

CASE STUDIES OF EdD AND PhD DISSERTATIONS
IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends for their support. A special dedication goes to my parents, Antonio and the late Mary Augusto. You are the best parents a person could ever ask for. And to my wife Kimberly and our three children, Larissa, Alejandro and Isabella. Thank you for your support.

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CHAPTER ONE: FRAMING THE RESEARCH STUDY

The doctoral degree is the highest degree offered by today's research university. As part of their doctoral study, doctoral candidates must complete an original work of research in the form of a doctoral dissertation. Despite the importance of this training for the US education system, little is known about how faculty evaluate doctoral dissertations.

A Doctoral Dissertation

A dissertation certifies a doctoral degree candidate's ability to conduct independent scholarship. It reflects on the type of doctoral training received. It is the final product for a graduate student and, in most fields is the starting point for a research career. A completed dissertation illustrates the technical and analytical writing abilities developed by the degree candidate. A dissertation can also be a reflection of the perceived quality of the degree candidate's abilities and to a certain extent, his or her faculty mentor's capacity to mentor and train doctoral students (Golde and Dore, 2001; Isaac, Quilan and Walker, 1992; Lovitts, 2007). The evaluation process includes review and approval by a committee of faculty members from the institution or faculty affiliated with the institution. However, despite the importance of the dissertation to the doctoral training process, the mystique in which it is typically held, and the weightiness of the task of completion, the purpose of the dissertation is rarely made explicit to graduate students (Lovitts, 2007).

Education Administration

Unlike similar disciplines, education uses the doctoral degree to prepare both scholars and the highest level of practitioners (McClintock, 2005). And it offers the two types of doctoral degrees. There are 142 schools of education that offer the PhD and EdD, often with little differentiation between the preparation of future faculty and researchers and the preparation of practitioners (Perry and Imig, 2008). Confusion exists regarding the distinctions between the intended purpose of the EdD and PhD degrees. Some institutions have historically awarded the EdD as the research degree in education, yet other institutions award the EdD degree to education practitioners (Levine, 2005). The PhD is perceived to be a research degree, but many institutions award it to practitioners (Levine, 2005). It is unclear what differences exist between the two degrees (Labaree, 2004, Carnegie, 2008). Nonetheless, for most institutions, completion of a dissertation is required for both degrees.

The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate is a five year effort led by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council of Academic Deans in Research Education Institutions that seeks to define distinct purposes for the PhD and EdD doctoral degree in education (Carnegie, 2008). By working with a group of research universities, this project seeks to redesign and transform doctoral education for school practitioners (Carnegie, 2008). According to Lee Shulman, former President of the Carnegie Foundation, the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate "is working to ensure that the academy moves forward on two fronts: rethinking and reclaiming the research doctorate (the PhD) and developing a distinct professional practice doctorate, whether we continue to call it an EdD or decide to give it another name" (Carnegie,

2008). Clearly the field of education administration has a need to better define the purpose of doctoral training and the intent of the two doctoral degrees (PhD and EdD) within the field of study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of how faculty describe the purpose, expectations and quality of dissertations. The study also investigates differences and/or similarities between PhD and EdD dissertations. Through a focused examination of how faculty judge PhD and EdD dissertations in the field of education administration, differences between expectations for PhD and EdD dissertations are identified.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the prominent role the dissertation plays in the doctoral program, little information exists about how faculty evaluate the dissertation and how they discern the overall quality of the dissertation (Council of Graduate Schools, 1991). The research that has been conducted regarding the dissertation process, dissertation completion and evaluation of the quality of dissertations has been either completed outside the United States (Johnston, 1997; Mullins and Kiley, 2002; Tinkler, 2000) or within other fields -- such as the arts, sciences and engineering (COSEUP, 2000; Golde and Dore, 2001; Lovitts, 2007, Nerad, 2007).

Research Questions

The following questions concerning PhD and EdD dissertations were used to guide this study:

- What are the expectations of EdD and PhD dissertations in education administration and how do they differ?
- What is the purpose of EdD and PhD dissertations in education administration and how do they differ?
- What makes an exceptional, good and unacceptable EdD and PhD dissertation in education administration?

Previous Research

This study is largely based on the recent work of Lovitts (2007) regarding faculty views on doctoral dissertations. The intent of Lovitts's study was to explicate the qualities of a dissertation from the viewpoint of the doctoral mentors who evaluate doctoral dissertations. Faculty were also asked to describe what constitutes an original and significant contribution in the field (via the dissertation) and the purpose of the dissertation for their discipline. Faculty focus groups from eleven different disciplines at nine different universities were asked to characterize the dissertation and components of the dissertation at four different quality levels: outstanding, very good, acceptable and unacceptable. The results indicated faculty view the purpose of a dissertation both in terms of a process and a product (Lovitts, 2007). The dissertation should "reflect the training received, the technical skills, and the analytical and writing skills developed in a doctoral program" (p. 11, Lovitts, 2007).

There is a dearth of research concerning faculty views on dissertations and Lovitts's groundbreaking work raises many issues for further research in order to understand the complex nature of the dissertation process. Lovitts' study focuses on ten departments in the arts, sciences and engineering offering the PhD degree. This study builds on the Lovitts (2007) study by including education administration and expanding the topic to include both the PhD degree and the EdD degree.

Conceptual Framework

According to Maxwell (1996) the four major sources of theoretical/conceptual contexts for a study are: experience; prior theory and research; pilot studies; and thought experiments. A successful study both integrates these sources with one another and with the study's purpose and research questions (Maxwell, 1996). This study begins with prior theory and research (Baker, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2007; Lovitts, 2007) and seeks to expand the research into a new area of faculty expectations for professional research doctoral degrees. This study is guided by the concepts raised in the research literature regarding faculty judgment of doctoral dissertations (Johnson, 1997; Lovitts, 2007); the transition of students to independent research (Gardner, 2008) and by research on doctoral student expectations of doctoral degree completion (Golde and Dore, 2001, Miller, 2006).

Judging dissertations

Insight into the standards used by faculty to judge dissertations comes from studies that either asked faculty about their standards for an acceptable dissertation or attempts to infer standards based on written reports. Lovitts (2007) showed that faculty utilize implicit criteria to judge the purpose and quality of a doctoral dissertation. Other studies (Johnston, 1997; Lovitts, 2007; Mullins & Kiley, 2002; Winter, Griffiths, & Green, 2000) also report consistent and explicit faculty criteria. Three of the studies (Mullins and Kiley, 2002; Winter, Griffiths & Green, 2000) report that the characteristics of a poor quality or failing dissertation are a lack of coherence and originality, weak or confused methodological sections, and a lack of intellectual grasp or confidence. Other studies indicate that dissertations of good or passing quality were coherent, engaged in the literature with well-structured comments, and possessed critical reflection and intellectual grasp of the material (Johnston, 1997; Lovitts, 2007).

Studies exist that also address the notion that the doctoral dissertation will produce original research (Johnston, 1997; Simpkins, 1987; Winter, Griffiths, & Green, 2000). Johnston's study (1997) states that originality is demonstrated by a dissertation that provides the discovery of new facts or by the exercise of critical thinking. Simpkins's study (1987) found that originality is a component of critical thinking and that reviewers expect a dissertation to look for an independent line of questioning and to take an imaginative approach. Accordingly, an independent line of research is demonstrated by a doctoral candidate's independent review of ideas, identification of trends, and ability to draw conclusions reached by assessing a conceptual model, and by the research method or argument for a position (Simpkins, 1987). Taking an imaginative approach is done by

looking fresh at questions, using an enterprising approach in the interpretation of evidence and moving beyond the clearly established to the speculative -- as long as the speculation is made via a reasonable, logical approach. Winters, Griffiths, and Green (2000) conclude that originality refers to qualities such as inspiration, responsibility, cognitive excitement, personal synthesis and a doctoral candidate who is adventurous with his or her methodological approach. With these criteria in mind, an important first step in creating a descriptive definition of faculty perceptions regarding the purpose, expectations and quality of a dissertation is to explicate how faculty members form their views on dissertations.

Transition toward Independence

As doctoral students complete coursework and exams, they transition from being consumers of knowledge by completing coursework to creators of knowledge through constructing original research (Bargar & Duncan, 1982; Delamont, Atkinson, & Parry, 2000; Egan, 1989; Gardner, 2008; Lovitts, 2001; Rosen & Bates, 1967). The transition from a doctoral student completing coursework to a doctoral candidate completing dissertation research is particularly difficult for some students in that it can be very different than their prior training and education and it requires very different skills (Gardner, 2008). The process of completing a dissertation is a transition to independence, as a student must decide on the topic, move forward in creating structure to complete the research and write the dissertation (Gardner, 2008; Katz, 1997). Many students have found this transition from student to dissertation researcher the most difficult part of their doctoral program (Katz, 1997; Lovitts, 2001).

Disciplinary cultures also play a part in the student's transition to independence. The manner in which a discipline approaches research and the ways in which the culture of collaboration is fostered have a great effect upon the student's transition to independence (Gardner, 2008; Golde, 2005). Understanding how education faculty foster dissertation research through the transition to independence will assist this study in understanding how faculty view the purpose and expectation of dissertations within education administration.

Doctoral Student Expectations

Data from various studies indicate that students do not often get basic information about the steps of the graduate process, including expectations about coursework, exams or dissertation proposals (Austin, 2002; Gardner, 2008; Lovitts, 2001; Nyquist et al., 1999; Wulff et al., 2004). Golde and Dore (2001) found that dissertations were more likely to be completed when doctoral students were given clear performance expectations. Miller (2006) stated that, for students, the benefits of clear expectations included improvement in the quality of the student's dissertation and reduced anxiety about the evaluation of their dissertation research. How education administration faculty provide clear expectations about dissertation research is unclear.

To date, no study has considered faculty expectations for dissertation research in the field of education administration. Understanding how faculty judge dissertations, how students transition toward independence and how students benefit from clear expectations are the concepts that frame this study.

Importance of the Study

This study seeks to expand the literature on doctoral training in education administration and how faculty judge doctoral dissertations. The training of doctoral students in the field of education impacts thousands of students, as each year the United States awards 6,500 doctoral degrees in education -- more than engineering or the physical sciences, and second only to the life sciences (Hoffer, Welch, Williams, Hess, Webber, Lisek et al., 2005). Both PhD and EdD doctoral training programs are widespread, as more than 250 universities offer one or both doctoral degrees (Levine, 2005). The number of PhDs awarded in education probably outnumber the EdDs awarded (Brown, 1990). Recent research on education administration deals with restructuring the doctoral training programs, specifically in the area of training education researchers (Labaree, 2004; Levine, 2005).

Several recent studies focus on doctoral training in education administration and the quality of faculty research produced by education administration faculty (Labaree, 2004; Murphy and Vriesenga, 2004; Schulman, Golde, Conklin-Bueschel & Garabedian, 2006). These studies do not compare the faculty expectations for doctoral students completing PhD and EdD degrees. In addition, schools of education have begun to review the role and purpose for the doctoral degree in education (Carnegie Foundation, 2008). This review questions the effectiveness of each degree program and if the effectiveness is decreased as it does not address the specific goals ascertained to the degree. There is a lack of research that investigates how education administration faculty judge EdD and PhD doctoral dissertations and this study is a first attempt to address this gap within this area of research.

Finally, there has been some recent research regarding the methods used by faculty to judge dissertations in other fields or disciplines (see Lovitts, 2007; Simpkins, 1987; Winters, Griffiths, & Green, 2000). However, these studies do not address the field of education administration nor the EdD and PhD dissertation. This study expands upon these existing studies by providing research in this area.

Organization of the Study

What follows is a discussion on the purpose, expectations and quality of EdD and PhD dissertations in the field of education administration. Chapter Two reviews literature on doctoral education, the process of determining quality for a doctoral dissertation, and the perceptions of education administration faculty, including their views on graduate education. Chapter Three examines the methodology used in this study, defines the context for the research, the protocol for choosing the participants, and the qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Limitations of the research are also identified within this chapter. Chapter Four describes the characteristics for each participating graduate program and identifies the participants' responses to the various research questions. Chapter Five summarizes the discussions across the five campuses and analyzes the themes of this study.

The final chapter brings all the findings together to provide a rich, descriptive portrait of how faculty describe the purpose, expectations and quality of EdD and PhD dissertations in education administration. It connects the discussions and themes with the current literature. The research question of how faculty view dissertations in education administration is answered and the study concludes with possible implications of the findings, draws some conclusions and considers future research directions.

CHAPTER TWO: STATE OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

There are three key areas of existing literature that inform this study. First, the following discussion provides a review of the historical development of doctoral education within the United States. A comprehensive understanding of doctoral education requires an appreciation of the historical aspects of both EdD and PhD programs. The following discussion begins with a focus on formative studies on doctoral education from the 1960s to the present day, as the modern era of doctoral training. An examination of the literature pertaining to doctoral education within schools of education follows this introduction to the history of doctoral education. Since this study concentrates on the field of education administration, an understanding of the unique aspects to doctoral training within schools of education, and particularly within the field of education administration, is necessary. Finally, the review analyzes the current research on doctoral dissertations at research universities. While doctoral degrees are granted at both doctoral granting universities and research universities, the following discussion focuses on research universities since this is the institutional type of the participating institutions used in this study.

Section One: Development of Doctoral Education

Scholars have identified several stages of development in doctoral education, and explicated how each stage has led to the creation of the current status of doctoral education (Berleson, 1960; Geiger, 1997; Goodchild and Miller, 1997). The development of doctoral education in the US was influenced by the German model of education, both in terms of the research mission of universities and the need to prepare future individuals for academic careers (Berelson, 1960; Clark, 1995; Geiger, 1997; Goodchild and Miller,

1997; Gumpert, 1999). Geiger (1997) discusses the growth and development of graduate education and research within US research universities. In doing so, Geiger (1997) identifies four distinct historical groupings: the formative generation (Civil War to 1890); the generation of the American university (1890 to World War I); the inter-war generation (1918 to 1941); and the post war generation (1945 to 1975). A final historical section is the development of modern doctoral education from 1975 to the present day. Geiger's discussion of the historical development of the doctoral degree informs this study, and provides a needed framework to understand the various parts (coursework, exams, and dissertation) that comprise of the doctoral degree.

The Formative Generation: (Civil War to 1890)

The American system of higher education took shape and definition in the years between the outbreak of the Civil War and 1890 as land grant colleges, the elective course system, and professional schools began to take form. Yale conferred the first PhD in 1861 and John Hopkins University was created in 1876 as a graduate education university. By 1900, 150 institutions were involved with graduate education, but only a handful granted doctoral degrees. Those institutions - Columbia, John Hopkins, Yale, and Harvard - constitute the founding members of the American Association of Universities or AAU (Berelson, 1960).

By the end of the 19th century, the American model of doctoral education was firmly established (National Science Foundation, 2006). Based in a research university with undergraduate and graduate programs taught by the same faculty, organized by discipline in departments (National Science Foundation, 2006), the American doctoral

program included several years of coursework, final exams, a language requirement and a dissertation.

The generation of the American university (1890 to World War I)

At the start of the 20th century, professional programs like business, law and medicine were separated from arts and sciences at many universities (Geiger, 1997). This was a time of small, yet significant growth in enrollment, which led to universities comprising the AAU considering such topics as the use of fellowships, the meaning of doctoral research, and the academic character of dissertations (Berelson, 1960). The AAU also pushed for standardization of the PhD doctoral degree as the number of universities offering the PhD degree increased. At the same time AAU membership also increased by 10 more members, eight of whom were Midwest universities (Berelson, 1960). The PhD as a degree had grown to include over 140 fields, but still only a handful of institutions confirmed the doctoral degree (Berelson, 1960).

The Inter-War Generation (1918 to 1941)

The time between the two World Wars was a time of great expansion for doctoral education. The number of doctoral degrees awarded increased 500% in the twenty years between 1920 and 1940 and the number of institutions awarding doctorates increased from 50 in 1920 to 100 in 1940 (Berelson, 1960). This growth was led by the AAU and a number of regional accrediting organizations that oversaw and monitored the increase of doctoral granting institutions (Goodchild and Miller, 1997). With this increase came change in the graduate student body, as the proportion of students coming from less privileged backgrounds increased as doctoral programs began to focus more on student's intellectual abilities and less on their given family history or background (Geiger, 1997).

With the creation of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) in 1937 and an increase in standardized testing since the end of World War I, institutions now used a common measure to compare students applying for various universities from different backgrounds (Geiger, 1997). The use of standardized tests helped facilitate increases in the number of doctorates produced and the institutions producing doctoral degrees (Geiger, 1997).

There was also an increased interest in doctoral education with 14 different studies or reports on the topic produced between 1925 and 1945. These studies covered topics still considered important today: the quality of the students recruited into doctoral programs, a perception of overproduction of doctoral degrees, and the types of research being produced by doctoral students (Geiger, 1997). It was also a time for expansion in the number of doctoral degrees awarded. In 1900, 239 PhDs were awarded and by 1920, the number had expanded to 615, an increase of 157%. As the number of degrees awarded grew, and serious examination of the process of doctoral education began, the modern PhD degree began to take shape.

The Post War Generation (1945 to 1975)

Significant growth in doctoral degree production occurred after World War II due to the direct funding of fellowships -- funding that started indirectly with the space race after the Soviet's launch of Sputnik, and continued with the GI Bill and funding of research grants at universities (Geiger, 1997). Five significant channels of research funding were established during this period: the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Departments of Defense and Agriculture, and the Atomic Energy Commission. These five entities focused their efforts, in part, to

compete with the scientific efforts of the Soviet Union (Geiger, 1997). Due to this increased funding, doctoral degree productivity soared every year after the war until its first drop in 1973 (Geiger, 1997).

Expanding opportunities: 1975 to today

A description of the expanding nature of doctoral education in the past 30 years follows. This description includes recent studies on doctoral education. These studies show the expansion of doctoral education into various types of institutions, delineate how doctoral education is supported and explicate recent research regarding the nature of doctoral training at these institutions.

Signs of strain in the graduate education/research nexus have become more evident as universities have begun to act more like modern research complexes (Gumport, 1999). According to Gumport (2005) "An underlying theme is a tension between the shortsighted mechanisms for financing graduate education, inconsistent expectations for research and teaching assistantships, organizational restructuring across fields of study, activism linked to social movements and labor and at times, projections for an unfavorable academic labor market" (p.208). Doctoral education evolved into a complex relationship with academic research, research funding, and undergraduate education (Gumport, 2005).

The funding of doctoral students changed dramatically from the early 1960s to today. The number of federal fellowships and traineeships dropped from 51,000 appointments in 1968 to 6,000 appointments in 1981 (Gumport, 2005). However, the federal government continued its indirect support of doctoral education through assistantships embedded in \$13 billion in federal academic research and development

(Gumport, 2005). With the Tax Reform Act of 1986, these assistantships became taxable as income. Assistantships have developed into a major source of financial aid for graduate students, along with grants and loans (Gumport, 2005). For example, the number of graduate assistantships increased dramatically from 160,000 in 1975 to 216,000 in 1995 (Gumport, 2005).

By 1960, there were 9,733 earned doctorates, and the number continued to rise dramatically during the 1960s and 1970s, peaking at a high of 33,755 in 1975 (Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2002). From the early 1970s until today, the number of doctorates has varied, from a low of 31,110 in 1982 to an all time high of 40,710 in 2003 (Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2003). Along with the growth of doctoral degree production, the number of institutions awarding doctoral degrees has also increased (Rhoades, 2001). In 1920, 615 doctoral degrees were produced by 14 universities. By 1962 that number had grown to 11,500 doctoral degrees produced by 174 institutions (Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2003). Forty years later, in 2002, there were 39,955 doctorates produced by 413 institutions (Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2003).

Today, the majority of doctoral degrees are awarded as the PhD or Doctor of Philosophy (Nerad, 2007). The remaining categories of doctoral degrees include 23 professional research doctorates such as the EdD (Doctor of Education) and the DFA (Doctor of Fine Arts). The JD (Jurisprudence Doctorate) or the MD (Doctor of Medicine) are not considered professional research doctorates (Nerad, 2007).

The 1980s and 1990s were characterized by concern over issues related to changes in the academic workplace, graduate students utilizing teaching unions to negotiate with the university, a significant increase in student loan debt taken on by

doctoral students (especially in the humanities) and perceptions of inadequate faculty advising in many graduate programs and research universities (Gumport, 2005). By the end of the 1990s, this fostered widespread discussion about the quality of doctoral education and how these degrees were confirmed (Gumport, 2005).

The purpose and structure of US doctoral education today faces numerous challenges -- including management of the intricate link between doctoral education and the institutional research missions of the university, balancing the demands of undergraduate and graduate education, the labor market for doctoral graduates, funding for universities, accountability, and pressures from the global economic market (Nerad and Heggelund, 2008).

Doctoral training today

The current wave of reports and research on doctoral education has been ongoing since the early 1990s and reflects both the large production of PhDs and a concurrent prediction of an increase in faculty hiring that failed to materialize (Golde, 2001). Since the 1990s, the majority of research focused on the following two subjects (Golde, 2001):

- the pipeline of doctoral education (who is attracted to graduate school, their level of preparation, what types of enrollments should be maintained and what is optimal PhD production);
- the process and content of doctoral study (what is the purpose of doctoral education, optimal time to degree, advising and mentoring during the doctoral program and funding of doctoral students);

What follows is a description of the research that addresses how students enter into doctoral education and some of the problems encountered by students as they try to complete their degrees.

Pipeline of doctoral education

Who chooses to pursue a doctoral degree and how students get through a doctoral degree program is a primary concern of this study. A study of successful and unsuccessful doctoral dissertations necessitates an understanding of how students get to doctoral programs and how students do or do not succeed to completion. With the availability of reliable admission data on a national level, there has been an effort to document and examine the types of individuals who enroll and complete doctoral degrees (Golde, 2001). Several studies identify and discuss the types of students who complete doctoral education (AAU, 1998; COSUP, 1995; MLA, 1998). These studies found that minorities continue to be underrepresented in science and engineering fields, but the historical gap between male and female enrollments has closed or is closing fast in most fields (Horne, et al, 1998; House Committee on Science, 1998). Suggestions for addressing these problems include increasing the pool of potential students at the K-12 level (Golde, 2001) and better recruitment/retention efforts (Pearson and Fechter, 1994).

Most students report being satisfied with their experience and decision to attend graduate school (Davis and Fiske, 2001; Golde and Dore, 2001; Nerad, 2000). The production of doctoral recipients is managed in a decentralized fashion, with a number of factors including funding availability (AAU, 1998), institutional demands for people to teach and do research (Bowen and Rudenstine, 1992), and departmental culture and the quest for some departments to increase the prestige of their programs (Geiger, 1997; Golde, 2001; Zumeta, 1999). In addition, some research has shown that in science and engineering, some of the brightest students are not choosing science careers, with more

going into the practice of medicine (COSUP, 1995; Geiger, 1997; Golde, 2001; Holmstrom, Gaddy, et. al, 1997).

One issue in doctoral education is the high failure rate. The attrition rate is estimated to be somewhere between 40 and 50% depending on the institution and discipline. Women are more likely to leave than men (Golde, 2001; Bair and Haworth, 1999), minorities more likely to leave than whites and domestic students more likely to leave than international students (Bowen and Rudentstine, 1992; Enrenberg and Mavros, 1992; NRC, 1996). The causes of attrition are not a deficit of academic skills, but are generally related to a lack of integration into a department (Bair and Haworth, 1999; Bowen and Rudentstine, 1992; Golde and Dore, 2001; Lovitts, 2007). However, these extant studies (Golde and Dore, 2001; Lovitts, 2001; Bowen and Rudentstine, 1992) focus exclusively on programs within the arts and sciences, and fail to capture the importance of the role of the faculty member in the doctoral dissertation process, choosing instead to focus on the inputs (admit numbers) and outputs (doctoral degrees produced). There is a lack of research that focuses within schools of education at multiple institutions concerning doctoral education and especially of the final stage of doctoral education -- the completion of the dissertation.

The identity of the US doctoral degree has been fostered over the past 150 years in great part due to the federal government's investment in research, as well as the high value placed on doctoral training by the academic institutions (especially true in the Arts & Sciences) and by the proliferation in the number and types of institutions offering doctoral degrees. The research previously discussed is important to this study because it highlights the need to further investigate how faculty view doctoral dissertation

completion. Since this study is focused within education administration, what follows is a discussion on the development of schools of education.

Section Two: Schools of Education

A thorough understanding of the culture and community within schools of education sets the proper context for this study. What follows is a historical description of schools of education, an overview of recent literature pertaining to faculty within schools of education, and a discussion of doctoral training within schools of education. Since this study pertains to the field of education administration, it is also important to review current research on doctoral training within the field of education administration. Also provided is a review of the development of both the PhD and EdD degrees. An identification of key issues in preparing education administrators and education researchers finalizes the discussion on schools of education. The literature reveals several consistent concepts within the field of education, including a perception that graduate degrees lack status, that there is a growing need to address the professional training needs of K-12 educators, and that education degrees are consistently compared to degrees in the arts and sciences. What follows is a discussion on the development of the school of education.

History of Schools of Education

The historical development of schools of education at research universities can be first traced back to normal schools and the need to train teachers. As the United States moved toward the development of a mandatory K-12 education system, the growing number of classrooms required more teachers. In 1870, there were 200,000 public school

teachers in the United States. In thirty years, that number doubled to 400,000 and by 1930 that number stood at 850,000 (Labaree, 2004).

The first public normal school opened in 1839 in Lexington, Massachusetts under the direction of Cyprus Pierce (Labaree, 2004). By 1860 the number of such institutions had grown to 12 normal schools (Labaree, 2004). Leaders within normal schools faced a choice between creating teacher training programs that were selective or bringing more students into their programs and working to control the teacher training industry (Labaree, 2004). The high demand for such programs resulted in the number of normal schools expanding from 15 to 103 from 1865 to 1890 (Labaree, 2004). Twenty-eight states (over half of the total of 45 states) had normal schools by the end of the 19th century (Labaree, 2004).

Schools of education have emphasized graduate work, post-baccalaureate training of administrators, and research since the development of New York University's School of Pedagogy, which opened in 1890 (Rhoades, 1990). In terms of doctoral production, schools of arts and sciences developed concurrently with schools of education at research universities (Rhoades, 1990). Education doctorates currently rank third in terms of doctoral degree production, behind the broader categories of the social sciences at 6,627 and in the life sciences at 6,777 doctoral degrees (Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2003). According to the latest figures from the Survey of Earned Doctorates (2005) there were 6,747 doctorates granted in the general field of education in 2004. As the post World War I growth of mandatory education grew, schools of education worked to educate and legitimize the expertise and authority of the administrative leadership of K-12 education (Rhoades, 1990). This has led to a development of the modern school of education, as

normal schools transformed and moved into the university setting, and graduate schools absorbed normal schools into the research university (Rhoades, 1990).

Today's Schools of Education

Schools of education are now caught between the challenges to conform to the academic values of the arts and sciences or work to serve the professional needs of the K-12 education community (Glazer, 1974; Holmes Group, 1988; Labaree, 2004). This development has led to an unanchored position for the school of education (Rhoades, 1990). Most of the prestigious education schools at elite research universities have the most precarious existence, which led some universities to dismantle their school of education or never bring one into the university (Rhoades, 1990; Labaree, 2004). The school of education relationship to the rest of the campus community has been, therefore, historically and currently defined as garnering little respect on campus, bringing little prestige to the university, possessing fewer resources, and suffering greater vulnerability to enrollment declines and university cutbacks (Rhoades, 1990). Recognition of this situation is important to this study as my research seeks to understand how doctoral students in schools of education are perceived by faculty members.

Faculty within Schools of Education

Faculty within schools of education are the individuals most responsible for doctoral training, and constitute the main category of participants in this study. The following section reviews the literature that allows for an understanding of faculty motivations and norms of expectations, particularly in regards to faculty within schools of education at research universities, the sub-group that best represents the participants in my study.

In terms of status and prestige at most research universities, faculty within schools of education are believed to be near the bottom (Holmes Group, 1988; Labaree, 2004). The reasons behind this lack of prestige and status are similar to the reasons behind the lack of status for education knowledge and the preparation of education researchers. Education faculty at research universities are seen to be lacking in terms of an active research agenda, especially in education administration and teacher education (Labaree, 2004). A study done in the 1970's found that only seven percent of education school faculty were moderately active in research (Guba and Clark, 1978). Some believe that these figures have not changed in the last 20 years (Holmes Group, 1988; Labaree, 2004).

Additionally, education faculty have one of the lowest average salaries compared to faculty within higher education (\$48,000 in education and \$57,000 for faculty overall) and contain a high proportion of women -- 58 percent in education and 35 percent overall (NCES, 2003). A low salary and a high proportion of women are two sociological signals of low status for an occupation group (Labaree, 2004). Finally, many researchers believe that education faculty have an open and unregulated mode of scholarly production, compared to those in the physical and life sciences (Labaree, 2004). This freedom from strict regulation in terms of research design and results may lead to a perception that research completed by education faculty is pedantic at best.

Faculty within schools of education on campuses of research universities also have the double-edge sword in that not only are they perceived to have low status, their school is perceived to have low status and prestige (Labaree, 2004; Berlinger 2002). The school of education's low status is especially true for those education schools at prestigious private and public research universities. A strong education school at a weak

university makes the university look good; but a strong education school in an elite university can face constant embattlement (Labaree, 2004). Some have speculated that as cheaper forms of doctoral education are produced, education faculty in private research universities will begin to diminish (Tierney, 2001). So, similar to schools of education within research universities, the faculty members within schools of education also struggle on an individual level with some of the same issues -- a lack of status, lack of prestige, and constant comparison to the arts and sciences. Recognizing the constant struggle for status informs this study's look at how faculty perceive dissertation mentoring as part of their overall role within the school of education.

Doctoral Training within Schools of Education

When reviewing literature on doctoral training within schools of education at research universities, one recurring theme is the current low status of education knowledge and research, the uncertain of value the field of education has within the academic community and how these factors shape the current perception of education faculty. What follows is a discussion about the struggles of doctoral training within schools of education. Labaree (1998) writes "a career in education research offers the intellectual status of agriculture and the financial prospects of philosophy" (p.73).

Lack of status for education research

The lack of status ascribed to education research is due in part to the weak authority within K-12 education, the research university community and the education policy-making community (Labaree, 1998). Education research is under constant pressure to not only study education issues in K-12 education, but to also provide practical and easily implemented solutions (Labaree, 1998).

In the traditional arts and sciences, master's education is for the most part seen as the completion of coursework that lays a path for gaining foundational knowledge and research abilities that will be used in the doctoral program (Labaree, 2004). This is not the same for education where the master's degree is a professional terminal degree for some and does not provide for the type of specific focus involved with doctoral training (Labaree, 2004). The gap between master's and doctoral training disables the connection between education research and K-12 education as many of the practioners stop at the master's degree and are unfamiliar with the processes of doctoral training (Labaree, 1998). This lack of connection between the professional master's degree and doctoral education training is significant to this study in its discussions regarding the comparisons between Arts and Science doctoral training and doctoral training within the field of education.

Exchange vs. Use-value education

Education research and knowledge is often seen as soft, applied knowledge that provides students a use value (Labaree, 1998). Use-value education is defined education that can be used as a skill or trade and the value of the education is in being able to perform that skill (Labaree, 1998). Use-value education allows students to use the knowledge and skills gained through their education later in life as he or she progresses through a professional career. According to some, it is soft, applied nature lacks academic rigor when compared to the biological, physical or life sciences (Labaree, 1998).

In contrast, the physical sciences and medical education maintain a high status at research universities, producing knowledge and research that is seen as hard, pure science that has an exchange value whereby medical students and physical scientist can exchange

their knowledge and education for prestige in society, high quality employment and financial rewards (Labaree, 1998). Exchange-value education allows students to exchange their knowledge for something in return in their personal or professional lives (Labaree, 1998).

The consequences of "use-value education" gives education research a lack of authority with education and educational policy-making communities (Labaree, 1998). Its widely diffuse style of research is difficult to replicate in other communities. Recently the Institute for Education Sciences within the Department of Education began pushing for and funding investigators who produce evidence-based research and doctoral training programs (Berlinger, 2002). In addition, a group of school of education deans at research universities called for standards in education knowledge and research, stating that current practices were "intellectually weak" (Holmes Group, 1988).

However, Labaree (1998) states that education knowledge and research has a place in society and is not necessarily a bad thing. In addition, education research has a freedom from disciplinary constraints normally found in the physical and life sciences (Labaree, 1998). Finally, education research has the potential to speak to a more general lay audience (Labaree, 1998). Whether or not these positive consequences can outweigh their negative counterparts remains to be fully examined. The result is that doctoral training within education is compared to arts and sciences in its role and status, but that education (unlike arts and sciences) has the dual role to inform the discipline and a more general audience.

Doctoral Training within Educational Administration

Education Administration is a substantial field within schools of education that produces over 2,400 doctorates per year -- or about 35% of all education doctorates (Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2005). It is important for this study to also review any recent literature on doctoral training within education administration so as to recognize any nuances that might deviate from the larger norm generally held within education. What this review will reveal is an active discussion regarding whether education administration is an academic discipline or profession, the differences and similarities between educating students seeking EdD and PhD degrees, and the differences and similarities in training students to be education administrators versus education researchers.

Establishing a Knowledge Base in Education Administration

There have been several efforts to define and standardize the knowledge base for education administration (Imber, 1994; Jackson and Kelley, 2002; Murphy and Forsyth, 1999; Labaree, 2004). These efforts have led to expenditures of an estimated 100 million dollars toward reforms aimed at education administration (Young, Peterson and Short, 2002). Whether these efforts have made a significant difference in doctoral training within education administration is a topic of considerable debate. An understanding of issues within education administration is important to this study as this literature informs the discussion on the training of doctoral students within this field of study.

Academic Discipline or Profession

One of the recognized difficulties inherent within the discipline is that education administration is perceived as both an academic discipline and a profession (Glassman,

Cibulla and Ashbly, 2002; Golde, 2005; Imber, 1994). Anderson (2002) referred to this as “the schizophrenia of outcomes,” as education administration must have research that meets academic research standards but must do so within the context of a practice-based education setting. The lack of theory suggests a wide gap between education administration as an academic discipline and education administration as a field of practice (Imber, 1994). This creates great difficulty as academia has generally valued the creation of knowledge more than the application of knowledge (Young, Peterson, and Short, 2002).

Imber (1994) identifies three categories of knowledge in education administration: theoretical, technical and career. Theoretical knowledge is specialized theory-based knowledge and relates to the basic goals of education. Technical knowledge consists of information that relates to the performance of specific tasks within a school or school system. Career knowledge enhances the quality of an education administrator's life (Imber, 1994). Professors use theoretical knowledge in order to maintain consistency with the value system of the higher education research community, while education administrators use technical and career knowledge to maintain their status within the school environment (Imber, 1994; Labaree 2004). Some have argued that the irrelevance of theory to the practice of education administration calls into question the status of both education administration's theory and practice (Imber, 1994; Levine, 2005).

PhD versus EdD preparation

The EdD is an applied doctorate and is a degree designed to prepare individuals for professional practice rather than scholarly research (Filipovitch and Schleuning, 2000). Individuals seeking education leadership positions within schools of education

generally seek this degree. The PhD is a discipline-based research degree and recipients have conducted scholarly research that reflects an original contribution of theory to the specific discipline in which the award is granted (Filipovitch and Schleuning, 2000). Individuals seeking an academic career at a college or university usually seek out this degree. The PhD is viewed as the research degree and its theory-based focus is opposite of the applied nature of the EdD degree, yet applied doctorates like the EdD also reflect a commitment to research (Filipovitch and Schleuning, 2000). The research expectations are theoretically different; whereas the PhD focuses on research internal to a given discipline, the EdD concentrates on applied research in the practice of the discipline in the professional field (Filipovitch and Schleuning, 2000).

Clarification for the two degrees

There is a great amount of confusion in these two tracts of the education doctorates. Levine (2005) states that part of the confusion lies in the fact that sometimes EdD recipients will find tenure-track positions at research universities and PhD trained recipients obtain careers in education leadership. A different study found that it is not even clear what the differences between the PhD and EdD degrees are as the purposes and requirements vary substantively across universities (National Research Council, 2005). Levine (2005) argued for the abandonment of the EdD program and the restriction of PhDs for only those interested in research careers in education. Others have called for a clarification of the purposes and intentions of both degrees so that the market for creating either EdD or PhD programs would be greatly restricted and institutions would be less likely to pursue doctoral education in education administration as just another revenue opportunity (Labaree, 2005; Levine, 2002; Young, Peterson and Short, 2002).

Finally, the Carnegie Project (2008) seeks to establish a high status practice doctorate that could include moving away from the EdD degree. Based on this review, it is apparent that much uncertainty exists in regards to the exact role of the PhD and EdD degree in education administration. This review did not find any research that examines both degree programs within doctoral research universities.

Preparation for two different purposes

The discussion about doctoral training in education administration also centers on doctoral training for two different purposes: training those who are education practitioners and training education researchers. What follows is a discussion of the issues surrounding these two types of training.

Education administration is concerned with preparing high level school administrators for schools and school systems. Young, Peterson and Short (2002) state the challenges facing these programs include: a lack of institutional support, the need for faculty development, the increasing number of programs, the size and quality of the pool of acceptable and diverse applicants, ongoing program enhancement and program context. These programs are seen as "cash cows" by many universities, with many schools encouraging large enrollments, but yet providing little support to maintain these enrollments (Labaree, 2004; Levine, 2005; Young, Peterson and Short, 2002). This leads to doctoral programs offered by colleges and universities that are neither equipped nor prepared for doctoral training in education administration (Labaree, 2004; Levine, 2005; Young, Peterson and Short, 2002). Faculty research and work performed within these schools is often fractured, with little connection between classroom and work experience (Labaree, 2004; Murphy, 2002; Levine, 2005).

Murphy (2002) stated that education administration has failed to successfully change its culture as a discipline and should focus its efforts on recasting the discipline by using the Principle of Correspondence. Based on Klieburd (1995), the Principle of Correspondence focuses on a critical problem by finding a principle that provides correspondence between the valued dimensions of a profession. Applied to education, this new principle would create a new focus for education leaders, one that would build their identity on becoming moral stewards of education, educators and community builders (Murphy, 2002).

Preparing educational researchers

Along with preparing leaders in the K-12 education, education administration programs also train the next generation of education researchers. Leading the way are education faculty who oversee the student's doctoral training. However, education faculty struggle to have their own research accepted by the educational policy-making community and this lack of acceptance weakens their position to socialize doctoral students within schools of education (Labaree, 2004). Elementary and secondary teachers who earn their doctoral degree with the intent of moving from teaching to education research often find the transition difficult (Labaree, 2004). Teachers spend a lot of their classroom time and efforts trying to normalize the students' classroom learning experience. These same teachers as doctoral students are moved away from this normative process to a more analytical one (Labaree, 2004).

Additionally, these doctoral students are often entering graduate programs after several years of an established teaching career, so they are older students who usually select their doctoral training program more out of convenience than prestige (Labaree,

2004). Because of their personal situations (older with family commitments), they are often less mobile than most arts and sciences doctoral recipients, thereby limiting their choice of academic positions (Baker, Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, 2007). A recent study found that K-12 teaching experience was a negative predictor in pursuing a faculty career, while experience in graduate school (fellowship, assistantship) and attending a top ranked graduate program were seen as positive predictors in pursuing a faculty career in education administration (Baker, Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, 2007).

One recent national study found that doctoral programs in schools of education play a particularly crucial role in helping to define and instill common principles and habits of mind for future education researchers (National Research Council, 2005). This study found that 1,000 doctorates in education research were granted each year, and that these programs were responsible for sharing the norms, language and ways of knowing for education research (National Research Council, 2005). The NRC recommends education schools train doctoral students for careers in education research by articulating the competencies that graduates should obtain by completing their PhD degree and that schools of education that train doctoral students for careers in education research should design their graduate programs to enable students to develop proper methodological knowledge and skills spread throughout their doctoral training (National Research Council, 2005).

As with education knowledge and research, the training that produces education researchers has also come under increased scrutiny. Education research, especially in education administration, involves doctoral students using personal examples in discussions that should be made to be more data-orientated or with more effective means

of debate (Labaree, 2004). This reveals a mismatch between the education that teachers receive and the education that these now doctoral students are expected to have and to enhance in order to become educational researchers (Labaree, 2004). The training process for these doctoral programs means taking teachers through a doctoral experience with a limited exposure to research training and mentoring about the various facets of an academic career (Judge, 1982; Labaree, 1998).

Section Three: Doctoral dissertations

The final section of this literature review looks at the area of doctoral dissertations. In this section, I will discuss the role of a doctoral dissertation, highlight recent research on doctoral dissertations, discuss the role of departments, graduate programs and faculty in the dissertation process and offer some research on how faculty judge dissertations. Defining how faculty and their graduate programs foster the doctoral dissertation process is key part to understanding how faculty view doctoral dissertations.

Role of the doctoral dissertation

There have been a few studies on the role of the doctoral dissertation for the doctoral degree. The Council of Graduate Schools, a policy umbrella organization for Graduate Schools in the US and Canada created a policy statement entitled "The Role and Nature of the Doctoral Dissertation (Council of Graduate Schools, 1991), which states that the doctoral dissertation should do the following:

- Reveal the student's ability to analyze, interpret and synthesize information;
- Demonstrate the student's knowledge of the literature relating to the dissertation or at least acknowledge prior scholarship on which the dissertation is built;
- Describe the methods and procedures used;
- Present results in a sequential and logical manner
- Display the student's ability to discuss full and coherently the meaning of the results. (Council of Graduate Schools, 1991).

In addition, the doctorate should signal a level of accomplishment in three facets of any discipline: generation, conservation and transformation (Carnegie Foundation, 2005).

According to the Carnegie Foundation study, a doctoral recipient should be able to: generate new knowledge and defend knowledge against claims and criticisms, conserve the most important ideas and findings that are the legacy of past and current work, and transform knowledge that has been generated and conserved by explaining and connecting it to ideas from other fields (Carnegie Foundation, 2005).

Recent research on doctoral dissertations

Lovitts (2007) study, *Making the Implicit Explicit*, furthered discussions about doctoral dissertations by examining faculty's implicit criteria for the evaluation of dissertations. This study asked over 200 faculty in ten different disciplines to make explicit their implicit criteria used in the evaluation of doctoral dissertations. Focus groups from eleven different disciplines at nine universities were asked to characterize dissertations and components of dissertations at four different quality levels -- outstanding, very good, acceptable and unacceptable (Lovitts, 2007). The focus groups were also asked what it meant to make an original and significant contribution in the discipline and what the purpose of the dissertation was in their respective discipline. The purpose of the dissertation was

- to train the student to be a professional in the discipline
- to ensure the student learns independent, original and significant research
- to engage in a sustained piece of research
- to think critically and coherently
- to ensure that the student shows mastery of the field
- to help the student prepare for a career and get a job
- to provide a capstone on the graduate education and research experience
- a rite of passage from the student to professional
- a union card or credential for admission to the academic profession

The nature of an original contribution was something that has not been done, found, known, proved, said or seen (Lovitts, 2007). The dissertation is also an original contribution if it is publishable, adds to the knowledge, changes the way people think, and moves the field forward or advances the state of the art (Lovitts, 2007). The nature of a significant contribution represents a nontrivial to very important original breakthrough at the empirical, conceptual, theoretical or policy level (Lovitts, 2007). A significant contribution is useful and has impact, it is publishable in the top tier academic journals, is of interest to people inside and outside the community and causes them to see things differently, influences the conversation, the research and teaching, and has implications that advance the field, the discipline, other disciplines or society (Lovitts, 2007).

When asked to characterize outstanding dissertations, the faculty often said that such work defied explication as there was no single feature or set of defining features (Lovitts, 2007). Even though outstanding dissertations are rare -- they come along once or twice a decade if that -- faculty liked talking about this quality more than any other and provided a consistent set of descriptors (Lovitts, 2007). Some of the descriptors identified included: very well written and organized, exhibits command and authority over the material, argument is focused, logical, rigorous and sustained, brilliant research design, and data is rich and comes from multiple sources (Lovitts, 2007). The participants indicated that the majority of dissertations they see are in the very good category, which is the level they expect of most graduate students. Because very good dissertations are the standard against which all other quality levels are compared, the faculty had less to say about very good dissertations than about the other quality levels (Lovitts, 2007). Very good dissertations are solid and well written, but they are distinguished by being less -- in

terms of less original, less significant, less ambitious, less exciting, and less interesting -- than outstanding dissertations (Lovitts, 2007).

In discussing the acceptable dissertation, faculty in many focus groups distinguished between acceptable dissertations and marginally acceptable ones, although their discussion of the two were often blurred (Lovitts, 2007). Acceptable dissertations meet the criteria for the award of the PhD, whereas marginally acceptable ones are just barely over the threshold of acceptability (Lovitts, 2007). The faculty said that dissertation committees adjust their standards and expectations for students who produce acceptable and marginally acceptable dissertations (Lovitts, 2007). Finally, when discussing unacceptable dissertations the faculty members balked, stating that dissertations that are unacceptable quality were seldom allowed to come before a dissertation committee for consideration (Lovitts, 2007). Students who would produce unacceptable dissertations would probably drop out of the program before getting a dissertation defense and that it was the advisor's responsibility to prevent unacceptable dissertations from going forward. Ultimately, according to the faculty, the hidden criteria for the dissertation is that the student not embarrass or damage the reputation of the adviser, the committee members, the graduate program or the university (Lovitts, 2007).

In addition, several research articles mentioned in this section are also mentioned in the Lovitts (2007) study. Both Bair & Haworth (2000) and Golde (2001) argued for more research on the dissertation process, as almost all doctoral student attrition takes place either after completing the first year or during the dissertation process. No one person has been attributed with creating the term "ABD" (All But Dissertation), but it's a symbol that indicates that many doctoral candidates do not finish their dissertation and

their degree. In addition, most studies have the doctoral attrition rate at 50% (Bair and Haworth, 2000; Bowen and Rudenstine, 1992;) and since its believed that a high amount of attrition takes place at the dissertation stage (Bair and Haworth, 2000; Golde 2001), it is safe to say that dissertation noncompletion is a substantial reason why almost half of the students who start a doctoral program do not finish.

Adams and White (1994) reviewed dissertation abstracts in several social science fields (public administration, management, planning, social work, and women's studies) and discovered that most dissertations had several serious setbacks including little conceptual framework, the use of improper statistical methodology, inappropriate research design and serious misapplication of a research theory to a particular research problem. Adams and White (1994) also looked at how these dissertations assisted in the theory development within their respective fields and found that the majority of dissertations contribute little to the development of knowledge. Lovitts (2007) questions the quality of standards used by faculty examiners in assisting doctoral students to complete a dissertation and the overall quality of training of doctoral students receive in most US doctoral programs. It is clear from these studies represented here that there is still insufficient research on the mentoring process for the doctoral dissertation and this study will add to the apparent deficit by describing how faculty view doctoral dissertations.

Role of departments and graduate programs in doctoral education

The role of departments and graduate programs in completing the doctoral dissertation cannot be overstated. The department provides the necessary support and constructive framework for the students to complete the dissertation research and

eventually the doctoral degree. What follows is a what departments and graduate programs can do to foster an interactive environment between faculty and students to improve doctoral degree completion.

Baird (1997) examined what strategies departments could utilize to be attentive to those candidates completing their doctoral degree. Baird found that doctoral candidates are more likely to complete their dissertation in departments where the faculty actively assist the student in identifying their dissertation topic early, engage the students in informal conversations, and push the students to informally engage each other (Baird, 1997). He went on to identify necessary components that departments must have in order to assist their doctoral students through degree completion. These include: assisting the student to find an idea, a method and a peer group, assist in the committee construction, have advisors provide advice and guidance, ensure financial support for students and familiarize them with the dissertation process early in the graduate degree program (Baird, 1997). These findings are similar to what Cerny and Nerad (1992) and Golde (2001) found in their studies. In addition to the department, the relationship between the advisor and advisee can have a significant impact on the dissertation process (Baird, 1997; Golde, 2001; Isaac, Quinlan and Walker, 1992).

There is also variation in graduate programs' policies concerning doctoral dissertations. Tinklers (2000) sampled 20 British universities to document institutional policy and identify guidelines governing the PhD defense process. The project looked at the policies that govern a range of practices that are integral to the dissertation defense process and found a large degree of inter-institutional consistency regarding key criteria for awarding the PhD (Tinkler, 2000). Tinkler (200) suggests that by completing this

close examination of the institutional policy, the PhD defenses should be more standardized in order to assist the doctoral candidates through the program. This research shows that the department can foster collaborations between students and faculty and can set up policies that promote doctoral dissertation completion. This study will review how the participating graduate programs look to foster doctoral dissertation completion within their graduate programs and whether issues raised in this research are saleable in these graduate programs.

Role of faculty in dissertation completion

Since its inception, the doctoral dissertation has been about the relationship between faculty mentor and student. The role of the faculty member in the doctoral dissertation process is the single most important role (Gore and Dore, 2001). Isaac, Quinlan and Walker (1992) conducted a research project looking at faculty perspectives of the dissertation. Respondents stated that the major purposes of the dissertation were to demonstrate the student's research skills, the development of these skills, and contribution of new knowledge to the field (Isaac, Quinlan, and Walker, 1992). Faculty were also asked to rate how important six characteristics were to a doctoral dissertation: independent contribution, originality, significance, substantial time commitment, length of document, and publishable or a possible source of publishable material (Isaac, Quinlan, and Walker, 1992). Independent contribution was found to be the most important, originality and ability to be published tied for second place and almost all the faculty groups found independence and originality as necessary characteristics of a dissertation (Isaac, Quinlan, and Walker, 1992). The authors expressed the concern that the meanings or definitions of these terms were never discussed.

Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain (1983) examined the issues that frame the doctoral adviser/advisee relationship, acknowledging that the relationship will evolve as the student progresses through the doctoral degree process. They found advisers create a more positive environment for advisees by positive nonverbal clues, open discussions and direct programmatic activities and that advisers need to break down the advisee's dissertation into the following segments: developing a topic, doing research, writing, oral defense, and providing general guidelines (Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain, 1983).

Advisers clearly have a role in explaining the dissertation, its process and the results to their advisees (Anguinis, Nesler, Quigley, Lee and Tedeschi, 1996; Baird, 1997; Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain, 1983). One way that advisors explain the results is to explain to the advisee the quality expectations for the dissertation. How faculty review the quality of a dissertation is something that has been given little consideration, although some research has been conducted in England and Australia concerning doctoral dissertations and the dissertation exam process. Griffiths (2000) collected data from a questionnaire sent to PhD examiners in Australian universities from a wide range of disciplines. The purpose of the survey was to establish a core vocabulary of words used to evaluate the dissertation (Griffiths, 2000). The results of the survey indicated that faculty reviewers examine differently and calculate the production of original research in doctoral dissertations (Griffiths, 2000).

Johnston (1999) reviewed reports produced by faculty examiners at English universities during the dissertation exam. The results of this review found variation among faculty reviewers in the details of the reported material during the exam and the extent to which the faculty reviewer used the report to discuss the quality of the various

aspects of the dissertation (Johnston, 1999). This research shows there are a number of factors involved with the role of faculty in doctoral dissertations. The study intends to add to the rich description of faculty views on the doctoral dissertation by elucidating how faculty describe education administration doctoral dissertations.

Judging Dissertations

One of the biggest roles that a doctoral faculty member has is the judging of the dissertation process. How a faculty member discerns various aspects of a doctoral dissertation is not clear, but it is clear that doctoral faculty have a tremendous role in the judging of doctoral dissertations. Lovitts study (2007) looked at prior research that asked faculty examiners about the standards for an acceptable dissertations and attempted to infer standards from their written reports.

Lovitts reviewed three key research studies (Johnston, 1997; Mullins and Kiley, 2002; Winter, Griffiths, and Green, 2000) and found that the results of these studies were quite consistent. All three found that the features used to describe good/passing dissertations and poor/failing dissertations were similar to each other (Lovitts, 2007). Terms like lack of coherence, lack of originality, lack of confidence, lack of engagement with the literature were used in the two of the three studies (Mullins and Kiley, 2002; Winter, Griffiths, and Green, 2000) to describe poor quality dissertations (Lovitts, 2007). These same studies used characteristics like coherence, originality with presentation, and engagement with the literature as characteristics of a good quality dissertation (Lovitts, 2007). In these studies, one consistent theme is how faculty implicitly define the terms originality and significant contribution. As noted in Isaac, Quinlan, and Walker, (1992) definitions of these characteristics were not discussed in their study or previous studies,

so work remains to be done to better define what is meant by originality and significant contribution.

Lovitts (2007) stated that studies that have assessed faculty reports on dissertations typically find statements that say the dissertation is original and made a significant contribution. These studies (Delamont, Atkinson, Parry, 2002; Isaac, Quinlan, and Walker, 1992) note that what counts as "original and significant contribution" is discipline specific and that no study (with the exception of Lovitts, 2007) has analyzed these concepts along disciplinary lines.

Lovitts (2007) found three studies that addressed the meaning of original (see Johnston, 1997; Simpkins, 1987; and Winter, Griffiths, and Green, 2000). These studies describe the meaning of original as the discovery of new facts, showing cognitive excitement, the exercise of critical thinking, or by taking an imaginative approach (Lovitts, 2007). With the exception of Lovitts (2007), no study on faculty standards or criteria on judging dissertation has been conducted and Lovitts' study does not include any discussion about departments housed within schools of education. While there has been a small amount of research discussing how faculty judge dissertations in the humanities, social and natural sciences and engineering, there are no studies that address this issue in education departments. This study builds upon previous studies that attempt to better articulate faculty expectations with doctoral dissertations in the field of education administration.

Conclusion

The purpose of the literature review was to describe the historical development of the American doctoral degree, focusing on the PhD doctoral degree. This historical

development informs this study by showing the extant research primarily focus on the arts and science PhD degree and the norms for doctoral training that come out of this tradition. A need remains for additional research on the other types of doctoral degrees in other fields of study.

This review examined the literature on doctoral education within schools of education and in particular education administration. The focus of this study is within the field of education administration, so it is important to understand the unique aspects of doctoral training within the field of education administration. This review showed education is at times viewed as having a lack of status within research universities. These findings inform this study by looking at how faculty describe their graduate programs and doctoral students.

Finally, a review of the current research pertaining to doctoral dissertations found that reasons for doctoral dissertation completion are not clear and transparent and that most of the research on doctoral dissertations has focused on the PhD model. This study will look to expand the research in other fields (education) and with other doctoral degrees (EdD).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the rationale for a qualitative case study, states the study's research purpose and questions, and justifies the sample selection used. In addition, the interview protocol, data collection and data preparation are explained and detailed along with an identification of the data analysis procedures used in the study. Finally, a discussion of the study's validity, reliability, and limitations are addressed.

Rationale for a Qualitative Case Study

A qualitative approach was used to elicit how education faculty define the expectations, purpose, and quality of education administration dissertations. Using qualitative research provides a lens to focus and describe the meanings that faculty members place on the various aspects of the dissertation. Creswell (1994) defined qualitative research as "an inquiry into the process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (p. 2). Gall, Borg, & Gall (1996) stated that a qualitative study is the appropriate method for analyzing perceptions. In addition, Morse (1991) suggested that the appropriate use of qualitative research was when the subject matter has immature concepts due to the lack of theory and previous research, that the available theory may be inaccurate, and that the nature of the phenomenon is not suited to quantitative measures. Based on this, this study used a qualitative approach to address the study's research questions.

Case Studies

Case studies are the preferred method of research when the following conditions exist: (a) the questions to be answered are how and why questions, (b) the investigator has little control over the events being studied and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with a real-life context (Yin, 2008). Cresswell (1998) contended case studies allow for the gathering of information from multiple sources such as interviews and document analysis. Stake (1994) says that "as a form of research, a case study is defined by interest in individual case(s), not by the method of inquiry used" (p. 236). Stake (1994) also states that when a researcher uses multiple case studies, they are using a collective case study approach. The multiple case studies are chosen so that a collective understanding of multiple issues will lead to a better understanding of the research question (Stake, 1994). This particular approach was adapted to this study because of the research question (How do faculty describe the purpose of the dissertation) and because the researcher has little control over the events being studied.

Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study is to identify how education faculty describe the purpose, expectations and quality of dissertations. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the expectations of EdD and PhD dissertations in education administration and how do they differ?
- What is the purpose of EdD and PhD dissertations in education administration and how do they differ?

- What makes an exceptional, good and unacceptable EdD and PhD dissertation in education administration?

Researcher's role

Creswell (1994) states that when discussing the role of the researcher in qualitative studies, one should include statements about past experiences of the researcher that lends themselves to familiarity with the topic, setting, or informants. I have eleven years of administrative experience in graduate education at a research university. During this time, I have overseen the implementation of policies and procedures that deal with doctoral education. I supervised the administration of various dissertation fellowships and awards. In this role, I worked with graduate faculty members to discuss the various merits and downfalls of doctoral dissertation research.

My experience provides me with a general understanding of the practice of mentoring doctoral dissertations. I believe that doctoral training functions optimally when students and faculty are able to interact in an engaged community, and that responsibility lies with both students and faculty to create and support such an engaged community. I have observed that the training of full-time doctoral students and part-time doctoral students is not approached in the same manner; that is to say that full-time students have the ability to dedicate more time to their doctoral study than part time students. Finally, I agree with Lovitts (2007) supposition that there are "different dissertations for different reasons (p. 4)" and while it is important that faculty explicitly state their expectations about dissertation research, the goals and aspirations of the student must also count toward these expectations.

Sample Selection

Merriam (1998) suggests that when selecting a sample in qualitative research, the most common form is purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling operates under the assumption that the investigator desires to discover and understand, and therefore must select a sample from which the most data can be obtained (Merriam, 1998). This study purposely sampled the top 75 schools of education that were ranked by *US News and World Report*. The schools were intentionally selected based on whether the school of education included an education administration program and was housed at a research university that offers both PhD and EdD doctoral degrees. This study chose research universities because research universities award half of all the doctoral degrees in education and it was thought that this is where the most could be learned about how faculty describe doctoral dissertations in education administration (National Science Foundation, 2006).

Selecting Schools of Education

The 2006 *US News and World Report (USNWR)* ranking was used to identify schools of education that were housed in a research university and offered both the PhD and EdD degree in education administration. The 2006 *USNWR* ranking utilized quality measures including a survey based quality assessment completed by Deans and graduate directors. A student selectivity measure as determined by verbal and quantitative GRE scores. A faculty resource measure that includes the number of faculty awards, the number of doctorates granted, and the proportion of students enrolled in doctoral programs (*US News and World Report*, 2006). The *USNWR* also conducts a survey to a select group of superintendents. The final measure is based on the research activity and

funded research of faculty. This measure looks at research expenditures by the school, expenditures per faculty member, and the percent of full time faculty in funded researcher (*US News and World Report*, 2006). Overall rank is determined by data that are standardized about their means then the standardized scores are weighted, totaled and rescaled so that the top school received 100 points. Other schools received their percentage of the top score (*US News and World Report*, 2006).

From the list of 75 schools of education ranked by *USNWR*, 24 eligible schools were identified that met the sampling criteria. The schools of education were rank ordered based on their *US News and World Report* ranking. Ten of the 24 education administration programs were contacted, three of which that were ranked high (from 1-25); four that were medium ranked (from 26- 50); and three that were lowest ranked (51-75). Of the ten programs contacted, five programs agreed to participate. Three were ranked in the top 25, with the remain two being ranked in the middle between 26 and 50th.

Institutional type

All five institutions included in this study are research universities. Research universities also offer a variety of bachelor degrees and are committed to graduate education by confirming at least 10 doctoral degrees per year in at least three different disciplines or at least 20 doctoral degrees overall per year (Carnegie, 2005). Each institution is identified within this study by a pseudonym name to conceal their identity.

Education administration graduate program

All of the programs studied were education administration programs, although the names of the departments varied greatly. Each graduate program offered both the PhD

and EdD in that department. Four of the campuses offered courses for their degree programs at multiple locations or campuses. Each graduate program was productive in terms of producing doctoral degrees -- during the ten-year period between 1990 and 2000, each graduate program produced at least 120 doctoral degrees, with the lowest producing 123 and the highest producing 361 (USNWR, 2006).

Informants

Faculty members from each participating institution were identified and verified by the institution's department chair via email correspondence. Each possible participant was contacted, inviting them to participate in an individual telephone interview. At two of the institutions, three faculty participated in interviews and at the remaining three programs four participants were interviewed. In total, eighteen interviews were successfully completed. The identity of the participants is being withheld and they are identified as Professor A, B, C or D at each institution.

Data Collection

Data was collected from the 2006 *US News and World Report*, the web sites of the participating institutions, and the interviews from the eighteen participants at these five sites.

Documents

Documents are a ready source of data easily accessible to the researcher and do not have the same limitations as observations or interviews (Merriam, 1998). Public records, personal documents and physical material are three types of documents available to the researcher for analysis (Merriam, 1998). Public records include official documents generated by the program (Merriam, 1998). Enrollment figures, admissions requirements,

and degree requirements from each institution were collected from institutional web sites. Data containing the number of doctoral degrees granted from 1990-2000 was purchased from the 2006 *US News and World Report*.

Interview Protocol

This study began with the questions utilized in Lovitts' study (2007), with modifications and additions. Lovitts asked doctoral mentors to explicitly describe the qualities of various dissertations, what it meant to make an original and significant contribution in the discipline via the dissertation and what purpose a dissertation in their discipline serves. For this study, similar questions about the quality and purpose of the dissertation were created. An additional question about the expectations for the dissertation was added to address any differences or similarities between PhD and EdD dissertations. It was expected that faculty would discuss the purpose, expectations and quality of dissertations, so the questions were not released before the interview. A copy of the survey questions is provided in the Appendix.

Pilot Test

Yin's (2008) writes that informants for a pilot site should be used if accessible and geographically convenient, and that a pilot case study will help refine data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed (Yin, 2008), this study's questions were pilot tested at a nearby research university with three faculty members from a similar academic discipline. The three participants were interviewed as a group in a conference room for a 48 minute time period. Based on that interview, the questions were refined in order to ask questions concerning the PhD

dissertation followed by questions about the EdD dissertation. The refinement was done to simply the flow of questioning with the participant.

Interviews

The methods of data collection were consistent with other studies using informant interviews for the study (Creswell, 1998; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998). After receiving confirmation from the department chairperson at each of the five institutions, I identified my possible participants from the program's web site. I then contacted the participants stating my intention to complete the study and a study summary. I asked for their participation. I copied the department chairperson in each email stating that the department chair had agreed to their program's participation. Upon receiving their replies (only one invited participant declined), I sent a second email with the list of possible interview times and dates. I conducted the phone interviews in clusters, so that participants from each institution would be interviewed within an identified, specific limited time period, allowing me to focus on a single institution at a time.

Data Preparation

The data preparation stage involved organizing the interviews and documents for analysis. The preparation steps were consistent with the writings of Merriam (1998) and Yin (2008) in that the documentation were placed in a stable in environment (Yin, 2008), data was collected in a database warehouse (Yin, 2008) and the online data was electronically copied and date stamped (Merriam, 1998).

Interview Preparation

All interviews were conducted over a four-month period between June 2006 and September 2006. The interviews were conducted over the phone with a digital voice

recorder. Each interview lasted a minimum of 16 minutes, the longest 54 minutes, and the average approximately 29 minutes. All of the interviews were conducted at the participant's faculty office during normal business hours.

Data preparation included transcription of all recorded interview sessions and written interview notes. Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher. In my transcription, every interview was reviewed at least three separate times. The initial review consisted of listening to the conversation, the second time the conversation was transcribed, and the third review ensured that the interview was accurately transcribed. Each participant received an email thanking them for their participation and providing a copy of the transcription of the interview for their records. A copy of each interview (audio file and transcription) was stored on the researcher's personal computer with an additional backup copy on a secure server.

Document Preparation

All web sites were electronically copied into a PDF document and date stamped. Data purchased from the *USNWR* was compiled into an excel spreadsheet. To illustrate the data collected, tables were constructed to list the commonalities and differences within and across each graduate program. Table One documents the admission requirements for the EdD and the PhD program from each graduate program. This table lists the requirements in each of the following categories: professional experience requirement (yes/no and duration; master's degree required before acceptance; grade point average minimum; GRE requirement; references required; English proficiency; possession of administrative license; and any other admission requirements. These requirements were chosen as the core requirements for most graduate programs (Council

of Graduate Schools, 1991). Table Four documents the PhD and EdD degree requirements for each graduate program. This table identifies the number of core credit courses (credit hours); campus residency requirement; research course requirement; elective course requirement; minimum dissertation credit hour requirement; the total number of credit hours needed for the program and any other degree requirement. These requirements were chosen as they best represent the required courses needed to complete a doctoral degree (Council of Graduate Schools, 1991).

Data Analysis

The goal of data analysis is communicating understanding of the subject matter (Merriam, 1998). This is done by linking the unit of analysis with the research question (Yin, 2008) and by analyzing data as while collecting the data (Merriam, 1998). What follows is a description of this study's collection and analysis of data for this study.

Analysis of documents

The data analysis consisted of an analysis of the tables created from the data collected and an analysis of the interview transcriptions. This analysis uses framework as described in Yin (2008) and refines this approach with methods described in Merriam (1998). Tables 8, 9 and 10 containing the institutions reviewed, their graduate program admission and degree requirements were analyzed using content analysis as described in Merriam (1998). The content was coded into tables congruent with categories as defined in the Council of Graduate Schools (1991) publication on the purpose of the doctoral degree. A description of this data for each graduate program is described in Chapter Four.

Analysis of interviews

Category construction seeks to capture recurring patterns that cut across the data (Merriam, 1998). These patterns form the various themes that are outlined in Chapter Five. Themes for this study are constructed using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Using this data analysis method, the researcher begins with a particular incident and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set (Merriam, 1998). These comparisons lead to themes that are then compared both to each other and to other instances (Merriam, 1998).

Within each graduate program, the responses were grouped by each general question (purpose, expectations and quality) and sub-questions (exceptional, average, unacceptable). When a respondent discussed PhD and EdD dissertations together with no distinction, those responses were grouped together as comments for both degrees. When respondents discussed PhD and EdD dissertations separately, those responses were grouped separately. Each respondent could have up to three types of responses: response for the PhD, responses for the EdD, and those responses where no distinction was made between the PhD and EdD. From there, the data were sorted using data manipulation to sort out common themes for the purpose, expectations and quality (exceptional, average, and unacceptable). These descriptions form the themes that are discussed in Chapter Five.

A descriptive framework was used to organize categories across the five campuses, based on both Yin's (2008) use of a general analytical strategy of building a descriptive framework for organizing a case study, and the use of category construction as described in Merriam (1998) to build this descriptive framework. The categories utilized are informed by the study's purpose, the researcher's role in the study and the

meanings stated by the participants (Merriam, 1998). The discussions identified in Chapter Four were analyzed and common categories for the purpose, expectations and quality (exceptional, average, and unacceptable) identified. Chapter Five summarizes the campus discussions and offers the four themes of the study.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and Reliability are two important components in any research study. Validity measures include the construct validity, internal validity, and external validity (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2008). To meet the test of construct validity, Yin (2008) encourages the use of multiple sources of evidence, the establishment of a chain of evidence and involvement of informants to review drafts of the study. This study gathered data from USNWR and from institutional web sites. Electronic copies of the web sites (with URL addresses) were captured and stored on a secure external drive. It also provided a member check by providing each participant with an electronic copy of the transcription of the interview via email to each participant.

Internal validity ensures that what is measured is in fact what the research is intended to measure (Merriam, 1998). Through the discussions in the pilot study, the research question matched the intended subject matter. External validity looks at how well the research can be applied to other studies (Merriam, 1998). During data analysis, the researcher needs to match patterns by comparing an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (Yin, 2008). The study was based on the patterns first identified by Lovitts (2007), as the patterns that this study is attempting to develop are somewhat narrower in scope but still similar in the question about faculty discussion doctoral dissertations.

Reliability looks at the how well the study can be replicated (Merriam, 1998). The objective is if a later investigator followed the same procedures as described and conducted the same case study, the later investigator should arrive at similar findings and conclusions (Yin, 2008). The goal is to minimize the errors and biases in the study. The study has identified its limitations and any researcher's bias. In addition, the study is derivative of the Lovitts (2007) study with similar interview protocol and findings.

Limitations of the Study

Yin (2008) writes that the researcher should understand and openly acknowledge the strengths and limitations of case study research. It is acknowledged that this study has limitations in its research findings, its articulation on the status of education administration faculty, and with its assumptions about the participants and the graduate programs. However, these limitations are balanced by the strengths of this study in building on previous research (Lovitts, 2007) and guided by the appropriate standards for qualitative study.

Rating System

This study should not be used to create a rating system or scoring chart for the individual components of a dissertation. Rather, this study furthers the formative discussion on how to discern the expectations, purpose and quality of a dissertation. As Lovitts (2007) writes, "there are many kinds of dissertations and they serve many different purposes" (p. 4).

Recognizing Quality

Faculty recognize many of the qualities discussed within this study, but fail to articulate them precisely. Lovitts (2007) summarizes a remark from one of her

participants by writing "I think of those things like pornography, you sort of you know it when you see it" (p. 3). This study does not define a singular particular quality of successful dissertations; rather this study seeks to identify and clarify the importance of a particular quality or qualities of PhD and EdD doctoral dissertations.

Status of education administration faculty

It is important to articulate the status of education administration faculty. This study, however, is limited in its ability to directly connect the perception of quality of faculty and of graduate programs with the perception of dissertation quality. Any relationship between these three measures (faculty quality, program quality and dissertation quality) is beyond the scope of this study. Finally, it is important to note that the data utilized in this study is a faculty member's portrayal of his or her programs, or a possibly biased representation of the program. The faculty members who serve as participants may possess limited knowledge, distorted views or unintentionally misrepresent how the program functions for the majority of faculty and students within the program.

Assumptions about faculty and graduate programs

This study makes certain assumptions that may limit the results. The schools of education were selected based on their ranking by the *US News and World Report*. Yet this study does not attempt to measure the quality of the education administration programs and the faculty participants. It is assumed that both the education administration programs and the faculty participants, due to their location at research universities, are of sufficient quality. In addition, while all of the participating institutions are research universities, other types of universities award half of all education doctorates

(National Science Foundation, 2006). As stated earlier, one reason why research universities were purposely sampled because of the convenience of data provided by the USNWR. This limits the discussion of any results to other research universities.

Summary

By conducting case studies at five education administration programs to elicit faculty views on the doctoral dissertations, my intention is to contribute to the research that deals with how faculty perceive the purpose and success of the doctoral dissertation. In the next sections, I will provide a discussion of each participating program, an analysis of the themes identified within and across the programs and discussion of the future implications of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: DESCRIPTIONS OF EACH CAMPUS

This chapter describes the participating graduate programs. Each graduate program has a table that provides an overview of that graduate program and summarize the descriptions provided by the respondents. Table Two provides a visual representation of the discussions for each graduate program and summarizes the descriptions provided in this chapter.

The five institutions are described beginning with the institution with the overall greatest difference between the PhD and EdD program, progressing to the institution with the smallest difference in the PhD and EdD program. The remaining three programs are comparable and therefore appear in alphabetical order. In my descriptions, the identity of the five institutions and the 18 participants will be kept anonymous.

University of Southeast

As the state's oldest, largest and most comprehensive university, Southeast is among the nation's most academically diverse public universities (Southeast web site). It is one of only 17 public, land-grant universities that belong to the Association of American Universities (Southeast web site). The University of Southeast enrolls more than 46,000 students in 16 different colleges, with more than 100 undergraduate and 200 graduate degree programs. The College of Education was founded in 1906 and it consistently ranks in the top 25 among public education schools in the Association of American Universities (Southeast web site). Over 1,800 full time students are enrolled in 20 bachelor's and graduate degree programs in the College of Education, with 45 concentration areas, with 116 faculty housed within the five academic units: Counselor

Education, Educational Administration and Policy, Educational Psychology, Special Education and Teaching and Learning (Southeast web site).

The Education Administration and Policy Department houses the Educational Leadership doctoral program within the College of Education (Southeast web site). The department offers both an EdD and a PhD in School Administration.

PhD Program

The PhD doctoral program has four core course areas: departmental courses, research courses, elective courses and dissertation hours. It requires 30 credit hours in departmental coursework and 22 hours of research (quantitative and qualitative) methodology of which 12 hours are required by the College of Education and the other 10 approved by the committee. A total of 90 credit hours are required for PhD students, with 24 dissertation hours and 14 hours of electives.

The qualifying examination culminates the student's doctoral coursework. The exam is nine hours in duration, but can be segmented into either three half-days (three hours each) or a full day (six hours) plus a half day (three hours). The written examination is followed by an oral exam by the student's doctoral committee, and a pass or fail determination is made after the oral portion of the qualifying exam. Each written exam question is assigned a pass or fail grade independently. After successful completion of the exams, doctoral students are expected to complete the doctoral dissertation.

EdD Program

There are five core requirements that must be completed for the EdD; departmental courses, clinical experience, research courses, elective courses and dissertation hours. The EdD degree requires 30 credit hours in departmental coursework

with two required courses (six credits) in Education Leadership and an additional 24 credits from coursework approved by the dissertation committee. In addition, EdD students are required to complete between three and six credit hours of supervised practicum in school administration. EdD student must also complete 12 research method credit hours required by the College of Education, along with up to 21 credit hours of elective coursework. As part of completing their dissertations, EdD students must complete a required 20 dissertation hours and a four-credit required research course. The entire program is 90 credit hours.

The qualifying examination, taken at the end of coursework, is nine hours in duration that can be segmented as three half-days (three hours each) or as a full day (six hours) plus a half-day (three hours). The written examination is followed by an oral exam by the student's doctoral committee with a pass or fail determined after the oral portion of the qualifying exam. Students are graded on a pass or fail basis separately for each written exam question. After passing the comprehensive exam, doctoral students are required to complete 24 dissertation credit hours to fulfill this requirement.

Comparing the EdD and PhD program

The first doctoral degree in the College of Education was the EdD granted in 1948 (Southeast web site). This degree was generally regarded by the Graduate School and University as a "professional degree", and the College had broad authority to determine its requirements. In 1967, the PhD was approved as a degree for the College of Education to provide both in-depth specialization and thorough preparation for basic research competency. In contrast, the long-established EdD emphasizes research that is directed at immediate practical application rather than at the fundamental ideas necessary for

developing educational theory (Southeast web site). In 1983, the College Curriculum Committee sharpened the distinction between the research coursework and nature of the dissertations for these two degrees. Based on a review of 100 PhD and EdD dissertations, guidelines were developed and approved by the faculty of the College of Education in 1988-1989 and again in 1997-1999. These guidelines address the purpose of the PhD/EdD; the definition of the literature review and hypothesis for both programs; the target audience for both programs; and even the overall organization of the dissertation, with particular emphasis on data and results. A summary of these guidelines can be found at the end of this section.

Participants

There are four faculty participants from this campus: one assistant professor, one associate professor and two full professors. The assistant professor was in the second year, so the responses provided reflect a limited experience with doctoral education. Nonetheless, every participant held dissertation chair status and was actively involved with mentoring doctoral students for both the EdD and PhD program.

Purpose of a dissertation: career preparation

Participants view the purpose for both the PhD and EdD dissertation as an exercise that assists the student in his/her career preparation. The participants stated that the purpose of the PhD is to demonstrate the candidates' ability to do the research that will establish their academic career. The purpose of the EdD is to show that the candidate can analyze data and look at the body of research in a manner that will improve their practice as administrators and leaders in the school system.

Table 1: University of Southeast

Topics	PhD dissertations	Edd dissertations
Purpose	Career preparation for academia	Career preparation for existing career
Expectations	Theoretical	Applied
Quality: exceptional	Time with faculty and time to write; example of particular dissertation	Time to write a dissertation; example of a dissertation
Quality average	Not having time or personal characteristics/capacity to complete an exceptional dissertation	Not having time or personal characteristics/capacity to complete an exceptional dissertation
Quality unacceptable	Dissertations rarely fail as chairs are also responsible for their completion	Discussion mentions individual dissertation; members get involved

Admission Requirements	PhD	Edd
Professional Experience	Yes (3 yrs)	Yes (3 yrs)
Master's Degree	No	No
GPA	B or higher	B or higher
GRE	440 V 530 Q	No minimum
References	Yes	Yes
English Proficiency	Yes	Yes
Administrative Certification	No	No
Program Requirements	PhD	Edd
Program Core Courses	30 credit hours	30 credit hours
Campus Residency	1 year	1 year
Research Courses	22 credit hours	12 credit hours
Elective Courses	14 credit hours	21 credit hours
Dissertation Hours	24 credit hours	24 credit hours
Total for Degree	90 credit hours	90 credit hours
Other		Clinical experience (3-6 credit hours)

For the PhD student the dissertation begins their research career, but for the EdD student, the dissertation enhances their career. According to professor C: “it’s to teach the student how to carry out, how to organize research, to carry out research and write in academic style.... for the EdD student, it is the first and last piece of original research EdD students will ever do...when we have the same requirements for the PhD and EdD I think we forget that and ignore that reality.”

Expectations of a dissertation: "If you don't have distinctions, then why have both"

The participants have both common and unique expectations for the PhD and EdD degrees. They expect both degrees to have rigor. While completing the interviews I learned that the faculty had recently voted to make the distinctions clearer between the two degrees. Professor B: "from what I have heard, the distinctions between the two degrees have not been that great between those two, except with course requirements. We just passed this year, policies that make those distinctions clear. If you don't have distinctions, then why do you have both? "

Expecting rigor in the dissertation

A common stated expectation for both the PhD and EdD is the expectation of rigor. Rigor is generally defined as the quality of being unyielding or inflexible. Participants defined the expectation of rigor as maintaining an inflexible high standard for dissertation research. Professor C summarized similar statements made by the other participants: "The level of rigor is both the same for the EdD or PhD ...what I am looking for in a PhD dissertation is that it must have a theory base to it or a testing of hypothesis and it must have more than a regional application...the expectation for the EdD

dissertation is the same rigor, same organization, (but can be) more of a regional-based research."

PhD expectations

A PhD dissertation is expected to be a theory-based study that is narrower in focus that leads the student into an academic career. Professor A states "When I look at a PhD dissertation, I am looking for something that has some theory, a conceptual framework, and is generalizability...something more than one site....a traditional type of PhD dissertation that has those properties." Students are also expected to complete a dissertation that will teach them the process of academic research. Professor D: "Students who wanted the PhD thought they wanted to teach at the University level...it was also more of a content focus of theory in preparation to work at universities."

EdD expectations

EdD dissertations are expected to enhance the student's existing school administration career. The participants do not exclude the possibility of an academic career for EdD recipients, but faculty participants recognize that most students expect to maintain their current administrative career. Professor B "The EdD dissertation is preparing those who will probably stay in the field (school administration) with the possibility of going into higher education later down the field; it does not limit them." The expectation is that this practice-based research will either enhance the overall understanding of a current issue pertaining to the student's school system or that it will lead to a better program within the school. Professor D: "I see the EdD dissertation as a much more practice-orientated dissertation... and the number one purpose was to understand and interpret the kinds of tests and scores that were given in their school, but

also so that they could do action research and help teachers do action research that would lead to better programs in the schools."

Quality of a dissertation: different qualities for different needs

Southeast participants state that both PhD and EdD candidates need time to carry out an exceptional study. Participants stated that full-time PhD students need time with faculty to discuss and shape their dissertation. Professor A: "I think what helps a PhD dissertation succeed is students working closely with faculty." Not only is it important to have the time to interact with the faculty, but equally important is the time to write. Time to write includes both the daily open time to write the dissertation but also having time within their overall program to complete the dissertation. Professor C: "the exceptional PhD dissertation is the student who wasn't trying to get out in the shortest amount of time....they really wanted to carry out a good piece...it had both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in it...it was very through and well written....and such...it was very well done."

Participants stated that most EdD students don't have sufficient time with faculty and time to write an exceptional study. High quality EdD dissertations are produced by students who somehow find the time to write an exceptional dissertation. Professor C's comments on faculty interaction time... "our EdD students don't have (time with faculty) as most of them are in cohorts working at off campus environments."

The second common theme for exceptional PhD and EdD dissertations is the way in which the participants associate the definition of an exceptional dissertation. For both dissertations, participants talked very little about the parts of the dissertation (such as the review of literature or theoretical framework) and talked extensively about a particular

dissertation. When asked what makes an exceptional dissertation, the responses focused on a particular dissertation they had mentored to completion.

Professor D: "One that I think off right off the bat dealt with the stress associated with school administrators. It had a very strong conceptual model process, it was conducted with broad enough population (that) we were comfortable in making some general assumptions and (it) was exceptional well written, the student was also very bright, it was clearly one of the best dissertations I've ever been a part of."

Average Dissertations: not having capacity

As for average dissertations, participants perceived these dissertations to be not as well written, or that the students did not have sufficient time or the students lacked the skill to write an exceptional dissertation. Professor A: "In a good dissertation, it may be well done, but not publishable...sometimes a good dissertation may be a bit messy, whereas a great dissertation gets to the point quickly as it is succinct, it walks the reader through the methodology so it can be replicated."

Participants also stated that most of the PhD and EdD students did not have the capacity or insight to create exceptional work. Average dissertations, both for the PhD and EdD, often times are completed by students who do not possess the desired level of writing and/or analytical skills necessary to complete the exceptional dissertation.

Professor B: "The students who have written what I call fair dissertations –I would not call them good, but fair dissertations -- are those students who are more surface level because they don't dig deep into the literature in the analysis of their data. Sometimes they don't dig deeper because they don't have the capacity; sometimes they don't because they are just trying to get finished." In addition to time and writing skills, average dissertation often are lacking in terms of their design. Professor D: "A lot of it has to do

with the insights of the student who is conducting the research as some students, despite taking additional doctoral courses and research courses...don't seem to have the instinct."

A third description is that average PhD and EdD dissertations require the faculty member to provide more feedback and more time in terms of quality control. The participants spend time doing quality control, working out the various aspects of the dissertation. Professor C: "my job as the chair of the dissertation committees is to make sure that the study is well done...so my job is quality control and the student's responsibility is quality...so I find in those kind of situations to ride hard on them quite a bit for more thoroughness in each of the chapters."

Failing Dissertations: Getting everyone on board

All four participants agreed that dissertations did not fail and that they were never part of a failing dissertation. Because a dissertation is a reflection on both the student and mentor, participants all acknowledge the role of the faculty member as part of the approval process. Professor A: "If a student gets to dissertation stage and is allowed to defend, the student's mentor should not allow a dissertation that is not ready to be passed. If that happens, it's not only a failure on the part of the student it's also a failure on part of the faculty mentor."

Similarities and Differences: moving forward from the past

The participants stated PhD and EdD dissertations were historically very similar. Professor A: "I will tell what has historically been done and this is a line that some of the faculty do not like to hear it, but the truth is that the difference between the PhD and the EdD is the letters." Professor B agrees: "Here at Southeast, we have the split model and

from what I have heard, the distinctions between the two have not been that great, except with course requirements."

Participants stated that completion of the EdD and PhD dissertation would bring different rewards. The reward for a PhD would be academic in nature (journal article), whereas the EdD dissertation would be applicable to a particular school district. This means the EdD can be very specific to a school/district, whereas the PhD should be a more broad population sample. Professor C: "I think that probably some of the PhD dissertations will be transferable to the journal articles. We are doing the student a disservice if they don't finish with the potential or realization of a few journal articles. With an EdD dissertation, this research can't be turned into a publication."

Summary

The descriptions identified with the Southeast participants are that the purpose of the PhD dissertation is to prepare the student for academia while for the EdD, the purpose is for career preparation for an existing career. The common expectation for both is that the dissertation will have rigor, but the PhD dissertation is expected to be theoretical and the EdD dissertation is expected to be applied. Participants see the outstanding dissertations for both the PhD and EdD are dissertations where the students have time to complete the dissertation, time to write and time with faculty. Average dissertations are produced by both PhD and EdD students who do not have the time, personal characteristics or capacity to complete an exceptional dissertation. Dissertations for both the PhD and EdD rarely fail, but when there are problems, individual faculty members step in to resolve the issues.

Table 2: Guidelines for PhD and EdD Dissertations at Southeast

Purpose:

The PhD creates questions for the study that are formulated in association with theoretical constructs, while the main purpose of the EdD dissertation is to describe and analyze a particular situation or set of events for a particular sample.

Literature Review: The PhD literature review focuses on the theory and empirical studies in which researchers have tested that theory, perhaps in different settings with different samples. The EdD literature review may be focused more on studies of similar events, similar settings and/or similar samples to those in this particular study.

Hypothesis: The PhD creates a hypothesis that guides the data analyses and must be generated around variables that play prominent roles in the guiding theory. The EdD creates a hypotheses that guide the data analysis and may be generated from either a theoretical perspective or a practical perspective to yield information useful to decision-makers in this or similar settings.

Target Audience: The PhD primary target audience for the study is the community of scholars who do research on the theory chosen to guide the study. The EdD primary target audience for the study is primarily educational decision-makers, who work with the type of group studied.

Organization: The PhD dissertation will organize and present results that are primarily related to underlying theoretical constructs, rather than the surface structure of documents reviewed or data collection instruments. The EdD dissertation will organize and present results that may be based on themes corresponding directly to content and structure of documents or interview protocols.

Data: The data generated from a PhD is analyzed using methods learned in the Ph.D. track. The data generated from an EdD is analyzed using methods learned in the EdD track.

Results: The PhD dissertation discussion should include a section on how the present findings extend the body of knowledge, supporting or failing to support the guiding theory. The EdD dissertation discussion should include a section dealing with implications for practice.

University of NorthCentral

The University of NorthCentral is the state's land-grant university, with a strong tradition of education and public service and the state's primary research university with faculty of national and international reputation (NorthCentral web site). The main campus enrolls over 50,000 students with over 14,000 graduate students and awards over 800 doctoral degrees per year (NorthCentral web site). The College enrolls over 5,300 students with 193 full-time faculty in nine academic departments granting over 380 graduate degrees. One of nine academic departments, the Education Administration department, has four graduate degree tracks: education administration, higher education, international education and evaluation studies. For Fall 2007, the department had 981 master's students and 1,090 doctoral students enrolled in the doctoral programs and 14% minority enrollment. The department offers masters degrees in education in addition to the PhD and EdD program. There are fourteen core faculty members in the Education Administration track and the degrees are offered for students interested in general education administration, K-12 education administration and special education administration.

PhD degree

The PhD degree is intended for students who pursue careers in academic or policy research and is also available to students interested in careers in school administration (NorthCentral web site). The program is selective, as it is limited to ten fully supported students each year. They are selected on the basis of their credentials and their long-term interest in policy, research, and college and university teaching. The PhD requires at least 52 credits of coursework and students who already have a master's

degree can transfer up to 18 semester credits toward their PhD. At least 12 credit hours must be in research methodology courses that are selected with the student's advisor's approval. One course each must be taken in qualitative and quantitative methodologies and the remaining courses should be in statistics, measurement and evaluation, research methods, computer analysis of data, psychometrics, and econometrics. In addition, 24 dissertation credit hours are required for graduation. Students often can complete the required coursework in two-and-a-half years, at which time they complete preliminary written and oral examinations. There is no residency requirement for the PhD program, although the degree must be awarded within five calendar years after passing the comprehensive exam. Many are able to complete their dissertation in within an additional one to two years. Upon completion of their dissertation, students complete a final oral examination.

EdD degree

The doctor of education (EdD) degree is a professional degree cohort program suitable for individuals who will provide leadership in the operation of educational institutions and who are interested in applying scholarly research within the school setting (NorthCentral web site). According to the program, "Members of the EdD cohort program are the current and future leaders as they are teachers, principals, and superintendents who have chosen to remain fully employed in their school districts while studying for an advanced degree" (NorthCentral web site). Cohort members follow a set curriculum and schedule with some opportunity for elective courses. Courses are offered at various sites and some courses may be offered via the internet or other distance education technologies depending upon appropriate access. The EdD curriculum

emphasizes a broad scope of knowledge and skills related to understanding the context of schooling, leading educational organizations, understanding and utilizing research, and evaluating program effectiveness.

The EdD requires at least 52 credits of course work. Students who already have a master's degree, with adviser's approval, can transfer up to 18 semester credits toward their degree (NorthCentral web site). In addition, 24 credits are required for the dissertation. Students may complete the coursework on either a full-time or part-time basis. Students often can complete the required coursework in two and a half years, at which time they complete preliminary written and oral examinations. Many are able to complete their dissertation in another one to two years. Upon completion of their dissertation, students complete a final oral examination.

Comparing the PhD and EdD program

The two doctoral programs possess notable similarities, including admission requirements, research requirements, and total credits hours for degree completion. Both programs also share the same set of core faculty. The two main differences are the stated purposes of the two programs and the type of dissertations completed. The purpose of the EdD program is to prepare practitioners, while the purpose of the PhD program is to prepare scholars. Whereas the EdD candidate completes a field study focused on an administrative practice problem, the PhD candidate completes a dissertation that contributes to the knowledge base within education administration.

Participants

There are four participants from the University of NorthCentral comprised of two full professors, one associate professor and one assistant professor. All four participants

have experience working with doctoral students completing both EdD and PhD dissertations.

Purpose of a dissertation: taking a project from beginning to end

The NorthCentral participants agree that both the PhD and EdD dissertation possess a common purpose of creating a learning process for their students. In addition, the purposes of the PhD and EdD dissertation are also distinct, with the PhD dissertation providing opportunities to expand the research while the purpose of the EdD dissertation is to inform practice.

The learning process includes learning how to design, implement and write up a research study and supports the student's career interests. Professor A: "The purpose of the dissertation is to give them that first opportunity to be able to take a project from beginning to completion." Professor D concurs: "It's a chance for them (to) really have to take on the majority of their responsibility around the design -- you know, all the levels of the methods."

The dissertation is a common learning process that encourages the student's professional career interests. Yet those exact career opportunities are different for the PhD and EdD students. The professional career for the EdD is an administrative career and a PhD student is learning about a career in academic research. Professor B: "You know we find that EdD students want to learn an approach to work with others in designing research to ask good questions, to use data in their decision making process." Professor C stated "Students need to prove they can do the work and need to have something to show that they can do that work, so I think to that extent it is the credential that helps future employers believe in the level of rigor in which they are capable."

Table 3: University of NorthCentral

Topics	PhD dissertations	Edd dissertations
Purpose	Learning process that takes a dissertation research project to completion	Career opportunity and support current/future administrative practice
Expectations	High quality, contribute to the theory, assist their professional work	Field based research that creates a field based study; assist their professional work
Quality: exceptional	Complex in their theoretical framework and research methodology. Focused on individual dissertation	Complex in their theoretical framework and research methodology. Focused on individual dissertation.
Quality average	One or more parts of the dissertation does not fully work out; adequate theoretical framework; writing skill	One or more parts of the dissertation does not fully work out; adequate theoretical framework; writing skills
Quality unacceptable	Discussion mentions individual dissertation; members get involved	Discussion mentions individual dissertation; members get involved

Admission Requirements	PhD	Edd
Professional Experience	No	No
Master's Degree	Yes	Yes
GPA	3.0 UG 3.5 MS	3.0 UG 3.5 MS
GRE	500 V 500 Q & 4.5 A	500 V 500 Q & 4.5 A
References	Yes	Yes
English Proficiency	Yes	Yes
Administrative Certification	No	No
Program Requirements	PhD	Edd
Program Core Courses	18 credit hours	18 credit hours
Campus Residency	No requirement	Three yrs of fulltime study
Research Courses	12 credit hours	15 credit hours
Elective Courses	18 credit hours	12 credit hours
Dissertation Hours	24 credit hours	12 credit hours
Total for Degree	72 credit hours	72 credit hours

PhD and EdD Purposes: research and practice

All of the participants identified distinctions between the purpose of the PhD and the EdD. The participants state the PhD provides for broader opportunities in that their research has the opportunity to provide a contribution to the overall literature base.

Professor A: "The PhD provides a broader opportunity base than the EdD degree." The EdD provides a more limited, more focused opportunity base that supports current or future administrative practice. When the EdD dissertation is completed it can "add something to the effective administrative practice rather than to the literature base" (Professor C).

Expectations: different expectations for different degrees

The participants stated that they had different expectations for the PhD and EdD. The PhD dissertation is expected to be a high quality piece of research, one that will illustrate the research design and implementation ability of a particular student. "My personal expectations are real high as many of the graduates go on to be where they need to have the skills that a PhD suggests that they do have, in terms of high quality research design with mixed methods and the ability to write well" (Professor B). Along with expecting high quality research, participants also expect PhD dissertations to be drawn from and contribute to the theory of the discipline. "The expectation of the dissertation is that they will do a piece of research that is generated from theory and contributes to theory" (Professor A).

As for the EdD dissertation, the expectations are not as clearly defined as the PhD expectations. "For the EdD dissertation I think there are now mixed perceptions about what should be there for people who are principals, education leadership positions...the

expectation for research rigor to conceptualize and do research is not what is going on in their world...sometimes the notion of the field study might be best for their needs"

(Professor B). Part of this lack of a clearly defined expectation may be the field based component of the research, yet few faculty in the program do this type of research.

Professor D: "The EdD is a field study based in practice; it is a different kind of study, a practitioners-based question." Participants state that completing a field based research study becomes the overall goal. "I think our expectations for these students is a little lower...what we are trying to do with these practitioner scholars is to get them some research experience in collecting data, writing up their research and analyzing data."

Quality of a dissertation: skills realized in completing a dissertation

Participants describe exceptional EdD and PhD dissertations as complex in their theoretical framework and research methodology. This complexity is developed in large part in collaboration with the research mentor, but at times even independent of the mentor. Professor A: "The most exceptional dissertations are those that I could not have done it myself. It has a theoretical framework that is really novel, change(s) the shape of the field, change(s) the way I think. It does not happen very often." This rare robust theoretical framework often leads the dissertation writer to mix his/her research methods.

Professor B: "the student was able to frame this question so that he could use mixed methods to address the question for a particular type of analysis."

Not only do exceptional PhD and EdD dissertations possess a complex framework, but the analysis is complex as well. Professor C is most impressed by the complex analysis: "The dissertations that have impressed me the most, the one I am thinking of, the student employs complex analytical frameworks....Here's someone

working hard to set up this complex research question and would say the bulk of the education faculty don't have those skills." For these exceptional dissertations, participants did not specifically mention similarities or differences between the PhD and EdD dissertation. The participants mentioned these dissertations specifically by name while focusing on their merits that made them exceptional.

Average dissertations: Not deep enough

Discussions about average PhD and EdD dissertations clustered around the idea that the average dissertation is lacking because of the dissertation content or the student's writing skills. The dissertation content is lacking because one or more of the section of the dissertation did not meet expectations. Professor A: "Sometimes your data doesn't go that well and you can get an ok dissertation, even though the data is not that great...one can have an adequate dissertation even if you have mediocre data if you done the other parts well."

One section where average dissertations often fall short is in the construction of the theoretical framework. Either the dissertation does not fully connect the meaning of the theoretical framework to the study or the dissertation does not delve deep enough to flush out the study's deeper meanings.

Professor C: "So even if a passing dissertation has a theoretical framework in which they are operating, they may not understand the depth and complexity of that framework. They don't explore fully what that framework means. An average dissertation can create the results, but have a hard time about what it means. An average dissertation does not go deeply into their study what are the barriers and challenges."

An average dissertation is usually characterized as possessing average writing. The lack of higher level writing skills prevents the PhD or EdD dissertation to properly

connect all the parts of the dissertation in a holistic study. Average writing skills preclude a PhD or EdD dissertation from connecting the literature to the theory and research questions. Professor B: "The student has developed good questions but they may not integrate the various findings and results which creates a stunted development in that they don't build back from the other chapters, especially chapters two and three. It is not a bad dissertation, it is just an adequate one."

The student who completes the average PhD and EdD dissertation also lacks academic writing experience. This lack of experience with academic writing can either be from a lack of experience with this type of writing and/or result from a student not possessing a full understanding of the expectations of this type of writing. Professor D: "...in my experience, the only way you get good at that is to do it (writing) a lot...it's a different kind of intelligence...being able to deal with big ideas."

Failing Dissertations: getting a decent committee

Similar to their discussions about exceptional dissertations, discussions around dissertations that did not pass were discussions about faculty experiences with individual dissertations. All of the participants agreed that a bad dissertation should not get to the defense stage and not pass. Professor A: "here you have to have three readers; three people have to read it and say it is acceptable for defense. If you have a decent committee, it should never get to the defense and not pass."

If the dissertation goes to defense and the defense reveals deficiencies, the dissertation defense is stopped. When this does happen, it usually involves both the student and the mentor. Participants all agreed that at this point, the other committee members need to step forward. Professor B: "We stopped the dissertation defense and the

advisor was not ready to address these issues. The committee addressed the issues with the advisor and I was brought in to co-advise the completion of the dissertation."

The participants stated the need for committee intervention when a dissertation is not successfully defended. This usually involves one of the committee members leading the student through the process to get the dissertation approved.

Professor D: "I've only had this one situation, most of the time this gets taken care of before the defense as the student has to execute a certain amount of confidence so the committee feels confident in your study... I personally made the decision that the student was not going to fail. I felt it was not totally the student's fault. We set up the parameters, provided more support to finish, because technically she should not of been there."

Another example given involved a new professor who was unwilling to challenge the more senior dissertation chair. Professor C: "I was a brand new assistant professor in my very first year of the program and was still feeling my way around. I served as dissertation committee member and I wasn't comfortable with the level of analysis, but I didn't voice my concerns about the research in the defense. I voted to pass." In this case, the focus is on the professor's interests as a new professor and colleague and less on the interests of the student completing the dissertation. Dissertations that are questionable in nature rarely ever fail and when they do it is usually at the defense. At this point, the committee members become more involved in mentoring the student to completion.

Differences between PhD and EdD

The two descriptive differences between the PhD and the EdD are that the PhD students spend more time on the dissertation and that faculty possess different expectations for PhD and EdD dissertations. Participants noted that PhD students spend more time on the dissertation than the EdD students and that this additional time is because the PhD students go full time whereas the EdD students work full time and

pursue the degree part time. Professor A: "It's usually not a question of quality, it's a question of focus. If there are differences in quality, it's because the EdD dissertations are usually done part time, they are not given opportunities to practice before they go out and do the big project." Professor D agrees: "They (PhD students) have longer blocks of time and are closer to those of us who are doing the writing and there are so much that people pick up in that context."

The second difference deals with different faculty expectations for the two degrees. For EdD students, faculty expect applicability to the research: "I think a high quality product can be found with both those degrees: the quality of the writing, the rigor, the design, these are the same in my way of thinking for both dissertations. The differences have more to do with the application of the research, and the distinction between real world problems in an EdD dissertation." For the PhD, faculty expect more for these dissertations: "I think our expectations are different in degree, but not in form, so both are doing the same thing...but we hold the PhD to a higher standard....so there are reviews of literature and methods of analysis that get by with an EdD dissertation that would not get by in a PhD dissertation" (Professor C).

Similarities between PhD and EdD

Participants discuss EdD and PhD dissertations in a similar fashion in regards to what constitutes an exceptional, average, or failing dissertation. Exceptional and non-passing dissertations are identified not categorically, but by relating individual cases, perhaps because they both happen in rare circumstances. For the average dissertations, both EdD and PhD dissertations are described as lacking in sophisticated research methodology, understanding of the results or in overall writing skills. It is expected that

both dissertations will provide the student with some research experience (the purpose) and that the student will be able to utilize this experience toward some future goal (the expectation).

Summary

Participants at NorthCentral identified the purpose of the PhD dissertation as an opportunity to learn how to successfully take a project from beginning to end and the purpose of the EdD dissertation as the creation of a career opportunity that would support the student's current and/or future administrative practice. Participants stated that their expectations for the PhD dissertation include a high quality contribution to theory within the field, where they expect the EdD dissertation to be a field-based research study that will further the student's professional work. The participants described the quality of PhD and EdD dissertations in similar terminology, stating that the exceptional dissertations are complex in theoretical framework, methodology and analysis. Average dissertations were seen as not fulfilling one or more parts of the dissertation or as cases where the student did not possess strong writing skills. Finally, participants noted that dissertations that were about to fail usually meant the personal hands-on involvement of a committee member to mentor the dissertation to completion.

Midwest

The University of Midwest was founded in 1839 and it serves as the flagship and land grant university of the entire state system. The campus enrolls over 28,000 students with over 250 academic degrees at the bachelor's, masters and doctoral level. The College is one of nine colleges on the campus. The College has over 3,200 students and 140 full

time faculty within its four departments. The education department within the College offers both the PhD and EdD degree in Education Administration.

PhD Program

The PhD in PK-12 Educational Administration is designed to prepare qualified students for careers in teaching and scholarly inquiry at institutions of higher education, educational agencies, and leadership in PK-12 school systems (Midwest web site). Students develop in-depth expertise in one or more specialty areas of PK-12 educational administration, as well as the research skills required to conduct ongoing inquiry. The program concentrates on research and scholarship, rather than applied practice. However, according to the Midwest PhD description, "this does not exclude practioners from pursuing the degree." PhD students are expected to produce a dissertation that is an original piece of research of publishable quality.

Applicants for the PhD program must have a master's degree, GRE scores, and a competitive GPA. The PhD program requires a minimum of 60 hours including a major or content core, a support (elective) area, and a minimum of six dissertation hours. All of the coursework is completed on the main campus. PhD students must take the department's core curriculum which is composed of courses in educational leadership, policy and organizational analysis as well as internships in college teaching and research, and then complete a doctoral dissertation. Twelve research credit hours are required for the PhD program, mostly in either quantitative or qualitative research methods.

EdD Program

The EdD program is conducted in collaboration with other regional universities. Applicants for the EdD must have an undergraduate GPA minimum of 3.0 in their last 60

undergraduate hours, a 3.5 in graduate level work, a combined GRE score of 1000, and have completed a prerequisite introductory course in educational statistics. The program admits a bi-annual cohort with students taking courses at each regional institution site. Courses are completed over a six-semester sequence at the regional site during the fall and spring terms, with students coming to the main campus for a four-week summer session.

Students completing the EdD degree are encouraged to utilize a research framework based on action research (Midwest web site). However, the program fails to provide a definition of action research in its literature. In Grey (2004), action research is defined as possessing three common features: the research subjects are themselves researchers involved in a democratic partnership with a researcher; the researcher is seen as an agent of change; and the data is generated from the direct experiences of research participants (Grey, 2004).

The EdD requires 46 credit hours including 34 hours of coursework in six contiguous semesters, beginning with the summer session and concluding in the winter two years later. In addition to the 34 credit hours of coursework, 12 hours of dissertation research are required (Midwest web site). All candidates prepare and defend an electronic portfolio as the major component of the comprehensive examination processes established by the EdD coordinating committee. The exact format and content of the exam may vary and are determined by the student's committee. All EdD candidates complete a dissertation and participate in a final defense.

Additionally, students complete courses in the following areas: Leadership Theory and Practice, Content and Context for Learning, Organizational Analysis,

Research, Inquiry, and Evaluation, and Analysis of Educational Policy. Students take their core courses at their respective campuses and attend a four week summer course during the first two years of the program. There are twelve credit hours of required research methodology courses with a focus on using action research methodology as a research method for a student's dissertation.

Comparing the PhD and EdD program

A comparison of the two programs reveals that the most noticeable difference lies in their respective structures. PhD students complete all their coursework, exams and dissertation on a single campus. EdD students move through the program as a cohort, taking classes on two campuses. A second difference is the idea that PhD students complete a theoretically based dissertation, but EdD students complete a field-study project for their dissertation. The final significant difference is the number of hours required to complete the program -- PhD students earn at least 60 credits whereas EdD students earn at least 47 credits.

Participants

The faculty participants included one assistant, one associate and two full professors. All four earned their PhD degrees from similar research universities and have experience mentoring graduate students, but as expected, the assistant professor has the least experience with mentoring dissertations.

Table 4: University of Midwest

Descriptions	PhD dissertations	Edd dissertations
Purpose	More broad study, research questions and focus is in on the study	Reflective leadership paper, research prepares for leadership position
Expectations	Solid theoretical framework, publishable; better than a EdD dissertation	Research study about the field ; less expected than the EdD
Quality: exceptional	Novel approach to an idea, research is theory grounded	Looks like a traditional PhD dissertation; data will inform the practice; how passionate they are about the research
Quality average	Not enough, there was not enough time to write the research, not enough covered in the study	Not enough, there was not enough time to write the research, not enough covered in the study
Quality unacceptable	Rarely fail, as students leave before getting there	Usually involve working closely with the student until completion

Admission Requirements	PhD	Edd
Professional Experience	No	Yes
Master's Degree	Yes	Yes
GPA	3.0 UG 3.5 MS	3.0 UG 3.5 MS
GRE	1000 combined score	1000 combined score
References	Yes	Yes
English Proficiency	Yes	Yes
Administrative Certification	No	No
Program Requirements	PhD	Edd
Program Core Courses	46 credit hours	46 credit hours
Campus Residency	36 credit hours	34 credit hours
Research Courses	6 credit hours	6 credit hours
Elective Courses	0 credit hours	0 credit hours
Dissertation Hours	12 credit hours	12 credit hours
Total for Degree	60 beyond master's	60 beyond masters
Other	practicum	No practicum

Purpose of a dissertation: preparing for job expectations

The faculty participants agree that the purpose of both the PhD and EdD dissertation is preparation for employment, but that preparation is more broadly defined for the PhD and more narrowly defined for the EdD. The PhD and EdD dissertation "prepare people for different job expectations" (Professor A).

The purpose of the EdD dissertation should be preparing, "those individuals with leadership positions," (Professor A) and should use the dissertation "as a reflective exercise in the practice of leadership" (Professor B). The process is expected to foster the development of "skills that will allow that person to do research in a more contextual area" (Professor D). The participants do not view the PhD dissertation as directly career focused. Professor C: "A PhD dissertation might be more abstract, across more disciplines, studying things farther away than the EdD." The PhD dissertation focuses more on creating the right setting to execute a broader study. Professor D: "It pushes the students to develop research questions and a study around those questions."

Expectations of a dissertation: drawing clear lines

The Midwest participants expect PhD and EdD candidates to write a scholarly piece that draws upon their coursework to create a sound study that either informs theory (PhD) or informs practice (EdD). They stated that they are starting to define different expectations for the EdD and PhD doctoral dissertation and use these expectations to guide them in the mentoring of their students. The broader purpose of the PhD dissertation leads participants to have broader expectations as well.

These broader expectations include the idea that the student will conduct a more thorough analysis of the topic with the dissertation. Professor B: "As I look back at the

EdD dissertations...I full well know that those students (EdD students) would not have done well with a PhD dissertation ...it was not going to require the high level of analysis...the EdD dissertation over the years has not had the quite the same level of rigor over the past few decades."

Because there is a different set of expectations, and an expectation that PhD dissertations require a deeper analysis, participants will guide their student/prospective student into either degree.

Professor B: "when we admit students, we tell them 'you really should think about an EdD' or 'you really should think about a PhD'...and you do that in terms of how bright the student is, how capable they are...what their desires and professional goals...and how well you think they are going to do research"

In the end, participants stated that clearer distinctions between PhD and EdD dissertations would benefit the program. Professor B: "The program is trying to draw a clearer line, as almost all EdD students are encouraged to continue in administrative careers...its leadership in practice, not leadership in scholarship."

Expectations for the EdD are closely linked to the field of research administration and participants acknowledge little change over the past few decades in the EdD dissertation. EdD dissertations are expected to inform the practice of education, focusing on issues pertaining to the field. The participants described the EdD dissertation as a component closely linked to the EdD degree – viewing it as just another degree requirement. Professor B: "The EdD dissertation today does not look much different than it did in 1980...basically it's a research study about the field." Professor C: "the EdD degree is much more lock-step...and the dissertation is the last step."

Quality of a dissertation: looking for high quality

In the discussion of quality, participants viewed the exceptional PhD dissertation as a broad study grounded in theory to create new knowledge, and the EdD dissertation as a reflective leadership paper focused on the student's administrative practice. Exceptional PhD dissertations are perceived as exceptional because the student possessed certain attributes or the dissertation contained certain attributes, or both. These dissertations come from students who are described as brilliant (Professor C). The student also demonstrates great passion for their work (Professor B). The exceptional PhD dissertation is also described as a well-grounded research study that "shows that the researcher understands what the study is and is methodologically sound enough to contribute to the research literature" (Professor A). This study creates new knowledge (Professor B) and is a novel approach to an established research area (Professor C).

Participants describe exceptional EdD dissertations as appearing to be similar to PhD dissertations. Exceptional EdD dissertations were also closely linked to the profession, rather than to an area of research. When discussing an excellent EdD dissertation, it might "look a lot like a traditional dissertation" (Professors B & C), but "the data will be used to inform the practice of the profession" (Professor A). One participant commented on the quality of the EdD dissertation and personal qualities of the doctoral students on "how passionate they are about the research" (Professor B).

Average: not enough time on the problem

For average dissertations, a common discussion for both the PhD and EdD dissertation is that these dissertations are "not enough." Participants agreed average PhD dissertations do not delve far enough into the analysis of the literature, or inadequate time

was invested to complete the research in the subject matter, or the student lacks sufficient academic skill to fully explore the research question. Statements to this effect include that there is "not enough of an examination of the research question" (Professor A); or "not enough time to work on defining the research problems" (Professor C).

Average EdD dissertations are described as either lacking in substance or the student is described as lacking the writing skills necessary to substantially tackle the research. "Average dissertations seem to tackle simpler questions and seem to think in less abstract terms" (Professor B) and "the average dissertations have a narrower historical context and thinner literature review" (Professor D) characterize comments by faculty describing average dissertations.

Unacceptable dissertations: more differences than similarities

There were a number of different issues raised in discussions about unacceptable dissertations. The discussions included a wide difference in quality between the unacceptable PhD dissertation and the unacceptable EdD dissertation. Professor B: "there is a world of difference between the weakest EdD dissertation and the weakest PhD dissertation." The main difference is that, even within the scope of a wide range in quality, poorly written PhD dissertations are still viewed as significantly better than poorly written EdD dissertations (Professor B).

There are also similarities in the way participants perceive a poor quality dissertation, as "poor research for either the EdD or PhD is unacceptable" (Professor B). When discussing students who might create poor PhD and EdD dissertations, Professor C states that (students who might write poor dissertations) flunk themselves out or the

students go AWOL before the dissertation defense so those students who might write a poor dissertation never get that far in their program.”

Differences and Similarities of the two dissertations

Midwest participants drew distinct differences in their descriptions of PhD and EdD dissertations. These differences are summarized in the following quote: “There is little difference between the very best EdD dissertations and some of the good PhD dissertations...there is a world of difference between the weakest EdD dissertation and the weakest PhD dissertation” (Professor B).

These differences are a byproduct of the two different structures of the PhD and EdD doctoral programs. The department is attempting to clearly distinguish the two programs (Professor A) and are doing so by requiring additional statistical coursework for stronger quantitative studies (Professor C). “We are not including or excluding folks, just trying to be clearer about the purposes of the two degrees” (Professor A). However, keeping rigorous standards for both different types of dissertations can be difficult. “The various qualities of EdD and PhD dissertation are significant, but we are struggling as people in our understanding how both dissertations are rigorous, but different” (Professor D).

The similar expectation for the EdD and PhD is that the dissertation is completed to enhance the student's professional career. For the EdD, this means the dissertation affords the student with the opportunity and knowledge of how research methodology may be used in their administrative setting (Professor A) and to use this research to reinforce their professional interests (Professor B). For the PhD this means the dissertation illustrates the student's ability to conduct independent research and to use the

research conducted in completing the dissertation as a start for their career as a researcher (Professor C).

Summary

For the Midwest participants, the purpose of both the PhD and EdD dissertation is preparation for employment, but that preparation is broad for the PhD and narrow for the EdD. The expectation for both the PhD and EdD dissertations is for the student to write a scholarly piece that draws upon their coursework to create a sound study that either informs theory (PhD) or informs practice (EdD). The participants state that the exceptional PhD dissertation is written by an outstanding student that utilizes a novel approach grounded in theory, and the exceptional EdD dissertation looks like a traditional PhD dissertation, but uses data to inform practice. Average PhD and EdD dissertations were described as not having sufficient time to write the study, as lacking in the quantity of literature reviewed, and as insufficient strength in the writing skills necessary to complete a stronger dissertation. The discussion of a failing dissertation varied greatly among the participants, as each one provided a story of a particular dissertation near failure that was rescued by the individual effort of a particular faculty member (usually themselves). They all agreed that dissertation rarely get to this stage because dissertations that get brought to the defense rarely fail.

MidAtlantic

The University of MidAtlantic was founded in 1819 with the ideal of developing, through education, leaders who are well-prepared to help shape the future of the nation (MidAtlantic web site). The University of MidAtlantic is comprised of ten schools that

offer bachelor's degrees in 47 fields, 83 master's degrees in 66 fields, and 57 doctoral degrees in 55 fields. There are over 20,000 students, with over 4,800 graduate students.

The School is organized into four academic departments. There are approximately 105 full-time faculty with 1,400 students and over 640 graduate students. The education department states that it prepares students for leadership roles in administration, foundations of education, and educational policies and it offers both PhD and EdD degrees. The PhD program is designed for scholars seeking careers as researchers and as faculty in higher education, while the EdD program is geared toward professionals in education seeking practice-oriented study (MidAtlantic web site).

PhD program

The primary purpose of the Ph.D. degree is to develop educational scholars who are able to conduct original research and interpret and communicate the results of such research as authors, university professors, and governmental or research agency officials (MidAtlantic web site). The applicant to the PhD program must hold a baccalaureate and a master's degree from an accredited university, have an exceptional record as a student, and submit an application for admission and official transcripts of all academic work, two references, official score reports for the Graduate Record Examination and a statement of professional goals.

Ph.D. students must complete at least three academic years (fall and spring semester) of full-time (12 credits) graduate work (MidAtlantic web site). One year of this requirement may be waived for candidates who have already earned a master's degree. Students must be continuously enrolled during the fall and spring semesters while working toward the Ph.D. degree. To earn a Ph.D. degree the student must successfully

complete a program of study determined by their doctoral committee. The student must earn 72 credits beyond the bachelor's degree, including at least 54 credits for courses other than non-topical research or dissertation credit, and at least 12 dissertation credits. A minimum of 36 credits (not including internships, independent study, practica and dissertation credit) must be earned in residency on the main campus (MidAtlantic web site). The student must successfully complete any preliminary examinations required by the program area or the doctoral committee. The student must successfully complete written comprehensive examinations and an oral examination as determined by the student's doctoral committee. Comprehensive exams must be completed before the dissertation committee is appointed and before the dissertation proposal is defended. The student must acquire research proficiency by successfully completing 15 hours of research methods courses. The student must successfully complete all dissertation requirements, including defending a dissertation proposal and passing an oral final examination on the conduct and conclusions of the dissertation. All requirements must be completed within four years after passing comprehensive examinations and within seven years of admission to the Ph.D. program.

EdD Program

For the EdD program, the primary purpose is to provide experienced educators with a broad understanding of professional education, a definite knowledge of selected aspects of educational theory and practice, and an ability to both conduct research and evaluation and to apply those research findings in an informed and critical manner (MidAtlantic web site). An applicant to the EdD program must hold a master's degree or equivalent from an accredited college or university, have an exceptional record as a

student, and have previous professional experience in an area related to the proposed major. According to the web site, professional qualifications and experience are weighted heavily.

Students must successfully complete a program of study established by their doctoral committee that includes 72 credits with at least 54 credits for courses other than non-topical research or dissertation credit, and at least 12 dissertation credits (MidAtlantic web site). A maximum of 24 credits from the master's program may be applied to the program with the approval of the doctoral committee. A minimum of 36 credits (not including internships, independent study, practica and dissertation credit) must be earned on campus. Students must also complete any preliminary examinations required by the program area or doctoral committee, complete written comprehensive examinations as determined by the doctoral committee, pass a minimum of six credits of research courses at the University of MidAtlantic, and complete six credits of supervised practicum or internship work after admission to the EdD program supervised by University of MidAtlantic faculty or other approved professionals. Finally, students must complete and defend a dissertation. The dissertation defense is an open, public examination of the doctoral research project. All requirements must be completed within four years after passing the EdD comprehensive examination.

Comparing the PhD and EdD program

The PhD and EdD program are similar in their requirements for overall course hours, the number of hours required for coursework in residency and in the required number of dissertation hours. The most noticeable differences between the EdD and PhD programs is the stated intent of the program and the number of research hours. The stated

intent of the PhD program is to educate scholars, whereas the stated intention of the EdD program is to train experienced educators. In addition, EdD students complete six credit hours in research and six credit hours of supervised practicum where PhD students complete 12 credit hours of research requirements.

Participants

There were three participants from the University of MidAtlantic; two full professors and one assistant professor. All three professors have experience mentoring graduate students and have chaired or co-chaired EdD and PhD dissertations.

Purpose of a dissertation: traditional roles for traditional dissertations

The participants view the purpose of the PhD dissertation as making an addition to the research literature within the field and the purpose of the EdD dissertation to contribute to the theory of practice. This purpose of the PhD dissertation adds to the research base and the development of theoretical constructs (Professor C). In doing so, a dissertation contributes to the existing body of knowledge (Professor A). As for the EdD, the traditional purpose is to inform administrative practice (Professor C). The EdD dissertation adds to the knowledge base with a broader goal of informing practice (Professor A).

Expectations: showing a strong interest in the subject matter

Participants have similar expectations for both the EdD and PhD dissertation, in that each is viewed as a piece of scholarly work that contributes to existing knowledge (PhD) or practice (EdD) and allows the student to demonstrate a strong interest in their subject matter.

Table 5: University of MidAtlantic

Descriptions	PhD dissertations	Edd dissertations
Purpose	Add to the research base, theoretical constructs	Contribution to the theory of practice;
Expectations	Write a scholarly piece that draws upon coursework to create a sound study.	Scholarly piece that informs practice. Overall similar expectation to PhD
Quality: exceptional	Exceptional sections of the dissertation and results section was well written	Exceptional sections of the dissertation and results section was well written
Quality average	Topics are usually not well researched, difficult to identify	Edd students are not full time so they want to do as little as possible, topics are not well researched.
Quality Unacceptable	Committee ensures that dissertations brought to defense rarely fail.	Committee ensures that dissertations brought to defense rarely fail.

Admission Requirements	PhD	Edd
Professional Experience	No	Yes
Master's Degree	Yes	Yes
GPA	Yes	Yes (3.5)
GRE	Yes	Yes
References	Yes	Yes
English Proficiency	Yes	Yes
Administrative Certification	No	No
Program Requirements	PhD	Edd
Program Core Courses	54 credit hours	54 credit hours
Campus Residency	One year; 36 hours in residence	One year; 36 hours in residence
Research Courses	12 credit hours	6 credit hours
Elective Courses	0 credit hours	0 credit hours
Dissertation Hours	12 credit hours	12 credit hours
Total for Degree	72 credit hours beyond Bachelor's	72 credit hours beyond Bachelor's
Other	University teaching requirement	Practicum

The participants expect students to have a dissertation of publishable quality (PhD) and to make a contribution to the field of study or administrative practice (EdD). Professor A: "I'm not interested in working with people who simply want the degree to enhance their salary status. I insist that they have a theoretical framework in which their questions are rooted, so fishing expeditions are not something I support, where they just go out and look for information and hope that something will be interesting."

Faculty also expect both PhD and EdD students to show a strong interest in their subject matter, along with a demonstration that they have gained sound research and writing skills while completing the coursework required by their doctoral program. Professor B: "You know as far as I am concerned it's the quality of research and writing. I can't tell students what topic you use so we make sure the student has a high interest in it otherwise it will be difficult to complete." Whatever the dissertation, students are expected to write their dissertation in a scholarly fashion (Professor C) and create a study based on the knowledge they gained in their program.

Participants acknowledge that their program has similar expectations and purposes for the EdD and PhD dissertation. Professor C: "The expectations are pretty much the same for both PhD and EdD topics." These similar expectations also mean participants don't draw distinctions between the EdD and PhD dissertation (Professor A). Instead of drawing distinctions, the faculty focus on getting students to complete dissertations that are scholarly in nature and that utilize the knowledge earned in coursework.

Quality of a dissertation: emphasis on the student's effort

All of the participants used general, technical aspects of previous dissertations to discuss exceptional PhD and EdD dissertations. The participants made no distinctions between exceptional EdD and PhD dissertations. They explained the various sections of a study or the study's results that made the dissertation exceptional. The sections (literature review and research methods) were seen as well researched and written and the results were described as creating new emerging theory. Comments included: "The implications of the study were extensive" (Professor A); "Literature review was exceptional, the methodology was good, and types of questions were done well enough for the topic" (Professor B); "Synthesized philosophies of teaching math to create an emergent theory of learning math" (Professor C).

Average dissertations: getting the right topic

The participants agree that one element that separates exceptional dissertations from average PhD and EdD dissertations is the topic addressed. For the EdD and PhD, quite often these are dissertation topics that students identify early on in their program (Professor A) and are "quite often are ones that students feel that address issues that no one has looked at... What they fail to see is that there are reasons why no one else has looked at the issue as they are not particularly fruitful areas." Because these topics have had little research, these average dissertations require longer completion times, necessitating a greater time commitment from both the student and the advisor. "It takes them longer to complete, they must do additional work on it. If it is not right it takes them longer to get it right."

Since the EdD students work full time and attend courses part time, the additional time for average dissertations results in students completing the bare minimum necessary in order to finish the dissertation (Professor B). For some average dissertations, the EdD students also struggle to create an adequately written study. Professor C: "it's simply the issue that if it is not well written, it does not pass... it is a requirement to be acceptable so we don't let them go until they are good."

Unacceptable dissertation: when a student is not ready

Participants noted that if PhD and EdD reach the defense, they almost never fail. Committee members approve the dissertation proposal and it is up to the dissertation chair to release the dissertation when it is ready, so if the student completes the study, the committee members work with the student to finish the dissertation. Professor B identified a time when the student was not fully ready: "The student, with recommendation from the committee, was told that it was not ready and was told what needed to get done." When those issues were addressed, the advisor would tell the committee it was ready. If and when it arises that the student has not carried out the study properly, the committee members will identify any issues that need to be addressed. Professor A: "At that point it is not the student, but the committee that has failed."

Similarities

Participants expressed similar concerns regarding the purpose, expectations and quality of EdD and PhD dissertations. As for the dissertation, participants perceive more similarities between the purpose, expectations and quality of EdD and PhD dissertations than differences. Professor B: "there are no differences...I don't distinguish between the EdD and PhD because I don't think there are differences." The only stated difference was

in the discussion of average dissertations and the impact of having the EdD students trying to finish their dissertation while working full time. These dual demands (career and dissertation) were not identified with the PhD dissertations.

Summary

Participants have similar expectations for both the EdD and PhD dissertation, specifically that they are pieces of scholarly work that contribute to existing knowledge (PhD) or practice (EdD) and that students demonstrate a strong interest in their subject matter. All of the participants used general, technical aspects of previous dissertations to discuss exceptional PhD and EdD dissertation providing no distinctions between the exceptional EdD and PhD dissertation. The discussion on average dissertation for both PhD and EdD dissertations focused on a poor choice of topic and the attempt to dedicate insufficient time to the dissertation by some EdD students. Failing dissertations are described as rarely making it to a defense, but when it does happen, it is described by one participant as an example of when the "committee has not done its job properly."

FarEast University

FarEast University is a private university established in 1841 and currently enrolls over 14,400 students in its ten schools (FarEast web site). In 2006-2007, this included 6,800 graduate students and granted over 100 PhD degrees and 14 EdD degree programs. The School of Education has a student body of 1,500 students the majority of whom are employed full-time in schools and social service agencies. The School offers more than 40 program options for masters, professional diplomas, and doctoral degrees at its three campus locations. The School consists of three divisions. The education administration division has six tenure track faculty, 35 adjunct faculty and offers graduate degrees in

educational administration at the masters and doctoral level. Students are primarily school administrators, principals, superintendents and leaders in public and non-public schools and church settings. During the fall semester of 2007, the education administration program had 189 master's students and 89 doctoral students.

PhD program

The PhD applicants must have at least three years of administrative experience, possess a master's degree, a minimum graduate grade point average of approximately 3.5, satisfactory scores on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT), provide two reference reports, demonstrate satisfactory command of oral and written English, show evidence of academic ability, effective communication skills, leadership potential and seriousness of purpose (FarEast web site). The PhD degree program is "designed for individuals who aspire to careers devoted to research or educational positions in institutions and other organizational setting as the PhD stresses the refinement of candidates' social science concepts and methodologies as they relate to education, with particular attention to developing one or more cognate disciplines." The majority of PhD students are part-time students with full time professional careers. All PhD students enroll in a program where the primary focus is the preparation and development of leaders and key administrators in education (FarEast Web site).

The PhD program requires a minimum of one-year of doctoral residency (two consecutive semesters and a summer), participation in a research course with a faculty member -- culminating in a project that demonstrates the student's ability to do doctoral work -- and graduates must successfully complete an end-of-program comprehensive

assessment -- the dissertation seminar -- which facilitates student/faculty interaction in the development of a dissertation proposal.

The PhD candidate must defend an original dissertation related to the theological, humanistic, and social science concepts and methodologies, while the findings must also relate to educational institutions and/or religious organizations. The PhD requires 60 credits beyond the master's degree of which 12 credits are called the collateral component, whereby students take courses from other parts of the university.

EdD program

The EdD program requires the following for admission: at least three years of appropriate administrative experience, possession of a master's degree, minimum graduate grade point average of approximately 3.5, satisfactory scores on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT), two reference reports, demonstrated satisfactory command of oral and written English, demonstrated evidence of academic ability, effective communication skills, leadership potential and seriousness of purpose, and the appropriate professional administrative certification (FarEast web site). The EdD degree program is intended for educational practitioners in leadership positions serving educational institutions, including public and higher education organizations (FarEast web site). Students may choose from one of two types of education leadership programs. The first program is designed for education leaders in public and private educational settings and is a doctoral degree in education administration. The second leadership program focuses on the doctoral training of public school leaders and is organized with a cohort of 20 students who complete their courses

together. Both EdD programs emphasize applied research and site-specific problem solving and are designed to improve practice.

As with the PhD program, the EdD program requires a minimum of one-year of doctoral residency seminar (two consecutive semesters and a summer), including participation in research with a faculty member, culminating in a project that demonstrates the student's ability to do doctoral work; successful completion of an end-of-program comprehensive assessment; and completion of the dissertation seminar, which facilitates student/faculty interaction in the development of a dissertation proposal. The EdD requires 45 credits beyond the master's degree. The EdD candidate must defend an original dissertation related to the application of research to the solution of field-specific problems in educational leadership or educational administration and supervision.

Comparing the EdD and the PhD program

The EdD and PhD program have similar requirements for admission and similar degree requirements. Both programs follow the traditional track by which the PhD program is the more traditional doctoral program, requiring coursework outside the education while the EdD program is traditionally focused on training for school superintendents requiring fewer hours to complete the program.

Participants

The three faculty participants (Professors A, B, and C) from FarEast are all full professors with a combined 60 plus years of academic experience at FarEast. Two hold the EdD degree and one with the PhD degree. All three have mentored and continue to mentor both EdD and PhD dissertations.

Table 6: FarEast University

Descriptions	PhD dissertations	Edd dissertations
Purpose	Advance knowledge in the discipline, professional development, learn how to do research	Advance knowledge in the field, professional development, learn how to do research
Expectations	Complete the overall dissertation to the best of their ability. Use mostly field-based qualitative studies	Complete the overall dissertation to the best of their ability. Use mostly field-based qualitative studies
Quality: exceptional	Topic of the dissertation, ability of the student and cited a specific example Few, if any available.	Topic of the dissertation, ability of the student and cited a specific example. Few, if any available.
Quality average	More time to write (students), more mentoring time (chairs) and more time to complete the dissertation	More time to write (students), more mentoring time (chairs) and more time to complete the dissertation
Quality unacceptable	Dissertations that make to defense do not fail.	Dissertations that make to defense do not fail.

Admission Requirements	PhD	Edd
Professional Experience	Yes (3 yrs)	Yes (3 yrs)
Master's Degree	Yes	Yes
GPA	3.0 UG, 3.5 MS	3.0 UG, 3.5 MS
GRE	Yes	Yes
References	Yes	Yes
English Proficiency	Yes	Yes
Administrative Certification	No	Yes
Program Requirements	PhD	Edd
Program Core Courses	33 credit hours	33 credit hours
Campus Residency	0 credit course	Two semesters and summer
Research Courses	12 credit hours	9 credit hours
Elective Courses	12 credit hours	0
Dissertation Hours	0 credit course	3 credit course
Total for Degree	57 credit hrs beyond master's degree	45 credit hrs beyond master's degree

Purpose of a dissertation: No difference needed

All three participants stated that they saw little or no difference in the purpose of the PhD dissertation and EdD dissertation. The purpose of both dissertations is to assist the student's professional development in relation to employment and to advance the knowledge within the field (EdD) or discipline (PhD). Professor C: "the PhD is a research degree and we are saying the EdD is a practitioners degree, but our program is literally the same." One purpose of the EdD and PhD dissertation is professional development for the student.

The EdD dissertation is tied to the students' professional development, preparing them for a future career (Professor A). Since many of the students are already principals, the EdD students come to the program with an established career. Professor B: "The goal is to prepare them not for any specific job, but for a variety of higher level policy-type positions."

The second purpose of the PhD and EdD dissertation is the advancement of knowledge within the field (EdD) or discipline (PhD). Professor B: "The EdD is about advancing knowledge in the field. For the PhD, it's about advancing knowledge in the discipline." The purpose of advancing knowledge also gets to the purpose of having students learn something about completing research for the discipline or the field. Professor A states no difference between advancing knowledge with the EdD or PhD dissertation, rather "I think the purpose is trying to learn something...to push the envelope of knowledge so that you are getting the best results."

Expectations of a dissertation: complete the dissertation to the best ability

Participants stated little difference in the expectations between EdD and PhD dissertations. Participants stated a general expectation for both dissertations -- that the student will complete their dissertation to the best of the student's time and ability.

Professor A: "my philosophy has always been that you take the student where they are and you produce the best dissertation that you can whether it's an EdD or PhD... I pay attention to the topic and to the ability and capacity of the student." Students in the program are expected to produce a dissertation that, according to one participant, is mostly qualitative field-based studies. Professor C: "We tend to get students who are doing mostly qualitative...but then everything looks alike, because no one works in the quantitative field, whether for the EdD or the PhD."

Quality of a dissertation: Time to mentor and work with students

The abilities that a student brings to the dissertation and the dissertation topic are two qualities of either an exceptional EdD or PhD dissertation. The topic for a dissertation is almost one-third of the reason why a dissertation can be viewed as exceptional (Professor B). The topic needs to be framed in such a way that the dissertation can be finished in a specific amount of time and the dissertation topic must be able to be studied in a concise manner.

Two participants gave a specific example when discussing an exceptional dissertation. Part of the discussion on exceptional dissertations was spent on participants recalling specific details about a particular exceptional dissertation. Participants spent more time discussing the facts of the dissertation itself and less on the factors that made it exceptional. Professor A gave an in-depth monologue of one dissertation where the

student created a new funding model for public education. Professor B shared a similar example of student who wrote on emotional intelligence and that what made the dissertation exceptional was the student's choice of the topic. Participants also stated that they had very few or no exceptional dissertations. One participant could not identify more than one exceptional dissertation and the other (Professor C) gave no example, choosing to discuss how EdD and PhD students were not prepared to write an exceptional dissertation.

Professor C: "What makes for a really good dissertation, a real sense of methodology and a real sense of theory, is a real sense of curiosity. And maybe because these are practioners it doesn't mean as much that they don't have the same intellectual curiosity. That they are contributing to a new area of social science, so they really don't stretch their thinking in these dissertations."

Average dissertations: more time to mentor

Participants noted that dissertation chairs need more time to mentor average dissertations, that average dissertations took longer timeframes to be completed, and the student needed more time to create the study and complete the dissertation. Professor A: "There's the topic, there's the rigor, and part is the ability to write. (Dissertation chairs) can spend a lot of time just cleaning up the language. It could be a great topic that is well researched and could be poorly written." For the average dissertations, some students require extra time because they lack the skills necessary to make them a better writer. As dissertation chairs, average dissertation use more faculty time because of the writing skills of the students (Professor B) and the students lack the capacity to create a sound dissertation study (Professor C). Some of that capacity may come from the undergraduate or master's coursework. Professor B: "we try to encourage them to find those ideas that force the student to think creatively....those (exceptional dissertations) have better ideas

than the average dissertation....I don't want to call it a gift....(but) their previous education pushes them to a different level."

Unacceptable dissertations: additional pressure to pass students

PhD and EdD dissertations that are brought forward for defense are usually passed. The dissertation does not get released until the dissertation chair believes that the dissertation is ready to be reviewed by the entire committee. The chair does not want to tarnish their "reputation" (Professor A), so they will make sure the student is ready. Committee members also recognized that a student who completes the coursework, passes the exams and completes a dissertation is going to pass. Professor C: "If you have worked with your committee throughout the process, your committee is not going to fail you. If the committee approves your oral exam (dissertation proposal), then your dissertation should get approved."

One participant noted that because there are no outside members on dissertation committees there may be additional pressure to pass the student. The outside member is traditionally a faculty member in another department, but some universities bring in an outside member from another university. This lack of outside voice on the dissertation committee could lead to over-influence by one or more committee members. Professor C: "it may be too supporting of an environment as there are no committee members outside the university...we have no outside readers....FarEast has talked about this for years....and it keeps getting voted down...it seems there is even more pressure to make sure the student is ready to defend the dissertation."

Similarities

All three participants acknowledged that they tend to view their students' dissertation research as part of the larger purview of the student's career choice. None of the participants described their students' dissertations as launching a new career; rather each described their dissertations as part of the established career choice.

For both Professor B and C, the question of quality (exceptional or good) led to in-depth descriptions of a specific dissertation. For example, when I asked Professor A about an exceptional dissertation, he began to read to me the titles of his exceptional PhD & EdD dissertations by pulling them off the shelf and providing in depth descriptions. In his descriptions of what made these ‘the best,’ Professor B discussed at length two of her best EdD dissertations, providing detailed descriptions of each one. For Professors A and B, the topic of the dissertation and the student's ability to write an outstanding dissertation is what made them so compelling. Yet Professor C did not provide any example a single dissertation he mentored, stating that his students' dissertations were at best good to fair.

Summary

Participants stated little or no difference in the purpose of the PhD dissertation and EdD dissertation. The purpose of both dissertations is to assist the student's professional development via employment and to advance the knowledge within the field (EdD) or discipline (PhD). Participants stated a general expectation for both the PhD and EdD dissertation in that the student will complete their dissertation to the best of the student's time and ability. The abilities that a student brings to the dissertation and the dissertation topic are two qualities of either an exceptional EdD or PhD dissertation.

Participants noted that dissertation chairs need more time to mentor average dissertations, that average dissertations required more time to write, and the student needed more time to create the study and complete the dissertation. PhD and EdD dissertations that are brought forward for defense are usually passed. The dissertation does not get released until the dissertation chair thinks the dissertation is ready to be reviewed by the entire committee.

Chapter Conclusion

The purpose, expectations and quality of EdD and PhD dissertations are shaped by the doctoral programs and the faculty that teach and mentor in these programs. In the next chapter, I will provide a cross campus analysis of the faculty views on the purpose, expectations and quality of EdD and PhD dissertation. I will identify the discussions across the campuses and analyze the themes identified from this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DESCRIPTIONS AND THEMES ACROSS PROGRAMS

This chapter identifies and explicates the descriptions and themes across the campuses in relation to the purpose, expectations and quality of PhD and EdD dissertations within education administration. The first part of the chapter describes each element in terms of the commonalities found across all of the doctoral programs. The second part identifies the major themes across the five campuses.

The table below provides a thematic overview for each of the detailed descriptions that follow. Participants state the purpose of both dissertations is to support the student's career, whether academic or administrative. Participants expect the dissertation to contribute to either existing theory (PhD) or practice (EdD). Faculty describe PhD and EdD dissertations using similar terminology.

Table 7: Summary of the discussions across the doctoral programs

	PhD dissertations	EdD dissertations	Similarities (S) Differences (D)
Purpose	Career	Career	(D) Type of career (S) Career focus
Expectations	Theory contribution	Practice contribution	(D) Type of contribution (S) contribute to larger audience
Quality: exceptional	The ones that get pulled off the shelf	Look like a PhD dissertation	(S) High quality is high quality (D) qualitative vs. quantitative
Average	Lack what they need	Not enough time	(S) Great variety, but all lack (D) Time more important for EdD
Unacceptable	Almost never happens	Almost never happens	(S) Same for both (D) none

Purpose: Preparing for a career

There was general consensus among the five programs that the EdD and PhD dissertation serve three purposes. These purposes are to prepare the student for his/her career, to provide instruction in how to conduct research, and to advance knowledge within the field of study.

PhD Purpose: Looking to begin an academic career

All five programs agreed that the purpose of a PhD dissertation is to prepare a student for a career in academia. The PhD is viewed as a launching point for an academic career. This preparation begins with knowledge gained from disciplinary and research methodology coursework and the dissertation is the application of this knowledge. The dissertation is the opportunity for students to establish their identity as an academic researcher. "It shows others (potential employers, other researchers) that you can successfully complete research in an academic setting" (NorthCentral, Professor C). Four of the five programs identified this as their top priority, but one (FarEast) identified this as a general priority. At the same time, not many students sought out academic careers.

In addition, all five programs stated that learning how to conduct research, specifically academic research, is a second purpose of the PhD dissertation. A student must learn the process necessary to complete a research study from start to finish. Immersion in the research endeavor also provides the student with an understanding of the workings of the academic discipline. Understanding the academic discipline and its theoretical framework allows the student to begin the process of constructing a research program and future career. Midwest, Professor A: "Dissertation research allows the student the opportunity to do academic research under guidance from a faculty mentor."

Completing research that adds to academic knowledge within the discipline is the third purpose for PhD dissertations in education administration. As part of the dissertation, students learn about the current state of the research within that particular area. For example, respondents from FarEast and MidAtlantic stated that students should identify an open hole in the research and pursue this as a dissertation topic. The other programs (Midwest, NorthCentral, and Southeast) did not emphasize this view. However, because dissertation research necessarily builds upon the existing body of research, students must be well grounded within their area of study.

Additionally, the expectation that the dissertation adds to the current academic research within education administration was widely held. "I feel the purpose of the dissertation is to make a contribution to the accumulating body of knowledge" (MidAtlantic, Professor A). Examples of how this contribution would take place were given in the individual testimonies of exceptional dissertations.

Edd Purpose: Enhancing a established career

The five program participants all stated that the three purposes of the EdD dissertation are career preparation, learning to conduct research, and advancing the current state of knowledge within the field of practice.

Career preparation was focused in particular on preparation for a career in K-12 educational administration. The majority of participants indicated their students had begun their career in education administration, so the doctoral degree is viewed as a step toward career enhancement more than preparation for a new career. Participants view the doctoral degree not as preparation for a specific position, but as preparation that will allow graduates to utilize the research and leadership skills learned to assist them in

future positions. "The purpose of the EdD is to show that the candidate can analyze data and look at the body of research that will help them improve their practice as administrators and leaders in the schools" (Southeast, Professor A).

All of the participants identified learning how to conduct research as a second purpose for the EdD dissertation in education administration. Participants stated that EdD dissertations are more focused on local, applied research issues. The research doctoral students complete should have some impact on and relevance to their practice as education administrators. Some participants from three of the programs (Midwest, NorthCentral, MidAtlantic) discussed using action research as a research method that ensures doctoral students learn research that can be applied directly to their professional environment. "The program is expanding their academic and research experience in education leadership to include action research within their own field" (Midwest, Professor D).

Making a contribution to the field of education administration is the third purpose of the EdD dissertation. That contribution is measured in two ways -- first by the manner in which the research informs the field through application, and second by how the research contributes to the literature pertinent to the practice of education administration. All of the participants stated that the EdD dissertation should have practical applications for the practice of education administration. This contribution should inform practice within the student's own professional work and should be replicable at other locations. "The EdD is about advancing knowledge in the field; for the PhD, it is about advancing knowledge in the discipline" (FarEast, Professor B).

However, only a few participants perceived that the purpose included a contribution to the larger body of research concerning the practice of education administration. Three of programs did not discuss EdD dissertations adding to the research literature base. Additionally, no single participant gave a specific example of journal where a student would submit a research article for the practice of education administration.

Expectations: expectations for a dissertation equal expectations for a degree

Participants discussed their expectations of the PhD dissertation and EdD dissertation in education administration. The participants all shared their personal expectations as well as their perceptions of the shared expectations of their department. The faculty spoke of their personal expectations as closely aligned to their department's expectations. However, at times there were obvious differences between the individual faculty member's opinion and the rest of the department. Based on all the respondents, the discussion of expectations for both PhD and EdD dissertations can be summarized into three areas: the expectations for the different parts that make up a dissertation; an expectation about the overall quality of the dissertation; and the general expectation faculty place on students to complete their dissertation. What follows is a review of each set of expectations for both PhD and EdD dissertations.

Expectations for PhD dissertations: generating and contributing to theory

All the participants stated that they expected PhD students in education administration to sufficiently address the various parts of the dissertation. They felt that the quality of their research should meet the program's standard and that the student should focus on research as a long term career.

The PhD dissertation in education administration is comprised of several parts - including the research question, theoretical framework, literature review, discussion and analysis, and a conclusion stating future implications of the research. Generally, participants focused their discussion regarding expectations in three of these five areas -- the research question, theoretical framework, and literature review. Each of these areas needed to be sufficiently addressed in order to meet their expectation.

The research question needed to address a missing piece within the literature, while the theoretical framework should be based on relevant theory to frame and support the research questions. "I insist that they have a theoretical framework in which their questions are rooted...." (MidAtlantic, Professor A). The literature review is expected to sufficiently summarize the current and past relevant research related to the topic. This expectation is supported by the assumption that EdD and PhD students will be well grounded in their knowledge of the relevant literature and possess a thorough understanding of theory in an academic setting. For example, for the PhD dissertation, the expectation is "that the students will do a piece of research that is generated from theory and contributes to theory" (NorthCentral, Professor A).

The second expectation for a successful PhD dissertation is that it be of a certain level of quality. All of the participants stated two general criteria required for dissertations to meet the standards of a high quality dissertation. Three programs (Midwest, NorthCentral, and Southeast) stated that one criterion is that the dissertation should be publishable. Students are expected to publish their dissertation or parts of their dissertation upon completion. "My intent is that it is good enough that it can somehow be

shared more broadly, because its not an exercise just for them to get their thesis, and about half of my people publish their thesis work" (NorthCentral, Professor B).

All but one program (FarEast) identified a second criterion. A PhD dissertation must be a higher caliber research project than an EdD dissertation. When participants compare their EdD and PhD dissertations, most mention their program's general expectation of having a higher quality dissertation produced by the PhD students. One participant spoke about this program expectation in these terms:

NorthCentral, Professor D: "I think our expectations of these students (EdD students) is a little lower...so as one faculty member put it to me...what we are trying to do with these practioners scholars that we are trying to put out...they are trying to get them some research experience in collecting data, writing up their research...some experience analyzing data, less rigorous than the PhD."

Participants also identified general expectations placed upon students who complete the PhD dissertation. In general, participants expect that the student that completes a PhD dissertation is interested in research as a career. Primarily, this is a career in higher education or in a non-profit organization. PhD students are expected to take more research coursework and to gain more research experience leading up to the dissertation. "The expectations of the PhD student is that they are an expert in a particular area...our program is much more geared toward people who are going to do research as part of their future" (NorthCentral, Professor B).

Expectations for EdD Dissertations: Studying the field of practice

When discussing the EdD dissertations, participants outlined their expectations regarding the dissertation. In contrast to the PhD, for the most part, the discussion about EdD expectations did not focus on the parts of the dissertation (literature review, questions, and theoretical framework). The majority of participants instead discussed

their expectation that an EdD dissertation should be applied research based within the field of study. It is expected that the dissertation will be a field-based study, particular to the student's area of work. The expectation is that the EdD dissertation will have similar sections to the PhD dissertation (research question, theoretical framework, literature review, etc) but that the nature of the research would be applicable to the practice of education administration. "The expectation for the EdD dissertation is the same rigor, same organization....but more of a regional based research mission for the school districts"(Southeast, Professor C).

As stated earlier, for all but one program (FarEast), the EdD dissertation research is not expected to meet as high of quality standards as the PhD dissertation. Most participants stated that the EdD dissertation is written regarding school-based issues. The discussed that the students completing EdD dissertations are full time administrators working on their dissertation on a part-time basis. The participants also stated that most EdD students do not complete a heavy load of research courses. Because of this, the majority of participants did not expect the EdD to contain as high of a level of quality of research relative to the PhD dissertation. "The EdD is a field study based in the practice....it's a different kind of study...a practioners-based question, generally because of the coursework that our EdD students have in terms of research methods....I think our expectations of these students is a little lower" (NorthCentral, Professor D).

The student's dissertation is expected to contribute to the professional practice within education administration. All of the participants agreed that doctoral student research conducted in relation to issues pertinent to their local school system accomplished this goal. Participants expected that upon graduation that EdD students

need to be able to apply their research knowledge and skills in the school system setting. "Someone graduating with a doctorate from our program will go out in a school system and they need to be able to head up the research questions and design for a evaluation or action research project...and if they can not complete that research evaluation project, then we have not done our job" (NorthCentral, Professor A).

Quality of dissertations: Do we know it when we see it?

Participants were asked to describe the characteristics that comprise an exceptional EdD and PhD dissertation, an average EdD and PhD dissertation and a failing EdD and PhD dissertation. Each participant was asked to describe three types of dissertation quality (exceptional, average, failing) for both the PhD dissertation and the EdD dissertation. In addition, participants were also encouraged to compare exceptional, average and failing dissertations between the PhD and EdD degrees. Below are the descriptions of their responses.

Exceptional PhD and EdD dissertations: The ones that get pulled off the shelf

All of the participants described exceptional dissertations for both the EdD and PhD degrees as being very similar in nature. They occur very infrequently in all of the programs and most of the more experienced participants describe only one dissertation in this category, while one less experienced professor indicated that he/she had never mentored an exceptional dissertation. The three themes that describe exceptional PhD and EdD dissertations are: the use of time, the identifying features of an exceptional dissertation, and the individualized relationship between the student and faculty member. These three themes are found both in descriptions of exceptional EdD dissertations and PhD dissertations.

PhD Exceptional Dissertations: "They change the way I think about a topic"

The exceptional PhD dissertation is one where the student is able to dedicate a significant quantity of time to the dissertation. The time dedicated to the dissertation is spent working closely with faculty to fully address the question, framework and plan for the study. Such in-depth immersion develops the student's experience as the student carry out smaller research projects with faculty in preparation for their dissertation research. Exceptional PhD students also dedicate large portions of time to the writing of their dissertation. The students use this time to craft, execute and report their research study in a well-written fashion. "PhD students (that write exceptional dissertations) being able to work closely with faculty...having regularly scheduling appointments with due dates for pieces of that dissertation...so its not just one big blurb...so they are working with faculty all along the way" (Southeast, Professor A).

Most of the participants state that an exceptional PhD dissertation starts with an exceptional topic, one that is unique to existing dissertation research. In addition, participants state that these exceptional dissertations have exceptional dissertation sections or parts. These dissertations were described to possess a complex theoretical framework, an in-depth literature review, and they often times adopt a novel approach within their research methodology. The results section flows naturally out of the research theoretical framework and their cited implications provide new insights upon the area of research. They are always well written and usually produce one or more research articles. One professor in particular summed up the exceptional dissertation; "I'm looking at the forty (PhD) doctoral students I've worked with....the most exceptional dissertations are dissertations that I could not have done myself. It has a theoretical framework which is

really novel, changed the shape of the field, and changed the way I think" (NorthCentral, Professor C)

Almost all of the participants clearly identified at least one exceptional PhD dissertation. Each participant discussed the many traits that contribute to the construction of an exceptional dissertation and each went to great lengths to describe the student, the study and what in particular made it exceptional. Many read a blurb from the dissertation itself, pulling them off the shelf and providing examples of the dissertation's greatness. It was evident that most of them had an individualized relationship with the student, describing the research and what the student did after completing this exceptional dissertation. This was true for both the PhD and EdD dissertations. Clearly the participants want to associate their professional work with mentoring these types of dissertations.

EdD Exceptional: "It looks a lot like a PhD dissertation"

Exceptional PhD dissertations are rare and exceptional EdD dissertations are even rarer. All of the participants indicated that EdD students who have time to write and time to meet with faculty also have a better chance of producing an exceptional dissertation. The exceptional EdD dissertation had a unique topic, a complex theoretical framework, and sophisticated research methodology. EdD dissertations are usually multiple site studies that address practice questions that are broad in nature. "One exceptional EdD dissertation recognized that her audience was not an academic audience, but a practioners audience, so she focused her implications around what she found and why it was useful for practioners and it gave practioners additional guidelines and questions to consider the topic further" (NorthCentral, Professor D).

Most of the participants state that their exceptional EdD dissertations can look and read very similar to an exceptional PhD dissertation. These dissertations are described as often more theoretical in nature and usually address the research with a more generalizable and less applied focus. Students who completed an exceptional EdD dissertation can qualify for the PhD program, but usually did not complete the additional research course requirement. The exceptional EdD dissertation often produces journal publications and is nominated for awards, similar to an exceptional PhD dissertation. One professor recalled a recent EdD dissertation: "it was exceptionally well done, I hope it wins some awards...most people would look at that dissertation and never realize it wasn't a PhD dissertation, it was an EdD simply because of the research requirement issue" (Southeast, Professor D).

Since EdD dissertations are similar to the PhD dissertations, it would only seem natural that most participants would form an individual relationship with the student who completes an exceptional dissertation. As with the PhD dissertation, great care was taken to describe students who complete exceptional EdD dissertations, their professional experience and what made the EdD dissertation impact the field in such an exceptional manner. These students were described as possessing a passion for their research and the participants were grateful to have mentored exceptional students.

Average dissertations: lacking in what they need for a complete dissertation

The same terms and similar examples were provided by participants discussing average PhD dissertations and average EdD dissertations. The descriptor of average was applied to the bulk of PhD and EdD students completing their doctoral degree. Average dissertations are described by participants as "lacking" or "not having" certain things that

are necessary to "fully realize" the full potential of the dissertation. (NorthCentral, Professor B)

PhD and EdD dissertations: need more time, skill and mentoring

Dissertations require a significant investment of time to finish. All of the participants describe average PhD and EdD dissertations as not having enough time, taking too much time to finish or sometimes both. For the PhD students, many participants described students who took too much time getting their dissertation writing on target and were forced to hurry to complete given the time limits. Faculty participants consistently raised the point that average students take more of their time to finish, as these students require more mentoring, more editing of dissertation drafts and more herding to dissertation completion.

Most of the participants describe an EdD student as completing a dissertation on a part-time basis while working full time. This can leave little time to write and to meet with faculty mentors while completing their dissertation. "When you live 100 miles away and are going to weekend courses, trying to do your job during the week and stuff...I don't think you absorb the kinds of things and have time to really reflect the way you do when you are here full time."(Southeast, Professor D) This lack of contact time was a frustration raised by the majority of participants in all of the programs.

Average dissertations are described by participants as being written by students who have the writing and analytical skills necessary to carry out research for a dissertation study, just not at the exceptional level. Most participants stated that the EdD students lacked the required skills at the start of the program. A couple of participants stated that PhD and EdD students never had ample opportunity to learn sound writing

skills while completing their coursework. Regardless of whether they had writing skills before they entered or whether they never learned writing skills in the program, the participants all agreed that the lack of strong writing skills leads PhD and EdD students to superficially detail their theoretical framework or literature review sections of their dissertation.

Even if a passing dissertation has a theoretical framework in which they are operating...they may not understand the depth and complexity of that framework...they don't explore that fully...and what that framework means...an average dissertation can create the results, but have a hard time about what it means...average dissertation does not go into deeply into their study...what are the barriers and challenges...they lose sight of the forest (Southeast, Professor A).

Especially for the EdD students, most participants' stated that due to a lack of a strong research background, these students struggle in understanding any level of complexity.

"There would be a number of EdD dissertations that would not be found acceptable at the PhD level because they don't go deep enough, they are not complex enough, and they are not holistic enough" (NorthCentral, Professor D).

Dissertations that Fail: It almost never happens

In order to complete a dissertation a student must first finish coursework, pass their exams and complete a PhD or EdD dissertation proposal. Once the student's proposal is approved, the student executes a study and writes up the results. The student writes up the PhD or EdD thesis and, at some point, convinces the chair of their dissertation committee that the dissertation is ready for committee review. There are many opportunities for a student to quit or fail out of the program before the dissertation defense. When student reaches the dissertation defense, they rarely fail the dissertation. Students who make it to the dissertation defense and struggle are usually supported by the

direct involvement of the committee members in order to get the student to complete the dissertation.

Most participants describe a particular incident when discussing dissertations that were unacceptable. Many times it is simply a time when the defense is stopped and specific items on the dissertation are addressed by a committee member and the student is permitted to defend at a later date. Participants described the particular student's situation, the situation with the dissertation and what actions were taken after the defense was halted and postponed. One professor recalled this story:

I actually chaired one of them...I was the (stand-in) chair of a dissertation defense...this was also the case where the (regular) advisor was not very available to the student...I don't know if the advisor had been honest with the student and when it got to questions about the methodology, the student could not answer them. I had to stop the defense...and we had to convene the faculty to decide what to do...I personally made the decision that the student was not going to fail...I felt it was not totally the student's fault...I'd never been in that before...stopped the exam in process...we set up the parameters...provided more support to finish, technically she should not of been there (NorthCentral, Professor B).

For some participants, the experience of going through a poor defense early in their academic career was perceived as a learning experience. Several professors offered a similar story of being new to the program, participating in a student's dissertation defense, and during the defense identifying key weaknesses that caused the faculty member great concern.

I was a brand new Assistant Professor in my very first year of the program...and was still feeling my way around as a dissertation committee member...I wasn't comfortable with the level of analysis (during the defense)...I didn't voice my concerns about the research in the defense...I didn't really know what the student norms were...I did follow up with the advisor and apparently it was touch and go for awhile...and the committee decided to go ahead and let the student go...I'm not sure I would have made the same decision (NorthCentral, Professor C).

These types of experiences shape the way the faculty view the students who struggle to pass their defense. In these cases, the faculty members are willing to take the extra step to ensure students complete their dissertations.

The discussion regarding dissertations that struggle to pass the dissertation defense centered more on the faculty reactions to the departmental politics of appropriate responses than a discussion about why and how students failed during their dissertation defense. When this happens to a student, most participants see it as a reflection on the dissertation chair, the committee, and the program -- and less about the student and his or her shortcomings. Most participants stated that the committee chair is expected to release the dissertation only when it is ready to meet the norm within that program. Then the dissertation committee members review the dissertation before the defense and have time to raise any doubts before the defense begins. Finally students have little influence or control until after the committee accepts the dissertation and signs off on its completion. What the participants did not discuss was the various reasons why the breakdown in communication takes place so that students are not stopped before these events unfold during the defense.

Themes of the study

There are four unique themes that span across the five campuses. The themes are identified from document analysis and analyzing the interviews from each campus. The four themes are listed below and what follows is a full description of each theme.

- 1) Time is an issue in completing the doctoral dissertation
- 2) There is little or no difference in doctoral training for the PhD and EdD
- 3) Faculty use the same terminology for different dissertations
- 4) Faculty treat EdD and PhD students the same

Theme One: Time is the issue in completing the doctoral dissertation

It is obvious that time is an issue in completing the PhD and EdD dissertation. However, having sufficient time is not the only issue. Equally important is how the faculty identify with the use of time, both their own time and the student's time. How faculty perceive time is as important as whether that students have time and use time wisely to complete their dissertation. What follows is an analysis how faculty view their use of time (or lack of use of time) when mentoring doctoral dissertations.

A student's time on the dissertation

Time is a theme when faculty describe the range in quality of a dissertation. PhD and EdD dissertations that are exceptional are seen by faculty as taking time to complete and those students who have that time to dedicate to the completion of an exceptional dissertation. It is not enough for a student to have the ability to write an exceptional dissertation, the student must have the time to do so. Professor C at Southeast: "The characteristics (of an exceptional dissertation for either degree) were that the student wasn't trying to get out in the shortest amount of time." Time is also a common theme when faculty describe average dissertations, stating that average dissertations don't have the time to strengthen their research. Professor C at Midwest: Problems (of average dissertations are) were the ability of the students to address their problem, define their

research problems...*time* to work on it...technically they are sound, but they are not enough."

Spending time with students

Time is also a theme when faculty describe their interactions with students. Doctoral students need time to interact with faculty so that the faculty mentor/student mentee relationship is able to unfold. During that time, the student will learn to discuss their writing projects with faculty and students, work on their writing, and learn about the academic discipline. Southeast, Professor D: "I have a student who was in an off campus cohort and has spent the last year and a half in the full time, on campus cohort and the difference I see in her over that period of time is short of remarkable." Faculty often struggle with part-time students who do not or can not engage in these activities. Again, Professor D at Southeast: "When you live 100 miles away and going to weekend courses, trying to do your job during the week and stuff...I don't think you absorb the kinds of things and have time to really reflect the way you do when you are here full time."

Faculty use of time

Participants also describe the theme of time for their own use. Participants' use of time is important to them, so when they have to spend their time mentoring students beyond what is expected, they perceive that as a negative experience. When participants have difficulty with a doctoral dissertation, it is a struggle because the dissertation requires the faculty member to use additional time to mentor the student to completion. Professor A at FarEast provides an example of mentoring the writing process: "You can spend a lot of time just cleaning up the language. It could be a great topic that is well researched and could be poorly written."

How faculty perceive their use of time when mentoring doctoral dissertations and how faculty perceive student's use of time is one theme derived from this study. The second theme deals with the doctoral training provided by these programs.

Theme Two: There is little difference in doctoral training for the PhD and EdD

The data analysis revealed very little or no difference in the structure of PhD and EdD programs. The programs all offered their PhD and EdD programs with high similar expectations for coursework, exams and the dissertation. The structure of the dissertation also possessed little differences between the two degree designations. What follows is a more in depth analysis of these two areas of doctoral program structure: coursework and dissertation.

Coursework Structure

Data analysis of the program's admission and degree requirements revealed similar structures for the PhD and EdD programs. Each of the five programs require the same number of core courses for the PhD and the EdD degree, require similar residency requirements for both degrees and most require the same number of dissertation hours for both degrees. Four of the five programs require the same number of total credit hours for both degrees. What little difference exists resides in the location where the courses are offered and in the research requirement. Three of the programs offer courses in multiple locations, but the courses offered off the main campus are for the EdD students. In addition, only one program has the same research course requirement for both degrees. Three other programs require PhD students to take three more credit hours and only one program required a significant difference in required research courses, with the PhD students taking an additional 10 credit hours. Doctoral students who completed the

coursework were given their comprehensive exams. Students who passed their exams are considered doctoral candidates with the dissertation as the final requirement for the doctoral degree.

Structure of a dissertation

Based on the analysis of the program requirements and through the interviews, a key sub-theme is the identical structure for dissertations in both degree categories. This study found that the basic structure for a doctoral dissertation includes a statement of the problem with research questions, a review of the literature, a methodology section, the results or findings, and a conclusion with a discussion of the findings and need for future research. The programs have a similar structure for both types of dissertations (PhD and EdD). The minor differences in the dissertation are found within the discussion of research methodology. As previously stated, most of the programs require additional research courses for the PhD dissertation. This is due to a perceived difference in the type of research required. Three of the programs make mention of using action research in the EdD dissertations, but neither program offered methodology coursework or even a working definition of action research in their program information. Most of the participants stated that their PhD dissertations tended to be more quantitative and their EdD dissertations tended to be more qualitative. Yet there was no methodology requirement for either dissertation and many participants identified both the PhD and EdD dissertations as using either methodology (qualitative and quantitative).

The fact that the two types of dissertations are structurally similar is remarkable as the participants either identify differences in the purpose of the two degrees or they state an interest in developing differences between the two degrees. This results in a

situation where the students experience similar structures, but the faculty expect different results. The next theme will develop this idea more fully.

Theme Three: Faculty use the same terminology for different degrees

In analyzing the data from the graduate programs and the interviews, it can be surmised that the faculty participants (and the graduate programs) use the same terminology to discuss the two different degrees. As stated earlier, the participating programs show little difference in the structure of the degree programs. Faculty also use the terms in describing both degree dissertations. What follows is a analysis of when faculty use the same terms for different degrees.

Purpose: Establish a career

The participants describe one of the purposes of both dissertations is to establish the student's career. For the PhD dissertation, students wish to establish a research career at another university in a faculty position or as a professional researcher with another organization. For the EdD dissertation, student often times wish to enhance, not establish their current administrative career. These are two different types of careers and the students pursuing these two degree programs often times have very different career interests and objectives. Establish one professional career at a different location with very organization is different than enhancing a already established professional career. Students with established careers may not wish to fully socialize themselves into an academic discipline that will have little meaning after their dissertation is complete.

Expectation: Dissertation that produces a publication

One of the descriptions that many participants identified was the expectation that dissertations (especially exceptional ones) would yield a publication. The publication of a

dissertation reflects well on the student's research and is also, in part, a reflection on the student's mentor. When discussing PhD dissertations, participants identified an individual dissertation, the dissertation topic and if the dissertation resulted in either a book (rarely) or an journal article (more common). When discussing EdD dissertations, participants identified an individual dissertation, the dissertation topic and if the dissertation *was publishable*. It was evident that the EdD dissertations yielded fewer publications than the PhD dissertations. One reason could be that when asked about publishing in journals for the practice of education administration, only a few faculty members could name any journal that would be interested in this topic.

Faculty participants clearly use the same terms when working with PhD and EdD students. What follows is an analysis of the final theme: Faculty treat EdD and PhD students the same.

Theme Four: Faculty treat EdD and PhD students the same

Faculty participants describe the interactions with the PhD and EdD students in very similar ways. Based on the faculty descriptions and the data analysis, it appears that in the five programs, the majority of PhD students attend on a full time basis and the majority of the EdD students attend on a part time basis. This greatly impacts how much or little the student are able to participate and interact with faculty and other students. How faculty discuss the various types of quality in the PhD and EdD dissertations is one example of treating EdD and PhD students the same.

Exceptional dissertations are seen as rare for the PhD dissertation and even rarer for the EdD dissertation. There are both described in similar fashion: "time with faculty", "time to write", "outstanding theoretical framework" and "advance the knowledge in the

field." One program even stated that an exceptional EdD dissertation should look a lot like a PhD dissertation. Finally, all of the participants described the exceptional PhD and EdD dissertation with great personal pride. Ironically, the participants also gave personal examples of a failing PhD or EdD dissertation. Again, it was a personal involvement for both types of dissertations. Finally, the descriptions for the average PhD and EdD dissertations were similar. The participants highlighted students' lack of time to write, their lack of a experience with academic writing, and discussed an overall lack of enthusiasm for the students' dissertations. For both dissertations, there were no personal examples offered for either degree. What impact this has on the student and their education experience will be addressed more fully in the concluding chapter.

Conclusion

There are similar descriptions and themes across the participating campuses on how faculty view the purpose, expectations and quality of EdD and PhD education administration dissertations. The final chapter will compare the findings of this study to the existing research and offer suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

This final chapter summarizes the findings from this study, relates the findings to other research studies in the literature, provides an interpretation of the data collected, and draws implications and recommendations for future policy and practice in education.

Summary of Findings: Descriptions and themes in the literature

The PhD and EdD in education administration can provide the recipient with an opportunity to contribute to the research literature in the field and provide professional career opportunities. The findings of this study defined the purpose, expectations and qualities of PhD and EdD dissertations in education administration. The findings demonstrate that while notable differences exist between PhD and EdD dissertations, most of the participants identify similarities in the purpose, expectations, and quality of EdD and PhD dissertations.

Purpose: Two dissertations with not so unique purposes

The themes and discussions from this study support the findings of other, recent studies that state that education administration has two dissertations with not so unique purposes (Carnegie, 2008; McClintock, 2005). The participants in one program (FarEast) mentioned that they encourage both PhD and EdD dissertation advisees to consider both academic research and education administration careers. Rather than distinguish between the overall purposes of both degrees, the participants emphasized their correspondence, as both degrees could prepare students for either career choice. This analogous nature of both degrees was previously identified in Labaree (2004) and, according to Labaree, leads to problems as schools of education try to train both education researchers and education administrators in a similar fashion.

Expectations: Getting what you expected

Some programs (FarEast and MidAtlantic) have highly similar expectations for both degrees. Other programs (NorthCentral, Midwest and Southeast) have, over time, struggled to define unique expectations for the PhD dissertations and EdD dissertations and have, as a program, clearly defined their expectations for both distinct dissertations. NorthCentral Professor C: "In the field as a whole, EdD dissertation expectations are poorly defined. The practitioner's degree is poorly defined in a lot of places. In our institution, the difference is the quality of the dissertation; with a PhD expected to have an impact beyond the practitioner's world and we want the EdD to have an impact on practice."

Recent studies (Carnegie, 2008; Levine, 2005) have identified these unclear expectations and offered different solutions. Levine (2005) stated that the EdD should turn into an executive MBA type degree, whereas Carnegie (2008) looks to refine the EdD degree. Two of the programs (Midwest, Southeast) are already participating in the Carnegie Project and have begun to make changes to their programs. It remains unknown if other education administration programs will follow suit and mimic the efforts advocated by either the Levine or Carnegie initiatives.

Educating researchers and practitioners: different purposes with similar degrees

Two key themes of this study are (1) that faculty treat EdD and PhD students in much the same way and (2) there is little difference in doctoral training for the PhD and EdD.

The literature characterizes education administration as a field of study that is struggling to meet the demands of producing knowledge, training scholars and -- at the same time -- training future professionals in education administration (Baker, Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, 2004; Labaree, 2004; Levine, 2005; McClintock, 2005). In theory, the two degrees (PhD and EdD) are expected to overlap, yet offer distinct niches for each one (Richardson, 2006). Participants (and their graduate programs) clearly struggle with the task of defining their niche for training researchers and training practitioners. For the PhD, the struggle includes defining mechanisms to ensure that the student receives the training needed to become a researcher in education. For the EdD, the challenge lies in training the student in the use of research as a practitioner in education. Most participants and their programs state the two purposes for their two degrees similarly, while a few participants and one program contend both degrees could prepare someone for either career.

Transition to Independence: Publishing as part of the doctoral training process

Dissertation research may be published in either the form of a book or one or more journal articles. However, the majority of participants stated that they did not expect either their PhD or EdD students to publish the results of the dissertation research project. Twelve of the eighteen participants did not expect PhD students to publish their dissertation research.. All but two (16) of the participants did not expect their EdD students to publish their dissertation research. The expectation that graduates will not publish the results of a dissertation raises the question of how, then, does the research inform practice or the research literature? It is unclear how participants expect the student's dissertation research to contribute to the field or enhance their research career if it is not published.

Labaree (2004) raises the issue of the lack of publication of dissertation research, and cites this as an example of how education administration fails to properly prepare educational researchers. Further, two different studies found that doctoral students who publish during their career have a higher overall satisfaction level with the doctoral training than students who do not publish (Golde & Dore, 2001; Nettles & Millet, 2006). As previously stated, students struggle often times with the transition during the doctoral dissertation process and publishing with a faculty member is an activity that could aid students in this transition (Miller, 2006). The lack of concern over the publication of dissertation research does a disservice to both the student and the field of study.

Faculty judging dissertations: clarifying purpose and expectations

Two studies (Mullins & Kiley, 2002; Winter, Griffiths & Green, 2000) reported that the characteristics of a poor quality or failing dissertation are a lack of coherence and originality, weak or confused methodological sections, and a lack of intellectual grasp or confidence of the material. Lovitts (2007) found that dissertations that were of good or passing quality were coherent, engaged in the literature with well-structured comments, and possessed critical reflection and intellectual grasp of the material. Findings from this study are consistent with this research. Program participants stated that average/poorer dissertations lacked coherence, possessed a weak theoretical framework, and struggled with the significance of the topic being addressed. "Difficulties arise in the ability of the students (PhD and EdD) to address their problem, to define their research problems...technically they are sound, but they are not enough" (Midwest, Professor C). This is true for both PhD and EdD dissertations, with participants citing more cases of

weak dissertations in the EdD category. This may be due in part to fewer faculty contact hours for EdD students than for students in PhD programs.

Exceptional dissertations as defined in the literature

This study demonstrates that participants describe exceptional PhD and EdD dissertations utilizing similar terminology and were identified and described in very personal ways. They identified high quality PhD and EdD dissertations as those that explored unique research topics and used imaginative research methods. "An exceptional dissertation starts with an exceptional topic" (FarEast, Professor C); "...an (exceptional dissertation does) does the deep analysis of the data...not just the basic level" (Southeast, Professor B). Simpkins's study (1987) found that reviewers expect a dissertation to look for an independent line of questioning and to take an imaginative approach. An independent line is evidenced by a doctoral candidate's use of independent reasoning when reviewing ideas, identification of trends, drawing their own conclusions in the assessment of a conceptual model, researching the method utilized or arguing for a position (Simpkins, 1987). The findings from the Simpkins study and this study are similar in that both identified specific, similar tasks in order to complete an outstanding dissertation.

Quality: Average dissertations -- not enough face time with faculty

Unlike the exceptional dissertation, students completing average dissertations were not described in any personal way. They were described as neither really bright nor really poor students. Rather, average dissertation students were described in relation to the parts of the dissertation or by the student's general deficiencies (lack of writing skills/lack of research experience). Many times these students require the most faculty

time to both mentor and direct to complete the dissertation. If 5% of the doctoral candidates are exceptional and 5% are failing, that leaves 90% of doctoral dissertations as average.

Little personal description of these students -- who complete the bulk of the dissertations (average) -- was provided. One possible explanation of this might be the large mentoring loads expected for faculty in the education administration programs (Labaree, 2004). These large advising loads often lead faculty to over look deficiencies in a student's dissertation in order to preserve the efficiency of mentoring a large group of students. Recent studies have found that as time with mentor increased so did students' satisfaction with their doctoral training (Golde & Dore, 2001; Lovitts, 2001; Nettles & Millet, 2006).

Implications: the future of doctoral training in education administration

This study both affirms the existing research on doctoral training in education administration, and reflects the research that demonstrates that the field of education administration is struggling to ensure the quality of doctoral dissertation research. Further, it identifies similar expectations purposes for these two doctoral degrees. What follows is a discussion about the expected and unexpected aspects of the results of this study, and an indication of areas for future research and policy implications.

What was expected: A confirmation of existing research

As stated previously, this study confirms existing research on the quality of doctoral dissertations and faculty views regarding dissertations. In their description of average dissertations, participants identified dissertations that were lacking in respect to one portion of the dissertation or another. Some participants discussed the notion that

PhD students did not have the sufficient skills (writing or research) to complete a better dissertation, while EdD students lacked the necessary time to commit to completing a better than average dissertation. The current research states that average dissertations in education administration are insufficient in one or more parts of the dissertation (Levine, 2005; Labaree, 2004). And both of these studies discussed either student preparation or a student's lack of time as issues when completing a dissertation.

What was not expected: Use of action research as a research method

Three of the programs discussed using action research as a research method research model for EdD dissertation. Action research encourages the researcher to incorporate the research participants to be active members in the design, planning and implementation of a research project. Use of this type of research methodology is a break from the traditional models of dissertation research in education. As the Carnegie Project on the Doctorate and other national efforts push toward reform of doctoral training of education practioners, the study might provide further evidence to help reframe the traditional EdD doctoral training. If that is the case, action research may be one approach to address this need.

Policy Implications: Addressing a need for education practice and research

This study provides rich descriptions of how faculty have similar expectations for the students completing both the EdD and PhD. Yet the current research shows a need to address education practice and education research with separate expectations (Carnegie, 2008; Labaree, 2004; Levine, 2005). Recent efforts are encouraging schools of education to retool the EdD degree by either asking for a new "MBA type-degree for education practioners" (Levine, 2005) or a redesign of the current EdD degree (Carnegie, 2008).

Labaree (2004) has stated that since the EdD and PhD are different degrees, they should have different purposes. This study found at least one participant with a similar view: "They are different degrees (the EdD and PhD), so they should have different dissertations" (Midwest, Professor C).

One way to approach this difference should be to move increasingly toward two distinct types of doctoral degrees. The EdD, or education doctoral degree, should be decoupled from the doctoral dissertation. This study has demonstrated that in spite of faculty expectations that the dissertations be similar, the students' are expected to accomplish very different things with their research and the skills gained from completing this research. Removing the expectation that EdD students need to complete a traditional dissertation in order to complete the doctoral degree is a first step towards retooling education practioners with the research tools that they need in the practice of education administration.

In addition to changes in the EdD, the expectation for PhD training needs to be addressed as well. Richardson (2006) describes the knowledge, skills and habits of mind that education researchers should learn to incorporate in their endeavors. These include:

- having knowledge of the field;
- thinking theoretically and critically;
- frame fruitful problems;
- see research as socially situated;
- join researchable problems to appropriate methods of inquiry;
- collect and analyze data;
- and communicate with various audiences about research.

When discussing PhD dissertation research, faculty participants described PhD dissertations as having two of these traits (joining researchable problems to appropriate methods of inquiry and thinking theoretically and critically). They also discussed that

PhD students who struggle often times do so because they are not sufficiently trained to complete the research required for the PhD degree. This study demonstrates that education administration graduate programs need to ensure that students complete sufficient research methodology coursework and that this coursework addresses the issues raised by Richardson (2006) research.

Future research implications: need for research about teaching research

I think that probably some of the PhD dissertations will be transferable to the journal articles...we would be doing the student a disservice if they did not finish the dissertation with the potential or realization of a few journal articles. As with a EdD, not that they can't be turned into a publications, but that it is more relevant...that's my own personal bias...in my field I'm expected to publish in journals that are not read by principals and superintendents, so how much impact is that in the field (Midwest, Professor A).

One of the implications for future research from this study relates to the pedagogy of training students in education research. Dissertation research is, for many students, the only time that doctoral students in education administration will conduct a research project. Completing a dissertation is a great way to learn how to understand and conduct research, but most individuals do not do something once, and then never do it again. This highlights the question of how faculty teach students to conduct research. What types of research skills are needed by education researchers? What is the evidence that good teaching of research works? For example, can this be shown by looking at dissertations that win research awards? Understanding how to best instruct and develop new education researchers could have multiple benefits for the field of education administration.

A second question is: how can academia best train practioners to use research in education administration? Is the answer as simple as teaching practioners to be able to read and understand research, as suggested by one participant? (FarEast, Faculty C).

What research skills do current education practitioners use and how best can those skills be provided to those students in an EdD doctoral program that seeks to prepare future practitioners? Is there a way to incorporate practitioners into research training of students, much like the senior level medical residents training the first year medical residents? More studies that address the research training of education practitioners is needed.

This study interviewed participants who were tenured or tenure track, with the majority of the participants tenured professors. Further research is needed comparing younger, untenured professors to senior, tenured professors and their expectations on doctoral dissertations. In addition, this study did not compare faculty that are considered active researchers versus faculty that has less research activity. Do faculty views on the dissertation vary among productive and non-productive faculty in education administration?

Conclusion

This study's conclusion is that faculty in education administration programs explicitly state the purpose and expectations of doctoral dissertations for the PhD and EdD programs. Participants stated similar expectations for the two different degree programs. This is similar to the findings in Labaree (2005) and Carnegie (2008). This study also found similar findings to recent research discussing high quality dissertations (Simpkins, 1987; Lovitts, 2007) and recent research on average dissertations (Labaree, 2005).

Final thought: Writing a dissertation about dissertations

It was both interesting and informative to write a dissertation about how faculty view dissertations. As stated earlier, I have had previous discussions with faculty about

what constitutes a good dissertation in other disciplines, but, prior to this project, I had never discussed the characteristics of a good dissertation in my own field of education. Going through the process of interviewing faculty about dissertations, I found myself considering how faculty might review this dissertation. In analyzing the respondents' views regarding the various qualities of a dissertation, I sometimes found the lines between the dual identities of a researcher of education doctoral dissertations and of a student completing an education doctoral dissertation became confused. In the end, the familiar saying still holds true: "A good dissertation is a finished dissertation."

Table 8: Participating Institutions

Institution	Southeast	FarEast	Midwest
Total Enrollment	46,000	14,400	28,000
SOE Enrollment	1,800	1500	3,200
PGRM enrollment	267	278	211
Participants	2F, 1A, 1a	3F	2F,1A,1a
Research	Intensive	Extensive	Intensive
Documents	USNWR Data University Web sites	USNWR Data University Web sites	USNWR Data University Web sites

Institution	NorthCentral	MidAtlantic
Total Enrollment	50,000	20,000
SOE Enrollment	5,300	605
PGRM enrollment	391	187
Participants	2F, 1A, 1a	2F,1a
Research	Intensive	Intensive
Documents	USNWR Data University Web sites	USNWR Data University Web sites

F=Full Professor, A=Associate Professor, a=Assistant Professor

Table 9: Admission Requirements for each institution

	Southeast		NorthCentral		Midwest	
	PhD EdD		PhD EdD		PhD EdD	
Professional Experience	Yes (3 yrs)	Yes (3 yrs)	No	No	No	Yes
Master's Degree	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
GPA	B or higher	B or higher	3.0 UG 3.5 MS	3.0 UG 3.5 MS	3.0 UG 3.5 MS	3.0 UG 3.5 MS
GRE	440 V 530 Q	No minimum	500 V 500 Q & 4.5 A	500 V 500 Q & 4.5 A	1000 combined score	1000 combined score
References	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
English Proficiency	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Possess Administrative Certification	No	No	No	No	No	No
Other						CO-OP program attend classes at two campuses

	MidAtlantic		FarEast	
	PhD	EdD	PhD	EdD
Professional Experience	No	Yes	No	Yes
Master's Degree	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
GPA	Yes	Yes (3.5)	Yes	Yes (3.5)
GRE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
References	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
English Proficiency	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Possess Administrative Certification	No	No	No	No

Table 10: Degree Requirements for each institution

	Southeast		NorthCentral		Midwest	
	PhD	EdD	PhD	EdD	PhD	EdD
Program Core Courses	30 credit hours	30 credit hours	18 credit hours	18 credit hours	46 credit hours	46 credit hours
Campus Residency	1 yr	1 yr	None	3 yrs of FT study	36 credit hrs	34 credit hours
Research Courses	22 credit hours	12 credit hours	12 credit hours	15 credit hours	6 credit hours	6 credit hours
Elective Courses	14 credit hours	21 credit hours	18 credit hours	12 credit hours	0 credit hours	0 credit hours
Dissertation Hours	24 credit hours	24 credit hours	24 credit hours	12 credit hours	12 credit hours	12 credit hours
Total for Degree	90 credit hours	90 credit hours	72 credit hours	72 credit hours	60 beyond master's	60 beyond masters
Other		Clinical experience			Practicum	No practicum
	MidAtlantic				FarEast	
	PhD	EdD	PhD	EdD	PhD	EdD
Program Core Courses	54 credit hours		54 credit hours		18 credit hours	18 credit hours
Campus Residency	One year; 36 hours in residence		One year; 36 hours in residence		None	3 yrs of FT study
Research Courses	12 credit hours		6 credit hours		12 credit hours	15 credit hours
Elective Courses	0 credit hours		0 credit hours		18 credit hours	12 credit hours
Dissertation Hours	12 credit hours		12 credit hours		24 credit hours	12 credit hours
Total for Degree	72 credit hours beyond Bachelor's		72 credit hours beyond Bachelor's		72 credit hours	72 credit hours
Other	Teaching requirement		6 credit hours practicum			

Table 11: Descriptions within each Campus

	Southeast	NorthCentral	Midwest	MidAtlantic	FarEast
PhD Purpose	Career preparation for academia	Learning process that takes a dissertation research project to completion	More broad study, research questions and focus is in on the study	Add to the research base, theoretical constructs	Advance knowledge in the discipline, professional development, learn how to do research
EdD Purpose	Career preparation for existing career	Career opportunity and support current/future administrative practice	Reflective leadership paper, research prepares for leadership position	Contribution to the theory of practice;	Advance knowledge in the field, professional development, learn how to do research
PhD Expectations	Theoretical	High quality and contribute to the theory, assist their professional work	Solid theoretical framework, publishable; better than a EdD dissertation	Write a scholarly piece that draws upon coursework to create a sound study. Similar expectation to the EdD	Complete the overall dissertation to the best of their ability. Use mostly field-based qualitative studies
EdD Expectations	Applied	Field based research that creates a field based study; assist their professional work	Research study about the field ; less expected than the EdD	Scholarly piece that informs practice. Overall similar expectation to PhD	Complete the overall dissertation to the best of their ability. Use mostly field-based qualitative studies

Table 11: Descriptions within each Campus (cont'd)

	Southeast	NorthCentral	Midwest	MidAtlantic	FarEast
PhD Exceptional	Time with faculty and time to write; example of particular dissertation	Complex in their theoretical framework and research methodology. Focused on individual dissertation	Novel approach to an idea, research is theory grounded	Exceptional sections of the dissertation and results section was well written	Topic of the dissertation, ability of the student and cited a specific examples Few, if any available.
EdD Exceptional	Time to write a dissertation; example of a dissertation	Complex in their theoretical framework and research methodology. Focused on individual dissertation.	Looks like a traditional PhD dissertation; data will inform the practice; how passionate they are about the research	Exceptional sections of the dissertation and results section was well written	Topic of the dissertation, ability of the student and cited a specific example to highlight exceptional dissertations; few if any available
PhD Average	Not having time or personal characteristics/capacity to complete an exceptional dissertation	One or more parts of the dissertation does not fully work out; adequate theoretical framework; writing skills	Not enough, there was not enough time to write the research, not enough covered in the study	Topics are usually not well researched, difficult to identify	More time to write (students), more mentoring time (chairs) and more time to complete the dissertation
EdD Average	Not having time or personal characteristics/capacity to complete an exceptional dissertation	One or more parts of the dissertation does not fully work out; adequate theoretical framework; writing skills	Not enough literature reviewed, not enough in the student's writing skills	EdD students are not full time so they want to do as little as possible, topics are not well researched.	More time to write, more mentoring time (chairs) and more time to complete the dissertation

Table 11: Descriptions within each Campus (cont'd)

	Southeast	NorthCentral	Midwest	MidAtlantic	FarEast
PhD Failing	Dissertations rarely fail as chairs are also responsible for their completion	Discussion mentions individual dissertation; members get involved	Rarely fail, as students leave before getting there	Role of the dissertation committee ensures that dissertations brought to defense rarely fail.	Dissertations that make to defense do not fail.
EdD Failing	Dissertations rarely fail as chairs are also responsible for their completion	Discussion mentions individual dissertation; members get involved	Usually involve working closely with the student until completion	Role of the dissertation committee ensures that dissertations brought to defense rarely fail.	Dissertations that make to defense do not fail.

Interview Protocol

Below are the questions used for each interview:

Expectations and Purpose

What are the expectations of PhD dissertations in education administration?

What are the expectations of the EdD dissertation in education administration?

Purpose

What is the purpose of PhD dissertation in education administration?

What is the purpose of the EdD dissertation in education administration?

Quality of the dissertation

Exceptional

I'd like you to think about an exceptional PhD dissertation or dissertations you mentored to completion. Tell me what made those dissertations so exceptional? What are the characteristics of an exceptional PhD dissertation?

I'd like you to think about an exceptional EdD dissertation or dissertations you mentored to completion. Tell me what made those dissertations so exceptional? What are the characteristics of an exceptional EdD dissertation?

Average

Now think about an EdD dissertation that was average. What made it average?

What about an average PhD dissertation. What made it average?

Unacceptable

Finally, think about a PhD or EdD dissertation that was unacceptable or that you didn't pass. What made it unacceptable?

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