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Focus and Delivery of Doctoral Programs in Educational Leadership

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to present the current status of program focus and delivery of doctoral level educational leadership programs in the United States. Drawing on a 2011 national survey of educational leadership doctoral programs in 103 institutions, this study describes the differences and similarities of Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs in two domains—program focus (i.e., purposes, credit requirements, and curriculum emphases) and program delivery (i.e., use of cohort model, time, location, and online/face-to-face/hybrid). In light of mixed findings, implications for practice and recommendations for further research are presented.

Keywords: educational leadership programs, Ph.D., Ed.D., program focus, program delivery

Focus and Delivery of Doctoral Programs in Educational Leadership

Doctoral level education is undergoing reform globally. Impetus for the reform has stemmed from the changing global economy, the focus on knowledge as a competitive advantage, and the demands from labor markets (Bitusikova, 2009; Nerad, 2011; Neumann, 2005; Probst & Lepori, 2008; Servage, 2009). Scholars have noted the rapid growth of professional doctorates in the fields of health, law, management, nursing, psychology, science, and education (Nerad, 2011; Neumann, 2005; Servage, 2009). In these fields, traditional doctoral education, with its focus on academic teaching and research, has not met the rising challenges of candidates who aim to be practitioners instead of scholars (Kehm, 2007). The expansion of the professional doctorate has fueled the need to redefine the purposes of doctoral degrees globally as well as to differentiate between the features of the professional and the research degree (Kehm, 2007).

In the United States, perhaps no field reflects the global reform issues related to the doctorate better than that of educational leadership. First, doctoral degree programs in educational leadership have proliferated. From 1993 to 2003, the number of doctoral programs increased by 48% across the country (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007). Secondly, just as the professional and traditional doctorates in other countries look almost identical in practice (Neumann, 2005), so, too, do doctorates in educational leadership in the U.S. (Hackmann & Price, 1995; Norton, 1992; Norton & Levan, 1987). Action related to the recent initiatives of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) may signal that the long and persistent call from scholars to differentiate the degrees may have reached a tipping point (Guthrie, 2009; Levine, 2005; Murphy, Moorman, & McCarthy, 2008; Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, & Garagedian, 2006). A flurry of program redesigns, published descriptions of program redesigns,

and conference dialogue and debate seem to have energized a field traditionally satisfied with the status quo (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997). A logical step at what appears to be a critical juncture in the field of doctoral programs in educational leadership is to describe the current status of doctoral programs, including similarities and differences between the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) and the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) as the program reform momentum continues.

Scholarship aimed at describing and comparing these two degrees has historically been placed on program features exclusive of program focus and delivery. Recent reviews of innovative programs, as well as arguments for improved practice, have explored elements such as program outcomes (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Levine, 2005; Murphy, Moorman, & McCartney, 2008), the knowledge base related to practice (Clark & Clark, 1996; Jackson & Kelley, 2002), leadership skills (Clark & Clark, 1996), teaching and learning strategies (Brown, 2006; Clark & Clark, 1996; Jackson & Kelley, 2002), and curriculum relevance and alignment (Levine, 2005; Murphy, Moorman, & McCartney, 2008; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006). Therefore, the limited literature on program focus and delivery potentially provides little guidance for Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs, because a quality program should ensure: (1) a seamless alignment between program focus and content, and (2) a program delivery structure well-suited for the content.

To inform this discussion and program development, particularly in program focus and delivery, this study was designed to provide: (a) a snapshot of the current program focus and delivery features of doctoral programs in educational leadership and (b) a description of similarities and differences between Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs. This article is structured to first present current research in Ed.D. and Ph.D. program focus and delivery. An overview of the literature for each element is presented, followed by a description of methods of inquiry and a

report of the survey findings. Comparisons of the elements of Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs then provide a context for a discussion of implications for further research and next steps.

Relevant Literature

A growing body of literature has consistently concluded that although Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs espouse different purposes, few substantial differences have been observed in terms of program focus and delivery (Hackmann & Price, 1995; Norton, 1992; Norton & Levan, 1987). Given recent redesign initiatives in many leadership programs across the United States, one wonders whether history will repeat itself or whether program elements are undergoing substantial change. This literature review presents an overview of program focus and delivery structures, including recommended practices.

Program Focus

Although doctoral programs across the U. S. exhibit unique features, they also share general characteristics of program focus and delivery. Most are university-based and require the completion of course credits in content specific to educational leadership and management, as well as credits in research methods, internship or clinical experience, and dissertation research. Some also require the completion of credits in a cognate field. Time to completion also varies among programs. The following section provides an overview of program purposes, credit requirements, and curriculum emphases.

Program purposes. Central to any examination of elements of doctoral programs in educational leadership is clarity of program purpose. Although program leaders have consistently asserted that the Ed.D. is designed for the preparation of practitioners and the Ph.D. is designed to prepare scholars, boundaries have been blurred. The inception of the first Ed.D. at Harvard College's Graduate School of Education in 1921 marked the pioneering effort to provide a

doctoral degree to prepare educational leaders (Perry, 2012). Yet that first Ed.D. closely

resembled the Ph.D. in curriculum, research focus, and dissertation format (Perry, 2012). Over

the years, despite the lack of defining curriculum features, the Ed.D. was instituted in universities

across the country, often with the claimed purpose of preparing practitioners for school

leadership but with most features resembling the Ph.D. This persistent lack of distinction

between the two degrees has led to the acceptance of both degrees as "dual-purpose" degrees

(Guthrie, 2009, p. 3).

The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate, currently a consortium of 52 schools

and colleges of education, is currently engaged in the redesign of Ed.D. programs, with the

purpose of providing high quality doctoral level education for the preparation of practitioners.

Anchoring its work is the definition of the Ed.D. as a professional doctorate to prepare educators

"for the application of appropriate and specific practices, the generation of new knowledge, and

for the stewardship of the profession" (Perry, 2012, p. 43). A similar initiative focused on the

Ph.D. has not yet been undertaken. However, scholars have suggested specific reforms in

doctoral level educational research programs focused on preparing scholars (Levine, 2007).

Credit, Content, and Clinical Experience Requirements.

Number of credits. Although descriptions of individual programs are widely available in

the literature, few studies have aggregated program features to identify general credit and content

distribution requirements. In addition to limited literature on credit requirements, previous

studies revealed wide variations in total numbers of credits required for program completion. A

1995 study of 121 doctoral programs in educational leadership reported a range of 28-67

semester hours required for program completion, with a mean of 48 (Hackmann & Price, 1995).

Dissertation hours also showed a wide range from 0-30, but a mean and mode of 12 showed

greater consistency among programs (Hackmann & Price, 1995). Twelve years later a survey of

23 doctoral programs found a similarly wide range of total required credits of 45-92, with a mean

of 66.6 (Dembowski, 2007). Dembowski also found a mode of 12 credits required for

dissertation work. Interestingly, both of these studies pooled data from Ed.D. and Ph.D.

programs, without differentiating between the two, possibly indicating researcher assumptions

about the similarities between the two degrees. Also of interest was the finding that the mode of

credits required for completion was 60 in both studies.

   Curricular content. Research on the competencies and thus the curriculum requirements

for exemplary educational leadership doctoral programs has been limited almost exclusively to

programs that prepare senior level school district leaders. Nevertheless, inroads are being made

on a number of levels. To some extent, programs are responding to licensure and accreditation

requirements, but they are also drawing upon research and expertise in curriculum design to map

out appropriate content for the Ed.D.

   Licensure and accreditation requirements drive at least some program content in doctoral

level educational leadership programs. (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Murphy, 1991). Complicating

this issue, however, is the lack of distinction between Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs as vehicles for

superintendent or district level licensure. For superintendent licensure, the Educational

Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) program standards, which are part of the National

Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation process, require two

assessments in content knowledge and three in professional leadership skills in six standards

areas, including candidates' skills in instructional leadership, supporting student learning,

organizational management, and community relations. The standards assessments also include an

assessment of the clinical experiences required of all candidates (NPBEA, 2011). Licensure and

accreditation standards do not, however, assess candidates' research expertise, an issue that has been subjected to considerable criticism (Archbald, 2008; Levine, 2005; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006; Pounder, 2000).

A variety of sources has served to inspire suggestions for curricular reform. Scholars have proposed curriculum content based on syntheses of literature as well as examination of curricula in related fields such as business administration (see, e.g., Richardson, 2006 and Hallinger & Snidvongs, 2008). To differentiate key curriculum features of the Ed.D. and the Ph.D., Young (2006) offered a comparison of key elements of each, including a description of the knowledge base. In this model the Ed.D. knowledge base requires the ability to develop and apply knowledge for practice and integrate research-based content themes and theory with practice. The knowledge base for the Ph.D., by contrast, fosters theoretical and conceptual knowledge, content investigation, and relationships between leadership practice and policy (Young, 2006). Such proposals for curriculum emphases in doctoral level educational leadership programs have begun to provide frameworks for newly developed programs and those undergoing redesign.

Although there is little evidence of curricular reform in Ph.D. programs in educational leadership, there is a growing body of strong evidence of purposeful curriculum redesign of the Ed.D. Reports of innovative programs (e.g., Jackson & Kelley) as well as program self reports (e.g., Everson, 2009; Jean-Marie, Adams, & Carn, 2010; Marsh & Dembo, 2009; Normore & Slayton, 2010; Sheckley, Donaldson, Mayer & Lemons, 2010; Storey & Hartwick, 2010) provide a range of exemplars of substantial efforts to align programs with purposes. It appears, then, that the momentum for reform in the Ed.D. has captured the attention of academics. Whether the momentum will continue remains an open question.

***Clinical experiences*.** As part of a complete curriculum for doctoral programs in educational leadership, a clinical experience is a generally acknowledged key component (Goldring & Schuermann, 2009; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Murphy, 1991). Designed to enable future leaders to engage in authentic leadership work under the guidance of a skilled practitioner, internships are seen as essential in both the Ed.D. and the Ph.D. (Young, 2006). However, developing and monitoring internship quality has historically been problematic (Murphy, 1991). Exemplars like the Harvard University Urban Superintendency, in which students engage in a full-time six-month internship with an urban superintendent, are rare (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

An overarching challenge in developing clinical experiences for doctoral programs is the lack of clear criteria to differentiate between experiences appropriate for programs that prepare practitioners and those preparing scholars. Young (2006) proposed that Ed.D. internships focus on experiences linked to candidates' career aspirations, including experiences that develop program evaluation expertise. Ph.D. programs designed to prepare scholars, on the other hand, might offer internships in which students acquire skills related to the responsibilities of teaching and research (Young, 2006). Attending to the clinical component of doctoral programs in educational leadership, in terms of time allocated as well as quality and appropriateness to program purpose, remains an area for further development.

Program Delivery

The logistics of delivering academic programs include determining how candidates will be grouped for instruction, as well as when, where, and how instruction will occur. These decisions are critical from a program alignment perspective, in which the emphases are on meeting the learning needs of students, delivering content in logical sequence, and engaging students with content in ways that will ensure achievement of program outcomes. In addition,

decisions about delivery structures affect institutional needs for resource efficiency. Thus, student access and retention, as well as efficiencies in the use of personnel and material resources are paramount. This section presents a review of delivery trends.

Use of cohort model. Of the ways of grouping doctoral students in educational leadership programs for instruction, the use of cohorts has become ubiquitous (Cordiero, Krueger, Parks, Restine, & Wilson, 1992; Donaldson & Petersen, 2007; Norton, 1995). Surveys for the past nearly 20 years have found that more than half of doctoral programs in educational leadership programs have reported the use of cohorts (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000; McCarthy & Kuh, 1997; Murphy, 1999; Norton, 1995). Defined as "a group of students who engage in a program of studies together" (Yerkes, 1995, p. 3), the cohort model has "achieved at least a moderate level of penetration for doctoral programs in a relatively short amount of time" (Donaldson & Petersen, 2007, p. 14).

Scholars have identified many strengths of the cohort model, related directly and indirectly to learning. Among the key instructional strengths of cohorts are fostering curricular coherence, active engagement, and motivation (Barnett et al., 2000; Burnett, 1989; Hill, 1995; Leithwood, 1995; Murphy, 1993; Norton, 1995). Social benefits also result from cohort participation, in which students gain a sense of affiliation, trust, and respect for their classmates' expertise (Clark & Clark, 1996; Greenlee & Karanxha, 2010; Zander, 1982), and develop a professional network (Teitel, 1997). Related to the acquisition of skills for leading educational organizations, cohorts have been found to support the development of professional learning communities (Goldring & Schuermann, 2009; Teitel, 1997). These positive effects seem to overshadow negative aspects of cohorts, which include some students feeling "stuck" with unprofessional and unproductive classmates (Teitel, 1997).

Positive benefits of teaching cohorts also accrue for faculty who have reported becoming more collaborative with their own colleagues as well as with faculty at other institutions (Milstein and Associates, 1993, as reported in Basom, et al., 1996). Hill (1995), for example, found greater use of team teaching in cohorts. Furthermore, cohorts can foster positive faculty-student relationships (Basom et al., 1996; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Just as there are benefits for faculty, there are also challenges. Cohesive cohorts have been known to engage in power struggles with faculty (Teitel, 1997). In addition, faculty report that cohort teaching imposes time demands for program development, advising, and teaching, which can impede progress in scholarship (Bassom et al., 1996). Nevertheless, the power of cohorts to foster collaboration among students and faculty seems to outweigh negative views of cohorts, as evidenced in the widespread use of cohorts in program delivery.

Finally, the use of cohorts has been noted for positive effects related to institutional goals of student access, retention, and completion (Burnett, 1995; Hill, 1995; Norton, 1995; Teitel, 1997). Class size is usually limited to 18 to 25 students (Basom et al., 1996; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Transfer of cohort skills into the work environment has been noted as evidence of program outcomes (Basom, Yerkes, Barnett, et al., 1996/1997; Norris, Barnett, Basom, & Yerkes, 1997). Furthermore, cohorts have been found to facilitate efficient delivery of courses, providing students consistent access to the courses in their programs of study and ensuring adequate enrollments in all courses (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000; Barnett & Muse, 1993). In fact, the literature on the effectiveness of cohorts as a delivery structure in educational leadership programs is fairly consistent.

While a cohort structure may be effective for grouping students for coursework in both types of doctoral programs, individual guidance and mentoring may be equally important for the

preparation of future researchers. According to Levine (2007), to become skilled researchers, candidates should become apprentices to senior scholars, similar to the traditional European Ph.D. model. Intensive mentoring enables students to assume increasingly greater research responsibilities. However, that arrangement rarely occurs in either Ed.D. or Ph.D. programs in the United States, except for the brief period in which candidates work with a dissertation chair to complete a research project (Levine, 2007).

Logistics of course delivery. Location, day and time of course offerings are key elements in delivering programs aligned with program purposes and student needs. Historically, courses have been offered on college campuses (Goldring & Schuermann, 2009) during the "tired time of the day"—evenings and weekends (Guthrie, 2009, p. 4). However, the growth of "executive" doctoral programs offered for practicing educators exclusively on weekends or in a face-to-face/online hybrid format (Sherman and Beaty, 2007) has gained popularity, as has access to courses in school district offices, schools, or satellite campuses.

Face-to face and online instruction. Perhaps one of the greatest influences on the delivery of educational leadership programs is the growth in online delivery formats (Goldring & Schuermann, 2009). One possible cause for the growth in online courses has been the emergence of for-profit market competitors who deliver their programs exclusively online (Glasman, Cibulka, & Ashby, 2002), thus widening the pool of applicants. Similarly, the desire to increase student access to university programs has heightened faculty interest in delivering at least some courses online or in hybrid format (Sherman, Crum, Beaty, & Myran, 2010). In addition to creating greater access, online delivery has been found to contribute to higher rates of persistence to graduation, a benefit that speaks to the need to address an attrition rate of approximately 50% among doctoral programs in education (Ivankova & Stick, 2009).

As online course and program delivery has increased, so, too, has attention to

pedagogical issues. Studying learning outcomes in online learning settings has been the subject

of two recent systematic reviews. One examined the effectiveness of online learning compared

with face-to-face instruction as well as effectiveness of hybrid approaches using a combination

of online and face-to-face instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Most of the 45

studies included in the meta-analysis were conducted in higher education, primarily in fields

such as medicine and health care, although five studies of online learning in K-12 settings were

also included. Findings were that students who learned material online performed slightly better

than students who learned the same material in face-to-face environments. Even more effective

than learning solely online was learning in a hybrid combination of online and face-to-face

delivery (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, pp. xiv-xv). Finally, the authors cautioned:

> Despite what appears to be strong support for blended learning applications, the
>
> studies in this meta-analysis do not demonstrate that online learning is superior as
>
> a medium. In many of the studies showing an advantage for blended learning, *the*
>
> *online and classroom conditions differed in terms of time spent, curriculum and*
>
> *pedagogy*. It was the *combination* of elements in the treatment conditions (which
>
> was likely to have included additional learning time and materials as well as
>
> additional opportunities for collaboration) that produced the observed learning
>
> advantages. (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. xviii)

Another recent systematic review focused on collaboration in post-secondary online learning

(Jahng, 2012). Of the 18 studies reviewed, most focused on learning processes, such as

collaboration and social presence, rather than on learning outcomes (Jahng, 2012). Although

providing evidence to guide decision-making about online learning in the broad field of education, these studies limit conclusions that might be drawn for doctoral level education.

As yet, however, little research has been done to explore the quality and outcomes of online learning in graduate programs in educational leadership and in doctoral level programs in particular. Findings of one recent study of educational leadership students, including doctoral students, indicated students preferred hybrid courses, experienced a range of learning activities, enjoyed their online classes, and felt that online coursework resulted in greater personal responsibility for learning. In addition, the majority agreed that their online coursework was as rigorous as face-to-face learning, that they experienced high levels of interaction with instructors and classmates, and that they felt they had been part of a learning community. Respondents also reported effectiveness of learning in preparing them to provide leadership, with weaker confidence in their knowledge and skills related to leading change than in other areas (Sherman, Crum, Beaty, & Myran, 2010). To develop a useful research base for decision making, further research in this area is essential.

Methods of Inquiry

This study is an analysis of part of a national survey of doctoral educational leadership programs conducted by a joint task force of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) and the Learning and Teaching in Educational Leadership Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association. In 2011, the survey— comprised of closed and open-ended questions--was sent by email to the directors/coordinators of 258 doctoral educational leadership programs in 46 states and Puerto Rico. Participants were directed to an online survey web link. While 103 institutions responded to the survey, the response completeness varies from question to question. In many cases, respondents answered

some survey questions and left others unanswered, thus resulting in variations in sample size for each survey item. Elements of program focus and program delivery were captured in seven questions. Descriptive statistics (i.e., mean, standard deviation, count, percentage, etc.) were calculated for each item on the survey pertaining to program elements. Data were organized into two areas: program focus and delivery.

The purposes of this part of the study were twofold: first, to describe the focus and delivery of educational leadership doctoral programs, and second, to compare program elements of the Ed.D. with the Ph.D. Thus, the research questions were: (1) What was the focus of doctoral educational leadership programs, in terms of purposes and coursework, and how were programs delivered ? (2) What were the similarities and differences in program elements between the Ed.D. and the Ph.D.?

Findings

Findings related to program focus are reported first in this section, followed by findings regarding program delivery. Comparisons between the Ed.D. and the Ph.D. are integrated into each section.

Program Focus

Program purposes. Preparing practitioners for leadership was the primary purpose of most Ed.D. programs, with a mean of 3.59 out of 4.0 reported for district-level leadership and a mean of 3.11 for building level leadership. Preparing scholars for the educational leadership professoriate was the primary purpose of most Ph.D. programs, as indicated in a mean of 3.25. (See Table 1.) Interestingly, preparation of practitioners was reported as a strong focus among Ph.D. programs, also, with a mean of 2.89 for the preparation of district-level leaders and a mean of 2.70 for higher education leaders. In fact, the only roles that did not fall into the "extensively"

end of the spectrum in both the Ed.D. and the PhD were "educational leadership in non-educational settings," "non educational leadership in non-educational settings," and "state-level leadership." It appears, then, that both programs tended to serve the dual purposes of preparing both practitioners and scholars.

[Insert Table 1]

Credit, content, and clinical experience requirements. Ph.D. programs required an average of 74.4 credits for program completion, approximately eight more credits than Ed.D. programs (see Table 2). It is likely that the higher number of hours is reflected in the higher numbers of credits required for research methods and dissertation in the PhD. Ed.D. programs included more required courses than the Ph.D., a possible reflection of the higher degree to which Ed.D. programs were prescribed (see Table 4) as well as greater use of cohort models in the Ed.D. than in the Ph.D. (see Table 5).

[Insert Table 2]

Coursework receiving the greatest emphasis in Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs was identical, as reported in Table 3. Content focused on "professional" topics (clarified in the survey question with the examples of "finance, law, leadership, and supervision") received the greatest emphasis in both programs. Research methods and dissertation or other capstone project received second and third priority, respectively. Internships or field placements received the least emphasis in both programs. Furthermore, respondents reported less latitude for student choice in Ed.D. programs than in Ph.D. programs (see Table 4). More than 90% of Ed.D. programs were "entirely" or "mostly" prescribed, while approximately 70% of Ph.D. programs were prescribed. Factors contributing to the high degree of prescribed components in Ed.D. programs may include the need for prospective superintendents in these programs to meet state criteria for licensure.

Also, Ed.D. programs were more likely to enroll students in cohorts (see Table 5) in which all

students in a cohort progress through a series of specified courses together. In Ph.D. programs,

on the other hand, students preparing for academic roles may be required to take cognate courses

and electives to support their research interests, contributing to greater flexibility in course

selection.

[Insert Table 3]

[Insert Table 4]

Program Delivery

Use of Cohort Model. Cohort models were widely employed as a delivery structure in

doctoral programs, but were particularly widespread in Ed.D. programs, as reported in Table 5.

When aggregated, the data indicated that both programs used primarily full, partial, or de-facto

cohorts as a means of grouping students for instruction. Nearly 95% of Ed.D. programs were

delivered in some type of cohort, while 60% of Ph.D. programs were cohort-based. Forty percent

of Ph.D. programs retained non-cohort delivery. Given the apparent level of freedom in PhD

programs for students to select courses outside of a prescribed curriculum, this is not a surprising

finding.

[Insert Table 5]

Time and location of course delivery. Weekends appeared to be the most favored time

for both types of doctoral programs to be offered. The second and third preferred options were

one evening per week and summer (see Table 6). Daytime classes were nonexistent in Ed.D.

programs and only minimally available in Ph.D. programs, with only one-quarter of Ph.D.

programs reporting this delivery option. Both programs reported offering the bulk of classes on a

campus or satellite campus (see Table 7.) Nearly 40% of programs offered 16 or more courses in

these locations. In addition, respondents from both types of programs reported offering up to five

courses in school or district offices. These findings confirm that doctoral programs of both types

cater to the needs of working practitioners who are able to attend classes only after business

hours and who prefer easily accessible locations for coursework.

[Insert Table 6]

Hybrid course delivery was the preferred instructional format for both Ed.D. and Ph.D.

programs, with about 70% of coursework delivered in this mode, as reported in Table 7. (Ed.D.

programs reported 67.2 %, and Ph.D. programs reported 71.4 %.) Of particular interest was the

high percentage of courses offered entirely online in both types of doctoral programs. Among

Ed.D. programs, 44.8% reported offering up to five courses online with an overall total of 55.2%

of coursework online. An even higher percentage of online courses was reported by respondents

for Ph.D. programs, where 57.1% of programs offered up to five courses online or with another

technology. (Although the survey did not list examples of other technologies, examples might

include such techniques as educational television and videoconferencing.) A surprising finding

was that the number of courses taken online or with another technology in Ph.D. programs was

higher than that in Ed.D. programs. Whether this was a factor of an overall higher number of

credits required of PhD candidates or possibly the availability of electives offered online in

educational leadership and cognates is a matter of speculation.

[Insert Table 7]

Discussion

Despite the agreement among respondents that the primary purpose of Ed.D. programs

was to prepare district level leaders and the purpose of the Ph.D. was to prepare scholars of

educational leadership, the two types of programs looked remarkably similar in program focus

and delivery structures. Although Ph.D. programs require slightly more credits than Ed.D.

programs, both tend to deliver similar prescribed programs, emphasizing professional content,

research methods, and a dissertation or other capstone project. Both the Ed.D. and the Ph.D. are

likely to be delivered in some form of cohort structure, on a campus or satellite campus, on

weekends, one weekday evening, and in the summer, using a hybrid delivery combining online

and face-to-face delivery. At a time when scholars are calling for clear differentiation between

the Ed.D. and the Ph.D., the data from this study might lead to the conclusion that the programs

continue to resemble each other closely. However, these data provide evidence of similar focus

and delivery only. Whether the similarities run deeper requires further investigation.

Program Focus

Although both the Ed.D. and the Ph.D. included the preparation of practitioners and

scholars in their top three purposes, the means and standard deviations for the primary purpose of

each indicated that the degree programs were decidedly different in purpose. The purpose of the

Ed.D. was to prepare district level leaders, and the purpose of the Ph.D. was to prepare scholars.

To that end, the Ph.D. required slightly more research and dissertation credits than the Ed.D. but

only about 8 credits total beyond those required of the Ed.D. for program completion.

Furthermore, the total number of credit hours required to complete a doctoral degree has not

changed significantly from a historical requirement of 60 hours (Dembowski, 2007; Hackmann

& Price, 1995). If the focus and amount of time allocated to specified content areas are similar in

both degrees, one wonders whether the actual content is also similar. Yet the amount of time

devoted to studying a particular domain of leadership gives us only a possible indication of the

range and depth of program content, even when similar course titles dominate the field (Murphy,

Moorman, & McCarthy 2008). One needs to look beyond number of hours allocated for

internships, for example, because many innovative doctoral programs integrate clinical experiences with coursework (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

The similarity between Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs' percentage of content devoted to the dissertation or other capstone project invites speculation about the purposes, processes, and outcomes of these experiences. It may be that Ed.D. programs are, in fact, developing different models of dissertations other than the research study (Archbald, 2008), but identifying qualitative differences between Ed.D. and Ph.D. dissertations requires inquiry that goes beyond number of credit hours and beyond the scope of this study.

Program Delivery

Cohort model. The widespread practice of grouping doctoral students into full, partial, or de facto cohorts is noteworthy in this study. Of special interest is the finding that nearly 66% of the coursework in Ed.D. programs is delivered in a full cohort model, while an additional 30% is delivered in partial or de facto cohorts, thus indicating that cohorts are clearly the preferred delivery structure for Ed.D. programs. Courses in Ph.D. programs also appear to be delivered in cohorts, although on a more moderate scale, with a split of 60% in full, partial or de facto cohorts and the remaining 40% in traditional randomly selected courses. This may reflect a rationale that the cohort model is the most suitable structure to reinforce the generally espoused purpose of the Ed.D.-- preparing practitioners. Research has enumerated leadership skills enhanced by participating in cohorts, including collaboration, problem solving, and conflict resolution (Basom et al. 1996). In addition, a cohort model affords efficiencies for students and faculty, offering them the expectation that courses will be offered in a prescribed sequence, with faculty regularly scheduled to teach classes that match their expertise. These attempts to explain cohort popularity are mere conjecture, given the paucity of empirical research on the effects of cohort learning.

Other possible factors influencing the steady increase in use of cohorts as a delivery structure stem from the institutional press for accountability and efficiency. Donaldson and Petersen (2007) analyzed three institutional phenomena—coercive, mimetic, and normative— and concluded, "student cohorts are likely the result of all three mechanisms, each acting on and within the organizational field in particular ways" (p. 18). Certainly one source of institutional influence on the use of cohorts stems from the pressure on graduate schools to decrease attrition and to improve completion rates (Educational Testing Service, 2010). The extent to which the use of cohorts is a response to institutional needs for efficiency or the enactment of pedagogical goals remains inconclusive.

Locations and formats of course delivery. The number of doctoral level programs and increased regional access to these programs seems to have corresponded with a high market demand for educational leaders (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007). The present study confirmed that institutions are finding ways to respond to market demands by delivering programs off campus and on satellite campuses as well as in school districts. In addition, courses delivered online in both Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs outnumbered courses delivered on campus or on satellite campuses. Although online learning has been determined in many studies to be equally or more effective than face-to-face instruction, the uneven quality of online courses identified in prior research (Zha, Lei, Lai, & Tan, 2004) highlights the need for research on online course delivery in educational leadership doctoral programs.

Next Steps

Research on programs in educational leadership, has been characterized as an "intermittent, shifting, and *ad hoc* approach" (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006) resulting in a "shallow pool of research evidence on any given area of focus" (Pounder, 2000, p. 466). This is

particularly true in the area of program focus and delivery. However, an examination of these elements can be informative. From the findings of this study, the following are suggested as areas for further research.

Scholars in the field of educational leadership widely agree that the field experience is central, yet this study indicated that "internships or other field placements" comprise only about 4.6% of Ed.D. programs and 4.0 % of Ph.D. programs. It may be that respondents whose programs integrate practicum work with coursework chose not to allocate a percentage of time for a field "placement." It may also be a by-product of the large percentage of doctoral students who enter their programs as practitioners and who are encouraged to view their work sites as internship sites without formally calling them "internships." More research needs to be done to identify whether and how doctoral level programs are integrating field experiences with coursework and, more importantly, how effective clinical experiences are in preparing practitioners and scholars.

Although the prominence of cohorts as a delivery structure indicates general acceptance of this method of organizing students for learning, there is little research on cohorts in doctoral educational leadership programs beyond designs that report faculty and student perceptions of this model. One area for further empirical investigation is that of cohort impact on leadership effectiveness as well as on the development of scholars. There is a need to explore instructional delivery in both types of programs, in order to ascertain whether cohort-based learning or other models are, in fact, fostering the outcomes programs are designed to achieve.

Another critical element that needs to be examined in doctoral programs in educational leadership is that of online learning, given the widespread use of this mode of instructional delivery in both the Ed.D. and the PhD. As this study indicated, not only are candidates in

doctoral programs in educational leadership likely to progress through an entire program in a cohort, they are also likely to take at least some of their classes either entirely online or in hybrid format. What are the combined effects of that type of course delivery?

Most importantly, there is a need for research on what is actually being delivered and what students are learning in Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs. Efforts to articulate program purposes and to align the knowledge and competencies needed by doctoral students preparing for the practitioner role or the research role are appearing in the literature and in professional conference discussions. Continuing to clarify and differentiate the purposes of the degrees is critical to developing meaningful learning experiences for all doctoral candidates. To this end, organizations such as the UCEA and the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration are providing leadership. Also, at the institutional level, engaging in program self-evaluation can be an effective catalyst for aligning program components (see, e.g., Glasman, Cibulka, & Ashby, 2002; UCEA, 2012). Finally, comprehensive frameworks for systematic curriculum development in educational leadership (see Osterman & Hafner, 2009; UCEA, 2012) may serve as useful resources for programs undertaking redesign work. Ultimately, however, there is a need to go deeper than course titles and numbers of credits to understand whether and how students in doctoral programs in educational leadership are acquiring the knowledge and skills deemed essential for effective roles as practitioners and scholars.

Beyond research implications, this examination and analysis of program focus and delivery of doctoral programs in educational leadership also has implications for practice. As more institutions in the United States and other countries redesign programs to better address the needs of practitioners and scholars, those involved in program design are urged to fully integrate the elements of program focus and delivery into redesign frameworks. After all, carefully

selected and developed structures that support program purposes and delivery are levers for

program effectiveness.

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Table 1

Comparison of Ed.D. and Ph.D. Program Focuses

Preparation Focus	Ed.D.			Ph.D.		
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
Building-level leadership	3.11	0.97	61	2.56	1.15	18
District-level leadership	3.59	0.76	66	2.89	1.20	19
District-level business leadership	2.46	1.06	61	2.56	1.15	18
State-level leadership	2.54	1.01	63	2.44	1.15	18
Education leadership professoriate	2.72	1.01	64	3.25	0.85	20
Higher education leadership	2.63	1.13	60	2.70	1.17	20
Educational leadership in non-educational settings	2.32	1.04	62	2.30	1.03	20
Non-educational leadership in non-educational settings	1.84	0.99	58	2.10	0.97	20

Note: Ratings can range from Extensively (4.00) to Minimally (1.00).

Table 2

Credits Required in Ed.D. and Ph.D. Programs

Credits Required	Ed.D.			Ph.D.		
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
Credits to Program completion	66.3	14.5	74	74.4	19.8	18
Credits for Required courses	42.6	20.3	65	38.2	18.5	18
Credits for Elective courses	11.8	9.4	57	16.4	13.7	17
Credits for Research methods	12.2	3.4	63	16.1	4.6	18
Credits for Dissertation advisement or seminar	11.3	5.7	66	13.1	4.1	17

Table 3

Mean Percentages of Emphasized Areas in Coursework

Coursework	Ed.D.			Ph.D.		
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
Foundations	14.1	15.0	67	10.2	8.3	22
Professional	32.7	16.4	68	28.9	17.3	22
Research methods	20.9	7.9	68	20.0	10.2	22
Discipline specific	5.2	11.0	66	7.3	12.1	22
Internship or other field placement	4.6	6.1	67	4.0	5.5	22
Dissertation or Other Capstone Project	17.9	7.1	68	16.9	7.3	22
Other	5.2	14.8	67	12.8	29.9	22

Table 4

Mean Percentages of Prescribed and Elective courses

Course Prescriptiveness	Ed.D.		Ph.D.	
	n	percentage	*n*	percentage
All of the program is prescribed, students are not allowed to take electives	22	32.8	3	14.3
Most of the program is prescribed, students are allowed to take minimal classes/modules as electives	40	59.7	11	55.0
Most of the program is not prescribed, students are required to take minimal classes/modules as electives	4	6.0	3	15.0
All of the program is self-selected by the student	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other	1	1.5	3	15.0
Total	67	100.0	20	100.0

Table 5

Mean Percentages of Cohort and Non-Cohort Grouping for Learning

	Ed.D.		Ph.D.	
	n	Percent	*n*	Percent
Full cohort	50	65.8%	6	30.0%
Partial cohort	8	10.5%	3	15.0%
De facto cohort	14	18.4%	3	15.0%
Non-cohort	4	5.3%	8	40.0%
Total	76	100%	20	100%

Table 6

Time of Course Delivery

Time of Delivery	Ed.D.		Ph.D.	
	n	Percent	*n*	Percent
One day a week during the day	0	0.0	5	25.0
One day a week during the evening	34	44.7	10	50.0
Two or more days during the day	1	1.3	3	15.0
Two or more days during the evening	13	17.1	6	30.0
Weekends	44	57.9	10	50.0
Monthly or bimonthly	10	13.2	1	5.0
During the summer	25	32.9	7	35.0
Others	9	11.8	2	10.0

Ed.D. N=76, Ph.D. N=20

Table 7

Locations and Formats of Course Delivery

Course Location or Format	Ed.D.		Ph.D.	
	n	Percentage	*n*	Percentage
Campus or satellite campus	61	91.0	19	90.5
0-5 courses	6	9.0	5	23.8
6-10 courses	14	20.9	3	14.3
11-15 courses	16	23.9	4	19.0
16 or more courses	25	37.3	7	33.3
School or district office	27	40.3	10	47.6
0-5 courses	25	37.3	6	28.6
6-10 courses	0	0.0	3	14.3
11-15 courses	1	1.5	1	4.8
16 or more	1	1.5	0	0.0
On-line or other technology	37	55.2	14	66.7
0-5 courses	30	44.8	12	57.1
6-10 courses	3	4.5	1	4.8
11-15 courses	2	3.0	1	4.8
16 or more courses	2	3.0	0	0.0
Hybrid	45	67.2	15	71.4
0-5 courses	18	26.9	10	47.6
6-10 courses	11	16.4	2	9.5
11-15 courses	7	10.4	1	4.8
16 or more courses	9	13.4	2	9.5

Note: Ed.D. N=67, Ph.D. N=20