from teaching

Preparedness

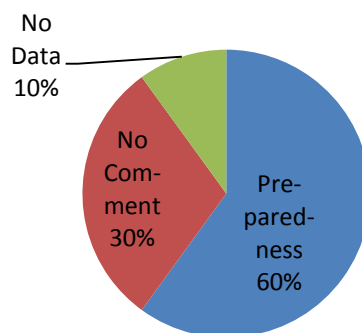


Figure 27. Preparedness: Feeling prepared from past experiences

End of program reflections found in the Portfolio included student thoughts and perceptions on the overall program. (*"One of the most eye-opening field experiences I worked on in the program was mining data last summer in my Decision Oriented Educational Research course."*). Comments also included how students used their experiences in the program (*"I took what I learned from the classes on leadership and was able to analyze my leaders based on the information I gathered."*). Comparing student perceptions in the Portfolio to those from the beginning of the program indicates student growth in understanding of educational leadership.

Growth in the LDPs. For the Leadership Development Plans, and comments regarding them, codes indicated student perceptions and concerns about leadership developed during the Practicum (SP/C_L-Pr), and student perceptions and concerns about leadership in the Portfolio

(SP/Ct_L-Pf). In comments for the end of Practicum LDPs, I found a recurring theme of ownership, students beginning to see their strengths and weaknesses and desiring to build on their knowledge (e.g. *“This assignment gave me a feeling that the plan belonged to me and only I could do the work required to improve the areas where I need improvement.”* and *“Through this activity I have realized I need to become comfortable with discussing my abilities, experiences, and promoting myself.”*). A second theme that emerged was the desire to improve performance (e.g. *“When I looked at the goals section, I realized I had a lot of work to do!”* and *“Developing the plan caused me to think about what I need to do not only to meet the requirements, but to prepare myself to be the best administrator possible.”*).

Using the same sample population of 10 students, LDPs, and reflections and comments on the LDPs, were analyzed from the end of the Practicum, as well as from the end of the program. Of the data analyzed from the Practicum course, 90% made some form of ownership comment regarding their performance and growth in the LDP, 10% made no discernible comment of that type in the end of course LDP assignment. Of the data analyzed, 100% commented on a desire to improve performance over the course of the program.

Corresponding LDP documents were reviewed and analyzed in the Portfolio. Most notable changes in the LDPs have been addressed in the PLSI and Reflection analyses, as the LDP is an all-encompassing document. A side-by-side comparison of LDPs completed in the Practicum and those completed in the Portfolio give the impression of a polished final draft as compared to its initial rough draft. In the document sets reviewed, the writing was more specific and succinct in most cases, and the concepts were more substantiated by benefit of having the full program as a source of knowledge. Vision Statements, goals, and the overall voice of the student were, basically, and for the most part, more polished, but otherwise unchanged.

Growth in the Mentor Logs. For the Mentor Logs, I coded comments that indicated student perceptions and comments on successful outcomes with student mentors during the Practicum (SP/C_M-Pr), and student perceptions and comments on successful outcomes with student mentors within the Portfolio (SP/C_M-Pf). In Mentor Log comments at the end of the Practicum, I found a recurring theme of hands-on, real life experience (e.g. *“The mentor initiative allowed me to gain some leadership experience....This semester, (my mentor) allowed me to shadow her, as well as step into a few leadership roles.”*). A second theme that emerged was awareness of the position (e.g. *“This experience has caused me to analyze my career path and has initiated much discussion in my home...about the time commitment as well as frustrations and satisfaction of being an administrator.”*).

Using the same sample population of 10 students, comments from the Mentor Logs were analyzed from the end of the Practicum, as well as from the end of the program. Of the data analyzed from the Practicum course, 60% commented on real life experiences, and 40% made no discernible comment of that type in comments regarding the Mentor Logs. 60% commented on a new awareness of the position, and 40% made no discernible comment of that type.

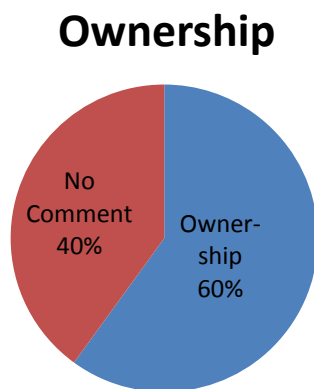


Figure 28. Ownership: Recognizing need for improvement

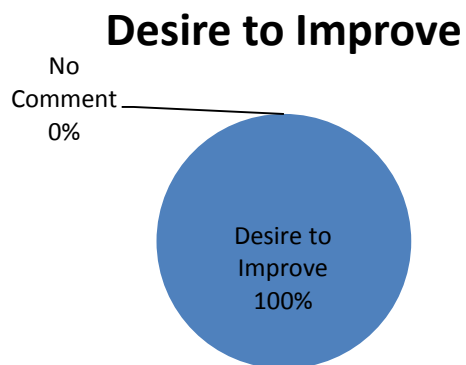


Figure 29. Desire to improve

Mentor Logs in the Portfolio echoed those at the end of the Practicum in their praise of the mentors and the mentoring initiative. Again, more polished prose and more awareness of the position were evidenced in the writing. Overall, students saw the mentor as most helpful.

Growth in FELE Preparation. Of those participants who responded to questions about the FELE, 100% stated that they passed the FELE on their first try and that their preparation in the Practicum course, and the overall program, did adequately prepare them for the exam. One student stated in an interview, “I was able to take the FELE in March and pass it the first time” (Student #45, Cohort H). The FELE pass rate, according to the FSU College of Education, is approximately 95% for first time attempts. Anecdotally, the addition of the FELE simulation exam was met with mixed emotions by classes starting in Cohort H, Spring 2011. Students did not initially fare well on the simulation exam. This was not unexpected by the instructors and did not affect grades in the Practicum class, but it did create tension for students who were worried about their grade and about their future performance on the exam.

The current study does have certain limitations. In particular, the nature of the research as time bound and narrow focused meant that a fuller consideration of FELE results and successful job placement lay beyond the scope of this study. As the timeline involved in the period of the research covers several school years, and hiring is usually done at the beginning of the year and rarely after that point, several students would not be eligible for job placement at this point. Students in Cohort A have been either on the job, or still on the job market, for approximately three years now, while those students in Cohort H finished the program in December of the current school year. It is much more likely students from Cohort A would have found jobs at this point, or that they would have been legitimately unable to find jobs, and highly unlikely that students from Cohort H would have been able to find jobs mid-school year. Therefore, this

question would be better answered for this research time period in a future study. Nevertheless, I believe the data on the FELE provided throughout this study reveals noteworthy information on students' perceived growth and preparation for the exam.

I also believe there is value in the lack of available data here in exploring the aspect of the Practicum, and the overall MSEL/A, as a totally online course and program. I initially assumed ease of student contact and available information, as this was an online course. Record keeping from the beginning of the program to present has evolved into a much more thorough and efficient system for an online program. Unfortunately, up-to-date online contact information for all 100 students has been harder to find than I had assumed, and the majority of those whom have been contacted have failed to respond. This finding is relevant to the aspect of online programs and the sudden shift to the fully integrated online delivery platform. As support systems, and courses themselves, become more digital and online accessible, adjustments and paradigm shifts may cause disruptions in record keeping, especially in a university setting, where many of the workers are students and change every few years. This lack of data is relevant to this research as a component of online education and the transition from a face-to-face paper-based approach to education to a fully integrated online delivery format. This situation will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Overview of Student Growth. Following are comments taken from students chosen randomly from the target population, but from various sections of the research range, to give examples of growth through student comments. Comments range from Week 1 Introductions on Blackboard to Week 16 (end of course) Practicum Reflection assignments and to the Reflection assignment from the (end of program) Portfolio course. Students were chosen randomly from three sections within the research range time period, early cohorts, mid-range cohorts, and end of

range cohorts. The first is from one student, in an early cohort, first within the confines of the Practicum course, then followed by comments from the Portfolio.

Week 1: Introduction: “This year, I am beginning my first year as a fifth grade general education teacher, and I am also serving fifth grade as chairperson. Previously, I have served as grade chairperson for our E.S.E. department for six years. Serving as grade chairperson requires a lot of time and energy, *but it has definitely provided me with a lot of practical leadership experience*, which has allowed me to personally connect with the many theories and practices I have learned in this educational leadership program.

Week 16: Reflection: ...I noticed at almost all of these meetings, both school and district level, there were individuals who seemed to dominate the leadership process, while others appeared passive or uninterested. My first thought was that they were forced to participate in the leadership role, but after a lengthy discussion with my mentor, it became apparent that *many of these individuals had become satiated with an autocratic leadership process invoked by those in the inner-circle....As fifth grade chairperson, I continued to facilitate weekly grade group meetings but took on a very different approach than before.* As a revived team, we worked together and developed a clear vision of where we wanted to go this year. We established benchmarks and timelines to help us accomplish our vision. I got this idea from the design of the leadership plan template. So far, we have accomplished several important tasks,....

Portfolio: Reflection: *My educational preparation here at FSU has equipped me with the leadership insight and essential keys I need....*I will commit myself to garnering the collective support, input and talents of all stakeholders in an effort to ignite an emotional commitment to the organization and the vision (Student #54, Cohort A).

Another student's comments follow here. This student is from a cohort in the mid-range time period of the research.

Week 1: Introduction: I'm a mathematics intervention specialist...I love my job, I love the diversity of the leadership role it puts me in, plus the fact that I still get to work with struggling learners. Five years from now, *I hope to still be doing what I am doing or to have followed any opportunities or open doors that I have come across* in leadership roles....I look forward to this experience and I hope we can all learn from each other."

Week 16: Reflection: It is difficult to think of anything that I would change in Practicum I. Maybe further along in the program I will be able to look back and think of something that might be improved upon. At this point, I think that although it is quite a bit of workload for the credit awarded, all the assignments were well worth the time. I wouldn't change anything. Just as part of Wintervalley's mission is to "acquire and process information in order to become lifelong learners" (Brooks, 2006, p. 42), *the practicum experience must be a meaningful and pertinent piece of the graduate experience* that doesn't end when the assignments are complete.

Portfolio: Reflection: (The textbook) describes the power of learning in the context of leadership when he states 'effective leadership development demands that you take on challenges that will almost certainly expose your weaknesses or developmental needs' (2005, p. 42). This is an apt description for the mentoring and field experiences that I participated in as part of my Practicum courses at FSU. They were tremendous learning experiences that not only encouraged me in my leadership journey, but also challenged me by uncovering my weaknesses. These challenges, at times, made me step back and evaluate my own romantic views regarding leadership. When confronted with the realities of

leadership, at times, I realized that while my aspirations regarding leadership were noble, they alone would not make me an effective leader. These aspirations would guide me in motivation and methodology, but they also must be balanced with a realistic appraisal of leadership as it is often a difficult process; it is not for the faint of heart (Student #14, Cohort E/G).

The final student's comments are from a cohort near the end time period of the research, and those comments follow here.

Week 1: Introduction: *In five years I would like to still be teaching*, but I'll be working on, having, creating goals to be an assistant principal or be working at the county office, but I will have obtained my masters' degree...at that point...*I am not sure exactly what road I want to take yet in educational leadership*....I am not sure if I want to be a school administrator but more so work in curriculum or a county office position. As I progress through the *program I hope to find my niche* in the educational leadership profession.

Week 16: Reflection: My other initiative in a leadership role was that of the Teacher Introduction Program II teacher. In this position, I learned a lot through doing. I had never taught adults before, but *I found that I have a passion for sharing my knowledge and resources for advancing teachers*. I learned how to meet the needs of teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school level when talking about effective teaching methods and student diversity.... After reading through the course text and having experience in the school systems, it was easy to identify my Leadership Vision Statement, especially when you are passionate about what leadership roles you currently hold. My mentor and I scheduled an appointment to meet to review the leadership Standards and my vision statement. With the content of my statement, we brainstormed ideas of leadership roles I

could hold...and then identified the goal. *This method was effective and it opened my eyes to if the goals were realistic when you thought of a time-frame for the leadership role.*

Portfolio: Reflection: The main concept that I learned from the critical tasks was that a school leader has to have a diverse knowledge about various important components at the school. Although a school leader works alongside other school administrators who have an expertise of knowledge in a specific content, the school principal still must understand those administrators' jobs and relation to the education system. *I felt the greatest sense of accomplishment and understanding when I completed the technology critical tasks.* I spent a great deal of time interviewing the school's technology coordinator/director, learning more about computer hardware and software and developing a communication plan with the assistance of school administrators. I ran the presentation software at the school board meetings and was able to better understand what each member of the board contributes. *I struggled the most with the Human and Fiscal, and Legal Aspects of Public School Administration critical tasks* (Student # 43, Cohort H).

These comments each follow a single student from beginning of the practicum class and the overall program, through the end of the practicum and then through the end of the program.

Summary of Research Question #2 Findings

Students have shown growth as indicated in the comments made in and the content of their end-of-course work, specifically, the Reflection assignments, the LDP assignments, FELE work, and the Mentor Logs due in the latter part of the semester. As with the examples given in this section, many students show growth in their approach to the idea of leadership, their attitudes toward the burden of leadership, and understanding the role a leader plays in school's success.

Initial postings from students seemed to indicate a lack of direction, except that of a natural progression from teaching into administration. There was also a lack of understanding of the differences between teaching and actual educational leadership; or an attitude of confidence in leadership abilities based on small teacher-oriented leadership responsibilities, e.g. committee leader, team leader, etc. End of course reflections and comments in the LDPs suggest that students were, by that point, beginning to see educational leadership in a different light, as a different, and much more challenging task. One student in particular, as stated in this section, commented that leadership “is not for the faint of heart.”

Growth, then, can be seen in student reflections, both at the end of the Practicum and in the Portfolio. The LDPs and Mentor Logs also indicate student growth in both courses, as do FELE comments and available pass rates. The majority of students indicated that the mentoring initiative was the most useful part in their growth.

Research Question 3: What is the overall student satisfaction with their learning experience in the MSEL/A program?

As stated earlier, the survey shows that 84% of participants were satisfied with the online program, including satisfaction with both teacher interaction and peer interaction, and 90% would choose a similar online program again. The survey also showed that 72% of participants were satisfied with the overall academic program, including both the practicum and the portfolio. Specifically as to whether the MSEL/A program adequately prepared them for an educational leadership position, 80% of survey participants responded favorably.

In available exit surveys, 33% answered that they were very satisfied with their learning experience, 56% were satisfied, and 11% were somewhat satisfied. The main theme that emerged from these surveys was a need for consistency among instructors. Student comments

were that the experience, the content, and the lead instructors were all excellent, but some class instructors were not as adequately prompt or helpful with assignment feedback.

For exploring student satisfaction in student comments, I coded those comments that indicated student attitudes toward their Practicum experience (SA-Prac), and student attitudes toward the overall program in the Portfolio (SA-Port). I also coded comments made specifically regarding satisfaction with the online component of the program (SA-Onl). Comments in the Reflection assignments at the end of the Practicum and in the Portfolio indicate students were, overall, satisfied with the course.

Satisfaction in Practicum. The main theme that emerged in the reflections and comments in the Practicum was appreciation. Students expressed appreciation for the opportunity to go back to school, to work online, and for their instructors and the quality instruction they received. Of those reflections explored, 70% expressed appreciation of some kind (e.g. *“I’m thankful for the opportunity and the ability to be able to be in school and continue working. The online format is a blessing....”*).

Satisfaction in Portfolio. The main theme that emerged in comments from the Portfolio was that of being prepared. Students commented on feeling adequately prepared for becoming an administrator by the end of the program. 90% of student comments indicated that the mentoring and field experiences were most valuable. 60% made comments that the discussion boards, readings and instructor and peer interactions were also valuable for their preparation (e.g. *“I passed the Florida Educational Leadership Exam in July. I felt prepared and relaxed due to the rigor of the coursework and the required mentoring opportunities. The multitude of interviews, discussions, Critical Tasks, have all brought me to this point in my journey. My conclusion – I have learned to trust myself, my experiences, and those around me.”*)

Following are comments from the practicum Reflection assignment chosen randomly from the target population that support the finding that students were, overall, satisfied with the practicum course and the program.

As I consider my experiences in this first semester at Florida State University, *I am very thankful that I chose the Educational Leadership and Administration program at this institution. It has been an especially good fit for my personality as well as my goals and aspirations.* Many of my colleagues chose to go different routes toward their leadership goals, most which are less restrictive to get into, less rigorous, shorter in duration, and in some cases less costly. However, after this first semester I am confident that my learning experiences will give me every opportunity to be highly prepared for the world of leadership, and I know the “road less traveled” is the route for me. Each learning experience is designed to not only pass along knowledge, but to foster an attitude of continual learning that will extend beyond the time in the program. *The experiences are meaningful, inspire reflection and growth, and are very practical in nature* (Student #14, Cohort E).

Another example follows here.

Over the past year of study my favorite and most beneficial coursework has been the Practicum Series. Even though the required 40 hours each semester presented some scheduling challenges for me due to the fact that I am not located in a school; it forced me to find the time to get into the school environment and view it from a leadership perspective *...I recognize leadership at all levels can be a 24/7 job....* My mentor helped me learn the importance of being able to balance both the professional and personal life..... I am excited about the work ahead of us and I can honestly say that I am passionate about my work!

These experiences with my mentor and my current job responsibilities have helped me refine my leadership goals and I recognize that I truly enjoy the district level of leadership. *As I entered this program, I had set my goals for becoming a school level administrator, but this past year has shown me that my true passion is in the work of assessment and accountability reform.* I am grateful for the clarity that I now have and a sense of purpose that I have found in my professional and personal life. We have enjoyed our relationship as mentor and mentee over this past year and now look forward to working together.... I am excited about having the opportunity to continue to learn from her wealth of knowledge and experience as a leader in this district (Student #3, Cohort A).

Comments from the Portfolio course Reflection assignments follow here.

At the beginning of the program, I felt so naïve about education, even though I had been teaching for five years and questioned my place in the program. I had never worked in the public school system, so my experiences were quite limited about budgeting, human resources, educational law, curriculum, FTE, and school data analysis. *The field experiences and coursework have given me confidence in knowing I now have the foundation of knowledge to pursue a position as an administrator* (Student #52, Cohort B).

Another comment follows here.

The Practicum in Educational Leadership class provided the foundation that I needed to understand the importance of a leader being able to express their vision and mission for their school to all stakeholders in an understandable and inspiring format. Through the William Cecil Golden Florida School Leadership Development website, I learned of the leadership standards and took a survey to determine where I was on the continuum of

leadership preparation. This gave me clear objectives and goals to work on in areas that I was unacquainted with in my experiences and knowledge (Student #96, Cohort G).

Results from the surveys and interviews support the finding that students found the program to be satisfactory.

Summary of Research Question #3 Findings

According to the student surveys, exit surveys, interviews, and content analysis of Reflection assignments, LDP, and Mentor Logs in both the Practicum and the Portfolio courses, students indicated they felt that the program had been beneficial in preparing them for a successful career as an educational leader. Students felt the program had adequately prepared them for the FELE and the position of administrator. The program helped some students find their focus, while helping others realize what educational leadership actually encompasses. While there were suggestions for change in the exit surveys and in the student surveys, comments pointed toward individual characteristics of various instructors, but seldom at content or format. The main exception to this is during the period when the Practicum was broken down into 3 separate one hour credits. This, however, was changed early on in the program.

Overview of Courses between Practicum and Portfolio

This study focuses on the results of the Practicum course, the first course in the MESL/A program sequence. It also explores the work within the Portfolio, the last course in the program, to support those results. Yet, there are several other courses between the Practicum and the Portfolio that each cohort must take, preferably together and in order. A quick overview of those courses may give insight as to the comments found in the student portfolios.

There are nine core courses, 3 credit hours each, for the MSEL/A program. Students of different tracks may take different electives, some required, some truly elective, but all students

take the nine core classes. These core classes include Educational Leadership; Curriculum and Instruction; Technology and Communication; Human and Fiscal Resources; Legal Aspects of Education; Principalship; Instructional Leadership; Decision Oriented Educational Research; and the Practicum in Educational Leadership.

Electives include Assistant Principalship; Adult Learning; Multicultural Education; Ethics in Education; Policy and Community in Education; Teacher Leadership; Leadership for Diversity; Politics of Schooling; and Program Evaluation, among others. The last two, Politics and Evaluation, are required for Advanced Master’s students. Students take 2 courses per semester except when taking the Practicum course.

Table 2 Cohort Schedule

Semester Admitted	PRACT.	C & I	ED LEAD	LEGAL	DOERS	PRINC	HUMAN & FISC	TECH	INSTR LEAD	E1	E2	E2
Sp 11	H	H	G	G/F	E	XX	F	XX	E	D	D	C
Su 11	I	I	H	H	G / F	G	XX	XX	F	E	E	D
F 11	J	J	I	I	H	H	G	G	XX	F	F	E
Sp 12	K	K	J	J	I	I	H	H	G	G	X X	F
Su 12	L	L	K	K	J	J	I	I	H	H	G	G
F 12	M	M	L	L	K	K	J	J	I	I	H	H

Students mentioned beneficial courses in the Reflection assignments in the end of program Portfolios. Among those cited specifically were Educational Leadership; Human and Fiscal Resources; Legal Aspects of Education; Decision Oriented Educational Research; Policy and Community in Education; and Leadership for Diversity. Student comments on helpful courses included the following: “One of the most eye-opening field experiences I worked on in the

program was mining data last summer in my Decision Oriented Educational Research course. We were required to gather a great amount of information from our school concerning its FCAT grades, benchmark grades, and other standardized tests results. *I was shocked to see how far data could be disaggregated and how each piece could be analyzed and interpreted*" (Student #72, Cohort D)

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the Practicum course for the MSEL/A program at FSU for its efficacy in preparing educational leaders for Florida schools, and to add to the knowledge base of online education in the area of educational leadership. The focus of this study was the Practicum course as an introduction to the process of becoming an educational leader and/or administrator in the state of Florida, as well as how the course fits into the overall MSEL/A program. Specifically, I explored students' growth in the Reflections, LDPs, Mentor Logs, and overall perceptions of educational leadership and administration. I used the semesters of Fall 2008 through Fall 2012 to gather this data.

According to the data, MSEL/A students are mostly female, white, between 30 and 40 years old with a minimum of 6 years of experience, mostly in middle schools in the Florida panhandle area. While 84% were satisfied with the online component of the program, as well as with both instructor and peer interaction, 72% were satisfied with the overall MSEL/A program, including both the practicum and the portfolio. Additionally, 80% felt that the program had adequately prepared them for the role of educational leadership.

Of the seven objectives set forth in the aggregate collection of syllabi from the various semesters, all seven objectives were met by students with no discrepancies. Students showed ample evidence of exploring resources, creating plans, and discussing theories and leadership

styles, as well as establishing mentor relationships that lasted beyond the scope of the program. Students began to recognize strengths and weaknesses, as well as leadership styles and career goals.

Student growth within the confines of the Practicum course was evident in student LDPs, reflection assignments, and mentor logs. Student growth throughout the program was evident in the same assignments in the end of program Portfolio course. Students also showed overall satisfaction with their learning experiences in the Practicum course, as well as with the overall program.

According to student comments in content analysis, surveys, and interviews, the practicum played a key role in preparing students for the FELE. Data on student success rates in job placement were unavailable, but should be explored in a later study. However, the lack of data is relevant to the research as a component of the paradigm shift from face-to-face paper-based to fully integrated online delivery systems and the support systems needed to facilitate that change.

Other courses within the program are geared to more specific preparation, covering topics such as curriculum, legal aspects, more in-depth leadership concepts, and diversity. Student comments in the reflection exercises, as well as in other places, indicate benefits from those courses and student satisfaction with those courses. Overall, students consider the program to be beneficial to their success and preparation for educational leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This chapter uses the research findings described in Chapter 4 as the basis for discussion, conclusions, recommendations and implications for practice and research. The purpose of this study was to explore how well the practicum prepares educational leaders for Florida schools and to add to the knowledge base of both the fields of distance learning and educational leadership on the success of an online educational leadership program. I looked at the semesters of Fall 2008 through Spring 2012, as these students would now be through the practicum (a total of thirteen semesters) and many would have had opportunity to take the FELE. Although this was a content analysis of historical documents, I also included a survey and e-mail interviews (Appendices G and H). Three research questions guided the inquiry and selection of the data collection and analysis methods (Appendix I). I examined and analyzed documents from 16 different classes, more than 10 different assignments, in two different courses covering 13 different semesters. All work, all surveys, interviews, documents, and most meetings regarding this project were web-/computer-based. The following sections present the summary of major findings, conclusions, and recommendations, for practice and research in the fields of distance learning and educational leadership.

Summary of Findings

Programs in educational administration and leadership prepare prospective school leaders to meet performance-based standards (Melton, Tysinger, Mallory & Green, 2011), as well as the myriad of duties, responsibilities, and daily roles the position entails. The educational leader is often seen as the person who will get things done (Mitchell & Tucker, 1992) and must be thus prepared to do so. To make sure students are prepared, the MSEL/A at FSU begins each cohort

with a practicum. According to Shulman (1998), a knowledge base is not professional knowledge until it is enacted in the field and meets the requirements of practical application. Through the Mentor Initiative, and the use of journals, and supported by the Leadership Development Plan, discussions, assigned readings, and other assignments, the Practicum in Educational Leadership course meets this definition.

Demographic data gave insight to the students who entered and completed the MSEL/A program at FSU. The MSEL/A program most often attracts an average clientele of teachers looking to move into administrative positions. According to a study on teacher retention by Inman and Marlow (2004), the profile of the teacher most likely to leave the profession is that of the secondary male teacher who has been teaching fewer than five years. Conversely, the most likely to stay is the “female elementary teacher who feels supported and important in her chosen field” (p. 611). According to the demographic data, the majority of participants were women with over 6 years of teaching experience in the middle grades (elementary was a close second). This is even more interesting when viewed through the theme of “natural progress” found in students’ initial comments at the start of the practicum course. Students often saw the move toward educational leadership as a natural next step in the career of an educator. The data support Inman and Marlow’s findings that the long term educator is a female elementary or middle grades teacher, and that the next step for the career educator is an administrative position.

Research Question #1 asked if there were any discrepancies between the stated outcomes of the course and the actual outcomes as demonstrated by the students and evidenced in the e-portfolios. The findings indicate that there are no discernible discrepancies between the stated outcomes and student achievement. Outcomes were written in somewhat broad terms, using descriptors such as “explore,” “describe,” and “understand.” Exploring student responses to the

six major components showed strong evidence that students did adequately explore the concepts and understand the concepts and resources presented to them, and that they increased their understanding of educational leadership in so doing.

A practicum course provides the opportunity for students to gain access to the “knowledge-in-action” of the experts being observed and the “thinking underlying the practices of expert practitioners” (Ethel & McMeniman, 2000, p. 99). In Practicum in Educational Leadership, students had several opportunities to explore and understand the underlying thinking. Outcome A, the exploration of the William C. Golden website, and Outcome C, understanding of the Principal Leadership Standards Inventory (PLSI), provided students with not only an opportunity to take the PLSI more than once, but a wealth of resources applicable to what Tubbs and Holliday (2009) refer to as real-world experiences. The exploration gave them insight into the complex nature of educational leadership.

The use of the WCG website and assignments such as the Blackboard discussion boards, readings and videos, as discussed under Outcomes F and G, gave students a look at practical theory: what works; what doesn't work; and what theories are applicable to different situations. Assignments such as the mentoring journal put students into more of the real-world experiences. From the research, I believe the Leadership Development Plan is one of those assignments that began to bridge the gap between theory and practice. According to Heid, et al. (2006), bridging the gap between theory and practice, realizing that theorists and practitioners bear equal responsibility for educational reform, is essential to good leadership.

The LDP, as explored in Outcome B of the Practicum and again in the Portfolio, was an assignment that gave students an opportunity to begin to apply theory to the real world. Students began to develop their plans in the practicum course with the goal of submitting it by the end of

the semester. The LDPs, however, followed students throughout the program, and were updated and finalized in the Portfolio at the end of the overall program. While a practicum is considered to be an “essential component of the preparation and training...” (Rodolfa, Owen, & Clark, 2007, p. 64) of the professional, the portfolio allows students to “demonstrate knowledge and skills gained...” (Valeri-Gold, Olson & Denning, 1991, p. 299) through the work in the overall program, including the practicum. Data collected showed the changes in the LDPs from the practicum to the portfolio. Students’ perspectives of their own growth were positive, reflecting recurring themes of ownership of strengths and weaknesses and a desire to improve performance.

Students had more real-world, hands-on experiences in the practicum through Outcomes D and E, the Florida Educational Leadership Exam and the Mentor experiences respectively. Early cohorts had a less than real-world FELE experience as preparation included the crossword study guide. By the latter cohorts, however, the FELE preparation had become a true simulation test.

This preparation is an even more important component of the practicum course since the FELE is no longer offered as a paper-based test, and is only offered on the computer since January 2010 (FLDOE: FELE, 2005). This change reflects the cultural change that accompanies the Net Generation, or the Digital Natives, as discussed earlier (Prensky, 2001; Rosen, 2011). Students interviewed enthusiastically agreed that the Practicum had given them what they perceived as a distinct advantage in preparation for the actual FELE. Student discussions within the Practicum indicated that students were glad for the opportunity to prepare, especially in the latter cohorts when an actual simulation test was administered. As discussed in the literature review, there were 2.35 million students taking on-line courses in 2008 (Bangert, 2008), and many of them can do homework on an app on their phones (Ansell, 2008; Braun, 2008; Dykman

& Davis, 2008; Gaudin, 2009; Parry, 2010; Prensky, 2001). In light of this type of cultural change, it made sense for the DOE to move to an all computer-based format for testing.

The most reports of and opportunities for hands-on, real-world experiences through the Practicum came, of course, from Outcome E, the Mentor experience. According to Shulman (1998), actual professional practice is the point and “the end to which all knowledge is directed” (p. 518). Students who are able to have hands-on experience have a better understanding of how theory and practice align (Ethel & McMeniman, 2000). Field work with a mentor can provide participatory research (Green & Ottoson, 2004), which allows students to see the reasoning in the decision-making process.

As the practicum was an online course, and will likely stay that way (Milliron, 2010), adapting this experience to a distance learning format was essential. According to Sherman and Beaty (2007), as good leadership and good leadership preparation are defined, the best methods of delivery of instruction must also be defined. An assignment such as the mentoring initiative, however, lends itself readily to a distance and/or online format, since it is less about the classroom and more about going to the field and reporting back. Students are able to connect theory and practice through work with their mentors in whatever part of the state they are in, and still report back to the classroom (Sherman, Crum, Beaty & Myran, 2010). The technology and the current social media culture, together, create an environment such that, even in a traditional classroom setting, this assignment could, and likely would, be submitted digitally through Blackboard.

As with much of the current online educational offerings, most components can be adapted easily if the perceptual paradigm shift occurs within the major stakeholders (Richardson, McLeod & Dikkers, 2011). With the technology available, and the cultural shift in the general

populace (Prensky, 2001), leadership preparation programs would be wise to acknowledge the monumental change in education that is taking place through technology (McLeod, 2011) and avoid the potential diffusion gap (Szabo, 2002) that so often hampers educational reform. Recognizing the importance of computer-mediated collaboration in educational leadership preparation (Calabrese, et al., 2008), and modifying instructional delivery efforts to create more effective on-line learning experiences (Conceicao, 2006), will create more successful online leadership programs.

Research question #2, concerning students' perception of growth through the course and program, and research question #3, which concerns students' satisfaction with their learning experience, support the findings in research question #1. Students did perceive growth and did indicate satisfaction with the course and the program. Had the objectives not been met, I believe that growth and satisfaction would not have been perceived as high as it was. The findings in the three different research questions all indicate that the Practicum and the overall MSEL/A program were successful at preparing potential educational leaders. Assignments completed for the practicum course indicated where students stood in their understanding of the role of educational leader.

Document analysis of early practicum assignments indicated that students entering the program often saw administration as the next logical step in growth for a teacher. Students equated leading a classroom, a committee, or even an athletic team to leading a school or a district. There were, at times, indications of naiveté, assuredness, or strong self-confidence in student comments and responses on the Blackboard Discussion posts and in the introduction videos at the beginning of each cohort. This often seemed to shift almost immediately with the Scavenger Hunt assignment and the introduction to the WCG website, as student comments

tended toward frustration with their initial performances on the PLSI exam and the vastness of the available information from the WCG as a resource.

The main focus of this research was specifically the Practicum, itself. Within the confines of the practicum course, evidence of student growth can be seen specifically in the finished product of the end-of-course LDP, as well as the Reflections and Mentor Logs. Although the LDP is an assignment that is constantly polished and updated throughout the program, the version that is submitted at the end of the first semester gives a picture of student perspectives on leadership compared to earlier assignments, including the student introductions, Scavenger Hunt, Discussion Boards, and other assignments. The LDP includes Vision, Mission and Belief statements that show student's thoughts on leadership. Along with this assignment, the end-of-course Reflection assignment and Mentor Log assignment give insight to student growth and achievement. Students most often recognized the benefits of working with a mentor and the growth they see in themselves from these activities. One student in particular, as stated earlier, commented that leadership "is not for the faint of heart." I believe this is indicative of an awakening of sorts that many of the students experience by the end of the practicum, or at least by the end of the overall program.

Research question #3 is centered on student satisfaction with their learning experience in both the Practicum and the overall MSEL/A program. All students indicated an overall satisfaction with their experience in the MSEL/A program. This unanimous praise may be due in part to a lack of anonymity and/or concern in expressing an opinion that could put one in a negative light while on the job market. While I did not see evidence that would indicate that students were dissatisfied with the program overall, there were instances where I questioned the sincerity of a student's praise. One student noted satisfaction with a harder, longer, more

expensive program, which would give “every opportunity to be highly prepared for the world of leadership...” This comment reminded me of the quote from English poet Alexander Pope, “Damn with faint praise...” in which one praises someone or something in such a way that is more of a complaint or insult than actual praise. As to actual complaints, these were found only on the anonymous surveys and then only in reference to aspects of distance learning, specifically the teacher interaction of a few supporting instructors in regards to timeliness of feedback. There was, however, praise for the main instructors with almost every instance of criticism for the few. I found no direct expressions of dissatisfaction with the overall program content or delivery platform.

Conclusion

The results of this study support the premise that the Practicum is fulfilling its purpose of preparing students for the overall MSEL/A program; the FELE; and thus eventually, to become administrators for schools in Florida. Although the current study does not allow for a generalization of findings, it will still provide an important contribution to the literature and research on both the use of the practicum and distance learning for several reasons. First, the study of student perspectives from the beginning of the practicum course to the end of the course, and the comparison of student perspectives in the program ending portfolio showed not only the growth of students through the assigned exercises, but also the lack of understanding, almost naiveté, of some teachers as to the burdens of school leadership, prior to taking the practicum. Second, this study provides a resource for Educational Leadership/Administration programs that are considering whether or not to use or keep a practicum course in the program. Third, this study supports the usefulness of the e-portfolio as an assessment of student growth and success. Fourth, this study was conducted on a fully integrated online program, using,

almost exclusively, computer-based online documents and approaches, on portable, easy-to-use computers including two different brands of laptops, a smartphone, and easily downloaded free software which gives access to files from almost anywhere. This makes this study a valuable resource for educational leadership programs interested in becoming fully integrated online-only programs.

The Practicum experience offers rich possibilities for student growth and understanding of leadership concepts in the area of educational leadership. As an introduction to educational leadership, the Practicum offers opportunities for close up observations through an experienced mentor, firsthand information from experts in the field, in-depth study of theories and concepts, and the opportunity for open debate and discussion with peers and professors on the basic issues of educational leadership. Students who have completed the program found the practicum experience, and the e-portfolio reflections, to be useful in preparing for both the exam and the position of school leadership. Continual review of and reflection on course objectives and student achievement will keep the practicum relevant to the program and to preparing students to be leaders.

Recommendations

Student comments indicate that the most useful components of the Practicum are the FELE simulation and the Mentoring Initiative. This type of real-world and expert guided experience was invaluable to the preparation of educational leaders. While exercises such as the LDP and the reflections were also important, students did indicate the usefulness of the video colloquium series. This opportunity to hear from local experts gave a deeper insight to the roles and daily expectations of the educational leader. Anecdotally, over Cohorts G and H, many students

remarked about how impressed they were by the educational leaders presented in the videos. The Video Colloquium series was cited as a very useful, real-world component to the course.

Valuable information can be more easily acquired with some adjustments to the program. The Practicum LDP already contains a resume component. It would be a simple task to add a demographic survey to the LDP in both the Practicum and the Portfolio. This would give FSU information on who is entering the program, and who is completing the program, and how long it is taking them. This is done to a small extent already, but it is not an organized, concentrated assignment. Students give demographic information of their choosing in introductory videos and Blackboard postings, and in the resume/CV section of the LDP. If this were organized as an information gathering tool, with alternate contact information as opposed to only using FSU e-mail addresses, progress and success rates would be easier to track and more readily available for future research and evaluation of the program.

The FELE simulation tool is underutilized for evaluation methods. Given at regular intervals, such as the beginning and ending of the Practicum, again at certain points throughout the overall program, and at least at the end of the Portfolio, the simulation would provide benchmarks for students and facilitators. Students could monitor their progress and practice for the test, being even more prepared for the official exam. Program facilitators would be able to track student growth through performance on the simulation FELE.

Monitoring the FELE more closely would add an important element to the program. The FELE is the state mandated test to become a school leader in Florida. Discussions on scenario-based simulation questions and the value of both the correct answer and the other answers provided would give students a better understanding of why a decision is the best course.

Tracking FELE results of program graduates would allow FSU to compare pass rates with those of students from other programs, and the state average.

The Mentoring Initiative was most often seen as the most valuable piece of the practicum, and overall program, experience. Working with an experienced leader in the field not only gave the students close up observation opportunities, but often allowed for practical hands-on experience as mentors would assign leadership tasks to their mentees. This component, more than any other discussed by students, gave deeper insight and understanding of the role of an educational leader. The Mentor Initiative also allows for networking which could, potentially, increase the student success rates in acquiring a position after graduating from the program. This is an area that may be explored in future research.

More importantly, I believe, mentoring adds a human connection component to the online program that enhances the overall experience. Although students surveyed indicated an overall satisfaction with the online delivery system, only 20 participants out of 100 responded to the survey. There are potentially many students who may feel the lack of face-to-face interaction to be a deficit of the program. This aspect may be explored with further research.

The Video Colloquium series was mentioned frequently by students as a valuable asset to the Practicum. Interestingly, this component has been removed from the current course syllabus. Videos made for this assignment were produced at FSU using 3 or 4 different local, experienced educators in a discussion with the program coordinator on varying topics in educational leadership. Students heard directly from school administrators how situations were handled, what unexpected events to be aware of, and why and how decisions were made in different situations. Different administrators gave differing perspectives on questions presented, allowing students to see diversity, and to understand that people react differently to situations based on

their own unique personalities and training. Based on the student comments I read in my research, I would recommend re-instating this component of the practicum.

Overall, the Practicum in Educational Leadership was seen as an experience that prepared students to become educational leaders. Students' perceived growth in their levels of knowledge and skills, and were satisfied with the learning experience, both academically and as an online/distance learning experience. The e-portfolios at the end of the program indicated students' mastery of skills and preparation for leadership.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Asynchronous-mode learning environment (Asynchronous)

A web-based course with no real-time element, no specific class meeting times or places (Power & Vaughan, 2010).

Blended/Hybrid learning

On campus (f2f; traditional) instruction (including satellite campus locations) supported by web-based resources (Power & Vaughan, 2010).

“Generally, blended learning means any combination of learning delivery methods, including most often face-to-face instruction with asynchronous and/or synchronous computer technologies. Hybrid learning is another term which has been used synonymously with blended learning (So & Brush, 2008, p. 321).

Digital Native

Students “who are ‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1).

Digital Immigrants

Students and teachers “who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology....” (Prensky, 2001, pp. 1 – 2)

Face-to-face (f2f; traditional)

Instruction given in a traditional classroom setting where teachers interact with students gathered in the same place (Power & Vaughan, 2010).

Fully Integrated

A delivery system that includes various technological communication aspects such as asynchronous discussion boards and e-mail systems, and synchronous chatrooms and/or audio and video conferencing (Power & Vaughan, 2010).

‘Netiquette

Internet etiquette “providing guidelines and tips, modeling appropriate etiquette and effective use of the medium (Conceição, 2006, p. 28).

Online Education/ Online Learning/Distance Learning

Online education is defined as the creation and proliferation of the personal computer, the globalization of ideas and other human acts, and the use of technology in exchanging ideas and providing access to more people. (Power & Vaughan, 2010).

Portfolio

The contents of...a case, such as drawings, paintings, or photographs, that demonstrate recent work. (portfolio, n.d.). An electronic or virtual version of the same, such as a document or file on a computer, also called an e-portfolio.

Practicum

A course of study designed especially for the preparation of teachers and clinicians that involves the supervised practical application of previously studied theory (practicum, n.d.).

Synchronous-mode learning environment (Synchronous)

A course offered in real-time via a “virtual classroom” with a class meeting time and live class participation (Power & Vaughan, 2010).

APPENDIX B

FLORIDA PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP STANDARDS

Florida's school leaders must possess the abilities and skills necessary to perform their designated tasks in a high-performing manner. The school leader, commensurate with job requirements and delegated authority, shall demonstrate competence in the following standards:

Instructional Leadership

Instructional Leadership –

High Performing Leaders promote a positive learning culture, provide an effective instructional program, and apply best practices to student learning, especially in the area of reading and other foundational skills.

Managing the Learning Environment –

High Performing Leaders manage the organization, operations, facilities and resources in ways that maximize the use of resources in an instructional organization and promote a safe, efficient, legal, and effective learning environment.

Learning, Accountability, and Assessment –

High Performing Leaders monitor the success of all students in the learning environment, align the curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes to promote effective student performance, and use a variety of benchmarks, learning expectations, and feedback measures to ensure accountability for all participants engaged in the educational process.

Operational Leadership

Decision Making Strategies –

High Performing Leaders plan effectively, use critical thinking and problem solving techniques, and collect and analyze data for continuous school improvement.

Technology –

High Performing Leaders plan and implement the integration of technological and electronic tools in teaching, learning, management, research, and communication responsibilities.

Human Resource Development –

High Performing Leaders recruit, select, nurture and, where appropriate, retain effective personnel, develop mentor and partnership programs, and design and implement comprehensive professional growth plans for all staff – paid and volunteer.

Ethical Leadership –

High Performing Leaders act with integrity, fairness, and honesty in an ethical manner.

School Leadership**Vision –**

High Performing leaders have a personal vision for their school and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to develop, articulate and implement a shared vision that is supported by the larger organization and the school community.

Community and Stakeholder Partnerships –

High Performing Leaders collaborate with families, business, and community members, respond to diverse community interests and needs, work effectively within the larger organization and mobilize community resources.

Diversity –

High Performing Leaders understand, respond to, and influence the personal, political, social, economic, legal, and cultural relationships in the classroom, the school and the local community.

SBE Rule 6B-5.0012, Approved April 19, 2005

APPENDIX C

FLORIDA SCHOOL LEADERS – FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Florida Principal Leadership Standards

Purpose and Structure of the Standards

Purpose: The Standards are set forth in rule as Florida’s core expectations for effective school administrators. The Standards are based on contemporary research on multi-dimensional school leadership, and represent skill sets and knowledge bases needed in effective schools. The Standards form the foundation for school leader personnel evaluations and professional development systems, school leadership preparation programs, and educator certification requirements.

Structure. There are ten Standards grouped into categories, which can be considered domains of effective leadership. Each Standard has a title and includes, as necessary, descriptors that further clarify or define the Standard, so that the Standards may be developed further into leadership curricula and proficiency assessments in fulfillment of their purposes.

Domain 1: Student Achievement:

Standard 1: Student Learning Results.

Effective school leaders achieve results on the school’s student learning goals.

- a. The school’s learning goals are based on the state’s adopted student academic standards and the district’s adopted curricula; and
- b. Student learning results are evidenced by the student performance and growth on statewide assessments; district-determined assessments that are implemented by the district under Section 1008.22, F.S.; international assessments; and other indicators of student success adopted by the district and state.

Standard 2: Student Learning as a Priority.

Effective school leaders demonstrate that student learning is their top priority through leadership actions that build and support a learning organization focused on student success. The leader:

- a. Enables faculty and staff to work as a system focused on student learning;
- b. Maintains a school climate that supports student engagement in learning;
- c. Generates high expectations for learning growth by all students; and
- d. Engages faculty and staff in efforts to close learning performance gaps among student subgroups within the school.

Domain 2: Instructional Leadership:

Standard 3: Instructional Plan Implementation.

Effective school leaders work collaboratively to develop and implement an instructional framework that aligns curriculum with state standards, effective instructional practices, student learning needs and assessments. The leader:

- a. Implements the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices as described in Rule 6A-5.065, F.A.C. through a common language of instruction;
- b. Engages in data analysis for instructional planning and improvement;
- c. Communicates the relationships among academic standards, effective instruction, and student performance;
- d. Implements the district's adopted curricula and state's adopted academic standards in a manner that is rigorous and culturally relevant to the students and school; and
- e. Ensures the appropriate use of high quality formative and interim assessments aligned with the adopted standards and curricula.

Standard 4: Faculty Development.

Effective school leaders recruit, retain and develop an effective and diverse faculty and staff. The leader:

- a. Generates a focus on student and professional learning in the school that is clearly linked to the system-wide strategic objectives and the school improvement plan;
- b. Evaluates, monitors, and provides timely feedback to faculty on the effectiveness of instruction;
- c. Employs a faculty with the instructional proficiencies needed for the school population served;
- d. Identifies faculty instructional proficiency needs, including standards-based content, research based pedagogy, data analysis for instructional planning and improvement, and the use of instructional technology;
- e. Implements professional learning that enables faculty to deliver culturally relevant and differentiated instruction; and
- f. Provides resources and time and engages faculty in effective individual and collaborative professional learning throughout the school year.

Standard 5: Learning Environment.

Effective school leaders structure and monitor a school learning environment that improves learning for all of Florida's diverse student population. The leader:

- a. Maintains a safe, respectful and inclusive student-centered learning environment that is focused on equitable opportunities for learning and building a foundation for a fulfilling life in a democratic society and global economy;
- b. Recognizes and uses diversity as an asset in the development and implementation of procedures and practices that motivate all students and improve student learning;
- c. Promotes school and classroom practices that validate and value similarities and differences among students;
- d. Provides recurring monitoring and feedback on the quality of the learning environment;
- e. Initiates and supports continuous improvement processes focused on the students' opportunities for success and well-being.
- f. Engages faculty in recognizing and understanding cultural and developmental issues related to student learning by identifying and addressing strategies to minimize and/or eliminate achievement gaps.

Domain 3: Organizational Leadership

Standard 6: Decision Making.

Effective school leaders employ and monitor a decision-making process that is based on vision, mission and improvement priorities using facts and data. The leader:

- a. Gives priority attention to decisions that impact the quality of student learning and teacher proficiency;
- b. Uses critical thinking and problem solving techniques to define problems and identify solutions;
- c. Evaluates decisions for effectiveness, equity, intended and actual outcome; implements followup actions; and revises as needed;
- d. Empowers others and distributes leadership when appropriate; and
- e. Uses effective technology integration to enhance decision making and efficiency throughout the school.

Standard 7: Leadership Development.

Effective school leaders actively cultivate, support, and develop other leaders within the organization. The leader:

- a. Identifies and cultivates potential and emerging leaders;
- b. Provides evidence of delegation and trust in subordinate leaders;
- c. Plans for succession management in key positions;
- d. Promotes teacher–leadership functions focused on instructional proficiency and student learning; and
- e. Develops sustainable and supportive relationships between school leaders, parents, community, higher education and business leaders.

Standard 8: School Management.

Effective school leaders manage the organization, operations, and facilities in ways that maximize the use of resources to promote a safe, efficient, legal, and effective learning environment. The leader:

- a. Organizes time, tasks and projects effectively with clear objectives and coherent plans;
- b. Establishes appropriate deadlines for him/herself and the entire organization;
- c. Manages schedules, delegates, and allocates resources to promote collegial efforts in school improvement and faculty development; and
- d. Is fiscally responsible and maximizes the impact of fiscal resources on instructional priorities.

Standard 9: Communication.

Effective school leaders practice two-way communications and use appropriate oral, written, and electronic communication and collaboration skills to accomplish school and system goals by building and maintaining relationships with students, faculty, parents, and community. The leader:

- a. Actively listens to and learns from students, staff, parents, and community stakeholders;
- b. Recognizes individuals for effective performance;
- c. Communicates student expectations and performance information to students, parents, and community;
- d. Maintains high visibility at school and in the community and regularly engages stakeholders in the work of the school;
- e. Creates opportunities within the school to engage students, faculty, parents, and community stakeholders in constructive conversations about important school issues.
- f. Utilizes appropriate technologies for communication and collaboration; and
- g. Ensures faculty receives timely information about student learning requirements, academic standards, and all other local state and federal administrative requirements and decisions.

Domain 4: Professional and Ethical Behavior:

Standard 10: Professional and Ethical Behaviors.

Effective school leaders demonstrate personal and professional behaviors consistent with quality practices in education and as a community leader. The leader:

- a. Adheres to the Code of Ethics and the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida, pursuant to Rules 6B-1.001 and 6B-1.006, F.A.C.
- b. Demonstrates resiliency by staying focused on the school vision and reacting constructively to the barriers to success that include disagreement and dissent with leadership;

- c. Demonstrates a commitment to the success of all students, identifying barriers and their impact on the well-being of the school, families, and local community;
- d. Engages in professional learning that improves professional practice in alignment with the needs of the school system; and
- e. Demonstrates willingness to admit error and learn from it;
- f. Demonstrates explicit improvement in specific performance areas based on previous evaluations and formative feedback.

SBE Rule 6A-5.080 Revised November 15, 2011

Rulemaking Authority 1001.02, 1012.34, 1012.55, 1012.986 FS.

Law Implemented 1012.55, 1012.986, 1012.34 FS. History—New 5-24-05, Formerly 6B-5.0012, Amended 11-15-11.

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APPENDIX D
PRACTICUM SYLLABUS



FALL 2012

COURSE SYLLABUS

The Florida State University
College of Education

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Conceptual Framework: Leadership development begins with self-assessment and is sustained through lifelong learning, reflection, and continuous improvement.

A. EDA 5931 Practicum in Educational Leadership or EDA 5942 Practical Experiences in Educational Leadership (3 credit hours)

B. Prerequisites— none. This course fulfills requirements for the modified certification, master's, and specialist degree programs in Educational Leadership/Administration.

C. Objectives/Description

The primary purpose of practicum is to provide students an experiential orientation into the components for fulfilling certification requirements in Educational Leadership/Administration toward Level I Educational Leadership Certification. The practicum provides the infrastructure that bridges leadership practice with leadership theory as students acquire the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to make a positive impact on improving schools and student achievement. Students will:

- Establish an ongoing mentoring relationship with an expert in the field through the Program's Mentoring Initiative,
- Synthesize orientation knowledge of the Florida Educational Leadership Exam,
- Secure access to the Florida School Leaders Website for continued use throughout the program and for continued use as a resource to all Florida school leaders,
- Develop a plan of action (via their Leadership Development Plan) that guides individual improvement and professional learning in the field of educational leadership;,
- Reflect upon and analyze seminar discussion topics observed through the Discussion Board.
- Demonstrate mastery of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards Competencies and Skills through Critical Task Assignments related to leadership resiliency and professional and ethical behavior.

D. Required Readings, and/or other Resources

- 1) Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.) (2010).
Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- 2) Stanfield, B.R. (2002). *The courage to lead: Transform self, transform society.* Gabriola Island BC, Canada: New Society Publishers.
- 3) Servais, K. and Sanders, K.. (2012). *The courage to grow: Leadership lessons on the potential within.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

4) Subscription to Educational Impact Online Professional Development Academy

http://www.educationalimpact.com/UandC_Reg.html

William Cecil Golden Florida School Leadership Development Program: This program is aligned to Florida's Principal Leadership Standards and includes web-based resources to support an ongoing culture of continuous school improvement that can be used by all school districts, universities, and schools. The integration of resources found on this site are used to supplement the goals and objectives of the course and are critical to the student's successful completion of the course.

To access the William Cecil Golden Website, directions are provided in the Weekly Protocol or, go to <https://www.floridaschoolleaders.org/index.aspx> and register for full access.

Other Required Readings can be found under the Weekly Protocol and in the Course Library.

E. Topical Course Outline – Practicum in Educational Leadership

Week 1	Review Orientation Materials and Mentoring Initiative <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Introduction to Practicum</i>• <i>Overview of the Mentoring Initiative</i>• <i>Introduction Discussion Board</i>• <i>FSU Libraries Orientation</i>• <i>International Programs – Study Abroad</i>• <i>Introductory Discussion Board</i>
Week 2	Program Tools <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Florida School Leaders Website Orientation / Study Guide
Week 3	<u>Book Study Db and Activity</u> - The Courage to Lead

Chapters 1 Through 6

Week 4	Book Study Db and Activity - The Courage to Grow Chapters 1 and 2
Week 5	CT – Developing a Resiliency Awareness Plan
Week 6-8	Building Your Leadership Development Plan / LDP
Week 9	Book Study Db - The Courage to Grow Chapters 6 and 7 (Values, actions, and Ethics)
Week 10	CT – Code of Ethics Analysis
Week 11	Book Study Db – The Courage to Lead / Toolbox Activity Chapters 7- 9
Week 12	Book Study Db – The Courage to Lead / (Text Reflection) Chapters 10 - 12
Week 13	Preparing Your Mentoring Journal
Week 14	The Florida Educational Leadership Exam Study Guide
Week 15	Course Closure Activities Mentor Journal and Field Hour Form Practicum Tool Box

Task	Points	Due Date
Video Introductions (Db)	3	August 31st / <small>11:00 PM EST</small>
Mentor Profile Agreement Form Due	-	September 7th/ <small>11:00 PM EST</small>
Discussion Boards	10	See Course Outline
Florida School Leaders Scavenger Hunt	8	September 9th/ <small>11:00 PM EST</small>
Resiliency Awareness CT	12	September 30th/ <small>11:00 PM EST</small>
Leadership Development Plan	20	October 21st/ <small>11:00 PM EST</small>
Code of Ethics CT	12	November 4th/ <small>11:00 PM EST</small>
FELE Study Guide	5	December 2nd/ <small>11:00 PM EST</small>
Practicum Tool Box	10	December 9th/ <small>11:00 PM EST</small>
Mentoring Journal and Field Hour Form	20	December 9th/ <small>11:00 PM EST</small>
TOTAL	100	

F. Teaching Strategies

This course is a distance-learning course. However, students will be required to join the Cohort for a Face-to-Face meet and greet for the first class session.

During the course, students will have an opportunity to interact with the professor and other students through discussion boards, collaborative group work, virtual chat opportunities and skype. The course will incorporate multimedia resources and maximizes Internet usage to engage students in the learning process and address a range of learning modalities.

Various components and resources are in place to support student learning in the online environment. A course mentor works along side of the professor to assist with technology concerns and facilitate the management of the course, and students have access to the Blackboard Help Desk (phone: 850-644-8004 and email: help@campus.fsu.edu).

G. Field Experience (120 hours)

The time spent in the field in activities related to the Mentoring Initiative will total 120 hours over the course of 3 semesters. These hours added to the field hour expectation in the core courses (20 hours per course) will total 300 hours. While the online platform does not

support a traditional internship, the 300 hours of field experience across the program satisfies the internship requirement.

Mentoring Initiative

You will need to identify a mentor and secure their commitment over the course of the program. The purpose of working alongside an expert in the field is to assist you in goal setting, goal accomplishment, sharpening your leadership lens, and helping to shape positive dispositions toward becoming an educational leader. The time spent with the mentor will include but not be limited to discourse, activities, observations and meetings that amount to 40 hours of interaction in your 1st, 3rd, and 5th semesters. You will be required to submit a completed mentoring log at the end of each semester that details your involvement with your mentor and in activities related to the leadership standards, competencies and skills.

H. Expectations/Attendance

University Attendance Policy

“Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the immediate family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. Accommodations for these excused absences will be made and will do so in a way that does not penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.”

“The instructor decides what effect unexcused absences will have on grades and will explain class attendance and grading policies in writing at the beginning of each semester. **Instructors must accommodate absences due to documented illness, deaths in the immediate family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities and must do so in a way that does not penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration should also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.** All students are expected to abide by this class attendance policy. Students must also provide, when possible, advance notice of absences as well as relevant documentation regarding absences to the instructor as soon as possible following the illness or event that led to an absence. Regardless of whether an absence is excused or unexcused, the student is responsible for making up all work that is missed. University-wide policy requires all students to attend the first class meeting of all classes for which they are registered. Students who do not attend the first class meeting of a course for which they are registered will be

dropped from the course by the academic department that offers the course. In order to enforce this policy, instructors are required to take attendance at the first class meeting and report absences to the appropriate person in their department or school/college”

Netiquette Statement

Considering online classes will take place in a variety of settings, it is important to have a reference point for successful participation in this cyberspace environment. Be mindful of the Core Rules of Netiquette taken from Virginia Shea’s Book and Website -

"<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>"

Rule 1: Remember the Human.

Rule 2: Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life.

Rule 3: Know where you are in cyberspace.

Rule 4: Respect other people’s time and bandwidth.

Rule 5: Make yourself look good online.

Rule 6: Share expert knowledge.

Rule 7: Help keep flame wars under control.

Rule 8: Respect other people’s privacy.

Rule 9: Don’t abuse your power.

Rule 10: Be forgiving of other people’s mistakes.

Sexual Harassment Policy

“Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination based on a person's gender. Sexual harassment is contrary to the University's values and moral standards, which recognize the dignity and worth of each person, as well as a violation of federal and state laws and University rules and policies. Sexual harassment cannot and will not be tolerated by the Florida State University, whether by faculty, students, or staff; or by others while on property owned by or under the control of the University.”

Reading and Activity Requirements: Students are responsible for all assigned readings and activities linked via the Blackboard website. In addition, some resources will be required that are found on the Internet.

Participation: Students are expected to participate in all assigned activities including web course required assignments. Participation is to be conducted through the course Blackboard site.

Late Assignments: If extraordinary circumstances cause a student to be late in submitting an assignment, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor in advance to make arrangements for an extension of the due date. If no such arrangements are made, 25% will be deducted from the assignment grade, per day. Assignments received more than four days after a due date will receive no credit.

Writing Expectations: The level of writing for graduate school requires the use of APA style and format. All written work should be proofread for grammar, content, and mechanics. A scholarly level of presentation that incorporates research and academic journals for references is expected.

While there may be overlap of concepts across the coursework in the Educational Leadership program, students should ensure that the work submitted is original.

I. Grading/Evaluation

Each assignment has a point value and the points add up to 100. Final grades will be determined according to the following scale:

A	94-100 points
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83

C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	Below 60 points

J. Honor Code

“The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “. . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm>.”

Plagiarism: Students will submit papers through the Blackboard website to the professor or on a discussion board. Student papers may then be submitted to Safe Assign for an “originality report.” The first time a student submits an assignment with a low originality score, the assignment will be returned to the author(s) for revision; a second offense will result in a grade of zero for the assignment; consequences for a third offense are immediate dismissal from further participation and a grade of “F” in the course.

K. ADA Requirements

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

(1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and

(2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center

874 Traditions Way

108 Student Services Building

Florida State University

Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167

(850) 644-9566 (voice)

(850) 644-8504 (TDD)

sdrc@admin.fsu.edu

<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

L. Syllabus Change Policy

“Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.”

K. Bibliography

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APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL

From: Human Subjects [humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu]
Sent: Friday, March 01, 2013 9:16 AM
To: Norman, Scott
Cc: jirvin@fsu.edu
Subject: Use of Human Subjects in Research - Approval Memorandum

The Florida State University
Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(000) 000-0000 · FAX (000) 000-0000

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 3/1/2013

To: Scott Norman
Address: 000 XXXX XX. XXX 00 XXXXX, XX 00000
Dept.: EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS AND POLICY STUDIES

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Content Analysis of the Practicum Course in the Master of Science in Educational
Leadership/Administration Program

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and one member of

the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 2/28/2014 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is FWA00000168/IRB number IRB00000446.

Cc: Judith Irvin, Advisor

HSC No. 2013.9904

The formal PDF approval letter:

http://humansubjects.magnet.fsu.edu/pdf/printapprovalletter.aspx?app_id=9904<2013.9904

ICF.pdf

APPENDIX F
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

February 2013

Title: Content Analysis of the Practicum Course in the Master of Science in Educational Leadership/Administration Program

The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the University in any way.

The purpose of this study is to relate past experiences in the Practicum course, as well as the overall Master's program that you completed through Florida State University, with the effectiveness of the course and the program in the areas of student satisfaction, professional growth, and post-program success.

Data will be collected using a brief survey that will be sent by e-mail. The survey should take approximately less than 10 minutes. I will be collecting the surveys over a two week period, at the end of which time I plan to begin analyzing the data. I appreciate your participation and will be respectful of your time.

Random participants will be contacted for more in-depth interviews conducted online. These interviews will be conducted via Skype, or some similar format, with or without video connection, as each participant may wish. Interviews will last approximately 15 minutes. Interviews will be conducted during the same two week period as the survey collection, and then data analysis will begin. Data will also be collected through an anonymous analysis of student portfolios. This will not affect participants directly.

Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating, or during the study. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and only the researcher will know your identity, to the extent allowed by law.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are only the experience of and grateful appreciation for your participation in this study and its benefits to FSU, the Practicum, and the fields of educational leadership and distance learning. Digital data will be stored on my computer under password protection, and hard copy data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the COE and FSU. No one other than the researcher will have access to the files and all data will be destroyed no later than September 1, 2013.

Please sign this consent form in the space provided below. You are signing it with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Researcher Contact Information:

Scott W. Norman, Doctoral Candidate

(000) 000-0000

XXXXXX@my.fsu.edu

Major Professor Contact Information:

Dr. Judith Irvin, Faculty Adviser

(000) 000-0000

XXXXXX@fsu.edu

Institutional Review Board: Human Subjects Committee Office Contact Information:

Human Subjects Office

0000 XXXX Avenue

Suite 000-X

Tallahassee, FL 00000-0000

Ph: (000) 000-0000

Fax: (000) 000-0000

Participant Signature

Date

Scott W. Norman, Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX G

SURVEY

Survey of Experiences with and Perceptions of the online MSEL/A at FSU

A. Demographic Information

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Ethnicity

- American Indian or Alaska Native or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- White
- Multiracial

3. Age

- 20-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 60+

4. At what campus level do you currently serve?

- Elementary
- Middle School
- High School
- K-8 campus
- K-12 campus
- District/ Central Office

5. Years experience as an educator

- 1 – 3
- 4 – 5
- 6 – 8
- 9 – 10
- 10 – 15
- 15+

6. Geographical Region you lived in while taking the Masters program at FSU

- Florida Panhandle
- Northeast Florida
- Central Florida
- South Florida
- Outside of Florida

B. Experiences with distance learning at FSU

1. My online learning experiences were as rigorous as face-to-face courses.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. I feel my online course(s) successfully prepared me to serve as an educational leader.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I felt connected to my professors/I had a high level of interaction.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I felt connected to my classmates/I had a high level of interaction.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I would choose an online program such as the Masters program at FSU again.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

C. Perspectives of the Masters of Science in Educational Leadership/Administration at FSU

1. The Practicum course set a good tone for my overall program experience.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The field experienced mentor I chose to work with during the Practicum course is still a person I look to for guidance.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. The Leadership Development Plan (LDP) from my Practicum course is still useful to me now.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. The Portfolio I started in the Practicum course was useful to me after I graduated the program.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. The Masters of Science in Educational Leadership/Administration at FSU gave me the tools I needed to be a successful public school leader in Florida.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Using the following categories, describe yourself: Gender, age, ethnicity, years in education, grade level experience, geographic region, other descriptors of your choice.
2. Why did you choose to get a Masters degree in Educational Leadership at FSU?
3. How and to what extent did the fact that it is only offered online affect your decision?
4. How was your online experience? Was the course rigorous? Was there good interaction with students and with the instructor(s)? Did you feel adequately prepared by the course?
5. How was your experience with the curriculum itself? What new skills and knowledge would you say you gained from the coursework? Which ones did you grow in? Were you adequately prepared for the FELE?
6. What were some things in the coursework that you felt were not really helpful or that you have not really used since completing the program?
7. What were some things you wish you had learned from the program that were not covered in the coursework adequately or at all?
8. In what ways do you still work with your mentor or use anything from your portfolio in your job?
9. In what ways do you still communicate with any of the other members of your cohort?
10. How would you sum up your overall experience in the online Masters program at FSU?

APPENDIX I

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS CHART

Research Question	Data Collection			Data Analysis		
	Interview	Survey	Document Analysis	Descriptive Statistics	Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods
R.Q. 1	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
R.Q. 2	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
R.Q. 3	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y

Research Question	Satisfaction	Growth	Success: FELE/Jobs	Descriptive Statistics	Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods
	R.Q. 1	N	Y	Y	N	Y
R.Q. 2	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y
R.Q. 3	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y

R.Q. 1: Are there any discrepancies between the stated outcomes of the course and the actual outcomes as demonstrated by the students and evidenced in the e-portfolios?

R.Q. 2: What growth has been made in student knowledge and skills due to participation in the practicum?

R.Q. 3: What is the overall student satisfaction with their learning experience in the MSEL/A program?



APPENDIX J

SCAVENGER HUNT



WCG SCAVENGER HUNT

Directions

- This is a partner assignment. Within the Communication Tab on the Main Menu under 'Group Pages', you will find your partner group.
- Notice that I have placed the Scavenger Hunt in your file exchange, which will allow you and your partner to share the file.
- Open the file and begin to collaborate with your partner in completing the Hunt.
- Be sure to **summarize** your explanations. I expect that the group will have the same answers to the questions, but the Summary in Question #4 should be individual.
- If you use sources outside of the website, be sure to provide a reference list.
- Save the Scavenger Hunt back to the file in the file exchange each time you or your partner work on it.
- **Once the project is completed, each student must submit the assignment to the Assignment Link by [September 9th - 11:00 PM \(EST\)](#).**

WCG/ Florida School Leaders Scavenger Hunt

(16 questions @ 1/2 pt. each= 8pts total)



FAQ

1. What is the purpose of the William Cecil Golden Program?

What's New

2. List a new resource, a new module, and a new menu item that has been added to the Leadership Development Program.

Leadership Partners

3. List the 5 partners of the WCG Leadership Development Program, the city they are located in, and a tab that you explored on the homepage of their websites.

Learning Library

4. Individually read the article from the June 2012 archive on Research on Principal Effectiveness. Provide a 3-paragraph summary and reaction to the article using the APA standard for writing (including citations).

For questions 5 – 8, Please provide a brief excerpt from the site to support your answer.

5. What is oldest archived date of material in the Learning Library?
6. In what month and year is there information about Florida's NGGS?
7. In the archives of the Learning Library, what month and year is there information on the Common Core Standards?
8. When did Florida adopt the Common Core?

Register as a new user on the Home Page of the Florida School Leaders Website and answer the following questions:

9. How many "Tools" and "Resources" are there and which ones will you explore first?
10. How many "Workgroups are there and what does "CET" stand for?

Resources

11. Complete the Module – WCG: The Big Picture. List 6 points of new knowledge obtained from the information provided.

12. Where in Florida Law (the Statute) does it outline a new direction for professional development of school leaders with emphasis on the WCG Leadership Development Program Website as a platform?

Now turn your attention to other resources on the website and match the following terms to their descriptions:

___ 13. You will find within this resource a protocol that consists of standards that define what a district system should enable people to do at the individual, school, and district level.

___ 14. A form of long-term professional development in which teams of teachers systematically and collaboratively conduct research closely tied to lessons, and then use what they learn about student thinking to become more effective instructors.

___ 15. This resource was created in collaboration with Rosabeth Moss Canter and provides educators with real, resources that support leadership development and change management expertise.

___ 16. Provides an online introduction to modules that help school leaders work through various challenges. The ‘Challenge Cycle’ simulation includes exploring initial thoughts, resources, revised thinking, and culminates with group work.

Terms

- A. Change Toolkit**
- B. Professional Learning Systems**
- C. Lesson Study**
- D. Building 21st Century Schools**

APPENDIX K

COLLOQUIUM AND DISCUSSION BOARD



COLLOQUIUM SERIES AND DISCUSSION BOARD DIRECTIONS

A Colloquium Series that explores Topics in Educational Leadership is provided to extend your learning and diversify content presentation in the online environment. The purpose of the Colloquium is to provide applicable and practical conversations on topics relevant to you as an aspiring educational leader.

To facilitate the conversations, a panel of experts that represent organizations, institutions, and school districts from central and northeast counties in Florida were brought together in a discussion format. The panel has a plethora of experiences that they speak from to enlighten you.

As you listen to the conversations, you should find that the information is useful and allows you to expand your perspective on educational leadership as you form healthy dispositions toward a career that you will eventually move into.

The Colloquium Series video link can be found in this week's protocol. If you have problems viewing the video link, please contact Blackboard User Support.

Upon completion of viewing each Series Topic, you will have an opportunity to enter the Discussion Board to construct a reflection to the following threads:

- A. **Enlightenment:** What information resonated with you in the Series discussion among the panelists?
- B. **Connections:** What information in the discussion among the panelists provided you confirmation from other coursework, text readings, mentor conversations, etc. that you have previously heard? Be sure to properly cite your sources.
- C. **Application:** How do you plan to make the information applicable now?

The Discussion Board will be organized in a group format and groups will be rotated after each video Series. Each Discussion Board will be worth 2 points with 1.5 points for your initial post, and .5 points for your response posts. Be sure to note the rubric for Discussion Boards assessment.

DISCUSSION BOARD POSTS

Description of Post Score	Score
Posts are thoughtful, well-organized, and substantive; uses correct APA style, and contains citations that support the author’s analyses; Examples are useful as well. Enlightenment, Connections, and Application parts of the thread are addressed.	2
Post lacks organization and substance. Post does not make use of correct APA and/or does not use citations to support writing. No examples used. 1 or more aspects of the thread are not addressed.	1
Author did not post during the week.	0

Note: In most cases the prongs within the initial post will be divided across the maximum points allotted (1.5 points).

Reminders:

- Both posts should be substantiated by the readings or conversations and include citations.
- Both posts should include a reference list.
- Up to .25 points a day are deducted for late posts.

APA NOTES

Film / Movie / Motion Picture

To cite a film, video, or DVD, list the producer, director and the year of release. Give the title in italics, followed by "Video" in brackets, the country where it was made, and the name of the studio.

Example

Mass, J. B. (Producer), & Gluck, D. H. (Director). (1987). *Deeper into hypnosis* [Motion Picture]. United States: Prentice-Hall.

Use the following information for citing the Video Colloquium:

R.M. Blackwell-Flanagan (Producer)

F. Calzado (Director)

Name of Studio (Academic and Professional Program Services)

Year of Copyright (2009)

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<http://www.famu.edu/index.cfm?graduatestudies&GraduateDegreePrograms>

<http://www.coe.fau.edu/GoogleResults/Default.aspx?cx=007734294614915340684%3Abug1retwps&cof=FORID%3A9&ie=UTF-8&q=online+degrees>

<http://coe.fgcu.edu/edleadershipmed/index.asp>

<http://online.fiu.edu/programs>

<http://ncf.edu/about-ncf>

http://www.education.ucf.edu/academics_departments.cfm

<http://www.distance.ufl.edu/online-programs>

<http://www.unf.edu/distancelearning/>

<http://www.coedu.usf.edu/main/departments/edlead/masters.html>

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Scott W. Norman has spent his adult life as an educator working with students as young as seven and as old as seventy, from all around the world, both on-line and on-ground. He holds degrees in English, History, and Education, and is certified as an educational administrator through the Arizona Department of Education. His interests are online or distance education, small schools, and educational leadership. He has been involved with on-line education for more than a decade and has developed courses and curriculum, taught synchronous and asynchronous classes, and researched and presented findings on the history and use of distance learning. His paper on distance learning, *The Future is Now: Digital Native Students and Old School Teachers*, was accepted for presentation at the 2012 Eastern Educational Research Association (EERA) Annual Convention.

Originally from the foothills of North Carolina, Scott has been involved in education in California, Arizona, Florida, and Georgia. He has been an adjunct instructor since 2001, and serves as a Full Professor for Western International University, teaching for the on-line campus and working with students from all over the United States, and in a global classroom that has included students from Japan, Italy, El Salvador, Bermuda, Trinidad and Tobago, The Republic of Sudan, and other countries. He enjoys teaching Cultural Diversity, Critical Thinking, and Educational Leadership courses. He is a licensed minister and enjoys preaching occasionally, as well as working with youth in his church. He is a history buff whose favorite authors include Jeff Shaara, Stephen Ambrose, and David Barton. He enjoys motorcycles, softball, and staying connected with old friends through social media.