

## Redesigning the Professional Doctorate in Education

### Year 3 Evaluation Report

July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

Edward Crowe, PhD

This evaluation report includes the survey protocol developed by the outside evaluator to collect information from university project Directors (Attachment 1), a brief description of project goals and activities during 2012-13, and the evaluator's findings with respect to those goals and activities.

#### Overview of the Evaluation Plan

Evaluation questions developed to report on the CPED FIPSE initiative document and analyze the major activities of this initiative during 2012-13. These questions are:

- How does the FIPSE project document and analyze the impact of CPED on doctoral preparation at member institutions and at other universities?
- How have changes to the doctoral programs of participating universities been measured and analyzed?
- How has the implementation of changes to the doctoral programs been measured and analyzed?

The evaluation plan submitted to FIPSE included evaluation questions, data sources, report dates, and responsible parties. For some aspects of the evaluation, the evaluator is reporting in this document on whether the project did what it committed to do in the proposal and what the results are. Other components of the evaluation take an analytical approach to the project's design, implementation and findings.

#### Data Collection Instrument Developed for the Evaluation

The survey protocol included as Attachment 1 has been used to gather information from several dozen university leaders who serve as project directors (PD) for implementation of the CPED initiative for their universities; this group includes PDs from the Phase 1 cohort as well as

PDs from the universities that were recruited into the Phase 2 cohort by the project during 2011-12. For both groups of PDs, the evaluator conducted a survey asking them about their contacts with CPED, influence of CPED on the redesign of Ed.D. programs at their institutions, the current status of doctoral program redesign work, and the extent to which the redesign has influenced the education of a new generation of Ed.D. recipients at these universities.

### Project Goals

The evaluation is built around the overall CPED Initiative project goals described in the funded grant proposal submitted to FIPSE:

- ***Document and evaluate change in the organizational structures of member schools of education to accommodate new professional practice degrees for school and college leaders.***
- ***Document and evaluate change in the signature learning processes, learning environments, and patterns of engagement of faculty and candidates in member Ed.D. programs.***
- ***Document and evaluate member fidelity to the set of guiding principles developed in Phase 1 of the CPED initiative.***
- *Describe “lessons learned” from the experiences of Phase 1 CPED universities that can be useful to a new cohort of participating universities.*

During 2012-13, the project concentrated on the first three of these goals—bolded and italicized above—through a wide range of activities. Pilot studies at three universities were completed in 2011-12 and early in the following project year that encompassed these goals. During the 2012-13 project year, research teams conducted 21 case studies at the Phase 1 CPED universities utilizing research protocols developed in early 2011-12 and refined through the pilot case studies phase of project research. The “lessons learned” analysis will be completed in early fall 2013. In addition, major work took place during 2012-13 to support the integration of Phase 2 institutions into the CPED network. As discussed below in more detail, these new recruits to CPED began their program design or redesign efforts, attended the CPED convenings, and presented early results of their work at the June 2013 convening.

### Evaluator Data Collection Activities

The evaluator continued to collect information about the research design and data collection processes that had been established by CPED in 2011-12 to document and evaluate implementation of CPED principles and practices at Phase 1 institutions. This included participating in the summer 2013 CPED conference, reviewing documents related to research protocol development, researcher training, presentations made by project leaders, and publications written by a variety of project participants. The evaluator downloaded and reviewed documents associated with the research design and its implementation. CPED made available draft and final copies of presentations, internal documents, and other descriptive material. The project PI answered additional questions through an email-based interview.

### Research Activities by CPED: Findings

The key evaluation question has to do with the quality of the research design created by CPED to address its project goals and its implementation of the research design across Cohort Phase 1 sites in 2012-13. Based on analysis of this process the main findings are:

- Instruments developed by the CPED project for pilot site data collection in 2011-12 were refined as a result of pilot implementation and applied to the 21 Phase 1 programs.
- The instruments themselves represent strong examples of good qualitative research. Relevant research methodology literature was consulted and used extensively in design of the instruments; and experienced researchers were deeply involved in design, revision, and pilot application of the instruments.
- The project developed an organized strategy to train and support research teams that conducted the 21 studies and fed data into a cross-case analysis.
- The CPED Initiative implemented an elaborate case study development and analysis process. The project's own research findings were produced through this process and reviewed by the external evaluator.

The case study data collection and analysis process employed by CPED was designed to produce reliable and valid findings from each case, using these findings as the basis for cross-site descriptive and analytical conclusions. Each of the 21 cases developed through on-site research and other document analysis by project research teams was read and reread by three researchers

through the lens of the overall Research Questions. Case study material included artifacts, interviews, and documents. The researchers also conducted two on-line surveys. The data in each case study analysis was used to construct a matrix of Research Question themes. Case study materials and matrices then were used to extract information about broad themes at the institutional, program, and individual (doctoral students, program faculty) levels. Preliminary conclusions were drawn in each of these categories—again by overall research question.

For example, research teams looked for and presented evidence about the impact of CPED on institutional policies about doctoral study in education. They extracted and summarized themes like faculty engagement and support for the design/redesign process and its results, or the extent to which faculty roles began to change in these programs. The research summaries also flagged obstacles or challenges to successful implementation of the CPED design principles.

In the course of their work, project researchers probed doctoral student motivations, expectations, and actual experiences. They gathered information about the views of faculty members at Phase 1 CPED institutions, examined program documents, and interviewed program and college leaders at these institutions. Among other things, these research activities uncovered a great deal of contextual information about design and redesign of education doctoral programs at the Phase 1 universities. They also highlighted differences across campuses in the way CPED principles were translated into program features. As noted in a CPED presentation to the 2013 AERA Conference, “CPED provided programmatic information in the form of principles and design features, and depending on the program’s context and where it was in the design/implementation process, this information was used in different ways.” The external evaluator’s survey of campus PDs also found that they were the beneficiaries of technical assistance from CPED leaders and from member institutions.

### *Summary of Findings*

The role of external evaluation for this project is to examine how the project organized and conducted its own research. Findings reported by the CPED research teams are described or even quoted to show how the process was implemented. Evaluator findings are based on review of research design materials, preliminary findings made available to the evaluator by CPED, presentations to professional groups by the project, and analysis of how the research process was

conducted. Through these steps, the project external evaluator is able to conclude that a carefully designed and implemented research process has been employed by CPED to draw conclusions about Phase 1 design and redesign of education doctoral programs across its member institutions. At this stage of the CPED project (with cross-case analyses due to be completed in fall 2013), there are strong reasons to have confidence in the analyses and conclusions of the CPED research teams.

### Implementation of New and Redesigned Doctoral Programs: Findings

As a result of recruitment activities under the FIPSE grant, thirty-four colleges and universities joined the project as Phase 2. This group included twenty-six public and private institutions with doctoral programs as well as eight campuses of the California State University (CSU) system. All Phase 2 institutions began the process of designing or modifying Ed.D. programs at their respective institutions, joining the Cohort One institutions in the work of fundamental change to doctoral education<sup>1</sup>.

Through a survey of university CPED project directors (PDs) and review of university program presentations at the June 2013 CPED convening in Washington, DC, the evaluator was able to learn a great deal about the outcomes of CPED work across its national network of member institutions. These sources of data also shed light on implementation status, challenges encountered by the member institutions, and progress made at CPED sites toward longer-term sustainability of redesigned doctoral education.

Phase 1 and 2 project directors responded to a survey administered on-line in late June and early July 2013 (see Attachment 1). Asked through a multiple-response question what attracted them to CPED, 53% of respondents said that the CPED philosophy brought them to the initiative, and 73% reported that CPED attracted them because of the desire or need to modify an existing education doctoral program. ***These responses suggest very strongly that CPED is influencing the redesign of programs already in existence, thus acting as a change agent in the overall landscape of American doctoral education.***

With respect to the status of program redesign, 53% of project PDs reported that the process had been completed; redesign is still underway at 27% of member institutions, and 20%

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<sup>1</sup> The CPED principal investigator reported on June 23, 2013 that one Phase 2 institution, the University of Tennessee, subsequently decided to postpone its participation in CPED.

of respondents are leading new program designs. For both groups of institutions, the on-line survey asked about the influence of CPED on their work. All respondents (100%) reported that CPED meetings had assisted them in their work, and they all responded that CPED initiative leaders had been important sources of help through conversations and other interactions. An indication of how valuable the CPED network has been is the fact that 83% of project PDs obtained advice and assistance from other CPED institutions, including documents relevant to their design or redesign that were provided by colleagues elsewhere (83% gave this answer to a separate item about sources of assistance). Similarly, the CPED leadership was the source of documents for 83% of the campus project directors.

These survey findings suggest two important implications of the overall CPED initiative: first, *the Initiative itself*—through project leaders, graduate assistants, and others—*was influential as a source of interest in doctoral program changes across the country*. Secondly, *Initiative leaders did more than talk about the CPED work*—campus leaders indicate they also provided important information and technical assistance that facilitated the work at individual universities. And finally, *the network of CPED institutions was just as important to the work of member campuses*. Perhaps this combination of central and distributed leadership offers broader lessons for promoting change in higher education: peer-to-peer support may be more effective under the umbrella of initiative leadership that is equally active in advancing the change process, while central leadership may function best when it also enables initiative members to work with each other.

#### *What's happened so far as a result of CPED?*

University project directors report important changes in the core features of their education doctoral programs. Among other things, 50% of those with completed program redesigns say their programs are now characterized by a “signature pedagogy” while 83% report that research and inquiry are connected to practice, and 84% indicate that the program has required core courses. Half of respondents (50%) say that program changes have improved its alignment with K-12. As a result of the redesigns, 92% of PDs indicate that doctoral student capstone projects are influencing education practice, and 74% report the capstone projects are having an influence on education policy.

Project directors where the design process is still underway report that core CPED principles will be at the heart of doctoral education when their work is complete: 100% of these campus leaders expect that research and inquiry in doctoral education will be connected to practice, 80% say that capstone projects will be included in the program, and 80% believe the program will have a signature pedagogy.

Based on these two sets of survey responses, it seems reasonable to conclude that for the universities whose program designs are complete, core CPED principles are embedded in the programs. It is particularly noteworthy that PDs believe that capstone projects—which seek to bring together all the strands of a doctoral student’s learning and experience into a single overarching paper or project—are influencing educational practice (probably in the settings where program graduates work) as well as education policy. This suggests that an important part of the CPED philosophy, bridging the often-yawning gap between educational research and on-the-ground practice in school settings, is having some success.

For those programs still in their redesign phase, the survey findings indicate the influence of CPED leadership and support. The strong focus on capstone projects (80% of respondents) and signature pedagogy (also 80%) grow directly from the work of CPED, the content of its convenings, and the example of Cohort One projects that are complete.

A sample of education doctoral program emphases and features shows the range of changes that CPED inspired, supported, and disseminated. A key part of the CPED philosophy is the principle that programs emphasize “problems of practice” in dissertations and similar capstone projects for doctoral students. Examples of this work were highlighted at the June 2013 CPED meeting in Washington, DC:

- At one institution, doctoral students studied and wrote about the “effects of cognitively guided problem solving” in second grade mathematics classrooms.
- Another group of students at CSU Fresno worked with the University’s Center to Close the Achievement Gap, and some of their fellow doctoral students collaborated with a statewide foundation as well as local civic and faith-based organizations.
- The problem of practice in another program led to creating a “scoring rubric for evaluating the quality of best practice evidence” gathered from higher performing *and* lower performing schools.
- In yet another example, as part of their doctoral work the graduate students “developed reform strategies and action plans” for local workforce initiatives.

Doctoral program structures and processes have been created to facilitate and sustain these kind of practice-relevant projects and dissertations. The University of Connecticut's three-year program includes hybrid courses (online and face-to-face); co-research projects that reach across disciplines; and mentorships with both scholars and practitioners. At another CPED university, all dissertations include a chapter that is developed as a white paper on the dissertation topic. The faculty accept this chapter when it is ready to be shared with relevant external stakeholders, and it includes recommendations aimed at improving a "problem of practice". Arizona State's program includes a "Research Day" attended by the doctoral students, faculty scholars, other students in the College of Education, program graduates, and members of the wider education community in the local area.

### *Faculty Roles*

The PD survey asked respondents whether doctoral program faculty now view their roles differently as a result of program changes that are underway or have been completed. Here, the story is mixed: 54% reported that faculty view their roles differently. This is an important finding: ***to the extent that role conceptions are different, this is likely to support sustainability well beyond the period of CPED support.*** Nonetheless, 31% of survey respondents feel their faculty colleagues have not changed how they understand their roles in a doctoral program.

The survey offered respondents a chance to elaborate on their answers. One project director wrote about both sides of the faculty role issue: "A feature of our program is a 'mentor team' that works with a thematic learning community. This team approach is totally different than 'accepting' individual doctoral students. Some faculty are really getting into this new notion, but others struggle - they still want one person to be a leader and make the decisions about scheduling, etc." Another respondent commented, "All courses are taught collaboratively by a faculty member and a practitioner. Most faculty have made the leap to focusing on practice."

Yet another PD cited changes in the structure of the program from the standpoint of faculty composition and expectations of faculty: "We have added many more clinical faculty since the original re-design, and have expanded their roles and responsibilities within the school greatly. Also, all tenure track faculty are expected to contribute to the Ed. D." And finally from those who think faculty operate differently came this comment: "The faculty view the EDD [sic]

as a collaborative program, where we all take responsibility for all of the students and courses in the program.”

Continuity as well as change characterize the way one program’s faculty seem to be operating post-redesign: “Faculty view their roles as preparing quality students who have the knowledge and skill sets to meet their professional roles. Those aspects have not changed. The context within which some of those skills can be demonstrated has widened for some but not for others. We have always focused on evidence based decision making and learning by design to ensure continuous quality improvement - CPED initiative has not changed that.” And as a “work in progress” some programs are finding that their faculty have begun to rethink how they function but the change process has a bit of distance yet to do: “Some faculty are still sitting on the fence taking a wait and see approach. They don't value the EdD and consider their involvement at this time a waste of their time. This attitude is slowly changing over time.”

#### *Impact on Doctoral Students*

CPED stakes a lot on improving the way education doctoral programs prepare their students for current and future positions in education. And the project directors find positive outcomes in this regard. As noted above, most of them believe that doctoral student capstone projects affect education practice (92%) as well as education policy (75%). They also reported that program graduates have developed the capacity for data-driven decision-making as a result of their program experiences (87%).

#### *Final Comments*

As to how all this has come about, evaluation survey respondents were pretty direct. Two-thirds of survey respondents felt strongly enough about CPED’s impact on their work and that of their university to offer detailed reflections. These comments touched on accomplishments, remaining challenges, and limitations of doctoral program redesign at American colleges and universities in a time when higher education is under tremendous pressure to change more quickly and more thoroughly. As one project director said,

The national conversation began before CPED. Accountability in K-12 schools and universities has meant that a shift in doctoral preparation has been occurring for well over a decade. Dr. Schulman provided a common framework and language for discussion across institutions. The components of that framework are

part of good pedagogy and educational psychology theory that he has applied successfully to various professions. It is our sincere hope that the children who are taught by the educational leaders whom we produce benefit from the expertise that they gain throughout their program.

Another described CPED as “A great initiative with both accomplishments and promise”.

Elaborating on this theme, the project director at a different university reported:

I don't think we would have succeeded in revising our Ed.D. without CPED. We tried once before and couldn't do it. CPED provided a structure and source of information for our planning committee, but the list of prestigious universities involved also lent weight to the importance of the work. It gave our planning committee the "nerve" to push forward with their vision. It was outstanding that from the start CPED realized the importance of letting every institution apply the design principles to their context. I think this is what will contribute to success in the long run.

And still another university leader, referring to colleagues as well as herself, indicated that “We value this project, especially as it has been a primary impetus for us to improve doctoral education overall. It jarred us from complacency/survival mode to re-consider how to better serve students and society in general through doctoral education.”