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Leadership Preparation Programs: Preparing Culturally Competent Educational Leaders

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Abstract

The demographic profile of the United States has been rapidly changing; by 2020, minority students will constitute the majority of the public school student population nationwide. This makes cultural competence a necessity for today's school leaders. Educational leadership preparation programs are responsible for preparing culturally competent leaders; however, few programs assess their students' cultural competence. The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional, causal-comparative study was to examine whether graduates of educational leadership preparation programs had significantly different cultural competence than those beginning their respective program. The findings of this study suggest that matriculating through a principal preparation program positively correlates with educational leadership students' overall cultural competence, cultural beliefs and motivation, and cultural knowledge. However, there appears to be no significant relationship between completing the program and students' cultural skills.

Keywords

cultural competence, diversity, evaluation of leadedership programs, master's programs, principal preparation, social justice

Over the last few decades, the demographic profile of the United States has been rapidly changing and becoming more racially and ethnically diverse (Aud et al., 2011; Shrestha, 2006). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2014, there were

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more than 20 million children below the age of 5 living in the United States, and approximately half of them belonged to minority groups (Wazwaz, 2015). Schools reflect these demographic changes and minority students are gradually becoming the majority (Grothaus, Crum, & James, 2010; Shrestha, 2006). These projected demographic changes have already occurred in some regions of the United States. For example, in the southern states, African American and Hispanic students, many who come from impoverished backgrounds, compose the majority of public school enrollment (Southern Education Foundation Suitts, 2010). Students who live in poverty perform below national norms on standardized tests, and there is a critical need to increase their success. Accordingly, it is imperative for school leaders to develop strategies that foster student and school success and that help them navigate "increasing cultural diversity, changing demographics, economic exigencies, complexity, . . . social change, . . . classism and values tension, as well as expressions of spirituality, religion or faith" (Gerstl-Pepin & Aiken, 2012, p. xv).

A fundamental principle of democracy entails providing every student with a solid education and an opportunity for a successful, productive, and rewarding life, no matter his or her background (Barakat, Reames & Kensler, 2012; Dewey, 1916; Ingram & Walters, 2007). Research has shown that the impact of the school leader "is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 5). This impact is especially important in schools where students are underperforming (Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Murphy, 2009).

Thus, educational leadership preparation programs, which are the primary preparation route for school leaders (Young & Brewer, 2008), carry the responsibility of preparing future school leaders for the new norm of cultural diversity within public schools. Leadership preparation programs must assure that these leaders understand and value students from diverse cultural backgrounds and believe in their ability to achieve academic success (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Gandara, 2000; Huber et al., 2012). It is also imperative that they equip graduates to lead in an inclusive and equitable manner (Barakat et al., 2012; Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011; Ingram & Walters, 2007).

Some educational leadership preparation programs have tried to incorporate strategies to promote issues of cultural diversity and develop their students' cultural competence, which include an appreciation of cultural diversity, an ability to connect with people from other cultures, and a willingness to fight oppression (Barakat, 2014). However, these efforts remain unmeasured and their effectiveness unknown (Chan, 2006; Gerstl-Pepin & Aiken, 2012).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study, which is one of a three part investigation, was to examine the effectiveness of educational leadership master's certification programs in preparing culturally competent school leaders. The study was guided by the following research question:

Research Question 1: Is there a difference in (a) cultural knowledge (CK), (b) cultural beliefs and motivation (CBM), and (c) cultural skills (CS) between students who are beginning their educational leadership master's program and students who have completed their respective program.

Literature Review

In recent years, scholars have criticized hierarchical views of leadership (Celoria & Hemphill, 2014). For example, Lipman (2004) argued that hierarchical leadership is biased by nature, promotes inequity, and maintains the status quo. They posit that this type of leadership results in unequal learning opportunities for students, uneven distribution of resources and supplies, socioeconomic segregation, and inequality in school performance. Scholars have also criticized educational leadership models that ignore the effect and importance of context (Grogan, 2002). As a result, educational leadership scholars have focused on the importance of preparing prospective educational leaders who are collaborative, understand the context within which they operate, advocate for equity, and emerge as culturally competent and socially just leaders (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Marshall & Ward, 2004).

Current research on educational leadership and best practices in the field recommended that leadership preparation programs advocate for cultural diversity and become institutions of resistance of any forms of exclusion or discrimination (O'Malley & Capper, 2015; Oplatka, 2009). Therefore, the structure, content, and implementation of educational leadership preparation programs should prepare school leaders to promote social justice, equity, and inclusion in schools and communities (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1988; Styron & LeMire, 2009).

Evolution of Research on Preparation Programs

Since the 1970s, educational politics have shifted from issues of equality to issues of excellence, accountability, and school choice (Fowler, 2013). In parallel, educational leadership scholars begun focusing on how leadership preparation programs correlated with school leaders' excellence and influence on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). This included examining how specific program elements correlated with perceived success of school leaders (Crow & Whiteman, 2016; Gordon, Oliver, & Solis, 2016; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007; Orphanos & Orr, 2014) and how characteristics of principal preparation programs informed policy makers on career outcomes and placement rates (Fuller, Baker, & Young, 2011; Fuller & Hollingworth, 2016). However, with the increased focus on student achievement, accountability, and standards-based educational leadership preparation programs, some scholars have warned against "the possible negative and perhaps unintended impact . . . especially when it comes to inclusiveness and social justice" (Celoria, 2016, p. 200). There remains a fear that overemphasizing standards

would be "reductionist" and constraining; overemphasized standards would result in narrowing the focus of educational leaders, thus lowering the bar of professionalism as opposed to raising it (English, 2006).

Since the emergence of a more contemporary perception of the educational leader's responsibilities, school leaders have been expected to become community leaders, moral stewards, advocates for students, and instructional leaders who foster the academic achievement of all students (Hallinger, 2003; Murphy, 2002). This 21st-century understanding of the role of educational leaders has informed the redesign of educational leadership preparation programs, including their conceptual frameworks and curricula (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Furman, 2012; McKenzie et al., 2008; Miller & Martin, 2015). These efforts have resulted in programs that focus on preparing school leaders with the capacity to foster the success of every student in an increasingly diverse society (Reames, 2010; Crow & Whiteman, 2016; Gordon, Oliver, & Solis, 2016; Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010; McClellan & Dominguez, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011).

Presently, it is the responsibility of instructors and faculty members of educational leadership preparation programs to provoke students' thoughts, promote reflection, and challenge long-standing mental models and stereotypes. As argued by Brown (2004), preparation programs should engage educational leaders in the ". . . examination of ontological and epistemological assumptions, values and beliefs, context and experience, and competing world views" (p. 99). Scholars proposed that successful principal preparation programs aspire to increase leaders' self-efficacy (Versland, 2016) beyond a mere consciousness of diversity and equity issues (Young, Madsen, & Young, 2010). They added that "training for leaders cannot focus solely on 'awareness,'" but that leaders should be well prepared to respond to "diversity-related conflicts" (Young et al., 2010, p. 20).

In recent years, actions and research concerning educational leadership preparation programs have become more rigorous (Capper et al., 2006; Furman, 2012; Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010; McClellan & Dominguez, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Miller & Martin, 2015; Young, 2015). For example, in 2004, the University Council for Education Administration (UCEA), the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), Division A of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the Teaching in Educational Administration Special Interest Group (now known as the Learning and Teaching in Educational Leadership Special Interest Group [LTEL-SIG]) established a collaborative taskforce focused on research in educational leadership preparation (Black & Murtadha, 2007). The taskforce faced many methodological challenges but succeeded in conducting longitudinal studies of educational leadership preparation programs, which focused on program graduates' impact on real contexts and student achievement. In addition to the aforementioned efforts, members of UCEA developed a research agenda that focused on the progress of educational leadership preparation programs' graduates and their ability to inform first-, second-, and third-order changes within their institutions (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Pounder, 2012; Young, 2015).

Driven by their awareness of the demographic changes and persistent achievement gaps within the educational public system, some members of UCEA further pushed for examining the preparation efforts of culturally competent school leaders who were capable of promoting equity, inclusion, and equal access for public education's increasingly diverse student population (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Young, 2015). Madsen and Mabokela (2005) posited that school leaders must understand racial, ethnic, and cultural issues to become proactive agents of change and challenge the unjust status quo. "Culturally engaging leaders cross boundaries to understand how different groups struggle to make sense of their existence within this society" (Black & Murtadha, 2007, p. 9).

The Status of Preparation Programs

Young and Brewer (2008) reported that educational leadership preparation programs in the United States covered a wide range of options, varying from master's in education (MEd), education specialist (EdS), doctor of education (EdD), and doctor of philosophy in education (PhD). Most of these are within the realm of college and university settings. There are approximately 500 educational leadership programs, the majority of which offer master's and doctoral degrees, while one third offer education specialist degrees (Young & Brewer, 2008).

Evaluation of Preparation Programs

Even though some preparation programs have attempted to integrate issues of diversity and cultural competence within their components, there is presently no well-developed, effective way to measure whether these efforts have been successful or not (Chan, 2006). Young, Crow, Murphy, and Ogawa (2009) conveyed the concern that educational leadership's body of research lacked studies about program evaluation and student assessment. There is a lack of systemic program evaluation that is sustainable and that built on former research (Black & Murtadha, 2007).

Preparation programs lack data and evidence about their effectiveness in changing leadership behavior, informing organizational change, positively influencing student achievement, and/or preparing socially just school leaders (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Pounder, 2012). In response to the external critique of educational leadership preparation programs, as well as internal reflections of members and stakeholders, UCEA has made substantial efforts to evaluate preparation programs. UCEA "has been a strong advocate and positive instigator of preparation program evaluation, and empirical study of leadership preparation in general during the past decade" (Kottkamp, 2011, p. 12). In collaboration with the LTEL-SIG, UCEA has established the INSPIRE Institute for the Evaluation of Educational Leadership Preparation, which provides systemic, valid, and reliable program evaluation tools (Winn et al., 2016). However, in spite of the growing program evaluation efforts, specific attempts to assess the development of cultural competence within educational leadership preparation programs has remained limited (Chan, 2006; Gerstl-Pepin & Aiken, 2012).

Elements of Preparation Programs to Correlate With Cultural Competence

Research has suggested the following educational leadership program elements that positively correlate with educational leaders' cultural competence and social justice experiences: (a) a selective admission process (McKenzie et al., 2008), (b) study abroad opportunities (Barakat, Reames & Kensler, 2012; Smith, Moallem, & Sherrill, 1997, Reames, Kaminsky,Downer & Barakat, 2013), (c) diverse cohort and faculty members (Akiba, 2011; Smith et al., 1997), (d) field experiences and an internship element (Akiba, 2011; Black & Murtadha, 2007; Gordon et al., 2016), and (e) a special course on diversity or social justice (Akiba, 2011; Bondy, Schmitz, & Johnson, 1993; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Tran, Young, & Di Lella, 1994).

Admission process. McKenzie et al. (2008) recommended the following criteria when recruiting students for educational leadership preparation programs: "a strong commitment to social justice or equity or, at least, an already existing tendency to question social inequities" (p. 119). However, research on recruitment, selection, and admission to preparation programs is lacking (Crow & Whiteman, 2016).

Traveling abroad and diverse cohort and faculty members. Smith et al. (1997) identified four main factors that positively correlate with the cultural competence of students of an educational leadership program: "(1) exposure to multiple different culturally diverse groups, (2) education; for example the influence of teachers or certain courses etc., (3) travel; like study abroad, living abroad, etc., and (4) personal experience with discrimination (membership in a marginalized group)" (p. 54). Traveling abroad correlates with higher cultural competence (Barakat et al., 2012), possibly because traveling abroad puts people in vulnerable positions where they experience being viewed and treated as minorities. They experience looking different, communicating in a different language, and espousing different cultural norms. It also allows for exposure to other cultures and different word-views, thus adding to CK, challenging cultural beliefs, and developing CS (Barakat, 2014).

Internships in diverse settings. The importance of internship and induction elements in preparation programs is stressed in research (Akiba, 2011; Crow & Whiteman, 2016; Gordon et al., 2016). In particular, educational leadership students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural differences if they have internship experiences in diverse school settings. These interns need to work side-by-side with educators and policy makers and get involved in the complex decision-making process. These varied internship experiences serve two purposes: (a) they offer additional support to schools and neighborhoods and (b) the interns can further develop their knowledge, skills, and dispositions as aspiring leaders. Interns get the chance to apply and make sense of what they learned within their programs to real-life situations (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Gordon et al., 2016).

Special course(s) about diversity. Attending a course on diversity or experiencing special, culturally responsive pedagogical tools has positively influenced educational leadership preparation program students' beliefs and attitudes toward racial issues (Akiba, 2011; Bondy et al., 1993; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Tran et al., 1994). Other studies concluded that effects of a course on diversity vary according to students' different beliefs and views. Garmon (2004) concluded that students starting a course on diversity with positive beliefs and attitudes on cultural diversity benefit from attending that course, whereas Kagan's (1992) findings showed that "candidates tend to use the information provided in course work to confirm rather than to confront and correct their preexisting beliefs" (p. 154). Even though courses on diversity and internship experiences may be effective tools for developing educational leadership students' cultural competence, these factors *alone* cannot overpower negative preexisting attitudes, beliefs, and views (Garmon, 2004).

Theoretical Perspectives

Culture is a complex concept with many definitions that are rooted in anthropology, sociology, intercultural communication, and cross-cultural psychology. Based on an extensive literature review, Bustamante, Nelson, and Onwuegbuzie (2009) summarized *culture* as being

> a learned meaning system of shared beliefs, values, norms, symbols, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a group use to make sense of their world and foster a sense of identity and community . . . Culture is typically transmitted across generations . . . is more unconsciously experienced than taught . . . Cultures are not homogeneous, and subgroups or subcultures exist within larger cultures . . . A single person might belong to multiple cultures . . . and people might identify with more than one culture, depending on situations and points in time. (p. 796)

Given this definition of culture, being *culturally competent* can be defined as possessing the necessary dispositions and skills to successfully communicate, cooperate, and collaborate with others from different cultural backgrounds (Kohli et al., 2009). However, "cultural competence goes beyond surface cultural variations to include an understanding of historic oppression and discrimination" (Krentzman & Townsend, 2008, p. 9) and includes a commitment to combating racism and "all forms of prejudice and discrimination, through the development of appropriate understanding, attitudes, and social action skills" (Bennett, 1995, p. 263). So, for the purpose of this study, culturally competent educational leaders must possess CK, CBM, and CS. They must be able to interconnect these with an appreciation of cultural diversity, a willingness to fight oppression and to support people in vulnerable life situations (Bourkiz, Barakat, & Shatar, 2017).

The conceptual framework for this study (see Figure 1) had two layers. The first layer was based on Murphy's (2002) framework, reculturing the profession of educational leadership. In this layer, educational leaders must be moral stewards who foster

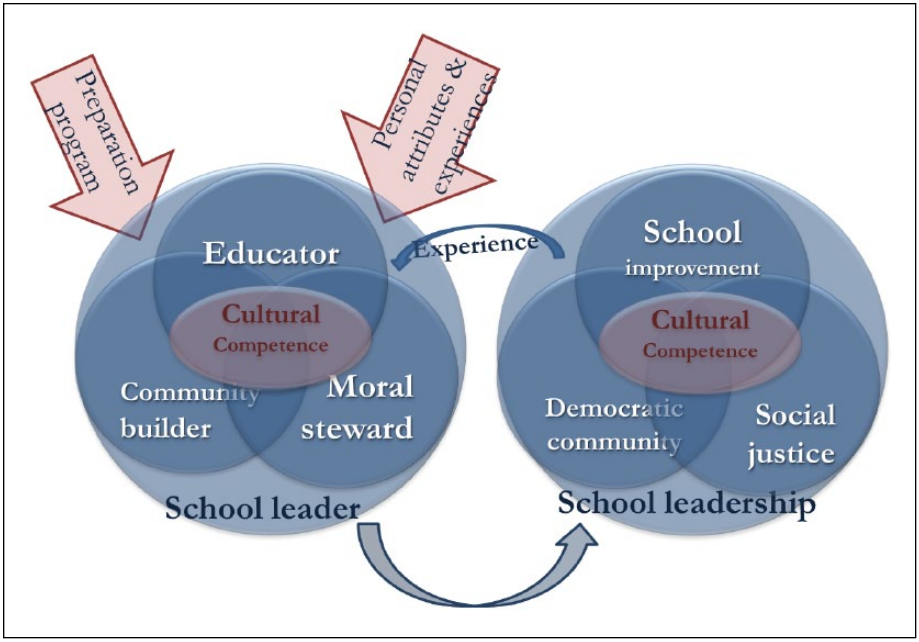

Figure 1. The framework of the study.

social justice in their school and community. They must also be educators who support all students' success and achievement. These school leaders must be community builders who are responsible for promoting concepts of democratic societies (Dewey, 1916; Murphy, 2002). As cultural competence is an integral factor for achieving all of the above, and is at the heart of social justice (Bustamante et al., 2009; Furman, 2012; Manis, 2012), an educational leader must be culturally competent to fulfill the mission of creating a school environment where all students can achieve academic success (Bustamante et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010).

Research literature informed the second layer of the framework: School leaders are a product of their personal and professional background (Evans, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). "It seems reasonable that school leaders' own history and background, beliefs, work history, role identities, and group affiliations figure prominently as they frame and interpret issues and events and construct their roles in the manner they do" (Evans, 2007, p. 162). It is also affected by the type of formal education or the preparation program that they participated in (Bussey, 2008; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004; Versland, 2016). The conceptual framework (Figure 1) shows continuous progression, where the school leader is influenced by personal attributes and experiences and by their preparation program. The leader then affects the school environment in an ongoing cycle of learning and development.

Method

We used a quantitative, cross-sectional, causal-comparative research design to examine if educational preparation programs will affect the cultural competence of educational leaders (CCEL). Researchers compared students' CBM, CK, CS, and the overall cultural competence (combined subconstructs) across two groups of students in the same preparation programs, those just beginning and those just completing. A cross-sectional method was selected because "differences between defined groups in the cross-sectional study may represent changes that take place in a larger defined population" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 196), and because "causal comparative research explores effects between variables in a non-experimental setting" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 190).

Data Collection and Analysis

Instrument. The researcher developed CCEL, a questionnaire that measures cultural competence as a compiled construct of three subconstructs: (a) CBM, (b) CK, and (c) CS. The CCEL questionnaire measures the cultural competence compiled construct with a total of 24 closed-ended questions. Questions had a 5-point, Likert-type scale with options ranging from *very knowledgeable* to *not aware*, or *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Five-point scales have been shown to maximize reliable variance in responses (Anders, 2012). Details of the development of this instrument are described in Barakat (2014); therefore, we briefly only summarize this information next.

The content validity of the instrument was established through conducting think-aloud sessions, an expert panel review, and a pilot study with individuals similar to the target population. Following these initial validity measures, we used exploratory factor analysis to test the underlying structure of the CCEL. Exploratory factor analysis revealed three factors of cultural competence, although thorough review of the literature had suggested a four-factor solution (see Barakat, 2014). When running the four-factor solution, two factors, motivation and belief items, loaded onto a common factor, thus making a three-factor solution most appropriate. Twelve items loaded to CBM, six items loaded to CS, and only four items loaded to CK. Analysis of item loading to two of the three factors (CBM and CS) showed a pattern of strong coefficients and few strong cross loadings (see Barakat, 2014). Furthermore, the internal consistency measure (Cronbach's α) of the entire instrument was .851 and the first two factors were strong (Cronbach's α for CBM was .85 and for CS was .76). The third factor (CK) had the weakest item loading coefficients of 0.48 and low internal consistency; this factor may benefit from further development and item revision (see Barakat, 2014).

The survey was sent electronically or in hard copy to program coordinators who then forwarded it to their program's master's students. Participants completed the survey, and the data were analyzed using SPSS.

Figure 2. Distribution of participating programs.

Participating Programs and Participants

We sought educational leadership programs most likely to promote social justice and cultural competence throughout their coursework. UCEA membership provided an indicator for this commitment: "UCEA is a community of learners that values: Diversity, equity, and social justice in all educational organizations" (UCEA, n.d., paragraph 1). In addition, four of the last seven annual UCEA conferences had themes that explicitly focused on issues of cultural diversity and social justice. As institutions must undergo a rigorous institutional and program review prior to admission for full UCEA membership, it seemed safe to assume that member institutions demonstrate a common commitment to these same values. The target population for this study included the 77 UCEA member institutions that offered principal certification master's degrees.

Letters of invitation to participate in the study were sent to the coordinators of the 77 programs asking them to forward the invitation to students in their respective master's principal preparation program. Twenty-seven program coordinators initially responded to the invitation and confirmed programs' descriptive information found on their respective web pages. However, students from only 16 programs participated in the study. The sample population consisted of 251 graduate students in master's degree certification programs, with 21% program participation.

Eight of the participating programs were from the Southern U.S. region, six were from the Midwest, and two programs were from the Northeast (Figure 2). None of the programs in the Western region of the United States agreed to participate in the study. The Western region has the least institutional membership in UCEA (see Figure 3). The participating programs include different elements, which are also in the overall population of UCEA member institutions, such as the cohort model, online and hybrid courses, and internship or field-based experiences (see Table 1).

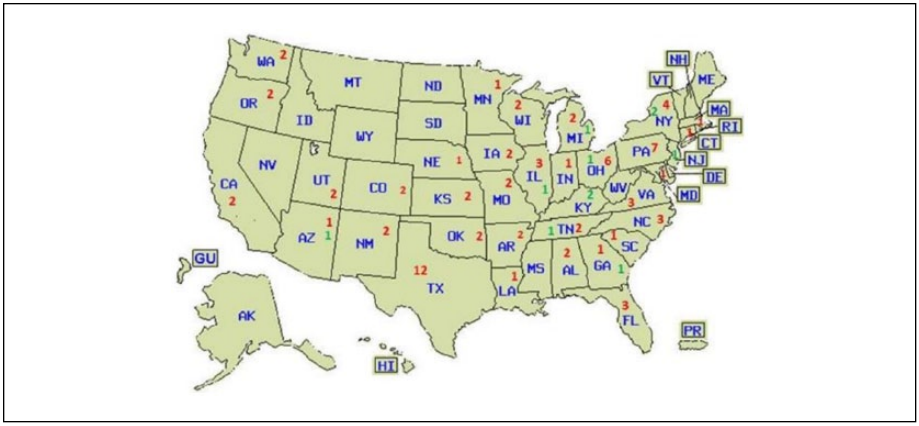

Figure 3. UCEA program distribution.
Note. UCEA = University Council for Education Administration.

Results

This section reports the findings, beginning with a description of the participants. Information about the participating programs, including the two participating cohorts, follows. The last part of this section answers the research question, regarding the difference in (a) CK, (b) CBM, and (c) CS, between students beginning educational leadership master's programs and students ending their respective programs through graduation.

Description of Participants

Gender. Out of the 251 participants, 139 were in the starting cohort and 112 were in the graduating cohort; 152 (60.6%) were female and 86 (36.1%) were male. The ratio of female participants to male participants was higher in this sample than in the general population, which is consistent with demographic trends in the field of education (Ross, 2008; Sleeter, 2001). The percentage of female participants in starting cohort was 62.6%, and the percentage of female participants in graduating cohort was 66.3%. The percentage of male participants in starting cohort was 37.4%, and the percentage of male participants in graduating cohort was 33.7%. The female to male ratio in both cohorts is quite similar (Table 2).

Race. One hundred seventy-six (70.7%) participants self-identified as White, 36 (14.3%) self-identified as African American, and 10 (4%) self-identified as Hispanic. The demographic profiles, based on race, for the beginning and the graduating cohorts were similar (Table 3).

Age. The demographic data showed that 91 participants (38.7%) were between the ages of 21 and 30. One hundred one participants (43.2%) were between the ages of 31

Table 1. Description of Participating Programs.

Institution location (state where program is located)	Length and dates	Method of delivery	Model (cohort/ noncohort)	Internship	Course on diversity
1. Alabama	33 credit hours Start-end Summer-summer	Face to face	Cohort model	30 days	No
2. Ohio	33 credit hours Start-end Fall-summer	Online-hybrid	Cohort model	225 hr	No
3. Virginia	36 credit hours Start-end Fall-summer	Face-to-face	Cohort model	180 hr	Yes
4. Florida	36 credit hours Start-end Fall-spring	Fully online	Cohort model	Internship is built into classes	Yes
5. Ohio	33 credit hours Start: Fall	Combination of face-to-face, online and hybrid	No cohort	150 hr field and 45 contact	Yes, diversity embedded in courses
6. North Carolina	42 credit hours Fall-spring	Face-to-face	Cohort model	18 credit hours	No
7. New York	30 credit hours Start-end Fall-spring Spring-summer	Combination of face-to-face, online and hybrid	Cohort model	540 hr	No
8. Alabama	30 credit hours Start-end Fall-fall 4 semesters	Face-to-face	Cohort model	3 semester hour credit + 10 day residency	Yes
9. Arkansas	33 credit hours	Combination of face-to-face and online	No cohort	216 hr for 17 required activities	No
10. Illinois	40 credit hours (10 courses) Start-end Summer-spring	Combination of face-to-face, online and hybrid	Cohort model	200 hr over 12 months	No
11. Kansas	36 credit hours Start-end Summer-spring	Combination of face-to-face and online	Cohort model	240 hr	Yes
12. Massachusetts	36 credit hours Start-end Fall-spring	Face-to-face	Cohort model	500 hr	Yes
13. North Carolina	33 credit hours Start-end Fall-spring 2 years	Face-to-face	Cohort model	6-12 credit hours	Yes
14. Texas	39 credit hours Start-end Summer-spring 2 years	Face-to-face	Cohort model	220 hr	Yes

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Institution location (state where program is located)	Length and dates	Method of delivery	Model (cohort/ noncohort)	Internship	Course on diversity
15. Wisconsin	33 credit hours Start-end Summer-21 months	Face-to-face	Cohort model	3-6 credit hours	Yes
16. Virginia	33 credit hours Start-end Fall-fall	Combination of face-to-face and online	Cohort model	5-7 credit hours	Yes

Table 2. Gender of Participants: Beginning and Ending Cohorts.

	Group	
Gender	Starting cohort	Graduating cohort
Female		
Count	87	65
% within group	62.6	66.3
Male		
Count	52	33
% within group	37.4	33.7

and 40, while 32 participants (13.6%) were between the ages 41 and 50, and 10 (4.2%) were between the ages 51 and 60. Only one participant (0.4%) reported that he or she was 61 or older. The demographic profile of the starting cohort showed that it was a younger cohort with 43.1% of its members between the age of 21 and 30, and 86.2% of the members were 40 years old or younger. In the graduating cohort, only 32.7% of its members were between the age of 21 and 30, and 75.6% were 40 years old or younger (Table 4).

Years of experience. The demographic data showed that 59 participants (25.1%) had between 1 and 5 years of experience, 95 participants (40.4%) had between 6 and 10 years of experience, 50 participants (21.3%) had between 11 and 15 years of experience, 20 participants (8.5%) had between 16 and 20 years of experience, and eight participants (3.4%) had between 20 and 25 years of experience. Only three participants (1.3%) reported that they had more than 25 years of experience. The demographic profile showed that members of both cohorts had experience (see Table 5), where 70.8% of members of the starting cohort had more than 5 years of experience, while 80.6% of the graduating cohort members had more than 5 years. Approximately, 40% of both cohort members had between 6 and 10 years of experience. Twenty-five percent of the members of the graduating cohort had between 11 and 15 years of experience versus 18.2% of the members of the starting cohort. On average, the graduating

Table 3. Race of Participants: Beginning and Ending Cohorts.

	Group		
	Starting cohort	Graduating cohort	Total
African American			
Count	20	16	36
% within group	13.7	14.6	14.3
American Indian/Pacific Islander			
Count	1	1	2
% within group	0.7	1.0	0.8
Asian			
Count	3	1	4
% within group	2.1	1.0	1.6
Hispanic			
Count	6	4	10
% within group	4.1	3.9	4.0
White			
Count	103	73	176
% within group	70.5	70.9	70.7
Biracial			
Count	3	3	6
% within group	2.1	2.9	2.4
Other			
Count	3	2	5
% within group	2.1	1.9	2.0

cohort members had more years of experience than the starting cohort (Table 5), which is in accordance with their reported ages.

Program Design and Delivery

Although there were no research questions related to program design and delivery, these elements provide context for the study. Therefore, we report this information in Table 1.

We addressed the research question with a two-part process. First, to assume similarity between the two cohorts, a chi-square analysis was conducted to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the starting cohort and the graduation cohort in regard to gender, race, age, perception of belonging to a historically marginalized group, years of experience, and travel abroad. Results of the chi-square statistical analysis, presented in Table 6, showed that no statistically significant difference existed between the two cohorts. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume similarity between the starting and graduating cohorts.

MANOVA was then used to discover if there were any significant differences among the starting and graduating cohorts on the combined dependent variables (overall

Table 4. Age of Participants: Beginning and Ending Cohorts.

	Group		
Age	Starting cohort	Graduating cohort	Total
21-30			
Count	59	32	91
% within group	43.1	32.7	38.7
31-40			
Count	59	42	101
% within group	43.1	42.9	43.0
41-50			
Count	15	17	32
% within group	10.9	17.3	13.6
51-60			
Count	3	7	10
% within group	2.2	7.1	4.3
61+			
Count	1	0	1
% within group	0.7	0.0	0.4

Table 5. Years of Experience: Beginning and Ending Cohorts.

	Group		
Experience	Starting cohort	Graduating cohort	Total
1-5			
Count	40	19	59
% within group	29.2	19.4	25.1
6-10			
Count	57	38	95
% within group	41.6	38.8	40.4
11-15			
Count	25	25	50
% within group	18.2	25.5	21.3
16-20			
Count	10	10	20
% within group	7.3	10.2	8.5
20-25			
Count	3	5	8
% within group	2.2	5.1	3.4
26+			
Count	2	1	3
% within group	1.5	1.0	1.3

Table 6. Statistical Difference Between Starting and Graduating Cohorts.

Variable	χ^2	*df*	*p*
Gender	0.350	1	.554
Race	0.004	1	.533
Age	7.663	4	.105
Years of experience	5.809	5	.325
Marginalization	0.986	1	.321
Travel abroad	1.560	1	.212

Table 7. Multivariate Tests.

Effect		Value	*F*	Hypothesis *df*	Error *df*	Significance	η_p^2
Cohort groups	Wilks's Lambda	.883	10.580	3	240	<.001	.117

Table 8. Univariate Tests of Between-Subjects Effects.

Source	Dependent variable	*F*	Significance	η^2
Cohort Group	Beliefs and motivation	26.405	**<.001**	.098
	Knowledge	8.388	**.004**	.034
	Skills	0.841	.360	.003

cultural competence), while also investigating if cohort differences were significant for each dependent variable (Huberty & Morris, 1989). MANOVA was chosen because the outcome variables (dependant variables [DV]) were not conceptually independent (Huberty & Morris, 1989). MANOVA results revealed significant differences among the starting and graduating cohorts (see Table 7), where the graduating cohort scored higher than the starting cohort on the combined DVs: Wilks's Lambda = .883, $F(3, 240) = 10.580$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .117$. The η_p^2 of .117 is considered to be a medium to large effect size (Cohen, 1988).

Univariate analyses were conducted on each dependent variable (see Table 8) as a follow-up test to MANOVA: Cohort differences were significant, with graduating cohorts higher than starting cohort for CBM, $F(1, 242) = 26.405$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .098$ (medium effect size), and CK, $F(1, 244) = 8.388$, $\eta_p^2 = .034$ (small effect size). Cohort differences were not significant for CS, $F(1, 244) = 0.841$, $p = .360$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$ (see Table 8). The mean of CS for the graduating cohort was higher than that of the starting group (see Table 9); however, the increase was not statistically significant.

Table 9. Means and Standard Deviations for CBM, CS, and CK by Cohort Categories.

	CBM		CS		CK	
Cohort	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Starting cohort	3.57	.58	3.96	.50	4.12	.48
Graduating cohort	3.97	.58	4.01	.45	4.31	.53

Note. CBM = cultural beliefs and motivation; CS = cultural skills; CK = cultural knowledge.

Discussion and Conclusion

The participating programs in the study sample showed variations in length, credit hour requirements, methods of delivery, use of a cohort model, and internship requirements. These variations may be a result of state mandates (Behar-Horenstein, 1995), state licensure or certification requirements (Preis, Grogan, Sherman, & Beaty, 2007), or a result of market changes (Levine, 2005). Multiple factors and interest groups influence program development and structure, which lead to variations in program design and delivery (Preis et al., 2007).

Although it is difficult to assume that changes manifested in individuals related to cultural competence were solely the result of participating in any specific program, the results of this study suggested that participating in the principal preparation programs may have contributed to a positive and statistically significant effect on the compiled construct of cultural competence. The subconstructs of CBM, and CK of students, was positively and statistically significant; however, there was no significant effect on CS.

This is in agreement with findings of another study conducted on an educational leadership preparation program in a southern state. The study used the cultural intelligence instrument (CQ) and concluded that going through the preparation program seemed to have had a positive effect on CK and cultural beliefs of students; however, "there did not seem to be motivation to change behavior" (Barakat et al., 2012, p. 253). This is also in line with Furman's (2012) proposition that most preparation programs urged their students to challenge their mental models and develop critical consciousness about issues of cultural diversity and social justice, but the actual development of necessary skills remained unaddressed.

The results of this study suggest that the graduating cohort had higher CBM than the starting cohort. The first probable explanation was that students' CBM developed because of their exposure to the program's content and offered activities. This would imply that the programs provided opportunities and ideas for students to "learn new approaches" and "question their prevailing values and norms," thus affecting second-order change (Waters, McNulty, & Marzano, 2004, p. 8). A fulfillment of the essential and difficult responsibility of educational leadership programs to prepare school leaders for cultural diversity which now has become the norm in their school environments (Barakat et al., 2012; Horsford et al., 2011; Ingram & Walters, 2007; O'Malley & Capper, 2015).

Another probable argument was that the change in CBM was not a result of true development of cultural competence; instead, it could be the result of external pressure on participants. As participating programs in this study had institutional UCEA membership, this meant that they were influenced by UCEA's "emphasis on elevating the topic and practice of social justice in educational leadership preparation, practice, and research" (Bussey, 2008, p. 202). This emphasis could have imposed direct or indirect pressure on participants to respond in a socially *desirable* manner.

In addition, participating programs were assumed to embrace social justice issues and foster cultural diversity. Accordingly, these programs likely exerted efforts to influence students' cultural competence. Preparation programs mainly utilize lectures and reading assignments, and writing assignments to instruct students (Murphy, 2006). Engaging participating students in issues of social justice and cultural diversity through lectures and reading and writing activities might have resulted in first order change in their cultural competence, manifested by higher CK.

The results of this study suggest that although the mean of CS for the graduating cohort was higher than that of the starting cohort, the difference between the two cohorts did not reach statistical significance. This confirmed what was suggested in previous research that there was a need for preparation programs to help students develop the necessary skills for effective leadership (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Furman, 2012; Levine, 2005; McKenzie et al., 2008; Miller & Martin, 2015; Murphy, 2006; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004). It may also be that acquiring CS requires longer time and a more deliberate and rigorous process than being motivated to acquire these skills or to gain understandings and knowledge about cultural competence.

Implications for Preparation, Policy, and Practice

The findings of this study imply that these UCEA Educational Leadership Preparation Programs are moving in the right direction in terms of fostering positive student cultural beliefs, motivation, and knowledge that can lead to more developed cultural competence of future educational leaders. However, additional research and new instructional approaches may need to be designed and implemented to foster the development of students' CS, so that they can apply their knowledge to real-world situations. Developing skills require time and opportunities for practice and application.

As all participating programs had an internship element, it is safe to assume that providing field-based experiences or internship opportunities in diverse contexts can provide educational leadership students with opportunities to apply their CK and deal with cultural diversity (McKenzie et al., 2008). Although having an internship component in diverse settings might be a good start, it would appear that additional program changes are needed for educational leadership students to develop necessary CS (Brown, 2004; Bustamante et al., 2009; Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010; McKenzie et al., 2008).

Opportunities for Future Research

The results of this study open the door for further research and for better understanding of the above-mentioned correlations. Conducting a qualitative longitudinal study that

would follow the same group of students from the beginning of the program until completion would add understanding to the findings of this cross-sectional study. It would be valuable to conduct the same study with participants from programs with no institutional membership in the UCEA to compare the cultural competence of the two groups.

Upon starting this study, the researchers intended to examine the correlation between the participants' cultural competence and the different elements of the programs, such as using the cohort model, offering a course on diversity, differing modes of delivery, and having an internship. However, that proved to be challenging because of the variation in the length of time that different cohorts spent together, the variation in the content of the diversity courses, and the variation in the length and contexts of the different internships. Close examination of these program elements and their correlation to students' cultural competence are lacking in the literature and are much needed.

This study was a response to the need for educational leadership programs to prepare culturally competent leaders and is an initial study to explore the potential for causal relationships between matriculating from educational leadership programs and the cultural competence of the programs' graduates.

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