Why CPED Needs a Philosophy in Practice

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ABSTRACT

The authors employ a philosophical approach to model why a philosophy in practice dissertation has value in the context of EDD programs. Through literature review and philosophical analysis, the authors interrogate binary oppositions implicit in the discussion of theory, research, and practice. The authors out what the philosophy in practice dissertation might look like and finally consider Challenges and Implications for CPED & Member Programs.

<u>KEYWORDS</u>

CPED Dissertation in Practice (DiP), philosophy, educational philosophy

RESEARCH, PRACTICE, AND THEORY: INVESTIGATING THE BINARIES

Because of a decades-long struggle to distinguish between PhD and EdD degree-granting programs, since 2007 the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) has attempted to bring clarity and coherence to the EdD degree (Perry et al., 2020). As many have noted, common understanding frames the EdD as focusing on issues of practice whereas the PhD focuses on research. At the same time, critics often assert that students have been largely prepared in similar fashions in both degree programs, arguing that many EdD and PhD programs offer students coursework based on the same research methods. As a result, EdD students are often encouraged to replicate PhD-type research projects, effectively obfuscating the EdD/PhD distinction. CPED has attempted to bring clarity to the EdD's uniqueness by offering a framework that guides EdD programs to help students ground research in real-world problems that make real, lasting, educational change, especially change focused on equity and social justice.

While we see CPED's efforts as both laudable and important, we worry that some of the details of the CPED Framework inadvertently undermine the very aims that CPED seeks to achieve: Helping EdD researchers engage in high quality projects that result in significant change. We are drawn to the assertion that "Teaching and learning are grounded in theory, research, and in problems of practice" (https://cped.memberclicks.net/the-framework), and while this listing might appear to be noncontroversial, we suggest that it, and others like it within the CPED framework, demonstrate a subtle but important underwriting belief about the nature of applied research: Theoretical or philosophical research is a separate endeavor to that of 'real' research. More than a mere semantic point, we assert that this apparent division between theory and research undercuts CPED's ability to reach its own stated aims. If CPED

wants to inspire equitable educational change, it <u>must</u> include philosophical analysis within its framework. Furthermore, we argue that they <u>cannot</u> achieve their aims without teaching the skills of philosophical analysis. We believe this tension presents an opportunity for growth and change: Rather than framing theoretical or philosophical research as a separate endeavor from that of "practical" research, we see an opportunity to apply theory to problems of practice to provide CPED with another potential tool to inspire equitable educational change.

Before continuing, let us address what we presume to be an initial fear at the outset of this discussion: We are *not* arguing that EdD programs should prepare doctoral students to become philosophers of education. Instead, we will outline what we are provisionally describing as 'Philosophy in Practice' – a form of philosophical research specifically aimed at meeting the applied and real-world change-focused efforts of CPED's EdD framework. Further, we will differentiate social research 'theory' from philosophical research. We do so to emphasize that the research method we are proposing remains solidly focused on CPED's aim to inspire students to engage with real-world problems to make tangible change. The term also delineates itself from philosophy of education dissertations. While many of those are interdisciplinary, philosophy of education is itself a distinct academic field, one which the American Educational Research Association (AERA) recognizes as included in "humanities-oriented research in education," and has developed clear standards of reporting (AERA, 2009, p. 481-482). While many philosophy of education research projects are focused on questions that have practical implications for teaching and learning, that is not necessarily a requirement. A 'Philosophy in Practice' dissertation, though, would be one that would most likely be interdisciplinary, one that, by definition, uses the resources of philosophical research to engage real-world problems. These projects would most likely also engage with empirical research and the real perspectives of practitioners. The central focus, then, would be to engage in enough

philosophical analysis to bring a new understanding to a practical situation, a new understanding that would then guide and result in significant educational change. This is not philosophical research that builds upon philosophical questions to advance *philosophical* understanding. Instead, the Philosophy in Practice research project would always be focused on using the tools of philosophy to make real-world change.

In what follows, we will expand upon this conceptual framing by beginning with the ways that philosophical research and the theoretical work within social science research traditions are both similar and significantly different. In this comparison, we will also discuss common misperceptions about philosophical research. We then demonstrate what a philosophy-in-practice approach might entail through an exploration of the ways that the current CPED Framework subtly and, we presume, unintentionally pits philosophical research against other forms of inquiry. We then offer examples of what philosophy-in-practice dissertation projects might entail by discussing existing work that we consider to be clear exemplars of Philosophy in Practice and then outline how a potential philosophy-in-practice dissertation might be structured. We conclude by drawing some implications for CPED and member EdD programs.

As previously noted, there is a growing body of literature that attempts to distinguish EdD programs from PhD programs, and the overwhelming consensus is that the EdD should be practitioner-focused while PhD programs should typically have a greater emphasis on conducting research (Peña Alfaro 2023; DeMARtino & Renn 2023, p. 30; Fertman 2018, p. 51; Hawkins and Martin 2022, p. 53). Given the suggestion by Foster et al. (2023) that there are still unresolved questions around the differences between the two programs, we would like to trouble in particular the perceptions of philosophy and its relevance for practitioners in the context of EdD programs by providing some context for the difference between theory in social research and a philosophical methodology. Even while acknowledging that "EdD programs need to be distinguished from PhD programs and more relevant to preparing educational leaders," there is a question of method that comes up when considering what skills might have value for educational leaders (Capello, 2023, p. 37). What methodological skills are relevant for educational leaders? When focusing on problems in practice versus more formal social research, are methodological elements related to theory to be eschewed? Keeping in mind that there is significant literature to suggest that EdD students' dissertations should address problems in practice, it is worth considering what assumptions we are making about the methods, skills, and dispositions that are available to EdD students to address these practical real-world situations (Peña Alfaro 2023; DeMARtino & Renn 2023, Ezzani & Paufler 2018; Kramer, 2022). We believe that something is missing in the binarization of "research" and "practical" that can be fleshed out through different modes of inquiry. Because broad categories such as 'research' and 'theory' often inform distinctions between what might be practical or impractical for educational leaders, we seek to position philosophical methodology as distinct from theory as it is typically considered in educational research contexts: We argue that a philosophical dissertation can effectively address problems in practice.

Presenting EdD students with the classic broad research methodological binary of qualitative versus quantitative fetishes the collection of data, whether it be numerical or language-based as being necessary for making change. Doing so presupposes a model of change that requires the collection of data as the pivot point around which all change happens. To be clear, we *do* believe that collecting data can and *does* lead to effective change-making projects. Our point, though, is that the focus on numerical and language-based data collection is itself too narrow. Change can and does happen when we *think* about or understand a problem in novel ways.

Separating Theory from Social Research

While there is much discussion of bridging theory and practice and how theory can be useful to the scholar-practitioner, we want to understand specifically how EdD candidates might use theory to develop new knowledge outside of traditional social research schemas (Ezzani & Paufler 2018, p. 15; Flood 2024, p. 31). The irony that begins to emerge in the literature discussing alternatives to traditional dissertations is that these often include a departure from theory and are still rooted primarily in the collection of data (Hurst, 2023; Kochhar-Bryant, 2017). Referencing the Educational Sciences Reform Act, language like "systematic," "objective," and "reliable," tends to suggest that 'practitioner-based' approaches ought to be synonymous with methodologies that rely heavily on the collection of data, such as improvement science (Kochhar-Bryant, 2017, p. 8). In particular, we are drawn to the recommendation to focus on "practicality versus perception," and its implications for alternative dissertations that do not include some manner of data collection (Foster et al, 2023, p. 19). We suggest it is possible to frame "perception" as a concrete epistemological method deeply connected to equity and social justice that scholar-practitioners could operationalize to address problem of practice.

Capello et al. (2023) suggest that EdD candidates should have the "ability to inquire into problems of practice," but this leaves open the question of what it might mean to 'inquire' (p. 1). New methodologies and modalities are emerging each year, from arts-based approaches to collaborative dissertations, but as previously mentioned, most of these emerging forms seem to share a reliance on some version of 'data,' even when the projects claim to be moving away from traditional research methods (Friend and Militello, 2015; hash, 2022, p. 30; Hooser et al 2023 p. 9; (Kramer, 2022, p. 22). At this point, it is worth remembering that even words like 'data' have operationalized meanings that tend to be rooted in particular theoretical traditions, and improvement science language including phrases like 'management by fact' and 'data-driven decisions' could tacitly delegitimize other modes of knowledge production (hash, 2022, p. 30). "Facts" and "data" have been used as weapons to further oppression of marginalized groups stretching back over a century, most notably with the very concept of "assessment" rooted in eugenics (Cauthen, 2018).

What other framing do we have available, then? Students are often taught research designs focused exclusively on the collection of data in some form. For example, qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research designs all focus on data collection (Hurst, 2023, p. 60). When the EdD-focused literature frames inquiry projects that do not include the collection of empirical data, it references them as either consisting of forms of textual analysis or as Humanities-oriented (philosophical) studies. Because they are framed as extraneous to real-world change, these 'other' modes of research are often left out of the curriculum. It is then not surprising that students who want to pursue such research routes often struggle to make sense of their projects in the context of such value being placed on methods that involve 'data collection' (Hurst, 2023; Hash, 2020).

While we typically associate the notion of data and data collection as empirical, we are consciously resisting binary thinking and eschewing the term "non-empirical" to categorize philosophical research. The American Educational Research Association (AERA) explicitly states the opposite in their *Standards for Reporting on Humanities-Oriented Research*, pointing out that because this research "seeks to examine the role of education in human existence through experience and observation, AERA deems the approach empirical" (p. 482). We contend that there is a problem with the binary framing of empirical and non-empirical in philosophical studies because depending on the theoretical tradition these projects could run the gamut from more traditionally empirical disciplines to phenomenology, existentialism, or poststructuralism, which do not live as neatly within the broader concept of 'empiricism.' For the remainder of the paper, we choose to use "philosophy" because the concept "non-empirical" does tend to, at least rhetorically, devalue and diminish the practicality of this approach.

With that framing, theoretical thinking as a research method can take a variety of forms, and it is important to note that philosophical inquiry does bear resemblance to what St. Pierre refers to as a "post-qualitative" approach. Even though philosophical inquiry and post-qualitative methods are not synonymous, there are significant similarities between the two as they both use conceptual inquiry (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 686). Principally, post-qualitative research engages in theoretical work; it seeks to deconstruct the notion of method from a post-structural perspective. While similar, philosophical inquiry might be thought of as a slightly wider umbrella, offering theoretical methods coming from a range of conceptual schools of thought to conduct practice-focused philosophical research. Regardless of the differences between post-qualitative research and philosophical research, there's enough overlap for us to conclude that they share a significant family resemblance. Furthermore, that point itself – that post-qualitative research projects can be viewed as examples of how philosophical research can exist within EdD programs – itself proves our main point: Philosophical research is a viable choice for scholars seeking to make real-world change and should be included formally within EdD research methods offerings.

Theoretical framework versus philosophical inquiry

In social sciences research, the word theory has a particular operational connotation that does differ slightly from how the word theory might be used in philosophical research. As opposed to social science research where theory usually characterized the assumptions about epistemology and ontology that inform a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods study, in philosophical research, the theory is the methodology. With this in mind, we would like to frame theory as capable of being separated from social science research, moving theory beyond research paradigms to its own method within a study. Philosophical dissertations would seem to meet a particular need, given that "...we do not have extensive literature from EdD programs demonstrating how we are guiding our students to understand and transform practice through the application of theory" (Hurst, 2023, p. 59). We suggest that a productive move would be to shift from thinking about theory as solely framing research designs to considering philosophy itself as a source for guiding and conducting practice-focused inquiry.

While we see theory and philosophy as generally synonymous, it seems clear that operationally the term theory is used more often in the EdD literature, specifically about concepts as they apply to social research (Hurst, 2023; Kennedy et al, 2018; Kochhar-Bryant 2017). There seems to be some cross-disciplinary confusion around the terms theory and philosophy, which is often complicated by the use of the same vocabulary in each, in particular the usage of terms like ontology, axiology, and epistemology (Lee-Johnson, 2023, p. 44-45).

In contrast, some terms have significantly different meanings across philosophy and social theory, for example, the term "pragmatic" within research methodology might refer to an approach to research design, while in philosophy it would most likely reference a school of thought and thinkers like Rorty and Dewey (Hurst, 2023, p. 60). To be clear, the two uses are not synonymous.

In reading Hurst (2023) there is another difference between theory in the context of social research and philosophical inquiry and that is how paradigms are classified and described as fixed categories (p. 60). Hurst (2023) also references Colleen Capper's (2019) theoretical classifications which have great value for the practitioner and researcher. These are somewhat oversimplified for the benefit of survey course style understanding, which Capper well understands and admits to in her text (p. 3). While we are not arguing against the social science framing of theory within their research tradition, the downside to the "theoretical menu" approach is that it allows for some reification and oversimplification of philosophical categories. For example, was Judith Butler a critical theorist, queer theorist, or phenomenological theorist? Was Michel Foucault a post-structural philosopher, critical historian, or writer of genealogies? Was John Dewey a pragmatist or a constructivist? The study of philosophy allows for ambiguity and focuses on the concepts thinkers develop rather than pushing their work into fixed disciplinary categories. In contrast, we read social science paradigms as more about positioning the research and the researcher "in" a theoretical category than considering how to use philosophical ideas to actually "do" something. The turn to philosophical research asks how one might 'do' or operationalize theory rather than considering paradigms in terms of where we dwell. We posit that this positional shift from a 'theoretical paradigm' to a philosophical method could be a useful move toward making theory relevant in a practitioner context. Rather than being a mere semantic shift, the focus on philosophical method opens us to engaging in a wider range of research projects otherwise hidden by the framing. What we are proposing here thus increases the possibilities for helping EdD students engage in real-world change. **How Practical is a Philosophy in Practice Dissertation?**

In this section, we seek to make the last assertion clear by exploring reasons one might choose philosophical research in an EdD program. To do so, we focus on the work of the philosopher Nel Noddings. While in the second half of the paper, we will provide a model for a potential Philosophy in Practice dissertation, for now, we turn to reasons one might choose a Philosophy in Practice dissertation. Doing so builds upon Sroka's (2021) point that with a myriad of contemporary challenges to collecting empirical data, doctoral students ought to consider novel approaches to dissertation research (p. 21-22). Though philosophical approaches are certainly not novel per se, they are certainly an answer to the problem of data collection around certain problems of practice.

A second reason for considering a philosophical dissertation is that it addresses the dual realities of the difficulty of getting IRB approval and finding participants in more controversial studies (Kramer, 2022, p. 21). There are questions rooted in problems of

practice that might not work with traditional studies because of the reticence of participants or even the recent emergence of legal restrictions in several states around engaging students in research on controversial topics. From such laws spring additional concerns about the safety of faculty and staff discussing their experiences which might make IRB approval difficult for certain studies that would not be a hindrance in a philosophical study. Philosophical dissertations are exempt from IRB and free researchers from the ethical constraints of safety for participants and fears around legal restrictions. In short, philosophical dissertations benefit from the privilege of academic freedom and protect researchers from engaging with the constraints of research restrictions which can be used as tools to stymie and prevent research projects that threaten traditional power structures.

A third consideration is that philosophical inquiry supports dissertation students by offering them latitude to move past more what might be conceived as formulaic dissertation options to foster independent and critical thinking (Shaw et al 2024, p. 21). This is not to suggest that traditional dissertations do not create space for critical thought, but it has been noted that EdD students often don't see how theoretical ideas relate to their practice, and this may well be a barrier to critical reflection and philosophical growth (Hurst, 2023, p. 59). For example, Hurst (2023) reports that some EdD students hold the perception that theory, at least as it is traditionally presented in the context of social theory, is not relevant to the practitioner (p. 59). Further Hurst (2023) points out that EdD students "rarely apply theoretical knowledge to practice settings" (p. 59). Building on this, philosophical inquiry can help EdD researchers develop the practical skills of applying theory to practice and articulating clearly the epistemological and ontological basis for current knowledge claims.

A fourth point connected to the third is that educational leaders and change agents are constantly drawing upon conceptual ideas in their work, and the study of applied philosophy would help them to develop deeper and critical understanding of the concepts that animate their daily work. For example, practitioners are asked to develop and interact with policies and documents that have theoretical commitments such as conceptual frameworks, mission and vision statements, policy statements, and other reports and documents created to meet accreditation standards and to inform the daily practice of educational institutions. When we make conceptual commitments as leaders, as teachers, and as organizations, then there are real-world consequences that can and, we suggest here, *should* follow. This is another clear reason we argue that EdD students should have the opportunity to develop critical philosophical research skills. If graduates cannot link conceptual commitments to equity and diversity to practical outcomes in the world, then they will not be able to make the vital change efforts we and CPED believe to be necessary.

In the fifth and final justification for the philosophical dissertation, we turn to political philosophy and a concept that Adrian Walsh (2020) refers to as the immunity thesis (p. 445). In "On the necessarily non-empirical nature of political philosophy," Walsh writes about the distinction between political philosophy and political science which has relevance in the context of the comparison of educational/social sciences and educational philosophy (Walsh, 2020, p. 445). The argument is developed through the claim that there are "non-trivial" questions that cannot be solved through empirical studies and yet need to be addressed (Walsh, 2020, p. 445). The problems that cannot be solved through empirical study

are cast by Walsh as being 'immune' to resolution through empirical means (Walsh, 2020, p. 449). These are problems that, for example, require the application of a particular set of values (axiology), a particular assumption about how knowledge is produced (epistemology), or the nature of being (ontology). In each case, the problems cannot be addressed by traditional empirical social science research. A wide range of real-world "problems of practice" are often eschewed as being unapproachable because social sciences do not have the methods with which to address what are essentially philosophical questions. Thus matters related to ethics, faith, the nature of being, virtues, and the like are often met with resistance. Walsh contends that even when social sciences attempt to address these 'immune' questions, they often come up short:

> [W]hen empirically-oriented theorists claim to have solved one of these genuinely non-empirical fundamentally philosophical questions, they do so either by smuggling in non-empirical material or, as P.F. Strawson once elegantly made the point, by 'changing the subject' (Strawson 1963). According to the Immunity Thesis, problems in political philosophy cannot be solved fully or adequately responded to using empirical scientific methods alone. (p. 449).

Of course, social science research in education does not so much 'smuggle in' non-empirical material as it does acknowledge the theoretical assumptions, or paradigm that the study resides in (Kennedy et al 2018; Hurst 2023; Lee-Johnson, 2023). In this way, educational research rooted in the social sciences first acknowledges the study's assumptions about the nature of reality, and then asks questions of practice, while philosophical inquiry asks questions about how assumptions about the nature of reality influence the very questions that we might ask.

OUTLINING THE PHILOSOPHY IN PRACTICE

A Philosophy in Practice Analysis of the CPED Framework

Careful reading of CPED documents reveals that the approach to the EdD outlined in the CPED Framework intertwines both beliefs about knowledge and the moral responsibility of educational researchers. We discover that researchers have an "...obligation to resolve problems of practice by collaborating with key stakeholders, including the university, the educational institution, the community, and individuals" (The CPED Framework, 2024). Note that there are two parts to this obligation: to focus on practical, change-focused problems and to do so in collaboration with diverse stakeholders who are involved in or impacted by the problem and any resulting change efforts. Furthermore, CPED asserts that there is an identifiable and teachable body of knowledge that emerges from both research and "practical knowledge."

We see in this language an opportunity to address a potential limitation to promoting equity and justice within the CPED framework by blurring two critical binaries. First, there is the separation of academic and practical knowledge, and second, there is the separation of theory from research. Building upon the previous discussion of the practical nature of philosophy, let us now trouble the separation of academic and practical knowledge particularly in the context of promoting social justice.

We first must express that a focus on real-world problems, especially ones involving equity and social justice, resonates with our commitments as educators and researchers. Our critique here is

meant to support doing that work with even greater precision and success. With that acknowledgment, the framing of academic knowledge as separate from practical knowledge furthers the rift between both theory and practice as well as the academy from the school practitioner. The potentially problematic element here is that this split obfuscates the fact that theory always informs practice, and this is how White, European, colonial ideas continue to dominate epistemological and ontological assumptions that guide practitioners (Lee-Johnson, 2023, p. 44-45). In this way, time and time again lived experience, especially that of marginalized individuals, becomes silenced by 'data.' This dynamic has been explored within multiple aspects of identity and is especially salient when considering the dynamics of racism and sexism (Capper, 2019). Given the rich traditions in both critical race and feminist theories that take up this important concept, equipping practitioner-researchers with the philosophical skills to focus on that lived experiential knowledge aligns with a commitment to equity and social justice.

Next, we turn our attention to the binary of theory as separate from research. That framing itself seems to rest upon an assumption that work done to understand theory or philosophy is itself not research. We have more in mind here than some sort of semantic slight. The frame leads researchers to believe that philosophical work is distinct and separate from practical and <u>real</u> research, research that results in the collection of some form of data that then can be used to make real-world change. We trouble this bifurcation not just because we believe that philosophical inquiry is legitimate research in its own right, but because the dichotomy closes off lines of research that could help CPED reach its aims. Philosophical research can be practical. It can lead to a specific, action-focused change in real-world contexts.

We have in mind a form of philosophical analysis that doesn't require decades of experience training as a philosopher. Instead, we believe that EdD doctoral researchers can be supported to develop the skills of philosophical inquiry that can be used to understand and analyze problems of practice to create change-focused ideas that can support CPED's call for making real-world change. To make that clear, we suggest the working title of this sort of EdD dissertation research be called 'Philosophy in Practice.' The details are important, so in the next section, we explore what we mean by philosophy in practice through some examples.

Applied Philosophy: An Example

One paradigmatic example of how philosophical research can influence actual change in the real world is Nel Noddings's popular text, The Challenge to Care in Schools (1992, 2005). After an introductory chapter, in the second chapter Noddings outlines an approach to moral education predicated upon the lived experiences of women. These beginning sections summarize and further develop Noddings's original conception of caring from two previous books and across several articles while also translating the philosophy of an ethic of care to an educational context. While a full exegesis of her moral theory is beyond the scope of this article, in brief, Noddings outlines an approach to morality that shifts the discussion from focusing on justice (i.e. criteria for determining right vs. wrong) to enhancing caring relationships. Noddings grounds her theory in a relational ontology predicated upon the observation that our original and primary world orientation is that of being in relation with others: "Just as relation is ontologically basic, the caring relation is viewed as ethically basic, as well as a moral achievement" (Diller, 1996, p.

91) In practice, then, the ethic of care challenges educators to ask this fundamental question: "How can caring relationships best be sustained or created in this particular case?" (Diller, 1996, p. 94).

Once Noddings has established her definition of the ethic of care, she then engages in a series of applied philosophy thought experiments in which she brings her conception of caring into conversation with specific educational topics. In each case, she draws direct relationships between her analysis and implications for practice. She explores (1) curriculum continuity, (2) self-care for students and teachers, (3) student, family, and community relationships, (4) implications for strangers and distant others, (5) the environment, (6) technology and human-made objects, and (7) intellect and ideas. She concludes with a summary of how to get started with infusing the ethic of care in schools (Noddings 1992, 1995).

Throughout the text, Noddings engages in applied philosophical analysis. Again, we're advocating for a type of philosophical work that is always focused on application, and Noddings's work is a clear example of what this looks like in practice. For example, we find Noddings engaging in a detailed interweaving of philosophical work with everyday analysis of practical, school-based examples and implications for how educational practice *would change* as a result of working with her philosophical ideas. That warrants emphasizing: she focuses on how her philosophical ideas would result in real-world change in educational practice throughout the text. For example: "My alternative vision suggests an entirely different organization of schooling. …If it were possible to redesign education along the lines of our alternative vision, we would see children studying, discussing, exploring matters, and doing things in their various centers of care. Teachers would work with all children on topics of general concern and with small groups of children on more specialized subjects" (Noddings 1992, 61).

To be clear, we're not advocating for Noddings's conception of education (although we find her ideas to be intriguing.) Instead, we're suggesting that this real philosophical work is an example of our conception of philosophy in practice… a way to engage in philosophical analysis that keeps its focus on the implications for how to engage in creating schools and engaging in teaching. Noddings does this in other texts as well. For example, in Critical Lessons: What our Schools Should Teach, she offers a definition of critical thinking that she then applies to what would have to change in the curriculum if taken seriously. Likewise, in Education and Democracy in the 21st Century, she draws upon John Dewey's philosophical work to challenge readers to rethink the links between theoretical commitments to democratic principles and the potential resulting implications for public schooling. We could continue to offer more examples from her vast body of work, but we will stop here because we hope the point is clear. We are arguing for a type of philosophical analysis that engages in both philosophical analysis and exploration of what would change as a result in real-world contexts.

While Noddings presents us with a set of clear examples, other philosophers have and continue to engage in similar sorts of projects. For example, in Understanding Equal Educational Opportunity: Social Justice, Democracy, and Schooling (1997), Ken Howe outlines a conception of equality of educational opportunity and then goes on to explore the implications for real-world educational policies having to do with gender, multiculturalism, segregation, testing, and school choice. Current educational philosopher Sarah Stitzlein also writes books that define important

educational concepts such as dissent (2015), hope (2019), and honesty (2024). Each then explores the result in both policy and teaching practice. Like these examples, we argue that similarly, if CPED wants to help EdD students be able to make real and lasting equitable change, then they need to be able to understand how our conceptual resources - how we frame problems - intersect with and influence our real-world choices.

Before offering an example of what a sample Philosophy in Practice dissertation might entail, we first invite readers to join us in what to us is perhaps one of the clearest examples of how philosophical analysis can influence actual change in the real world, change that has implications for empirically-guided practice. This is not an educational example, but instead one from science. Evelyn Fox Keller describes a paradigm shift in embryonic research due to a philosophical change in the conceptual framing that scientists had been using for several decades (Keller, 1997). We need to emphasize this: We are not discussing a shift in data collection or empirical methodology. *What changed was a conceptual shift in how to understand what the scientists were examining*. As you read the following, we invite you to imagine what the educational corollaries might be, where our conceptual "givens" might impede our empirical research.

We continue: the previously dominant discourse in embryonic research was of "gene action," a way to understand the embryonic cell's gene as the driving force or the source of the most important action in the cell. This framing was done through a masculine metaphor, whereas the protoplasm was conceived as feminine. Given this gender-based conceptual framing, the protoplasm was considered to be passive and relatively unimportant, *thus not worth researching*. Keller explains:

> By the discourse of gene action, I mean a way of talking about the role of genes in development, introduced in the 1920s and 1930s by the first generation of geneticists, that attributes to the gene a kind of omnipotence – not only causal primacy, but autonomy and, perhaps especially, agency. Development is controlled by the action of genes. Everything else in the cell is mere surplus. …This way of talking not only enabled geneticists to get on with their work without worrying about what they did not know; it framed their questions and guided their choices, both of experiments worth doing and of organisms worth studying (Keller, 1997, p. 22).

For the next forty years, Keller argues, embryonic research was guided and inhibited by this masculinist metaphorical conceptual framework. When researchers reconceived and abandoned the gender-based framing of the relationship between cytoplasm and genes, *new understanding and new research avenues opened* (Keller, 1997). We must emphasize this: the shift in research and understanding was due to a philosophical shift in how to think about embryos. The advancement in understanding didn't happen because of the emergence of new data, but because of a philosophical shift in thinking.

The example from embryonic research demonstrates how philosophical analysis is quite practical. In this case, it took scientists to engage in new conceptual thinking in order to make progress toward understanding embryo development in profoundly new ways. We argue that if empirically-grounded biological research can be significantly changed because of a conceptual shift, then this could happen in the realm of education. We could also inspire EdD researchers to help us make similar shifts in the conceptual resources that frame the ways that we understand the institutions and practices of education. If CPED wants to help EdD students be able to make real and lasting equitable change, then its students need to be able to understand how our conceptual resources - how we frame the very problems of practice - intersect with and influence our real world choices.

Modeling the Philosophy in Practice Dissertation

Now, let us consider a potential EdD dissertation. Referring to the aforementioned Noddings example, let us imagine that a doctoral student is a classroom teacher and educational leader interested in equity and discipline methods. They are further interested in how the philosophy of the ethic of care might change our conception of discipline at the school and classroom levels. We now posit a potential outline of how the dissertation might be structured while also noting how these elements align with the CPED framework as well as outlining how they meet the AERA standards on reporting for humanities-oriented research, including significance, method, conceptualization (why it fits together), substantiation, coherence, clarity, and ethics (AERA, 2009, p. 484).

Chapter 1 - Introduction to the Problem and the Dissertation

This would be recognized as a standard introduction to the dissertation that introduces the research topic, outlines research questions, and situates the project within the Philosophy in Practice approach. Recalling CPED's first guiding principle, to ask if an ethic of care can be applied to disciplinary methods to increase equity is a question "of equity, ethics, and social justice to bring about solutions to complex problems of practice" (The CPED Framework, 2024). This is also where directly addresses the AERA standard of "Significance of Topic," or that the topic ought to be timely and important, addresses a neglected issue; is of an intrinsic or edifying interest, or otherwise fills a gap in the study of the subject (AERA, 2009, p. 484). In the Noddings sample case, the literature on equity gaps in discipline policy and implementation would be used to demonstrate why novel approaches to discipline are timely, important, and address a significant issue.

Chapter 2 - Understanding the Research on Discipline through a Philosophy in Practice Analysis

This chapter would offer readers an introduction and analysis of school discipline models, although unlike what might be understood as a social science review of literature, this chapter would focus on analyzing the theoretical underpinnings of the various approaches to discipline. This chapter connects directly to AERA's standard of conceptualization, where "the perspective, scholarly tradition, school, and/or conceptual framework and the methods employed should be made explicit, consistent with the rhetorical form and structure of the manuscript" (AERA, 2009, p. 484). While this chapter would draw upon relevant empirical research, the aim is to offer the reader a way of understanding the sweep of the literature on approaches to classroom/school discipline in a way that guides readers to understanding the scope of literature through a unique framework that helps highlight relevant philosophical commonalities as well as divergences. For example, there may be groups of discipline frameworks that rest upon a conception of personhood that posits student behavior is due to inherent human flaws, whereas others may rest upon understanding human behavior as emerging from an interaction with the environment. This ontological framing sets the

stage to contrast Noddings ontology as positing that the caring state is just as "natural" as being self interested. Regardless of the details of this one example, the chapter would use the tools of philosophical analysis to help illuminate the topic of classroom/school discipline in a new way, leading to CPED principle six, the generation of professional knowledge in tandem with CPED principle four, using multiple frames to develop meaningful solutions (CPED, 2024)

Chapter 3 - A Philosophy of Caring Discipline - through a Philosophy in Practice Analysis

This chapter would offer a deep dive into the philosophical underpinnings of the ethics of care, with an emphasis on describing how an ethic of care will be used in conjunction with the previous chapter's research synthesis of discipline to develop a new conceptual framework on discipline based on the clearly defined foundation of Noddings ontology. This chapter connects directly to AERA's "Identification of Methods," where the author considers their method and execution of their method (AERA, 2009, p. 484). The researcher would construct a conception of a philosophy of caring discipline that links the work on care with the previous research on behavior management approaches, and the chapter would conclude with a clear philosophical outline of the resulting conception of 'caring discipline' that addresses the problem identified at the conclusion of chapter two. To add clarification to the methodology of doing philosophy, one might think about the process up to this point as identifying the assumptions about the nature of being that tend to guide typical disciplinary processes, and here in this chapter the point would be to demonstrate how applying different assumptions about being might challenge these typical disciplinary processes, demonstrating CPED principle five in that it links theory, in this sample case Noddings Care theory, with systemic and systematic inquiry, in this case the ontological and ethical assumptions behind discipline strategies (CPED Framework, 2024).

Chapter 4 - Caring Discipline in Action - Data Analysis

In chapter four, the researcher will now use the newly created philosophical framework, the notion of caring discipline, to address results in practice. This is really where the conceptual framework developed in the previous chapter will be specifically applied to the problem of practice. This new chapter would make clear links between existing research and practice with the proposed new philosophical framework and then explore a wide variety of implications for practical implementation, or "the skilled application of the principles and procedures of reasoning and meaning construction in different traditions" (AERA, 2009, p. 484). Rather than being what some might refer to as a quick discussion of implications, this, in some ways, is the heart of the dissertation. It is a robust discussion of how the philosophical framework developed in chapters two and three would result in both changed practice and practice that would address the problems introduced in chapters one and two. The focus here is on depth and originality of analysis and practical application, demonstrating the construction and application of "knowledge to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and communities," (CPED, 2024).

Chapter 5 - Further Implications for Implementation

Our conception of how chapters four and five differ from each other might be subtle, but the difference is significant. The focus of chapter four is to engage in a robust research and practice-grounded

experiment to conceptualize the many ways in which the framing of caring discipline could alter discipline methods while also addressing the egregious problems outlined in chapters one and two. The fifth and final chapter extends that project by discussing implementation challenges and responses to those challenges. This connects to the AERA standard that states the work should be positioned so that "other researchers who understand the purpose and procedures of the research could understand how evidence was used to make claims or follow the line of reasoning that led to the researcher's conclusions" (AERA, 2009, p. 486). Thus, while chapter four offers a research and practice-grounded discussion on what might be possible, this last chapter responds to the myriad real-world challenges that educational leaders would need to confront if they were to attempt to work with the implications of this philosophically-informed yet practice-focused research. This focus would keep the Philosophy in Practice dissertation grounded in the practical implications of theoretical work by exploring how the recommendations in chapter four might encounter obstacles and then how to respond to them. Rather than philosophy focused on philosophy, the aim here is to use philosophy to inspire actual change. This space in the dissertation where the writer can demonstrate the communication skills to show application to diverse contexts and communities, thus meeting CPED principle three (CPED Framework, 2024).

Additional Considerations for a Philosophy in Practice Dissertation

The above outline is only one example of how a Philosophy in Practice dissertation might be structured. There are many other ways, depending on the research question and topic. Our intention here is to offer a clear example of how one might approach a philosophy-in-practice dissertation in an EdD program to help students develop leadership skills appropriate to real-world settings. While a list of potential topics that could be explored would be vast, here are some that we considered while drafting this article:

- Grading: Educational leaders interested in making equitable change might first want to explore how our conceptions of grades and what they represent have implications for teaching practice and constructing whole-school assessment policies.

- Inclusion: Educational leaders who might want to support the creation of inclusive school communities could begin by engaging in a conceptual analysis of what inclusion entails, offering a nuanced guide with practical implications for different potential conceptions, implications that explore both policy and classroom-level details.

- Indoctrination: School leaders interested in understanding and responding to accusations of indoctrination by community groups and parents could begin by conceptualizing what we might mean by the term indoctrination and then what an education that sought to avoid indoctrination might look like, offering practical resources and teaching strategies to teachers and curriculum specialists.

- School Safety: School leaders are increasingly charged with managing and ensuring safety in schools, and while there are certainly important empirical studies to be done to understand how to engage in creating safe schools, one essential place to begin is to create some shared

understanding of what we even mean by the notion of safety itself. Doing so may help us create specific types of policies and engage in specific types of practices while potentially ruling out others. As with other examples throughout this article, the practical implications rest upon the conceptions of safety upon which the researchers base their work.

As we hope this short list offers, a Philosophy in Practice dissertation would offer robust opportunities to explore educational leadership issues. Let us dive into a potential example in more detail. A current hot issue in public schooling today is how much say parents should have in responding to curricular issues within schools. Let's imagine another EdD doctoral student who aspires to a district-level leadership position, and they are interested in exploring this issue because their district has had trouble responding to parental challenges in coherent ways that address the myriad concerns raised by different interested groups (i.e., parents, students, teachers, and the school board.) Many administrators and teachers disagree over how much decision-making parents *should* have. That has resulted in school board meetings that have dissolved into shouting matches over who *should* have control. (We emphasize *should* here to highlight that when we raise *should* or *ought* questions we're often in the realm of philosophical inquiry.)

In this case, the topic is grounded in ethical considerations, and there are plentiful philosophical resources that could inform real-world responses. To draw upon one last philosophical example, consider Amy Gutmann's well-known discussion of how to conceptualize parental involvement in curriculum in her classic philosophical text, Democratic Education (1987). In that text, she outlines four potential frameworks that provide answers to the question of how much involvement parents should have in curriculum choices. In brief, she discusses the potential results of offering parents full control, the school having full control, the school being completely neutral in curriculum development, as well as a framework for engaging in democratic discussions about such matters (Guttmann 1987). Diving into the details of Gutmann's argument is beyond the scope of this discussion, but our point is that developing a clear set of philosophical rationales to inform policy choices is itself a considerable contribution to real-world change-making practice. Among other choices, our fictitious student could offer their district a framework for thinking through the issue with clear policy recommendations based upon the philosophical conclusions they develop. We also note that this issue involves equity and diversity, and if educational leaders aren't able to engage in the underwriting philosophical frameworks that inform a controversial equity challenge, then we suggest they cannot make the significant change that CPED wishes to promote.

Curriculum

The first implication for doctoral program design is to ensure that students have access to philosophically-informed approaches. First, these approaches ought to be included as options in introductory courses so students know from the beginning of their programs that philosophically-informed approaches are possible. This will also serve to inform how they might plan courses of study and craft committees accordingly. Second, there needs to be dedicated research methods courses that teach Philosophy in Practice research methods. A course of this nature would use existing Philosophy in Practice texts, articles, and dissertation exemplars while at the same time deepening students' understanding of the process of conceptual analysis/research.

Another key component of courses of this nature would be a philosophical exploration of educational ethics. Ethics remains part of the CPED Framework, but nowhere is there a call for preparation for systematically engaging in ethical analysis. We suggest the creation of applied ethics courses that introduce students to how philosophical understandings of ethics can be woven into both actual practice as well as empirical and Philosophy in Practice research projects.

Policy

The second implication for program design is the development of policy that explicitly includes philosophically informed approaches and how they fit into the preparation and development of students' dissertations. One good first step here would be to list philosophy in practice as a key aspect of EdD programs in the CPED framework. Next, program-level policies ought to be revised to allow for philosophically informed approaches to be seen as legitimate and institutionally supported. Examples of potential revisions include listing the IRB number as optional on prospectus and proposal forms and reworking the language of Qualifying Exams to allow for a philosophically-informed option so that the QE process is meaningful to all students regardless of how they approach their dissertations. Finally, there needs to be a level of philosophical advocacy within the program, ensuring that philosophically informed approaches are understood as legitimate at all levels, from committees to the graduate school. One way to ensure this would be to adopt new guidelines for philosophically informed dissertations, using recommendations from this paper or the AERA humanities standards as a guide.

Challenges

As previously noted, EdD students commonly point out that they do not see the practical value of philosophy (Hurst, 2023, p. 59). Philosophy as a discipline or even simply as a term is often entirely left out of the EdD curriculum, presumably because of the perception that it lacks practical value. Even the phrase 'bridging theory and practice' suggests that there is an inherent rift that exists between the two that requires the development of an artifice to connect them. At best this implies that the practitioner is only a consumer of theory which has already been developed and whose only function is to work out how it fits in current practical systems and processes. In contrast, throughout this article, we have argued that we can equip EdD graduates with a focused form of philosophical research skills to enhance their abilities to lead educational change by collapsing the seeming theory/practice dichotomy. All graduates, even those who are resolutely empirically minded, would benefit from learning Philosophy in Practice research skills because doing so would enhance their abilities to interrogate current practical systems and processes that can affect real and potentially meaningful change. Rather than focus on bridging gaps, students instead could conduct research and write dissertations that operationalize philosophical methods to change practice in ways that address and even solve real-world educational problems.

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