The University of California Educational Leadership Institute

A New Strategy for Linking Research and Practice

The need to bring research to bear on the problems of educational practice has never been greater. American schools face a number of critical challenges in the years ahead. Two of the most cited examples are incorporating increasing numbers of educationally disadvantaged students into the educational mainstream (Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1989) and preparing students for an increasingly competitive and technologically advanced work environment (U.S Department of Labor, 1991). In order to meet these challenges, a variety of reform efforts are under way at the local, state, and federal levels.

Research should play an important role in meeting these challenges. Although some critics claim educational research has produced few findings that can be used or have been used to improve schools (e.g., Finn, 1988), others claim that research has made an important contribution, not so much in producing immediate applications, but in "constructing, challenging, or changing the way policymakers and practitioners think about problems" (Shavelson, 1988, p. 4). The recent report of the National Academy of Education (1991a), *Research and the Renewal of Education*, further argues that "current efforts to implement broad-based school reforms without adequate research to guide the direction of change will fail" (National Academy of Education, 1991b, p. 19).

Currently, there are a number of strategies for bringing research to bear on problems of educational practice. Existing strategies include incorporating research knowledge into pre- and in-service training programs for teachers, administrators, and other members of the educational system; disseminating research findings to educational personnel through professional journals and other printed outlets; and providing technical support through consultants, state education officials, and the regional educational laboratories.

As the largest public research university in the United States and the designated research university in the state of California, the University of California (UC) is responsible for applying research to the problems of public education in a state that educates one out of every eight schoolchildren in the country. Moreover, the challenges facing public education in the state of California are among the most difficult and widespread of any state. For instance, the majority of students in California are members of racial and ethnic "minorities." In fact, California educates almost one third of all Hispanic students in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 1991, tables 40, 43); its school population is projected to grow by 200,000 students per year over the decade of the 1990s (Kirst, Guthrie, & Odden, 1991, figures 3.2, 3.5); and fully two thirds of new students who entered its schools in the last 5 years were limited-English proficient (Rumberger & Slater, 1991). Furthermore, these challenges must be confronted in a climate of reduced fiscal support and heightened political restraints (Kirst et al., 1991).

To meet these challenges, UC has initiated a number of proactive approaches to link research and practice. These efforts include pre-service training of teachers and administrators on eight of its nine campuses; the Subject Matter Professional Development Projects, a statewide effort involving UC, the California State University system, and the California State Department of Education, designed to improve curriculum and teaching in the public schools through in-service training and collaboration between public school teachers and university faculty (Intersegmental Coordinating Council, 1991); and a host of collaborative research and training activities on individual UC campuses.

Unique, perhaps, among these efforts is the Educational Leadership Institute (ELI). ELI was conceived by UC President David Gardner as another way to improve elementary and secondary education in California by building an ongoing, collaborative relationship between UC faculty and public school superintendents. This relationship is fostered primarily through study teams composed of superintendents and faculty who work collaboratively, investigating specific problems confronting local schools, recommending alternative strategies that superintendents can use to address these problems, and implementing the proposed solutions in an incremental, experimental fashion within selected districts around the state.

A Unique Strategy for Educational Improvement

ELI has three features that make it a unique and viable approach for linking research and practice. Although each of these individual strategies is currently being used to improve education elsewhere, ELI is the first attempt to combine them in a single effort.

ELI Focuses on Superintendent Leadership

Effective school district leadership is essential to promote meaningful and lasting school improvement. As Fullan (1991) points out, "Individual schools can become highly innovative for short periods of time without the district, but they cannot stay innovative without district action to establish the conditions for continuous and long term improvement" (p. 209). Both the school board

and the district superintendent play crucial roles in the innovation process by setting goals, allocating resources, and establishing a school culture that values and rewards experimentation and evaluation (Purkey & Smith, 1985). The challenge facing virtually all school districts is not simply to innovate—most are constantly doing so—but "to get better at working through and thinking through a process of change that really *works*" (Fullan, 1991, p. 212).

ELI Strengthens Leadership Through School-University Collaboration

School-university collaboration has been recognized as an effective strategy for improving educational practice since the time of Dewey (1899), who envisioned close working relationships between schools and universities as a way of providing new ideas to school practitioners. Goodlad (1988) echoes that call as a way of "renewing" both educational institutions and the individuals who work in them:

> Universities increasingly have played a significant role in producing knowledge relevant to professions and occupations and in designing mechanisms for linking theory, research, and practice. The closer these linkages, presumably, the greater the probability that the agenda of research and the agenda of practice will be parallel and significant—the right agenda, so to speak, for their time and place in history. (p. 10)

Goodlad argues that school-university collaboration juxtaposes the action-oriented culture of the school and the inquiry-oriented culture of the university, with the promise of "shaking loose the calcified programs of both" (p. 21). Collaboration benefits both practitioners and scholars through prolonged interaction: Practitioners benefit from the research knowledge and investigative skills that university scholars bring; scholars benefit from the opportunity to expand, test, and refine their knowledge and theories about educational problems and practices. These benefits should apply to all levels of the educational system, not just to teachers and schools, where most collaborative efforts are now concentrated.

ELI Addresses Both Content and Process

For educational improvement to be effective and lasting, both the content and the process of schooling must be addressed. According to McLaughlin (1990), early innovations that ignored either area failed: "Policy must address both and acknowledge the need for the quite different kind of expertise associated with the management of organizational change and improved content" (p. 15). Cuban (1989) argues that changes in content, or "first-order changes," are much easier to achieve than changes in process, or "second-order changes," that alter the fundamental ways of conducting education. Yet such changes are now viewed as necessary to achieve fundamental school improvement. *America 2000* is one recent example. Collaboration may be particularly valuable for providing school superintendents with the vision and support that they need to achieve fundamental reform at the district level.

Governance

Collaboration extends throughout ELI, including its governance structure. ELI is governed by a board of directors composed of a prominent group of six California school superintendents and four UC faculty members, appointed by UC President Gardner, and three voting, ex-officio members. The names and affiliations of the current board of directors appear in Table 1. The director's office, which is responsible for carrying out the mandates of the board and managing the daily activities of the Institute, further reflects this collaboration. The director of ELI, Russell W. Rumberger, is a faculty member at UC–Santa Barbara, while the associate director, Michael R. Slater, holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership from UC–Santa Barbara and is a former California school-district superintendent with 14 years' experience in the public schools.

Institute Activities

ELI pursues its mission through four major activities, which are described below.

Identification of Educational Problems

The Institute addresses concrete problems facing California education. Four criteria guide the selection of study topics: (a) Does the topic represent an important, enduring problem facing California education? (b) Can the topic be informed by existing research? (c) Can the topic be addressed through school-district leadership without major new funding? (d) Is the topic one in which both superintendents and UC faculty have expertise and interest?

The first ELI study topic, selected by the board of directors in July 1991, concerns the role of the district superintendent in engaging students of diverse

Table 1

ELI Board of Directors

Chair Frank J. Abbott, Superintendent Fresno Unified School District	**Vice-Chair** Gail G. Anderson, Superintendent Piedmont City Unified School District
Members	
Robert L. Trigg, Superintendent Elk Grove Unified School District	James R. Brown, Superintendent Palo Alto Unified School District
Rudy M. Castruita, Superintendent Santa Ana Unified School District	Rudolph F. Crew, Superintendent Sacramento City Unified School District
Eugene E. Garcia Dean and Professor of Education UC–Santa Cruz	Douglas E. Mitchell Professor of Education UC–Riverside
Jeannie Oakes Professor of Education UCLA	Aaron B. Wildavsky Professor of Political Science UC–Berkeley
Ex-Officio Members	
Joyce B. Justus Assistant Vice President UC, Office of the President	Richard J. Shavelson Dean and Professor of Education UC–Santa Barbara
Russell W. Rumberger Associate Professor of Education UC–Santa Barbara	

backgrounds and needs in meaningful learning activities. To address this topic, the board has convened a study team of three California school superintendents, three UC faculty members selected for their interest and expertise, and a chair whose expertise and experience span both groups. The names and affiliations of the study-team members appear in Table 2.

Analysis of the Topic

Each ELI study team is expected to produce a report that:

- reviews current research and practitioner knowledge on the nature of the problem, on effective practices and programs that have been used to address the problem, and on alternative strategies that superintendents can use to promote effective practice;
- recommends a set of practices and programs that could help to solve the problem at a district level;
- suggests strategies that superintendents might use to implement the proposed solutions within their districts.

Study teams operate under the premise that there are no single solutions to the problem. Instead, they examine a variety of promising approaches to address the problem and formulate alternatives that involve both programmatic and structural changes. The idea is to encourage districts to experiment with different approaches and adopt those that prove most successful for their unique, local conditions.

Implementation and Evaluation

After a study-team report is published, ELI will work with a few interested districts to implement the report's recommendations. Although the first study-team report on student diversity will not be published until early 1993, ELI is already devising an implementation plan.

How and where the implementation is carried out will be critical for giving the study-team recommendations an adequate test. Good reforms poorly implemented are just as likely to fail as poor reforms (Fullan, 1991; McLaughlin, 1990). While no blueprint exists for effective implementation of reforms at a district level, several key features have been identified. Drawing on the effective-schools literature, Purkey and Smith (1985) argue that "efforts to change schools have been productive and most enduring when directed toward influencing the entire school culture via a strategy involving collaborative planning, shared decision making, and collegial work in an atmosphere friendly to experimentation and evaluation" (p. 357). Fullan (1991) contends that "neither centralization nor decentralization really works," but rather that change is a "*negotiated process*" (his emphasis). He goes on to argue that there is no single recipe for change, but suggests some guidelines, including the need to develop the management capabilities of administrators and "to provide the resources, training, and the clear expectation that schools (teachers, principals, and others) are the main centers of change" (p. 212).

The role of ELI is to work with the districts to adapt the general prescriptions of the study-team report to local needs and conditions, a process McLaughlin (1990) refers to as "adaptive implementation." Effective reform must involve the ongoing interplay between general research knowledge and local knowledge: "If schools are small local cultures, then researchers and reformers need to know more about the cultural contexts of the objects of their reform efforts. This includes, for example, understanding local schemas or beliefs that shape perceptions and drive behaviors in 'unselfconscious' ways" (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991, p. 12).

ELI will aid this process by working with district superintendents to bring UC faculty together with school practitioners to generate local knowledge through collaborative inquiry and then work together on designing, implementing, and evaluating local reform strategies based on local and research knowledge. The collaborative relationship must be structured in such a way that both school practitioners and university faculty benefit. The benefit for school practitioners is the opportunity to work with university faculty to conduct local inquiry and to design and implement research-based intervention strategies; for university faculty, it is the opportunity to work with school practitioners to study school practice and to evaluate the process and outcomes of the intervention strategies. As a broker, ELI will draw on school-improvement activities currently under way within the UC system and will help establish new collaborative activities.

Systemic reform requires changes at three critical levels in the local system: the district level, the school level, and the classroom level. ELI will work with participating districts to promote collaboration at all these levels because each involves different activities and personnel and, therefore, requires different local and research knowledge to effect change.

At the district level, reform involves mobilizing community support and involvement; setting districtwide educational goals; establishing a districtwide culture that encourages experimentation within the schools; providing the organizational structure, staff development, and resources to support such ex-

Table 2

Superintendent Leadership and the Engagement of Diverse Students: Study Team Members

Chair	**Study Director**
Harry Handler, Assistant Dean UCLA, and former Superintendent Los Angeles Unified School District	Michael R. Slater, Associate Director ELI
Members	
Joseph P. Linscomb, Superintendent Pasadena Unified School District	Judith R. Glickman, Superintendent La Canada Unified School District
Richard P. Mesa, Superintendent Oakland Unified School District	David S. Stern, Professor of Education UC–Berkeley
Deborah J. Stipek, Professor of Education, UCLA	Richard A. Figueroa, Professor of Education UC–Davis
Ex-Officio Members From ELI Board of Directors	
Rudolph F. Crew, Superintendent Sacramento City Unified School District	Eugene E. Garcia, Dean and Professor of Education, UC–Santa Cruz

perimentation; and establishing a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the reform process. ELI will serve as a broker to help districts locate university faculty and programs to address each study-team report, the first being the engagement of diverse students. For example, a school-university evaluation team could design a series of evaluation activities that would provide useful information to the district about the process and outcomes of reform and that would also serve as a legitimate research activity for university faculty.

At the school level, which Fullan and others argue should be the center of change, reform includes involving students, parents, teachers, and administrators in the reform process; engaging in local inquiry to identify local conditions and problems; selecting local school goals from among district goals; and establishing programs and strategies to meet these goals. But schools also need the capacity to undertake these activities. ELI will help schools identify university faculty willing to participate in local inquiry into the current conditions and problems that exist in the school and willing to help design, implement, and evaluate local reform strategies. School activities will focus on organizational issues and school-level programs. For example, one activity might be a study of parental attitudes and participation in the school as a basis for designing improved parental involvement programs.

At the classroom level, reform involves changing classroom practice. Teachers must have the opportunity to study and reflect on current classroom practice and to access available research knowledge that can help them change it. ELI will work with individual teachers and groups of teachers to identify university faculty willing to work with them on studying and changing classroom practice. One important resource is the Subject Matter Professional Development Projects that now exist on most UC campuses to improve teaching in the subjects of mathematics, writing, literature, foreign language, arts, and science.

Dissemination

For ELI to succeed in building an ongoing, collaborative relationship between the university community and the superintendent community, it must have an effective dissemination strategy to reach both groups. Dissemination is used (a) to inform both communities about its mission and activities, particularly opportunities for collaboration; (b) to solicit ideas from those communities on the nature of the ELI activities, including the topics that the study teams will address; and (c) to distribute study-team reports, evaluations of implementation activities, and other materials that may be of interest to both groups. Dissemination must also build ties with other groups in the state involved in school improvement, such as teachers, principals, school boards, the State Department of Education, the business community, and other agencies serving youth. Finally, Institute findings are disseminated to agencies involved in leadership training, such as the pre-service training in UC schools of education and the in-service training activities of Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and the California School Leadership Academy of the State Department of Education.

Future Outlook

The ultimate goal of ELI—to effect fundamental and lasting improvement in California education—is clearly ambitious. It is a goal shared by many other school-improvement efforts inside and outside of the UC. But school improvement is not the sole province of any single effort or agency. The complex and enduring problems facing California education require a host of efforts.

It is too early to tell whether ELI will be successful in reaching its goal. Meaningful change is a long-term undertaking. But ELI has already succeeded in securing the involvement and commitment of some exceptional researchers and school practitioners from across the state of California. A number of significant challenges remain, however. First, ELI must secure a permanent source of funding that recognizes the joint contributions and benefits of ELI activities for both the university and school communities. If the university believes that its mission includes school improvement, it must be willing to provide financial support for those activities; at the same time, if the public schools benefit from those activities, they should be willing to share in the cost. Second, ELI must encourage more faculty, superintendents, and other participants both inside and outside of the public school system to work together on improving public education. Widespread faculty involvement may be particularly difficult to sustain given the present reward system in universities that typically favors the "scholarship of discovery" over the "scholarship of application" (Boyer, 1990). A just-released report of the UC Task Force on Faculty Rewards argues for an expanded definition of scholarship to include application as well as discovery as criteria for faculty promotion. If adopted and actually used, it could give faculty greater recognition and reward for their involvement in school-improvement efforts.

Perhaps the biggest challenge of all is the inertia to change itself. Comer (1980), who has been reforming schools since 1968, notes:

> Inertia or resistance to change—often generated by government, higher education, union, and school system activities; by personal investments of time, money, and psyche in current arrangements; and by the security of the status quo, tradition, certain attitudes and values—is massive. Also, there are no quick and easy solutions to school problems. Improving schooling is a complex, gradual process and it is almost imperceptible for a significant period of time even with good managers carrying out effective programs. Schools are under pressure to reduce problems and improve test scores, yesterday. Thus, many schools are more willing to try quick cure-all techniques and new materials than to engage in the careful planning, implementation, and evaluation of school programs needed to bring about significant and sustained change. (p. 25)

Yet the historical record demonstrates that, with proper leadership, district-wide change can be achieved (Cuban, 1989).

Note

This paper was adapted from the ELI Mission Statement (August 1991). For more information about ELI, write to Educational Leadership Institute, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106. I would like to thank Mike Kirst, Richard Shavelson, and Michael Slater for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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AERA Winter Institutes

Artistically Based Approaches to Qualitative Research and Evaluation

Director: Elliot Eisner, Stanford University

Instructors: Tom Barone, *Arizona State University;* David Flinders, *Trinity University;* Gail McCutcheon, *Ohio State University*

Stanford, CA; **January 22–23, 1993;** $175.00 AERA members, $210 nonmembers

During the past decade qualitative approaches to the study of educational practice have become increasingly important. The vast majority of these approaches have resided within a social science framework. Ethnography, for example, has been a primary source for educational researchers seeking qualitative methods for revealing the details of educational practice. This day-and-a-half institute is designed to explore artistically based approaches to the study of educational practice, especially the approach referred to as educational connoisseurship and educational criticism. Taking its lead from what critics do in studying works of art, film, music, and theater, educational criticism is designed to exploit the capacities of perception and the artistic rendering of language to describe, interpret, appraise, and thematize the objects and events studied. This session will be aimed at educational researchers interested in understanding the epistemology underlying this approach to the enlargement of human understanding. It will describe the major concepts it employs and provide examples of work that has used this approach in practice. In addition, it will afford participants an opportunity to utilize artistically based methods for the critique of real-time videotapes of teachers working in elementary and secondary school classrooms.

How to Evaluate the Legal Defensibility of High-Stakes Tests

Directors: W. James Popham, *IOX Assessment Associates;* William Mehrens, *Michigan State University*

Honolulu, Hawaii; **January 7–8, 1993;** $175.00 AERA members, $210 nonmembers

Drawing on their experience as expert witnesses in courtroom evaluations of educational achievement and licensure tests, Mehrens and Popham will provide specific guidelines for appraising educational tests on the basis of court-sanctioned evaluative dimensions. There are two objectives for the session, one cognitive and one affective. The first objective is that participants will gain knowledge regarding the qualities that educational tests must possess in order to increase the likelihood that the tests will be considered legally defensible. The second objective is that participants will become more confident in their ability to develop legally defensible educational tests and/or to appraise such tests on the basis of court-sanctioned evaluative dimensions.

The overall instructional method to be employed in the session will feature an exposition-application scheme. Mehrens and Popham will initially describe a court-sanctioned evaluative dimension such as content-related evidence of validity, then set forth the kinds of evidence that have, in previous litigation, proved acceptable in defending a test's quality. Following this exposition, participants will be given individual exercises (dealing with the evaluative dimension treated) that call for the application of the concepts described. Participants will then discuss their completed exercises in small groups. The small-group sessions will be followed by brief review and summarizing sessions provided by the codirectors.

For an application, contact the AERA Central Office: 1230 17th Street, NW; Washington, DC 20036-3078; (202) 223-9485.