


Transforming Dissertations into Global and Career-Advancement-Centered Doctoral Digital Portfolios: Interweaving Research Rigor with Social Media Dissemination¹

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ABSTRACT

This is a collaborative article co-authored by an EdD Director and five doctoral students who are embarking on their final year research journey. The article offers 1) a discussion of the design and development of a global and career-advancement-centered doctoral digital portfolio (DDP), and 2) an advocacy towards alternative dissertation formats with social media dissemination while maintaining research rigor. The doctoral students corroborate the significance and benefits of the DDP for democratizing the knowledge dissemination with improved accessibility and interactivity. Most importantly, the DDP offers a new possibility for EdD doctoral students to transform traditional textual dissertations into a digital format that is relevant to the diversified audience and readership, including potential employers.

KEYWORDS

intersectionality, logic-of-inquiry, epistemology, ontology, digital media

The Design and Development of the Doctoral Digital Portfolio (DDP)

In the following paragraphs, the research team discusses the process of developing a doctoral digital portfolio at Webster University by 1) narrating the ethos of the EdD, 2) discussing the rationale for moving beyond the traditional format, and 3) explaining the DDP as an alternative dissertation format. The EdD Director (first author) was inspired by a new way of framing the EdD final year projects via participation in the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) annual convenings. In particular, conversations with colleagues at CPED Convenings spurred the further discussion of creative ways of professionally representing research findings, e.g., via podcasts.

Ethos of the EdD: The Scholar-Practitioner Model

CPED defines the EdD in these terms: "The professional doctorate in education prepares educators for the application of appropriate and specific practices, the generation of new knowledge, and for the stewardship of the profession" (CPED, 2022, para. 4). In this light, CPED advocates for the use of the dissertation-in-practice

(DiP) model. Many CPED member institutions have shifted to focus on DiPs, in contrast to traditional dissertations. For example, Ewell et al. (2022) combined action research with DiP as the "signature pedagogy" and "alternative format for the Dissertation in Practice" (p. 4). The DiP is considered as an alternative format in this article because of its ethos in connecting research to practice and the focus on the field rather than a new ground-breaking study that does not have practical implications. When conceptualizing the EdD and what it does, the first author created the following image to represent how it is different from a PhD.

Illustration 1: Scholar-Practitioner Model of EdD



In the above illustration, the infinity loop represents a conceptualization of EdD research, with a focus on the scholar-practitioner model (Perry, 2016). This illustration signifies the dialogic



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and dialectic (Bakhtin, 1981) relationship between theory, research, and practice. Theory and research are woven together as they guide the final year research project for informing practice. Theory and research—as well as practice—inform each other in a continuum and are inseparable. Note that the right circle is slightly bigger in the illustration. Based on the research team's interpretation of the literature and the evolution of the EdD, practice is the heart and soul of an EdD research project. A project that has minimal contribution to practice is not aligned with the EdD program objectives. CPED's definition of the EdD stresses "the stewardship of the profession" (CPED, 2022, para. 4). Thus, the practice circle on the right carries more weight because the emphasis on practice signifies how the end goal is for EdD graduates to become good stewards of the profession. Illustration 1 is an anchor point for doctoral students in an EdD program because it expresses the combination of scholarly endeavors, research rigor, and practical implications. Theory and research inform practice and vice versa, creating an infinity ring of impact.

Rationale for Moving Beyond Traditional Dissertations

Traditional dissertations are well-suited to contribute to the academic knowledge base, which is a key purpose of the PhD degree. For the EdD degree, the traditional format limits the democratizing of knowledge aiming at various stakeholders in the field. For example, an EdD project can be an action research project that tackles gun violence in public schools in a particular area. Such findings contribute not only to the knowledge base of gun violence in public schools; most importantly, the study and its findings are meaningful and impactful to many urban school leaders, parents, students, psychologists, counselors, social workers, and educators in the United States and beyond. If the findings can be represented via audio, video, and disseminated via social media, the impact of the study can be expanded exponentially. Therefore, based on the audience and stakeholders who can benefit from the EdD projects, the five-chapter traditional dissertation has its limitations in representation and dissemination.

Most importantly, EdD students often have career advancement goals upon obtaining the terminal degree. Besides higher education faculty positions, many EdD students aspire to become higher education and K-12 leaders and non-profit organization administrators. Thus, alternative formats would be more meaningful for these students in their future careers because of the focus on practice. In addition, traditional dissertations tend to have a textual representation only. With the Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology and the prevalent use of Large Language Models (LLMs), a large part of writing could be done by AI-assistance, and at the same time, social media and representation has become more and more important among educators, students, and families. These considerations spurred the creation of an alternative dissertation format that would work well for EdD students and their audiences.

Administrative Process for Approving the Alternative Dissertation Formats

At the researchers' institution, any new curriculum revision needs to be first approved via votes by the departmental faculty where the EdD is housed. Then, the proposal needs to be approved by the Graduate Council. In Fall 2023, the first author consulted with institutional and non-institutional colleagues regarding the creation of an alternative dissertation format. The format had the following characteristics: 1) it aligns with the EdD ethos as defined by CPED and Webster's EdD, 2) it creates digital representation opportunities for doctoral students to publish and disseminate research findings, and 3) it adheres to the academic rigor expected by the institution and the professional audience of the EdD degree. When the proposal to create a new alternative format was brought up, it was evident that many faculty members inside and outside of the research team's institution still believe in the traditional dissertation as the yardstick of a doctoral degree. Many of them expressed concerns regarding the rigor of the terminal degree. Some even mentioned that the alternative formats were "watering down" the EdD program. In light of these concerns, the move away from the traditional dissertation model was not easy. The first author worked with research assistants to conduct online research regarding traditional versus alternative dissertations.¹ This research documents the movement of CPED and non-CPED institutions towards alternative dissertations. The first author then used the research findings to support the proposal for an alternative format at the academic department where the EdD is housed and then presented the research to the Graduate Council. Though questions about research rigor had been raised, the first author was able to persuade faculty colleagues to vote in favor of the alternative format, particularly with the shift toward alternative models shown by the online research. In order to offer a choice to doctoral students, the EdD program at the research team's institution allows students to choose between a traditional dissertation and a doctoral digital portfolio in the final year. Some faculty have concerns about abandoning the traditional format, and therefore, the decision was made to keep the traditional format as an option. Because the faculty expect research rigor in a new model to be equivalent to the traditional dissertation, the research report in the DDP was retained to satisfy such expectations.

Therefore, when navigating the necessary institutional approvals needed for the DDP, the EdD Director had to ensure that the alternative dissertation includes considerations of academic rigor. Strategically, the director consulted with colleagues at the academic unit and at the graduate curriculum approval unit. Such informal conversations assisted the EdD Director to anticipate potential criticisms and challenges to the alternative dissertation proposal. For the DDP approval, the EdD Director anticipated questions regarding rigor and therefore included a streamlined design of the research paper within a digital portfolio.

¹ To better understand the changing dissertation landscape, the EdD program at Webster conducted online research that included 142

CPED institutions and 41 non-CPED institutions. The findings are not included in this article but can be available from the authors.



Based on our experience, we offer the following suggestions for EdD administrators and faculty when considering the transition to a digital portfolio:

- Actively consult with EdD faculty and students via CPED or other professional networks regarding their current dissertation options and their aspirations for the future development of traditional and alternative dissertations.
- Have an open mind when an alternative format is suggested by faculty or students and reflect upon any biases that one may have towards alternative formats.
- Conduct online research to find out what other EdD programs are working on.
- Communicate with faculty and colleagues who approve graduate curriculum proposals before submitting an official application for transitioning to an alternative model, such as a digital portfolio.
- Work with the university library regarding any online repositories that will support hosting the digital portfolios.
- Create a chart to document the differences between traditional and alternative dissertations regarding curriculum requirement, time commitment, and career prospects so that students have a clear understanding of the difference between the two.
- Create an online survey for EdD students to document their decisions about pursuing traditional and alternative dissertations.

What is a Global and Career-Advancement-Centered Doctoral Digital Portfolio?

At the authors' institution, the strategic goal of the EdD program is to be global and career-advancement-centered. Doctoral applicants from around the world generally pursue four different careers upon graduation: higher education faculty, higher education administrators, K-12 educators and leaders, and non-profit organization leaders. Doctoral applicants were advised to collect job descriptions of their dream career upon graduation and start to network for such positions via social media connections. Therefore, the DDP has requirements that would produce websites, social media connections, and digitalized representations of findings for addressing students' global and career advancement strategic goals.

As corroborated by Maxwell and Kupczyk-Romanczuk (2009), a portfolio is a collection of project items with a coherent theme, similar to those in "creative arts" (p. 138). A DDP in our EdD program at Webster University requires three main components: 1) a professional website, 2) a research report, and 3) a digital representation of the research findings. The professional website requires a doctoral student to create a site that hosts their resume, previous projects, presentations, and information about their final year research project. The research report resembles a mini-dissertation but it allows for more flexibility in terms of outline, required sub-sections, and content. The digital representation allows doctoral students to use any chosen digital channel to disseminate their research findings.

At this time, the digital representation portion of the portfolio is new and at an exploration phase. The doctoral students have been exposed to samples from other institutions that utilized digital formats such as digital magazine, podcasts, videos on social media, etc. The

rationale for having the three components is as follows: 1) the professional website requires doctoral candidates to create their digital footprint and digital representation of themselves as a scholar-practitioner, 2) the research report ensures the same academic and research rigor required of dissertation projects, and 3) the digital representation allows for democratizing knowledge construction and dissemination. The focus on developing a professional website and digitalized representations is aligned with the global and career-advancement strategic goal of the EdD program. The requirements for each component are as follows.

1) Professional Website

Students will create a professional website to introduce themselves, their professional identities and positioning, research interests, and professional memberships. The website requires a picture and statements about the student's advocacy for marginalized populations, as well as a list of publications and links to the student's social media sites. One of the recommended links is Research Gate (www.researchgate.net) because this will allow the doctoral student to connect with theorists, scholars, and practitioners regarding their research interests. Students are also expected to discuss the "problem of practice" (CPED, 2022, para. 12) with contextualization of the research topic chosen. An educational philosophy statement, which can be done via a short video recording, is also required on the website. The website will offer readers a comprehensive overview of the doctoral student as a scholar-practitioner. Other digital components recommended to be included on the website include: visual representations about the student's philosophy and researcher identity, podcasts, poems, songs, or short documentary films. The benefit of the websites is that they expand the readership of the students' work. Most importantly, it contributes to the career-advancement of the doctoral candidates. Years ago, doctoral candidates were not expected to have their own professional websites. But nowadays, employers may look up doctoral applicants' information online before job interviews. Having a professional website that showcases professionalism, career readiness, and digital competency is an absolute must for career advancement and a significant benefit for doctoral candidates.

2) Research Paper Requirements:

The research paper is equivalent to a mini-dissertation and requires students to write 60-120 pages. There is a minimum requirement of 40 references in the research paper. (The traditional dissertation requirement is a minimum of 100 pages, though many EdD graduates exceeded the minimum.) For the DDP research paper, since the doctoral student needs to work on a professional website and digital representation of findings, it is understandable that the number of required pages would be less than in a traditional dissertation. The sections in the research paper include: contextualization of the topic (historical, sociocultural, and sociopolitical contexts), theoretical framing, literature review, statement of problem of practice, research questions, methodology, discussions of findings and impact in the field, and IRB approval letter (if applicable).

3) Oral Presentation requirements:

There is a 25-minute recorded oral presentation requirement in the DDP. This presentation is an oral walk-through of the research report. Besides the oral presentation, students may use creative digital formats to represent the research findings.

At first glance, the DDP requirements resemble a mini-dissertation and an oral presentation, which seems to be a

compromise between traditional and alternative dissertations. As noted earlier, the rationale for this was two-fold: 1) to ensure that faculty would approve of the DDP at department and Graduate Council meetings, particularly those with concerns about keeping the equivalent academic rigor of the DDP as a traditional dissertation and 2) to function as a transition towards future developments with more advanced digital modes of representation and not exclude any current doctoral students who are less tech-savvy from completing the requirements. The intention is that the optional digital format of representation of findings will allow doctoral candidates to explore meaningful, impactful, and transformative digital representation of research findings. Most importantly, the website and digital representation of findings support doctoral candidates to present at job talks and interviews, which will likely improve the employability of doctoral candidates. In Spring 2025, the first group of EdD students choosing the digital portfolio route will complete their projects. As such, the kinds of digital formats chosen are not included in this article. In Fall 2024, the majority of the EdD students expressed interest in using video clips, websites with embedded interview findings, and social media channels such as Instagram, LinkedIn, Podcasts, and Facebook for disseminating results from their projects. These formats may change eventually based on the availability and interpretation of research data. The digital formats cannot replace the text of the mini-dissertation, because students still need to write a research report despite having digitalized representation of findings. This is because of the importance in maintaining the academic rigor, in particular doctoral level writing and their capability of producing a research report. With further data on what kind of social media channels and digitalized formats will have been employed by the first group of doctoral candidates, the anticipated outcome is that more and more digitalized representations of findings will replace texts in the future. With the challenge posed by generative AI, more and more EdD administrators will need to explore alternative ways than texts because ChatGPT can potentially write a dissertation (Lee-Johnson et al., 2023).

The major difference between a traditional dissertation and a DDP goes beyond the format. Traditional dissertation students, once in the final year of study, register for dissertation credits with their dissertation chairs. DDP students, on the other hand, take coursework credits in the final year. DDP students enroll in a two-course sequence in the final year. Each course is 5 credits and semester-long. The design of the coursework offers more hands-on and application-based experiences for doctoral students in the final year, and therefore, it is anticipated that the DDP route will result in a higher graduation rate. The hands-on experience and the opportunities to interact with other cohort members are expected to bring stronger support to doctoral students, especially those who are full-time working professionals.

Interweaving Research Rigor with Social Media Dissemination

In the EdD program at Webster, students articulate their logic-of-inquiry, linking their theoretical framing, objectives, and research methods. Logic-of-inquiry can be traced back to Dewey's (1938) structure of inquiry, which was about how we make inferences and judgment as a natural way of being.

Doctoral students need to know how the epistemological and ontological assumptions form the educational philosophy of the research study, how to formulate research questions from identifying a research gap based on the literature, and how to select the research methods that are relevant for addressing the research gap (or problem of practice). While maintaining research rigor is important; it is equally important to expand the impact of EdD studies in the field. Social media dissemination has become more and more prominent and prevalent in educational research. When research findings are disseminated via social media, the audience, especially those who are not in the ivory towers, will have a better chance to benefit from the findings. In addition, the social media outreach helps doctoral students expand their professional network for future career advancements.

Five doctoral students volunteered to co-author their experiences regarding their personal perspectives when choosing the doctoral digital portfolio over traditional dissertations². They are all at the end of year two and are ready to begin their final year. The doctoral students wrote according to the following prompts:

- Why did you choose this topic and how is this project transformative³?
- How does your intersectionality connect with the design of your DDP?
- Discuss your website and your social media (or digital) dissemination plan of your findings.
- Why did you choose DDP over dissertation?
- Now that you are in the process of working on DDP, do you find that the DDP is potentially more demanding than a traditional dissertation?
- What are your anticipated pros and cons of working on a DDP?
- What is your anticipation of a potential ripple effect of the involvement of social media in your DDP?

Trish Iaiennaro

My name is Trish. The title of my doctoral digital portfolio is "Examining the Effectiveness of Administrative Strategies for Empowering High School Students with Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds". This DDP project is important to me because it is aligned with my commitment to equity. I believe that all students deserve to have a supportive and inclusive educational environment where they can thrive. While working as a teacher in various educational settings, I witness racism and inequity throughout

² The majority of EdD students chose DDP over dissertation in the program.

³ Transformative learning is one of the most important constructs in the EdD program that advocates for challenging the status quo realities of inequity and offering new opportunities to minoritized populations.



schools that primarily serve students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. My DDP is a manifestation of my passion to explore effective administrative strategies for educators to confront inequity with effective administrative strategies.

My digital portfolio design was influenced by my personal background as an urban high school Spanish teacher. I would describe my intersectionality as a researcher and a Mexican-Italian mother of three young mixed-race boys. As I have spent my entire career in urban schools, I have seen firsthand the level of trauma that students endure, which has included the loss of some students with whom I built strong relationships in the past. These experiences gave me a cause and a unique opportunity to offer my perspective on presenting the advantages and disadvantages of administrative strategies through digital pedagogy. I have always had a passion to help kids that look like me and my own children to succeed. My DDP allows me to connect deeply with my research participants, which will ensure that my research is both contextually relevant and culturally sensitive.

This project is transformative as it pushes beyond the normal trajectory of simply assisting students with tools and teaching methods. It offers authentic administrative strategies that support students from diverse backgrounds. By understanding and promoting these administrative strategies, my research will assist in creating a more equitable landscape for every student to succeed in schools. I am hopeful that my findings can lead to change within the schools regarding their policies and practices that center diversity. Regarding the digitalized representations, I will create an accessible portfolio designed intentionally for educators who teach diverse learners with different learning needs.

My dissemination plan for my DDP findings involves the strategic use of social media platforms as well as the development of a comprehensive website that allows me to communicate my findings in real-time. The website will serve as a hub for me to share my research findings and further resources. On social media, I will be presenting summaries of my key findings, videos, and infographics which will not only increase the visibility but also allow the audience to discuss the topics in real-time. After maintaining the research and furthering discussion, I could even collaborate with educational organizations and create newsletters to continue engagement and learning on this very important topic.

I chose the digital portfolio over the traditional dissertation because I enjoy the idea of accessibility, interactivity, and flexibility. With the digital format of the portfolio, I have the opportunity to create and incorporate multimedia elements, creatively organize my work, and reach an audience far beyond the scholars in the room during my defense. My choice demonstrates my commitment to transforming the future of education while enhancing the scholarly impact.

The main advantage of working on a digital portfolio is that the data dissemination is more flexible and practical and that the findings will be accessible to a larger audience, which will hopefully lead to changes in many educational environments in the world. The only disadvantage is that there is a lack of the same structure and guidance as found with traditional dissertations, since the DDP is in uncharted territory and there have not been any published samples as references.

Joseph Clay

I am Joseph. My doctoral digital portfolio title is "A Grounded Theorizing of the Learning Opportunities Afforded to Third Graders Who Read Below Grade Level". As I reflect upon my experience as an assistant principal, there appears to be a phenomenon causing current third graders to miss out on the milestones of acquiring knowledge like phonics to become strong readers. I remember my third-grade teacher's class as a child, and it is nothing like today's environment from my observations as an assistant principal. I ask myself what has happened when I see all kinds of referrals for classroom disruptions that may have taken away from the learning environment in the form of lesson stoppage, room clears, or unprovoked extreme violence. Children with or at risk for emotional behavior disturbance (EBD) demonstrate externalizing behaviors, for instance, aggression and noncompliance (Wagner & Davis, 2006) and internalizing behaviors, for example, depression and anxiety (Morris et al., 2002). These children often display a lack of engagement in school and rate higher on feelings of disaffection than other students, which may adversely affect their academic achievement (Garwood, 2015).

As an analogy, I compare my decision to skip the traditional high school for a technical high school with my choice between the dissertation and the digital portfolio option. I chose the DDP format because it would allow me to pursue "the road not taken" (Frost, 2015, pp. 48-49) just like my technical school selection, and apply those new skills in the future. For my DDP, I will showcase information in an interactive website. Also, my research may show that reteaching primary phonics is needed well into the third grade, or students with transition issues may have caused some disruption in the learning environment that may need to be solved. Additionally, my research may show that students with transition issues may have higher referrals than peers. Students experiencing learning loss during the pandemic may also exhibit a specific learning loss gap (LLG). I have designed a workable theory that may help explain and solve the dilemma, which will be part of my main web page design. I have seen students start kindergarten with no prior preschool academics from parents who need support in the home to better parent children. So, parent and student engagement may have to be analyzed to help reduce disruptions in the learning environment. Ideas like transformative student-centered approaches to improve grade-level reading and behavior for third-grade students are hopeful, and results will be showcased on my website once I have collected all the data. As a researcher, I envision the DDP as a revolutionary dissertation format, a bridge that can fill the transformative gap in displaying beneficial data. This format, I believe, is poised to be the next wave of a technological revolution, painting a vivid picture to enhance dissertations for future researchers.

Oybek Imomov

My name is Oybek. My doctoral digital portfolio topic is "Exploring the Adoption of AI-assisted Teaching Among TESOL Instructors at a University in Tashkent". In the past few years, AI has become publicly available across various sectors including the field of education. AI is changing our education approach by helping teachers prepare classes, create material, assessments, and helping students in getting additional support to work on their assignments. My research topic is at the intersection of AI technology and language education, where innovations are rapidly changing the face of teaching and learning. By exploring how AI tools are being

integrated into teaching methods, we can gain fresh insights that have the potential to have a big influence on teachers and students.

This research has great importance for me since it could improve language learning opportunities for students in Tashkent and beyond. By understanding the possibilities and challenges associated with the use of AI among Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) instructors, we may establish opportunities for more efficient methods of teaching and better equip educators and students for the digital age. With over ten years of teaching experience and a background as an administrator for a learning management system such as Moodle, selecting a digital portfolio option was a natural fit for me as it combines both of my interests in technology and teaching. This project allows me to integrate my technical skills to create a website, utilize online tools, and teach English at the same time.

As a Central Asian married male from a middle-class family, my intersectionality has greatly influenced my career. My interest in teaching is inspired by my mother, a Russian language teacher. My early fascination with languages facilitated my travels and education abroad, broadened my outlook and shaped my identity as an educator and researcher. Working in a TESOL department has equipped me with the knowledge and skills necessary for my profession.

The results of the study on the usage of AI-assisted teaching among TESOL instructors in Tashkent can be efficiently communicated using a variety of digital media outlets. I'll share my interests and accomplishments on my Google webpage, which has proven to be a useful tool. In addition, I'll share my findings on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

The digital portfolio offers a useful approach that fits with my interests in technology and education, therefore I chose it over a traditional dissertation. With the DDP, I can investigate AI in TESOL and produce useful digital materials. It also makes it possible for me to directly address current educational problems while sharing my research results, which makes it a more dynamic and important approach.

Rokhatoy Boltaeva

I am Rokhatoy. The working title of my doctoral digital portfolio is "Reconceptualizing Digital Pedagogical Creativity Among Master's Degree Students at a University in Tashkent". The decision I made for the DDP on digital pedagogical creativity among master's degree candidates at a Tashkent institution is anchored in my academic and professional experiences. Since Uzbekistan gained its independence, I have observed rapid changes in education, and I find it fascinating how digital tools may improve the teaching and learning process. My vision is to develop a new generation of educators with the abilities to engage and inspire students through creative digital pedagogy. This project aligns with my vision. It is also transformative with an aim to close the gap between conventional teaching methods and cutting-edge digital approaches. My DDP seeks to greatly improve Uzbek educational practices by advocating for a learner-centered approach supported by digital resources.

The design of my digital portfolio is greatly influenced by my intersectionality as an educator, researcher, and Uzbek woman. As a child in a post-Soviet educational system, I personally witnessed the transition from a curriculum-based approach to one that was more learner-centered. I now have a unique perspective on the benefits and challenges that digital pedagogy brings to Uzbekistan thanks to

this personal journey. Because of my identity and experiences, I am able to establish a more meaningful connection with the study participants, which shows that the research is relevant to the context and sensitive to cultural differences. I hope to create a nuanced knowledge base regarding how digital tools might support instructional innovation in my nation's distinctive educational landscape via my DDP project.

The main platform for sharing my study findings will be my personal website. The website will include a special section called "Reconceptualizing Digital Pedagogy" where I will post digital materials such as concept maps, infographics, visuals, and unidentified participant statements. I will update my LinkedIn profile to reflect my research endeavor and its ongoing progress to broaden the audience for my discoveries. I will also use Facebook and Instagram to provide updates. To reach a wider audience and establish connections with other educators and scholars who are interested in digital pedagogical innovation, I will use hashtags like #digitalpedagogy, #UzbekEducation, and #TeachEd.

What motivated the decision to pursue a DDP rather than a regular dissertation is the aim to produce a more dynamic and useful research output that makes use of digital tools and platforms. Research findings can be presented in a more dynamic and visually appealing way with a doctoral digital portfolio, making them more understandable and powerful for a larger audience. Moreover, the DDP format is consistent with my research focus on digital pedagogy, as it embodies the creativity concepts that my study seeks to advance.

While the advantages of choosing the DDP include possibilities for innovative and participatory ways to deliver study results and providing more accessibility and participation through digital platforms, the drawbacks include the technical difficulties involved in producing and preserving digital content and the requirement for ongoing monitoring and upgrades to the digital portfolio. Though the minimum number of pages required for the research paper in the DDP is less than a traditional dissertation, I believe the challenge of the DDP goes beyond the number of pages, because of its transformative power and potential influence in the field.

I will also create a series of engaging workshops and webinars for teachers in Uzbekistan to highlight the results and real-world uses of digital pedagogical creativity to help increase the impact of my DDP. A culture of innovation in education might be fostered by setting up an online community where educators can exchange best practices, resources, and experiences relating to digital pedagogy which would also present chances for cooperation and continuing support.

Jiewei Zhang

My name is Jiewei Zhang, and I live in Beijing, China. The title of my DDP is "The Challenges and Practice of Transformative Learning in Transnational Higher Education in China." The study explores the application of transformative learning (TL) within the context of transnational higher education (TNHE) in China, focusing on Sino-foreign cooperative programs. The findings highlight the importance of critical thinking, facilitative teaching methods, cultural understanding, and innovative problem-solving in fostering transformative learning experiences. The study also emphasizes the need for comprehensive onboarding for foreign professors, language support for students, and the integration of localized content into curricula. My intersectionality is Chinese, cisgender, woman, and

transnational, and I have 20 years of experience working in a transnational higher education institution in China. My professional target is to promote and improve the transnational program operation and students' learning experience. Since I have been an administrator in a US-China joint program for over 19 years, I am familiar with transnational higher education operations in China. This topic fits my career background and transformative leadership is a key factor to ensure the success of transnational education.

Transnational education is considered an essential component of educational internationalization; and it involves the movement of people, ideas, and resources across national borders for educational purposes, as well as integrating global perspectives and experiences into educational institutions' curricula, teaching, and learning practices (Huang, 2007). Transformative learning is the process of individuals reexamining and revising their original cognitive structure and meaning system through reflection and critical thinking to achieve deep psychological and cognitive transformation. It is not only about increasing or updating knowledge but also about the comprehensive reconstruction of an individual's beliefs, values, and worldviews. Thus, transformative learning is the key component and major benefit that transnational higher education could provide to students who choose to stay within their own country, such as China, and still have the opportunity to reconstruct their learning and cognition through foreign education.

The digital plan in this article includes using text analysis software, such as NVivo, to manage data categorization and coding, identify themes, and create visual documents and utilize Mendeley for organizing citations and references. Tools such as Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Illustrator, or specialized data visualization software can be used to represent qualitative findings. Platforms like Google Docs, Dropbox, or OneDrive are also considered for sharing and collaborating on qualitative data and findings with team members or stakeholders.

In terms of social media, my website serves as a major platform for uploading ideas, discussions, articles, books, and relevant videos, among other content. Additionally, Chinese social media platforms like Zhihu (a Chinese social media platform where people mostly share or seek knowledge and experiences), and higher education academic periodicals are suitable channels for sharing and discussing findings.

The main reasons that I chose the DDP over the dissertation are: 1) a DDP allows me to present my research more interactively, including videos, audio, images, and text. This multimedia presentation can attract readers' attention more than traditional text-based dissertations, 2) DDP is usually stored online and is accessible by a wider audience. Readers can easily access my work through the internet, and 3) DDP facilitates collaboration and sharing of research results. I can link to other researchers' work, embed interactive maps or data visualizations, and even collaborate with other authors in real-time editing.

A digital portfolio can increase the reach of my research and facilitate collaboration with other scholars. Another anticipated advantage is a well-designed DDP can showcase my unique research interests, skills, and achievements. It could help me to establish a strong personal brand and advance my career development in the transnational higher education field. The major disadvantage to developing a professional DDP is the time and effort I need to devote to digital technical skills. Developing a DDP may

require technical skills such as website design, multimedia editing, and coding, which is worthwhile for investing from my perspective.

Springboarding to the Future of DDPs

This discussion of the DDP design and development and the testimonies from the five doctoral students corroborate the potential benefits and positive impact of the DDP. Doctoral students mentioned using social and digital media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Zhihu, and YouTube for disseminating their findings. Based on the five doctoral students' stories, the advantages of using social media include allowing for accessibility, democratized knowledge dissemination, improved interactivity with the audience, and thereby expanding the reach of readership when compared to traditional dissertations published on ProQuest. Doctoral students also mentioned the challenges with using digital media while balancing the privacy expectation of research participants, as well as the time investment in learning the digital tools for disseminating research findings.

Apart from the above summarized pros and cons, one of the most important elements of the website and social media dissemination is to explicitly connect the doctoral students' intersectionality to their choice of research topics. The five doctoral students represent a global and diverse student body in the EdD program: two from the United States, two from Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and one from China. Their intersectionality, epistemological and ontological stances, and their unique contextualities of the research projects contribute to our understanding of the future potentialities of EdD programs that are global, diverse, and impactful. The DDP is expected to be accessible, interactive, and this new format transforms the status quo dissemination and impact of EdD research studies.

Though further impact needs to be verified by future studies with completed DDPs, this article offers a new and timely perspective on alternative formats of dissertation with testimonies from doctoral students who chose DDP over traditional dissertations. Most importantly, the article connects to the existing paradigm shift among EdD programs with examples for interweaving rigor with accessible knowledge dissemination via social and digital media.

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