

**THE REEXAMINATION OF A MULTI-YEAR ENHANCEMENT PLAN FOR
PASSING THE PRINCIPAL LICENSURE EXAMINATION AT A
HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY (HBCU) IN TEXAS**

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Introduction

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have made an impact on post-secondary institutions in the United States of America. “Most private black colleges originated in the nineteen southern and border states after the Civil War during and after Reconstruction (1867–1890).” (Avery, pg. 327, 2009) Since the 1800s, black institutions of higher learning were established to ensure that blacks received education opportunities and were equipped with the tools to succeed in a society that were not of equitable rights. Ultimately, HBCUs became the changing faces of post-secondary education for students of color. “For nearly two centuries, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have provided educational opportunities to millions of students who were disenfranchised from traditional higher education institutions.” (Baylor, pg. 1, 2010) As of today, “there are 105 institutions federally recognized as HBCUs.” (Satterfield, pg. 6, 2008) Although most colleges and universities serve students who are classified as African Americans, they are not predominately recognized as historically black colleges. “HBCUs provide an excellent foundation for millions of African American students throughout the country.” (Baylor, pg. 33, 2010) Over the years,

many of these institutions have closed their doors due to low enrollment and financial troubles; however, the vision of HBCUs still shines brighter in the 21st century. These postsecondary institutions have paved the way for thousands of students from different races to walk across the stage with bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees in most disciplines.

In the south, HBCUs have established institutions located in, or close to, most of the major cities of the region. “Due to the South’s dual racial education system before the 1950s, HBCUs were the overwhelming source “for an educated middle class of lawyers, doctors, teachers, and leaders to serve the black community.” (Avery, pg. 328, 2009) The origin of HBCUs provided a unique collegiate experience that were not offered to students of color upon their establishment. “Education is culturally specific” (Allen, Jewell, Griffin & Wolf, pg. 265, 2007); these institutions were, and still remain, the stepping stones for African American students to receive a premiere education that cultivates excellence.

History of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Texas

In the state of Texas, a total of nine historically black colleges and universities embrace the Lone Star state. These include Huston-Tillotson College (Austin), Jarvis Christian College (Hawkins), Paul Quinn College (Dallas), Prairie View A&M University (Prairie View), St. Phillips College (San Antonio), Southwestern Christian College (Terrell), Texas College (Tyler), Texas Southern University (Houston), and Wiley College (Marshall). Including public and private colleges and universities, these historically black postsecondary institutions in the state of Texas have seen an increase of

diverse student population and continue to educate students who come from all walks of life.

Amongst the HBCUs located in the state of Texas, Prairie View A&M University, just northwest of the city of Houston and noted as the second oldest public institution of higher education in the state, “was the only institution of higher learning for Negroes supported by the State, its history becomes the record of the Texas conception of the ends and aims of Negro education.” (Woolfolk, pg. 18, 1962) Prairie View A&M University was established and joined as a member of the Texas A&M University System in the year 1876. “The university is a state-assisted institution by legislative designation, serving a diverse ethnic and socioeconomic population, and a land-grant institution by federal statute. It is committed to achieving relevance in each component of its mission, *dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, and service*, by addressing issues and proposing solutions through programs and services designed to respond to the needs and aspirations of individuals, families, organizations, agencies, schools, and communities--both rural and urban.” (Jackson, History of Prairie View A&M University online) During Prairie View A&M University’s establishment, “the Texas Legislature established the "Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas for Colored Youths" and placed responsibility for its management with the Board of Directors of the Agricultural and Mechanical College at Bryan. The A&M College of Texas for Colored Youths opened at Prairie View, Texas on March 11, 1878.” (Jackson, History of Prairie View A&M University online) On August 27, 1973, “Prairie View A&M College” was renamed Prairie View A&M University and was declared “an independent unit of the Texas A&M University System” (PVAMU Fact Book 2007-2011, pg. iii)

Prairie View A&M University has steadfastly provided high quality education for all students who have entered their doors. The institution “offers baccalaureate degrees in 50 academic majors, 37 Master’s degrees and four doctoral programs through nine colleges and schools” (www.pvamu.edu) More importantly, it has established a strong foundation for students to create a journey of excellence while building upon tradition. Prairie View A&M University’s fall enrollment continues to fluctuate from year to year. As indicated, in Table 1, below in the 5 year trend enrollment statistics chart, five years ago during the fall semester of 2008, a total of 8,203 students were served by the campus, which is an increase of 9.8% of the fall student enrollment for 2012 (8,336 students).

PVAMU Student Enrollment Statistics				
5 Year Trend – Fall Semesters				
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
8, 203	8, 608	8, 781	8, 425	8,336

Table 1 PVAMU 5 Year Fall Enrollment Statistics

The university has continuously embraced the number of students who have been awarded degrees from the institution. “During the University's 130-year history, some 46,000 academic degrees have been awarded.” (Jackson, History of Prairie View A&M University online)

Perceptions Regarding HBCUs

For the individual student who seeks to pursue a college degree, researching different postsecondary institutions that meet their criteria has its advantages.

“Throughout their enrollment, colleges and universities have a primary responsibility to

increase students' knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live.” (Henry and Closson, pg. 18, 2010) However, HBCUs continue to leave a positive and negative perception since their existence began. “Often when outsiders are familiar only with the history of HBCUs, they fail to see what is currently happening, including these institutions' service to diverse communities, their enormous track record in the sciences, and their continuing and crucial role in educating those African Americans who eventually occupy the black middle class.” (Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010, pg. 9) In the beginning these schools were the only place for students of color to receive an opportunity of higher education. Thus, historically black colleges and universities have changed the paradigm of education. “HBCUs, on the other hand, seem to make up for what they lack in resources by providing a more collegial and supportive learning environment for students and faculty.” (Kim and Conrad, pg. 401, 2006) Nevertheless, HBCUs have played a major role in how African American students who have attended these schools attribute their success. For these students, attending HBCUs have allowed them to place themselves among the elite of college graduates, take ownership of their pathways, and give back to their communities built upon a foundation that has allowed them the freedom to leave their marks on society.

Since their beginnings, HBCUs have embodied an essence that has captivated its students and staff for years to come. The history behind the development of HBCUs comes from a positive perception that these institutions would equip students of color with the knowledge and skills necessary to survive and compete with all educated persons in society. With an environment enriched with a strong historical background, “HBCUs provide an opportunity for students of color to examine their culture and to

understand that they can be academically successful.” (Baylor, pg. 39, 2010) This importance has helped HBCUs provide the type of education that is needed for students to embark on a journey that may have previously been deemed a dream. “The sense of community at African American higher education colleges and universities offers cohesiveness in Black culture that is not totally visible within the larger social structure.” (Satterfield, pg. 9, 2008) Not only do HBCUs provide a culturally-sound education for its students, but they help shape the minds and souls of former students who have made their marks in the history books. “HBCUs, private and public, represent only three percent of all American colleges and universities, and enroll only 14 percent of all African American college students, but they have produced: 70 percent of all African American dentists and physicians, 50 percent of all African American engineers, 50 percent of all African American public school teachers, and 35 percent of all African American attorneys.” (UNCF, 2008) From Pulitzer Prize winners Alice Walker (Spelman College), the Honorable Barbara Jordan (Texas Southern University), to author Alex Haley (Alcorn State), these distinguished and notable individuals, as well as others, have graduated from HBCUs and have made an unforgettable impact in fields of education, entertainment, Science and other notable areas of discipline.

As HBCUs took shape in the history of America, they also inherited a negative image. “A number of HBCUs are in trouble because of low endowments, low enrollments, administrative and financial mismanagement, heavy debt, and/or loss of accreditation.” (Avery, pg. 338, 2009) With discussions of segregation, HBCUs have been taunted with what they have fought to eliminate in schools: segregation. “Both public and private black colleges in the South remained segregated by law and were the

only educational option for African Americans until *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.” (Gasman, et al., 2010, pg. 8) Although HBCUs were originally established in order for people of color to have the same educational opportunities as their white counterparts, they were also charged with segregating, or establishing, schools that may be negative in its being. “HBCUs may provide the type of environment that allows for engagement in practices designed to assist in enhancing the critical consciousness among their White student populations.” (Henry and Closson, pg. 14, 2010)

Financial Constraints

While predominately white colleges and universities began to fully accept the enrollment of African American students into their institutions, a decline in enrollment at HBCUs began to immerge. “With the push for the integration of historically white institutions during the Civil Rights Movement, enrollment dropped at HBCUs, and their role of educating the near entirety of the Black middle class shifted.” (Gasman, pg. 5, 2013) Students of color now have a greater chance of enrolling in predominately white institutions as well as historically black colleges and universities.

Statement of the Problem

African American students’ state-mandated test scores on the Principal Texas Examination of Essential Skills (TExES) exam have tended to lag behind their white counterparts. The chart indicates the annual pass rates by entity based on ASEP rules:

Educator Certification Online System Annual Pass Rates on Principal 068 on ASEP Rules Initial Pass Rates 9/1/2012 – 8/31/2013				
	# of Test Takers	# of Tests Taken	# of Tests Passed	% of Tests Passed
All	41	41	39	95.1
Female	33	33	32	97.0
Male	08	08	07	87.5
Afro-Am	33	33	31	94.0
Hispanic	03	03	03	100.0
White	04	04	04	100.0
Other	01	01	01	100.0

Table 2 PVAMU Annual Pass Rates - ASEP Rules

Per the results taken from the Certified Principal Demographics by Preparation Route 2008-2012 (Ramsay, 2012), black/African American principals who took the university post-baccalaureate route for principal certification were produced in small percentages in comparison to their white counterparts. In the year 2011-2012, 63% of white principals obtained their principal certification through the university post-baccalaureate route in comparison to only 14.6% of black/African American principals who obtain their principal certification using the same route. (Ramsay, 2012) Per the Educator Certification Online System Report, submitted on August 22, 2013, thirty-four out of 36 students successfully passed the Principal EC-12 exam through Prairie View A&M University during the completion year of 2012. (www.pvamu.edu/education)

“The Texas State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) compiles all the results of the exams and reports the passing rates to higher education institutions. The standard expectation for an institution to remain accredited is currently 80%.

Therefore, university principal preparation programs must align the curriculum to address all the standards.” (Hernandez, Roberts, and Menchaca, pg. 5, 2012)

Although many Texas regional ESCs (education service centers) and participating post-secondary institutions offer programs that support future campus leaders adequately prepare for the principal exam, a high percentage of African American students do not successfully pass the exam. This has been particularly true within HBCUs. “There is tremendous pressure on preparation programs for their students to do well.” (Wilmore, pg. 3, 2003) “The responsibility of reforming principal preparation programs lies with state certification policies, as well as with institutions granting the degree or certifications.” (Lynch, pg. 46, 2012) In the Certified Principal Demographics by Preparation Route 2008-2012 report, the results show that “...most Principals were white and the university post-baccalaureate route produced the smallest percentages of black/African American Principals.” Social values weigh heavily on stakeholder decisions in our educational system. It is important that what educators value in higher learning hold truth to what is to becoming of our African American campus leaders of today and in the future. “The assessing of students’ learning with a standardized metric suggests neutrality.” (Donnor and Shockley, 2010) This draws a line between what is valued socially and what is valued academically. This also speaks the same for those African American principals who have the same credentials as their white counterparts in the role as the campus principal. In the article, “What Happened to All of the Black Principals After Brown?” (Smith and Lemasters, pg. 3, 2010), the author mentions a dissertation (Wright, 2003) “he conducted face-to-face interviews with eight African

American educators” and spoke of their experiences in Texas public schools after the ruling of the Brown vs. the Board of Education case:

We had a lot of black middle school and elementary school principals that were placed in an assistant principal's position and very, very many of them who were called assistant principals. Basically they ran errands□they ran errands!

Basically, if you were the librarian or you were the principal, you became an assistant. There were no black principals, head coaches, or head band directors. The most negative thing that I experienced was being placed in a sub position coaching with the experience that I had.” (Wright, 2003, pp. 135-136)

Purposes of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine what steps were taken to enhance the TExES scores at a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in Texas and if the steps were effective with African American students.

Research Questions

1. What steps were taken to improve the TExES scores of African American students at a specific HBCU in Texas?
2. Were these steps effective as measured by African American student scores on the state mandated TExES Principal certification exam?

Significance of the Study

Minorities are underrepresented as principals in Texas as compared to the general Texas population. Per the Employed Principal Demographics 2008 – 2012 data (Ramsay 2012), the race and ethnicity results indicate that “nearly two-thirds of principals were

white, about one-fifth were Hispanic/Latino, and just over one-tenth were black/African American.” In addition, “underrepresented minority students who currently attend college are generally not attracted to teaching as a career because of increased opportunities in other fields.” (Madkins, pg. 420, 2011) One factor causing this underrepresentation is the difficulty of the required TExES exam. In the state of Texas, the Principal TExES exam is a comprehensive criterion-referenced test that is “divided into three domains, *school community leadership, instructional leadership, and administrative leadership*, with nine competencies. The questions that are designed on the exam address specific competencies.” (Wilmore, pg. 4, 2003) Initiatives put into play via this study significantly helped African American students to pass the Principal TExES exam which makes them certifiable and eligible for employment as administrators in Texas. “Communities, scholars, policymakers, and practitioners interested in expanding college access and success for underrepresented racial-ethnic minorities would be wise to seek answers in the lessons and examples provided by HBCUs over their long, distinguished histories.” (Allen, et al., pg. 275, 2007) This will help narrow the gap between Caucasian and African American percentages of principals in Texas.

Limitations of the Study

1. This study is limited to one HBCU in Texas and enhancement steps that were put into place there.
2. The study does not reflect the Hispanic minority numbers of principals in Texas. The focus is strictly on African American students.

Assumption

The study assumes that numbers and passing rates provided by the state to the university regarding the TExES exam are accurate.

Definition of Terms

HBCU: A Historically Black College or University was originally founded to meet the higher education needs of African American students, particularly during segregation.

TExES Exam: The Texas Examination of Essential Skills (TExES) is the state mandated test for all new certifications in Texas. This begins with people seeking initial teacher certification and continues through the superintendent. Passing of this test is required for a person to become certified in their particular field in Texas. Without certification, they cannot be hired.

Methodology

A quantitative design was used in the study. According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) qualitative research plays a discovery role, while quantitative research plays a confirmatory role. Data for the quantitative study were gathered by extracting pertinent data from extant databases.

Explanatory and descriptive methodologies comprised the quantitative portion of the study. An explanatory design involves the researcher collecting and analyzing quantitative data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Descriptive research is a type of quantitative research that involves making careful descriptions of educational phenomena, concerned primarily with determining “what is” (Gall, Gall & Borg 2003). The independent variable for the study was 068 Principal TExES exam. One set of dependent variables for the study were Principal

candidates classified as Finishers seeking licensure. The other set of dependent variables for the study were Principal candidates enrolled as All but Clinical seeking licensure.

Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) defined a target population as “all the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events, or objects to which researchers wish to generalize the results of their research” (p.167). The target population for the quantitative portion of the study consisted of Prairie View A&M University graduate students enrolled in The Whitlowe R. Green College of Education/Education Administration Department seeking Principal P-12 licensure using information gathered through the Texas Education Agency databases.

Conclusions

The Whitlowe R. Green College of Education is committed to ensuring candidates experience the synchronicity of clinical experiences incorporating theory and practice in a multicultural and multi-dimensional setting. In order to sustain and enhance the performance of our field experiences, the College of Education is currently taking the following steps: (1) at each monthly departmental meeting, the faculty analyzes and organizes data from a variety of sources for program and candidate improvement. These results are used to make necessary changes and/or adjustments as outlined in the minutes and agenda of each department meeting; (2) each week the Dean’s Executive Council analyzes TExES® scores for all candidates and program decisions are made based on candidate performance; (3) data from meeting agendas and minutes and course syllabi including rubrics and assessments are examined and used to improve programs; (4) data

from the candidate, teacher, principal, and field supervisor are examined and evaluated at the end of the semester; and (5) the College of Education will continue to have open communication between building administrative mentors (Supervisors), field supervisors, candidates, interns, university professors, and program coordinators. All of the above items are monitored and analyzed by our internal auditing team and documented to ensure compliance.

Recommendations for Future Study

It is recommended that future study be done to determine the reasons African American students continue to select an HBCU as their higher education option of choice when today they are welcome at all universities. Various questions come into play such as do predominately white colleges offer a wider variety of majors and/or financial aid than HBCUs? How has lower enrollment due to African American students increasingly choosing to attend predominately white colleges impacted HBCUs financially?

Regardless, to continue to be viable HBCUs must market themselves in the 21st century as schools of choice to increase their enrollment and provide a culture and climate in which all students, not just African Americans, feel welcomed and supported by a common vision of excellence.

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