

Making Commitments Visible: A Self-Study of CPED Enactment in an EdD Program

Amy Markos 
Arizona State University
amy.markos@asu.edu

ABSTRACT

Doctor of Education programs often articulate guiding commitments through mission statements, program values, and, for Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) member institutions, the CPED Framework®. Yet, the presence of commitments in program routines and practices does not guarantee that they remain visible in a program's everyday experiences. This study examined how CPED principles and design concepts were embedded, enacted, and made visible within the Leadership and Innovation EdD program at Arizona State University, a founding CPED member institution. Using a self-study design, data included artifact collection and focus groups with students and faculty. Artifacts were analyzed through deductive coding aligned with the CPED principles and design concepts, while focus group transcripts were inductively coded using in vivo coding. Artifact analysis showed that the CPED Framework® was deeply embedded in the program's architecture, and focus group analysis revealed alignment between participants' experiences and the CPED ideas. However, CPED language was not used consistently in program community discourse. This suggests that our program's commitment to the CPED Framework® operated as tacit theory-in-use rather than as an explicitly articulated one. Drawing on Argyris and Schon's (1974) distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use, this study highlighted the importance of making guiding commitments visible within program dialogue. The findings suggest that self-study can serve as both a methodology and a pedagogical practice through which EdD programs examine and intentionally cultivate the visibility of their guiding commitments.

KEYWORDS

self-study, program improvement, espoused theory, theory-in-use, CPED framework

Education Doctorate (EdD) programs often devote considerable attention to articulating their guiding commitments, such as the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) principles and design concepts, through mission statements and program values. Yet, the presence of guiding commitments in program routines and practices does not guarantee their visibility in a program's everyday life. In some cases, commitments that guided program design become so embedded in program routines that they fade from explicit conversation among faculty and students. As one student in this study remarked, "I had never heard that term before, but that's exactly what we are doing."

As a faculty member in the Leadership and Innovation (L&I) EdD program at Arizona State University, I occupied a dual role as both practitioner and researcher. Through my work teaching in the program, supervising dissertations, and participating in program leadership and redesign efforts, I became interested in how the program's guiding commitments were being understood and experienced by students. This raised an important question: when guiding commitments are deeply embedded in program architecture, how visible are they within a program community's shared discourse?

In this article, which highlights some of the findings from the self-study (LaBoskey, 2004) of the L&I program at Arizona State University, I draw on Argyris and Schon's (1974) distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use to make sense of how CPED principles and design concepts were enacted and made visible in our

program, offering implications for how other EdD programs might do the same.

PROGRAM CONTEXT

The L&I EdD program at Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation is a founding member of CPED. Our program launched in 2006 and graduated its first cohort in 2009 (Markos et al., 2024). In 2007, L&I faculty joined colleagues from more than two dozen institutions in the early development of CPED, engaging in national dialogue focused on strengthening the preparation of advanced education practitioners (Perry & Imig, 2008). As a result, the L&I EdD program and CPED have evolved in close relationship. While our program maintains its own articulated core values, these values have been shaped in dialogue with the CPED principles and design concepts (see Figure 1), which have informed our program's architecture and design decisions over time.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, our program experienced rapid growth, which surfaced tensions related to scale, modality, and coherence. In response, we formally launched a program re-envisioning process in Spring 2023. A Program Re-Envisioning Committee, composed of 11 full-time faculty and four instructional designers, was formed to guide this work. Initial efforts included surveying faculty, students, and alumni to identify practices and



New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 United States License.



This journal is published by Pitt Open Library Publishing.



impactinged.pitt.edu
Vol.11 No.4 (2026)

This journal is supported by the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate: A Knowledge Forum on the EdD (CPED) cpedinitiative.org

ISSN 2472-5889 (online)
DOI 10.5195/ie.2026.640



policies to “stop, start, and continue” in light of the program’s core values. This re-envisioning work centered on questions about how our program’s core values were being experienced in practice and whether they remained visible and coherent across the program.

In this context of active program re-envisioning, we accepted CPED’s invitation to participate in the CPED Principles Implementation & Framework© Impact Self-Study Project. Rather than approaching this opportunity as an external evaluation, we viewed participation as an extension of our re-envisioning work. Looking at our program through a CPED lens offered an additional framework for examining not only how our program enacted CPED

principles and design concepts, but also how our own program values were being experienced and articulated by students and faculty.

The present study, therefore, emerged at the intersection of two ongoing efforts: our local re-envisioning work and the CPED Principles Implementation & Framework© Impact Self-Study Project. At the time of writing, our program has adopted a revised Core Program Values statement, modified the program of study, and redesigned coursework for the first three terms of the EdD program. New cohorts have begun under this revised structure, marking the initial phase of implementation of our re-envisioned program.

Figure 1. Crosswalk between the Leadership and Innovation’s Core Program Values and the CPED Framework

L&I Core Program Values	Informed by CPED’s Framework	
<i>Through our program priorities, goals, and beliefs, the Leadership & Innovation Education Doctorate Program supports professionals in becoming scholarly and influential practitioner leaders.</i>	Principle(s)	Design Concept(s)
Priorities		
Priority 1: Ethical, just, and inclusive instructional and research practices	P1; P5	
Priority 2: Multiple cycles of action research to transform local Problems of Practice	P2; P3; P4; P5; P6	Dissertation in Practice; Problem of Practice; Inquiry as Practice; Scholarly Practitioner; Laboratories of Practice
Priority 3: Rigorous theory-driven instruction, innovative research, and personalized mentoring	P5	Inquiry as Practice; Mentoring and Advising
Priority 4: Leader Scholar Communities (LSCs) that facilitate small-group interaction to advance dissertation completion	P3	Mentoring and Advising
Goals		
Goal 1: Transforming & improving practice	P2; P4; P5	Scholarly Practitioner; Inquiry as Practice; Laboratories of Practice; Dissertation in Practice; Problem of Practice
Goal 2: Leading change & implementing innovations	P2	Scholarly Practitioner; Inquiry as Practice; Laboratories of Practice; Dissertation in Practice; Problem of Practice
Goal 3: Becoming scholarly & influential practitioners	P2; P3; P4	Scholarly Practitioner
Beliefs		
Belief 1: Engaging with uncertainty, discomfort, and ambiguity is part of the learning process	P4; P5	Scholarly Practitioner; Inquiry as Practice; Mentoring and Advising
Belief 2: A scholarly practitioner’s ideas are always evolving	P3; P5	Scholarly Practitioner; Inquiry as Practice; Mentoring and Advising
Belief 3: The work to lead transformation in a local context extends beyond the dissertation	P6	Scholarly Practitioner; Inquiry as Practice; Mentoring and Advising

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is founded on two conceptual ideas: self-study (LaBoskey, 2004) and theory-in-action (Argyris & Schön, 1974). I relied on self-study to shape the methodological design of this study. I turned to theory-in-action during the data analysis to help me make

sense of patterns I observed across artifacts and participant accounts.

Self-Study as Program Re-Envisioning Work

This inquiry is situated within the tradition of self-study as articulated by LaBoskey (2004), who characterizes self-study as self-initiated and focused, improvement-aimed, interactive, and grounded in multiple, primarily qualitative, methods. These defining features



provide the method and methodological framework for this study. Prior to and alongside this research, faculty in the L&I program were engaging in reflective program re-envisioning aimed at improving program practice. We were already enacting self-study as a method for program improvement. This study extends that work by using self-study as a methodology for a systematic inquiry into how the CPED principles and design concepts were enacted in our program.

Self-study is *self-initiated*. Although the research opportunity emerged within the context of the sponsored CPED Principles Implementation & Framework© Impact Self-Study Project (Pape & Perry, 2026), our participation was voluntary and grounded in our faculty's longstanding commitment to reflective practice (LaBoskey, 1994; Schön, 1992; Whitehead, 2000). At the time of CPED's invitation, our program was already one year into a self-initiated formal re-envisioning process prompted by post-pandemic growth and the complexities it introduced. We accepted the research invitation as an opportunity to deepen our inward examination of our program through a lens that enabled us to see how CPED principles and design concepts were being espoused and enacted.

Self-study is *improvement-oriented*. Self-study is undertaken not merely to describe practice, but to inform and transform it. When CPED extended its invitation, the L&I EdD program was already engaged in examining what practices to "stop, start, and continue" in light of our core values, forming a Program Re-Envisioning Committee to guide this work. Participation in the CPED Principles Implementation & Framework© Impact Self-Study Project offered an additional structured lens through which to examine both our espoused values and values in practice. The present study functioned within an ongoing cycle of reflective improvement rather than as a discrete evaluation. By accepting the research opportunity, we intended to use the study findings to inform our re-envisioning efforts.

Self-study is *interactive*. While I conducted the data collection and data analysis, the study unfolded within an already collaborative program context. As part of our re-envisioning process, faculty engaged in structured conversations about program values, growth, and emerging tensions. I consulted the faculty on methodological decisions, shared emerging findings, and engaged them in discussions about how findings might inform our re-envisioning efforts. Student and faculty focus groups further extended this interactivity by centering stakeholder voices in examining how CPED principles and design concepts were experienced and articulated. Participation in the CPED Principles Implementation & Framework© Impact Self-Study Project also situated this inquiry within a broader inter-institutional dialogue about EdD program enactment. In these ways, the study operated interactively across multiple levels: within the Program Re-Envisioning Committee guiding institutional change, through structured engagement with faculty and students, and within the broader national CPED community.

Finally, self-study *employs multiple qualitative methods*. Artifact analysis examined formal representations of CPED commitments in syllabi, assessment structures, and program documents, while faculty and student focus groups provided insight into lived experience. The juxtaposition of these data sources enabled comparison between structural embedding and experiential articulation.

These characteristics position this inquiry as a disciplined and reflexive examination of professional practice. By centering inward inquiry and attending to what may have become normalized or taken

for granted within our L&I EdD program, this self-study has sought both to inform our ongoing program redesign and to contribute to collective understanding of how CPED principles and design concepts are enacted and made visible within professional doctoral education.

Espoused, In-Use, and Visible Program Values

Argyris and Schön's (1974) theory of action helped me make sense of the data collected in this study. Their theory of action describes the governing logic that connects a person's or an organization's articulated commitments to patterns of practice. Argyris and Schön (1974) explain that an actor's theory of action can be understood through two expressions: espoused theory, "the theory to which he gives allegiance," and theory-in-use, "the theories that actually govern his actions" (pp. 6-7). While their early work centers on individuals, they extend this framework to organizational contexts. At the organizational level, espoused theory refers to the values and commitments an organization formally articulates through mission and vision statements, guiding principles, and other formal statements. Theory-in-use, by contrast, reflects the governing assumptions embedded in an organization's routines and practices. Additionally, Argyris and Schön (1974) note that theory-in-use often operates tacitly; actors may enact an organization's governing assumptions without consciously naming or articulating them. Within this framework, organizational coherence is understood as the relationship between articulated commitments (espoused theory) and institutional routines and practices (theory-in-use). When articulated commitments, routines, and practices align, organizations are seen as demonstrating coherence between stated values and lived action. When misalignment exists, it signals tension between rhetoric and practice. When gaps are identified, organizations can work to more closely align their theory-in-use with their espoused theory.

In professional doctoral education, this distinction is particularly salient. EdD programs articulate their commitments to practitioner-scholar preparation through formal documents and program architecture. The CPED principles and design concepts are examples of program commitments. In the context of our L&I program, our Core Program Values are our articulated commitments. Yet, the presence of explicit commitments (espoused theory) does not determine how those commitments function in practice (theory-in-use). Examining the relationship between articulated values and lived enactment is therefore essential to understanding program coherence.

In this study, I use Argyris and Schön's (1974) framework as an analytic lens to consider the relationship between the CPED principles and design concepts as articulated in our program documentation and how those commitments are experienced and described within the program community. Consistent with Argyris and Schön's (1974) emphasis on observable patterns of action, I infer theory-in-use not only from participants' accounts but also from institutionalized routines and practices embedded in course syllabi, dissertation structures, and other artifacts that reflect our program's architecture.

While the espoused/in-use distinction provided a useful starting point, the patterns that emerged in this study prompted closer attention to the nature of theory-in-use. In the context of our mature EdD Program, the tension was not between whether the CPED principles and design concepts commitments were enacted, but how they were enacted. Because theory-in-use often operates tacitly,

enacted commitments may shape practice without being consciously articulated. When embedded in our program's routines and structures, the CPED Framework© risks becoming background architecture, structuring practices without being intentionally foregrounded. Therefore, I attend to the visibility of enactment: the extent to which the CPED principles and design concepts are embedded in practice and intentionally named, foregrounded, and recognized within the program's shared discourse. Because the CPED Framework© informs our Core Program Values, this study extends the conversation about CPED's visibility to include the visibility of our program values.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was designed as a program-level self-study examining how CPED principles and design concepts were enacted within our EdD program. Self-study, as a methodological stance, invites educators to systematically examine their own practices, assumptions, and structures to generate knowledge that informs improvement (LaBoskey, 2004). Consistent with this tradition, the inquiry was rooted in disciplined inward examination rather than external evaluation. To operationalize this self-study, I employed qualitative methods, including artifact analysis and faculty and student focus groups, and engaged in iterative, comparative analysis to examine patterns across structural documentation and lived experience.

The study was undertaken as part of the CPED Principles Implementation & Framework© Impact Self-Study Project, which invited participating institutions to engage in structured reflection on their program's alignment with CPED principles and design concepts. In our context, this provided an opportunity to examine not only whether the CPED Framework© was embedded within our program design, but also how those ideas were experienced and articulated by faculty and students.

Although the self-study was interactive in both purpose and outcome, I conducted the data collection and analysis. Throughout the process, I engaged faculty on the Program Re-Envisioning Committee as critical friends (Kember et al., 1997) seeking their input on research redesign, initial interpretations of the data, and how we might use findings from this study in our broader program re-envisioning work. The research was guided by the following questions:

- How are CPED principles and design concepts reflected in our program's formal structures and documentation?
- How do faculty and students describe their lived experiences of the program in relation to CPED principles and design concepts?
- In what ways are CPED principles and design concepts explicitly articulated, or implicitly enacted, within the program?

The intent of this design was not to audit compliance with the CPED Framework©, but to engage in disciplined inquiry into how CPED principles and design concepts were embedded, enacted, and experienced within our program. As a founding CPED member institution, alignment with CPED was assumed; the self-study gave us an opportunity to examine how that alignment functioned in practice.

Context and Participants

The study took place across the 2024-2025 academic year. It was situated within and included student and faculty participants from the L&I program.

Student Focus Group Participants

I recruited students in the advanced stages of the program who had completed coursework and were actively engaged in the dissertation process. These participants were defending dissertation proposals or implementing their studies and collecting data during the penultimate or third-to-last semesters of the program. I invited eligible students via email, noting that participation was voluntary.

Seven students expressed interest; ultimately, six participated across two focus groups (two students in one group and four in the other), each lasting approximately one hour. Participants represented a range of professional roles, including two K-12 practitioners, three in higher education, and one educational leader in the military.

Faculty Focus Group Participants

I recruited faculty who were actively engaged in the program through teaching and/or dissertation supervision but who were not involved in course development or program-level decision-making, including service on the Program or Re-Envisioning Committees. In doing so, I sought perspectives from faculty who were involved in the lived delivery of the program rather than those shaping its structural design.

Eligible faculty were invited via email and informed that participation was voluntary. Six faculty expressed interest, and all six participated in a single 60-minute focus group. Five participants were full-time faculty members in the college: three tenured and two holding non-tenure-eligible faculty appointments; one participant was a part-time instructor. Two faculty participants had taught courses and supervised dissertations, three had supervised dissertations but not taught coursework, and one had taught coursework but had not supervised dissertations.

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation, consistent with Institutional Review Board approval.

Role of the Researcher and the Program Re-Envisioning Committee

As a faculty member in the L&I EdD program, I occupied a dual role as both practitioner and researcher. At the time of this study, I was teaching courses in the program, supervising students through the dissertation process, and serving on both the Program and the Program Re-Envisioning Committees. I also previously developed courses within the program. This level of involvement afforded intimate familiarity with the program's structures, culture, and design decisions while requiring deliberate reflexivity to examine practices with which I was directly involved.

Recognizing my roles within the program, I intentionally recruited faculty for the focus groups who were actively engaged in teaching or dissertation supervision but were not involved in course development or program-level decision-making. This sampling decision was designed to center perspectives shaped by enactment rather than architecture.

Although members of the Program Re-Envisioning Committee were not research participants in the conventional sense and did not



provide data for analysis, I sought their contributions to the study through structured dialogue about its design, findings, and implications. During regularly scheduled committee meetings, I consulted the group on methodological decisions (e.g., which artifacts to collect and which students and faculty to invite to participate in focus groups), shared emerging findings, and engaged them in discussions about how those findings might inform our re-envisioning efforts. While committee members did not participate in coding or direct data analysis, their engagement ensured that the study remained aligned with the program's ongoing redesign work. Engagement with the faculty on the Re-Envisioning Committee through structured dialogue reflects self-study's emphasis on reflexive interaction and collaborative sense-making (LaBoskey, 2004).

Data Sources

This self-study drew on two sources of data: (1) program artifacts and (2) faculty and student focus groups. I intentionally selected these sources to enable comparison between how ideas from the CPED Framework® were represented in program documentation and how they were described in participants' lived experiences.

Program Artifacts

I collected artifacts to examine how CPED principles and design concepts were represented in program documentation and curricular design. These artifacts included the following pages from our L&I EdD Google site: the Program Description, the Program Concepts, Outcomes, and Signature Pedagogies, the Action Research Dissertation Guidelines, a Sample Dissertation Outline, and a CPED page. I also collected and reviewed syllabi for all 11 core courses in the program to analyze how the CPED principles were embedded in the course architecture. In addition, I examined the 2023–2024 Program Handbook, our Information for Prospective Students website, and our Core Program Values (see Figure 1). Although the prospective student site is externally facing, I included it because it serves as an official articulation of our program's values and design and reflects how CPED principles are presented to both internal and external audiences. All artifacts were publicly available.

The purpose of artifact analysis was not to determine compliance with CPED standards, but to identify both explicit references to CPED principles and implicit structural features that institutionalize those commitments within program routines and practices. These documents functioned as representations of the program's espoused values and provided a foundation for comparison with participants' experiential accounts.

Focus Groups

I conducted focus groups with faculty and students to explore whether, and how, CPED commitments were reflected in their lived experiences of the program. Focus groups were conducted via Zoom, recorded for transcription purposes only, and followed a semi-structured format.

The semi-structured protocols were developed as part of the CPED Principles Implementation & Framework® Impact Self-Study Project. Participating institutions were asked to use a shared set of prompts designed to explore how CPED principles and design concepts were encountered and enacted within their programs. I used these shared prompts to guide both student and faculty focus

groups, as they aligned directly with the aims of this inquiry and our ongoing program re-envisioning work. At the beginning of each focus group, I oriented participants to the CPED Framework® and invited them to reflect on where and how they had experienced CPED within the program.

Core prompts asked participants to provide concrete examples of how CPED principles were integrated into coursework, dissertation work, and their professional practice. While student prompts emphasized the dissertation experience and professional application, and faculty prompts included questions about course design and the purpose of the EdD, the shared structure of the protocols enabled me to examine how participants' lived accounts aligned with or diverged from the way CPED principles and design concepts appeared in program artifacts.

Rationale for Data Source Selection

Together, artifacts and focus groups provided complementary perspectives. While some artifacts functioned as articulations of espoused commitments (e.g., the CPED page on our website and our Core Program Values), many of the remaining artifacts revealed institutionalized routines and structural expectations that provided insight into theory-in-use, even when explicit CPED language was absent. Focus groups provided insight into lived enactment and participant interpretation. The intentional juxtaposition of these data sources enabled me to examine the convergence and divergence between formal commitments, institutionalized routines and practices, and the visibility of those commitments in faculty and student discourse.

Analytic Approach

The analytic process was iterative and reflexive, consistent with self-study traditions that emphasize disciplined examination of one's own practice (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014; LaBoskey, 2004). I began the artifact analysis by compiling text from relevant program webpages and documents into a set of Google Docs organized by source (e.g., Prospective Student website, L&I Google Site, Program Handbook, and course syllabi). During this process, I removed university policy language from the syllabi and focused my analysis on course and program ideas. Next, I read and reread the artifacts, documenting observations and emerging questions in analytic memos. After familiarizing myself with the artifacts, I conducted my first pass of deductive coding. When I saw passages that explicitly or implicitly reflected a CPED principle, I highlighted and coded them by principle. Then, I did another coding pass, this time identifying design concepts. Through this process, I identified extensive structural alignment between the program artifacts and the CPED Framework® (see Table 1).

To analyze the focus group transcripts, I first cleaned them to ensure they matched the audio recordings and then reread them multiple times, recording initial observations and questions in my analytic memos. Because the focus group prompts were already aligned with the CPED principles and design concepts, I chose to code the transcripts inductively, using *in vivo* coding (Saldaña, 2016) to stay close to participants' descriptions of their experiences.

After completing the initial coding, I collapsed related *in vivo* codes into broader patterns. These patterns helped me see how the CPED principles and design concepts were enacted and articulated across student and faculty experiences. I ended up with three patterns that shaped the findings below: congruency (participants

describing their experiences as aligned with the CPED Framework©, “*this is what the program is all about*”), hidden curriculum (participants recognizing connections between their experiences and the CPED Framework© despite not being familiar with the CPED language, “*I had never seen this term, but...*”); and tensions (instances where faculty and students acknowledge that Principle 1 was present, but not always actionable, “*someone or something sometimes prevents that from being able to happen*”).

Following these analyses, I used analytic memoing to consider the data set as a whole, think through cross-data comparisons, and identify patterns of convergence and divergence. I asked: Where do documented commitments align with lived descriptions? Where do they differ? What assumptions appear embedded in practice but are not explicitly articulated? Through this comparative analysis, I found that a recurring dynamic emerged.

Although I began this self-study interested in the alignment between CPED principles and lived experience, I did not initially anchor the inquiry in Argyris and Schön’s (1974) distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use. As I compared artifact analysis with focus group conversations, a dynamic became increasingly visible: CPED commitments were embedded in documentation and enacted in practice, yet often not explicitly named or connected to participants’ experiences. In seeking conceptual language to describe this dynamic, I turned to Argyris and Schön’s (1974) framework as an interpretive lens. Yet, even this distinction required refinement, as the findings suggested not a gap between espoused theory and theory-in-use, but between enactment and visibility.

Table 1. Instances of Deductive Codes Across Artifacts

CPED Principles	Artifact Instances	CPED Design Concepts	Artifact Instances
P1	5	Scholarly Practitioner	20
P2	32	Problem of Practice	15
P3	10	Inquiry as Practice	31
P4	23	Laboratory of Practice	19
P5	23	Signature Pedagogy	8
P6	26	Dissertation in Practice	24
		Mentoring and Advising	11
Total	119	Total	128

FINDINGS

Guided by Argyris and Schön’s (1974) distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use, I generated three interrelated findings. First, artifact analysis showed structural saturation; CPED principles and design concepts were embedded into our program architecture. Second, focus group data revealed that faculty and students’ lived experiences in the program were aligned with ideas in the CPED Framework©. Finally, comparing the two sources revealed a visibility gap; while CPED principles and design concepts were present in program routines and practices and student and faculty experiences, they were rarely articulated in program discourse.

Structural Saturation

Artifact analysis revealed extensive, systematic alignment between our program architecture and the CPED principles and

design concepts. Across program descriptions, policy documents, course syllabi, dissertation guidelines, and materials for prospective students, CPED commitments were explicitly named and implicitly embedded. Explicit references to CPED principles were present in all 11 course syllabi and on the EdD Aspirations, Outcomes, Signature Pedagogies, and CPED Resource pages on our L&I EdD Google site. Beyond these direct references, implicit connections to CPED principles and design concepts were present across all analyzed artifacts.

Ideas associated with Principles 2, 4, 5, and 6 appeared consistently across the artifacts, each occurring more than 20 times. Principle 1 (equity, ethics, and social justice) and Principle 3 (collaboration and communication with diverse communities) were also present, though less frequently. These patterns indicate not incidental inclusion but the structural integration of CPED principles across our program’s architecture.

Explicit references to the Problem of Practice and Scholarly Practitioners Design Concepts were evident across the artifacts, as these are terms routinely used in our program. Implicit connections to the other design concepts were also present. The program requires that all students complete an Action Research dissertation. As such, students engage as scholarly practitioners to address a problem of practice within their local context and to enact improvement through inquiry. This structure institutionalizes CPED’s design concepts of the Scholarly Practitioner, Dissertation in Practice, Problem of Practice, Inquiry of Practice, and Laboratory of Practice. As such, these findings indicate that CPED commitments were deeply embedded in the program’s architecture.

Lived Alignment

Artifact analysis demonstrated that the CPED Framework© was structurally embedded across program architecture; focus group conversations revealed that these commitments were also reflected in participants’ lived experiences. Students consistently described their experience in the program as aligned with the CPED principles, noting that, as action researchers, they were conducting research focused on Problems of Practice situated within their own professional contexts. One student, reflecting on Principle 2, remarked, “this is all about what our program is about,” emphasizing that the integration of theory and practice was not peripheral but foundational to the EdD experience. Others described conducting research “where we practice,” capturing CPED’s Laboratory of Practice concept. Across discussions of dissertation work, students framed their research as action-oriented, locally grounded, and aimed at improvement, features consistent with CPED’s Scholarly Practitioner and Dissertation in Practice Design Concepts.

Faculty accounts mirrored these ideas. Instructors described coursework and dissertation requirements intentionally structured around cycles of inquiry, collaborative problem-solving, and applied research. Faculty supervising dissertations emphasized mentoring students as Scholarly Practitioners who design studies to address authentic Problems of Practice in their professional contexts. Several faculty members noted that CPED principles “almost define our program,” reinforcing these commitments were deeply integrated into everyday teaching and advising practices.

While students generally described alignment with CPED principles across their coursework and dissertation, Principle 1 (framing questions around equity, ethics, and social justice) was particularly complex to enact. Several students described navigating



equity-oriented inquiry as “the elephant in the room,” noting that conducting action research centered on equity and social justice could be particularly difficult in contexts where support for such research was limited or prohibited. Although students described the equity-focused program coursework as powerful and transformative, they acknowledged that constraints in their local contexts influenced the extent to which they could apply these ideas in their professional practice. The faculty echoed this awareness of contextual constraint. One faculty member reflected:

I think that we should have it [Principle 1] as an aspiration. Very explicitly. But the students that work with me, ...very often the issue of equity or the complexities around equity, social justice, and so on, need to be simplified to survive in their professional context.

While CPED commitments were reflected in students' and faculty's lived practice, students' abilities to enact Principle 1 in their professional contexts were shaped by contextual conditions. Student and faculty narratives demonstrate that CPED commitments were not only structurally embedded but actively enacted within program routines.

The Visibility Gap

Taken together, the contrast between artifact analysis and focus group data revealed a visibility gap between the lived alignment of the CPED Framework© in our program's routines and practices and faculty members' and students' explicit articulation of CPED ideas within program discourse. In artifacts, CPED principles and design concepts were clearly embedded throughout the program. From a program architecture standpoint, alignment appeared robust and intentional. Yet, focus group conversations complicated this picture. Faculty and students consistently described experiences deeply aligned with the CPED Framework©: grappling with equity tensions in professional contexts, conducting cycles of action research within local systems, integrating theory with practice in dissertation work, and engaging in inquiry around Problems of Practice. However, these commitments were rarely articulated explicitly in CPED language. Students recognized alignment with CPED once the Framework© was presented during the focus group. As one participant noted when reviewing the idea of the Laboratory of Practice in the Design Concepts, “I had never heard that term before, but that's exactly what we're doing.” Another reflected after seeing the Framework©, “I look at these [principles and design concepts] now, and I understand them.”

Faculty and students noted that the CPED principles were included in course syllabi but not consistently discussed. One student explained, “I did read about CPED briefly. It's mentioned in the syllabus...but I didn't see how it directly related to me, so I didn't really delve into it.” Students shared that while the CPED principles appeared in syllabi, “it wasn't explicitly talked about.” Faculty echoed the idea that the principles were in course materials, but not explicitly discussed, one noting:

I see the principles within the syllabus, and it operates primarily as boilerplate. I have never had any of my students in either a course or the LSC [dissertation process] ask me or make connections to any of the CPED principles.

Faculty and students recognized the value of making the CPED Framework© more visible. One student suggested that the CPED Framework© might become more meaningful if it were more intentionally foregrounded in program dialogue, noting, “if we want to

see this, then we have to be intentional about it.” The faculty discussed how conversations with students about the CPED principles and design concepts could help students navigate the complexities of these theories-in-use. Returning to the tensions that students described around conducting equity-focused research in their professional contexts, one faculty member reflected, “it is our job to help people navigate these constraints,” and suggested that bringing CPED ideas more deliberately into conversations between faculty and students could provide the language and support for doing so. Finally, a more visible connection to the CPED Framework© would provide students and faculty with the language and values that distinguish the EdD from other degrees, as one student noted, “it would be nice to know about CPED from the beginning to counter the misunderstandings, the negative understandings about an EdD versus a PhD.”

DISCUSSION

This visibility gap does not suggest misalignment or contradiction. Rather, it highlights a distinction between structural embodiment and intentional cultivation. Drawing on Argyris and Schön's (1974) distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use, I determined that CPED principles and design concepts were indeed enacted in program practice, yet their explicit articulation within the program community was limited. In this sense, the gap was not between espousal and enactment, but between enactment and visibility.

The distinction matters. When principles shape practice implicitly, they may influence experience without becoming part of participants' shared language or a program's lived identity. Students described engaging in inquiry cycles, addressing equity challenges, and linking theory with practice, hallmarks of the CPED Framework©, yet many did not initially connect these experiences to the formal language of the CPED principles and design concepts. Faculty similarly expressed comfort with the alignment between the CPED Framework© and the program but noted that the Framework© itself was seldom foregrounded in classroom dialogue or dissertation conversations. In most cases, the CPED commitments operated tacitly, guiding practice without being explicitly named.

Embedding values within program structures is necessary but insufficient. For espoused theories to function as formative commitments in professional doctoral education, they must be intentionally cultivated: made visible in program architecture, explicitly connected to program experiences, and integrated into the shared discourse of the program community. Structural coherence does not automatically produce conceptual clarity. Without deliberate articulation, even deeply embedded commitments risk becoming background features of the environment rather than consciously held guideposts for practice.

Program Shifts

This visibility gap prompted the Program Re-Envisioning Committee to reconsider not only what it means to enact the CPED Framework© within an experienced EdD program, but also the degree to which our L&I Core Program Values were integrated into the program community's discourse. We needed to figure out how to articulate the role the CPED Framework© plays in our program, beginning with its influence on our Core Program Values. Our values were unique to our program but influenced by the CPED



Framework©. Findings that show the implicit connection between CPED principles and design concepts and our program architecture made sense. We have worked to stay connected to the CPED Framework© as we have designed, redesigned, and enacted our program. Now we were left to figure out, to what degree, where, and why we wanted to make that influence explicit.

As a Program Re-Envisioning committee, we began by creating a crosswalk between our Core Program Values and the CPED Framework© (see Figure 1). This allowed our founding program faculty to engage in dialogue with newer faculty about our program's history with CPED, including the roles some of our program faculty played in creating the CPED Framework©. This strengthened the visibility of the CPED Framework© that guides our program and brought it more explicitly into program faculty dialogue.

Next, we considered the finding that CPED language functioned as "boilerplate" in our course syllabi rather than intentional engagement. Two important insights surfaced. First, our program uses standardized syllabi to ensure that all students taking the same course receive the same experience, regardless of instructor. Syllabi are written by course coordinators who serve on the Program Faculty Committee, meaning those who develop courses/course syllabi are involved in the program design, but faculty teaching a course may not be directly involved in integrating the CPED Framework© into a syllabus or course. As a result, students and faculty often encountered CPED language in syllabi without a clear understanding of its relevance to the course.

Second, some students and faculty did not realize the CPED language was in the syllabus at all, challenging the assumption that everyone reads the syllabus as a shared reference point for course expectations. In practice, students and faculty more often access course information through the Canvas learning management system. Recognizing this, we decided that during the program re-envisioning process, we would make connections between course learning outcomes, our Core Program Values, and the CPED Framework© more explicit in the course Canvas shell. By foregrounding these relationships in the spaces where faculty and students most often make sense of course experiences, we aimed to transform our espoused theory into a visible guide for teaching and learning. At the same time, we recognized that visibility alone was insufficient. It's only when ideas shift from tacit theory-in-use in program discourse that they can be named and interrogated. As a program faculty, we are committed to using the language of our Core Program Values in our community's discourse.

These shifts reflect our program's continued commitment to reflective practice. Through the Program Re-Envisioning Committee, we used the findings from this study to move our Core Program Values and the CPED Framework© from background architecture to more visible elements of program design and dialogue.

Implications for CPED Programs

Programs should consider the relationship between their espoused theory and the routines and practices that structure students' and faculty members' experiences. Argyris and Schön (1974) remind us that theory-in-use is not revealed by what a program says it values, but by the patterned actions that guide its practice. For doctoral programs, this raises an important question: to what extent are program routines inherently structured around shared program values? CPED programs whose courses and dissertation expectations are designed around espoused theories

are more likely to have coherence between espoused theory and program routines and practices. In contrast, programs that function as a patchwork of individually aligned courses or whose dissertation expectations replicate PhD models may struggle to translate the CPED Framework© into consistent program practice.

Long-standing or experienced CPED programs are not immune to visibility challenges and may, in fact, be more susceptible to implicit saturation. In these contexts, the CPED Framework© may become so embedded in program routines that it fades from explicit dialogue within the program community. When espoused theory is experienced as tacit theory-in-use, it is hard for program stakeholders to engage in conversations about CPED principles and design concepts because they experience its influence without having the language to name it. As Argyris and Schön (1974) caution, when theories-in-use remain tacit, they become difficult to reflect on, limiting a program's ability to engage in intentional improvement.

A final implication concerns the role of self-study in EdD programs. Self-study should not only serve as a research methodology but also as a means by which programs continually examine how they enact their espoused theory. For self-study as a method of program improvement to be sustainable, programs must cultivate reflective inquiry as a routine practice rather than an occasional activity. In our case, we have intentionally crafted the program architecture to support this work through a standing Program Faculty Committee, our ongoing program re-envisioning work, and regular dialogue with students and faculty about program experiences (e.g. meetings with dissertation chairs, surveying students about course revisions). Adopting the values of self-study as both espoused and in-use theory enables programs to keep their guiding commitments visible, discussable, and open to improvement.

Programs often devote considerable attention to articulating their guiding commitments, yet this study suggests that embedding those commitments into program architecture is only part of the work. In our L&I EdD program, artifact analysis revealed structural saturation: the CPED principles and design concepts were deeply embedded in program architecture. Focus group data demonstrated lived alignment between students' and faculty's program experiences and our commitment to the CPED Framework©. Yet, the visibility of these commitments in program discourse was less consistent. Through this self-study and our ongoing program re-envisioning process, we were able to surface our commitments (both our Core Program Values and the CPED Framework©), examine how they functioned in practice, and explore how to intentionally bring them into program dialogue. Aligning commitments with program routines and practices is not a one-time design task, but an ongoing process of reflective inquiry. For programs committed to continuous improvement, the challenge is not only to embed commitments in program architecture but also to keep them visible, discussable, and open to ongoing reflection within the program community.

REFERENCES

- Argyris & Schön (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Hamilton, M. L., & Pinnegar, S. (2014). Self-Study of teacher education practices as a pedagogy for teacher educator professional development. In *International Teacher Education: Promising Pedagogies* (Part A) (Vol. 22, pp. 137-152). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Kember, D., Ha, T. S., Lam, B. H., Lee, A., NG, S., Yan, L., & Yum, J. C. K. (1997). The diverse role of the critical friend in supporting educational



- action research projects. *Educational Action Research*, 5(3), 463–481.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09650799700200036>
- LaBoskey, (2004). The method of self-study and its theoretical underpinnings. In, J.J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, & V. K. LaBoskey (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices*: (pp. 817-870). Springer International Handbooks of Education.
- Markos, A., Buss, R., & Marsh, J. (2024). From reacting to re-imagining: Using pandemic adaptations for program advancement. *Impacting Education*, 9(1), 1–6.
- Pape, S. J., & Perry, J. A. (2026). CPED Framework Implementation and Impact Rubrics Self-Study: An Overview. *Impacting Education*, 11(4), 3–11.
- Perry, J. A., & Imig, D. G. (2008, Nov-Dec). A Stewardship of Practice in Education. *Change*, 40(6), 42–48.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* [3rd Edition]. Sage Publishing.
- Schön, D. A. (1992). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Whitehead, J. (2000). How do I improve my practice? Creating and legitimizing an epistemology of practice. *Reflective Practitioner*, 1(1), 91–104.