

Accountability, Administrative Preparation and Social Justice in Georgia

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Abstract:

This study utilized a qualitative case study design to examine the connection between accountability, concerns for economic development, social justice, and administrator preparation in Georgia. The research suggests that administrator preparation programs need to be more proactive about developing programs that foster leaders adept at strategically advocating for social justice.

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Purpose

This paper provides an overview of the development of accountability policy in Georgia and its relation to licensure and administrative preparation. Additionally, I explore the connection between the standards movement, dominant economic discourses, and definitions of social justice, and suggest that administrator preparation programs need to be more proactive about developing programs that foster leaders adept at strategically advocating for social justice.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative case study design (Gillham, 2000) to examine the connection between accountability, social justice, and administrator preparation in Georgia. Georgia's policy context was well suited to the study since it is embracing national calls for accountability and is ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse. Thirty-two informant interviews (university policymakers, members of the professional standards commission, education reform commission task force members, business leaders, professors of educational leadership, principals, teachers, and former and present state leaders) were conducted. In an effort to triangulate the data (Patton, 2002), participant observation of statewide meetings and conferences was conducted and systematically documented. Additionally, a document analysis (including correspondence, news media, and government and institutional documents) was conducted of key documents to triangulate the themes developed from the observational and interview data.

Implications

Just rejecting standards is impossible given the current political context. Administrator preparation programs must include information on how schools can take action to strategically improve student learning (and develop skills to analyze test score data). Given this current context, administrator preparation programs should consider focusing on developing advocate-leaders. Educational leaders not only need to understand research but they also need to understand social justice issues and be trained in how to advocate for their schools (students, teachers, staff, parents, and communities). The desire to hold schools accountable is paradoxical in the sense that the very skills business leaders' desire of prospective employees such as higher-order thinking, collaborative learning, and ability to work with diverse individuals are not measured by standardized testing. If this is the case then we need to develop alternative ways of showing that schools, school leaders, and administrative preparation program are working responsively.

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As national calls for accountability resonate with an increasing number of state leaders, policymakers are turning their gaze to administrative preparation programs. The ISLLC standards hold a central position in connecting leaders to the concern for accountability and recognize the important role school administrators play in school improvement (Murphy, Yff & Shipman, 2000). At least 30 states have adopted the ISLLC standards, yet their effectiveness for administrative preparation remain unclear. When a policymaker was asked why they adopted the ISLLC standards, they replied, “Well, it’s what other states are doing.” Many of the interviewees who supported ISLLC said they did so because other states had endorsed the standards. This is troubling since the standards have been criticized for being doctrinaire (English, 2000) and questionable in terms of their ability to bring about school improvement (Anderson, 2002). Many questions remain as to how these standards are being interpreted and adopted at the state level, yet states and accrediting bodies such as NCATE are adopting the standards.

The ISLLC standards are supposed to serve as a guide for improving administrator preparation, yet how exactly should the standards influence the day-to-day experience of administrator preparation? Georgia provides an interesting case for analysis since its former Governor, Roy Barnes (who recently lost reelection), embraced national calls for accountability. The state is ethnically and racially diverse and has deep economic and racial disparities, and is often listed at or near the bottom in state-by-state comparisons of K-12 education. Under the leadership of the previous

governor, Zell Miller, Georgia adopted the ISLLC standards by 1999, yet little change resulted until Barnes took office and made educational accountability in Georgia a top priority.

This paper provides an overview of the development of accountability policy in Georgia and its relation to licensure and administrative preparation. Additionally, I explore the connection between the standards movement, dominant assumptions about economic development, and definitions of social justice, and suggest that administrator preparation programs need to be more proactive about developing programs that foster leaders adept at strategically advocating for social justice.

Study Design

This study utilized a qualitative case study design (Gillham, 2000) to examine the connection between accountability policy, social justice issues, and administrator preparation in Georgia. Georgia's policy context was well suited to the study since it is embracing national calls for accountability and is ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse. I conducted thirty-two informant interviews (university policymakers, members of the professional standards commission, education reform commission task force members, business leaders, professors of educational leadership, principals, teachers, and former and present state leaders). In an effort to triangulate the data (Patton, 2002), participant observation of statewide meetings and conferences was conducted and systematically documented. Additionally, a document analysis (including correspondence, news media, and government and institutional documents)

was conducted of key documents to corroborate themes developed from the observational and interview data.¹

Economic Competition Drives Reform in Georgia

It is difficult to understand how the policies concerning accountability in Georgia shifted the past few years without understanding how the political and economic context evolved. In the early 1980s, Georgia actively pushed economic development. As a result, Atlanta, Georgia's political and economic based, has grown tremendously in terms of new businesses and overall population and is becoming increasingly diverse (Dameron & Murphy, 1997). Statewide, the Hispanic population has nearly doubled in the past decade going from 1.7% to 3.1% of the total population. As Georgia has become more diverse, political and business leaders have grown increasingly more concerned about the educational system.

Political and business interests view Georgia's consistently low rankings on the SAT (49 out of 50 states, Salzer, 2000), as detrimental to growth. Despite the problems with comparing SAT scores², business groups assert that companies have been hesitant to move to Georgia because the state may not have a sufficiently skilled work force and consequently it would be difficult to recruit businesses to the state due to its "failing school system."

As a result of these beliefs, business advocacy groups have become increasingly influential in educational reform policy in Georgia. Starting in 1990, business leaders in Georgia formed the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, to address the

concerns of business leaders from the Georgia Chamber of Commerce who “identified education as a pressing concern for economic development in Georgia.” (The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, 2001). The partnership’s slogan was “we can’t afford to fail,” connecting school reform to the economic security of the state. The Partnership directly tied its activity to Governor Miller. As Governor Barnes took office, a new coalition emerged tied directly to the new governor, the Breakthrough Alliance, headed up the Chairman and CEO of BellSouth Corporation. The membership application form for this group requires that members agree that they “support the need for education reform in Georgia so that all students are prepared for the opportunities of the information age and to ensure that Georgia is competitive in the national and international economy.” It is this assumption that the state’s educational troubles scare off potential economic growth has driven Georgia’s accountability reform for the past eight years (1994-2002).

Shifting Certification Requirements

Georgia first tackled administrative licensure in the early 80s. Up until then, administrators had a single lifetime K-12 certification track, which made them eligible to be principals at any public school or district (superintendents were elected officials in many counties until licensure was phased in during the mid 90s). Many teachers and principals still maintain these “grandfathered” life-time certifications today.

In the past two decades, policy changes to teacher and administrator certification occurred simultaneously. Beginning in the early 80s the Department of Education

(DOE) decided to develop a new performance-based certification process. Once an aspiring teacher or school leader fulfilled university requirements for course work, they received provisional certification. Then, they would have to pass a state-developed assessment, the Administrator Performance Assessment Instrument (APAI) for administrators and the Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI) for teachers leading to a 5-year renewable certification. The tests had two primary components; a written standardized test that covered the knowledge base they were expected to cover in their university study, and then a performance-based component in which the teachers and administrators were assessed in their school or district settings. For administrators, the written test included topics such as school law and policy. The performance component involved having an outside team of individuals come in and assess their effectiveness as a school leader. Principals were shadowed as they performed their jobs to see if they could take the knowledge they gained in their preparation programs and apply it to their school setting.

By the mid 80s, however, the TPAI assessment drew major criticism from teachers. Many teachers felt that the test represented an inauthentic “snap shot” of their teaching abilities rather than a meaningful evaluation of their teaching. The ultimate political demise of performance-based certification resulted from growing teacher dissatisfaction with the process. At the time, the wife of the third most powerful Democrat in the State House (the Chair of the Appropriation Committee) was a teacher (per interview with a former elected official). The legislator responded to growing teacher concerns by eliminating the funding for performance-based assessment,

effectively cutting the program. This left the five-year renewable certification in place for administrators but effectively removed the performance-based assessment, leaving just the standardized test.

While Georgia was very forward looking initially in terms of performance-based licensure and national calls for standards in administrative preparation, almost a decade went by before the issue of administrative preparation became a major policy issue. Between 1990-1992, Georgia was heavily involved in the process that led to the creation of the national ISLLC standards. This was primarily because Georgia's Superintendent of Schools at the time served as the President of the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), a professional organization that was one of the driving forces behind the development of the ISLLC standards.

Despite Georgia's early involvement with ISLLC, the standards were not integrated into state requirements for administrative licensure until 1998. Linda Schrenko, the Superintendent of Schools at the time, refused to participate in the CCSSO, arguing that the organization represented nothing more than a "liberal cabal."³ As a consequence, Georgia is not with the national organization and has been slow to adopt the ISLLC standards.

Not until 1998 did Georgia's then governor, Zell Miller, convene a leadership task force to develop recommendations for the preparation, certification, and hiring of educational leaders. Professors and public school educators made up the majority of the task force membership (9 were professors, 12 were district-level and school-level administrators, and 3 represented professional organizations). The task force

developed the current licensure policies in Georgia and adopted the ISLLC standards. The resulting policy created two certification levels: the initial nonrenewable L5 certification, which lasts 5 years and then the next level, L6, which is renewable every five years through an individualized program of professional development activities.

The Push for “Performance-Based” Education

Current educational reforms in Georgia are the direct result of the imposing leadership of Governor Barnes. When Barnes took office in 1999, he immediately instituted numerous changes in the political structure of state government and placed education at the center of his policy proposals. Barnes embraced the national accountability movement and cited North Carolina and Texas as examples of state-wide educational reforms he wanted Georgia to emulate. As a result, Georgia is in the midst of implementing a statewide high-stakes testing program (House Bill 1187) designed to rank and grade schools across the state. Once Barnes successfully lobbied for HB 1187, he turned his focus on the preparation of school leaders.

To bypass the state department of education, Barnes appointed and chaired a 63-member education reform commission to develop education policy for the state (Pruitt, 1999). While there were educational members on the commission, the numbers were relatively small (about 20%) compared to business leaders and the political elite (about 80%). This is particularly striking when compared to the 1998 Educational Leadership Taskforce created by Zell Miller which was exclusively composed of educators and heads of professional education organizations. This change shifted the balance of

educational policymaking, particularly with reference to educational leadership, towards a business model outlook. The commission's token membership of educators has come to symbolize Barnes' distrust of teachers and administrators. The governor's reform policies—particularly his abolishment of tenure—led to teacher outrage and protest but these had little effect in changing policy or the perception that education needed to be fixed.

Tackling Licensure and Leadership Preparation

Once HB 1187 passed in the legislature, Barnes convened two parallel education personnel committees on licensure and preparation as part of the education reform commission. One focused on teacher preparation while the other focused on principal and superintendent preparation. Unlike the earlier PSC Task Force on Educational Leaders, the governor's committee involved only two university representatives. Despite the fact that the new licensure changes had only been in effect for two years, Barnes charged the committee with thinking about a way to improve the preparation and licensure of principals and superintendents (Governor's Education Reform Study Commission Education Personnel Committee (EPC), 2000a; 2000b). The tenor of the committee's discussions were problem-based and operated on the assumption that the current preparation and licensure of educational leaders needed improvement and that the committee's role was to determine how this would be accomplished. When asked why members of the committee did not highlight the positive aspects of some programs in Georgia, one committee member responded, "it was understood that we were

starting from the position that the preparation and licensure of administrators currently was substandard and that it needed to be fixed.” (per interview with committee member; EPC, 2000a, 2000b).

The primary recommendations of the EPC committee included a modification of current licensure requirements to create two categories for administrator certification, one for principals and one for superintendents. Additionally, the committee also proposed moving to a three-tiered certification system based on experience and participation in professional development; Tier 1 principal or superintendent, Tier 2 professional principal or superintendent, and Tier 3 master principal or superintendent. These licensure suggestions are still under consideration by the PSC and have not been enacted yet but their adoption looks certain according to insiders (although this may change now that Governor Barnes did not win his 2002 re-election bid for governor).

The most striking aspect of the committee’s recommendations was its assertion that leadership preparation programs needed to be held responsible for the graduates they produce. The committee argued that the PSC needed “to phase-in the requirement that in order to retain accreditation, each public and independent college, university, and alternative agency or organization that prepares school administrators must have at least an 80% pass-rate on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment...PSC accreditation is required in order for an institution or other agency or organization to offer school administrator preparation programs.” (EPC, 2000b, p.17). There was a strong desire for administrator preparation programs to be accountable for whether their graduates pass.

Social Justice as Economic Development

What is missing in the standards discourse in Georgia? Accountability policy depends upon the assumption that the test measures the essence of what we believe needs to be taught and learned in school. But does it? What about the acknowledged cultural bias of standardized tests and how they can lead teachers to believe that they must “teach to the test” (Hilliard, 2000)? This can also deform administrative preparation and licensure by emphasizing the test rather than acknowledging that school improvement can be deeply intertwined to the need to support the communities in which the schools are located. Since the lowest performing schools have high minority and/or lower income students populations, social justice issues around racism and poverty are of equal importance (Anyon, 1998; Wagstaff, Reyes, & Fuserelli, 1998). For those able to influence administrative licensure policy in Georgia, social justice concerns are often subsumed by an emphasis on the need for economic development. Thus, documents, policies, media reports and interviews often tied the need for school improvement directly to the need to support economic development in Georgia.

To be honest the economics are going to drive the majority of the decisions. In my mind I can't exclude social justice from economics because if there aren't opportunities for people to work to make their lives better then that's not right either. Economics will always drive our decisions but the economics will also drive the opportunities for people to grow. I would hope that secondarily policymakers would worry about injustices for kids (professional standards

commission official).

While interviewees acknowledged a concern for social justice issues, these were often minimized in comparison to economic concerns. They assumed that improving Georgia's stature nationally would bring more jobs to Georgia and provide employment opportunities for lower income families (their definition of social justice). Despite this concern, though, interviewees acknowledged that because social justice issues are implied rather than stated, the effects of economic development may not necessarily impact the students in the low performing schools by creating new jobs for their families.

We're pushing and pushing, especially in Georgia, so that all kids will learn. And they don't just mean the brightest and the best and the most affluent, but all kids and I really do think that they mean that. If you start disaggregating the data, surprise, surprise we know the kids that are not doing so well are from the lower socioeconomic level. I hope that people are concerned about that. I realize though that they maybe more concerned with unemployment. Maybe they are not motivated by social inequities. I really don't know. (member of the education reform commission).

Most interviewees did not see accountability as relevant to their own actions. Instead they placed the onus for school reform on the shoulders of principals and

superintendents.

I guess I see social justice as the people in an organization that are concerned that all people have an equal chance, an equal opportunity to get the best education they can. There should be policies and practices in place that would ensure that that would happen. Using that kind of definition, then I think the standards movement is directly applicable to educational leaders because I truly believe that what happens in the school can always be traced back to that principal and eventually to the superintendent. Those line positions are key to what happens in a school. I think they have to be advocates for all kids to ensure that they are treated equitably and given equal opportunity and chances to do their best. I believe it is really an ethical question (director of a professional organization).

According to policymakers interviewed, under the new accountability policy, student test scores become the primary indicators of whether social justice concerns have been met. Interviewees rarely connected social justice issues related to discrimination such as racism, poverty, or sexism, inequitable funding of schools, or whether principals and superintendents represent the diversity of the state, in their definitions of social justice. One of the few instances in which this was included in the discussion was when one interviewee remarked on how these issues do not seem to enter political discourses:

Of all the discussions that I was involved in for the past 30 years, I can think of only a couple of instances in which social justice issues were discussed. I don't think policy makers take social justice issues into consideration at all. In all of my discussions with members of the legislature, including women and minority members, I can only remember one instance in which I had a discussion with a female legislator about the number of high school principals and superintendents who were women. It was not a philosophical discussion about should there be more or why there were not more. It was simply how many are there and can you get this information for me? Other than discussions we had in the Department of Education about the number of women and minority superintendents, I don't think anything has ever been done to address that issue (former elected official).

For many years in Georgia, superintendents were elected officials that did not need to have training in education. They could be elected on platforms of promising not to raise taxes. Only since 1996 have Georgia superintendents become appointed rather than elected. "Historically if you look at measures of student performance in Georgia, the investment has been lacking. We have played a lot of catch up but the investment is nowhere it needs to be (former elected official)."

Some interviewers asserted that what is missing in many policy discussions is the historical evolution and social context of racial and economic disparity in Georgia. The historical lack of support and development of public education coupled with the

legacy of racism and slavery could explain why it is the southern states that consistently do not perform well in national comparisons. In particular, African American schools were underfunded before segregation, a situation exacerbated by post-desegregation “white flight,” as wealthier parents fled urban schools for private or suburban schools (Anderson, 1988). Despite this historical context, these issues have not found a place in the political discussion concerning standards.

Regarding the whole question of race relations and economics, if you look now at the seventy low-performing middle schools that needed attention, ninety percent of the schools have more than a ninety percent minority population of students and ninety percent had more than seventy-five percent of their students on free and reduced lunch. Then you start to ask who are the principals leading those schools. And quite frankly they are not the high flyers—just because they are licensed does not mean that they are ready to work in those situations. This is not just a Georgia problem but it reflects issues in the southeast in general (former state superintendent of schools).

The push for accountability in Georgia assumes that increasing the requirements for administrative preparation will somehow overcome social inequalities. What these perspectives ignore are the factors that may have contributed to the inequalities such as socioeconomics, inequitable resources (teachers, supplies, and funding), and racism.

The new 1187 legislation is talking about improving the situations of low performing schools by assessing administrators and making licensure more difficult but they really have not addressed the issues of race, economics, and gender (former member of the professional standards commission and current central office administrator).

While the call for standards is focused on economic development and many policymakers in Georgia assume that this will lead to social justice for students currently not being served in schools, it ignores historical contextual factors in the state that have led to the current disparities. The fact that the majority of “low performing schools” in Georgia have high populations of minority and low-income and this implications of this for school improvement and administrator training were not included in policy deliberations.

Holding Administrator Preparation Accountable

As noted earlier, up until Governor Barnes’ election in November 1998, the university system in Georgia enjoyed relatively strong support. Professors and educators were heavily involved in the development of administrative standards for the state. Accountability policies support the notion that Georgia’s administrator programs as failing in much the same way that policymakers assume that teachers are not doing their job. This is most apparent in the treatment of administrator preparation programs by education reform study commission’s Education Personnel Committee (EPC), which

was changed with improving university preparation programs (EPC 2000a, 2000b).

Discussion in the EPC centered around an awareness that university preparation can only go so far in preparing administrators. The recommended changes in licensure policy recognize that once many students leave administrator preparation programs in Georgia, it may be several years before they secure their first administrative position. As a result, there is a period of time in which they are unable to apply the knowledge base they learned at the university to a school setting. To deal with this issue the committee recommended that a new principal, regardless of when they finished their program, would have to work with university personnel and district personnel to develop a year-long professional development plan. The professional development plan would be designed to fit their particular strengths and weaknesses and support them in their first year as an administrator (EPC 2000a, 2000b). However, there is no discussion of how leadership programs would handle the additional supervisory workload.

Many of the recommendations made by the committee are still under consideration. For now, the PSC kept the PRAXIS II as the test that will be used for initial licensure. The Board of Regents developed policy based upon the EPC recommendations. The policy changes reflect the concerns of the EPC (the head of the EPC was also in charge of implementing and writing the university principals), the most striking of which is holding the universities accountable for the graduates they produce (BORRFP, 2001b). These standards are reflected in two policy changes. First of all, 80% of graduates of educational leadership program have to pass the PRAXIS II by

2006 (consequences for programs that don't meet this goal are unclear). Secondly, as stated in Principle #5: "The University System will guarantee the quality of any educational leader it produces." (BORRFP, 2001b, 8). If a school district is unhappy with a program's graduate who was certified by the institution, then the university is responsible for working with professionals to create an individual professional development plan to address concerns including courses or professional development professional development at no cost for the graduate or district.

Additionally at the request of the EPC, with support from the governor, the state funded (budgeted at \$15 million) a free-standing institute dedicated to the preparation of educational leaders. The proposed institute would operate independently of a college of education and have connections with business (EPC, 2000a, 2000b). The preliminary meeting to discuss the institute was held at a building used by BellSouth Corporation, whose chairman and CEO also heads up the Breakthrough Alliance. The institute will be housed directly under the Provost at Georgia State University and its director is appointed by a board composed of business leaders and politicians (BORRFP, 2001c). The upcoming principal shortage is cited as the primary reason for the institute, despite evidence to the contrary that there are enough licensed administrators to handle current needs (Henry, 2000). Questions such as why the available licensed administrators are either not being selected to fill positions or elect not to work in educational administration are not part of the policy discussion.

The Implications of Accountability for Leadership Preparation

Accountability policies in Georgia exert control over schools by pressuring them to raise test scores. The paradox of this is that while test scores are used to render the successes and failure of schools visible to the general public they can actually mask other issues. Higher test scores may not ensure that lower income students or their families will share in the resulting economic prosperity. HB 1187 essentially minimized policymakers complicity in educational “problems” by placing the onus for educational reform squarely upon the shoulders of educators. This power is internalized for many teachers, administrators, parents, and students as test scores are assumed to be *the* indicator of a successful educational environment. While policymakers set the standards, they themselves are not held to any standards concerning the ethics and consequences of the policies they produce. Under these policies policymakers bear no responsibility for any harm (such as stressful working environments and low morale) their policies inflict.

One faculty member in educational leadership suggested that given the new accountability and standards focus, universities need to be more strategic about preparing administrators.

Educators have a much greater responsibility to be more vocal. I think we are very unvocal. We are not proactive at all about getting our voice heard. I think that is part of what we need to be doing in the university. We need to encourage our people to feel comfortable to speak up and to articulate profoundly what they believe in and why. Then we need to give them the skills to get out there

and do it. I don't think we do that at all. I really don't (university professor).

These concerns were echoed by a few other professors who saw these issues as important but expressed concern that their programs were not addressing them.

We teach classes and we grade them and that is the end of it. We just don't give them the backbone and they certainly don't get it in schools. Questions of ethics and social justice should be central to administrator preparation and be threaded throughout all classes including topics such as finance, law, policy, and governance.

When other faculty were questioned about these issues, they saw them as important but were either uncertain how to go about addressing them or felt they had little time to deal with these issues. This raises many questions about the university's role in preparing administrators such as how intentional are programs around addressing social justice or what are the implications of training administrators to be advocates.

When practicing administrators were asked about these issues, many felt their preparation program did not adequately prepare them for supporting social justice issues in the context of accountability. Many felt that policymakers had reduced social justice to a focus on making

When I was trained as an administrator, I learned a lot of interesting ideas about

management and school reform. But when I had to put these ideas into practice, I realized that I had not really been given the tools to do so. Also, with all the focus on accountability I realized that I didn't really hadn't learned how to deal with test scores. Everything I do now has to be focused on getting those scores up. Most of what I learned I learned on the job. I made mistakes but luckily I served under a principal who taught me how to be an advocate for my staff and the children.

But where does this leave educational administration preparation programs in their highly politicized roles as preparers of future educational leaders? Perhaps what is needed is for programs to overtly make social justice, in a proactive sense, central to administrator preparations program. The way to merge theory and practice is to go beyond discussions of how the system works and what is wrong with it, to encompass discussions of how programs can give students the skills to be advocates for disadvantaged children, parents, teachers, and communities.

Accountability policies in Georgia viewed economic development as paramount to the future of the state. These discourses assume that the focus of administrative preparation programs should be to prepare administrators to produce higher test scores, and that test scores should also be used to hold the programs accountable. What these policies overlook is the oppressive consequences of privileging quantifiable measures of success by simultaneously excluding discussions of how test scores may be influenced by social inequalities (e.g. differentiated funding, racism, testing bias). In Georgia's case, accountability policy rests on the assumption that test scores should be

the primary focus of administrative preparation. This policy focus missed the irony of emphasizing test scores. For example, business leaders behind the push for HB 1187 and accountability assume that accountability will prepare students for jobs that:

...require graduates of our schools to have new skills and knowledge: the ability to use current technologies, to employ good communication skills, to work independently and with a diverse group of people inside and outside an organization (Breakthrough Alliance, 2000, 1).

The very skills business leaders desire of prospective employees, such as higher-order thinking, collaborative learning, and ability to work with diverse individuals, are not measured by standardized testing. Instead, these skills require educational leaders that can promote collaborative and collegial school cultures that foster life-long learning.

While the ISLLC standards are supposed to guide administrator preparation, there seems to be little attention to the standards in terms of licensure in Georgia. Other than the fact that administrator preparation programs are going to be held responsible for their student's scores on the PRAXIS II (loosely based on ISLLC), accountability discourses pay little attention to the standards. Instead, good test scores will be assumed to be the result of educators taking responsibility for education, while bad test scores will be assumed to be caused by a lack of responsibility. This discourse leaves little room for a discussion of the implications of the standards for administrator preparation. While public universities are going to "guarantee the quality" of the

educational leaders they prepare, again this guarantee will be based primarily on their ability to pass the PRAXIS II and to raise their school's test scores, not their ability to create nurturing school environments that stimulate life long learning.

In a sense, the educational policy shift to accountability displaces blame. Our educational system is perceived as failing and this is considered problematic because it hurts our ability to compete in a global marketplace (Berliner & Biddle, 1997). Blame for this failure has been focused on teachers and leaders, however, since policymakers are responsible for public education they share in part of the blame for perceived failures. The new accountability policy in Georgia shifts the blame for the failures of educational reform policies away from the policymakers, placing it even more squarely upon schools, teachers, administrators, and preparation programs. Barnes' mantra for his accountability program placed the blame for education upon educators, "I'm looking [to]...make education performance-based rather than excuse-based." (Pruitt, 1999, p. 1C).

Georgia's accountability policy deflects attention away from evaluating the worth of the accountability policy and focuses attention instead on the failure and success of individual schools, teachers, administrators, and administrator preparation programs. When the policy was formulated, experts from other states were brought in to discuss what they were doing in their own state. This is problematic for a number of reasons. First of all, it ignores contextual differences between states such as racial inequities, segregation, and elected superintendents. Additionally, policymakers assume that other accountability reforms are successful, despite a lack of empirical

evidence to support the assumed effectiveness of the programs. For example, in his presidential bid George W. Bush held up the “success” (higher test scores) of his accountability program in Texas as proof of his expertise on education. Independent research conducted by the Rand Corporation was held up as proof of this yet the research did not claim that the accountability program was the cause of the higher test scores (Grissmer, Flanagan, Kawata, & Williamson, 2000). In fact a later report by another group of researchers at Rand claimed that test scores only went up on the state created test and did not improve on national comparison tests, calling Texas’ “success” into question (Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey, Stecher, 2000). Texas continues to be held up as a model program, yet its effectiveness is open to debate.

In closing, with the current emphasis on accountability, administrator preparation programs must include information on how schools can take action to strategically raise test scores. This does not, however, preclude maintaining a commitment to education for social justice. Just rejecting standards is virtually impossible given the current political context. Since these discourse are the constraints we must deal with, perhaps it is time for administrator preparation programs to address the panoptic effects of accountability by taking a proactive stance to conceptualize how standards can be used to support social justice.

Implications for Practice and Policy

- Policymakers who favor accountability reforms assume other state reforms have been successful, despite a lack of empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of the programs. These weaknesses in policymaker assumptions about accountability need to be scrutinized.
- Merely rejecting standards is virtually impossible given the current political context. Administrator preparation programs must include information on how schools can take action to strategically improve student learning (and develop skills to analyze test score data). This does not, however, preclude maintaining a commitment to education for social justice.
- Accountability policy places the blame for school failure on teachers and leaders, yet politicians are not held accountable for the policies they create. In order to hold them accountable educators will need to lobby their representatives (and administrator preparation program should consider teaching these skills).
- In the current accountability context, administrator preparation programs should consider focusing on developing advocate-leaders. These leaders would not only understand research and be able to articulate an understanding of social justice, but they would also be trained in how to advocate for their schools (students, teachers, staff, parents, and communities).

- The desire to hold schools accountable is paradoxical in the sense that the very skills business leaders' desire of prospective employees such as higher-order thinking, collaborative learning, and ability to work with diverse individuals are not measured by standardized testing. If this is the case then we need to develop ways of showing that schools, school leaders, and administrative preparation program are working responsively as an alternative to high-stakes testing.

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¹ The research I conducted for this paper was initially part of a larger eight state comparative study (Indiana, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Texas), which examined Licensure nationally.

² I do not want to reinforce the use of the SAT as a measure of state comparison and believe that it is not an accurate way to compare state's educational systems. The governor and business leaders use the state's low ranking to support their political argument for accountability reform in Georgia.

³ Per interview with a former elected official.