Leadership Preparation for School Principals:

The Place of Certification

David Opeyemi

Paper presented at the
Graduate Symposium, Winter 2013

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations & Psychology, Faculty of Education,
University of Manitoba
Abstract

As the needs of society changes, the demands on schools and their leaders change. In Canada, for instance, the issue of cultural diversity, increase in school population, and the inclusion of the Aboriginal and immigrant values and beliefs in the school curriculum are among the rising demands placed on schools. These demands have resulted in the need for school reform and have also changed how school principals are perceived today. As a result of these demands, the roles of school principals are beginning to shift from just managing buildings and budgets to providing accountability related to teacher’s performance, students’ success, managing school data, aligning resources while still providing instructional leadership (Mitgang, 2012). As the responsibilities of school administrators change, there is need to better prepare principals through professional certification. This paper examines individuals in Manitoba who have obtained Level 1 School Administrator’s Certificate and Level 2 Principal’s Certificate between September 01, 2007 and June 30, 2012. The paper argues that leadership preparation for school principals through certification is important for school improvement in that it will facilitates principals’ effectiveness. This paper has implications on content delivery for leadership preparation and it will influence educational administration policies in Manitoba.

Keywords: Leadership preparation, certification, school, student’s success, school principal
Introduction

Leadership is crucial in every aspect of human life particularly in the school environment where teaching and learning takes place. The effects of school leadership is seen been in every aspect of the school. Leadership is seen played out in curriculum design and implementation, in teacher’s pedagogy, teacher-leadership, in students’ academic success, and in parents’ and community relationship with the school. According to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 5). School principals play a central role because they often determine the conditions under which policy interpretation and implementation will be carried out (Burch & Spillane, 2002; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marks et al., 2002). Successful school reform depends on having principals well prepared to change schools and improve instruction, not just manage buildings and budgets (Mitgang, 2012, p. 3). This implies that principals can be catalyst towards success school reforms and improvement when they are well prepared.

The idea of school leadership is far from being simple; it is complex, changing, and demanding in the 21st century more than what it used to be (Fullan, 2008; Leithwood, 2004 & 2005; Shields, 2004; Wallace Foundation, 2012). Principals have been known to manage the school buildings and budgets (Mitgang, 2012) but this perception is changing with principals assuming new and challenging roles related to providing instructional leadership while still managing the school. These are not easy tasks to accomplish without better leadership preparation. Leadership preparation is important for school leaders in order to be able to influence teaching and learning positively.

Mitgang (2012) describes the importance of preparing school leaders like this:
The increased recognition of leadership’s importance and the growing body of evidence on what works in preparing new leaders together offer hope that inadequate preparation programs will eventually be replaced by ones that better reflect the new conceptions of school leadership and the tough challenges facing districts (p. 8).

As school administrators in Manitoba public schools prepare to meet the challenges before them, the focus of this study is to examine individuals in Manitoba who have obtained Level 1 – School Administrator’s Certificate and Level 2 – Principal’s Certificate in the last five years. Apparently, no research has been conducted in this area in the last five years in Manitoba. Of recent, the work of Young (2011, p. 192) suggested a study on principals’ perceptions about principal certifications in Manitoba but not on who is being certified as a principal and/or school administrator between September 01, 2007 and June 30, 2012. Also, Hickcox’s (2002) report titled *Shaping the Principalship in Manitoba* focused on both training and certification of school-based administrators but not on individuals that have obtained their Level 1 and Level 2 certificates.

As the managerial skills of school principals improve, teachers’ performance and students’ success will be greatly influence (Leithwood, Louis, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010). This paper argues that the preparation of school principals through professional certification is important for school improvement such that it will facilitate principals’ effectiveness. Theoretically, this study draws upon the work of Edward Hickcox (2002). Hickcox proposed four models, namely: a) development of standards, b) programs, c) practicum, and d) certification towards shaping the principalship in Manitoba.
It is the assumption of this paper that carrying out a study which focused on examining certified school leaders in the last five years will set a direction for further studies on principal certification. It may add to the conversation related to whether principal certificate should be mandatory or a voluntary requirement for principals in Manitoba public schools. This paper is part of an ongoing research process on *Leadership Preparation for School Principals: The place of certification*. Currently, this research is in chapter three – research methodology, therefore, no empirical data have been collected so far. The discussions in this paper are based on the review of literatures and the discussion the researcher had with faculty members and some graduate students about leadership preparation for school principals in Manitoba.

This paper concludes with some factors that were identified in the course of reviewing related literatures, which may influence leadership preparation for school principals and principals’ certification program.

**Method**

The review of the literature was conducted following the discussion I had with my advisor, some faculty members, some graduate students, and a broad search of academic journals, educational databases and educational research organizations on three major themes; what is leadership and why should we care about it? What do we know about highly effective principals? And why is leadership preparation through certification important for school leaders? The matrix below (See Table 1) describes the framework that informed the review of the literature for this paper.
Table 1: Literature Review Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Concepts</th>
<th>Main Idea</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is leadership and why we should care about it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership preparation programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals’ effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership effects on student success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal certification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table illustrates how some key leadership concepts, authors, references, databases, and some reoccurring themes were identified. It is pertinent at this point to define a number of concepts surrounding leadership preparation for school principals and principal certification programs as pointed in the literature review matrix. So what is leadership and why is leadership preparation important for principals? And what do we know about effective school leadership?

**What is leadership?**

The concept of leadership is broad; it has been defined differently for several decades. There is no singular definition of leadership; no single definition is right or wrong in itself. “Leaders are known with two core functions: They provide direction and exercise influence” (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 9). Leaders are positioned to lead people toward the actualization of set goals usually within an organization. People assume the position
Leadership can be obtained through different means. Some leaders are elected through casting of votes, some are appointed while some became leaders based on expertise and/or years of work experiences.

Leaders exercise influence in diverse ways. They can influence the budgets, set work standards, reward excellence performance and penalize poor performance, and they can determine the direction of an organization. Green (2005) observed that “leaders were believed to be a select group of individuals who focused their attention on identified tasks” (p. 14). Based on Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson, (2010) and Green’s (2005) definitions of leadership, it is evident that leaders exist within a given organization, they are driven by identified tasks, they provide direction for achieving these tasks, and they influence others to become leaders themselves.

In the school context, the way leaders are perceived is similar to how they are perceived in other workplace. What makes the difference is the context in which the art of leadership is exercised. People who occupy leadership positions in schools are sometimes referred to as school administrator or principal or vice-principal. Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) observed further that “while there are many sources of leadership in schools, principals remain the central source” (p. 54). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards described the school administrator as an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 14). By implication, an educational leader would not merely impose goals on teachers and students, but will work with teachers and parents to create a shared sense of purpose and direction for the school.
Why is Leadership Preparation Important?

Effective leadership preparation is crucial for school administrators as it will create opportunity for principals to acquire relevant skills and knowledge. These skills can be used as tools to address the challenges faced by schools in the 21st century. The challenges faced by schools are from different but many sources. They can result from school, divisional, and provincial policies; from allocating scare resources to meet what some days appears to be the unlimited needs of the school (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2008); preparing students to pass standardized test (Mitgang, 2012); and the challenge of cultural diversity in school population (Okan, 2008; Herdin, 2008). Furthermore, the centralization of power (Lingard & Douglas, 1999; Pollock, 2008); information gathering and data-based decision-making and school improvement planning (Alberta Education, 2009); managing school data and/or challenges of accountability (Mitgang, 2012); and the challenge posed by community and/or parents association (Lingard & Douglas, 1999). Leadership preparation for school principals can be a strategy toward addressing these challenges.

In the last two decades, more attention is placed on factors that have significant amount of effects on teaching and learning in the classroom. Leithwood and Riehl (2004) are of the view that “in these times of heightened concern for student learning, school leaders are being held accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn” (p. 2). Students’ academic success is now considered to be a strong parameter used to measure successful school principals (Leithwood et al, 2004; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Principals have an impact on student achievement primarily through their influence on teacher’s motivation and working conditions; their influence on teacher’s knowledge and skills produces less impact on student achievement (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 19). Some
research-based evidences have linked student’s success to school leadership (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2012).

According to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), they identified two areas that successful leadership can play a highly significant role in improving student learning. They are; “leadership effects is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. Leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most” (p. 5). By the virtue of their position, principals are closer to teachers, parents, students, and to the community than other key stakeholders in the school. They understood the aspect of the school curriculum that demands urgent attention and the aspect of the classroom that can improve student learning. Given the perceived importance of leadership, it is no wonder that an effective principal is thought to be a necessary precondition for an effective school (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 5). The implication, therefore, is that leadership effects on student’s success might improve with more training for principals.

Leadership preparation for principals is crucial because our society is rapidly changing. The society is changing scientifically, technologically, economically, socially, environmentally, politically, educationally, and culturally. In Canada and Manitoba, for instance, the issue of cultural diversity, increase in school population, and inclusion of Aboriginal and immigrant values and beliefs in the school curriculum are among the rising demands placed on schools. This of course has resulted in the need for school reform and improvement. Schools and their leaders need to catch up with the evolving society if is to continue to maintain its valuable position as an agent of change.
Due to the evolving nature of our society and the huge challenges posed to schools, the roles of school principals have changed drastically. The chance of any school reform improving student learning is remote unless school boards and school leaders agree with its purposes and appreciate what is required to make it work (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Of particular interest to this study is the impact of these changes on school systems and how it is gradually reshaping the entire process of managing schools. Changes as it were are expected to flow from top-down in the school systems (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The implications, therefore, is that principals are in the position to influence teaching and learning as they themselves engage in change processes through leadership preparation.

This paper assumes that effective leadership preparation for school principals may be a catalyst towards integrating the values and practices of the community in the school curriculum. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) states that “school curriculum should be such in which the instructional strategies, learning activities and assessment practices are clearly aligned and aimed at accomplishing the full array of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions valued by society” (p. 62). School leadership preparation through certification needs to focus in this direction so as to be able to integrate and strengthen the values of the society.

Apparently, the role of principals span through providing a quality instructional leadership in each classroom. Principals have the vision, courage, wisdom, and professional knowledge to lead learning communities that create opportunities for all children to achieve their highest potential. Principals, by the virtue of their position, are to ensure all children have a meaningful and relevant foundation for learning (Fullan, 2010, p. 40). Being an instructional leader, principals are expected to keep teaching and learning at the forefront of decision making while still maintaining the rules and regulations of the school. School principal’s preparation is
important as it has the potential to transform principals to assume the position of instructional leader than functioning as mere building and budget manager. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004) observed that instructional leadership:

…certainly conveys the importance of keeping teaching and learning at the forefront of decision making, it is no more meaningful, in and of itself, than admonishing the leader of any organization to keep his or her eye on the organizational “ball” – in this case, the core objective of making schools work better for kids (p. 6).

Furthermore, Mitgang (2012) states that “aspiring principals need pre-service training that prepares them to lead improved instruction and school change, not just manage buildings” (p. 9). Providing instructional leadership is an important goal that most schools are aiming at in view of the impact of leadership on teaching and learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). However, with quality preparatory programs, principals can have a successful transition from managing building to providing instructional leadership. Through effective preparation, school administrators are better positioned to acquire new mentorship and coaching approach for teachers while more professional development platforms are established for all staffs. Effective preparation may improve the skills of principals on possible ways of mining school data to harmonise students’ need, how effective communication within and beyond the school can be engaged, how high expectations for teachers and students can be designed, and how to engage systems thinking to diagnose problems and arrive at workable solutions (Mitgang, 2012). Meanwhile, the ability to engage in practices that will help develop people depends, in part, on leaders’ knowledge of the “technical core” of schooling – what is required to improve the quality of teaching and learning – often invoked by the term “instructional leadership” (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 24).
What Do We Know About Highly Effective Principals?

Having explored some of the important reasons why leadership preparation for principals is crucial, it is equally important to examine what highly effective principals do. There are different studies (Bass, 1997; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2003) which have suggested different parameters for measuring principals’ effectiveness but that of Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) makes strong connections with the focus of this research. Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) suggested four practices of an effective principal, they are: 1) Provide direction, 2) Develop people, 3) Re-design the organization, and 4) Manage the instructional programs (p. 56). These practices have been previously identified by Leithwood (2004, p. 8) but what makes the difference in their new empirical evidence (2010, p. 67) is the inclusion of managing the instructional program as part of the leadership expected from an effective principal.

Providing Direction – Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) have identified four core practices, which are: building a shared vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, creating high performance expectations, and communicating the direction (p. 75). For a principal to be highly effective, building a shared vision is imperative. This can be achieved by collaborating with teachers, students, and parents through different mediums and resources. For example, the principal can engage teachers and parents in a round table discussion, create opportunity for one-on-one discussion, operate an open door policy, and by allowing members to drop-off suggestions through a suggestion box. Leithwood and his colleagues (2004) state that:

People are motivated by goals which they find personally compelling, as well as challenging but achievable. People are motivated by goals which they find personally
compelling, as well as challenging but achievable. Having such goals helps people make sense of their work and enables them to find a sense of identity for themselves within their work context (p. 8).

An effective principal can foster the acceptance of group goals by allowing peoples’ opinions to count during decision making. That way, the teachers, students, and the parents are immersed in the school activities. The principal as well needs to maintain specific teaching and learning standards, which can encourage high performance among teachers and students. The principal also need to provide and get feedback from faculty members through effective communication mechanisms like notice board and email. These practices are aimed at helping colleagues develop shared understandings about the organization and its activities and goals that can undergird a sense of purpose or vision (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Effective school principals driven by a sense of direction will not only challenge teachers and students but will also improve teaching and learning experience in the school. This paper assumes that as school leaders improve their leadership skills, there is a possibility that the school will be vision-driven. Principals’ certificate could be one of the sources of acquiring these skills for effective school management.

**Developing People** – The second practice that defines an effective school principal according to Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) is to develop people. This practice is categorized into providing individualized support and consideration, offering intellectual stimulation, and modeling appropriate values and practices (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 68). Effective principals will support teachers through one-on-one mentorship, lesson plan design, use of pedagogy, and through participatory leadership. As
teachers are developed, classroom teaching experience will improve and students’ learning will change. Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) observed that:

…the primary aim of developing people is capacity building, understood to include not only of the knowledge and skills staff members need to accomplish organizational goals but also the disposition staff members need to persist in applying those knowledge and skills (p. 68).

According to Fullan (2010), “successful principals develop others in a way that is integrated into the work of the school” (p. 14). A highly effective principal will actively engage in the culture of building, modeling, and transforming the stakeholders in the school community. By implication, therefore, developing people is about practical applications of knowledge and skills as stimulus toward reaching the school goals mentioned earlier, providing direction, in their model. Developing people (teachers, students and personnel) in the school may foster school reform and improvement. As faculty, staff, and students are developed, they become committed to the process of building the school. However, principals cannot develop skills in others, unless they have developed the skills themselves. School leaders need to be trained on how to develop teachers, students, and school personnel. Licensing principals may be an avenue for acquiring such skills that will prepare principals to engage the culture of developing people.

Redesign the Organization – In this model, Leithwood (2004) and Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) discussed how effective school leaders who engage in the practice of redesigning the school motivate teachers and administrators to work individually but for the collective purpose of improving students’ learning. Highly successful educational leaders will be committed to developing their districts and schools as effective organizations that support and sustain the performance of administrators and teachers, as well as students (Leithwood,
Four distinctive approaches have been identified: strengthening school culture; modifying organizational structure; building collaborative processes; and managing the environment (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

At every school, there are existing cultures. Some need to be strengthened while others require lots of energy to get rid of. Redesigning the organization may be difficult when principals lack the technical know-how but with principal licensing, school leaders will be better equipped to redesign and still able to manage the school instructional programs.

Manage the Instructional Programs – Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) identified five key steps for managing instructional program, they are: staffing the program, providing instructional support, monitoring school activity, buffering staff from distractions to their work, and aligning resources (p. 69). In the last two decades, the functions of school principals have been concentrated mostly on managing building and budgeting (Mitgang, 2012). This perception is beginning to change drastically, such that, administrators need to provide accountability on teachers’ performance, students’ success, managing school data and aligning resources while still providing instructional leadership combined with managing the building. It implies that more tasks, responsibilities, and functions have been added to what principals are expected to do daily. But with the increase in the roles of principals, the question then remains “are school principals provided with better preparatory programs that would better equip them to meet these new/additional responsibilities?” As efforts are geared towards making school leaders effective, it is important to examine how school administrators in Manitoba public school are prepared to address the huge challenges before them.
Leadership Preparation and Certification in Manitoba: The Journey So Far

It is important to examine the composition of the current certification programs in the province. Certification and training for school administrators in Manitoba was first enacted on November 28th, 1988 (Manitoba Education Administration Act, 1988, p. 15). In Manitoba, currently there are two levels of certification: Level 1: School Administrator’s Certificate and Level 2: Principal’s Certificate recognized by the Manitoba Regulations 515/88 of the Education Administration Act (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2011).

The table below illustrates the general and specific qualifications for Level 1 and Level 2 Certificates.

Table 1 Summary of Qualifications for Level 1 & Level 2 Certificates in Manitoba

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1: School Administrator’s Certificate</th>
<th>Level 2: Principal’s Certificate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidates with Master’s or Doctoral degree in Educational Administration will complete the academic requirements for both the Level 1: School Administrator’s certificate and the Level 2: Principal’s certificate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A valid Manitoba Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate is required plus a minimum of three (3) years of teaching experience.</td>
<td>• A valid Level 1: School Administrator's Certificate is required plus, two (2) full years as Vice-Principal or Principal at 100 % time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 120 contact hours of accredited professional development; or</td>
<td>• 180 contact hours of requisite university coursework in educational administration and accredited professional development combined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A maximum of 6-credit hours of approved university coursework at the 500 level or above, plus 60 contact hours of accredited professional development activities; or</td>
<td>• The requisite is 9-credit hours of approved university coursework in educational administration, plus 90 contact hours of accredited professional development activities; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 3-credit hours of approved university coursework at the 500 level or above, plus 90 contact hours of accredited professional development activities.</td>
<td>• 18 credit hours of approved university courses in educational administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As important as these certificates may appear, no research has been conducted to determine how many principals in Manitoba received their Manitoba Level 1 School Administrator’s Certificate and Level 2 Principal’s Certificate in the last five years. School divisions may select those who hold, or those who may qualify for the above certificates; however, these certificates may not be required in order to fill an administrative position. Certification is not presently mandated (Young, 2011). There are four competencies described in the content for Level 1 and Level 2 candidates. They are: Leadership, Instruction, Management, and Personnel (p. 6). Candidates who participate in Level 1 or Level 2 certificates are expected to acquire relevant skills that will prepare them to provide effective leadership at their various schools and develop instructional practices that can improve teaching and learning situation for all students. Also, candidates are expected to provide managerial oversight on the school database, school facilities and school resources; facilitate strong parental and community relationship; and provide support to school personnel.

Arguably, this paper cannot confirm if the school principals in Manitoba that had obtained Level 2: Principal Certificate have improved on their leadership practices or if student’s success had improved drastically in their respective schools. It is also important to examine how principals and/or school administrators are prepared in other jurisdictions.

**Leadership Preparation in Other Jurisdictions**

Across Canada, Young (2011) observed that “the development of uniform approaches and standards for the preparation of Canadian educational leaders has been shaped by federalism and the fact that education is a provincial policy responsibility” (p. 3). The result is that Canada is the only country in the developed world that does not have a federal department of education,
and each province and territory has different jurisdictional requirements for administrative professional development (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2008). What is common in Canada is that every jurisdiction requires a valid teaching certificate as the basis for consideration for the principalship. However, only two provinces and two territories require certification from school principals. They are Ontario and New Brunswick, and Northwest Territories and Nunivut respectively (Hickcox, 2002, p. 9).

Hickcox (2002) observed further that Ontario has the most sophisticated and most demanding set of requirements for licensure for school administrators of any jurisdiction in Canada. It involve obtaining a Master’s degree or equivalent, taking two special short courses under Ministry of Education guidelines, and undergoing a supervised practicum, which leads to the award of Principal’s Qualification Program (PQP). The province of Manitoba is gradually catching up with the rest part of Canada toward implementing a mandatory principal’s certificate. Outside of Canada, USA has a long history of principal training and certification with the launching of six Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards in 1996. These standards were reversed in 2008 by the Council of Chief State School Officers. ISLLC (2008) standards are designed to serve as a broad set of national guidelines that states can use as a model for developing or updating their own standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 5). Over 40 states and District of Columbia now required principals to be certified (Hickcox, 2002; ISLLC, 2008; Mitgang, 2012; Young, 2011). Canada is far still behind when it comes to mandatory principal certification. Arguably, despite the long history of principal preparation and certification in US and in some other parts of the world, it has not yet been empirically supported if principals’ certification will result to effective leadership. Further studies needs to be carried out on this.
Connecting Leadership Preparation with Theory

This study draws upon the theory of Edward Hickcox (2002). Hickcox developed four models, namely: standards, programs, practicum, and certification toward shaping school principalship in Manitoba. Hickcox’s models were adopted for this paper are because his theory was developed to address issues surrounding school principalship in Manitoba public schools, and because the theory focused on preparation and certification for school principals. Furthermore, Hickcox is an expert in educational administration and an insider on Canadian and Manitoban education systems. Hickcox was professor of educational administration for many years and he was an adjunct professor in the University of Manitoba for a number of years. Hickcox was a Professor and Head of the Department of Educational Administration at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) for nine years. He retired in 1996. He was involved in research and field development activities with school boards and school administrators. In 2002, Hickcox wrote the reports titled Shaping the Principalship in Manitoba for the Manitoba Council for Leadership in Education (MCLE). Hickcox’s models were greatly influenced by Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards and the work of Joseph Murphy of Vanderbilt University.

Development of Standards – Hickcox (2002) in his theory observed the urgent need for standardized procedures and accessible policy, which will serve as the provincial watchdog on principal certification in Manitoba. As it is now, the current preparatory program (Level 1 School Administrator’s Certificate and Level 2 Principal’s Certificate) for school leaders in Manitoba only allowed candidates to become certified on a voluntary basis or if required by school boards at the time of hiring. The current policy does not allow for standardized practice among all school principals. It may draw the province backward in terms of school administration practice
among other provinces in Canada. It may slow down implementation of school reform programs, and it may impact teacher’s performance and students’ academic success adversely. In the USA, in contrast, over the last decade, there has been notable progress in revamping principal preparation. According to Mitgang (2012) observed that “since 2000, virtually all states have adopted new learning-centered leadership standards” (p. 4).

Hickcox observed that “standards themselves can be modified quite easily according to particular circumstances, according to the time and place” (p. 17). Hickcox’s theory was not intended to identify the lapses in the current certification policy but to strengthen it. He intended to convince the Manitoba education department that principal certification should be mandatory for school leaders. For school leaders in Manitoba to catch up with the trends in school administration in other parts of the world, there is need to tighten principal certification rules and compel leadership training programs for current and aspiring school principals.

**Development of Programs** – Hickcox (2002) observed that “once the standards, along with appropriate indicators are established, all training activities for school administrators be linked to the standards” (p. 18). School leadership preparatory programs, for instance, Masters Programs, short courses, post baccalaureate, workshops and/or leadership conference should be design to link up with existing standards. Leadership preparatory programs offered at the university should be such that complement the standards, which is to be an approved part of a training program for school administrators. School leaders should not pin all their hopes on universities course instead they should fight for better preparatory programs that would allow them perform better in their duties.

**Development of Practicum** – in this theory, Hickcox (2002) is of the view that the application of school-based experiences through internship, mentorship for all principal
candidates is catalyst toward improving the ways our schools are managed. Development of practicum would allow principals to be able to apply their daily school life experiences to deal with school challenges. The Minnesota-Toronto research found that the average school experiences changes in principals every three or four years, and this leadership churn can do measurable harm to student achievement (Mitgang, 2012). So, how often are school leaders exposed through training in Manitoba? Development of practicum will afford school leaders the opportunity of applying the leadership theory they acquired from post graduate classes to address some of the challenges confronting today’s school. Principals cannot continue to accumulate knowledge and skills; they have to learn how this knowledge may be used to transform the classroom experiences of students.

**Establishment of Certification** – As principals in Manitoba public schools are prepared through laid down standards, they need to be certified having successfully passed the required courses. According to Young (2011) “one of the commonly formalized professional development opportunities includes administrative certification, which requires that administrators engage in formalized learning opportunities related to agreed upon standards, often in conjunction with university Master’s degree preparation programs” (p. 3). Having been able to set clear standards, develop programs that are in-line with the standards, develop mentorship programs that allow for hands-on-desk training for candidates, then, mandatory principal certification can now be put in place as a requirement for holding the principalship in Manitoba. Mitgang (2012) observed that “training programs have a powerful incentive to change when a district (school boards) declares it will hire only graduates of programs that meet its needs” (p. 17).

Apparently, some scholars (Young, 2011; Hickcox, 2002) have called for a
A comprehensive review of the certification contents, the requirements for obtaining the certificates, a review of the contact hours for school principals and moving towards making principal certificates mandatory in Manitoba. Hickcox (2002) puts it this way “the various aspects of the program need to be re-examined, thought through again, and established on a higher level than is currently the case” (p. 7).

**Reflection on Hickcox Approach**

What I find interesting in this approach is that certification should not be made a priority in Manitoba until clear standards that are strongly connected to programs and effective mentorship are established. This is important if the current administrative certificates program will catch up with the international standards. Having voluntary certification programs for school administrators is good but it needs to be reviewed and standardized and/or mandated.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has examined concepts of leadership, the importance of leadership in schools on students’ academic success, and why leadership is crucial for transforming schools in the 21st century. Also, this paper discussed extensively some common practices (setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program) associated with effective principals. This paper aligns these practices with the current leadership preparation scene in Manitoba and in other jurisdictions. Being able to compare school administration practices in Manitoba to other jurisdictions highlights the strengths and exposes areas that need improvement in school administration practices in Manitoba. Furthermore, this paper was able to use Hickcox’s (2002) models, which are: standards, programs, practicum, and certification to justify the urgent need for a reform of
leadership preparation for school principals and making principal certification mandatory. However, Mitgang (2012) observed that “good pre-service training is essential. But equally important is the training and support school leaders receive after they’re hired” (p. 24).

In the course of reviewing some literatures on leadership training for school principals through certification, certain factors that may influence leadership preparation and certification were identified. They are: (1) Control – who controls education? Is it a provincial or federal policy? Who determines principals’ qualification? (2) Standard – is there standardized procedures for hiring principals? Are the contents of certificate programs relevant to today’s school situation? (3) Accessibility – is training and certification easily accessible to principals in rural areas and was it designed in line with the practice of the people? And (4) Benefits – will certification result in salary increase, promotion, and/or funding for further studies for principal candidates? These important issues are relevant in determining possible hurdles that may slow down implementation of principals’ certification and they require further research.
References


Young, D.Y. (2011). Educational leadership and the perceptions of principals and vice principals in Manitoba on their professional development. A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba Winnipeg, Manitoba.