

### Resource B: Key Program Review Processes Impacting Higher Education Programs

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There are four types of reviews that higher education leadership preparation programs are likely to experience. They include accreditation reviews, institutional reviews, state reviews, and professional association reviews.

In addition, the United States Department of Education has recently called on states to become more involved, proposing changes in the teacher preparation accountability requirements in Title II of the Higher Education Act as a means of monitoring preparation programs in teacher education. The proposed rules—which may be extended to leadership preparation programs—would require states to do the following:<sup>1</sup>

- Use federally established criteria to report results at the individual-program level, including information from surveys of graduates and employers, candidate placement and retention rates, and growth in student achievement.
- Rate programs as “low performing,” “at risk,” “effective” and “exceptional.”
- Report results on a state report card. Institutions would be required to post report cards on their websites.

In the following sections, we describe what each type of review entails and how often it typically occurs. The final section, “Factors Preparation Providers Consider to Be Beneficial Sources of Change,” discusses selected findings from a survey conducted by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) for the Wallace Foundation during the spring of 2013 that focused on the use of standards in program improvement efforts.

#### I. ACCREDITATION REVIEWS

Accreditation is a review process based on a set of expectations and standards. It is meant to ensure competency and credibility.

There are several levels of accreditation in higher education. There is the accreditation of the institution (i.e., the university), the school or college, and the individual program. The accreditation of an institution (referred to as “institutional accreditation”) is typically conducted by a national or regional organization.<sup>2</sup> In the United States, colleges and universities are accredited by one of approximately 60 different accrediting bodies. These associations focus on certain types of colleges—for instance, trade and technical institutions, or religious colleges, such as seminaries and Bible colleges. Regional accreditation agencies are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit degree-granting colleges and universities (see [http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation\\_pg6.html](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg6.html) for a list of those that are recognized by the Secretary of Education). There are six regions of the United States in which regional agencies operate. The regional accreditation agencies have similar standards for accrediting colleges and universities.

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1. By all accounts, the processes used and types of data collected for the accreditation of teacher education programs are still in a state of flux, and as Pavlakis and Kelley (2013) pointed out, this instability and energy may offer new opportunities. Pavlakis, A., & Kelley, C. (2013). *An analysis of accreditation in medicine, psychology, teacher education, engineering and law: Challenges, strengths, opportunities, and new directions*. Unpublished report written for the UCEA-Wallace Foundation Project on Leveraging Program Change.
  2. The Council of Higher Education Accreditation has an extensive list of regional accrediting organizations (<http://www.chea.org/Directories/regional.asp>)

Accreditors are private, nongovernmental organizations created for the specific purpose of reviewing higher education institutions and programs. The purpose of accreditation is to provide an assessment of institutional quality for students, families, governmental officials, and the public at large.

### A. Background on Accreditation

Accreditation in the field of teacher education was formalized in 1954 through the founding of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which was developed to professionalize teaching. It is still relatively new in comparison to accreditation in other professions but is experiencing many of the same growing pains as other fields have experienced.

National accreditation in education is a voluntary, peer-reviewed process that includes an evaluation of the professional education unit (the school, college, department, or body that is in charge of training teachers or other school personnel) and is based on a set of standards. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)<sup>3</sup> accredits institutions that train over 70% of America’s teachers. In a sizeable number of states, accreditation through CAEP is mandated for all or some categories of institutions.

The perception that the CAEP accreditation process may not be worth the effort required has long plagued accreditation in education.<sup>4</sup> Half of teacher preparation programs have not sought national accreditation, and Vergari and Hess referred to the link between accreditation and educator quality as “a matter of faith.”<sup>5</sup>

The efforts leading to the development of CAEP reignited discussions and debates “over the form and function of professional standards for educators,” reflecting the “continuing lack of consensus about what makes a great teacher or school leader.”<sup>6</sup> Teacher education standards and the accreditation process are viewed by some as too prescriptive and politically charged, and debates about inputs versus outputs—as well as lack of evidence on outcomes—have opened the doors for external groups to intervene.

A full accreditation cycle typically takes seven years (though some organizations have cycles of six, nine or 10), with reports occurring in years one, three and six and a site visit occurring in year seven. During this time, the organization under review assesses its programs and its impact on student learning and demonstrates the capacity, commitment, and competence to support high-quality student learning and ongoing school improvement.<sup>7</sup>

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3. CAEP was formed in 2010 when NCATE merged with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) following competing efforts between the organizations. In 1997, TEAC created an alternative accreditation system that focused on evidence-based outcomes related to learning, validity of assessments of learning, and continuous improvement and quality (Murray 2010). Whereas NCATE’s standards were externally developed, TEAC required institutions to select research-based principles that guide preparation programming and curriculum. Murray, F. (2010) Lessons from Ten Years of TEAC’s Accrediting Activity. *Issues in Teacher Accreditation*. 19(1). 8-19.
  4. Murray, F. (2005). On building a unified system of accreditation in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 56(4), 30-31; Vergari, S. and F. Hess. 2002. The accreditation game. *Education Next*, 2(3): 48-57.
  5. Vergari & Hess (2002, p. 57).
  6. Pavlakis & Kelley (2013, p. 14).
  7. An accreditation timeline and process overview can be found on page 9 of the “Guide to CAEP Accreditation” (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/accred-files/guide-caep-accred.pdf>).

## B. Key Challenges for Accreditation

In an effort to advance understandings of accreditation and its connection to program quality, Pavlakis and Kelley<sup>8</sup> conducted an analysis of accreditation standards and processes across five professional fields: medicine, psychology, teacher education, engineering and law. The lack of conclusive data linking accreditation to program quality or to the success of graduates is one of the key challenges facing accreditation in each of the five fields.<sup>9</sup> Because the evidence is often lacking, mixed, or inconclusive, in many cases it is challenging to say with certainty whether or not accreditation supports program improvement. This research gap can reduce confidence in the value of accreditation and hinder compliance. Yet Volkwein, Lattuca, Harper, and Domingo's study<sup>10</sup> on the impact of Engineering Criteria 2000 (the premier accrediting organization in engineering) on engineering education may be a helpful model for those interested in evaluating accreditation in other professional fields. Volkwein et al. examined the impact of the change in accreditation on a representative national sample of 203 engineering programs at 40 institutions and found that Engineering Criteria 2000 was succeeding in its quality assurance goals. For example, Volkwein et al. found that half to two-thirds of faculty reported increasing their use of more active learning methods in a course they teach regularly, that graduates had different educational experiences (such as more collaborative engagement in their learning and more interaction with faculty) than graduates a decade earlier, and that graduates reported statistically significant gains in nine areas related to accreditation goals (e.g., using modern tools, working well in teams, and applying experimental skills in analysis and interpretation).

Within the field of education, empirical research linking accreditation reviews to program improvement is scant. However, one project focused on the Educational Leadership Constituent Council's (ELCC) accreditation review process is worth mentioning. Based on a survey of educational leadership faculty, Machado and Cline found strong alignment between the content of educational leadership preparation programs and either the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) or ELCC standards.<sup>11</sup> Of the 222 survey respondents, 80% asserted that there was "moderate to substantial observable evidence of program-standards alignment."<sup>12</sup> The alignment process was described by many respondents as ongoing. Furthermore, 10% reported aligning their programs to leadership standards starting in 1996, when the ISLLC standards were first released; 75% reported engaging in program-standards alignment by 2003; and the remaining 15% indicated that alignment work began after 2004. Some states use the ELCC national recognition process, while others use state program review processes (that may utilize ELCC standards). CAEP is introducing a third option for states known as "program review with feedback."

## II. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEWS

Internal program reviews provide a periodic and comprehensive evaluation of a university or college's academic and/or research programs and student support services to ensure continuous improvement and to aid in institutional planning and budget allocation.

The purpose of an internal program review is to direct decision making regarding the development, approval, and management of programs and services and to ensure alignment with the college's mission, core themes and identified strategic objectives. To achieve these goals, internal program review procedures encourage self-study and purposeful planning within programs and services. In addition, an essential element of the internal program review is the identification and evaluation of student learning outcomes as key indicators of effectiveness.

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8. Pavlakis & Kelley (2013).

9. Ibid.

10. Volkwein, J. F., Lattuca, L. R., Harper, B. J., & Domingo, R. J. (2007). Measuring the Impact of Professional Accreditation on Student Experiences and Learning Outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 48 (2), 251-282.

11. Machado, C., & Cline, D. (2010). Faculty perceptions: Where do educational administration programs stand with the ISLLC/ELCC standards? *NCPEA Educational Leadership Review*, 11(1), 10-17.

12. Ibid, p. 12.

Many institutions (though not all) conduct internal reviews in conjunction with professional disciplinary or specialized accreditation (or reaccreditation) review cycles. University administrators keep lists of the different accrediting organizations that review programs and colleges within their institutions and generally organize the institutional review to coincide with the accreditation cycle. In some states (e.g., Rhode Island), the state office of higher education maintains a similar listing and requires that institutions forward copies of program self-studies and accrediting team reports according to the accreditation schedule.

Those programs that are not reviewed by national accreditation agencies undergo a program review initiated by the institution. Within a cyclical time frame of three to seven years, each institution determines a specific schedule for program reviews. Institutional reviews can also be triggered early, such as when the number of students enrolled in a given program falls below a certain number for several years.

The self-study developed for professional or specialized accreditation reviews normally provides the essential requirements of internal program review; however, if there is a difference in the requirements for the internal reviews, the entity under review currently must meet the requirements of each reviewer.

The basic components of a typical internal program review process include the following:

1. a self-study, recommendations, and preliminary implementation plan completed by the faculty or staff associated with the program;
2. review and recommendations by the peer program review committee (depending on the type of institution, peers may be from the same college, from a different college within the university, or from a peer institution);
3. revision of the self-study, recommendations, and preliminary implementation plan in response to the peer program review committee;
4. presentation of the final draft of the internal program review to the college council;
5. final approval by the appropriate senior administrator (chief academic officer, chief student affairs officer, chief fiscal officer) of all elements of the internal program review documents; and
6. implementation of actions to improve program effectiveness and quality as needed.

### III. STATE REVIEWS

There are several entities at the state level that review colleges and schools of education. The state office of higher education generally has review requirements that may or may not align with those of an external accrediting organization. Generally, states have a set of specific data points that they collect from universities that focus on the students enrolled, financial aid provided, resources available (e.g., libraries), class sizes, faculty characteristics, teaching assignments, incentives for promoting quality, research dollars, service, graduation rates, retention rates, graduate job placement, and alumni satisfaction. Collecting this information from all colleges at the same time enables state personnel to develop comparison reports.

State departments of PK-12 education are also involved in reviewing colleges and schools of education, as well as other organizations and entities that seek to provide certification programs for educational professionals. With regard to educational leadership, the introduction of the ISLLC standards in 1996 prompted some states to adopt program review and redesign initiatives that involved alignment to state or national leadership standards and the adoption of specific program features, such as expanded field experience requirements.<sup>13</sup>

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13. Baker, B. D., Orr, M. T., & Young, M. D. (2007). Academic drift, institutional production, and professional distribution of graduate degrees in educational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(3), 279–318. doi:10.1177/0013161X07303320

Some states have developed relationships with CAEP. These relationships can take several forms, such as delegating the review of programs to CAEP and accepting CAEP reviews in place of state reviews. In some cases, a state will partner with CAEP to conduct the reviews. In such cases, state department personnel will identify a faculty member and practitioner from the state to collaborate with CAEP volunteers in the review of materials and on the site visit. However, some states require that a college be accredited and will reserve the right to conduct program reviews.

In some states (e.g., North Carolina, Iowa, and Kentucky), low-quality programs that were unable to meet these new requirements were eliminated as the result of a state review. These reviews usually involve some kind of expert or critical friend review process (see description of critical friend reviews in section IV). The existing research on the effects of such processes on program change indicates that state policies and strategies intended to promote redesign of principal preparation programs have produced episodic change in a few institutions but have fallen short of expectations.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, research concerning the impact of such processes on program graduates is inconclusive.<sup>15</sup>

### A. Key Challenges for State Reviews

More research is needed to gain a robust understanding of the processes used in state reviews and their impact on principal preparation programs and candidates in those programs. Two issues in particular may impact the effectiveness of such processes. First, it is questionable whether state departments of education have the capacity to translate and implement policy in addition to supporting preparation program redesign, particularly in times of financial cutbacks.<sup>16</sup> The second issue concerns the process itself. A one-size-fits-all redesign process that does not take into account different institutional types, missions, and capacities is unlikely to yield desired results.<sup>17</sup>

A 2006 report from the Southern Regional Education Board<sup>18</sup> concluded that state policies and strategies intended to promote the redesign of principal preparation programs have improved some programs but have not led to the sort of deep change needed to ensure all candidates master the knowledge and skills needed to be effective school leaders. Murphy et al. had similar findings, stating, “The results of reform are uneven and fall short of the mark.”<sup>19</sup>

State reform initiatives often utilize a one-size-fits-all approach that does not take into account the context or capacity of the university preparation program.<sup>20</sup> Research universities and regional colleges, regardless of size or mission, are generally required to use the same framework for reform; yet faculty roles, resources available, and audiences served at these institutions are often quite different. It is important to note that context does matter when implementing change.

Further, if all university-based preparation programs in a state are required to participate in reforms, questions arise about the intentions and capacity of the state department of education as well as the intended impact of those reforms. Particularly in times of financial cutbacks, many raise the question: Do state departments of education have the capacity to translate and implement policy and support preparation program redesign?<sup>21</sup> Murphy et al. cautioned that without adequate attention to both the technical aspects of reform (e.g., staffing) and the adaptive aspects of reform (e.g., changes in core values and beliefs), change will be superficial. The magnitude of the resources (e.g., faculty time and funding) and institutional changes (e.g., changes in admissions requirements and processes) needed to support this type of work are significant. Without adequate institutional and state-level capacity to support redesign, implementation, and monitoring of program quality after implementation, most reform efforts will fall short of expectations.

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14. Murphy, J., Moorman, H. N., & McCarthy, M. (2008). A framework for rebuilding initial certification and preparation programs in educational leadership: Lessons from whole-state reform initiatives. *Teachers College Record*, 110(10), 2172–2203; Southern Regional Education Board. (2006). *Challenge to lead: The momentum continues*. Atlanta, GA: Author.
  15. McCarthy, M. M., & Forsyth, P. B. (2009). An historical review of research and development activities pertaining to the preparation of school leaders. In M. D. Young, G. M. Crow, J. Murphy, & R. T. Ogawa (Eds.), *Handbook of research on the education of school leaders* (pp. 86–128). New York, NY: Routledge.
  16. Young, M. D. (2013). Is state-mandated redesign an effective and sustainable solution? *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 8(2), 247–254.
  17. Ibid.
  18. SREB (2006).
  19. Murphy et al. (2008, p. 2186).
  20. Phillips (2013); Young (2013); Young, M. D., & Brewer, C. (2008). Fear and the preparation of school leaders: The role of ambiguity, anxiety and power in meaning making. *Education Policy*, 22(1), 106–129.
  21. Young (2013).

## IV. PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION REVIEWS

### A. UCEA Membership Reviews

Reform efforts have prompted an increased focus from within the profession on how to improve the quality of leadership preparation. Organizations such as UCEA have a long history related to the development and dissemination of pertinent research and tools that have influenced leadership preparation within and beyond UCEA institutions. UCEA has long invested in the development of instructional materials, from simulations to cases to course modules, and UCEA-sponsored research projects have raised critical questions about the conditions and quality of leadership development and practice. Additionally, through its sponsorship of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, UCEA was instrumental in the creation in 1988 of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), which has undertaken a series of important activities, including the development of ISLLC and the ELCC standards. NPBEA, in conjunction with the Danforth Foundation, sponsored national conferences focused on innovative preparation practices to help spread promising practices across the nation. UCEA worked with NPBEA in 2001 to sponsor the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation, which examined high-quality leadership preparation and professional development programs, their impact, and the contextual factors that influenced the success and impact of programs.

Membership in UCEA requires a rigorous, multistage review and renewal process—a process that carefully examines the quality of an institution’s preparation and research programs. The process begins with the development of an application portfolio. Decisions on membership are made based on three categories of evidence: (a) eligibility, including consistency with UCEA’s standards of excellence; (b) consistency with UCEA’s Institution and Program Quality Standards; and (c) other supporting evidence. A set of rubrics and suggested sources of evidence are provided in the UCEA publication “UCEA Institutional and Program Quality Criteria: Guidance for Master’s and Doctoral Programs in Educational Leadership.”<sup>22</sup>

After receiving an application portfolio, UCEA Executive Committee members thoroughly review the full set of application materials using the UCEA quality criteria rubric, and they provide an overview of the applicant’s strengths and weaknesses and note the absence of data necessary for rating the institution on one or more criteria. Depending on the strength of the application and the availability of data, the Executive Committee will make a recommendation to gather additional information, send a site-visit team to the institution, or let the institution know that its programs are ineligible for membership.

The site visitation is conducted by a team of two UCEA faculty with expertise in educational leadership development. The visit usually takes two full days and involves a combination of interviews with faculty, students, alumni, district partners, and institutional leadership; classroom observations; and a review of relevant program documents and evidence. Based on data from these sources, the visitation team submits a site-visit report to the executive committee, which then makes a decision about recommending the institution to the broader membership for consideration, either as a full or provisional member. Provisional membership is recommended for those institutions that are close to meeting membership criteria but still need to improve certain aspects of their program before full membership can be offered.

Representatives of UCEA member institutions are provided access to the applying institution’s membership application portfolio and site-visit report. They are provided a period of 30 days to review the applicant’s materials and the site-visit report, after which time the institution’s membership is put to a vote. At any point in this process, members may raise questions, request clarification, or make reasonable requests for additional evidence.

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22. Young, M. D., Orr, M. T., & Tucker, P. D. (2012). *UCEA institutional and program quality criteria: Guidance for master’s and doctoral programs in educational leadership*. Charlottesville, VA: UCEA.

Continuation of membership in UCEA involves periodic self-study. The purpose of the self-study is to provide each member institution opportunities to (a) review its commitment to improving its programs in educational administration, (b) assess its progress in the attainment of program goals, (c) exhibit its unique program qualities and strengths, and (d) describe its future program goals and opportunities. The self-study is facilitated by two UCEA resources: (a) “Developing Evaluation Evidence: A Formative and Summative Evaluation Planner for Educational Leadership Preparation Programs,” and (b) the UCEA’s Initiative for Systemic Program Improvement through Research in Educational Leadership (INSPIRE) survey suite. The evaluation planner is aligned to both the ELCC and UCEA standards and facilitates planning and data collection around preparation program evaluation and improvement. The planner includes a logic model, suggested sources of evidence to collect, worksheets, and key questions to drive program evaluation. The INSPIRE suite of surveys is also aligned with the ELCC and UCEA standards. It provides 360° data on the features, quality and impact of educational leadership preparation programs (including candidate, practicing leader, teacher, supervisor and program perspectives), and it reflects the key elements of the evaluation planner logic model regarding how preparation impacts leadership, school conditions, and student learning.

UCEA’s program review is considered by members to be an important and impactful self-assessment process. Like the critical friends review used by Murphy et al., UCEA’s program review process involves both program self-assessments and external review and feedback, followed by recommendations and technical assistance. The feedback from these reviews addresses both technical and adaptive elements influencing program quality.<sup>23</sup> These processes resemble in some ways the accreditation review processes used by CAEP and TEAC in that they are standards- and evidence-based, yet they take the review one step further by providing programs with actionable feedback and advice.

## B. Quality Measures

The Quality Measures (QM) review and improvement process resembles UCEA’s approach as well. The QM standards or “indicators of quality” were made publicly available in 2009 by the Education Development Center.<sup>24</sup> The indicators reflect research on the features, both in terms of content and clinical practices, associated with exemplary principal preparation programs and evolved through work with Wallace Foundation–funded districts, universities, and states to assess the quality of their principal preparation programs.<sup>25</sup>

This 2009 version of QM focuses on two program features in particular, Program Course Content and Pedagogy and Program Clinical Practice. The five course-content indicators focus on the content domains of the 2008 ISLLC standards. For example, it is recommended that content “be logically and sequentially organized and aligned with state professional standards and school district performance expectations.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the Education Development Center asserted that program pedagogy should include “problem-based learning strategies designed to incorporate real school contexts and make extensive use of formative and summative assessments.”<sup>27</sup> The five clinical practice indicators characterize a high-quality experience as one that is full-time, yearlong, carefully sequenced, and organized around opportunities to practice leadership skills in a real-world setting. As Darling-Hammond and colleagues describe, “Like other program coursework, the clinical practice should provide formal formative and summative assessments and offer interns the opportunity to develop competencies in more than one context.”<sup>28</sup>

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23. Murphy et al. (2008).

24. King, C. (2014). *Partnership effectiveness continuum*. Waltham, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.

25. Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., & Orr, M. T. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Executive summary*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

26. King, C. (2013). *Quality Measures Principal Preparation Program Self-Assessment Toolkit: for use in developing, assessing, and improving principal preparation programs*. Waltham, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

The QM document *Principal Preparation Program Quality Self-Assessment Rubrics* asserts, “An effective self-assessment of principal preparation program quality requires a clear understanding by all participants in the process of what is meant by ‘quality.’”<sup>29</sup> Thus, the QM designers worked to develop user-friendly tools as well as a process that decreased ambiguity about what program elements were to be assessed and what would be considered acceptable evidence. QM places particular emphasis on the review and consideration of “supporting evidence” in determining the degree to which programs reflect research-based indicators of quality. Specifically, tools (e.g., rubrics and assessments) were developed to facilitate program self-assessment and to build consensus around the features and attributes of high-quality programs. A hands-on program review involving program faculty and external consultants in the review of program artifacts, data, and faculty work is portrayed as invaluable and critical to the revision process. It is argued that “these tools and processes, when used together, will provide improved guidance to program self-assessment team efforts to more accurately determine the quality of their principal preparation programs.”<sup>30</sup>

They also calibrate the indicators of quality along a developmental scale (well-developed, developed, emerging, and beginning). QM has been used primarily by Wallace-funded principal preparation programs. Programs have used the QM rubrics, along with a handbook containing guidelines for selecting and analyzing credible evidence, to structure their self-assessment of core features. Self-assessments enable program teams to determine where they fall on a developmental scale and then use the results of the analysis to plan improvements in the quality of their programs.

### C. Self-Study Models

The UCEA and QM processes both involve a self-study component through which programs gather program information and candidate data to determine (a) the degree to which programs reflect the UCEA or QM criteria and (b) the impact of the program’s content and experiences on candidates’ growth, career outcomes, and leadership performance. As described above, UCEA and QM offer tools (e.g., rubrics) to facilitate program self-assessments and to build consensus around the features and attributes of high-quality programs. The tools reflect the current research and lessons learned about principal preparation program quality.

The new suite of instruments to evaluate preparation programs available through UCEA enables faculty to dig more deeply into questions of how preparation programs impact the knowledge and practice of their graduates. The INSPIRE survey suite includes a program features survey, a candidate survey, and a 360° survey. Together, the surveys provide data that help programs assess the quality and impact of various program features and content areas. When used in conjunction with the “Developing Evaluation Evidence” program evaluation planner, the surveys help guide program faculty through evaluation design, data collection, analysis and improvement cycles.<sup>31</sup> Given that most programs are guided by their own theory of action or program theory, which connects choices in program content, delivery, and design to expected outcomes, the surveys and planner support a variety of program designs and their unique features.

### D. Critical Friend Reviews

Critical friend reviews reflect the processes used by UCEA and QM and the process described by Murphy et al. They generally involve program self-assessments; external review of program documents, data and artifacts; feedback to program faculty, including recommendations; and, in some cases, technical assistance. The QM handbook asserts, “These tools and processes, when used together, will provide improved guidance to program self-assessment team efforts to more accurately determine the quality of their principal preparation programs.”<sup>32</sup> These processes resemble in some ways the accreditation review processes used by NCATE and TEAC in that they are standards- and evidence-based, but they take the review one step further by providing programs with actionable feedback and advice.

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29. Ibid, p. 4.

30. Ibid, p. 2.

31. Orr, M. T., Young, M. D., Rorrer, A. K. (2010). *Developing evaluation evidence: A formative and summative evaluation planner for educational leadership preparation programs*. Charlottesville, VA: Center for the Evaluation of Educational Leadership Preparation and Practice.

32. King (2013).

## V. FACTORS PREPARATION PROVIDERS CONSIDER TO BE BENEFICIAL SOURCES OF CHANGE

Below, we highlight several findings from a survey of directors of educational leadership preparation programs that is focused on program improvement levers. According to these program leaders, the most beneficial levers for program improvement include (in the following order of importance): state licensure and program requirements, national or regional accreditation review, and professional association projects or reviews.

Importantly, program directors were asked to identify factors that were most influential as well as those that were most beneficial. These two terms were differentiated in the following way: *Influential* was defined as having an impact, changing behavior or ensuring compliance, whereas *beneficial* was defined as supporting substantive, research-based, positive and sustainable change.

### A. State Program Accreditation and Approval

When asked to identify which reform and program improvement factors were most beneficial to their program improvement efforts, program directors were most likely to point to state licensure and other state requirements, as shown in Table 1 below.<sup>34</sup> Directors described several ways that state requirements benefited their programs. Comments ranged from the state’s influence on the focus of the program, such as, “State licensure requirements have required us to focus our efforts on what appears to be most important in our state,” to comments such as, “The state requirements were well done and therefore were instructive for the efforts of our redesigned program.”

Table 1: Percentage of Program Directors Who Rated Six Sources of Pressure in the Program Design Process as First- or Second-Most Influential and Beneficial

Source	First- or second-most influential	First- or second-most beneficial
National or regional accreditation review	78	36
State program requirements	52	41
State licensure requirements	41	65
Institutional requirements and demands	14	23
Professional association projects or reviews	11	33
Federal, state, or foundation funding requirements	4	4

Not all comments, however, highlighted the beneficial aspects of state requirements. Rather, some comments emphasized the ways in which state requirements were “not always viewed as productive by our program faculty.” One director shared, “New state requirements were rigorous and helpful but went too far in micromanaging institutional programs.” Another noted, “The state requirements are a double-edged sword in that they are required, but we do it well so students get exactly what they need. The institution sometimes creates obstacles for creative ways to implement programs.” However, a few directors offered a more balanced perspective. One commented, “While at times we find state requirements onerous, we believe that in our state many of them have merit and provide us enough latitude to differentiate programming to meet our students’ needs.”

33. American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (2013).

34. Young, M. D., Tucker, P. D., Mawhinney, H., & Reed, C. J. (2013). *Leveraging what works in preparing educational leaders*. Charlottesville, VA: University Council for Educational Administration.

## **B. National Accreditation**

Program directors' comments regarding the beneficial effects of program accreditation reflected both the challenges and opportunities of such work. For example, several directors highlighted the opportunities provided by NCATE to "review our program carefully." One shared that a "recent change of accrediting body for the institution brought an opportunity to examine the program through a slightly different lens. The changes we made to meet the accreditation standards [TEAC] have been very beneficial." Another shared, "While NCATE, CAEP and ELCC has impacted us tremendously, it has also helped us grow and develop as a department to deliver the best program that we can to our students." Reflecting a more mixed perspective, one director explained, "We are required to be accredited by ELCC/NCATE. The programs and policies put in place to address those requirements dictate everything else so we were forced to be on the same page as instructors and that did help."

## **C. Professional Association Projects or Reviews**

Interestingly, program directors identified professional association projects and reviews as more beneficial than influential, while the reverse was true for national and regional accreditation reviews. As some program directors explained, "Professional association reports and reviews are much more focused on the realities of administrator preparation," and, "Our faculty most value professional association change forces, as we believe them to be most informed by rigorous scholarship and praxis." Several mentioned UCEA specifically. Directors commented that "UCEA has set the best standard, which was largely embraced by [the state]" and that "UCEA is most beneficial in terms of determining what's most beneficial."

## **D. Other**

Program directors tended to identify research on effective preparation as more beneficial than influential. In fact, several cited research as a driver of program improvement. One program director remarked, "Program improvement decisions are driven by research." Another stated, "My awareness about research and connection to what works helps as I think about program design so I ranked professional association connections first. The rest are more about meeting state or other requirements which we usually meet easily." Engaging in inquiry on their own program was also considered beneficial; one program director commented, "Our redesign was informed by a formal cycle of inquiry and data collection (both internal and external). This process had the most influence on our program's current design and delivery."

A final source considered beneficial for program change involved local needs and priorities. One director shared, "We need to consider what our aspiring school leaders want/need in the field in order to serve all children and families." Similarly, another explained, "The most beneficial element of the change process over the last five years has been that the requirement of partnerships has strengthened both the K-12/university partnerships and the university system partnerships." Program directors highlighted feedback from alumni as important as well. One director shared,

The most beneficial forces have been the feedback provided by our alumni and by the students who take our program's courses. That's what matters most to us. The other factors listed actually distract and derail us from focusing on what matters most to us.

Finally, survey respondent comments revealed two factors considered detrimental to program redesign and improvement. The first factor dealt with institutional barriers. For example, one respondent noted, "The institution ranks low [as a beneficial influence] because they pose tuition barriers for effective recruitment/delivery." The second factor was increased competition. A director explained,

We have to compete with other entities locally and across the state that certify school administrators and at the same time prepare students to pass the certification exam. We have tried to revise our program to meet the state standards and at the same time be able to stay competitive.

## VI. FINAL THOUGHTS

Since the introduction of the ISLLC standards in 1996, a number of states have adopted program review and redesign initiatives that involve alignment to state or national leadership standards and the adoption of specific program features (e.g., expanded field experience requirements).<sup>35</sup> In some states, low-quality programs that were unable to meet these new requirements were eliminated. What research has been conducted on the effects of such processes on program change indicates that state policies and strategies intended to promote the redesign of principal preparation programs have produced episodic change in a few institutions but have generally fallen short of expectations.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, research concerning the impact of such processes on program graduates is inconclusive.<sup>37</sup>

Although more research on such processes would be helpful to gain a robust understanding of the processes used and their impact on programs and candidates, two issues may impact the effectiveness of such processes: (a) the capacity of state departments of education to both translate and implement policy and support preparation program redesign, particularly in times of financial cutbacks; and (b) the need for clear guidance in taking up the evaluation role—in particular, the need to avoid a one-size-fits-all redesign process that does not take into account different institutional types, missions and capacities.

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35. Baker et al. (2007).

36. Murphy et al. (2008); SREB (2006).

37. McCarthy & Forsyth (2009).