

## **Educational Leadership Preparation Faculty Program Review for Employer Satisfaction**

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### **Abstract**

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*There is a need to address the enhancement of university educational leadership preparation programs through the processes of accreditation and continuous improvement. The program faculty at a university in the eastern part of the United States has incorporated an Employer Satisfaction Focus Group to address the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Standard R4.2: employers are satisfied with completers' preparation for the position of principal or assistant principal. Seventeen themes were identified addressing the six CAEP proficiencies for graduates' knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions. Analysis of the idealized themes identified issues that may impact university educational leadership program's employer satisfaction. The considerations were used to derive a composite profile of employers' satisfaction with program completers. Results were used for continuous improvement by reviewing and revising the program's Curriculum Map: Leadership & Learning Matrix.*

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**Keywords:** accreditation, continuous improvement, principal preparation, transformational leadership, employer satisfaction

### **Introduction**

Leadership is essential, and how school leaders are prepared both in the United States and internationally is critical to the success of schools and student achievement in those schools. University educational leadership (principal) preparation programs are the major pipeline for preparing school leaders. There is a need to address improvement in university educational leadership preparation programs through the processes of accreditation and continuous improvement. For an educational leadership preparation program in the eastern part of the United States, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) is the national accreditor, and the program faculty provides continuous improvement. CAEP's mission is to "advance equity and excellence in educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen P-12 student learning" (CAEP, 2024, Mission).

This study addresses CAEP Standard R4.2 Satisfaction of Employers, which states, "The provider demonstrates that employers are satisfied with the completers' preparation for their assigned responsibilities in working with diverse P-12 students and their families" (CAEP, 2024, Satisfaction of Employers). To provide evidence of employer satisfaction, the university preparation program utilized an Employer Satisfaction Survey, which was employed for three accreditation cycles: 2009, 2016, and 2023. For the most recent Employer Satisfaction survey results, data were reviewed from academic years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022.

These results were used from the most recent 2022 - 2023 CAEP self-study that resulted in continuing CAEP National Accreditation with no Areas For Improvement (AFIs). This is the highest level of CAEP accreditation. Through the years, the Employer Satisfaction Survey has been sent to employers with a low number of responses, ranging from 17 – 31 for 2019-2022. For 2022 – 2023, the program used a new Virginia Education Assessment Collaborative (VEAC) data set developed by the Virginia Department of Education to assist universities with data collection for employer satisfaction. The responses remained low, with 23 total.

To address the issue of a continuing low response rate, the program faculty has incorporated an Employer Satisfaction Focus Group. The construction, procedures, and outcomes of the focus group are the purpose of this study. “A focus group is a research method that brings together a small group of people to answer questions in a moderated session” (George 2023, p. 1).

The outcomes from the focus group session are reviewed by the program faculty for improvement in the program offered to its students. This adheres to CAEP Standard R5.3, “The provider includes relevant external stakeholders (e.g., employers) in program evaluation and continuous improvement processes” (CAEP, 2024, Stakeholder Involvement). Program faculty meet regularly to review university, school of education, and program policies, procedures, and concerns in their Educational Administration (EADM) subcommittee meetings. All program data are reviewed for any changes, updates, or program improvements. The minutes of each meeting are transcribed and posted in the School of Education Educational Leadership-K12 School Leadership accreditation folder. The School of Education CAEP Regulatory Specialist is the gatekeeper for program data and various folders that house evidence for CAEP accreditation. Smylie & Murphy (2018) note that the need for continuous improvement is a recurring theme in the literature on principal preparation. This study addresses the need for continuous improvement in educational leadership preparation by analyzing data from employers of program graduates who have attained the positions of principal or assistant principal.

The design for this study is qualitative research using an employer focus group to explore, through open-ended questions, the actions necessary for sufficient response to employer satisfaction with program graduates. The outcome is to provide best practices in program preparation from input derived from employers in one public school district where the program has a high number, approximately 66%, of program completers in educational leadership positions (principals and assistant principals).

CAEP (2022) requires graduates in its educational leadership program to acquire six proficiencies during the program and demonstrate them once employed in their professional fields of study:

1. Applications of data literacy.
2. Use of research and understanding of qualitative, quantitative, and/or mixed methods research methodologies.
3. Employment of data analysis and evidence to develop supportive, diverse, equitable, and inclusive environments.
4. Leading and/or participating in collaborative activities with others such as peers, colleagues, teachers, administrators, community organizations, and parents.
5. Supporting appropriate applications of technology for their field of specialization; and
6. Application of professional dispositions, laws and policies, codes of ethics, and professional standards appropriate to their field of specialization (p. 1).

The university preparation program and the public school district are located in the eastern part of the United States. The participants, who included two central office directors, one elementary principal, one middle school principal, and one high school principal, were volunteers. These participants are homogeneous, and the objectives are narrowly defined, providing sufficient saturation as adequate data have been collected for analysis (Hennick & Kaiser, 2022, p. 1). The focus group session was recorded and tabulated for codes and emergent themes. The researchers are professors and administrators in the educational leadership program being studied. The outcome of this research design was to identify themes that can provide evidence that the educational leadership program is meeting its mission to improve P-12 student achievement (Educational Leadership Mission, 2024). Specifically, can the focus group provide adequate evidence that employers are satisfied with program completers who are principals and assistant principals in their school district, specific to the CAEP six proficiencies? Findings are used to review any changes to course content as outlined in the Educational Leadership Curriculum Map (Leadership & Learning Matrix).

## Type of Study

The research design for this study is a qualitative phenomenological exploratory feedback investigation of employer satisfaction with completers from a university educational leadership preparation program who have attained the position of a school principal or assistant principal. Qualitative research describes meaning from the participants' perspectives in their natural environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Phenomenology concerns the meaning people associate with phenomena based on their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peoples, 2021).

Accountability in principal preparation can be daunting for even the most seasoned university professor and program director. The key to CAEP accreditation can be found in the theory of transformational leadership. "Transformational leaders are agents of change who possess the power to transform their followers' mindsets, attitudes, and beliefs, thus continuously improving the program" (Fripp, 2025, p. 1). Transformational leadership fits well into this study because CAEP requires continuous improvement.

The sections that follow highlight the following topics: research questions, setting and participants, data sources, instrumentation, data analysis, threats to validity, findings, and discussion & conclusion. This study has been approved by the University Institutional Review Board.

## Research Questions

Phenomenological questions answer what it is like to experience a particular phenomenon (Peoples, 2021). This study provided an opportunity for employers to pause and reflect on their review of the principals and assistant principals that they supervise. Van Manen (2016) noted that when we have experienced something that makes us pause and reflect, we can ask phenomenological questions.

One central research question and five sub-questions guided this study. The central research question is: What are employers' experiences in evaluating graduates of a university educational leadership program who have attained the position of principal or assistant principal?

Sub-questions are:

1. What CAEP proficiencies do university graduates perform the strongest?
2. What CAEP proficiencies do university graduates need to be strengthened?
3. What other strengths, beyond the CAEP proficiencies, do university graduates demonstrate in their duties?
4. What other areas of responsibility, beyond the CAEP proficiencies, do university graduates need to strengthen?
5. How can the university improve its educational leadership preparation program to better prepare candidates for their field of discipline?

## Setting and Participants

The setting for this study was a university educational leadership preparation program and an adjoining school district in the eastern part of the United States. Participants included public school district employers. For this study, an employer was considered anyone who recruits, employs, or supervises one or more graduates of the School of Education's Educational Leadership and K-12 School Leadership programs. These two programs lead to the state's endorsement of administration and supervision to hold the position of principal and assistant principal. This study will focus on employers who supervise principals and assistant principals in one public school district that has a large number of educational leadership graduates employed as principals and assistant principals (66%).

Employers included two district directors who supervised and evaluated principals in the school district. According to Peters & Gering (2025), "supervisors in the central office lead the charge in principal support and development" (p. 2). In addition, three principals who supervised and evaluated assistant principals in the school district were also participants. The participants were chosen due to their availability to participate on the given date and time of the focus group session.

In qualitative research, the sample size is typically determined by studying a few individuals or sites and collecting data from them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Saturation in employing focus groups occurs when sufficient data to draw the necessary conclusions has been assessed and reviewed by an informed source (Damyanov, 2023; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peoples, 2021).

The informed source in this study is the School of Education CAEP Regulatory specialist, who oversees all data collection and evidence for the accreditation process in the university's School of Education. This individual has completed extensive training and experience working with the program's accreditation requirements and data collection/analysis. Damyanov (2023) notes that 4-8 focus group participants is the best practice. Beyond this number, there may not be time to address the questions posed, and harder to allow for diverse opinions. A "small number of well-chosen participants asking well-crafted questions provides the most reliable perspectives" (Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre, 2024, p. 1). The total number of participants in this study was five.

Participants were recruited by invitation from a program professor who had ties to the school district, having been employed in the past by the district in a high-level administrative position. The verbal invite was followed by an invitation letter explaining the procedures and a consent form. Central office directors and principals from the school district were emailed with the recruitment letter explaining the research study and asking for their participation. Considering the time-demanding job of directors and principals, the time commitment for participation in the study was also explained. A letter of informed consent with additional details, including the criteria for the study, was emailed to directors and principals who agreed to participate. To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of research participants, no demographic or school division identifiers were used in the study's data collection and analysis.

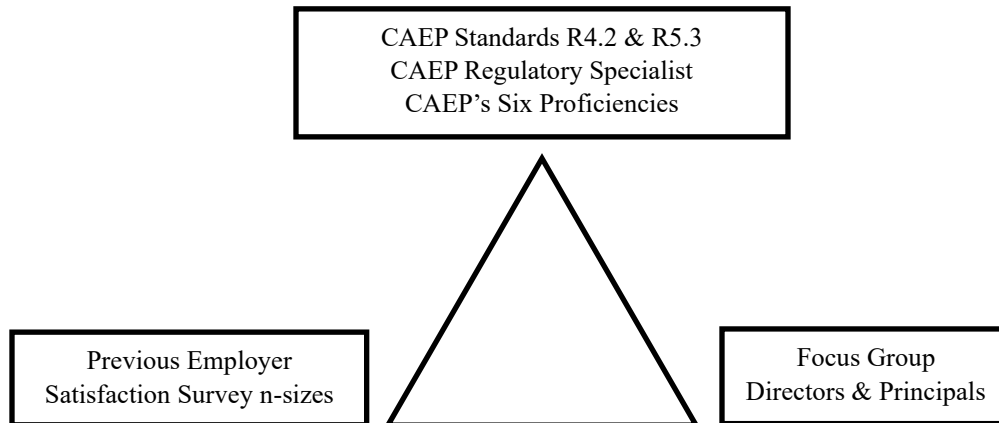
The focus group moderator is experienced in leading focus groups and was responsible for guiding the focus group in asking questions and following up as needed with additional insight to help participants understand each question. The moderator took notes to capture any key points. Study data was destroyed three months after the conclusion of the study.

The setting format for the focus group session was an online teleconference using Zoom. This made it easier to recruit participants and allowed for a Zoom recording of the forum and a transcript for data analysis. A transcript allows for accuracy in analyzing, as participant voice can be reviewed for accuracy (Rowlands, 2021).

### **Data Sources**

Triangulation was used to construct credible sources of data to complete the study. Multiple data sources allow researchers to better respond to the research questions and better evaluate the focus group transcript for program improvement. Triangulation "enhances the validity and credibility of the findings and mitigates the presence of any research bias" in conducting the study (Bhandri, 2023, p. 1). The researchers for this study are professors in the School of Education's Educational Leadership Preparation Program who teach the required courses. Triangulation in data sources and the construction of research questions help reduce bias and provide credibility and trustworthiness for the study.

Data for this study are derived from three sources (Figure 1). First, CAEP Standard R4.2 Satisfaction of Employers, Standard R5.3 Program Continuous Improvement, and the resources of the CAEP Regulatory Specialist, who provided the framework for designing and executing the employer focus group. Included in this source are the six proficiencies CAEP requires graduates in its educational leadership program to acquire during the program and demonstrate once employed in their professional fields of study. These six are listed in the Introduction section of this article.

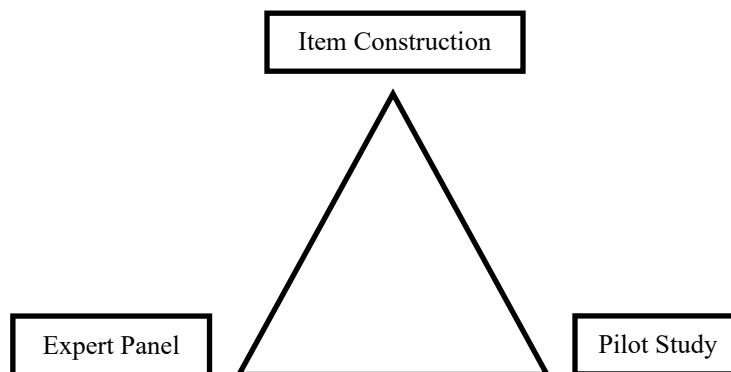
**Figure 1***Triangulation of Study Data Sources*

*Note: Triangulation of data sources provides a strong data set for analysis (Bhandri, 2023).*

Second, there is a historical record of employer satisfaction survey data from 2005-2023, with specific data from years 2019 – 2023 cataloged in CAEP accreditation evidence folders and reviewed by the EADM faculty for continuous improvement. Reviewing this database provides a historical review of program employer satisfaction and program improvement. The survey sample size for each year provided evidence of a lower response rate, resulting in the need (gap) for the current study.

**Instrumentation**

This study derived employer satisfaction information through an in-depth focus group forum. Triangulation was used to construct credible focus group questions (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2***Triangulation of Focus Group Question Construction*

*Note: Based on the recommendation from the CAEP Regulatory Specialist, focus group questions were developed, reviewed by an expert panel, and then piloted.*

The construction of the focus group questions is a result of recommendations from the university's School of Education CAEP Regulatory Specialist, who oversees the CAEP accreditation process. The researchers used the expert panel consisting of the School of Education Advisory Committee to add/delete or change focus group questions to be sure responses would answer the study's research questions. Changes to the questions were minor, including underlining the term "six CAEP proficiencies" and keyword(s) in each of the five questions, adding to "School of Education" in question #5, and deleting "of discipline" also in question #5. The next step was to pilot the focus group questions.

The moderator used these five questions with a previous focus group, so the Advisory Committee agreed that this previous pilot provided sufficient practice for this study. Piloting allowed testing of the focus group process and the credibility of the focus group questions. The data from the focus group questions were used to answer the research questions. The final focus group questions are found in Table 1. Table 1 also aligns the research questions with the focus group questions. The Advisory Committee also recommended sending the six CAEP proficiencies and the Focus Group questions to participants ahead of the focus group session.

**Table 1**

*Alignment of the Research Questions and Corresponding Focus Group Questions*

RESEARCH QUESTION	FOCUS GROUP QUESTION
The Central question: What are employers' experiences reviewing graduates of a university educational leadership program who have attained the position of principal or assistant principal?	See sub-questions.
<b>SUBQUESTIONS</b>	
1. What CAEP proficiencies do graduates perform the strongest?	1. Based on the <u>six CAEP proficiencies</u> and your own experience, which proficiency do graduates perform the <u>strongest</u> ? Please indicate why and provide examples or evidence to justify your perspective.
2. What CAEP proficiencies do the performance of graduates need to be strengthened?	2. Based on the <u>six CAEP proficiencies</u> and your own experience, which proficiency does the performance of graduates need to be <u>strengthened</u> ? Please indicate why and provide examples or evidence to justify your perspective.
3. What other strengths, beyond the CAEP proficiencies, do graduates demonstrate in the performance of their responsibilities?	3. Besides the <u>six CAEP proficiencies</u> , what other strengths do graduates demonstrate in the performance of their <u>responsibilities</u> ?
4. What other areas of responsibility, beyond the CAEP proficiencies, do graduates need to strengthen?	4. Besides the <u>six CAEP proficiencies</u> , what other areas of responsibility do graduates need to <u>strengthen</u> ?
5. Can the School of Education improve its education preparation programs to better prepare candidates for their field of discipline?	5. How can the <u>School of Education</u> <u>improve</u> its education preparation programs to better prepare candidates for their field?

### Focus Group Interview Session

The CAEP Regulatory Specialist's recommendations for the focus group session were followed.

1. Begin with welcoming and thanking participants for their involvement in this focus group study. Ask participants to introduce themselves.
2. Give a brief overview of why this focus group was formed and the importance of collecting this information for accreditation purposes.
3. After the overview, introduce the six proficiencies that CAEP expects advanced graduates to demonstrate in their respective disciplines.
4. Conduct the focus group session.
5. Discuss the findings and conclusion.

## Data Analysis

The process of data analysis began before the focus group session was held. The researchers met with the CAEP Regulatory Specialist to review CAEP Standards R4.2 and R5.3 and review the history of data collected from previous Employer Satisfaction Surveys. The previous Employer Satisfactory Survey results for program improvement were also reviewed from the program database for academic years 2019 – 2023, which comprise the three-year data set for CAEP continuing accreditation approval. In addition, the initial year of VEAC data results were reviewed. Researchers also met with the program's Advisory Council, made up of faculty and practitioners from the field, to assist in the design of the study. The n-sizes from the previous surveys informed us of the need for the current study. The results from the Focus Group session were evaluated for any improvements to the program's curriculum, titled the Educational Leadership Curriculum Map (Leadership & Learning Matrix).

The focus group Zoom session was held and recorded, providing a transcript. A backup recording was used. The Zoom transcript was reviewed for accuracy after the focus group was audio recorded and transcribed in the Zoom application and backup recording. The transcript allowed researchers to verify the accuracy of the participant's voice. Identifying information from participants and school districts was removed before uploading the transcript into NVivo Version 15. NVivo was used because it offered storage security for data and enabled coding, management, and analysis of data for themes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A central aspect of qualitative research is the coding process, which involves breaking down data into categories before reducing them into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After constructing folders in NVivo, the focus group transcript was loaded and skimmed by diagnosing significant statements and assessing core ideas for developing primary themes. These themes were aligned to address the research questions. The themes were supported in excerpts (participant's voice) from the transcripts. Two researchers designed the themes by working together to manage and organize the data by reviewing the transcripts, NVivo results, and an OpenAI ChatGPT summary. The final researcher used the same process to verify the results. Employer survey results n-sizes from 2019 – 2023 were reviewed to verify the need for the current study.

NVivo provided the supporting evidence needed to answer the focus group questions. Evidence of the major themes, patterns, and insights into the participants' experiences allowed the researchers to combine them into a cohesive summary to provide a review for continuous improvement.

## Findings

The analysis examined a focus group of employers' experiences evaluating graduates of a university educational leadership program who have attained the position of principal or assistant principal. Researcher manual analysis, NVivo Version 15 software, and OpenAI ChatGPT were used to develop the findings for this study.

The researchers obtained a transcription of the Focus Group session utilizing the Zoom transcription feature. The researchers reviewed the transcripts several times to ensure an accurate understanding of the responses. Two of the researchers independently reviewed the data manually, noting keywords and phrases from the transcripts, followed by tagging and reorganizing encoded keywords and phrases using NVivo Version 15 software. The two then collaborated to ensure agreement on the correct content of the theme then the wording. Independently and then collaboratively, the third researcher followed the same protocol in analyzing the data that emerged to provide insight into employer satisfaction in response to the Focus Group questions. Separating the reviews independently by the first two researchers, followed by their collaboration and, finally, verification by the third researcher, provided credibility and trustworthiness to the study.

OpenAI ChatGPT (2025) provided a summary and hierarchical overview of the findings: AI's quick recap noted that the focus group session focused on evaluating the University's Educational Leadership Program based on six key proficiencies, with participants discussing strengths and areas for improvement. The program was highlighted for its strong points in collaboration, professional ethics, and integrity. Areas needing improvement were identified in technology skills, data literacy application, classroom management, and special education knowledge. Suggestions for program enhancement include more in-school experiences, a focus on current student mental health and discipline challenges and preparing leaders to balance instructional leadership with daily operational demands.

The researchers continued to review the transcripts until all keywords/phrases were identified, recorded, coded, and further investigated for themes. Table 2 displays the themes that emerged and samples of participant voices from the transcript that support the themes.

**Table 2**

*Alignment of the Themes to Research Questions with Participant Responses*

RESEARCH QUESTION	NVivo, ChatGPT, & researcher-generated themes
The Central question: What are employers' experiences reviewing graduates of a university educational leadership program who have attained the position of principal or assistant principal?	See sub-questions.
<b>SUBQUESTIONS</b>	
1. What CAEP proficiencies do graduates perform the strongest?	Collaboration Ethics Professionalism
Sample of participant responses: <b>Statement #15</b> - <i>I have felt that the interns that I've had from your university have been high-quality interns and willing to work, have ethics and integrity, and are just looking for great experiences.</i> <b>Statement #19</b> - <i>I would say that I feel the leading and participating in collaborative activities with peers, colleagues, and teachers. I have found that the individuals that I've had the chance to work with come out in a very professional and collegial manner. I have been most impressed with the ability for them to respectfully collaborate and challenge each other in a respectful and meaningful way, which then develops into a positive solution.</i>	
2. What CAEP proficiencies do the performance of graduates need to be strengthened?	Technology Platforms Data Literacy Being able to produce administrators who can train teachers in classroom management
Sample of participant responses: All participants acknowledged the difficulty of keeping up with technology. <b>Statement #28</b> - <i>I think it's difficult to keep up with the technology that's used in different school divisions.</i> <b>Statement #33</b> - <i>They all come to us very strong, but I think that technology is something across the board because it's ever-changing. So it is that technology piece, but the application of data literacy.</i>	
3. What other strengths, beyond the CAEP proficiencies, do graduates demonstrate in the performance of their responsibilities?	Innovation Leadership Development Growth Mindset Integrity - Being able to hold effective conversation with staff Christian World View
Sample of participants' responses: <b>Statement #23</b> - <i>I would agree with the collaboration as well as the laws, policies, and ethics. I think that's sort of the cornerstone of the university, and just leading with integrity is definitely something that graduates take away from their program.</i> <b>Statements #54 &amp; 55</b> - <i>One of the things that I've seen with the individuals is their willingness to be able to take on the roles and experiences so that they can have as many opportunities for leadership development as possible.</i> <b>Statement #57</b> - <i>I would agree with that. They display a growth mindset.</i> <b>Statement #59</b> - <i>Leaders who are coming from the university have a lot of integrity, and they can have those hard conversations respectfully.</i> <b>Statement #61</b> - <i>Many of the graduates and representatives coming from the university are able to take this Christian Worldview mindset.</i>	

4. What other areas of responsibility, beyond the CAEP proficiencies, do graduates need to strengthen?	Special Ed - Leadership Development Effective Monitoring of Instruction Effective Communications Experience in Decision Making
<p>Sample of participants' responses:</p> <p><b>Statements #42</b> – <i>They aren't always ready for that classroom management piece. I'd like for us to focus a little bit more on the classroom management piece and understanding the way things are today versus the way they were just 5 years ago. It is very, very different and putting into place some better understandings of our inclusive environments.</i></p> <p><b>Statements #65 &amp; 66</b> - <i>I have one. I think that. And I don't know necessarily that I feel like it's just focused on Regent University. I think a strong understanding of all that entails special education, special education, law, understanding the role of the special educator, IDEA, what it means to have compliance issues, due process, mediation, advocating concerns, and working through that process. If I had to go back and work with any institution with regard to education as a whole, it would be to gain a better understanding of the process of special education.</i></p> <p><b>Statement #75</b> - <i>Not necessarily so much for just your grads. I think that collectively, for our school district, we really need to focus on just leading effective communications. Often, it's one of those things, whereas we're working with our principals. You know the difficulties related to navigating certain instances and certain challenges, particularly around a communications component. So just, you know, wanting to add that piece.</i></p>	
5. Can the School of Education improve its education preparation programs to better prepare candidates for their field of discipline?	Experience in Decision Making/Prioritizing
<p>Sample of participant responses:</p> <p><b>Statement #78</b> - <i>It's hard until you just jump in and, you know, start a regular school year to really understand all that's involved in all the decision-making and all the fires that come up throughout the day. So, I don't know how to address that.</i></p> <p><b>Statement #85</b> - <i>Anything student, mental health, trauma, and discipline these days has just really changed, especially at the primary level.</i></p> <p><b>Statement #88</b> – <i>The university does a really good job of developing our leaders as instructional leaders. But when you're actually in the building, we need to make sure that they get a better picture of what being an instructional leader looks like, while all the fires are going off all day long, because it's very, very challenging.</i></p>	

The ChatGPT review supports the themes indicated in Table 2 that were generated by NVivo Version 15 and the analysis from the researchers. These themes were then used to address the study’s primary research question: What are employers’ experiences reviewing graduates of a university educational leadership program who have attained the position of principal or assistant principal?

**Threats to Validity, Limitations, Delimitations, Assumptions**

The following strategies suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Peoples (2021) were considered to address any threats to the validity of this study:

- The Zoom transcript was reviewed for accuracy and allowed researchers to verify the accuracy of the participant's voice (dependability).
- Participants’ experiences were detailed, putting patterns and themes into context (transferability).
- The limitations of subjectivity and researcher bias were addressed in the triangulation of data sources, focus group question construction, and methods to validate findings (credibility and trustworthiness).
- Generalization is limited to the public school district and university in this study.
- It is assumed that the multiple perspectives of participants are based on their responsibilities to evaluate school principals and assistant principals.

## Discussion & Conclusion

Through recent academic years, the Educational Leadership program's Employer Satisfaction Survey has been sent to employers with a low number of responses, ranging from 17 – 31 for 2019-2022 (2019-2020 = 17, 2020-2021 = 31, 2021-2022 = 22). For 2022 – 2023, the program used a new Virginia Education Assessment Collaborative (VEAC) data set developed by the Virginia Department of Education to assist universities with data collection for employer satisfaction. The responses remained low, with 23 in total. The low n-sizes led to the need for the current study. This study employed a phenomenological exploratory feedback investigation of employer satisfaction with experiences in evaluating the graduates of a university educational leadership program who have attained the position of principal or assistant principal.

The central research question is, "What are employers' experiences reviewing graduates of a university educational leadership program who have attained the position of principal or assistant principal?" The themes illustrate employers' perceptions regarding their role in evaluating principals and assistant principals concerning the six CAEP proficiencies for graduates of the educational leadership preparation program. Overall, the results indicate that the employers were complimentary of the program. The program was highlighted for its strengths in collaboration, professional ethics, and integrity. Further insights into the study's research sub-questions led to identifying themes through analyzing participants' voices that directly inform program course content and the program's curriculum map. This was particularly beneficial for the researchers who are also faculty in the program and responsible for course content, final grades, and continuous improvement as required by the national accreditor, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). As noted earlier in this article, transformational leadership theory applies to this study's findings because transformational leaders are agents of change and the program faculty and director will address the findings in their review and update of the Educational Leadership Curriculum Map (Leadership & Learning Matrix) for content, assignments, scoring by rubric, and assigning grades:

Enhance technology training, particularly focusing on learning platforms and data programs that are used in different school systems.

- Strengthen the application of data literacy training.
- Increase focus on classroom management training, especially considering current educational environments.
- Enhance training in special education laws, processes, and compliance issues.
- Provide more extensive training on instructional monitoring and effective walkthroughs.
- Incorporate more training on leading effective communications for school administrators.
- Explore ways to provide more realistic day-to-day administrative experiences during internships, potentially beyond summer programs.
- Include more training on student mental health, trauma, and modern disciplinary approaches.
- Enhance training on balancing instructional leadership with daily administrative challenges.

In alignment with transformational leadership theory, the faculty and program director will "emphasize collaboration, empowerment, and innovation" (Fripp, 2025, p. 1) in the revisions.

To conclude, accountability, national accreditation, and continuous improvement in educational leadership preparation programs need to be studied and the results utilized for continuous improvement. We must never lose sight of the ultimate purpose that engenders the time and energies of those in the academy. The ultimate goal for attaining national accreditation and continuous improvement for a university educational leadership preparation program graduates' success, is P-12 student achievement and program graduates' success in their role as principals and assistant principals. To provide a measure of this success, an employer satisfaction focus group can provide adequate evidence that employers are satisfied with program completers who are principals and assistant principals in their school district, specific to the CAEP six proficiencies. The results can be used to review and revise program curriculum maps as part of a continuous improvement process.

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