

## Preface

The first *International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration* (Leithwood *et al.*) was published in 1996 and quickly became something of a best seller for reference works within education. Such success, we suggest, was at least partly due to the unprecedented global waves of concern for improving schools launched in the mid 1980's, combined with a widespread belief in leadership as the single most powerful contribution to such improvement. The roots of this belief can be found in evidence produced by the early "effective schools" research, although there is a "romance" with leadership<sup>1</sup> as an explanation for success in many non-school enterprises, as well.

During the two-year period during which this current handbook was being written, activity in the realms of school leadership, school improvement, and leadership development gained further momentum. The English government created its new *National College of School Leadership*, and several Asian nations announced new initiatives in leadership selection, preparation, and development. The (U.S.) *University Council on Educational Administration* announced a national commission on the development of future school leaders. Division A of the American Educational Research Association created a Task Force to help shape future research on educational leadership. Standards for the licensure and professional development of school and district leaders were widely implemented in many countries around the world. Many major foundations, during this same time, redirected significant proportions of their funds toward support for leadership research and preparation. As this small sample of a much larger set of initiatives indicates, belief in the power of leadership to improve education continues unabated.

We highlight this ongoing flurry of interest in educational leadership as something of a preemptive defense against those inclined to question the need for yet a second International Handbook on Educational Leadership only a few short years after publication of the first. Indeed, a growing body of research and writing has advanced the field during those intervening years. Some will also point to the *AERA Handbook on Educational Administration* (Murphy & Louis, 1999) as begging the value of this publication. But the largely North American, if not U.S., authorship and perspective of the AERA handbook stands in sharp contrast to the broadly international authorship and global perspective of the present manuscript. Some 11 countries are represented by the 55 authors of the 34 chapters in the Handbook. Readers of the two handbooks will find little that is redundant.

While the senior editors of this volume (Leithwood & Hallinger) helped to edit and author the first International Handbook, our strategy for ensuring new material and fresh perspectives was to invite, as both coeditors and chapter

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<sup>1</sup>Meindl, J.R., Ehrlich, S.B., & Dukerich, J.M. (1985). The romance of leadership. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 30, 78–102.

authors, well-regarded scholars who had, nevertheless, not contributed to the 1996 publication. The chapters of this 2nd Handbook are organized around six themes which capture insights about leadership and its development which have emerged over the past eight years. These themes include: leadership and school improvement; leadership in the creation of community; leadership in diverse contexts; organizational learning and leadership; the context for educational leadership in the twenty-first century; and leadership development.

In our view, this second international handbook, mostly adds to, rather than replaces, the insights captured by its predecessor. The initial and this second volume provide authoritative and comprehensive reference points to the policy and leadership research communities, and a state-of-the-art compilation of insights and guidance for practicing educational leaders.

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