An Emerging Framework for the Ed.D. Activist

University of XX

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The authors of this article are faculty members of an online Ed.D. program in Curriculum Studies at an R-1 state university in the Southeast. Aligned with the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate’s (CPED) Program Design Principles, our program’s website advertises that the Ed.D. “is designed to provide educators with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of social justice in diverse communities and how to… address problems of practice in various academic settings” (Blinded for review, n.d.). As a 100% online program, we attract students from across the country and abroad, none of whom have any trouble identifying a host of ominous problems confronting the schools in their respective locales. In South Carolina, for example, at least 10,000 teachers risked punitive actions from their school districts to attend a rally at the state Capitol to demand action on a wide array of problems they confront daily (Schechter, 2019). According to these teachers’ Facebook page, approximately 30,000 educators and supporters participate in an online forum to express their frustrations over myriad injustices levied at educators and their students. Meanwhile, a couple dozen Ed.D. candidates at the authors’ College of Education successfully defend their dissertations each year. They define a problem of practice for which they methodically research, apply theory, and review the literature. They attempt an intervention, collect and analyze data, and posit the implications. They are duly congratulated at the university’s hooding ceremony. They smile and thank their professors for an engaging and eye-opening experience. And then… what? What is expected of them? What do they expect of themselves? What should their schools and school districts expect of them? These are not unique questions. In October, 2019, the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) convened to discuss those very questions.

Questions centered on the critical topic of activism. As Yang (2016) posits, “Activism is an ambiguous word. It can mean both radical, revolutionary action and nonrevolutionary, community action; action in the service of the nation-state and in opposition to it” (p. 1). “Interaction & Activism in the Education Doctorate: Creating Lasting Impact” served as the theme for the October CPED convening. This theme, developed by the University of XX Ed.D. program faculty, supported our efforts to examine how our students were actively serving as change agents within the world. In addition to delving deeper into the impact of our Ed.D. program, we also recognized an opportunity, in a much broader context, to stimulate discussion regarding a framework for an Ed.D. Activist among CPED-informed degree programs.

Developing a framework for the *emerging* Ed.D. Activist could prove beneficial for the various programs within the CPED consortium. For new programs, the framework might serve as a foundational tool to identify critical elements resident in Ed.D. programs that promote activism and social justice. For more experienced programs, the framework could serve as a basis for ensuring continuing organizational alignment as it relates to coursework, research practices, and extended learning opportunities. Additionally, a framework with input from more than 100 CPED-affiliated colleges and universities could serve as a comprehensive blueprint for program evaluation and program development. To this end, the University XX faculty determined to focus their presentation at the CPED October convening on “The Emerging Framework of the Ed.D. Activist.” The presentation focused keenly on defining the construct of an Ed.D. Activist; exploring the coursework, research, and extended learning opportunities conducive to activism; and identifying methods for monitoring program success and outcomes.

**Review of Literature**

As we give further consideration to the creation of a framework, our review of literature will explore several critical components. In this review of literature, we will first examine the history of the education doctorate as well as its ongoing transformation. Juxtaposed with this history is a discussion of teacher activism with attention to implications for teacher educators. Lastly, we will explore social justice and how it directly or indirectly relates to activism among scholarly practitioners. Building on the history of the education doctorate, as well as the longstanding phenomenon of teacher activism, Ed.D. Activism must inherently embody social justice aims.

**History of the Education Doctorate**

Doctoral programs emerged in the U.S. in the last half of the nineteenth century. They aimed at transmitting and reproducing knowledge within the traditional disciplines of medicine, law, philosophy, and theology. Eventually, doctoral studies shifted focus toward critical thinking, creativity, and research. Simultaneously, industrial advancements, cultural diversity, and societal changes raised the interest in professional education to meet market needs. The education doctorate expanded access to research-based graduate study and offered new contexts for inquiry around professional practice (Archbald, 2011; Taysum, 2006). No longer catering to early-career, young adult learners only, professional doctorates opened the way for professional part-time students (Archbald, 2011). On the other hand, changes in American society led to increased high school enrollments, reinforcing the need for college educated teachers and giving rise to the education doctorate, the Ed.D. (Archbald, 2011).

Educators enrolling in Ed.D. programs are driven by career/professional development or a love for learning (Hawkes, 2016). Regardless of motives, the Ed.D. enables educators to address problems of practice through “research-based and research-driven” principles (Taysum, 2006, p. 330), using their expertise and linking theory to practice (Hawkes, 2016; Taysum, 2006; Tupling & Outhwaite, 2017).

However, the growing popularity of the Ed.D. and the proliferation of Ed.D. programs (Archbald, 2011) come with criticism, bias, and vagueness in differentiation from Ph.D. programs. Shulman et al. (2006) argued that problems in Ed.D. programs are “chronic and crippling” (p. 25). Perceived lack of rigor, compacted formats to meet the needs of working students, absence of community of practice, lack of balance between research and practice, and program structure that mimics the Ph.D. with requirement subtractions confuse the purpose of the Ed.D. and expose it to shortcomings.

In an effort to reclaim the education doctorate, as coined by Shulman et al. (2006), The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) embarked on redesigning doctoral preparation to meet the needs of professional practitioners, naming the capstone project a Dissertation in Practice (DiP). Differentiating it from the traditional five-chapter dissertation, CPED proposes a process of fusing professional practice to academic theory by exploring work-based problems that continue beyond graduation through individual inquiry, collaborative inquiry, or a hybrid combining the two (Storey & Maughan, 2014).

Understandably, transformative changes such as those recommended by CPED are challenging to program structures (Reigeluth, 2019). Kennedy, Altman, and Pizano (2018) recommended a repetitious review process to align program policies and principles. Peterson (2017) suggested a tight timeline with a clear mission, identification of future roles for doctoral students, and the use of CPED principles for guidance. Ezzani and Paufler (2018) advised allocating time for faculty collaboration and engagement in the change process. As institutions continue to strive to improve Ed.D. programs (e.g. Buss, 2018; Creighton, 2008; Mertler & Henriksen, 2018; Normore & Issa Lahera, 2019; Peterson, 2017), scholarly practice will ultimately permeate the teaching profession. Such permeation is necessary to raise the profile of educators among the general public and, more importantly, among the policymakers who influence the working conditions that give rise to teachers’ problems of practice--as well as to their activism.

**The History of Activism in Education**

Teacher activism has a long history and a vibrant present, encompassing resistance to unjust IQ tests in the early 20th century (Stoskopf, 1999), grassroots efforts that gave rise to Head Start in the 1960s (Hale, 2012), and far-reaching accountability-era protests (Brown & Stern, 2018). As teachers continue to engage in activism within and beyond the classroom (Dunn, 2018; Oyler, 2017; Picower, 2012), teacher educators have increasingly expressed a responsibility for their programs to foster teacher activists (Montaño, Lopez-Torres, & DeLissovoy, 2002; Riley & Solic, 2017).

Activism requires “linking citizens together” (Stout, 2010, p. 13), yet the connections afforded by 21st-century technologies have also given rise to so-called slacktivism (Neumayer & Svensson, 2016). As teacher educators in an online program, we take this concern seriously, turning to Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya’s (2017) call for more forward-thinking scholarship on activism that defines what activism is and can be rather than dwelling on what activists have done. Their emphasis on *activism* rather than *activists* privileges concrete behavior over variable identity. Similarly, Kluttz and Walter (2018) defined activists as “all persons participating and learning within a social movement” (p. 94), which necessitates specifying *which* movement.

Given how Ed.D. program participants inhabit dual roles as practitioners and students, establishing a clear and cross-cutting definition of activism is paramount. Likewise, we must heed the risks facing “scholar-activists in a neoliberal environment,” striving to model scholar-activism for our students (Dunn, 2016, p. 22). Cochran-Smith (2010), who envisioned teachers as “advocates and activists” (p. 457), insisted they cannot engage in such work alone. Thus, the Ed.D. Activism construct must be precisely defined, socioculturally situated, and intentionally scaffolded. In our view, social justice must comprise the core of that construct.

**Social Justice and Its Relationship to Activism**

Fundamental to the role of the Ed.D. Activist is understanding the complexity of human rights education and heeding the continuous call to calculate and calibrate transformative spaces where ideological explorations about constitutional rights occur. We expect that educational outcomes of Ed.D. scholar practitioners will ultimately advance the rights and privileges of women, children, people of color, immigrants, and members of the LGBTQA community (Cianciarulo, 2015; Giroux, 2015; Spreen, Monaghan, & Hillary, 2018). This enduring fight for democratic education continues to emerge across the literature as demands for establishing, institutionalizing, and fully practicing justice and equality in schools in the United States are championed. Moreover, effective activist leadership guiding this fight might be realized through a greater reliance on and inclusion of the views, practices, and accomplishments of members of these marginalized groups via cooperative participation (Kezar, Acuña Avilez, Drivalas, & Wheaton, 2017; King, 2015; Ryan & Higginbottom, 2017).

We need Ed.D activists as educational leaders to push public thinking beyond binary exchanges of right versus wrong, female versus male, other versus white, rich versus poor, other versus cis, along with a plethora of oppositional identities that indicate and reify political power. Educational institutions are prime spaces to broaden the narrative about democracy, social justice, and power; however, the primary challenges of changing educational institutions regarding human inequality remain at the forefront of classrooms with instructional leaders (Brooks, Normore, & Wilkinson, 2017; Jaquette, 2017; Theoharis, 2015). This dilemma is entrenched within the socio-economic agendas driving the multiple policies that work against a socially just society. Inglehart (2018) noted that developing educational leaders in support of activism is especially timely with “many marginally democratic countries hav[ing] become increasingly authoritarian and authoritarian, xenophobic populist movements hav[ing] grown strong enough to threaten democracy’s long-term health in several rich, established democracies including . . . the United States” (p. 20). Acknowledging that our present path is diametrically opposed to democratic ideals, educators should rightfully be at the center of activist efforts, which is critical needs work in our current political times.

**Positionality**

The University of XX’s Ed.D. Curriculum Studies program was redesigned in 2014 to embody a 100% online format. The program emphasizes concerns for equity, social justice, self-knowledge, cultural issues, and human growth and development through a balanced approach consisting of both theory and practice. Within the program, students are provided with an in-depth understanding of the theory, history, concepts, techniques, strategies, and issues of diversity in K-12 schools, as well as other social institutions and community settings. The degree program is uniquely designed to facilitate self-reflection that in turn promotes engagement in social justice education.

In October 2019, the University of XX was privileged to serve as the host institution for the CPED October convening. At this time, the Ed.D. Curriculum Studies program consisted of 12 full-time faculty members serving approximately 220 students. As aforementioned, we agreed to view the October convening as an opportunity to explore how the CPED consortium envisioned an Ed.D. Activist and what specific programmatic frameworks and assessments were in place to ensure the desired outcome. After investigating the profiles provided on the CPED website--The Disrupters, The Change Agents, The Leader, The Innovators, The Teachers, and The Collaborators, we saw a need to explicitly identify and articulate the tenets of what we termed the Ed. D. Activist.

**Theoretical Framework**

Examinations of inequity, marginalization and dissonance in educational settings are critical to the work of the Ed.D. Activist. Doctoral programs dedicated to the development of scholarly practitioners who are well versed on the current sociological and political debates will naturally create activist-minded professionals. Ed.D. Activists are then positioned to drive the direction of educational governance as they recognize the increasing importance of inclusivity and acknowledge the power they possess to impact equity through policy (Dulio, O’Brien, & Klemanski, 2008; Marginson, 2016).

Doctoral programs focused on activism are able to influence future leaders emerging from the ranks of Ed.D. educated instructional leaders. These leaders will ideally possess a working knowledge of structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and apply it toward inclusive goals in instructional settings and through professional development opportunities (Burridge, Carpenter, Cherednichenko, & Kruger, 2010). Giddens (1979) described the concept of human action with the overt intent to change power dynamics in education and other political spaces as agency, which is elsewhere illustrated as “identities in motion” (Buchanan, 2015, p. 714). This concept of agency can be seen as complementary to the notion of an activist in that agents challenge established ways of thinking and behaving or what we think of as structure. The disruption of structure or the space for effective activism called agency is a temporal state enabling transformation to emerge. Tural (2017) noted the capacity of structuration theory to support community education agents to respond effectively to the demands of a changing and highly diverse human landscape.

Ed.D. Activists might sustain their work through the use of structuration theory, which further recommends employing a perception that established structure is transient and evolutionary. As such, structures are inevitably replaceable as new intellectual knowledge, practical experience, and personal needs demand change. The cycle of agency and structure is a roadmap to action and meaning construction that continually guides our search for a more socially just experience (Jeffries, 2019). As doctoral education continues to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusivity, this theoretical framework offers a roadmap to successfully establish fluid and flexible policies that support continuous explorations of efficacious commitment to social justice (Berila, 2015; Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2013). Frameworks of this nature demand that we surpass simplistic ways of thinking about equity in education and strive for including diverse perspectives at the multiple decision-making spaces where revolutionary change can expand educational opportunities.

**Methodological Framework**

Without formal processes for documenting the outcomes associated with activism among our Ed.D. graduates, we recognized the need to develop a framework that could 1) describe the characteristics of an Ed.D. Activist, 2) suggest strategies that promote Ed.D. Activism, and 3) measure the impact of Ed.D. Activism among our students and graduates in their local communities. Given the emphasis on activism among the members of the CPED community (CPED, 2019), we felt the inclusion of diverse perspectives from the CPED community would lead to the development of a more broadly useful framework for Ed.D. Activism.

Because we aimed to generate a new understanding of Ed.D. Activism exclusively from the data collected in this study, we selected grounded theory as our methodological approach (Strauss & Glaser, 1967). Grounded theory, a qualitative research methodology with high regard in the education research community (Thomas & James, 2006), is a systematic, flexible, empirical, and creative process of knowledge generation from which the results can be shared, discussed, and in turn, direct future research efforts (Coe et al., 2017; Morse et al., 2009). We purposefully sampled a homogenous group (Patton, 2007) of CPED members who attended an interactive, general session presented at a recent convening (CPED, 2019).

The presentation was organized into three breakout sessions wherein participants first engaged in a prompted discussion about one aspect of our emerging framework. Facilitators used the following prompts for the breakout sessions: Prompt 1) attributes, characteristics and actions of an Ed.D. Activist, Prompt 2) Ed.D. program components to facilitate the Ed.D. Activist, and Prompt 3) strategies to evaluation program success in developing Ed.D. Activists. Each prompt also included guiding questions or statements. During the breakout sessions, 200+ participants sat at large round tables in groups of 4-8 people. Each participant in the general session received prompt-based templates on which to take notes related to the table discussion. A color-coded version of each template was provided, and groups were asked to identify one person to serve as the recorder to reflect the general discussion and ideas generated from the group for each prompt.

The questionnaires were collected at the end of the presentation, scanned, digitally transcribed, and organized into three subsets, each aligned with one aspect of our emerging framework. Two researchers concurrently but independently reviewed each data subset using a constant comparative method to identify open, axial, and core codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For each subset, open codes were identified by each researcher individually. In accordance with constant comparative methods, the identification of new codes in subsequent pieces of data led to the reanalysis of previously reviewed pieces of data to ensure new codes were not missed in previously analyzed data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process continued until the analysis of new pieces of data yielded no new codes, thus achieving data saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Once individual coding was completed, the researchers discussed their codes to determine consensus. This process was then repeated for the determination of axial codes and themes in the data, as well as for the identification of core codes as needed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Discussion and Findings**

The findings from the grounded theory coding approach are presented for each prompt.

***Profile of The Activist***

Researchers identified open codes related to attributes, actions, and characteristics of The Activist. Codes were developed through a constant comparison approach based on the written responses to Prompt 1) and its guiding questions: “How would you describe The Activist?  What attributes, characteristics, and actions reflect The Activist?” Sentences, phrases, and words from the reporting templates were combined in open coding to ensure representativeness but avoid duplication. Table 1includes the open codes and the axial codes that were developed based on the grouping of open codes. The researchers included the open codes that were grouped to determine the axial codes underneath each designated axial code.

Table 1 --- Profile of The Activist

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Open Codes** | **Axial Codes** |
| Inspirer  Empathetic  Invested/Committed  Inclusive  Negotiation Skills  Action Oriented  Open-Minded | **Coalition Builder** |
| Courage  Open to Risk  Strong Voices  Disrupter | **Courageous Risktaker** |
| Inquisitive  Inquiry Mindset  Leader  Problem Identifier  Change Oriented  Reflective  Integrity | **Visionary Leader** |
| Critical  Social Justice  Awareness of Inequity  Dissatisfaction with Current Situations  Integrity | **Social Justice Champion** |

Rather than a single, clearly-defined profile of an Ed.D. Activist, what emerged from the responses of more than 65 CPED-informed colleges and universities were four themes, represented by the axial codes in Table 1. Echoing Buchanan’s (2015) definition of agency as “identities in motion” (p. 714), these themes transform the “attributes, characteristics, and actions” supplied by our participants into action-oriented nouns. While an Ed.D. Activist could conceivably exhibit aspects of all four identities, it is also possible to envision four unique Ed.D. Activists, each representative of one of the axial codes. It bears repeating that this is an emerging framework, and we do not wish to suggest a one-size-fits-all approach. Below, we elaborate on each theme.

A *Coalition Builder*, based on participant feedback,is the leader who inspires and focuses on bringing people together for a common cause. In addition to infusing inspiration, the Coalition Builder also possesses negotiation skills. Essentially, this leader has the soft skills and wherewithal to foster collaboration. Collaboration results in the forging of something new and stronger than which could be developed by any one individual or agency in isolation (Kinsella-Meier and Gala, 2016). The profile of the Coalition Builder paints the picture of a leader with the ability to galvanize the forces and build consensus within an organization.

Another theme in the data suggested an activist is a *Courageous Risk-taker.* The Courageous Risktaker is the leader who gives voice to critical issues and topics and also possesses the courage to take the risk often associated with activism. Activism in many ways can be viewed as controversial because there can be a number of negative consequences experienced by those that stand up to voice concerns. Hoffman (2009) posited, “I have observed teachers fear the reactions of their principals, principals fear the reactions of their superintendents and communities, and superintendents fear the responses of the school boards and communities” (p. 391). Leaders in education need to come to terms with the competing political, social and economic forces all while becoming less apologetic about their views and beliefs (Hoffman, 2009). Hoffman challenges educators to “become more confident in resisting the dominant discourses in order to advocate for those typically marginalised and powerless in Society” (Hoffman, 2009, p. 392).

An additional theme evident in the data suggested The Ed.D. Activist is a Visionary Leader. Such a leader is always thinking intuitively about how to cultivate a more progressive future. Visionary Leaders engage in critical reflection to solve authentic problems, exhibiting the kind of vision that is a necessary precursor for organizational change. As Mack (2015) argues, vision “serves as a bridge between the present and the future, and it is intentionally aspirational” (p. 10). Through inquiry, Ed.D. Activists exhibit this sort of forward-thinking.

The fourth theme in the data characterized The Ed.D. Activist as a Social Justice Champion. A Social Justice Champion can quickly and readily identify the inequities and injustices that may be going unnoticed in a particular work environment. Continually focused on equity and fairness, Social Justice Champions serve truly desire to make a difference and recognize how “operationalizations of social justice are constantly evolving and shifting in the same proportion as cultural groups act on their emerging sense of agency” (Rodriguez & Morrison, 2019, p. 262).

***Ed.D. Program Strategies to Facilitate/Support the Ed.D. Activist (or Activism)***

After the discussion related to the Profile of The Activist, facilitators asked small groups to discuss how Ed.D. program strategies facilitate or support the Profile of the Ed.D. Activist or activism in general. Participants were provided with Prompt 2 and guiding statement: “Discuss current program strategies including, but not limited to, coursework, culminating work/product (dissertation, project), mentoring, conference attendance, publication opportunities, etc.”

The same process was used to analyze the written responses related to Prompt 2.

Table 2–Strategies to Facilitate/Support The Activist

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **OPEN CODES** | **AXIAL CODES** |
| **Coursework/Focus in Coursework** | Social Justice  Race, Reality, Poverty  Activism for Professionals  Leadership  Multicultural Education | **Coursework Specific to Social Justice, Multicultural Education and/or Leadership** |
| Community Leadership  School Community  Policy (Education, Health) | **Coursework Related to or Involving the Community** |
| Critical Literature Review  Credibility of Evidence  Problem of Practice  Action Research  Practitioner Inquiry  Ethnography  Scholarly Narrative  Critical Participatory Action Research | **Coursework Related to Research and/or the Dissertation in Practice** |
| Course Sequencing  Evidence-based Program Design  Needs Assessment | **Overall Course Design** |
| **Dissertation or Final Project** | Require Focus in Social Justice/Community | **Social Justice Related Focus for the Dissertation** |
| Student Professional/Personal Goals  Action Plan Required | **Inclusion of Student’s Career and Professional Goals** |
| Scholarly Narrative  Participatory Approach  Action Research  Include Indigenous Sources | **Considerations Relative to the Research and Writing of Dissertation** |
| Promote Innovation  Symposia to Present Approach/Findings | **Considerations for Dissertation Defense or Final Presentation** |
| **OTHER** | Institutional Inequities  Ed.D. Admission Inequities | **Addressing Inequity in Institutions, Policies, Methodological Approaches, Ed.D. Programs (faculty and students)** |
| Dissertation Requirements (social justice focus)  Alignment/Repetition in Course Sequence | **Defined and Supported Dissertation Process** |
| Mentorship  Leadership Opportunities  Diverse Staff and Faculty | **Mentoring/Supporting Students and Graduates** |
|  | Writing Articles/Co-Authorship  Methodological Philosophies  Community Study/Study Abroad | **Scholarly and Practitioner Inquiry Activities** |

One of the primary findings from this study is that through the feedback of the participants of the October CPED convening, we are able to now clearly identify several basic and fundamental strategies that CPED-informed Ed.D. programs could employ when cultivating an activism focus. Beyond providing students with a profile of an Activist, colleges and universities must commit to having certain structures and supports in place. Those institutions participating in this research study identified 12 key areas of consideration.

Table 2 – 12 Considerations to Support the Ed.D. Activist

|  |
| --- |
| **12 Considerations to Support the Ed.D. Activist**  Leadership & Prof. Development  (not listed in order of priority) |
| 1. Coursework Specific to Social Justice, Multicultural Education and/or Leadership |
| 1. Coursework Related to or Involving the Community |
| 1. Coursework Related to Research and/or the Dissertation in Practice |
| 1. Overall Course Design |
| 1. Social Justice Related Focus for the Dissertation |
| 1. Inclusion of Student’s Career and Professional Goals |
| 1. Considerations Relative to the Research and Writing of Dissertation |
| 1. Considerations for Dissertation Defense or Final Presentation |
| 1. Addressing Inequity in Institutions, Policies, Methodological Approaches, Ed.D. Programs (faculty and students) |
| 1. Defined and Supported Dissertation Process |
| 1. Mentoring/Supporting Students and Graduates |
| 1. Scholarly and Practitioner Inquiry Activities |

Although several of the 12 identified considerations would not be considered unique to doctoral program, consideration number 2 is an exception. Participants cited a need for potential graduates to have or experience a level of engagement within their community. While the other 11 considerations reflect an academic focus, connection with the community speaks more to the Ed.D. graduates need to be able to connect with people. A need to exhibit a degree of care or investment for the community. Nel Noddings (2004) noted:

Apprehending the other’s reality, feeling what he feels as nearly as possible, is the essential part of caring from the view of the one-caring. For if I take on the other’s reality as possibility and begin to feel its reality, I feel also that I must act accordingly; that is, I am impelled to act as though in my own behalf, but in reality on behalf of the other (p. 46).

Experiential social justice has the potential of increasing activism and civic engagement (Krings et al. 2015). Additionally, it has positive effects on academic, personal, social, and citizenship outcomes (Conway et al. 2009). Thinking critically about social issues through service learning sparks students’ motivation to act towards social change (Kajner, 2013). Moreover, reflecting on complex problems, goals, and strategies inspires them to move from problem identification to problem solving in their activism (Jacoby, 2017). Particularly for teachers, community involvement empowers them to make decisions, lead, learn about community needs and collaborate towards finding solutions (Stenhouse & Olga, 2102). Therefore, the consideration of community involvement (Consideration 2) coupled with consideration of coursework specific to social justice, multicultural education and/or leadership (Consideration 1) combine to provide a more distinct and unique picture of an “Emerging Ed.D. Activist”.

***Tools and Strategies to Understand Progress Toward Ed.D. Development/Support of The Activist***

After the discussion related to the Profile of The Activist and Ed.D. program strategies that facilitate or support the Ed.D. Activist or activism in general , facilitators moved to Prompt 3 and its guiding statement: “Discuss tools and strategies to understand (evaluate, measure) aspects and the overall Ed.D. program in its development and support of The Activist. These may be based on program strategies identified and/or the overall program experience.”

Table 3–Outcomes and Quality Indicators to Measure Progress Toward Developing the Activist

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **OPEN CODES** | **AXIAL CODES** |
| OUTCOMES | Dissertation must focus on Problem of Practice  Dissertation ideas developed by end up 1st yr with committee members identified  Develop a dissertation mentoring 1, 2, 3 step process- to complete dissertation.  As a content analysis of dissertations, to see if they are focused on change, social justice. | **Progress related to Dissertation** |
| Organizational Change  Socially Just Policies  Inclusivity  Improvement  Continuous Quality Improvement Cycles  Interventions | **Graduates Promoting Change within Organizations** |
|  | Being able to articulate concerning Social Justice issues  Growth over time | **Students Exemplifying Certain Characteristics** |
|  | Contribute to Public Discourse in Education  Action Orientation  Graduates’ Orientation toward Practice  Identify and Address Problems of Practice in their workplace  Graduates’ Roles in Organizations/Community  A postdoctoral network of EdD graduates so they continue to apply activist principles | **Graduates Demonstrate Leadership after Program** |
| **QUALITY INDICATORS** | Publications  Policy Briefs by Students/Alumni  Review of Alumni Work  Presentations  Student’s Dispositions  External Dissertation Review | **Analysis of Students’ Dissertations, Publications & Other Professional Writings** |
| Surveys  Exit Interviews  Artifacts | **Analysis of Student Feedback** |
| Review of Ed.D. Applications – Equity | **Ensuring Equity within the Program** |
| Plan in Early Stages of Program | **Program Organization** |
| Postdoctoral Network for Students | **Contact with Students Post-Degree** |

**Implications**

The Profile of an Ed.D. Activist will likely vary from program to program. Among the researchers engaged in this research study, a lively debate about whether we have uncovered a single profile or multiple profiles impressed upon us the importance of recognizing that our conceptualization may differ significantly from faculty in other programs. If so, the implications of this emerging profile will be different for each program. With this in mind, we have decided to share a potential model for both a single-profile of an Ed.D. Activist (linear in nature) and a profile having 4 Distinct Profiles of an Ed.D. Activist.

Figure 2 – The Single-Profile Model of an Ed.D. Activist

The Single-Profile Model

Based on the four emergent themes of Ed.D. activism uncovered by this study, we have developed an emerging framework that incorporates each of the identities into one, cohesive profile. This tentative model suggests to us that each graduate of an Ed.D. program can embody all four aspects but to varying degrees. For example, one graduate might see themselves as a skilled coalition builder but a bit reluctant to take large risks. Another graduate might feel a deep sense of commitment to others and thus be motivated to contribute to the work of rectifying issues of social justice yet remain somewhat ineffective given their hesitance to take on a leadership role focused on change. In other words, each graduate will demonstrate the four aspects to varying degrees based on their unique abilities. Programs that desire to have graduates embody this comprehensive model of an Ed.D. Activist should think critically and strategically about their Ed.D. program. Does the course work and the various supports that are in place for students, provide the necessary foundation for students to emerge with the skillset that is representative of this model.

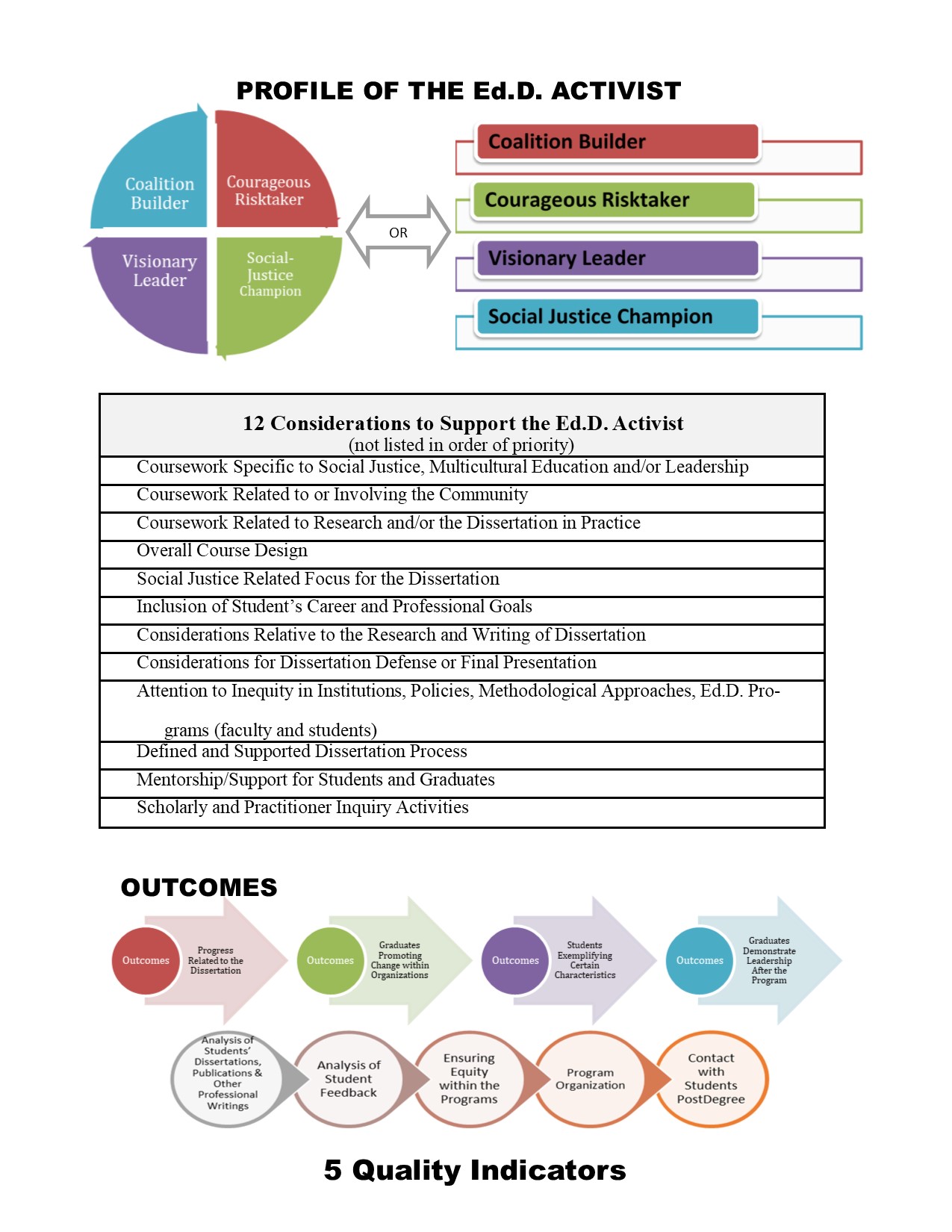
Figure 2 - Four Distinct Identities of an Ed.D. Activist

Similarly, we recognize that there are individuals and programs that could view this model from more of a linear perspective. Within this context, each individual student is afforded the opportunity to identify each distinct profile as an option or a type of leadership that can be embraced within the work of activism. For example, a more introverted leader may aspire to serve as a Coalition Builder or a Visionary Leader. As a Coalition Builder, this would give them the opportunity to capitalize on their ability to create harmony and productivity within a group. Conversely, this individual may never aspire to serve in the capacity of a Courageous Risk-taker. From a programmatic standpoint, we further recognize that programs can have a more centralized focus. For example, our program focuses more on the development of a Social Justice Champion. This model or framework can easily serve as a tool for us to reevaluate our program and our intended outcomes to examine whether or not we should focus more attention on the other three profiles.

**Conclusion**

As doctor of education degree programs expand and refine their visions and missions around the notion of activism, clarity will emerge around the dispositions of students who exhibit emerging and existing tendencies toward activist identies and will contribute to admissions, advisement and curriculum decisions. The enduring question for Ed.D. programs committed to equity and access in educational setting through its graduates is whether we focus on developing emerging activits, growing our burgeoning activists, or strenghting our functioning activist. One thing is clear – school leaders who influence positive and impactful change will be the doctors of education who utilize their teacher-researcher-activist lenses to rightfully justify our next generation decisions.

Professional development opportunities with enduring impact such as Ed.D. programs increase their imprint on the field through their effectual alignment with the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). This influential collaborative will continue to provide the space to revise and fine-tune the conceptual knowledge that shapes and defines the Ed.D. Activist, and the concept of structuration theory can aptly guide the progression of these educator identities and this revolutionary model. This early iteration of the Ed.D. Activist model (Figure 3) should be seen as fluid and evolving in response to the needs of our doctoral scholars, and more importantly, the students that they serve.



**FIGURE 3 – AN EMERGING FRAMEWORK OF AN ED.D. ACTIVIST**

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