

A STRONG WIND OF CHANGE: WAYS IN WHICH DOCTORAL PROGRAMS ARE SLOWLY ADJUSTING THEIR SAILS

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ABSTRACT: *This study explored the perceptions, structure and their impact on the final thesis of the EdD and the PhD (Education) and allowed a comparison of the UK and US. This report focuses on the qualitative component of a mixed methods study. EdD Program leaders in the UK and US were interviewed, and the transcripts were analysed allowing categories to be developed. The Donabedian model of structure, process and outcomes organised the findings. The main findings were: the EdD and PhD were perceived as equivalent qualifications; the main difference was the lack of a taught component in the PhD (Education) in the UK. No clear pattern was identified in the structure of the final dissertation and an examination of the final thesis across UK and US programmes was one of the final recommendations*

KEYWORDS: Doctoral Education, Thesis, Professional Doctorate

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This research study aimed to explore the differences in the EdD and PhD (Education) programs across faculties in the UK and the USA. The researchers from either side of the Atlantic wished to understand better faculty perceptions of the EdD compared to those of the PhD; the differences in the taught component (stage 1) of the two programs; and the differences in the final dissertation. The first phase of the study was a survey which examined institutions across the UK and the US and this was followed by a series of qualitative interviews completed by program leaders of the EdD in the United States and the UK. This paper is based on the qualitative aspect of the study.

The first EdD program was started in the United States in 1921 at Harvard University, and many other universities followed suit and offered EdD programs. Education departments wished to gain autonomy from Social Sciences Faculties and saw the offering of their own doctoral programs as a way of gaining autonomy, (Cremin, 1978). The EdD was thought to be for the scholarly professional and the PhD for professional scholars (Anderson 1983).

Until the early 1990s, the PhD (DPhil in some universities) was the main doctoral research qualification in the UK (Quality Assurance Agency, QAA, 2015). However, in the last decade of the twentieth century there was a proliferation of doctoral programs on both sides of the Atlantic. The first professional education doctorate (EdD) was established in 1992, at the University of Bristol and now an EdD in education is the UK's most common professional doctoral program (Scourfield, 2010).

Between the years 1999-2000 and 2009-2010, the number of doctoral degrees granted in the United States grew from 106,000 to 140,000, an increase of 40 per cent (NCES, 2012). The expansion of doctoral programs in education and the high productivity of terminal degrees has

fuelled discussions and debates about “the nature, the similarities, and the differences in programs” (Anderson, 1983, p. 55), particularly those in educational administration and leadership. A growing literature on the education doctorate includes recommendations for making greater distinctions between the curricula and culminating experiences of the two degrees (Andrews & Grogan, 2005; Deering, 1998; Silver, 1978; Toma, 2002; Townsend, 2002), particularly the dissertation model, research methodology, and capstone artefact produced by EdD candidates (Archbald, 2008; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2005; Riehl, Larson, Short, & Reitzug, 2000).

It was against the background of knowledge production and universities making stronger links with the professions and industry that the Doctor of Education was developed in the UK whereas in the US it was more about options and choice at the graduate level i.e., focus on data-driven decision making more than empirical research methods, and best practices more than theoretical debates. In both the UK and USA the literature puts the EdD firmly in the Professional Doctorate camp. Although the Professional Doctorate covers a range of programs, many have similarities to the traditional PhD (Brown & Cooke, 2010). In 1994, Gibbons et al., acknowledged the changing nature of knowledge production and subsequently proposed that there were typologies of knowledge, which they referred to as Mode 1 Knowledge, and Mode 2 Knowledge’ (Mode 1 being a uni-disciplinary or “pure” type and Mode 2 as knowledge generated from practice with strong applied focused). When applied to doctoral programs the PhD (Education) was characterised by Mode 1 knowledge and the EdD with Mode 2.

Classifying knowledge is profoundly complex reflecting constant power struggles within the field of education over what knowledge is most worth knowing – theoretical or practical -- and which practices are worth most pursuing—research, teaching, or practice. Furthermore, one can say that conflict over the EdD and its practical aspects reflect struggles and challenges made to the field of higher education’s legitimacy by the employment field, which constantly seeks to gain predominance over the education field by forcing it to abide by its (often economic) interests (Baez, 2002).

Classification of Mode 1 & 2 knowledge reflects the dualisms between vocational and academic education, between theory and practice, and between knowledge professors in universities and in other organizations. This requires universities to reconceptualize how research is taught and applied. Maintaining the integrity of the doctorate while being open to innovation, change, and new directions is perhaps the biggest challenge facing doctoral education (Holley, 2016).

Although the professional practice doctorate has been nurtured in different institutional and national contexts over an extended period of time, shared expectations do exist related to its key features traits associated with the doctorate include critical and independent thinking, strong communication skills, a depth of knowledge related to the discipline, and the ability to generate and apply new knowledge (Nerad & Heggelund, 2011). More recently identified traits include the need for translational or soft skills, and the ability to work as part of a team (Holley, 2016). The variability of the final product is directly related to current doctoral program variability. The Center for Innovation and Research in Graduate Education (CIRGE) and the implementation of the Bologna Process, for example, have urged faculty members and administrators to identify common elements and competencies associated with a doctoral degree to better support assessment efforts, comparative initiatives and students’ progression throughout graduate studies (Nerad, Trzyna, and Heggelund 2008).

In both the UK and the US these issues have been addressed at a national level: in the UK, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA, 2014) produced outcomes for the awarding of a doctoral degree. Students must have demonstrated:

1. The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication
2. A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
3. The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
4. A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

1. Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
2. Continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And holders will have:

- The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

A 2016 report by Careers Research and Advisory Center (CRAC) for England's Higher Education Funding Council found professional doctorates to be distinctive from the PhD on the basis of their:

- Purpose – PDs aim to develop the capacity to make a significant original contribution to professional practice through research. They are targeted at experienced professionals and practitioners working in a professional context and, therefore, are a research-based element of professional training and/or development of practitioners.
- Research focus – The research within a PD directly relates to, and is rooted in, the professional practice of the candidate, and its output should not only contribute to knowledge but have a significant impact on professional practice.

Structure – PD programs are more structured than many PhD programs, with taught components as well as supervised and cohort-based experiences. However, this distinction is reducing with the development of other structured doctoral programs, especially collaborative and cohort-based doctoral training programs (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2016, p.iii-iv).

In the US The American Education Research Association (AERA) and the National Academy of Education (NAEd) jointly conducted a systematic assessment of education research doctorates to improve the education research doctorate. Additionally, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) released its Taskforce on the Professional Doctorate (2007), which described the professional doctorate as the highest degree for the “preparation for the potential transformation of the field of professional practice, just as the PhD represents preparation for the potential transformation of the basic knowledge in a discipline” (p.6). The need to differentiate the two doctoral programs was crucial (Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, and Garabedian, 2006). In 2007, the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED, 2007) was launched to redesign doctoral preparation for professional practitioners. Between 2007-2010 the Consortium developed six principles that serve as a framework for designing professional practice EdD programs:

The Professional doctorate in education:

1. Is framed around questions of equity, ethics, and social justice to bring about solutions to complex problems of practice.
2. Prepares leaders who can construct and apply knowledge to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and communities.
3. Provides opportunities for candidates to develop and demonstrate collaboration and communication skills to work with diverse communities and to build partnerships.
4. Provides field-based opportunities to analyze problems of practice and use multiple frames to develop meaningful solutions.
5. Is grounded in and develops a professional knowledge base that integrates both practical and research knowledge, that links theory with systemic and systematic inquiry.
6. Emphasizes the generation, transformation, and use of professional knowledge and practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A concise literature review was undertaken in order to synthesize established knowledge and to provide key inputs into framing the research and developing the research instrument (survey). By the beginning of the twenty first century many European PhD/DPhil doctoral programs had become more structured as a result of Research Council initiatives, the Bologna Process (European Universities Association (EUA, 2005) and the implementation of the recommendations of ‘SET for Success’ (Roberts, 2002), with greater emphasis on the development of research-specific and transferable skills, in addition to conducting original research. Whereas in the US,

All of which adds complexity to the landscape of doctoral research program provision. Additionally, there was an increasing recognition of the wider role of the university and the relationship with industry and the development of the economy. Partnerships with industry were encouraged and much of the research was around dealing with practical issues and in dealing with “real world” problems. Arguably the generic professional doctorate in the UK is reflective of this new relationship and as such they are based on practical concerns and deal

with work based issues and problems (Usher, 2002). Increasingly, doctoral programs were seen, as well as producing original research and research training as also offering a range of generic and transferable skills. Leading to criticism of the PhD where it seemed that many candidates lacked the generic skills appropriate for the contemporary workplace.

A recurring theme in the literature is the links with industry (which of course can be interpreted in a wider sense to include education and health in the public sector). Mellors-Bourne et al (2016) on the basis of their survey into UK professional doctorate programs and argue that one reason for the proliferation of professional doctorate programs in the UK is that the Ph. D was seen as not meeting the needs of industry. Whereas professional doctorate programs allowed students to develop their practice in the context of their doctoral studies (Costley, 2013). It is against this background that UK a more generic professional doctorate emerged (mainly in Australia and the UK) which Maxwell (2003) referred to as the second-generation professional doctorate, which he defines as:

“ the realities of the workplace, the knowledge and the improvement of the profession and the rigour of the university are being brought together in new relationships.” (Maxwell, 2003:290).

Such programs are generic in nature, involving a focus on practice development and the development of practice. The focus is on Mode 2 knowledge and the commodification of knowledge (Scott, 1997), and the development of practice based knowledge and research (Costley & Aimsby, 2007; Morley & Priest, 1998). Doncaster and Lester, (2002) discuss the professional doctorate as developing capacity in the candidate and by this they mean intellectual thinking, problem, solving, working with people, ethics and integrity and the development and management of change.

In much of the literature there is a clear binary between PhD and the Professional Doctorates. Professional doctorates are seen as being work focused and relevant to the needs of industry; conversely the PhD is seen as preparing the candidate for a role in academia.

Taylor (2008) outlines some of the key differences between the professional Doctorate and the PhD; professional doctorates tend to be cohort based with a structured teaching program. The final project tends to be work based focussed on Mode 2 knowledge production. Additionally, the final product is a demonstration of the development of practice and the evidence may be supplied through the compilation of a portfolio. The professional doctorate, therefore, may require different forms of assessment from the traditional dissertation and an increasing number of programs techniques such as portfolios to assess the final outcome of professional doctorate programs. Scholars such as Winter et al (2000); Murray (2007) and Trafford and Leshem (2009) have attempted to define the doctorate-ness. Winter et al (2000) discuss the qualities expected of dissertation: intelligibility, credibility, efficacy (relevance), originality, viability and ethics. Murray (2003) argues that the doctorateness comes from “research decision, presentation, and coherent argument, quality of writing, outcomes, conclusion and contextualisation. Trafford and Leshem (2009) maintain that the originality comes from a synergy of the individual components making a coherent whole. They also discuss the importance of threshold competences, drawing on the work of Meyer and Land (2006) they define threshold competencies as irreversible, integrative, bonded and potentially troublesome and these are expected to be reflected in the dissertation.

Originality is a central concept in doctoral studies which applies to both professional doctorate programs and the traditional PhD. Wellington (2013) suggests that originality might be met in the following ways:

1. Building new knowledge, e.g. by extending previous work or 'putting a new brick in the wall.'
2. Using original processes or approaches, e.g. applying new methods or techniques to an existing area of study.
3. Creating new syntheses, e.g. connecting previous studies or linking existing theories or previous thinkers.
4. Exploring new implications, for either practitioners, policy makers, or theory and theorists.
5. Revisiting a recurrent issue or debate, e.g. by offering new evidence, new thinking, or new theory.
6. Replicating or reproducing earlier work, e.g. from a different place or time, or with a different sample.

Mellors-Bourne et al (2016) argue that while there are a range of professional doctorate programs and an associated range of titles however they fall into 4 broad groupings: health and social care, education, psychology and business. It is the education strand we are interested in developing in this paper and in particular the similarities and differences of the EdD and the PhD.

Townsend (2002) argues that there is a need for reconfiguration of the EdD and it should more explicit prepare the candidate for practice, at present there is no evidence to suppose the EdD improves practice. Brennan (1998) writing about doctorates in education in Australia maintains that both PhD (Education) and EdD are not typical but as many are not always part time and the PhD is not always seen as an apprenticeship for future academic work. Jones (2013) on the basis of a thematic analysis of 995 papers published in 45 journals on doctoral education identified many issues of relevance pertaining to the EdD against the PhD i.e. links with industry, methodological issues, exam and assessment and flexible delivery. Poole (2012) explored the EdD dissertation, and the perceptions English academics had of the EdD against the PhD. He carried out both a survey and interviews with EdD program leaders and he concluded that the thought processes were similar across the two programs.

It is therefore timely that research is conducted that seeks to understand more about the commonalities and differences between EdD and PhD programs, their approach to research and the application of their research skills to their culminating program product i.e. the dissertation

Research Aims and Approach

The key objectives of this research were to obtain a full picture of professional practice doctorate programs in the UK and the USA. More specific aims included to:

- Examine perceptions of the EdD and PhD programs

- Explore the commonalities and differences of the taught (stage 1) proponent of the programs.
- Investigate the nature of the program's culminating dissertation and the relationship between dissertation product and taught research methods.

The research was designed as a mixed methods study, with activities in two broad strands: a survey of institutions in the UK and USA, and in depth qualitative research with a stratified sample of institutions and programs supported by stakeholder inputs. A literature review was used to synthesize established knowledge. The initial phase of the study was a survey across institutions offering the ED D and/or PhD in education; the results have been reported in Fulton and Storey (2015). The response rate was low but the results indicated that the EdD was viewed as an equal qualification to the PhD and similar methodologies were deemed as appropriate both for the PhD and EdD.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is concerned with in depth exploration of a subject within the natural setting and establishing the meanings “people attached to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values etc.) within their social world” (Snape & Spencer, 2003:3). Following this approach will allow an in depth exploration of the trends which emerged from the survey and in particular to explore the findings which would allow both for greater depth and rational to be established.

In selecting the participants, the principles of theoretical sampling were followed (Glaser & Strauss, 2007) where by respondents were selected on the basis of how they could inform the development of the emerging theoretical ideas; data collection and analysis were simultaneous and the principles of theoretical saturation determined when the data collection would stop. Eight program leaders of EdD programs, all of whom had involvement in PhDs in education, were interviewed. Whereas distinction could be made between intuitions, in keeping with the findings of the survey, no differences were found between the UK and the US.

Interviews were in depth qualitative interviews whereby broad questions allowed themes and areas to be explored. Interviews were either face to face or “skyped”, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. The process of analysis took place simultaneously with the interviews, which allowed the emergent themes to be continually explored. Thematic analysis as outlined by Braum and Clarke (2006); they present a six stage model whereby the transcripts worried and re-read followed by an initial coding of the data, themes are identified and then reviewed, phases 5 and 6 consist of defining and naming themes and writing the final report.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

The broad themes emerging from the data analysis were the Donabedian (1986) framework of: structure, process and outcome.

Structure

A program structure commonality of the EdD was that on both sides of the Atlantic the students were cohort based with groups of students starting at the same time. Programs took a two stage approach with a taught first stage and a formal transition to a research stage in the UK, the PhD did have students starting at the same time but the cohorts had much more of an individual focus and the PhD students did not have the same cohort identity. In the UK once the taught component was complete the students tended to go their own way, so to speak, and work on their projects with their supervisors, at their own pace, this was not always the case in the US where cohorts could work together on a particular project:

So in this program, when I designed the doctoral, the dissertation and the research piece, I asked the students to do one empirical study on an issue within their practice; so, one of them, as I had...and they did it in groups, group work. Inter-...collaborative research, if you will. *US Program Leader*

The formal taught component was present in EdD programs in the UK, and while initial teaching was increasingly part of UK PhD programs this was much less formalised and structured. This could have implications of how it was viewed institutionally and in some institutions; the EdD was viewed as taught program rather than as research degree on the same footing as a PhD.

The ways in which the EdD was viewed could vary across institutions, generally in the US it was seen as practice based degree and as such was aimed at practitioners, who wished to develop their practice rather than become scholars. The taught component was geared towards this and programs were specifically designed to meet the needs of professionals, whereas PhD programs were designed to prepare the candidates become academics/career researchers:

As far as methodology goes, they were introduced in a very cursory way to case study phenomenology, a grounded theory, ethnography, auto ethnography, biography, but we focused primarily on action research and rapid assessment processes they have their **coordinate**, they have their focus, like if they want to do educational leadership, they take an education and governance class. They take a political course, they take a...now they have just introduced to social justice course into it. But that's more ideological than it is focused on practice. I think, the way that it's designed, it could be on a practical basis but it becomes more ideological and political. And they have courses...with leadership, in our EdD, *US Program Leader*.

The type of people who enrolled on the EdD programs both in the US and the UK tended to be professional educators who wished to develop as professional

We're dealing with practitioners, midcareer professionals who are working in practice.... *US Program Leader*

In a nutshell, I would say that our EDD is much more focused on training practitioners to address complex problems of practice in whatever context they happen to be working in. Our PhD students were training to go into the academy. *US Program Leader*

EdDs can have those reasons but they can also have reasons which are much more to do with their professional life, either where they are currently so it can be a sort of -- classic sort of ambitious deputy head or it can just be about staying, holding on to where they are.... *UK Program Leader*

The US training in many programs tended to be more ad hoc and contained research methods courses and also some educational theory based modules which tended to be pre-existing modules used on “masters’ programs”:

The six taught modules, three core compulsory modules and three optional modules. Five of those modules are at level four master level; one is at level five doctorate level. And level five is the dissertation proposal module where they produce their dissertation proposal and the other two core modules are analysing, interpreting and understanding education research. *UK Program Leader*

Interestingly, both in the UK and the US, EdD programs were proving popular with overseas students and some institutions were running summer schools for such candidates.

The average time in the UK and US for Ed D programs is 5-6 years and in the UK the vast majority of students are part time, holding down often senior positions. There is a similar pattern in the US although one program leader did manage an EdD program in such a way that all the candidates completed in a three year time frame

We have, our cohort consisted of – past tense because we graduated them – all of the graduated, we had 25 we admitted, 23 graduated together which is a fabulous graduation rite. *US Program Leader*

If one draws an imaginary continuum with the PhD based on a single discipline research study and the (second generation) Professional Doctorate at the other end of the continuum. The EdD and PhD do not map neatly onto either end. Some PhD (Education) were strongly practice based while Ed d could be theoretically. While it is tempting to take the mode 1 and mode 2 dichotomy and to place the EdD firmly in the mode 2 camp and PhD in the mode 1 camp but it is not quite as straight forward, education is a practice based discipline and as such it draws from a variety of disciplines. PhD can focus on a narrow area of study but many focus on practice issues and similarly the EDD can follow a similar trajectory.

At an institutional level, some institutions saw the both in the US and the UK saw the EdD as a professional work based doctorate whereas others saw it as (other the length) of thesis as exact equivalent to the PhD. This was particularly interesting as in the US, the work based professional doctorate was not established, yet in some institutions was the concept and focus of their EdD programs was entirely about the development of practice. Associated with the practice focus was the nature of the award, despite the proliferation of titles of doctoral awards in the UK, the EdD was standard across Departments of Education. Whereas in the US the award could indicate a practice focus, such as EdD (Leadership)

Process

The outcome of both the EdD and the PhD is to achieve a doctorate and the standard is expected to be the same in both EdD and PhD; and one of the key challenges in the process is to help the individual achieve doctorateness of the final award. This is difficult to define although in the UK the QAA (QAA, 2014) have produced standards for the final award. It was something which the various program teams were very aware of and attempted to ensure that students developed this quality in both EdD and PhD programs. In the EdD in through both the taught component and direct supervision; in the PhD, mainly through supervision the program teams attempted to develop this quality. .

They jump at assessment level from master's to doctoral level.

UK Program Leader

But I think that can work as long as you know that these students are aiming at doctoral level.

US Program Leader

The doctorateness did not seem to be quite so much an issue for the US as this is it did not emerge as a concern whereas the UK program leaders were very concerned and the doctorateness of the programs emerged key issue.

The other key concern was the methodological approach which the candidates would choose as a means of developing their work. The first impressions were that the PhD candidates follow a focused research approach and in the US this was indeed the case and the PhD were given more rigorous grounding in research

However, our PhD students, that degrees that are much more PhD specific tend to have a heavier statistic focus or research methods focus whereas our EdD's, you maybe take one or two research courses and our PhD's have to take a minimum of four *US Program Leader*

The methodological approach taken by the EdD candidates tended to be those focused on practitioner research, although many of the PhD candidates in education also used practitioner research approaches. As one respondent put it.....

and that's how I explain it to people who are interested and I say yeah, you'd expect your research interest of growing out of your professional practice in some way and whatever you research, you'll be able to see the implications for practice. Even if you don't directly put things into that practice, there will be that sense of you can see how this could inform practice. And I was quite happy with that definition for quite a while and then it occurred to me that most of the people doing PhDs in education, they tend to take the same view. They tend to be doing things in a fairly practical way with applications and it's the nature of education and the discipline. So I don't know what the difference is really. *UK Program Leader*

The approach also could be determined by the supervisors available and their methodological preference could dictate the methodological approach taken by many of the students

We have a significant amount of what some of my colleagues would call gold standard research which is Randomised Control Trails and a certain number of students have done that, I think it's more to do with supervisor base profile than it is to do with the type of students. Supervisors sell a positive approach much better than I can, so therefore they attract students to it. It's self-fulfilling. So if you've got members of staff who can talk enthusiastically about it as a way of doing research, then students will follow that, whereas if you've got student's talking about actual research very positively they'll follow that. We've got more people talking about our school trials positively than we have people talking about actual research positively, so that reflects --. *UK Program Leader*

Despite this there was a definite focus on both sides of the Atlantic on practitioner approaches, action research was mentioned by all the respondents as an example of an appropriate approach, but this was not seen as the only methodological approach. Generally people were very open about the approaches which are appropriate for an EdD or PhD project.

One respondent (US) was particularly innovative in the approaches in which he encouraged

They did the qualitative and quantitative, two approaches to research and they have intro and advanced...one intro and one advanced, one intro and once advanced in each one of them, different research approaches. As far as methodology goes, they were introduced in a very cursory way to case study phenomenology, a grounded theory, ethnography, auto-ethnography, biography, but we focused primarily on action research and rapid assessment processes.

Interestingly the issues of reflective practice and auto-ethnography, as an approach, were not discussed in detail. Most respondents said reflective practice was embedded in the program but did not articulate how or give detailed examples, as they did with other methodological approaches. Auto-ethnography was treated in a similar way.

Outcome

The outcome was final dissertation and length and product could vary greatly both between PhD and EdD and across institutions; generally the dissertation for the EdD was shorter in length. This was seen an issue by some respondents and one said that the shorter length meant a lack of depth in the dissertation and that it was difficult for the candidate to explore issues in any level of detail whereas in the PhD with longer wordage issues could be considered in greater detail.

One respondent went on to illustrate this point....

just to give you an example, if I had a student, a PhD student doing a dissertation that's focused on self-efficacy, I would require that student to really thoroughly investigate the work of Bandura, basically all the way back to the beginning of what Bandura did. I would have that person look at alternate models to explain things like self-concept, self-esteem. I would have them talk about how it's different from self-efficacy whereas if I have an EdD student looking at self-efficacy as one of their grounding theories of their dissertation. I would have them only review self-efficacy. I wouldn't have them review any of those other potentially competing theories, for example *US*
Program Leader

Conversely other respondents whilst acknowledging the difference in wordage could see not real different in the quality or depth and one respondent said that other than length there is no difference between the PhD and EdD dissertation and that if titles were omitted they could not be differentiated.

DISCUSSION

A key finding is that the EdD is not a homogenous unit both in terms of the structure of the program and the final thesis, varies across institutions. While the PhD could differ in its focus and orientation generally the final product was the same and in terms of structure and length

was similar in orientation. The EdD differed across institutions with some being akin to the PhD, while others had a stronger focus on practice and thesis requirements which were more reflective of this approach.

A theme which was found throughout the interviews was the equivalence of the EdD and the PhD, while the respondents saw the PhD and EdD as differently focused but nevertheless there was an underlying similarity in that they were both doctoral qualifications with similar outcomes. In particular, the UK respondents were concerned with equivalence and because of this there was a very strong emphasis on the development of the doctoral skills in the candidates, and in program changes were made, in the taught component, to accommodate this. The doctoral skills were not clearly articulated it was more “we will know them when we see them” rather than a clear and articulate account. This was often done through the research methods and preparation for project proposal, in the US, where the PhD has a taught component, there was equivalence in preparation. In the UK where the PhD has no formal taught component, this was a difference in the preparation of candidates. The candidates as they went on to engage in the research process would further develop these skills.

Education is a practice based discipline, and, in particular the EdD thesis is concerned with practice and practice issues. More recently what Maxwell (2003) referred to as the second generation of professional doctorates which involved work-based or practice based research. Freyling (1993), although discussing design research put this rather well when he described design research as either for, into or through design. Lester (2016), in discussing professional doctorates outlined traditional research which explored an area which was of relevance to practice (for practice), research involving one’s own practice area (into) and research about one’s practice (into or through). While none of the respondents explicitly mentioned this typology, they acknowledged that the candidates (and their supervisors) were free to construct their own research design and in both the EdD and PhD programs candidates could and did choose from this range of approaches. While in one EdD program (US) there was very strong focus on issues related to practice but in most programs candidates were free to choose the focus on study and much depended on the supervision available rather than from a position held by the faculty.

As would be expected from this eclectic approach to the project design there was an equally eclectic approach to methodological approaches, it was an issue which was left to the students and their supervisors to address. Respondents did mention approaches such as action research as being methodologies which could be used, but the emphasis was very individual choice rather than methodologies as being particularly appropriate for the development of practice. Similarly, with reflective practice, none of the respondents could articulate the ways in which this was addressed on the taught program they all indicated that it was addressed, always by someone else on another module. So, no clear model of the teaching of reflective practice or reflective practice itself seemed to emerge.

CONCLUSION

This study allowed an examination of the perceptions of the EdD against the PhD, and in general they were perceived as equivalent qualifications. It must be acknowledged that those interviewed were a highly focused sample and all of whom were involved in the delivery of these qualifications. In the UK the EdD programs, all had a taught period of study at the

commencement of the program, while the PhD did not have such a period of study. In the US the EdD and PhD both had a structured study period, they were separate programs and the EdD tended to focus on theoretical issues which were applied to practice whereas the PhD programs were focused on theoretical issues in a purest sense. No clear pattern for the culminating dissertation could be identified and the format of shape and dissertation varied greatly from candidate to candidate, amore in depth exploitation of the range of final dissertation in both EdD and PhD is an area which could be usefully explored in further work.

Implications for Practice and Research and Future Research

This research was in two stages the first being survey and the second phase was a further exploration of the key issues, which emerged from the survey. As such the research raised questions rather than proved evidenced which could provide definitive answers. However, the respondents both from the survey and interviews based their answers both on the courses they were offering and on their perceptions of the EdD and PhD. As such the findings are not generalizable and a larger scale survey is required.

The main issue in many ways is perceptions of people both in the literature and in general conversation; many assumptions are drawn about the nature of doctorates and their impact (and lack of impact on practice). The PhD for many is the gold standard and the EdD is seen as the poor relation. Practice based doctorates are relatively new and in many ways not as yet universally accepted. Much of these perceptions are not based on evidence and there is a need to explore the completed product the EdD and PhD theses and draw inferences, which are based on evidence. Perceptions of in equivalence persist in the academic environment, which can only be explored through a primary investigation of PD and PhD research outputs so as to provide robust measures of the quality of PD research in comparison with PhD research. This should not rely on individuals' perceptions of quality.

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