Ensuring Responsible Stewardship of Schools

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Abstract: This article adds to the conversation around the Agenda for Education in a Democracy, specifically around the responsible stewardship of schools. Information delineated in this article adds to the conversation in the following ways: 1) empirical support is used to more fully define the stewardship construct, 2) subscales are created to measure teacher candidates’ perceptions on how their initial teacher preparation program emphasized the construct of stewardship, and 3) perceptions of teacher candidates, from select NNER and non-NNER institutions, are measured on how their initial teacher preparation program emphasized the construct of stewardship. Six commitments that make up the construct of stewardship emerged from factor analyses and candidates from NNER institutions showed a significantly higher level of agreement (than non-NNER candidates) that their initial teacher preparation coursework stressed three of these six commitments.

The Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) provides all concerned with the renewal of schools, the directives to most effectively care for the aspects of schooling that need our attention. Luckily, this Agenda does not exist in vacuity. The partnerships of the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) helps situate the AED. Specifically, it allows us to engage in work focused on care and on the moral components of teaching. One part of the AED focuses on
our competence in and commitment to the responsible stewardship of schools (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004). This study was designed with three goals in mind: 1) to contribute to the conversation of more fully defining the stewardship construct, 2) to provide some empirical data of teacher candidates’ perceptions of how their initial teacher preparation program emphasized the responsible stewardship of schools as part of the curricula, and 3) to develop a survey instrument that could be used in part to measure candidates’ perceptions of this construct.

Conceptual Framework

The stewardship construct is derived from that of a caretaker, one who looks out for or manages the affairs of an estate, club, or other organization (Goodlad, 1994). *Webster’s Tenth Collegiate Dictionary* defines stewardship as the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care (Smith, 1999). Block (1993) defined the construct this way:

> Stewardship is to hold something in trust for another. Historically, stewardship was meant to protect a kingdom while those rightfully in charge were away, or, more often, to govern for the sake of an underage king. The underage king for us is the next generation. It is the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organization by operating in service, rather than in control, of those around us. (p. xx)

Essentially, stewardship is the activity of safeguarding something precious. One can be a steward of the Earth by caring for its natural resources or a steward of her or his place of worship, by giving of their time, talent, and treasure. Similarly, stewardship of schooling is the work by those involved in the education of the young to safeguard those things precious in our schools.

Exploring stewardship of schools requires identifying that which is precious in our schools. Certainly, students and teachers are precious but so are the purposes, conversations, and relationships that occur in our schools (Goodlad, et al., 2004; Smith, 1999). Stewards of schooling safeguard schools’ democratic processes, the rich diversity found in public schools, and the relationships needed so all can effectively work with the school community to create a better tomorrow (Smith,
Continuing the Conversation

1999). Stewards promote the purposes of schooling by having the expectation that all are involved in the work of providing educational experiences that are immediately valuable and which promote future contributions to our democratic society (Dewey, 1944). Stewards of schools are individuals who give back to the teaching profession, who realize they are part of a bigger community, and who help develop a more just and sustainable society (Smith, 1999; Soder, 1999a).

To explore the specific work of stewards in our nation’s schools, two assumptions should be made. First, that the stewardship of schools is the work of all involved in the schooling of the young and secondly, that the processes, purposes, relationships, and conversations in schools is worth safeguarding.

Smith (1999) has provided the most comprehensive description of the work by individuals who steward schools. Smith (1999) described six interrelated aspects of the work. These aspects are the following: (1) commitment to a shared mission, (2) the development of a democratic learning community, (3) dedication to whole-school renewal, (4) engagement in critical inquiry, (5) participation in professional development, and (6) the preparation of future educators (Smith, 1999). It is participation in, commitment to, and competence in these activities where by individuals most effectively steward schools (Fenstermacher, 1999a; Goodlad et al., 2004; Smith, 1999, Soder, 1999a). By involving oneself in these stewardship activities, Smith (1999) suggested that the precious purposes, conversations, and personnel in one’s school are being safeguarded and improved. Furthermore, by allowing these aspects to guide one’s activity in schools, it results in the stewardship of schools. Each of these aspects are further delineated below.

**Commitment to a shared mission.**

Whether it is toward a specific organizational mission or the general purpose of schooling, stewarding schools involves commitment to a shared mission. Fenstermacher (1999a) asserted that, “all participants in the unit are individually and collectively obligated to the welfare of the whole as well as to themselves and to selected others who constitute the whole” (p. 17). The welfare of the whole is ideally enveloped in the organization’s mission and purpose. For the stewardship of schools to be actualized, a commitment to a common purpose is the most critical work of stewards. Without a clear and common mission, the purposes, conversations, and personnel within schools cannot be safeguarded or improved because partnerships
will not be working in synergy. Collaboration among those in any organization is a critical factor in the change process (Fullan, 1993). Fullan (2005), Goodlad (1994), and Hargreaves and Fink (2006), stressed collaboration around a shared mission as a critical aspect for school success. Purkey and Smith (1985) found that schools whose staff agree on their specific schools’ goals and expectations are more likely to be successful in the achievement of all students within the school. Likewise, Goddard, Goddard, and Tschannen-Moran (2007) found that students have higher achievement in mathematics and reading when they attend schools that are described as collaborative towards a common purpose. These types of commitments towards a common purpose do not organically occur, they need to be safeguarded.

Commitment to a shared mission implies being part of a larger group. Stewards of schools truly understand that they occupy more than a classroom or an office and are part of the larger school community (Fenstermacher, 1999b; Smith, 1999). By working under a commitment to a shared mission, a larger school community can work symbiotically towards improvement. Even those involved in teacher education have the opportunity to steward the nation’s schools by engaging themselves in the larger educative community. Doecke (2004), a teacher educator, described being part of a larger group this way:

My own “self” is a function of the networks or relationships in which I operate as a teacher educator, both my relationships with students and colleagues, and the larger structures that shape my world. The issue in short, is the way I theorize the relationship between my professional practice and the world in which I operate. (p. 205)

This commitment to reflection on professional practice and its relationship to the social system assist in safeguarding his perception of who he is and how he operates in his professional world. By understanding that he is part of a larger educative community, Doecke (2004) focused his work to safeguard and improve his practice and the personnel that work and learn along side of him.

Stewardship of schooling also involves the communication of the shared purpose to the entire school community (Goodlad, et al., 2004; Smith, 1999). By seeking commitment to a common mission, stewards of schools safeguard and improve schools’ purposes, conversations, and personnel by enhancing collaboration
and communication within the community. Without clear communication of and dedication to the organization’s mission, stewards’ work in the other five aspects of stewardship cannot effectively safeguard and improve that which is precious in our schools.

**Development of a democratic community.**

Stewardship is intimately woven through the ideals and tenants of a democratic community (Smith, 1999). To be a steward of schools, one must understand and strive for creating democratic classrooms, schools, and educative environments as the conditions of the ideal democracy safeguarding and supporting the involvement of the entire community for enhancing the common good (Goodlad, 2008; Smith, 1999; Soder, 1999a). Soder (1999a) outlined the following eleven conditions needed for a democratic community: (a) trust, (b) exchange, (c) social capital, (d) respect for equal justice under the law, (e) respect for civil discourse, (f) recognition of the need for *e pluribus unum*, (g) free and open inquiry, (h) knowledge of rights, (i) freedom, (j) recognition of the tension between freedom and order, and (k) recognition of the difference between a persuaded audience and a more thoughtful public. Along with developing these conditions, Soder (1999a) recognized that democracy and its conditions are not innate to the young. They must be cultivated and learned. Since the large majority of the public experiences schooling, the institution of schooling seems to be most primed to carry the burden of this pursuit.

The value added by championing democratic educative environments is clear. Current literature suggests schools and classrooms focused on teaching and modeling these conditions (or a similar set) assist in closing achievement gaps, prepares students to be citizens, and provides access to knowledge for all learners (Clark & Wasley, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Dworkin, Saha, & Hill, 2003; Goodlad, et al., 2004; Goodlad, 2008; Navarro & Natalicio, 1999; Noddings, 1999; Zeichner, 1989). Not only do championing these conditions have explicit benefits to teachers and students, they systematically guide communities to effectively deal with issues, concerns, and tensions when they do occur in schools (Guttman, 1990; Smith, 1999; Soder, 1999a).

Many believe a hallmark purpose of public schooling is the preparation of democratic citizens (Bull, 1990; Clark & Wasley, 1999; Dewey, 1944;
Fenstermacher, 1999a; Furman & Shields, 2003; Goodlad, et al., 2004; Kerr, 1997; Noddings, 1999; Sirotnik, 1990; Smith, 1999; Soder, 1999b). As stewards of schooling work toward and model democratic conditions, they are actively promoting and safeguarding this hallmark purpose of public schooling. This purpose is critical, as democracy is more than a form of government; it is a mode of associated living and a shared way of life (Dewey, 1944; Goodlad, et al., 2004). School is the only institution in our nation specifically charged with enculturating the young into this shared way of living (Goodlad, 2008). Without stewards of schools safeguarding this purpose, our shared way of life is at risk (Goodlad, 2008; Smith, 1999).

**Commitment to whole school renewal.**

Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) argued that the school is the fundamental unit of educational change, not the school district, the state, or the individual classroom. Schools should be self-renewing and cultivate the capacity to solve their own problems and needs (Smith, 1999). For positive school change to occur and problems to be solved, stewards should take on leadership roles outside of their classroom or office space and be committed to renewing the entire community, not just himself or herself or their personal workspace. The construct of stewardship is different from leadership; yet it is important for stewards to be in school leadership positions. The difference between stewardship and leadership lies in numbers and the involvement of others. Only one individual can be a leader at a time, yet everyone can work toward safeguarding what is precious in our schools (W. Smith, personal communication, February 11, 2009). Whereas leadership positions are often political, stewardship shuns politics. Achieving a leadership position requires action from others (e.g. a constituency, an executive, a governing board); being a steward requires an internal desire to work towards collaborative norms of engagement (Chrislip, 2002). Leadership positions are often attained though formal academic or performance achievement; stewardship only requires a willingness to participate in safeguarding that which is precious within the entire school.

Fenstermacher (1999a) stated, “to exercise responsible stewardship is to understand oneself as being among the ‘they’” (p. 17). Stewards of schools realize that they are part of the greater educative community. Related to the first aspect
Continuing the Conversation

of stewardship, commitment to a shared mission, stewards of schools are to be working collaboratively toward whole school renewal. The idea of collaborative leadership and advocacy for whole school renewal has shown great promise in the transformation of schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Cotton, 2003).

Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) suggested that schools where renewal is occurring include the entire staff in decision-making opportunities. Smith (1999) added that stewards of schools understand and respect the points of view of the entire school community and they enjoy orchestrating interactions with other adults as well as with children. If a culture is created where these different school roles are honored and recognized, individuals do not just focus on their own contributions, they look at the entire schooling enterprise (Goodlad, et al., 2004). Undoubtedly, stewards of schooling strive for schools to be continually renewed and improved. They accomplish these ends by engaging in work that safeguards relationships to empower the entire community to work in collaboration.

Engagement in critical inquiry.

Inquiry, used as a pedagogical technique, begins with a teacher presenting a question or problem; students then formulate hypotheses, collect data, draw conclusions, and ultimately reflect on the original problem (Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 2006). Stewards of the teaching profession model this popular pedagogical technique to examine their own practices and the work of the entire school community (Smith, 1999). Even Dewey (1933) called for educators to display active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or assumption of knowledge. There is much value in reflection and inquiry, and opportunities to do this in a safe and constructive manner are precious.

Davis (2006) indicated the need to truly consider the interconnectedness of the many aspects of teaching to integrate knowledge and develop a more complex view of teaching. Of the 25 preservice teachers studied, nearly 50% showed little to no integration of ideas through their reflection on practice (Davis, 2006). Having the ability to reflect productively is not innate; this must be nurtured and safeguarded. Stewards of schools can use this model of reflection of one’s own work for the renewal of the entire school. Inquiry into both personal practices and school wide policies should be done with an understanding of the interconnectedness of
the many aspects of the school. For example, stewards of schools may realize a new policy being implemented to benefit the faculty may have adverse implications toward the school support staff and then reflect upon this policy’s alignment to the purpose of the school. By stewarding schools, these precious opportunities to challenge oneself and others are protected and couched in the notion of communal improvement. Reflection and inquiry should inform future action and should also be aligned with the organization’s mission (Smith, 1999).

Not only does critical inquiry into one’s practices improve teaching and school practices, it is a model for all students’ learning. Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) stated, “critical inquiry has been the premise of all pedagogy since Socrates” (p. 88). This time tested action allows all members of the school community the opportunity to improve their work. If teachers expect learners to uncover new knowledge through an inquiry framework, they should actively examine their own knowledge and practice. Likewise, school support staff can work toward entire school improvement when inquiring into and reflecting on their work. Foster (2004) studied schools with diversity of student demographics and found that schools, where the prevailing culture integrates critical inquiry into school wide patterns and practices, equity issues among staff and students tended to be more readily addressed. Foster (2004) suggested that critical inquiry into school wide practices begins with an agreement of and commitment to the purpose of schooling. From there stewards of schooling can inquire into school wide patterns and practices, using this purpose as the litmus test.

**Participation in professional development.**

Connected to the commitment to whole-school renewal and engagement in critical inquiry, stewards of schools are participants and leaders in professional development. The ongoing professional development of all who steward schools is central to the renewal of schools (Smith, 1999). This focus on professional growth includes an emphasis that the entire school community is made up of life-long learners (Day, 1999; Korthagen & Wubbles, 2001; Smith, 1999). As school personnel expect their students to be engaged in learning, it is important for all members of a school community to value and safeguard opportunities for professional and personal development. Schools should be restorative to one’s energy and passion for teaching and learning. Stewards of schooling seek ways
to create and develop restorative schools. Safeguarding work environments that are supportive, focus on personal development and promote self-efficacy decrease teacher burnout (Dweck 2006; Dworkin et al., 2003; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Jennings and Greenberg (2009) found that positive social and emotional factors within schools decrease teacher burnout and also promote positive developmental outcomes among students.

Collaborative professional development can be the catalyst for maximum personal and community growth. Research calls for collaborative teacher interactions to maximize personal growth through professional development (Borko, 2004; Fullan, 1990; Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Scribner, 1999). Glazer and Hannafin (2006) proposed a collaborative model of professional development where peer teachers serve as coaches of strategies and ideas aimed at improving instruction. This model can be extrapolated to include all members of the school community if all are valued and professional roles are safeguarded. In the previous section on commitment to inquiry, stewards of the teaching profession are devoted to exploring, questioning and refining their professional practices. This can and should be done in a collaborative manner where all parties are simultaneously growing and developing (Smith, 1999).

**Preparation of future educators.**

A distinctive feature of stewardship is holding in trust something for the next generation (Block, 1993). It is no surprise that the final area of work by stewards of schools focuses on the preparation of the next generation of teachers (Smith, 1999). The value added to the entire educative community by preparing the next generation of teachers is significant and can be attributed to the relationship between schools and institutions that prepare teachers. Teacher education is not and cannot be the responsibility of the education faculty alone (Michelli & Keiser, 2005). No relationship in public education may have greater mutual benefits than that of the teacher preparation program with its public school partners (Goodlad et al., 2004). These relationships can positively impact K-12 student learning, teacher preparation, discovery of new knowledge, and the education of all educators, both in higher education and in K-12 settings (Goodlad, 1994; Goodlad et al., 2004).

Many times these relationships begin through student teaching or a field experience. The opportunity of a preservice teacher to work alongside a master
educator has the potential to greatly impact K-12 learners, the preservice teacher, and the master teacher as well (Goodlad et al., 2004). Mentor teachers, who are involved in the training and induction of new teachers, can simultaneously play a significant role in their own professional development and in initial teacher education (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993). Stewards of schools seek out opportunities to be involved in these types of symbiotic partnerships (Smith, 1999).

School/university partnerships provide the opportunity for stewards from both cultures to come together and reflect on and work toward school and educational renewal. Fullan (2005), Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004), and Perkins (2003) indicated strong support for partnerships as a foundational base for teacher education programs, and for the opportunity to document both short- and long-term results of educational renewal. The need for extended collaboration between education colleges, K-12 partner schools and liberal arts departments should be of high priority (Goodlad, 1994). Schon (1983) framed these partnerships by encouraging the professions to give their practical problems to the university; and the university, the unique source of research to give back to the profession, new scientific knowledge. Stewards of the teaching profession safeguard these interactions and value the contributions of all in the educative community.

One way for schools and universities to actualize these relationships is through the collaboration of field experiences for the preparation of future teachers. Steward teachers in K-12 schools seek opportunities to host preservice teachers. Teacher educators and teacher candidates who steward schools seek opportunities to have their practices informed by their public school partners. At first glance, the field experience relationship may look only beneficial to the institution of higher education; however, if framed correctly, this can become a true symbiotic relationship that adds value to the entire educative community (Goodlad et al., 2004). In a simultaneously renewing relationship, institutions of higher education contribute new research, potential for impact on K-12 student learning, and professional development (Goodlad, 1994; Goodlad et al., 2004). Likewise, the cooperating teacher or mentor K-12 teacher tends to be one of the most important factors in the preparation of teachers (Wilson, 2006).
Summary of Conceptual Framework

The synthesis of this literature served as the foundation of this research project. Research participants’ perceptions were measured as to the degree that their initial teacher preparation program emphasized the following: (a) that the purposes, conversations, and personnel in schools should be safeguarded, (b) that all involved in the schooling have the opportunity to steward schools, and (c) stewards’ work. Based on this literature, it is clear that the work of those that steward schools positively impacts the teaching and learning processes in schools and provides opportunities for entire school renewal. Initial teacher preparation often serves as the foundational experience to impact teacher beliefs and practices (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Korthagen, 2004). Exploring how this construct is emphasized in initial teacher preparation aids in understanding how teachers are entering their professional careers with a focus on safeguarding that which is precious in schools.

Methods

Teacher candidates from two NNER universities and two non-NNER universities were the focus for this study. The NNER universities selected are partner members of the NNER and this membership requires commitment and evidence of progressing towards the AED ideal of ensuring responsible stewardship of schools. The two non-NNER universities are located in a similar geographic location but do not have an official affiliation with the NNER. For this study, initial teacher preparation was defined to include university-based courses in the arts and sciences, courses in teacher education, as well as school based field experiences and clinical practice. Initial teacher preparation has been defined this way to recognize that emphasis of stewardship may come from classroom instruction, experiential learning, and through interaction with university faculty and school-based clinical faculty. Like many theoretical dispositional constructs, stewardship may not be fully developed until much later in one’s professional career, but perspective on being a steward of schools can be widened immeasurably based on one’s teacher preparation program (Smith, 1999). Initial teacher education does impact teachers’ beliefs and practices (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Korthagen, 2004). One major goal of initial teacher preparation is to provide teachers with the core ideas and broad development of professional teaching (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005). Although stewardship is not fully actualized at the initial preparation level,
preservice education seems to be the critical point to introduce this construct to developing teachers.

A survey instrument was developed, consisting of 69 items that intended to measure candidates’ perceptions regarding the degree to which stewardship of schools was emphasized in their initial teacher preparation program. Items were created by integrating and synthesizing the conceptual framework outlined above. Candidates were asked to provide their level of agreement on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from *Very Strongly Disagree* to *Very Strongly Agree*, for each item. To assure that candidates would reflect on their entire experience of initial teacher preparation, items were attached to one of two stems; *My teacher preparation coursework (all university courses and faculty)*… and *“My cooperating teachers (in field experiences/student teaching)”*…

Special consideration was taken to assure instrument validity. The instrument went through two rounds of vetting by a panel of experts, all members involved in the work of the NNER and with a background in the stewardship construct. Additionally, the conceptual foundation of the instrument was presented as an interactive poster presentation at the NNER annual conference. Specific feedback on the understanding of the construct was sought from participants during this presentation. In addition, initial content validity was sought through a cognitive interviewing process (see Beatty & Willis, 2007) and a pilot study with teacher candidates similar to the target population. Finally, an established scale, focused on schools’ effectiveness in enculturating the young into a social and political democracy, (see Clark, Badiali, Hughes, & Foley, 2002) was added as part of the 69 items to examine the correlation between this established scale and the developed items. These items were structured around a third stem, and not attached to either stem listed above.

The four universities selected for this study are four-year public universities located in Midwestern part of the United States. For descriptive purposes they will be referred to in this study as University A, University B, University C, and University D. University C and D are members of the NNER, University A and B are not. Teacher candidates in their final year of initial preparation participated in this study. The total data sample was 339 candidates and was fairly equally distributed between the four universities.
Findings

Exploratory factor analyses (EFA) were completed for all participants’ responses for both stems in order to assess the factor structure of the items. The goal for this analysis was to establish underlying factors that account for the patterns of relationships among the items within the instrument. Essentially, the EFA provided an opportunity to determine which items psychometrically loaded together so as to determine key factors of the stewardship construct. Five factors emerged (with an initial Eigenvalue of 1.0 or greater) for the **My teacher preparation coursework (all university courses and faculty)**... stem and four factors emerged (with an initial Eigenvalue of 1.0 or greater) for the **“My cooperating teachers (in field experiences/student teaching)”**... stem. Following face analyses of these nine emerging factors, eight new composite subscales were created using the items that loaded together with these factors. These new composite subscales are listed in Table 1 with the Chronbach’s Alpha reliability statistic for each subscale.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Composite Subscale</th>
<th>Original Instrument Items</th>
<th>Chronbach’s Alpha</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Commitment to Professional Responsibilities (coursework)</td>
<td>Q23, Q19, Q24, Q20, Q22, Q16, Q17</td>
<td>.872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Commitment to Reciprocal Relationships (coursework)</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q6, Q10, Q5, Q4, Q21</td>
<td>.865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Commitment to Improvement of Practice (coursework)</td>
<td>Q28, Q25, Q26</td>
<td>.812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Commitment to Sharing the Wisdom of Practice with Others (coursework)</td>
<td>Q14, Q3, Q8</td>
<td>.688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Commitment to a Shared Mission of Schooling (coursework)</td>
<td>Q12, Q13, Q15, Q7, Q9</td>
<td>.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Commitment to Improvement of Practice (field based)</td>
<td>Q54, Q55, Q52, Q53, Q50, Q49, Q51</td>
<td>.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Commitment to Whole School Improvement (field based)</td>
<td>Q39, Q40, Q42, Q38, Q41, Q46, Q37, Q44, Q43, Q48, Q47</td>
<td>.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Commitment to Reciprocal Relationships (field based)</td>
<td>Q32, Q30, Q31, Q33, Q35, Q45, Q36, Q34</td>
<td>.906</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Alpha levels for all new composite subscales were above the benchmark for reliability, which was set at a level of .600 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Due to the acceptable level of reliability and the face analysis these new eight composite subscales were developed into eight new scale variables to measure differences in means based on institution.

Prior to commenting on differences of candidates from the institution, a comment on the correlation between the new composite subscales and the established embedded scale (see Clark, Badiali, Hughes, & Foley, 2002) should be made. Because of the similarity of constructs being measured a positive correlation between the eight new composite scales and the established embedded scale was predicted. At the $p < .01$ level each new composite scale did positively correlate with all other composite scales except for scale number four, Commitment to Sharing the Wisdom of Practice With Others (coursework). The positive correlation with the other seven subscales adds to the validity of these new composite subscales.

One of the most significant goals of this study was to seek differences in perceptions of teacher candidates from NNER and non-NNER initial teacher preparation program in regards to their programs’ emphasis of the stewardship construct. Analyses of variances (ANOVA) were conducted to examine possible differences of means for each new composite scale using the candidates’ institution as the factor. The ANOVAs indicated there was a significant difference by institution in means for scale one ($F[3, 334] = 3.73, p < .05$), scale three ($F[3, 334] = 6.67, p < 0.05$), and scale five ($F[3, 334] = 4.43, p < .05$). The ANOVA did not reveal a significant difference between groups for scale two, four, six, seven, and eight. A post hoc Games-Howell test indicated that University B’s mean (4.12) was significantly lower than the mean of University C (4.51) and University D (4.61) for scale one, Commitment to Professional Responsibilities (coursework based). University A was not significantly different from the other institutions for scale one. Likewise, University C and University D did not differ significantly from each other. For scale three, Commitment to the Improvement of Practice (coursework based), University C had a significantly higher mean (5.38) than University A (4.89) and University B (4.92). There was not a statistical difference between the mean of University D (5.19) and the other three institutions. University A and University B did not differ significantly from each other. Means for scale five, Commitment to a Shared Mission of Schooling (coursework based)
showed a significant difference between University B and University C. University C had a significantly higher mean (4.75) than University B (4.23). There was not a significant difference of the means for University A (4.43) and University D (4.51) between groups or with the other groups. It should be noted again, that University C and University D are NNER institutions and have an explicit focus on stewardship of schools. University A and University B are not formally affiliated with the NNER and do not have an explicit focus on stewardship of schools. This information is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Summary of the Differences of Means Based on Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New composite subscale</th>
<th>Summary of differences of means</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Commitment to Professional Responsibilities (coursework based)</td>
<td>Universities C &amp; D showed a higher mean than University B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Commitment to Improvement of Practice (coursework based)</td>
<td>University C showed a higher mean than Universities A &amp; B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Commitment to Sharing the Wisdom of Practice with Others (coursework based)</td>
<td>No differences in means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Commitment to a Shared Mission of Schooling (coursework based)</td>
<td>University C showed a higher mean than University B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Commitment to Improvement of Practice (field based)</td>
<td>No differences in means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Commitment to a Shared Mission of Schooling (field based)</td>
<td>No differences in means.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note. University C and University D are NNER institutions and have an explicit focus on stewardship of schools. University A and University B are not formally affiliated with the NNER and do not have an explicit focus on stewardship of schools.

Discussion

This study was designed to explore and describe teacher candidates’ perceptions of the degree to which the construct of stewardship was emphasized during their teacher preparation programs, particularly at NNER and non-NNER institutions. Overall, candidates at all four institutions showed a relatively high level of agreement that their initial teacher preparation programs emphasized the construct of stewardship. It was found that candidates at NNER institutions showed a statistically significant higher level of agreement that their initial teacher preparation emphasized the stewardship construct in three of the eight emerging components of the construct. All three of the components that candidates from NNER institutions perceived their program to stress more were commitments gained through coursework, specifically the Commitment to Professional Responsibilities, Commitment to the Improvement of Practice, and the Commitment to a Shared Mission of Schooling. It should be noted that there were no differences based on institution when looking at stewardship through the field experience lens. It is understandable that there would more likely be a difference between the NNER institutions and the non-NNER institutions as it relates to coursework than field experiences. University faculty have much more control over coursework curricular content than experiential learning, therefore the significant difference between NNER and non-NNER institutions as it relates to coursework is understandable. Likewise, the absence of a significant difference among NNER and non-NNER institutions as it relates to field experience is reasonable as an institution’s conceptual framework is much harder to nurture in an off campus experiential learning setting (Goodlad, 1994). Perhaps this is evidence in the disconnect between theory and practice. Initial teacher preparation candidates often have a very difficult time seeing congruency between what is learned on campus and what they are experiencing in field experiences and student teaching (Bransford et al., 2005).

Not only were the differences in perceptions of the sample explored and described, but some important by-products emerged from this research as well.
One important outcome to this study, is the continuation of the conversation around defining the construct. To define stewardship of schooling and to better understand the construct, I suggest not differentiating the dimensions based on perspective (coursework v. field experiences) but to take the construct as a whole and define it by the six, non-repeated commitments that emerged from this study. It is important to know that teacher candidates in this study recognized the emphasis of stewardship in their teacher preparation program differently through these two perspectives but as we work to define the construct, I suggest not attaching these perspectives to the different commitments of the construct. One of the characteristics of stewardship is that it can be the work of all in the educative community. It may be more divisive and impede renewal if stakeholders in the education of the young and the preparation of teachers demarcate specific dimensions of the construct. With this paradigm and based on this study, I suggest the following dimensions help define the stewardship of schooling:

1. Commitment to Professional Responsibilities
2. Commitment to Reciprocal Relationships
3. Commitment to the Improvement of Practice
4. Commitment to Sharing the Wisdom of Practice with Others
5. Commitment to a Shared Mission of Schooling
6. Commitment to Whole School Improvement

These certainly fit with Smith’s (1999) description of the work of stewards of schooling. A commitment to professional responsibilities is found throughout each of Smith’s (1999) aspects of stewardship work. Commitment to reciprocal relationships is congruent with developing a democratic community, and commitment to the improvement of practice is found in Smith’s (1999) participation in professional development and engagement in critical inquiry. Commitment to sharing the wisdom of practice with others corresponds to the preparation of future educators, but also expanded to include sharing with colleagues as well as future educators (Smith, 1999). Finally, the commitments to a shared mission of schooling and to whole school improvement are nearly identical to Smith’s (1999) description of an educative community committing to a shared mission of schooling and dedicating their work towards whole school renewal.
The final outcome of this study was a series of scales that help measure candidates’ perception of their institution’s emphasis of stewardship, based on the six commitments listed above. Both NNER and non-NNER candidates had a relatively high level of agreement that the construct of stewardship was being stressed in their teacher preparation program. This is a positive finding, but of course a focus on the stewardship of schools will have its greatest impact over a long career of work in schooling. I would recommend follow up work with a measurement of stewardship behaviors of these participants or similar participants to see how their stewardship cognition develops, lessens, or transforms as their teacher identity changes. Likewise, it would be beneficial for those leaders in teacher preparation program development to make curricular and programmatic decisions that nurture dispositions that are lasting. This study provided a glimpse of how teacher candidates perceive how stewardship is emphasized in their preparation programs; however, the real question may be, just because it was emphasized in a preparation program, does it manifest itself in a professional identity?

To this end, I want to highlight the participants that were the sample for this study. In this study Universities C and D were the institutions selected who have a formal partnership with the NNER and explicitly note stewardship of schools as part of their conceptual framework. Candidates from these institutions had a higher level of agreement that stewardship was emphasized by their teacher education coursework, but there was not a significant difference between the emphasis of stewardship from these institutions' cooperating teachers and the cooperating teachers from non-NNER institutions. If the stewardship of schooling is a unique part of their programs’ underpinnings, I would recommend an examination of the coherency of curricular elements with field experience sites. It is foreseeable that the measures were not developed to capture the differences between the field-based work at the NNER institutions and the non-NNER institutions or possibly, the cooperating teachers that the NNER institutions work with need to be versed in this construct so the transfer between theory and practice for these candidates is more congruent. Overall, these institutions that are affiliated with the NNER should delight that their candidates do perceive with a high level of agreement that stewardship is being emphasized in their teacher preparation programs.

Universities A and B do not have a formal relationship with the NNER but candidates from these institutions also recognized, with a high level of agreement,
the construct of stewardship being emphasized in their coursework and field experiences. These institutions should celebrate their work in emphasizing this construct. If these institutions should desire a relationship with the NNER, their teacher education programs seem primed to show evidence of emphasizing the stewardship construct in their curriculum. It should also be noted that the cooperating teachers that partner with these institutions were not perceived by candidates to emphasize stewardship any differently from the cooperating teachers from NNER institutions.

Through this study, stewardship of schooling has become better defined with empirical evidence. This addition to the conversation of school renewal will be an asset to those who work in this arena. Information gleaned from this study will assist those that prepare teachers, serve as leaders in our schools, and those that are directly responsible for the schooling of our nation’s students. Like any other institution in our society, schools need care today or decay will occur. The care and preservation of schools can be the work of all involved with educating the young, by safeguarding the precious purposes, conversations, and personnel in our schools.

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Continuing the Conversation


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