The Future of Higher Education Preparation Programs: Implications for Policy and Practice
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Introduction

Half of the sitting university presidents in the United States are over the age of 60 (American Council of Education, 2012a). Thus, they are nearing the age of retirement. This poses a problem and makes the preparation of leaders to replace them of particular importance. Higher education administration programs have been an academic preparation ground for those aspiring to higher education leadership. In prior years, it was most common that higher education program graduates were offered lower- and middle-level management positions in colleges and universities. Similarly some of these graduates developed careers in government agencies dealing with higher education issues such as, think tanks and other related employment. In recent years, however, higher education graduates have earned upper management positions including presidencies more frequently upon graduation (Altbach & Enberg, 2001, p. 15). The purpose of this paper is to review the role and value of higher education leadership preparation programs and provide recommendations for policy and practice that will enhance their effectiveness.

Higher Education Preparation Programs

It has been close to 120 years since the birth of higher education as a field of study (Goodchild, 2012). During the last 40 years, many scholars have added to the literature regarding these programs (Altbach, Bozeman, Janashia, & Rumbley, 2007; Barnett, 2007; Dressel & Mayhew, 1974; Fife & Goodchild, 1991; Freeman & Kochan, 2012a; Freeman & Kochan, 2012b; Kienle & Loyd, 2005; Wright & Miller, 2007). Goodchild (2002) defines higher education as "sophisticated knowledge about and research on colleges, universities, and related postsecondary institutions, as well as the professional skills used by those persons who work in them" (p. 303). Higher education's purpose is to "educate and train professionals for administrative, faculty, student life, and policy analyst positions in the country's approximately 4,000 postsecondary institutions" (Goodchild, p. 303).

G. Stanley Clark is generally considered the father of higher education studies (Dressel & Mayhew, 1974). In the 1890's Hall served as the president of Clark University. Between 1893 and 1895 he developed three courses in higher education studies titled, Present Status and Problems of Higher Education in This Country, Outline of Systemic Pedagogy, and Organization and Curricula of School and College. Later, he established a 16-course specialization that became a part of the Ph.D. program in education at Clark University (Barnett, 2007). The first doctoral and masters degrees in higher education were conferred in 1900 and 1906 at Clark University respectively (Goodchild, 1991). His enthusiasm for this emerging field did not go unnoticed. This initiation of higher education graduate preparation programs as a means of preparing college and university leaders led other larger institutions such as Ohio State University, Columbia University's Teachers College, the University of Chicago, the University of Pittsburg, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Michigan to establish graduate programs in this field during the 1920s (Wright, 2007a).

Although current higher education graduate programs can boast a strong history, scholars have noted that these programs have been historically viewed as less rigorous or less well accepted than other field or disciplinary preparation programs, such as those in the field of business (Bray, 2007; Fife & Goodchild,

1991; Townsend & Wiese, 1991). Higher education scholars such as Wright (2007b) and Freeman (2011) have proposed ways in which higher education programs could better position themselves to combat these stereotypes by establishing programmatic guidelines for both masters and doctoral programs. Though this problem persists, higher education graduate programs continue to prepare students with the knowledge, skills and competencies for leadership in areas such as higher education institutions and policy institutes (Freeman & Kochan, 2012a).

The Expanding Nature of Higher Education Programs
In recent years, there has been an increase in higher education programs geared to meet the changing needs of those who wish to fill future leadership positions in higher education. Among these are programs focused on meeting the needs of a diverse population and on serving individuals who are full-time employees**.**

New higher education programs have emerged that address leadership at Minority Serving Institutions such as Jackson State University, which prepares doctoral students, to serve in historically black institutions (Barnett, 2007) and Adams State University, which prepares its masters students to lead Hispanic Serving institutions.

Another set of higher education doctoral programs have emerged that specifically focus upon preparing individuals for executive leadership. Most of these programs were established during the early 2000s; among them are the University of Pennsylvania, University of Alabama, University of Georgia, and Jackson State University (Freeman & Kochan, 2012a). Almost all of these programs are arranged in the cohort model and students are required to demonstrate that they have had substantial leadership opportunities throughout their careers. Their programs usually take two to three years for students to complete. Jackson State University is the only such program that offers a PhD. The other programs offer an Ed.D. Doug Toma was the founder of the first program of its kind at the University of Pennsylvania. Selingo (2003) cites Toma, who found there were few programs catering to top college officials who wanted to earn a doctorate quickly without taking time off from their jobs. Thus, they developed a program option in which, "faculty members seek applicants who are one step away from becoming presidents" (p. A40).

There are other executive training programs, outside of universities such as the American Council of Education's (2012b) Fellows Program. This program allows those aspiring to a college or university presidency to spend time at another institution working with its' president. The other preparation program that ACE offers is the "Advancing to the Presidency" workshop that focuses on presidential leadership, the CEO search process, contract negotiation, and successful transitions into the presidency. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Millennium Leaders Institute (2012) is an additional program that some potential administrators take advantage of. This institute provides its participants with opportunities to experience theoretical learning as well as practical, hands-on training through media interviews, visits with representatives on Capitol Hill and close interactions with presidents and chancellors.

Not only are there programs that focus on preparing leaders for four-year colleges and universities, there are higher education programs that specifically educate community college leaders. There is a body of literature that addresses leadership preparation programs that are specifically geared towards community college leadership (Amey, 2006; Hammons & Miller, 2006; Townsend. & Wiese, 1991). Additionally, there is a wealth of literature addressing the role that student affairs leadership programs play in the development of student affairs practitioners (Burkard, Cole, Ott, & Stoflet, 2008; Cuyjet, & Kuk, 2006; Flowers, 2003; Herdlein, 2004; Kretovics, 2002; Strange, 2001).

There is a growing body of research that addresses both these areas, but only until recently was the perspective of presidents that served in four-year institutions sought (Freeman & Kochan, 2012a). This paper addresses and expands on the implications from that recent study (Freeman, 2011). It is essential to conduct research to uncover the strategies by higher education programs to prepare presidents. It is also important to research what needs to go into program development and implementation. This is vital because of the impact that the role of the presidency has on future direction of higher education.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Recent research (Freeman, 2011) indicates that there are three factors that directly affect the quality of higher education preparation programs; they include students, faculty, and curriculum. Although these factors are important, they are also informed by three important elements, which are the integration of theory and practice, consistency and flexibility, and assessment and accountability (Freeman, 2011; Freeman & Kochan 2012a). These findings have great importance for those preparing future university leaders. The following recommendations are formed using both these factors and elements as a framework.

Theory and Practice. The concept of integrating theory and practice into curricular activities and endeavors supports and extends proposals in existing literature (Freeman, 2011; Harris, 2007; Herdlien, 2004; Wergin, 2011; Wright, 2007a). One of the most important ways that higher education preparation programs can enhance their curriculum is including rigorous field-based experiences. It is no longer assumed that because one has served in a particular position for a number of years that they are performing their roles at optimal levels. Both higher education graduate programs and executive training programs provide its students with strong theoretical knowledge through the use of organizational, student development, financial and leadership theories (Freeman & Kochan, 2012; Herdlien, 2004; Wright & Miller, 2007). In addition, to the theoretical grounding that these programs provide it is important for them to allow their students to engage in meaningful hands-on experiences to synthesize their learning. Higher education graduate programs could implement these experiences through assistantships, practicum, internships and apprenticeships. Executive higher education training programs could match participants with mentors from their local campus that would work with and evaluate their progress over an academic year to further ensure that competencies are mastered after completing the program class work.

Consistency and Flexibility. It is very important that the curriculums of higher education programs include foundational components of the field. Additionally, attention needs to be given to how current higher education issues intersect with challenges faced by the broader society (Jones & Segawa, 2004). Therefore it is important that there is consistency and flexibility throughout program design of higher education preparation programs. In particular, both higher education graduate and executive training programs should introduce knowledge in the areas of history in Higher Education and Finance/Budgeting (Freeman & Kochan, 2012a). Those areas should always be a part of the curriculum. It would also be important for programs to remain flexible in their course offerings, for example presidents have identified that fundraising and crisis management is more a part of a university leaders' role then in the past. In my recent study presidential participants described that there program did not prepare them for fundraising (Freeman & Kochan, 2012a). This is an important finding because these same presidents stated that they spend a lot of time on fundraising. These presidents suggest that the best ways to learn about donor cultivation and fundraising are through professional experiences or through conferences or workshops or case studies (Freeman, 2011). The curriculum in higher education programs should be flexible enough to address those concerns through the curriculum.

Curriculum is not the only area in which higher education programs can show consistency and flexibility. The type of faculty appointments offered by programs could provide consistency and flexibility. Examples of such faculty appointments could be (i.e. permanent, visiting, and virtual faculty, and lecturers) to provide the expertise that students need to be exposed to. In this model, permanent faculty would provide the consistency that is needed to sustain the program. Visiting, part-time, and virtual faculty and lecturers would provide flexibility and could be used to fill in areas of needed expertise, particularly in topics that are emerging in which permanent faculty may not be well grounded. In such situations, faculty with virtual appointments and lecturers may serve at their primary institution while also providing their expertise to another institution This approach is also supported by Harris (2007) when he shares "The use of a core full-time faculty trained in the theoretical foundations of higher education with the use of practitioners augmenting the full-time faculty's expertise provides an appropriate group of instructors for training future administrators and faculty" (p.41).

The extent to which assistance from outside experts is provided is a concern amongst some full-time faculty (A. Hyle & C. Chambers, personal communication, April 25, 2012). Their concerns are valid as many faculty lines are being eliminated because of budget cuts. This is of particular concern for smaller programs. Therefore, it would be important for program coordinators to work with department heads and deans to develop the appropriate parameters for such arrangements. Student learning should be at the forefront of program decisions. It is important that higher education graduate programs expose students to the breathe of knowledge needed for leadership in higher education.

Assessment and Accountability. It is important for faculty to make sure that their program faculties have a good way to assess student-learning outcomes. Good student assessment metrics are not always easy for faculty to develop. They are influenced not only by faculty but also by outside entities such as, departmental standards. Assessments in education programs are an outcome of power sharing between higher education and professional entities. The field of higher education generally determines the need for standards, which attempt to be objective, reliable and fair and these are often dictated by professional groups and/or accrediting bodies (Olds, 2008).

It will be important for students in these programs to become familiar with the various constituencies that impact the academy including, boards of trustees and legislative bodies. In my (2011) study, one president stated, "I would think that a strong program would focus on issues related to the governments and the role of the board, so that through the program, (students) really understand all of the nuances and complexities and inter-relationships that exist in higher education administration" (p. 205). The board of trustees evaluates a president's job performance. So presidents must be aware of how to interact with their board keeping them informed about progress within their particular institution. So it is important that those aspiring to the presidency understand their responsibilities.

Students and parents are demanding greater accountability as tuition at many institutions continue to increase. Federal and State governmental legislators have taken notice and many have called for increased accountability and transparency regarding spending at U.S. colleges and universities (Freeman & Kochan, 2012b). These politicians can have an effect on the federal and state resources that are allocated to higher education. These resources can range from financial aid to grants. This is especially important to state supported institutions, as they receive direct budgetary support through their state government. So it is very important that higher education graduate students be trained on how to work with government officials and regional accrediting agencies. This includes how to demonstrate positive student learning outcomes and fiscal responsibility.

Conclusion

Although higher education programs prepare potential higher education administrators, faculty, and policy makers it is not generally known how they prepare leaders better for higher education leadership in comparison with their other disciplinary counterparts (Bray, 2007; Fife & Goodchild, 1991; Freeman & Kochan, 2012a, Haynes, 1991; Townsend & Wiese, 1991). There have been attempts by the field to define itself by developing general guidelines. Both the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2012) and the Association for the Study of Higher Education's Council for the Advancement of Higher Education Programs (2012) adopted sets of student affairs and higher education master's level preparation standards. Although it is still unclear the universal use of these standards beyond programs affiliated with these professional associations.

These recommendations for policy and practice should help administrators, curriculum developers, and faculty associated with higher education administrations programs and executive training programs ideas that they will be able to incorporate within their local programs. This information could also serve as a framework for enriching the knowledge of faculty who are engaging in program development.

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