CPED Case

Redesigning Educational Doctoral Programs:
A Study in the Complexity of Change

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Abstract

This case is based on one key question:

> What competencies do Ed.D. graduates need to be able to demonstrate to successfully lead change in the field?

It focuses on the redesigned Ed.D. program at Evergreen State University, and faculty resistance to the subsequent changes. The redesign was supported by the College of Education's recent admission to the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) Consortium. This case includes teaching notes, including opportunities to discuss and role-play interactions between the Dean, department chair and faculty members around the Ed.D. redesign process. It allows students to examine issues related to leading organizational change.

Keywords   Systems change, faculty resistance, educational doctorate

Case Narrative

As Dean Janice Evans prepared for the annual Educational Leadership Department Fall retreat, she deliberated about how to facilitate the programmatic goal setting for the coming academic year, in light of the division that seemed to be widening between faculty members in the program. Evergreen State had awarded an education doctorate (Ed.D.) for years. They enjoyed a fine reputation and always had plenty of interested applicants for their programs. Recently, however, some faculty members began to notice that a number of students were having trouble with completion, with time to degree rates being increasingly stretched. Junior faculty, in particular, began to question their doctoral program's relevance, wondering if their graduates were being adequately prepared to be school and district leaders, responsive to current contextual challenges.

One Doctoral Program with Multiple Identities

Craig Stone, the former Dean of the College of Education at Evergreen State, had a reputation for being unafraid of change. He reportedly "wanted to shake up all the departments in the College to move toward getting better". He recognized the need for change, but as long as students continued to apply, the need was not so apparent to veteran faculty members. Stone looked for a catalyst to initiate the change process, and found that the CPED Working Principles and Design Concepts were seamlessly aligned with the direction he wanted to take the college. So Evergreen State joined CPED, with

their primary goal to make the redesigned doctoral program more relevant to the needs of practitioners in the field.

The dean asked for volunteers to get involved in CPED; he had great respect for Carnegie, and thought that engagement in the Consortium would give the program the added support to change. He did not, however, engage the faculty in the decision-making process. Having read about the Carnegie work, he saw this new membership as a prime opportunity for faculty professional development, supported by the added cachet that this institutional membership would bring the college. Learning alongside other scholars from 21 American universities the consistent challenges inherent in re-imagining the Ed.D. would become an opportunity to develop a community of learners across the faculty. Stone sent a faculty leader to visit Jamestown State University to learn about their CPED-influenced Ed.D. program. They gathered course materials from other CPED members, and used them to re-design the Ed.D. courses and processes at Evergreen State.

So despite the fact that the courses all emanate from the same program, the on-campus Ed.D. ran as it always had for twenty years, while three off-campus cohorts ran in alignment with CPED's Working Principles and Design Concepts. Students enrolled in the on-campus program began to hear about what students in off-campus cohorts were doing/learning, and were either envious or angry. The on-campus Ed.D. changed very little since it was developed in the late 1970s. A cadre of retired superintendents, along with the professors who had served as their dissertation directors, taught traditional "administration" content classes. They had no interest in changing the program; with students continuously applying, they deemed it to be a successful program. Internships in this model consisted of a checklist at the end of coursework, for which a doctoral student had to identify a district employee who was willing to "sign off".

The CPED-influenced Ed.D. program expanded into site-specific cohorts as the college developed contractual agreements with school districts. These classes were designed to meet contextual needs of the schools/district, and were held in district facilities, thus reducing the stress of commuting and parking on campus for students. From the start of the off-campus Ed.D. program, students were required to collaborate with their district leaders to identify and work toward a data-informed solution to a significant problem of practice in the district. The classes were paired, and delivered in a blended online model, with classes alternating between being taught on-site one week, and being taught online the following week. The fact that classes were co-taught by department faculty (usually junior faculty) and district administrative personnel was one of the most popular features of the program to students. These leaders were very familiar with the district's persistent, complex problems of practice, and helped students construct meaning from their own local experience. In some cases, students and their internship projects gained high visibility when they were asked to present them at a board meeting.

Students saw application of coursework to their daily work. "It's all been strongly applied to current events going on within all of our jobs." Internship activities are fully integrated throughout the coursework (one credit each semester from the beginning). Superintendents were especially pleased to actually have the interns from the "new

Ed.D.' program make important contributions to the school or district, rather than the typically lopsided, resource-heavy situation that requires a mentor for each intern. Possibly the most impactful statement came from an Ed.D. student in an off-campus cohort: "What we discuss on Wednesday night - we apply in our schools Thursday morning!"

The embedded internship is closely aligned with CPED Working Principle 4:
> The professional doctorate in education provides field-based opportunities to analyze problems of practice and use multiple frames to develop meaningful solutions.

When students saw the six CPED Working Principles (see below), they reportedly said, "That sums up what we've been doing all year in our courses".

CPED Working Principles
The Professional doctorate in education:
1. Is framed around questions of equity, ethics, and social justice to bring about solutions to complex problems of practice.

2. Prepares leaders who can construct and apply knowledge to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and communities.

3. Provides opportunities for candidates to develop and demonstrate collaboration and communication skills to work with diverse communities and to build partnerships.

4. Provides field-based opportunities to analyze problems of practice and use multiple frames to develop meaningful solutions.

5. Is grounded in and develops a professional knowledge base that integrates both practical and research knowledge, that links theory with systemic and systematic inquiry.

6. Emphasizes the generation, transformation, and use of professional knowledge and practice.

CPED Consortium, 2009

A student enrolled in the off-campus Ed.D. cohort indicated, "The assignments in this program not only allow us to have real-time application, but also give back to our current district in a meaningful way, versus just doing an assignment for the sake of doing an assignment." Faculty who teach off-campus understand the advantage of the CPED-influenced Ed.D., as well. They notice that theory and practice now inform each other through the students' perspectives, rather than being compartmentalized and separate. "One of the things we identified with our traditional [program] is… it's so hard for the students to connect practice and theory, and you see it in their responses. It's almost like, 'Okay, now I've learned theory; that's done.' Book closed. 'Now I'm learning practice.'"

One of the faculty leaders referred to their Ed.D. as a "practice degree", because it causes faculty to be more intentional about integrating theory and practice in the course

design as well as the implementation. Their programs are now an intentional response to a specific region, not simply "the accumulation of a critical mass of people who are ready to start" in the on-campus courses. In the CPED-influenced Ed.D. program, faculty members have spent significant time with district leaders, in order to specifically determine their needs. It isn't a "random assortment of students who happen to register for a class".

Changes have been made from the first to the second cohort, as a result of surveys and interview feedback, especially related to the research methods courses. The faculty engages in regular progress monitoring of student progress, with implications for curricular design adjustments. Each cohort has an instructor who feels responsible for his or her success. The internship is no longer disconnected from course work and perfunctory, but instead is a laboratory of practice that is "integrated, extended and embedded". This internship model can be viewed as both a laboratory of practice and the program's signature pedagogy.

Changing faculty structure

In the off-campus model, students take two courses a semester, which is not possible to do on campus due to course offerings. This structure led to more faculty collaboration and assignments linked across courses, offering additional course work when needed. As a result, the Program Coordinator has become very selective about who teaches in the program, quickly replacing any ineffective instructor, and altering program requirements (especially related to required research courses) and course designs to meet the needs of students. In order to maintain this flexibility when the program plans to move on campus, Department Chair Evans will move the program to a satellite site so that it can operate more autonomously, much like an off-campus program.

CPED as a Fulcrum for Change

Convenings provide a clear goal of course redesign to align with needs from daily practice. The pre-work (assigned in preparation for the Convening) assigned to faculty who attended the Convening surfaced what was actually being done (as well as not being done) within their own college, department, and program. Dr. Evans reported that when faculty members prepare to report out at Convenings, they tend to get significant clarity about their own program designs and implementation. In addition, they bring back inspiring ideas from Consortium. While most members of the faculty didn't recognize the CPED Working Principles, they described them as "congruent with our program design", particularly the embedded internship.

The Superintendents Speak the Truth or "Change, Change Will Do You Good"

The original Principal Investigators were all junior faculty, and each was determined to make it "their own" program, moving forward into their tenure. One second-year faculty member suggested, "We were the only people who were willing to change things." The redesign was a heavy time commitment, but these faculty members met nationally known educational leadership scholars at the strong national network that comprises the CPED Consortium. These senior scholars wrote external letters for the innovative junior faculty members when they came up for promotion and tenure review.

The faculty members returned from first Convening excited about what they'd learned, ready to apply it with Dean's support. Their colleagues saw these PIs as the Dean's "pets", and had no interest in changing the Ed.D. Many of the veteran colleagues saw no need to change from the existing model that "has served us well for so many years". They told the junior faculty that "no superintendent will accept a redesigned program", a statement that inspired the PIs to get current students to interview their superintendents about it. Their findings from these interviews showed substantial support for the redesigned educational doctorate.

Faculty leaders decided to move the existing, traditional on-campus program to off-campus sites, where it could be redesigned. Ironically, at about the same time, a well-known and highly regarded superintendent approached the department, inquiring about developing a doctoral program for his district faculty. This probe provided a location from which to launch the newly revised program. As the department chair, Dr. Evans supported the move, as she saw potential for positive fiscal implications that have subsequently been realized and multiplied several times.

Lessons Learned

The expanded off-campus locations offered an opportunity for the department to be increasingly responsive to contextualized district needs. A new (fourth) contract has recently been signed with another local school district. Despite a turnover in college and departmental leadership, the momentum established by the transition to off-campus programming was maintained. The new Department Chair is a supporter of CPED involvement. He gave lead faculty financial support and substantial autonomy to complete the redevelopment of the program. The remaining PI says that while constant change is tiring, she wants to standardize all Ed.D. courses and procedures, aligned with the CPED Design Concepts and Working Principles. She indicated that they'll know if they've been successful when the quality of the dissertations have improved significantly, and the graduates have measurable impact on leading school improvement.

Strategies

One important change to note is the order, as well as choice, of the research methods students take. Students can now elect to specialize in qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, and departmental faculty members, rather than methodologists whose syllabi are designed for Ph.D. students, teach many of these courses. Other faculty members have been brought in from other departments and colleges to offer support to students as they approach dissertation stage, which helps them complete within the framework of the college's approved time to completion process.

Instructional Questions
1. Pretend that you are a superintendent of a large, urban district, located 10 miles from Evergreen State. Interview the department chair about what leadership competencies are taught in the off-campus program. How do these competencies impact the improvement of teaching and learning?
2. If you were a third year faculty member in this department, how would you develop a collegial relationship with faculty who teach in the on-campus Ed.D?

program? What are the challenges that hold potential professional danger for you, and how would you navigate them?

3. What could be done to diminish the faculty resistance in the department to support progress in redesigning the Ed.D. program?
4. The Dean has asked departments and programs to report to her about the impact of the department's graduates in the field over the past three years. Where would you begin? Describe your plan systematically to enact this request.
5. Several students from your school district are enrolled in the Evergreen State University doctoral programs. Two attend classes on-campus, and three are members of an off-campus cohort. Role-play a conversation between these two groups of students, both of whom have begun to work on their dissertation (or DiP).

Teaching Notes

The readings and instructional activities developed for this course are designed to provide practice responding to issues of change, resistance, and implementation.

1. Faculty resistance
2. CPED
3. Resistance to change

Instructional Questions/Strategies

1. Discuss the faculty resistance in the department. What do you perceive as influencing the faculty resistance in the Department? In what ways is the faculty resistance functional and dysfunctional? As Dean Stone, what strategies could you use to address the dysfunctional resistance? How would you respond to functional resistance?
2. Role-play a meeting between Dean Stone and Janice Evans, the Department Chair. What would be the purpose of your meeting?
3. Identify those resources, initiatives, etc. that the Educational Administration Department needs to continue their redesign efforts. How would you encourage them to begin?
4. Compare what you know about the program's two Ed.D. programs. If you were a student, what would you conclude about the program's purpose?

<u>Readings</u>

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