

**Reframing Roles in a University/District Collaboration:
Who Knows What Educational Leaders Need to Learn?**

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Abstract

This case outlines a dilemma encountered during an on-campus interview with Kathryn Wallace, a finalist for a faculty vacancy in the distinguished Educational Administration Department at Eastern University. She met with students, faculty members, the Dean, and a community partner during her on-site interviews. These meetings left conflicting impressions of the program redesign efforts (based on the work of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate), including the role of the community partner.

Teaching notes include role-playing opportunities between stakeholders around relevant leadership preparation, and a discussion of the indicators of CPED's Working Principles.

Keywords

Educational leadership, resistance to change, school-community partnership, program redesign, educational doctorate

Case Narrative

Eastern University has enjoyed a reputation as an excellent school leadership preparation program for years, having received several national awards. Several retired faculty members have written textbooks that are commonly used in educational administration programs across the country. Six years ago, the Dean and Assistant Dean heard a presentation by Dr. David Imig about the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) at the University Council for Educational Administration's annual meeting. He described the project as a process through which university programs either develop or review their program in order to re-imagine the professional doctorate. This idea resonated with the deans, and when they returned to campus, they sat down with their educational administration faculty, announcing, "We're going to use the CPED Working Principles to redesign the program." Dean Smith selected Dr. Laura Stovall, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources at neighboring Adams School District and a recent program graduate, to serve as a community partner in the process. This was a big step toward changes as partnerships in the program had been atypical, and were characterized by attendance at an annual meeting to receive a report from the program.

The Dilemma

For the past two years, Kathryn has worked as an Assistant Professor at a small liberal arts college in the Midwest. There she has been an active participant in the initial development stage of an Ed.D. degree, aligned with the Working Principles developed by the Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (CPED). Her department has offered a Ph.D. in Educational Administration for years, but in the past five years, faculty members have studied current scholarship about the professional doctorate, including articles by Shulman (2006), Maxwell & Kupczyk-Romanczuk (2007), and Archbald (2008). They

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agreed that their Ph.D. was not designed to meet the needs of practitioners. Several faculty members received informal feedback from the field, implying that graduates seemed better equipped to discuss theoretical problems than to lead their faculty through the change process. As a result, they developed a proposal to add an Ed.D. degree that was approved through the campus process. The first Ed.D. cohort began this fall.

When Kathryn saw the posting for the Assistant Professor vacancy at Eastern, she gave serious consideration to applying. While she enjoyed the teaching, service and research in her current position, she grew up fifty miles from the Eastern University campus, and was excited by the prospect of being able to work in a field she loves, in close proximity to her family and life-long friends. After considering the invitation for several days, Kathryn decided to accept the offer for an on-campus interview. Less than a week after submitting her completed online application, she received a phone call from Dr. Randolph Parrish, chair of the search and a faculty member in the program, thanking her for submitting her application, and inviting her to come for an on-campus interview. Her initial response to the invitation was amazed disbelief. While she was delighted, a stream of “What if?” options now raced through her mind. Eastern had a long-standing reputation for excellence – but she was already a valued part of an excellent faculty team at her current institution, one that appreciated learning together. She wondered if there would be faculty at Eastern that would engage in the kind of CPED redesign work for the educational doctorate that she so enjoyed doing, focused on relevant leadership preparation.

After considering the invitation for several days, Kathryn decided to accept the offer for an on-campus interview. The schedule that Search Chair Parrish sent to her included meetings with Dean Smith and members of the program faculty, as well as a campus tour conducted by Geraldine Graves, a current doctoral student at Eastern University who works as a middle school principal in a neighboring district. In addition, she had dinner with members of the Search Committee:

- Armando Garcia, Ed.D., an elementary principal and alumnus of Eastern University’s Educational Administration Program;
- Geraldine Graves, middle school principal and doctoral student (Ed.D.) at Eastern University;
- Laura Stovall, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Adams School District, and alumna of Eastern University’s Educational Administration Program;
- Rolland Parrish, Ph.D., Search Committee Chair.

The Visit

During her campus visit, Kathryn noted a wide variation in perspectives about the program, most notably about the role of community partners in the Ed.D. process. Dr. Garcia was proud to have completed his undergraduate and Master’s degrees at Eastern, and talked about the convenience of the program. “It didn’t take long to complete the courses (three years), and the content was very similar to my Master’s program, so it didn’t require much time away from my family.” Since the classes were held in the school where he serves as a principal, he decided to complete a doctoral degree program

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there. He said that he doesn't recall any conversation in his classes about CPED, so was unclear about what the Working Principles are.

Geraldine Graves serves as a middle school principal and is currently a doctoral student in the program at Eastern University. When Kathryn asked her what she learned in the program that helps her serve as an exceptional leader, she paused to reflect, then added, "I know how to use several statistical methods." While the courses were initially face-to-face, the program delivery model transitioned to a blended online format while she was in the program.

Dean Smith described the program faculty. "At Eastern, you will have the opportunity to work closely with faculty members, all of whom have practical experience in school and organizational leadership." He differentiated between an Ed.D. and a Ph.D., each of which has a significantly distinct purpose. "When I heard David Imig present about the educational doctorate several years ago, I knew we needed one; plain and simple." When Kathryn asked the Dean about how their programs stay relevant, he responded directly. "We're a CPED member now, so we'll always stay relevant." Laura Stovall engaged Kathryn in conversation at the recruiting dinner. They talked about their common interest in organizational change, which was the topic of Laura's dissertation. When asked about her role as a community partner with the program, or about a doctoral field study, however, it became clear that the program's espoused theory differed considerably from their theories in use (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

The Decision

Following her Research Colloquium presentation, Kathryn thanked her hosts for the opportunity to interview, and drove to the airport with a stream of questions racing through her mind. She wrestled with the stark contrasts provided by various people with whom she had conversation over the past 36 hours, trying to decide if this place would, in fact, be a fit for her.

Conclusion

A common set of challenges for faculty who interview for a new academic position includes, "What will *really* be expected?" or "How will my research agenda be supported?" Kathryn was intrigued about the possibility of teaching in this well-known program, and went into the interview process with a critical eye and ear. She left confused, however, wondering what decision to make based on the wide variation of interpretations and experiences shared with her by various stakeholders during her campus visit.

Teaching Notes

These readings and instructional activities have been developed for use with CPED Learning Communities, as members re-design their own Ed.D. programs. They are grounded in ambiguity, in order to highlight the importance of the ability to tolerate complexity and to lead change amid competing tensions.

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Educational leadership programs and their administrators could benefit from using such a case to promote change in a systematic way, unpacking their own programmatic mental models, as well as resistance to change and implementation.

Readings:

Argyris, M. and Schön, D. (1974) *Theory in practice. Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Archbald, D. (2008). Research versus problem solving for the education leadership doctoral thesis: Implications for form and function. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, (44)5, 704-739.

Definition of and working principles for Ed.D. program design. (n.d.) In *A knowledge forum on the education doctorate*. <http://cpedinitiative.org/working-principles-professional-practice-doctorate-education>

Fossey, R., Crow, G.M. (2011). The elements of a good case. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 14(4), 1-10.

Maxwell, T.W., & Kupczyk-Romanczuk, G. (2007). The professional doctorate: Defining the portfolio as a legitimate alternative to the dissertation. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, (46)2, 135-145.

Shulman, L., Golde, C.M., Bueschel, A.C., & Garabedian, K.J. (2006). Reclaiming education's doctorates: A critique and a proposal. *Educational Researcher*, 35, 25-32.

Instructional questions and strategies

1. Discuss three reasons that Kathryn should/not accept an offer to teach at Eastern University. Defend your responses.
2. Role-play a conversation between Dean Smith and faculty members of the Educational Administration Program. Discuss indicators of the Ed.D. program being designed to equip scholar practitioners with the competencies to connect research to practice, to lead high performing schools, and to promote growth in student outcomes.
3. Compare the current practices of the Ed.D. program to CPED's Working Principles and Design Concepts. If you were the CPED PI, what recommendations would you make to the program prior to the next CPED Convening?