

EAD 941 Administrative Behavior

Syllabus
Spring 2008
Saturday 9 am – 1 pm

Dr. Susan Printy
407 Erickson Hall
517.355.4508
sprinty@msu.edu

INTRODUCTION

As the Foreward to one of our texts indicates, “Leadership is back in fashion.” In most western countries, leadership capacity and capability are central targets in efforts to improve educational quality and performance. This marks a new point on the continuum of school improvement. Past efforts, of course, have focused on resources, organizational structures, professionalization of teachers, standards, and accountability levers as the means to improve the effectiveness of schools, and there are substantial “literatures” associated with each endeavor. You’ve engaged some of this literature already and we’ll look at other work along the way in this course. But our focus will be on leadership . . .

In fact, a central goal of this course is to examine the linkages among leadership, learning, and equity. Though I love the study of leadership, I make no claim that this is the last stop on the railway to the ultimate stop, schools that are healthy places for adults and children, that prepare all students to live their best lives, and that serve the needs of the “nested” communities in which they are located. (Here I include the global community, a topic that receives emphasis toward the end of the course!)

Yet, I think most people agree that the demand is great for well-prepared educational leaders. School administrators at all levels of the system are facing huge challenges from many directions. The public expects more from schools than ever before, including greater accountability, improved performance on standardized tests, guarantees of safety, accommodation for students with diverse needs, participation of various stakeholders, and enhanced school-community relations. Political, educational and religious leaders increasingly advocate alternative ways of organizing schooling such as privatization, home schooling, charter schools and vouchers or other forms of restructuring. School leaders are in the spotlight. Each must move his or her school or district toward excellence (however that is defined!). Other leaders contribute from many parts of the system, a reality that needs to be acknowledged, nurtured, and expected. Educational leadership is a complex and demanding endeavor, and the need for capable leaders willing to accept the requisite challenges has never been greater.

Administrative preparation programs are also in the spotlight. Some are criticized as being too theoretical and insufficiently grounded in reality. As a core course in a doctoral educational administrative program, EAD 941 could easily go in that direction. The design of the course, however, reflects an embrace of both theory and practice, with the assumption that theories inform practice and the realities of practice drive the articulation of theories. Readings and activities each week will attempt to bridge the theory/practice divide in a way that enriches your learning. We will co-create many of the experiences,

capitalizing on everyone's individual areas of expertise. While I have established an organizational plan for each week, please understand that there might be some adjustments according to emergent needs as the course unfolds.

Class Objectives:

Students will:

- become familiar with historical trends in general leadership theory
- appreciate the complexities of leadership in educational organizations
- acquire knowledge of the prevalent models of school leadership
- develop skills and competencies in line with various models
- learn about the linkages between leadership, learning, and equity
- investigate one domain of leadership (or an issue related to leadership), including both theoretical and research aspects
- investigate leadership by interviewing (or surveying) a small set of leaders
- improve critical analysis, synthesis, and writing skills
- reflect on personal leadership styles, skills, challenges, and successes
- participate with a spirit of openness, mutuality, and collaboration

Organization of the Class:

One way in which the class is organized is by sources of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge (thus, we start with an epistemological approach). The course is comprised of three interwoven strands: theory, research, and practice. In the theory strand, we will become familiar with leadership theory broadly conceived as well as leadership theory applied to schools. During the term we examine specific conceptualizations that are front and center in the current educational literature including instructional leadership, relational leadership forms, and distributed leadership.

Learning to read, understand, and write about research are important skills required of advanced graduate students. The research strand is interwoven closely with the theoretical work. Time is scheduled into the class to assist you with skills related to reading research, understanding research, and being able to “use” research in the work one must do as a graduate student. Much of this relates to the analysis of a research study and the synthesis of concepts and findings from multiple sources into your own writing. By the end of the course, you will have a good sense of the variety of approaches researchers have taken to learn about school leadership. And, you will have the chance to put this knowledge to use by getting “hands on” with research.

The practice strand unfolds in the multiple opportunities you have to develop and enrich your leadership competencies, through readings and activities related to your text and through in-class leadership exercises. You will engage in sustained reflective practice about your current and developing leadership skills. In the conduct of this work, as a result of reading about, thinking about, and “doing” leadership, you will move to an ontological perspective, requiring you to consider, “Does leadership exist?” and, if so, what is it? These are questions that have at the core, “Who am I, as a leader?” A second, and correlated, question asks, “Who am I as one who studies leadership?” The small

research study you conduct will help you begin to make sense of that question. You will learn a lot through inquiry.

Another way the class is organized is by the Competing Values Framework (CVF), in which each quadrant relates to a “classic” treatment of organizations (which you have already learned). Following a historical introduction to leadership, we use the CVF to integrate and synthesize these traditional approaches, drawing heavily on your earlier coursework with Drs. Smith and Cusick.

We also look at a relatively recent phenomenon in school leadership studies – leadership *for something*. For instance, writers focus on leadership for race and gender equity, leadership for social justice, and leadership for accountability. Throughout the course we will use the CVF to “position” the ideas in each reading and to appreciate the values in each. We will work cooperatively to “unpack” and understand these more abstract and conceptual writings. Ultimately, the CVF should provide you with tools for understanding the complexities facing educational leaders, suggested above.

A third way of thinking about the organization of ideas in the course is by starting in the classroom and moving out, through levels of the “nested” educational system. We are particularly focusing on how formal leaders interact with teachers (and teachers as leaders), how principals and superintendents approach leadership, how schools and local leaders interact with the community, how school and district leaders engage with educational leaders in ISDs, the state, and at the national level. We will place emphasis on an international perspective in the final weeks of the course.

I hope you will join me in co-creating an experience that will be compelling and challenging at the same time. I am passionate about school leadership... I hope that’s catching!!!

Required Texts:

Bottery, M. (2004). *The Challenges of Educational Leadership: Values in a Globalized Age*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Between \$23 (used) and \$34 (new) at Amazon.

Cameron, K. S., Quinn, R. E., DeGraff, J. & Thakor, A. V. (2006). *Competing Values Leadership: Creating Value in Organizations*. Northhampton, MA: Edward Elgar. \$35 at Amazon.

Firestone, W. A. & Riehl, C. (Eds) (2005). *A New Agenda for Research in Educational Leadership*. New York: Teachers College Press. \$50 at Amazon.

Readings through MSU e-collection or on Angel.

Assignments:

Assignment #1 – Class participation

During your previous two courses and in professional seminar, you have developed norms of interaction within the cohort and, perhaps, some preferred relationships. Much of the work of leadership is dependent on “relationship” and the ability to engage with others in an honest, respectful, and mutual fashion. School leaders need the ability to facilitate productive interactions among administrators, faculty, and staff. We will experience several developmental activities intended to help us strengthen our leadership competencies. Your cooperative, courteous, and courageous participation is expected – and appreciated. I know that you will come to class prepared to the best of your ability and that you will contribute actively to our collective learning.

Assignment #2 – Knowing Yourself as a Leader

I will provide you with prompts for thinking and reflection regularly, to which you will respond in a leadership journal. Entries in this journal, aimed at reflecting on your own development as a leader, will be completed at home; you can choose a paper format or keep a file on your computer. You can expect short, manageable entries each week. I will collect your Journals at the end of class on _____.

Assignment #3 - Investigating leadership, an extended assignment that has you completing a mini- research study. More detailed information will be provided as we go along.

The academic content of 941 pertains to leadership theory and research and the application of each to educational administrative practice. Following are brief details of an extended assignment that will culminate in a theoretically-grounded, informative, well-written mini research study into a specific domain of educational leadership.

- A. The first task is to identify a research PROBLEM. As you know from your work with Dr. Smith, research problems typically relate to “gaps” or “tensions” drawn from experience or review of the literature. We will use the notion of “paradox” to help articulate research problems. This will be a different, though related, process to what you used in your proposition paper.
- B. Next, you will begin to locate articles or chapters related to your leadership domain or topic (larger than your problem). You will want to shoot for a mixture of conceptual or theoretical pieces and research pieces, drawing on both primary and secondary sources. You will have to use all the strategies you have learned for library searches –using various key words, using various literature indexes, searching electronic journals.
- C. You will be documenting information about/from the articles according to a template. In class, we will use two of our assigned readings – a conceptual piece and a research piece – and discuss how we would organize and record

the important information in each type of article. The goal here is to “capture” the theories, concepts, and processes in the article so that you can set the article aside and work from your notes. This process assists you in ANALYSIS of scholarly literature. Finding the balance between writing down “too little” or “too much” is part of what you will grapple with. You will hand these templates in with your review of the literature.

- D. The next step is to SYNTHESIZE all that you have recorded from your articles about the particular domain of leadership, keeping in mind your identified research problem. A thesis statement will help you “say” what you want to say, organize your material, and begin to draft a succinct and persuasive summary. This mini “lit review”, due _____, helps set the stage for your actual inquiry.
- E. Informed by your review of the literature, and guided by your initial work on the research problem, you will decide how to “INQUIRE” by conducting a small study. Will your problem best be addressed through individual interviews? Through a focus group interview? By surveying a set of respondents? The literature reviewed should provide some guidance, here. You will design the study. Identify the sample and method, provide protocols, consider how you will analyze the data. These details will be turned in on _____.
- F. Conduct your inquiry!!! Collect your data.
- G. Analyze your data. Your goal is to make sense of it in a way that informs your original problem statement and answers questions that derive from the statement. Write up a discussion of “how” you analyzed the data and of the “findings.”
- H. Complete your paper, including all the above elements. End with a consideration of what it all means. What conclusions can you draw? What implications are you aware of? What have you learned through the process? What further research has your work suggested? For this final draft, you will need to edit and polish all your previous work and make sure it all “hangs” together.

My intention in this extended assignment is to “break down” the various stages of research and to support you in developing your skills. I want you to get your hands on some of your own data early in your career, as the learning you gain in this way is unique and so very important. You can use your data in various classes as you progress through your program. You can develop your work more fully and perhaps apply for summer research support next year. Additionally, there will be a graduate student research seminar in October 2008 at Eastern Michigan University. You might want to expand your small study, write up the results, and present a paper at this seminar. More details forthcoming in class. I also hope this sparks some interest in attending other research conventions. Not only do University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) and American Educational Research Association (AERA) have annual meetings, there are tons of regional meetings as well.

For instance:

The 2008 Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (MWERA) will be held in Columbus, OH, with an exciting program of invited speakers, focused workshops, and peer-reviewed papers presented in a variety of session formats. The meeting is October 15 - 18, 2008 at The Westin Great Southern Hotel.

If you are looking for a place to sit down and chat with colleagues from schools and universities about your ideas and perspectives, the Mid-Western Educational Research Association provides that opportunity with its supportive, collaborative environment. Educational researchers across North America return to MWERA to renew acquaintances, make new contacts, and engage in exciting conversation in a collegial atmosphere.

Distribution of Assignments:

Class participation	10%
Leadership journal	10%
Completed literature templates (analysis)	10%
Literature review (synthesis)	20%
Research Design	10%
Analysis document	10%
Final paper including all above	30%

Grading:

Work is expected on the due date. Sometimes you will have to make revisions in a timely manner in order to move forward. Contact me about difficulties. All members of a group receive the same grade for group assignments.

The grading scale for MSU is 4.0, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5. A 4.0 indicates excellent work, nearly free of critique. A 3.5 would be assigned to good work that satisfactorily completes the assignment. A 3.0 would be given for completed work that is marked by some inadequacies. A grade below 3.0 is a sign of serious problems for this level of study. Individual assignments might receive grades with smaller intervals (e.g., 3.2).

Academic Integrity:

The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of teachers and scholars. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor these principles and, in so doing, protect the validity of University grades. This means that all academic work will be done by the student to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. (See *General Student Regulation 1.00, Scholarship and Grades in the Spartan Life Handbook*, for specific regulations.) For my part, I will exercise care in the planning and supervision of academic work, so that honest effort will be positively encouraged.

