

**CPED Case:**

**Faculty Resistance to Higher Education Program Change:**

**A Case of Difference**

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Abstract

This case focuses on faculty responses to an Ed.D. redesign effort in a college of education. The redesign involves two departments within the college and allows for students to compare and contrast the redesign process, especially in terms of faculty responses to these efforts. The Ed.D. redesign efforts in the two departments were initiated through involvement in the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) and the use of CPED principles. Teaching notes are included that provide opportunities to discuss and role play interactions between the Dean and faculty members around Ed.D. redesign components.

Case Narrative (or the Dean's Dilemma)

Dean Rutledge sat in his office reflecting on his two meetings with the faculty in the Department of Teaching and Learning (TL) and the Department of Higher Education (HE). He requested these meetings to assess how the implementation of the redesign of the Ed. D. doctoral programs in each department was progressing. The meetings couldn't have been more different. In one case there was energy, excitement and visible changes in the way the TL department faculty described their redesigned Ed.D. In the other, the HE department, faculty were still feeling overburdened and, while some changes had been made, the plans for the future seemed vague at best.

**Two Doctoral Programs**

When he became Dean of Western University, Steve Rutledge found out soon enough that the two Ed.D. programs in the College of Education were struggling. Faculty in both units were certainly competent and had members who were nationally known in their respective fields. However, during his interview when he spoke with graduate students, alumni, and with the Provost, there were concerns raised about the relevance of the programs for graduates and the lack of energy exhibited by faculty in both units. Also, there appeared to be little distinction between Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs in the two departments. Although faculty members in TL were at earlier career stages, both groups of faculty were fairly evenly distributed in ranks. Western Indiana University was a research extensive university, which had grown considerably over the last decade. The College of Education was credited with a large proportion of that growth. The two programs were the only Ed.D. programs in the College, although the other two

units—counseling and special education—had masters and Ph.D. programs and were considering developing Ed.D. programs. One of the reasons Dean Rutledge was interested in the Ed.D. redesign was to create models for the other units as they developed their own education doctoral programs.

The Department of Teaching and Learning was composed of 15 faculty members focusing on elementary and secondary education areas. The Ph.D. program was designed primarily for students planning to become professors, while the Ed.D. program was designed for students seeking teaching and learning roles in districts, e.g., Directors of Curriculum, Elementary Education and Secondary Education. However, students, alumni and several faculty members told Dean Rutledge during his interview that there was little distinction between the two programs in terms of coursework or capstone experiences. In fact, one faculty member referred to the Ed.D. as “PhD lite.” The enrollment in the doctoral programs had begun to decrease in the last few years with competition from other state institutions. The teaching and learning faculty that Dean Rutledge interviewed seemed to be interested in making the Ed.D. program more relevant to careers of their students and to use more innovative pedagogies.

The Department of Higher Education had had a long and distinguished history in the state primarily in preparing administrators for higher education and student affairs areas. The Ed.D. program began with a sizeable grant from the Danforth Foundation and had been recognized in its earlier years for its innovative pedagogies. Over time, the number of Ed.D. students had decreased and the number of Ph.D. students significantly increased, to the point where faculty were overburdened and student time to graduation was lengthy. Faculty to whom Dean Rutledge spoke had trouble distinguishing the PhD and Ed.D. programs. The coursework was the same and capstone experiences were indistinguishable. The faculty was especially concerned that the level of research methodology courses and the rigor of research be emphasized in both programs. Many of the veteran faculty had little appreciation for applied research and the newer faculty who did emphasize applied research felt marginalized.

### **CPED as a Vehicle for Change**

As a new Dean, Rutledge’s first year in the role was spent getting accustomed to the university and college budget, fundraising, and strengthening connections with the field. He also spent a considerable amount of time getting to know faculty and the particular issues of the departments. In one of his trips outside the College, he attended a meeting of the Council of Academic Deans from Research Education Institutions (CADREI) in which Lee Shulman spoke about professional doctoral programs in a variety of disciplines. After the presentation, he chatted with Dr. Shulman and found out about the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). On his way back to campus, he checked out the CPED website and reviewed the CPED design principles. Impressed with Shulman’s argument and with the CPED activities and outcomes, he asked the two chairs of the TL and HE departments to determine if they and their faculty were interested in joining. He assured the department chairs of his support for their membership in

CPED and was excited to hear that both departments were willing to be part of the project. In neither case, did he hear the excitement he was looking for, but thought it was worth supporting the two groups to see if the CPED involvement could be useful in redesigning and energizing the programs.

Each department sent two faculty representatives and two graduate students to the CPED convening. When they returned they reported to the faculty and both groups decided they would begin work determining which design principle seemed most relevant to them and identifying initiatives to work on.

The two groups continued to attend CPED convenings and their representatives worked with the faculty on specific redesign elements. The Department of Teaching and Learning decided to address many of the CPED principles including, creating a cohort structure, fostering a community of scholars, encouraging critical thinking about topics such as social justice, honoring the scholarship of teaching, using students' workplaces as their laboratories of practice, having students perform cycles of inquiry, and requiring a capstone that was focused on a problem of practice. The faculty became especially energized by viewing their work as a professional learning community. As time went by, the faculty included students and alumni in their conversations and these groups also became energized by the conversations, plans, and outcomes. By the second year, the faculty in Teaching and Learning had developed plans sufficient to change their website. On the website, they emphasized the CPED connections. In particular, they focused on cohort learning around problems of practice.

The Department of Higher Education also found many of the CPED design principles helpful in their redesign efforts. They were discussing a cohort structure but had not utilized it yet. They also had plans to develop a common set of courses focused on research and on preparing for positions in university student affairs administration. They hoped to foster a community of scholars via their distance education program and wanted to encourage critical thinking about social justice. They also had developed plans for focusing the dissertation on problems of practice. They were, however, struggling with the purpose and structure of the comprehensive examination. Several of the veteran faculty members in the Department were concerned that some plans might diminish the rigor of the program, especially in regard to research. They were struggling with the website in terms of providing specific descriptions of the purpose of the Ed.D. degree.

### **The Dean Meets with the Departments**

The involvement of the two departments in CPED began two years ago, and the Dean was anxious to find out what progress had been made. He asked to meet with the faculty in the two departments not only to find out what progress had been made but also the level of excitement and energy around these plans.

His meeting with the Department of Teaching and Learning faculty was exciting and their use of CPED principles was obvious. Describing the Ed.D. cohort as the “CPED cohort,” the faculty emphasized how their involvement in CPED was the primary incentive and resource for making the Ed.D. changes. They began their meeting with the Dean by presenting their website. The website stated that the program created “a learning community for educators to develop and critique their practices.” The Ed.D. program examined problems of practice in terms of challenges and opportunities. The website explained in specific detail how the dissertation focused on a problem of practice in their districts and schools and was designed to contribute to their innovative practices. One of the areas that the faculty was proud of was how they had been able to distinguish the Ed.D. and PhD and to develop a series of Ed.D. courses and experiences that were not watered down. Although the number of required courses differed with the Ph.D., the Ed.D. research courses were designed to be more action-oriented and applicable to their educator roles.

As part of the presentation to the Dean, the faculty invited some doctoral students to talk about their experiences. Several students commented on the fact that they felt they were learning more methodology than the Ph.D. students because all the methods courses were applicable to both their work in data-informed decision making and their dissertations. In regard to other courses in the Ed.D. program, the students commented on the way the courses brought in experts from other disciplines, e.g., business, policy, and media to create authentic learning experiences and to provide the students opportunities to engage these speakers in an intellectual and practical discussion about relevant problems they faced in their jobs. The students also praised the redesigned program in terms of how faculty members were more accessible to them. They stated how they now felt that faculty was more likely to understand their needs, skills and experiences. They also commented on how faculty no longer assumed they came as blank tablets but instead valued the experiences, skills, and knowledge that the students brought to the Ed.D. program. Several used the term “family” to describe their new feeling of engagement with the faculty.

Several faculty members described the role that CPED played in their redesign efforts. They talked about meeting other CPED members and getting new ideas regarding sequencing courses and blending practice and scholarship as well as creating authentic learning opportunities. When Dean Rutledge asked about how their roles had changed, several faculty members commented positively about the influence they felt in redesigning the program and how this had enriched their class conversations with students. They also, however, admitted that the CPED work had taken more of their time and commitment to ensure that they developed an effective program.

After their presentation, the Dean asked what had influenced their success thus far. Faculty mentioned having a common purpose developed by recognition that in order to survive they needed to think differently about the Ed.D. degree. This common purpose, as well as a common language provided by CPED, allowed them to develop into a professional learning community. Several faculty members also mentioned the role that the department chair and a couple of the veteran faculty played as change agents in supporting the redesign. Some of the untenured

faculty mentioned how the department chair had provided release time for their Ed.D. design work and how several of the veteran faculty had worked with them on articles so that their programmatic redesign work paid off in publications focused on the scholarship of teaching.

The next day, the Dean attended a meeting with the faculty in the Department of Higher Education. Mostly the presentation was made by the Department Chair who described the successes and challenges they faced. In terms of successes, the Chair mentioned their move to an on-line Ed.D. program using a variety of distance education elements, and the innovative use of technology. The group felt this would increase the number of Ed.D. students. The Chair also felt that discussing CPED principles around the Ed.D. redesign had helped the department to come together rather than be a federation of individual professors. Although they had not created a cohort structure yet, the Department was experimenting with various ways to group students and help them learn from each other. Because of the large number of PhD students, the Department had been given approval to search for two new faculty; thus the student-faculty ratio would be lowered. The Chair summarized by saying while changes had been made the CPED redesign was only mid-way through.

Challenges, identified by the Chair, included lack of progress on several CPED principles that had been considered but that the department was not quite ready to make dramatic changes involving these principles. For example, there is a continuing lack of distinction between the PhD and Ed.D.. He mentioned that because of the small number of Ed.D. students, the courses weren't differentiated between Ed.D. and PhD students. In addition to not utilizing a cohort structure yet, the Chair mentioned their struggle with a common set of courses focused on research and the comprehensive examination.

The Dean asked the faculty for their assessment of CPED and what they thought the issues were. Several veteran faculty members said that the CPED conversation had raised some important issues about the purpose of the Ed.D. program and it was good to talk about making the program better. They were, however, worried that if they focused on practice and applied scholarship, rigor in the program, especially around research, would be diminished or lost. Some faculty also mentioned that reducing course and research rigor would damage the department's reputation. They also identified the problem of reduced faculty productivity as a result of all this redesign work.

Although no students were invited to the meeting, the Dean had interacted with some Ph.D. students from the Department and was surprised to find out that the students had never heard of a CPED program.

After the meeting, several newer faculty asked to meet with the Dean and expressed their frustration with the lack of progress in the CPED redesign for the HE Ed.D.. They felt that several of the senior faculty feared the redesign efforts because they were worried about losing power in the department. They also were concerned that the Department Chair was not

providing change leadership to the group. Several of them had been told by senior faculty that involvement in the CPED process would not be valued for tenure and promotion and that they needed to focus their attention on traditional research and publication outlets.

## **Conclusion**

As Dean Rutledge pondered the meetings, he realized that in many ways CPED had been one of the best things to happen for both departments, but that the Ed.D. redesign had been more successful so far for the TL Department. He identified at least three issues that needed attention. First, what could be done to diminish the faculty resistance in the HE department to enable them to make progress in redesigning the Ed.D. program there? Second, how could he encourage the two departments to support each other and work together for overall redesign? Third, what did he need to do and provide to enable the TL department to continue and institutionalize their redesign changes?

## **Teaching Notes**

Although this case may be used with higher education students and others preparing to be faculty members, the readings and instructional activities are primarily designed for university departments and administrators to use in identifying how to respond to issues of change, resistance, and implementation.

### Readings:

#### 1. Change

Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Heath, C. & Heath, D. (2010). *Switch. How to change things when change is hard*. New York: Broadway Books.

#### 2. Faculty resistance

Gaff, J.G. (1978). *Overcoming faculty resistance. Institutional renewal through the improvement of teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Trowler, P.R. (1998). *Academics responding to change. New higher education frameworks and academic cultures*. Buckingham, England: Open University.

Kazlow, C. (1977). Faculty receptivity to organizational change: A test of two explanations of resistance to innovation in higher education. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 10, 2, 87-98.

Weimer, M. (1990). *Improving college teaching: Strategies for developing instructional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Nordvall, R.C. (1982). *The Process of change in higher education institutions*. AAHE-ERIC/Higher Education Research Report, No. 7.

Clarke, J.S. (1996). Faculty receptivity/resistance to change, personal and organizational efficacy, decision deprivation and effectiveness in Research I universities. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Memphis, (TN, October 31/November 3, 1996).

3. CPED articles  
(Add CPED articles on Design principles, Shulman, etc.)

### Instructional questions and strategies

1. Discuss the faculty resistance in the HE Department. What do you perceive as influencing the faculty resistance in the HE Department? In what ways is the faculty resistance functional and dysfunctional? As Dean Rutledge what strategies could you use to address the dysfunctional resistance? How would you respond to functional resistance?
2. Role play a meeting between Dean Rutledge and the HE Department Chair. What would be the purpose of your meeting and what would you say to further this purpose?
3. Identify those resources, initiatives, etc. that the TL department needs to continue their redesign efforts? How would you encourage them to begin?
4. Role play a meeting between Dean Rutledge and the TL Department Chair.
5. Compare what you know of the websites of the two programs. If you were a student what would you conclude about the program purposes?