CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The Professional Education Unit (PEU) at Oklahoma State University prepares candidates in 25 initial and advanced certification programs housed in four colleges. There are over 150 faculty involved in the preparation of teachers and other professionals including administrators, counselors, library media specialists, reading specialists, school psychologists, and speech and language pathologists. The Professional Education Council (PEC) governs the unit. The mission of the unit, published as part of the PEU Strategic Plan, states, The Professional Education Unit prepares and develops professional educators who facilitate life long learning and enrich quality of life for people in public schools and other educational settings. This concept is rooted in an ideal of democratic education and of a democratic society as characterized by Dewey (1916) and explained by Beane and Apple (1995) as a “way of life built upon opportunities to learn what it is about and how to lead it” (p. 5). The fulfillment of this mission reflects a continuous commitment to five critical core values that compose the unit’s conceptual framework. These core values are summarized by the theme of the unit’s professional education programs: OSU L.E.A.D.S., with the overarching goal of preparing education professionals as ethical leaders. The acronym L.E.A.D.S. supports an understanding of and communication about the conceptual framework to our professional education community and other constituents.

Statement of Core Values: L.E.A.D.S.

Below, each of the five core values that guide the operations and programs in the OSU PEU is described, including a discussion of the knowledge base related to each and the concomitant performance expectations for candidates’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSD) as defined by NCATE guidelines. These descriptions and expectations reflect Wise’s (2005) concept of a “shared body of knowledge, based on research” (p.319), an essential characteristic of a strong profession and of strong professional educational programs. These expectations are grounded in the recognition that teacher preparation builds on “a theoretical, empirical, knowledge base” that, in turn, sets the foundation for strong pedagogical expertise and practice (Evans, 2010, p. 186).

Leadership. Leaders, “through their integrity and ability to work with people, solve problems, communicate vision, and build a sense of community” (Calabrese, 2000, p it). While management of a setting may be considered part of leadership, the greater purpose is to affect constructive change (Northouse, 2013), and affecting constructive change as a professional leader involves advocacy for our students, clients, and their families. For a PEU candidate who completes an initial program, such leadership and advocacy may occur within a classroom of students or among a group of colleagues. In comparison, for a candidate completing an advanced certificate such as in school administration, these actions involve schools and their larger communities. The PEU is committed to preparing candidates who serve as effective leaders and advocates in their respective professional settings.

Expectations for KSD: Candidates are committed to the belief that professional educators providing quality education are the foundation of a prosperous and democratic society. Candidates advance their professions as innovative leaders and advocates who support all learners and families, in the context of diverse systems and communities.

Ethics and Professionalism. Ethics and professionalism are inextricably linked with leadership (Ciulla, 1998; Feeney, 2012). Specifically, norms, values, and principles of an ethical leader include respect for others, service to others, justice, honesty, and building community (Northhouse, 2013, p. 431).
In any decision-making situation, ethical issues are either implicitly or explicitly involved. The choices that leaders make and how they respond in a given circumstance are informed and directed by their ethics. (p. 424)

PEU programs provide continuous opportunities for candidates to test ideas, to consider ethical and legal issues, to critically reflect on decisions, and to take responsibility for their actions. Our intent is to prepare candidates who will serve as change agents who are committed to transforming their professional settings into learning organizations that are as socially just and meaningful as possible. In order to accomplish this goal, education professionals, as ethical leaders, must recognize that we live in a dynamic era that necessitates the ability to change and grow within the world around us. Educators must be intellectually vibrant and foster a similar sense of vibrancy and commitment to lifelong learning in their professional settings.

Expectations for KSD: Candidates demonstrate ethical and professional behavior in their interactions with students, families, colleagues, and communities and practice social justice. Candidates demonstrate an understanding of legal aspects in their professional roles. As life-long learners, they engage in continuous professional development, collaborate with colleagues in the learning community and other professional arenas and reflect upon their practice.

Academics and Professional Roles. The Professional Education Unit, through curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, and the use of technology, prepares knowledgeable candidates who reflect upon the connections between academics and their professional roles. To understand how the PEU characterizes the concept of Academics and Professional Roles, six sub-areas will be addressed; they are consistent with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions identified by Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2005) as essential in the effective preparation of educators.

1. **Content Knowledge.** Research on teaching and teacher education clearly highlights the need and significance of a strong content knowledge base for teachers (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Further, research indicates that the number and type of content courses varies from discipline to discipline (Grossman, Schoenfeld, & Lee, 2005). Therefore, the PEU professional education programs are designed to be program specific based on the standards of Specialty Professional Associations (SPA) and/or state standards for those programs without an affiliated SPA in order to provide a rigorous and solid foundation of subject matter related to the area(s) a candidate plans to teach. For example, the candidates in early childhood and elementary education must complete a minimum of twelve credit hours in each of four content areas. A secondary education candidate meets or exceeds the same content area preparation as a major in the given discipline.

Expectations for KSD: Candidates value the importance of knowledge and learning as a result of OSU’s rich learning environment, technology, and supervised experiences in academic areas. Candidates possess subject matter competence and enthusiasm for the subject matter; they are life-long learners of the central concepts and methods of inquiry in their subject matter areas.

2. **Integration.** As it has been conceptualized in the PEU, integration is not limited to the notion of multi-disciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches to curriculum or “rearranging subjects” (Beane, 1997; Pappas et al., 1999; Wraga, 1993). Rather, integration is considered in a much broader manner and in a variety of ways (Evans, 2010). These approaches include integration of theory to practice, integration of local community issues with those of the global community including career awareness, integration of candidates’ individual life experiences and their professional preparation, integration of current research into class readings and discussions, and integration of diversity themes into the curriculum. Integration is a vital component of the ongoing and lifelong
process of learning. As with other components of these core values, the specific manner in which integration is addressed varies from program to program.

Expectations for KSD: Candidates demonstrate integration of theory into practice incorporating appropriate pedagogy, methodology, content knowledge, curriculum, inquiry and research-based practices in diverse settings. Candidates understand the process of curriculum integration and use a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development and learning. They assist students with career awareness and apply career concepts to the academic curriculum.

3. Human Growth and Development, including Special Populations. At the core of each candidate’s success as an ethical leader and decision maker, regardless of one’s level in the profession or setting, is the ability to make informed decisions based on knowledge of many factors. One of these factors is knowledge of child development and learning theories and their applications. A recent report by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2003) found, “A teacher who has a good understanding of child development and learning is more likely to be effective in the classroom” (p.84). It is only through an understanding of learning theory and its relation to one’s professional setting that teachers go beyond teaching the way they were taught (Bigge & Shermis, 1999). An extensive review of research by Horowitz et al. (2005, p. 92-93, 118) identified important considerations for preparing educators for theory-based, developmental practices that include: (1) Individual differences are inevitable; (2) Interactions exist among development, knowledge, and learning; (3) Learning and development are deeply embedded in cultural contexts; and (4) Developmental knowledge is essential in understanding and meeting the needs of diverse learners. The PEU is committed to offering programs that are consistent with these considerations and programs that are well grounded in learning theory and human development.

Expectations for KSD: Candidates understand how students/clients learn and develop and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and physical development at all levels including early childhood, elementary, middle level, secondary, and adult. Candidates understand that students vary in their approaches to learning and create opportunities that are adaptable to individual differences of learners.

4. Learning Environment. Building on knowledge of human growth and development and on the assumption that learning is an active process of constructing meaning within social contexts, candidates are prepared to create dynamic, inclusive environments (see Burden, 2006) in their professional settings. Our intent is to foster “adaptive expertise” (LePage et al., 2005) which involves the ability to critically reflect, solve problems, and make adjustments as needed in a process of continually expanding professional competence. This ability is essential in developing culturally responsive environments (Gay, 1993) and especially important in working with English Language Learners (Valdes et al., 2005).

Expectations for KSD: Candidates understand the dynamics of individual and group behavior and use communication techniques to develop, facilitate and manage positive approaches to learning. Candidates select styles that work best for their learning environments and are able to adapt to different circumstances. They choose procedures that are appropriate for all students/clients including those with diverse backgrounds, with exceptionalities, and English language learners.

5. Technology. Technology is thoughtfully infused throughout all PEU programs. We are committed to preparing technology-literate professionals who can be described as “having the skill and dispositions to use technology in flexible and adaptive ways for the purposes of classroom instruction and professional development” (Gillingham & Topper, 1999, p. 305). Further, we
consider technology a “fundamental form of communication” and that more technology is not necessarily better without purposeful use (Goetze & Stansberry, 2003). The PEU’s commitment to technology is demonstrated by course content; by an emphasis on faculty, staff, and candidate proficiencies; and by the dedication of resources to technology staff and equipment including an average expenditure of over one million dollars for technology each year of the last three years across the four colleges that house professional education at OSU.

Expectations for KSD: Candidates understand technology as a complex integrated process for analyzing problems and devising, implementing, evaluating and managing solutions to those problems in situations in which learning is purposeful and controlled. Candidates use technology to help all students/clients learn by providing a conceptual understanding of how knowledge, skills and dispositions related to education and information technology and instructional technology are integrated throughout the curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practices, assessments and evaluations.

6. Teaching/Professional Practice and Assessment. Synthesizing content knowledge with knowledge related to integration, human development, learning environments, and technology as well as with knowledge about standards of teaching and learning, education professionals should create an evolving and adaptive professional repertoire (Freiburg & Driscoll, 2000). And, consistent with current research of preparing education professionals (see Shepard et al., 2005), this repertoire should include an understanding of and appropriate use of assessment tools such as “oral questioning of students, observation, written work products, oral presentations, interviews, products, portfolios, tests, and quizzes” (p. 294). PEU programs include consistent and continuous opportunities for candidates’ development of professional repertoires, and these opportunities are clearly demonstrated by their developmental portfolios.

Expectations for KSD: Candidates use best practices to create learning environments and instructional opportunities based upon Oklahoma and national standards that lead to student learning and development. Candidates understand and use a variety of assessment strategies to evaluate and modify the teaching/learning process to ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of learners. They demonstrate reflective practice.

Diversity. The PEU definition of diversity is inclusive in the sense that it refers to age, gender, ethnicity, culture, socio-economic status, and intellectual, physical, and language abilities. This broad definition is consistent with reform literature whereby both multicultural and special needs populations are linked together when addressing learning differences. The PEU is committed to the assumption that educators “must seek to eliminate disparities in educational opportunities among all students, especially those students who have been poorly served by our current system” (Banks, et al., 2005, p. 233) and conceptualizes diversity in three important ways. The first way is by recognizing that our candidates must develop an awareness of and appreciation for the many cultures that are present in Oklahoma, in the United States and beyond (Bank & Banks, 1993). However, this approach is merely a first step for teachers in grappling with diversity issues. Thus, the second approach to integrating diversity into the curriculum is to ask candidates to critically consider the roles of schools and their communities in perpetuating the marginalization of some groups (Larkin & Sleeter, 1995). The third focus on diversity centers on the need for students to experience a multiplicity of pedagogical practices and theoretical frameworks for examining schools and our demographically-dynamic society. These three approaches to developing professional education curricula, which are infused throughout PEU programs and operations, are consistent with the most recent research on preparing teachers for diverse settings (for example, see Banks, et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Hollins, Torrez, & Guzman, 2005) and reflect Gay’s (2000) concept of preparing teachers to create culturally responsive and inclusive classrooms, a necessary step in preparing students for a democratic way of life. The PEU
further demonstrates a commitment to diversity by having candidates engage in critical analyses of readings, field experiences, and other experiences associated with professional education programs. Also important is a diversity of pedagogical practices and theoretical frameworks that faculty use to make learning available and relevant to diverse learners.

Expectations for KSD: Candidates believe everyone deserves the opportunity to learn and can learn; they possess knowledge, skills, and dispositions to serve as effective professionals who understand and meet the needs of a diverse society. Candidates provide evidence of understanding of differences including age, gender, ethnicity, culture, socio-economic status, and intellectual, physical, and language abilities.

Service Orientation/Community Outreach. According to Bonnen (1996) the evolution of 19th century beliefs that established land grant universities emphasize a 21st century land grant idea or commitment which is to provide outreach to society. Consistent with this idea and with the mission of Oklahoma State University, the PEU conceptual framework and programs value candidates’ understanding of and involvement in community as a way to contribute to the common good. Such involvement brings (1) personal and social development, (2) appreciation of diversity and social justice, (3) critical theory and reflection, and (4) career exploration (ECS, 2000). Ethical leaders pay attention to the goals or purposes of the community.

Expectations for KSD: The Professional Education Unit prepares candidates who value and engage in service and meaningful involvement of the learners/clients, their families and communities. Candidates engage in result oriented service to address the economic, educational, public safety, environmental, and other human needs.

Development of the Conceptual Framework

An early version of the conceptual framework was developed in 1997 and the PEU adopted four core values: Integration, Diversity, Lifelong Learning, and Professionalism. The conceptual framework evolved and, based on extensive discussion, the Council voted in 2002 to embed Lifelong Learning as part of Professionalism; thus, the unit considered three core values as Integration, Diversity, and Professionalism. At that time, the Council also passed the following motion: “The OSU PEU is competency based and not course driven. …To determine the competencies, the committee will have open forums in early fall 2003 to discuss the competencies.” Following this recommendation, the Council sponsored four open meetings during 2003-2004 with stakeholders including, but not limited to, candidates and practitioners. These meetings were held on campus and at two public school sites. In addition, the Conceptual Framework, Knowledge Base, and Certification Committee considered all input, professional and state standards and expectations for candidates, and its understanding of the research base for professional education and recommended to the PEC that L.E.A.D.S. be approved as the conceptual framework for the OSU Professional Education Unit. The PEC unanimously approved this recommendation in April 2004. During 2004-2005, the Professional Education Unit (PEU) began the process of implementation. The five core values that compose L.E.A.D.S. expand the previous three core concepts of Professionalism, Integration, and Diversity and clearly articulate the unit’s core values and their coherence among all aspects of our operations and programs.

Shared Vision

The PEU’s vision is to prepare education professionals as ethical leaders. Our commitment to the values of leadership, ethics and professionalism, academics, diversity, and service express this vision and consistently support our operations and programs. As described above in the development of the conceptual framework, our professional education community of faculty, staff, candidates, and
practitioners developed and share this vision and its reflected values. The PEU has ensured the widespread knowledge of these core values, and the demonstration of how they influence each program in the unit by (1) Providing our professional education community, primarily composed of faculty, candidates, and practitioners, the opportunity to help frame the knowledge base for the unit’s programs and sharing with them the knowledge base in its present form; (2) Referencing the conceptual framework in program descriptions, portfolios, and syllabi as well as on the website for the Professional Education Unit; (3) Citing the conceptual framework in candidate handbooks and in other PEU publications and communications; for example, a brochure was developed to distribute to those internal and external to the unit; and (4) Connecting the conceptual framework to candidate portfolio assessment rubrics and other forms of assessment. Further, the unit worked over the past three years to better articulate elements of our shared vision. In 2003, the unit formally adopted a Vision Statement that is published as part of the PEU Strategic Plan.

Coherence

The conceptual framework and its shared vision among our professional education community provide coherence among the unit’s programs and operations. As depicted in Figure II.2 L.E.A.D.S. Program Coherence, the L.E.A.D.S. core values serve as the foundation for all PEU programs. Based on these values and in consideration of professional standards and expectations, professional education curricula (including field work and clinical experiences, critical reflection, performance, and accountability) are designed, enacted, assessed, and modified. Further, we recognize that this process occurs within various societal contexts including schools, agencies, and communities. Four significant benchmarks of candidate assessment also compose an integral part of all PEU programs. Coherence among all aspects of PEU programs and operations is developed and maintained through systematic communication among stakeholders as described above in the section on “Shared Vision”. These actions also include, but are not limited to, regular meetings of the Professional Education Council, Program Advisory Committees that involve practitioners and candidates, and standing and ad hoc committees of the PEU.

Candidate Proficiencies Aligned to Professional and State Standards

The conceptual framework further articulates program-specific goals and structures that reflect the guidelines and expectations of other informed and regulatory bodies. For example, PEU programs follow recommendations for professional preparation set forth by the Holmes Partnership and the Council of Academic Deans from Research Education Institutions (CADREI, see “Design Principles for Teacher Education”). Especially significant is the fact that the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation (OCTP) requires initial professional education programs to demonstrate application of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) principles. The INTASC principles have been broadly accepted and have been variously incorporated into many professional education programs across the country. The ten INTASC principles are included among the 15 General Competencies the OCTP requires all candidates to demonstrate for initial licensure. Accordingly, these 15 competencies integrated with OSU’s core values (L.E.A.D.S.) provide the organizing framework for the professional candidate portfolio that each candidate must successfully complete before a recommendation is made for licensure. The INTASC principles (expanded to the state’s General Competencies) and the L.E.A.D.S. conceptual framework adopted by the PEU have clearly complementary aspects which lead to natural integration in the unit’s programs and assessment. Equally important, the PEU advanced programs meet the Specialty Professional Association standards for their respective areas. The unit demonstrates later in Standards 1, 2, 3, and 4 how candidates are assessed and how they demonstrate these competencies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Knowledge of, Skills, and Dispositions of the 15 Competencies Aligned to L.E.A.D.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>The teacher understands the central concepts and <strong>method of inquiry</strong> of the subject matter discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that makes these aspects of the subject matter meaningful for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>The teacher understands how students learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and physical development at all grade levels including early childhood, elementary, middle level, and secondary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>The teacher understands that students vary in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adaptable to individual differences of learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>The teacher understands <strong>curriculum integration</strong> processes and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development and <strong>critical thinking</strong>, problem solving, and performance skills and effective use of technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>The teacher uses best practices related to motivation and behavior to create learning environments that encourage positive social interaction, self-motivation and active engagement in learning, thus, providing opportunities for success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>The teacher develops <strong>knowledge of and uses a variety of effective communication techniques</strong> to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.</td>
<td>The teacher <strong>plans instruction, based upon curriculum goals</strong>, knowledge of the teaching/learning process, subject matter, students’ abilities and differences, the community; and adapts instruction based upon assessment and reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.</td>
<td>The teacher understands and uses <strong>a variety of assessment strategies</strong> to evaluate and modify the teaching/learning process ensuring the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>The teacher evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community), modifies those actions when needed, and <strong>actively seeks opportunities for continued professional growth</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.</td>
<td>The teacher fosters <strong>positive interaction with school colleagues, parents/families</strong>, and organization in the community to actively engage them in support of students’ learning and well-being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.</td>
<td>The teacher shall have an understanding of the importance of <strong>assisting students with career awareness</strong> and the application of career concepts to the academic curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.</td>
<td>The teacher understands the purpose of continuous lifelong learning, the concept of <strong>making learning enjoyable</strong>, and the need for willingness to change when the change leads to greater student learning and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.</td>
<td>The teacher understands the <strong>legal aspects of teaching</strong> including the rights of students and parents/families, as well as the legal right and responsibilities of the teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.</td>
<td>The teacher understands, and is able to develop instructional strategies/plans based on the Oklahoma Core Curriculum (<strong>PASS Objectives</strong>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.</td>
<td>The teacher understands the state teacher evaluation process, “Oklahoma Criteria for Effective Teaching Performance,” and how to incorporate these criteria in designing instructional strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure II.2

L.E.A.D.S. Program Coherence

LEVEL IV (Advancing) In-Service
LEVEL III (Professional) Intern
LEVEL II (Developing) Pre-Intern
LEVEL I (Initial) Admissions

Core Values
OSU
L.E.A.D.S.

Leadership
Knowledge
Skills
Dispositions

Service
Orientation/And
Community Outreach
Knowledge
Skills
Dispositions

Diverse Experiences/
Cultural Competence
Knowledge
Skills
Dispositions

Academics & Teaching
Knowledge
Skills
Dispositions

Ethics/
Professionalism
Knowledge
Skills
Dispositions

ASSESSMENT

Reflective Practice
Performance
Accountability

Curricular Experiences
Professional Standards/Expectations

ASSESSMENT