

The Power of Looking Inward: Insights from CPED Program Self-Study

Jennifer C. Theriault 
University of Findlay
jennifer.theriault@findlay.edu

Amy Markos 
Arizona State University
ampost@asu.edu

ABSTRACT

This introduction frames a themed issue of *Impacting Education* examining the role of program self-study within CPED-member institutions. Grounded in the theme *The Power of Looking Inward*, the issue features essays and research from participants in the CPED Principles Implementation & Framework© Impact Self-Study Project, a multi-institutional initiative designed to refine rubric-based approaches to assessing CPED principles enactment and impact. The project evolved beyond evaluation into a collaborative space for reflection, dialogue, and organizational learning across diverse Education Doctorate (EdD) programs. Across contributions, self-study emerges as a generative process extending beyond accountability to support collective inquiry, faculty learning, and program transformation. Authors explore cross-institutional collaboration, the visibility of program values, tensions between espoused theory and enacted practice, and the role of institutional contexts. Findings illustrate how self-study surfaces implicit practices, reveals gaps between intention and experience, and exposes “living contradictions” shaping program design. Collectively, the issue positions self-study as a critical mechanism for advancing CPED-informed doctoral education and fostering continuous improvement through reflective, collaborative practice.

KEYWORDS

program self-study, Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), CPED principles, reflective inquiry, doctoral program improvement

In the ever-evolving landscape of doctoral education, the call to “look inward,” to examine, question, and learn from one’s own practices, represents both a challenge and an opportunity. This themed issue of *Impacting Education*, *The Power of Looking Inward: Lessons from CPED Program Self-Study*, brings together a collection of essays and research articles from institutions that engaged in program self-study as part of the CPED Principles Implementation & Framework© Impact Self-Study Project. Collectively, these contributions offer a rich tapestry of reflection, innovation, and transformation grounded in a shared commitment to preparing Scholarly Practitioners through the CPED Framework© and to understanding the power of looking inward through program self-study.

Pape and Perry, in “CPED Framework Implementation and Impact Rubrics Self-Study: An Overview,” provide an overview of how the CPED Principles Implementation & Framework© Impact Self-Study Project was framed as a multiple case study to understand and validate the CPED Framework Implementation and Impact Rubrics. They explain that seven Education Doctorate (EdD) programs engaged in self-study both within their local contexts and as part of a collaborative initiative. While the initial purpose centered on examining and refining the rubrics as tools for assessing CPED principles implementation and impact, the project quickly evolved into something more expansive: a collaborative opportunity for institutional reflection, programmatic learning, and continuous

improvement, as well as a space to document the experiences, insights, and lessons learned through engaging in self-study.

Participating institutions engaged in the project for a range of reasons that reflect the diversity of CPED-influenced EdD programs. Some institutions, including Marymount University and Radford University, participated due to prior involvement in rubric development, while others, such as the University of Findlay and the University of Missouri, joined as newly appointed program coordinators seeking structured approaches to program assessment. Institutions such as Northeastern University and Rowan University used the project as a benchmark for evaluating curricular alignment, while Arizona State University engaged as part of broader efforts to re-envision its doctoral program. Despite these varied entry points, institutions shared a commitment to examining how their programs enacted the CPED Framework© and to understanding how they approached, engaged with, and at times wrestled with the self-study process. As a result, self-study functioned not only as an evaluative activity but also as a space for dialogue, collaborative meaning-making, and deeper examination of program design, pedagogy, mentoring, and dissertation practices.

This emphasis on collective inquiry is particularly evident in Capello and Yurkofsky’s “Using CPED Rubrics for Program Self-Study: Confirmation and Challenge,” where the authors highlight the value of cross-institutional collaboration and the importance of



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engaging stakeholders in reflective processes that deepen faculty understanding of program design and implementation. They emphasize how opportunities to connect, question, and learn from peers enhanced faculty understanding of program design and implementation. Their findings underscore self-study as not only evaluative work, but also as a process of organizational learning and faculty socialization.

Extending this idea, Boyd et al., in "Holding Up the Mirror: CPED Rubric Self-Study as Deliberate Improvement Work," examines self-study as a form of collaborative professional learning. The authors argue that one of the project's most significant contributions was the opportunity to identify gaps between intentions and perceptions. They further observe that CPED-aligned pedagogies were often deeply embedded in Marymount's program, even when not explicitly articulated, suggesting that self-study can surface and make visible existing program values and practices, while also illuminating key lessons learned through looking inward.

Building on this view, Theriault et al., in "Interrogating Integration: Reconceptualizing Doctoral Program Self-Study as a Window for Collaborative and Reflective Inquiry," reconceptualize self-study as a reflective and generative process. The authors argue that self-study must move beyond compliance-oriented metrics toward collaborative inquiry that supports collective learning and intentional program redesign. Their work highlights how rubric-based evaluation alone may obscure the depth of CPED principle enactment and positions self-study as a mechanism for ongoing program evolution and as a process through which programs grapple with how principles are enacted in practice.

Complicating this perspective, Mitani et al., in "Institutional Constraints and Methodological Ideals," examine the organizational conditions that shape self-study efforts. The authors emphasize the importance of institutional readiness and demonstrate how reflective inquiry can surface tensions and "living contradictions" within programs, revealing the ways institutions wrestle with aligning aspirations, structures, and enacted practices. Their findings highlight how self-study may simultaneously affirm program strengths while exposing misalignments among institutional structures, aspirations, and enacted practices.

Focusing more directly on issues of visibility and enactment, Markos, in "Making Commitments Visible: A Self-Study of CPED Enactment in an EdD Program," explores the relationship between espoused theory and theory-in-use. Drawing on Argyris and Schön (1974), she analyzes how CPED principles are articulated in documentation and experienced within the program community. Her findings suggest that CPED principles may be deeply embedded in program design, even as their articulation and visibility remain uneven.

Similarly, Parenti et al., in "The Authenticity and Promise of Learner Talk in Programmatic Self-Study," examine the relationship between program intention and participant experience. Drawing on maturation theory and retrospective sensemaking, the authors explore how differences in perceptions between current students and alumni reflect developmental positioning rather than inconsistency alone. Their work highlights the importance of attending to lived experiences as a critical dimension of program self-study.

Reinforcing the importance of collaboration, Scheese et al., in "Reflections on the CPED Self-Study Process: Strengthening Practice and Purpose," examine the role of inter-institutional engagement in the self-study process. The authors highlight how participation in a broader professional learning community created opportunities to share resources, troubleshoot challenges, and engage in collective reflection. Their findings suggest that collaborative exchange enhances the effectiveness and impact of self-study, particularly for future program planning.

Taken together, these essays and research articles position self-study as more than an accountability mechanism. Across the themed issue, self-study emerges as a collaborative, reflective, and iterative process that supports faculty learning, surfaces implicit practices, and makes program values visible. At the same time, it reveals tensions, challenges assumptions, and exposes misalignments between institutional aspirations and enacted practice. In this way, self-study functions as a generative mechanism through which doctoral programs can more intentionally align their structures, values, and practices with the evolving aims of professional doctoral education and the preparation of Scholarly Practitioners.