5-1-2006

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Assessing Principal Internships and Habits of Mind:
The Use of Journey Mapping to Enhance Reflection
by Donna Cooner and Ellyn Dickmann

Although the need for educational administrators to become instructional leaders has gained considerable recognition, most of the research in educational administration continues to focus on *what* effective leaders do, not on *how* they think about what they do (Stein and Nelson 2003). As one way to shift this focus, reflective journal writing by participants in principal preparation internship programs offers a particularly effective way to foster greater reflection toward the everyday thinking process that underlies the exercise of educational leadership. Such journals can also potentially provide valuable linkages among interns, mentor principles, and university faculty with regard to the leadership challenges faced during the internship experience; in turn, such journals can give program administrators a clear view into the thought processes and leadership development of their students as they grow over time, thereby providing a useful data set for these administrators to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the graduate program in its preparation of future educational leaders.

The problem is that few methods of reflective journal writing have been equally useful for principal interns and their supervisors in terms of tracking professional development toward measurable goals as well as assessing the overall effectiveness of the preparation program. In order for such journals to have maximum benefit, they need to be structured and focused in their content as well as be easily available for review by colleagues, mentors, and graduate program faculty and administration. In this context, electronic journals (e-journals) provide potent possibilities for educators by tapping into the power of reflection in an accessible way for all involved, allowing for easy communication between members of distant cohort groups and instructors while also giving program administrators a direct glimpse into the professional growth of their students. In this article, we will address the distinctive advantages of e-journaling in the context of principal internship programs; we will then describe an Internet-based program called Journey Mapping that offers a beneficial tool for interns as well as supervisors and administrators seeking to incorporate e-journaling in their own programs.

Facilitating Reflection in Computer-mediated Learning Environments

Although many principal preparation programs use reflective journals to encourage students to communicate their successes and struggles during their internship experience, assessing student experience as reflected through journal writing remains a challenge. While interns can write down school experiences and the emotions engendered by these experiences, there is often no way to track their critical thinking process or to compare sequentially one experience with another in terms of underlying patterns or mental attitudes. What interns really need is to be able to monitor their own growing ability to choose the right way to think about experiences as they happen and then act in response, becoming more and more adept at this ability as time goes on. However, the traditional method of reflective journal writing does not allow that. After experiencing the chaotic environment of the schools, the intern goes home and writes a reflection piece as an assignment for his or her supervisor, rather than as a personal learning and assessment tool.

Likewise, the supervisor of interns may gain valuable insights from reading students' reflective journals, but it is not a quick and easy process to monitor and respond to them continually. Sorting through extensive journal entries to find significant patterns of thought and action over time can be a daunting task; moreover, the process has limited value when restricted largely to interactions between supervisor and intern. To help remedy this, the supervisor will typically need to require a more explicit structure in journal entries and offer opportunities for dialogue among cohort peers and colleagues. For example, when I used the traditional

reflective journal as a pedagogical tool, I required students to write a reflective response based on each of the state standards for principalship based on their internship experience. The students then included these reflective responses in their internship portfolios. In turn, I required students to e-mail each of these reflective responses to two other students, who were asked to provide feedback (in addition to the feedback I provided) that would then be included as well in the portfolio exhibit. Thus, three people including myself would read each reflective journal entry, and all three feedback responses would become permanent and static parts of a student's portfolio. In this way, the traditional reflective journal did receive a small amount of exposure and dialogue, but not across the entire cohort and not in an engaging, dynamic process.

Through the use of online technology, electronically enhanced journals may overcome some of these limitations. Several authors have suggested that critical reflection can be enhanced in the electronic medium by providing readers greater freedom to review online transcripts or journal entries and compose thoughtful responses (Burge 1994; Davie and Wells 1991; Andrusyszyn and Davie 1997). Another advantage of e-journaling over traditional journals is that they allow for contemporaneous, if not necessarily synchronous, discourse while providing a written record of growth over time. Because e-journals facilitate greater communication between many geographically remote parties, they have particular value in helping remedy the sense of isolation and uncertainty faced by student interns; by connecting interns with their fellow colleagues across various sites, e-journals provide full access to the ideas and experiences of all cohort members at the same time. Similarly, e-journals can provide more sustained contact between internship supervisors and students. During the principal licensure internship, especially when geographical distance is involved, the rate of exchange between supervisor and intern can be slowed considerably when relying on traditional paper and pen journals, thus limiting the benefits usually associated with this form of communication. By providing important, timely information to supervisors about what is happening in field sites, e-journals also provide data for further research and evaluation purposes when analyzed for themes across journal entries. Such data not only allows for fuller assessment of the intern's progress, but also allows for supervisors as well as program administrators to address any limitations or shortcomings in the graduate program as a whole.

However, the electronic medium per se does not necessarily address all of the limitations that characterize the traditional reflective journal. While online communication can allow for greater reflection, issues of time, fragmentation of discussion, and volume of information can still compromise the potential of this medium in learning contexts (Burge 1994). Likewise, instantaneous and timely access to e-journal entries among all relevant parties can promote professional dialogue and overcome geographic barriers, but without sufficient structure or protocol, the value of e-journals in this context will remain compromised. For this reason, the asynchronous communication tools of certain course delivery applications (e.g., Blackboard, eCollege, or Collegis), the capabilities afforded by such software programs as Live Journal, or even the features of free or low-cost blogging programs (e.g., WordPress, Blogger, or Moveable Type) provide resources that support e-journaling but do not fully address the needs of the internship supervisor for focused, in-depth assessment and program evaluation. Ideally, a software application that supports e-journaling in this context would not only allow interns to share their critical insights and experiences with cohorts but would also help make the process of sorting through this information more convenient and beneficial for supervisors, administrators, and researchers.

The Next Level: Journey Mapping as an Effective Ethnographic and Assessment Tool

One tool that may successfully address the problem of assessment and data collection through e-journals is Journey Mapping, a software program created by Barry Kibel at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE). In outlining the goals informing the design of the program, Kibel (2003) proposes that an effective evaluation tool should

(a) expand the types of reporting done by key program participants—for purposes of fuller documentation,

self-reflection, and creative expression; (b) better enable the sharing of experiences and learning across participants—to mutually inspire, spark insights, and foster critical thinking about the work and results of the program, in terms of both output productivity and ennobling effects; and (c) increase the "market appeal" of the program with current and future supporters and champions—through demonstrating the true spirit of the program in action. (1-2)

As a means of meeting these goals, Kibel's Journey Mapping software evolved from his earlier Results Mapping program. His goal in creating the Results Mapping methodology in the early 1990s was to upgrade the value and status of storytelling within the field of program evaluation by devising a protocol for relating stories that would describe an event and then evaluate its potential impact on those involved. With Journey Mapping, Kibel adapted the mapping structure to an online journal format that allows for the charting of designated milestones and success markers as users construct narratives of their own personal and professional development.

The design of Journey Mapping thus involves both a descriptive model, capturing what has happened or is happening, and a normative model, indicating what ought to be happening and offering a yardstick to measure progress. Journey Mapping participants record their journeys electronically in their own words as journal entries or as sequences of events. As they do so, they also respond to specific preset probes, such as describing a single event that stood out for them; the purpose of these probes is to uncover peak experiences and program highlights and to encourage focused reflection on the self, the program, and others. Respondents can also identify problem areas and suggest improvements. Finally they are encouraged to assess growth or change by clicking Likert-type rating scales that address progress and outcome achievement. Supervisors can then use the results from probe questions and rating scales to generate summary reports that chart the various strengths and weaknesses of the program at large.

Easily accessible by mappers and their supervisors, Journey Mapping provides a systematic, user-friendly format for documenting reflections. On the one hand, it allows interns to record their personal and professional progress in a narrative format that accomodates their own thoughts, emotions, and insights; on the other hand, the format is sufficiently structured so that journal entries address issues that are particularly relevant to the program and particularly vital for users as they track their growth and change. By allowing supervisors and cohorts to have unlimited access to journal entries, the program supports professional dialogue, collegial support, and deep learning; by allowing for the organized collection of data, the program supports focused assessment of the internship process by faculty and administration.

Journey Mapping in Practice

Colorado State University's Principal Licensure Program first adopted Journey Mapping as a tool for interns in the fall of 2004. Since that time, three cohorts with a total of 63 students have completed over 750 entries about their experiences in the principal internship.

Using Journey Mapping, principal interns log in (Figure 1) to the Internet site and engage in periodic guided reporting and assessments concerning progress toward achieving standards in addition to analyzing their "habits of mind" in solving school-based problems they encounter on a weekly basis. In this context a habit of mind is defined as knowing how to behave intelligently when you do not know the answer; it means having a disposition toward behaving intelligently when confronted with problems that do not have easy or clear-cut answers (Costa and Kalick 2000). Principal interns are given a list of 16 habits of mind including persisting, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, managing impulsivity, listening with understanding and empathy, thinking flexibly, thinking about thinking (metacognition), thinking interdependently, and applying past knowledge to new situations. By using this list, interns can think about the school experiences they have had and discover what habits of mind they used to work through the experience, what habits of mind might have provided better results, and what habits of mind they want to explore and practice. Customized sets of directed program-specific questions are posed to interns to encourage informative and insightful reflections (Figure 2).

Additionally, interns might be asked to rate specific aspects of the internship experience, such as state principal licensure standards, and to indicate which standards or other outcomes were achieved, whether partially or fully, in a survey format (Figure 3). Reports containing both qualitative (Figure 4) and quantitative data (Figure 5) can be generated to assess program goals or to look at the progress of specific subsets. Qualitative data, collected longitudinally over the course of an internship, can be saved in rich text format and imported into a qualitative software program like NVivo for coding and analysis. The qualitative data can be easily collected for phenomenological, grounded theory or further ethnographic research.

The following is an example of the guided reporting interns do through Journey Mapping:

Describe a challenging situation or incident that you encountered during the past two weeks of your internship. How did you initially approach the situation? What habit of mind did you naturally rely on?

We suspended a student for five days after he wrote a letter to another student threatening to bring a gun to school and kill her. Looking at this student and his parents, knowing what a serious thing this is in this day and age, and also knowing this student (he is one of mine) is very impulsive and on medication, and then saying that he is suspended is VERY difficult. While he was suspended, we assembled a task force to help make his reentry very successful. At this time he is doing well with the support and provided counseling. The habits of mind utilized were listening with understanding and empathy, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, and gathering data through all senses.

Upon reflection, would you change how you approached the situation? What additional or different habits of mind might have been more effective?

I would not change how it was handled as we were advised by district administration as to the number of suspension days. I just think serious discipline is a very difficult part of any principal's job. Also thinking flexibly could be very important when planning intervention for this student.

The principal intern was asked to identify which specific habits of mind he used to deal with this serious disciplinary event; then he was asked to think about what other habits of mind he might have used to make the outcome more effective. As with many interns, at first he writes that he would not have changed how he thought about the situation, but this intern realizes toward the end of his entry that another habit of mind would have helped make the outcome more successful. In this example, it is evident that the list of habits of mind coupled with recording the events leads the intern to add more critical thinking to his repetoire of thinking habits and strategies.

In addition to being user-friendly and meeting data-collection needs, Journey Mapping helps instructors connect with interns who may be distributed physically across a large geographic area. I provide a workshop for principal interns on how to use Journey Mapping during summer classes when students are physically present on campus. During the internship experience, when students are often located some distance from the university in a variety of school settings, interns are then able to access the Journey Mapping Internet site from wherever they are completing their internship; they can keep in constant contact with the university supervisor and other cohort members about their progress, both through reflecting on their learning in narrative entries and measuring their attainment of state principal licensure standards through a Likert-scale format.

At the conclusion of the internship year, reports are generated and compared for progress. Qualitative data is collected and reviewed for emerging themes; these themes are then correlated with syllabi topics and course material to insure the classes taught before the internship experience provide the necessary content for future interns. Quantitative reports provide data to program administrators on how and when interns successfully master state standards for principal licensure and which standards are not being addressed through the internship experience.

Conclusion

With increased pressure on school reform and renewal, there will continue to be a greater need for reflective opportunities for all school principals and leaders; in this context a systematic, easy-to-use Web-based program such as Journey Mapping provides a valuable tool for promoting such reflection in the form of e-journals. Principal intern supervisors seeking to chart the professional growth of their students periodically will also find this tool helpful, and the qualitative data provided by the generation of summary reports will provide guidance for further dialogue and research about the direction of graduate programs in educational leadership. Whether it is reflection-in-action or reflection-on-action (Schon 1987), instructional leaders now have a tool at their keyboard to document their journeys and create a focused direction for future growth.

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