



***Fostering Compassion and Understanding Across Borders:  
An International Dialogue on the Future of Educational Leadership***

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Fostering Dialogue on Diverse Doctoral Programs in Educational Leadership

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## The Best of Times, the Worst of Times

Like the citizens in Charles Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities*, educators in doctoral educational leadership programs are living in the best of times and the worst of times. Professors of educational leadership preparation programs are being challenged and we are challenging ourselves to re-envision our educational administration and leadership programs. We have made what amounts to a national commitment to improve our programs and collaborate amidst persistent attacks on their quality, even from within our own ranks. Levine (2005), one such critic, has broadly chastised our leadership programs, recommending an entire overhaul. Among those rising to the occasion to produce new or improved course designs is the Texas Principals' Lighthouse Initiative, a consortium of approximately 15 universities in Texas working to continuously improve the delivery of instruction in its principal preparation programs (Herrington, 2004).

Quite literally, across the United States and in other countries, many of us are busy developing, revising and refining our leadership programs. New doctoral programs are being implemented in record numbers. In Texas alone there are 16 Ed.D. and 5 Ph.D. programs in educational leadership (<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us>), and at least 10 of these are less than a decade old. Additionally, two other Texas universities have applications pending with the Coordinating Board to begin new doctoral programs. In California, for example, until recently only the University of California system (9 campuses) could offer the Ed.D. degree but, under new legislation, universities in the California State University system (23 additional campuses) can submit Ed.D. program proposals to the California State University Board of Trustees. At this time, 7 CSU campuses have been approved in California for 2007–2008, with the remaining campuses scheduled so that all 23 campuses will, by 2011, offer the Ed.D. (Rosemary Papa,

personal communication, January 21, 2008). This movement is somewhat paradoxical, happening at the same time our loudest critics (Levine, 2005) are recommending the elimination of the Ed.D..

Despite Levine's (2005) well-publicized criticism of leadership and administration programs, there is a growing body of evidence that scholar-practitioner doctoral programs are thriving and resulting in improved practice. Harris (2005), Horn (2001), and Mullen (2005), among other leadership professors, have documented the transforming nature of these programs. Positive results have been reflected in leadership paradigm changes and high-quality, applied scholarship for both faculty and students.

The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) is the most recent effort sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council of Academic Deans in Research Education Institutions to strengthen the education doctorate. Approximately 24 colleges and universities have committed to working together to undertake a critical examination of the doctorate in education, with a particular focus on the highest degree that leads to careers in professional practice. The intent of the project is to redesign and transform doctoral education for the advanced preparation of school practitioners and clinical faculty, academic leaders and professional staff for the nation's schools and colleges and the organizations that support them.

#### Goals and Purposes of this Book Project

The editors of *The Handbook of Doctoral Programs in Educational Leadership: Issues and Challenges* (Mullen, Creighton, Dembowski, & Harris, 2007 [195 pages]) saw the need to further the national dialogue of school leadership and school improvement in program-related doctoral issues. Our goals and purpose of this book were aimed at advancing understanding in

areas relating to educational leadership and administration, and to enhance the capability and efficacy of university programs. We were focused on developing better methods of pedagogy and instruction to help bring about more effective academic and professional development programs for all doctoral students and faculty in educational administration. Finally, we strived to create more effective pathways and networks for exchanging new understandings and viable strategies among persons working to advance educational administration. The contributors collectively addressed numerous areas of the field related to the theme of better preparing school leaders in doctoral programs. Some of the specific topics include program accreditation, design and delivery, innovations in educational leadership, curricular and instructional improvement, dissertation conventions and writing, self-reflection and professional growth, social justice in leadership and learning, and mentoring theory and practice.

We wrote this book with the following readers in mind: university faculty and administrators in educational leadership/administration programs; program developers in higher education and K–12 education; school district and campus leaders; and scholars, researchers, and doctoral students.

### Call for Educational Change

As university leadership programs have undergone review, a common theme for revision has been to “meet the needs of the society of the 21st century” (Nyquist & Woodford, 2000, p. 2) resulting in doctoral learning embedded in a redesign of structure and pedagogy (Harris, 2005). Mullen (2005) described this as a redefinition of what an intellectual is and does within the framework of being a scholar and practitioner. Starratt (2004) pointed out that in this setting university professors are “bridge scholars who can effectively carry that critique closer to the practice of teaching and learning and the practice of leading schools” (p. 265).

The topic of doctoral issues and challenges is timely, if not overdue, in the educational administration field and literature. We agreed that it would be powerful to produce a document that exclusively focuses on the changing landscape of doctoral programs in our discipline, especially as they are emerging in more places and in non-traditional ways. Offering a broad, multi-disciplinary treatment of doctoral education is Golde, Walker, and Associates' (2006) *Envisioning the Future of Doctoral Education*. This collection of essays, commissioned by the Carnegie Initiative, adopts a wide view of the doctorate in education. The authors attend to such broad-sweeping issues as the call to restructure Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs, fragmentation and division across fields, and scholarly inquiry in such areas as educational psychology. In contrast, *The Handbook of Doctoral Programs in Educational Leadership* attends exclusively to doctoral program initiatives and reforms in educational leadership/administration, and it is the first book of its kind. This book covers multiple doctoral programs from across the United States and a myriad of interconnected perspectives on the preparation of school leaders are articulated. The contributing authors are all experienced leaders of programmatic change in higher education.

Stewart's (in press) review of our *Handbook* claims that it "offers hard-earned, provocative insights and solid information for anyone seeking to establish a doctoral program." This assistant professor of educational leadership at Stephen F. Austin State University, Texas, has found it rewarding to consult this text for ideas leading to the revision and improvement of doctoral programs. He believes that the assessments and narratives of programmatic change in it have wide-reaching utility beyond his immediate context. Importantly, after reading the book, he has "come away with a better understanding of the myriad of issues facing educational leadership doctoral programs" and of "useful information" that "can be applied to programs, practices, and policies." Moreover, Stewart concludes that

The 28 professors and four editors of this handbook have produced an important and germane treatise that I believe will serve as the progenitor of many significant conversations surrounding doctoral programs in educational leadership. All of the contributors serve as professors in educational leadership departments; they offer cogent ideas worth pondering concerning the improvement of our educational leadership programs, thus lending credence and trustworthiness to their claims.

Hence, the *Handbook* is potentially an invaluable resource for aspiring doctoral students in educational leadership. The contributors provided information about program- and dissertation-related issues and offer an insider's view of the culture of doctoral education, specifically in the area of educational leadership. Importantly, the book provides relevant information for professors of education that are designing and re-designing doctoral programs. Further, it serves as an informational resource for state coordinating boards about issues that surround the development, implementation, and delivery of doctoral programs in educational leadership—new and existent. We have attempted to honor the solid foundations that have been established in the discipline while proactively shaping the future by documenting common understandings. We also strived to create unity and shared purposes but in the context of difference and idiosyncrasy—we welcomed different voices and perspectives, and urged faculty to write who represent various program niches.

The authors of this book contribute to the field by revealing critical processes—such as action research, collaborative research, problem-based learning, and scholarly inquiry—that prepare educational leaders for today's educational environments. They discuss their efforts to enact new forms of delivery for developing qualified educational leaders through such means as cohort grouping, content focused on problems of practice and democratic issues, critical inquiry

skills development, moral and ethical practice, identity construction as scholar-practitioner leaders, effective mentoring and mentoring structures, and alternative forms of assessment. Clearly, there has been an under-reporting of the progress made in advanced educational leadership programs. Our book addresses this important missing link by describing recent innovative reform of the Ed.D. and Ph.D. in this field.

While the process of change has greatly influenced university preparation programs, most effort has been applied to masters-level and certification programs; however, as stated earlier, while increasingly doctoral programs have been undergoing revision, the literature lags behind at this level. By closely examining doctoral education, we hoped to attract scholars and practitioners to this under-studied but vibrant area. Collectively we focused on the front-end of doctoral study (e.g., issues of recruitment and admissions), the in-between (e.g., quality of faculty mentoring, innovations in program and instructional design, scholarly research development, research preparation for satisfying the demands in high accountability, results-oriented environments), and the back-end (e.g., completion rates, scholarly productivity, post-graduate issues). More attention is needed in the literature on the “in between” within graduate programs (Nettles & Millett, 2006). Thus, we posit that much can be learned from sharing insights into and lessons learned about quality issues at the doctoral level related to organizational and systemic change, program development and design, mentoring and advising, doctoral student–faculty and peer relationships, scholarly inquiry, and critical and collaborative/group learning. Issues and challenges in educational standards, data-driven evaluation and assessment models, accreditation and program reform, curriculum and instruction, social justice and equity, collaboration and dialogue, dissertation (project) preparation and writing, student recruitment and admissions, faculty and student development,

doctoral research coursework, and the cohort delivery model are all of general concern in our field.

Education is always marked by challenge and change, but there is, now more than ever, a special call for universities that prepare educational leaders. A compelling need exists for programs that are scholarly and relevant, contextualized to meet the changing needs of practitioners in schools, districts, and other educational places of work. We find Drucker's (2002) words persuasive and have felt motivated by the "prophecy" he offers: "It is a safe prediction that in the next fifty years, schools and universities will change more and more drastically than they have since they assumed their present form more than three hundred years ago ...." (p. 79).

One way this change has been manifested is in the numerous educational leadership doctoral programs that have sprung up in the past 25 years. Educating doctoral students for leadership was once primarily the role of research universities, but this charge has broadened to include many regional universities throughout the nation. At the same time, criticism by the media has been fierce about the quality of new and old programs. This has necessitated the importance of dialogue on how to best bring about change to structure university doctoral programs in educational leadership to prepare individuals who are both scholarly and effective practitioners.

Doctoral programs that follow the transformative scholar-practitioner model are incorporated in this volume. Evidence that this model results in transformed lives and practice was described in several independent studies of doctoral cohorts that credited their scholar-practitioner program with transforming their leadership paradigms and practices to one of expanding notions of social justice, increasing personal capacity, recognizing a need for

authenticity, nurturing an enhanced sensitivity to others, and challenging their own unfinished learning to continue as lifelong learners (e.g., Harris, 2005; Horn, 2001; Mullen, 2005).

### Organization and Content of Book

The 17 chapters of *The Handbook of Doctoral Programs in Educational Leadership*, written by 28 professors of educational leadership programs across the United States, are organized into three sections: Development and administration of doctoral programs, perspectives on the dissertation, and lessons learned in the delivery of doctoral programs.

#### *Section I: Development and Administration of Doctoral Programs*

Chapter 1, authored by Fred Dembowski, provides an empirical description of doctoral programs in educational leadership. In the next chapter, Joe Donaldson and George Petersen use neo-institutional theory as a means to explore not only the level of commonality in implementation of cohorts, but also the processes by which cohorts have become such a popular model in leadership preparation. Chapter 3 by Sandra Harris offers a narrative reflection on the first two years of a new doctoral program. Following this, Beverly Irby and Fred Lunenburg review some of the main concerns about leadership preparation programs, present the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards, and relate them to doctoral programs in general. Finally, they make recommendations for a profession-based accrediting process. In Chapter 5, Fred Dembowski describes two innovations—the action research practicum and the qualifying paper—that were developed within in a collaborative doctoral program in Louisiana.

#### *Section II: Perspectives on the Dissertation*

This section is launched with a chapter that describes a conceptual framework for doctoral program research. Dale Johnson, Danna Beaty, and Tod Farmer present a framework as

a way of viewing doctoral inquiry complexities in a logical and integrated format. In chapter 7, Mack Hines discusses moral implications of the dissertation experience relative to our discipline.

Chapter 8 by Margaret Grogan, Joe Donaldson, and Juanita Simmons presents a way to weave action research throughout an Ed.D. program so that students experience the application of action research methods in the field, thus learning how theory relates to practice. Janice Fauske reviews the socio-political context of academia and how trends in research methodology influence scholarly work. She synthesizes her own experience as a qualitative researcher/dissertation supervisor focusing on writing qualitative studies. In the next chapter, Marilyn Grady and Sharon Hoffman discuss the importance of effective doctoral advising through the proposal and dissertation processes.

### *Section III: Lessons Learned in the Delivery of Doctoral Programs*

In Chapter 11, James McNamara, Rafael Lara-Alecio, Beverly Irby, and John Hoyle provide a commentary on companion dissertations. Next, Betty Alford discusses salient program design and delivery practices in a 10-year old program. Janet Tareilo, a recent doctoral graduate, reports the experiences of her cohort in successfully completing their studies. Chapter 14 by Carol Mullen describes the role of a doctoral supervisor in both valuing and practicing interdependence as a mentor. Building on the theme of mentorship, Ted Creighton, David Parks, and Linda Creighton discuss the importance of mentoring doctoral students through completion of the degree. The final chapter by I. Phillip Young emphasizes attraction and selection of applicants for a doctoral program in educational leadership.

### How the Book Originated

Every story has a beginning: The *Handbook* came into being following a session at the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) conference in August

2006, held in Lexington, Kentucky. The session titled “Doctoral Program Issues: A Panel Discussion” was one of the very first in a national forum to focus on contemporary and complex issues of doctoral education in educational leadership. Numerous academics presented individual and joint papers at this well-attended session. The presentations focused on various topics that serve as the overarching themes or organizers of this volume: development and administration of doctoral programs, perspectives on the dissertation process, and lessons learned in the delivery of doctoral programs.

The enthusiastic response to this session underscored the obvious appeal of the topic of doctoral education for the membership. It also made apparent that the educational leadership field was ready to take a more significant step in this direction. Masters-level education, with its crucial but dominant focus on such issues as educational leadership standards, program improvement, preparation and certification, and school improvement, has long engaged the minds and energies of our colleagues in the field over the years. Accordingly, editors of journals and publishers of books in educational leadership have fallen in line, sponsoring works pertaining to school leadership preparation and school improvement. The time is ripe for giving much-needed attention to program-related doctoral issues. We, the editors, saw the need to nudge this subject into the fore, with the hope that this book will ignite and sustain scholarly conversation around pertinent ideas. After inviting the participants from the conference session to contribute to a project focused on doctoral programs in educational leadership, we extended the invitation to all NCPEA members and our University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) colleagues involved in doctoral-level education.

On a biographical note, we, the co-editors, are deeply invested in the goal of inquiring into and transforming doctoral education for the better. We are writers of doctoral-oriented texts

(most recently, *A Graduate Student Guide*, *Changing Mindsets of Educational Leaders to Improve Schools*, *Educational Administration Fire and Ice*, *Schools and Data*, and *The Handbook of Formal Mentoring in Higher Education*) and teachers of various doctoral-level courses, some of which we have created ourselves (such as Action Research Practicum, Analysis of Curriculum and Instruction, Communication in a Global Society, Doctoral Synthesis, Educational Management, Graduate Seminar, Issues in Curriculum and Instruction, Mentoring Theory and Leadership Practice, Teacher Evaluation, Readings in Educational Leadership Research, and Writing Preparation and Professional Development). Further, we share an ongoing commitment to bridge theory and practice in our writings and practices, as do the contributors to this volume.

#### Reflections on Reflections

The publishing of the *Handbook* surfaces at a significant time of national attention on doctoral programs in educational leadership. Foremost, our goal has been to address the pressing problem of underreporting the progress made in advanced educational leadership programs. However, at the same time, we acknowledge the reality of outdated and irrelevant components of doctoral programs for educational leaders.

Some of the issues and challenges facing our profession need only *programmatic redefinition*. However others will require a *redesign and transformation* of doctoral education for the advanced preparation of school practitioners, clinical faculty, academic leaders and professional staff for the nation's schools and colleges, and the organizations that support them. Complicating the situation further has been the blurring of the distinction between the Ph.D. and the Ed.D. over the last century, requiring examination of purpose and content. The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), led by the Carnegie Foundation for the

Advancement of Teaching, and partnered with the Academic Deans from Research Education Institutions, is comprised of a network of nearly two dozen U.S.-based colleges and universities aimed at creating doctoral programs in education that are geared more for practitioners than professional scholars. These universities are addressing substantive redesign and transformation by looking at such questions as: How should the Ed.D. differ from the Ph.D.? Is the traditional dissertation the appropriate final product for the Ed.D.? How can coursework better reflect job-related issues? And, how can we redesign the Ed.D. while ensuring rigor at the same time?

The contributors to the *Handbook* have identified salient concerns and challenges to be addressed over the next several years and even decades to come. The educational leadership field is at a critical juncture: We can continue with the status quo or we can, as some of the contributors to our book posit, disrupt it—igniting change. Yet another author drew attention to the importance of not only mentoring and advisement, but looking more closely at the front end of recruitment and selection. It is more than coincidental that several of the authors identified *mentoring* as a key component of substantively effective doctoral programs and outlined the crucial distinction between *mentoring* and *advising*, as well as between effective and ineffective mentoring involving individual students and cohorts. We can also learn by the exemplary models of doctoral programs presented by experienced faculty. Collectively, the authors highlighted the importance of (1) recruitment and selection of doctoral students, (2) accreditation of programs, (3) principles and creeds of doctoral programs, (4) exemplary models to learn from, and (4) sociocultural influences affecting doctoral programs.

#### Possible Ways Forward

Where to from here? The editors and authors of this *Handbook* feel that the educational leadership doctoral faculty has begun to remedy the problem of underreporting doctoral

development and refinement. We agree with Nettles and Millett (2006) that the challenges are not so much related to doctoral programs themselves but more so to the doctoral education *process*. Our collective investigations of doctoral programs in educational administration (Ed.D. and Ph.D.) reveal well-constructed programs of study with highly-qualified doctoral faculty delivering them. We seem to be in general agreement with what specific courses, seminars, and internships doctoral students in educational leadership need. It is the more multidimensional and complex doctoral program *process* that needs our immediate and ongoing attention. One of the authors astutely posits that university faculty members in our field pay much attention to the front end of the doctoral process (recruitment and selection) and the back end (dissertation proposals and defenses), with little focus on the *in between*.

Needed is investigation of the relationship between admissions criteria and program outcomes. For example, we generally agree that Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores are helpful as a screening tool—but, as one author believes, there is possibly a strong relationship between GRE scores and scholarly writing at the dissertation stage. One can stretch further and wonder if GRE scores might be related to time-to-degree and graduation rates.

As another issue, it is clear from some of the book's chapters that once members of a doctoral faculty agree upon working definitions of mentoring that suit their context and needs, they must be provided the structure, support, and encouragement to develop and practice good doctoral mentoring skills. The research is also self-evident regarding the role of effective mentoring relationships between faculty and students when it comes to time-to-degree and dissertation completion rates.

Nettles and Millett's work (2006) identifies many other challenges and issues for those of us working in educational administration doctoral programs to explore. In their 6-year study

(1996–2001) they found the median elapsed time to degree was 5.75 years for doctoral students in education. Not meaning to insult any of our intelligences, we mistakenly translate this to mean that 50% of our doctoral students are taking 6 years or more to finish their dissertations. Below the surface, and even more troubling is the evidence that perhaps this time-to-degree figure (5.75) represents the line between completion and non-completion. We suggest this is the case—50% of the doctoral students in our discipline never finish the degree, warranting immediate attention. Obviously, “shrugging our shoulders” is a “luxury” we simply cannot afford.

Though we have addressed numerous challenges and issues facing faculty and students in doctoral programs in educational leadership, we realize that other salient challenges have yet to be addressed and still others will surface through conversations about this book. Any problems and issues can only be identified, studied, and acted on once the dialogue among the colleagues in the broader field of educational leadership and administration begins.

The *Handbook* has launched a much-needed conversation about the pressing realities that occur within doctoral leadership programs and that impact them. The contributors narrate processes that prepare leaders for today’s rapidly changing environment, ranging from action research, collaborative research, cohort delivery models, and critical inquiry skills development to effective mentoring. Readers are invited to join our conversation so that we can learn about one another’s advanced programs. Together we can make strides to both explore and alter the contemporary landscape of doctoral education.

#### Authors’ Notes

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the UCEA convention, Alexandria, VA, November 2007 by the authors (book editors).

The NCPEA Press/Rice University has provided permission for the presentation and publication of excerpts of the edited book *The Handbook of Doctoral Programs in Educational Leadership: Issues and Challenges*. This paper is based on our editorial writing in the book but it is also a revision and update of this publication.

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