

Challenges in (Re)designing EdD Programs: Supporting Change with Learning Cases

Book Review

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Jill Alexa Perry (Editor): *Challenges in (Re)designing EdD Programs: Supporting Change with Learning Cases*. Myers Education Press, 2023. 98pp. Paperback: \$29.95. ISBN 978-1-9755-0548-6

The first EdD program was established in the 1920s, but these programs have morphed and spread nationwide serving students practicing in the field of education. EdD programs have evolved to meet the changing needs of practitioner-students. The EdD and PhD are constantly compared despite having different purposes. Often, the EdD is perceived as having less rigorous standards creating challenges for higher education institutions designing or redesigning EdD programs to meet the needs of students and demands of faculty and administration.

Dr. Jill Perry is the Executive Director of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) and Associate Professor of Practice in the Educational Foundations, Organizations, and Policy at the University of Pittsburgh. In her practice and research, she is committed to distinguishing the EdD from the PhD and to create space for EdD scholar practitioners and their work. She has written on Improvement Science and Organizational Change in EdD programs and has teaching experience in all levels of education. In Dr. Perry's *Challenges in (Re)designing EdD Programs: Supporting Change with Learning Cases*, she presents five case studies involving EdD program issues that are representative of universities across the nation. These case studies are designed for departments to digest and discuss finding common ground and consider new ways to move forward in redesigning programs. EdD programs are designed to allow practitioner-students the ability to grow academically while remaining in practice or with the plan of returning to practice. However, development and implementation of EdD programs can be challenging at times.

The first case study involves a city university where challenges of equity and diversity in coursework are present. In this case, there is discussion on expansion of equity and diversity beyond a singular, elective course. To provide an example of how realistic the case studies are, the author provides the actual program coursework required at this city university EdD program so that the reader can see where challenges in the curriculum may lie. Courses that focus on multiculturalism or social justice in EdD programs are common, but this chapter discusses moving beyond a course and integrating it further into all aspects of the program. This case provides a glimpse into leadership curricula and includes multiculturalism framework as a way to implement diverse perspectives into leadership preparation for students.

A faculty member who is charged with addressing concerns from an EdD evaluation presents in the second case. Even though the program had been redesigned ten years earlier, state funding cuts, declining enrollment, and evaluation feedback precipitate the program to review future directions. Like many programs revisiting the purpose of the program, a dichotomy develops. Newer faculty members want to produce educational leaders and older faculty members want to focus on training future researchers, including using EdD students to support research needs. The evaluation revealed, "no matter what research methods students used, they had trouble getting their research implemented in their professional settings to be able to generate action and change" (p. 28). Because of this and other issues, coupled with layers of stakeholders, the chapter introduces the complexity of leading and managing change. Managing change is necessary and the person tasked with leading the charge should "take both a micro political (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Blasé, 1993) and a learning perspective on the task ahead" (Louis & Murphy, 2017, p. 34).

The third case study addresses a dean's dilemma, whereby "there were concerns raised about the relevance of the programs for graduates and the lack of energy exhibited by faculty in both units" (p. 42) from two departmental units. Here, a department has two EdD programs- one in teaching and learning and the other in higher education. However, both EdD programs reflect a "PhD Lite" philosophy where there is little distinction between the curriculum and outcomes of the EdD and PhD programs. The dean approaches the two department chairs and asks if they would consider joining the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). Both programs join CPED, but with different goals and outcomes. Both find CPED, including CPED principles, helpful in redesigning the programs. Some HE faculty are "concerned that some plans might diminish the rigor of the program, especially regarding research" (p. 44). Issues around change leadership reemerge as being integral to any change or redesign to an EdD program. The author provides suggested readings on change leadership to assist others facing similar situations.

A state institution with a traditional PhD program looking to expand to an EdD program is presented in the fourth case. State funding and enrollment are declining, and more practitioner-students are applying, which, in turn, results in a longer time to graduation



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with the current doctoral program. The dean asks a tenured, associate faculty member to attend a CPED convening to determine whether the EdD would be a good fit for their department. In considering the fit within the department, issues arise concerning the type of dissertation endorsed by CPED, the dissertation in practice. CPED (2010) adopted the term “scholarly practitioner” to reflect the skills EdD students should have upon graduation with the dissertation in practice focusing on “problems of practice rather than ‘gaps in literature’” (p. 57) normally associated with a research-based dissertation. The program in this case identifies that the curriculum still reflects research courses that lend themselves more to traditional PhD dissertations rather than dissertations of scholarly-practitioners. With the support of CPED, the program established goals including:

- blend practical wisdom with professional skills and knowledge to name, frame, and solve problems of practice,
- use practical research and applied theories as tools for change,
- understand the importance of equity and social justice,
- disseminate their work in multiple ways, and
- resolve problems of practice by collaborating with key stakeholders, including the university the education institution, the community, and individuals (p. 58).

The fourth case emphasizes tools and skills that EdD graduates should have so that they can implement them into practice. It further touches on the roles of administration and faculty in implementing change noting that a faculty member is often charged with leading change in the design effort, even though they do not possess the resources or power to implement change without the assistance of the dean or other authority. The term used for faculty members who create organizational change without much authority is coined, “tempered radicals” (Meyerson, 2003, p. 61). These leaders are necessary, but face resistance from other faculty members as redesigning efforts take place. Many faculty members are trained in traditional PhD programs, so opposition to differing EdD processes may occur which require tempered radicals being adept at collaboration and balancing department politics. The author of the fourth case extends her discussion into organization change, where recognition and commitment, response generation, response implementation, and institutionalization (Gallant & Drinan, 2008) are described as stages that faculty and administration travel through to ultimately have the change institutionalized, meaning “the change ‘has moved from the margins of the institution to the core’ (Holland, 2009, p. 85) and has become part of the organizational and cultural structures where sustainability is perpetuated” (p. 63).

The final case presented involves a midsized, private institution faced with redesigning its EdD program. Again, a course schedule is provided so that the reader understands what curriculum design issues might be present. The challenge facing this EdD redesign relates to cohort model programs and preparing students to manage group dynamics. This EdD program requires a group dissertation where students express concerns with participation and contribution among members in their group. Additionally, the chapter points out issues related to “groupthink,” where students take on a particular idea without much independent critical thinking application. This can lead to “deficiencies in students only being able to understand their individual components of an assignment, rather than also being able to connect individual parts and understand the outcomes of a project as a whole” (Scribner & Donaldson, 2001, p. 79).

The final chapter, “Reflections on Cases for Program (Re)design”, Dr. Gary Crow outlines the major themes from the cases, perspectives on the uses of cases, pedagogical tools using cases, and future steps. He identifies the themes as purpose, process, content, and influences on change and he ties the issues from the cases together and suggests how to use them in redesigning EdD programs. The themes are helpful in reflecting on the text’s cases, but also provide a way for the reader to reflect on the reader’s program and how the case may provide guidance and “fit” for issues within their program, department, and institution.

I offer a few critiques for the text. First, the final chapter introduces the woven themes presented in the text’s cases and provides suggestions on how to implement them as guidance for the redesign of EdD programs. If placed at the beginning of the text, it could prepare the reader and provide a mindset in which to read and interpret the cases in a more meaningful way. The themes provide mental “buckets” for both text cases and the reader’s EdD program redesign issues. Second, as Dr. Perry points out in her first chapter, the amount of work unrelated to research and writing by faculty members is steadily increasing. As such, giving more tasks in the way of professional development by having faculty members work on case studies might be met with some resistance, so the implementor should be a very skilled “tempered radical” or have support or direction from higher administration. As reiterated by the text, there is a balance in redesigning all aspects of an EdD program.

The actual case studies in the text reflect real-life issues presented in a variety of institutions and programs. I pondered if one of the cases was a case study of my institution’s program. I say this in jest but feel that any reader who is involved in an EdD redesign will find a case study that resonates with them, and the issues faced at their institution. The case studies provide a way to discuss issues without being directly tied to individuals within a department which can lead to more thoughtful and open conversations. The questions following each case study guide users in conversation and can lead to more discussion regarding the reader’s program.

In conclusion, it seems that the overarching theme of this text is change management - taking a careful and systematic approach to implementing change so that it is ultimately institutionalized. I found myself wanting more discussion in the text around change and organization management after reading the cases. However, what I found to be most useful is each chapter’s author’s discussion and guidance about how to begin addressing some of the issues introduced in the case studies. Towards these ends, several authors provided frameworks, resources, and references that can be tailored to the reader’s program making the text a valuable resource for faculty and administration tasked with overseeing EdD programs.

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