

## **University and Program Leadership; Essential for Effective Professional Doctorate Programs**

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*Leadership at the university and program levels is important for effective professional doctorate program development and implementation. Leadership theories are applied to university leadership to demonstrate how reframing the role of university leaders in relation to program faculty and program faculty leaders can enhance professional doctorate program development and success.*

*The role of program faculty leaders is connected to the industry of the professional doctorate program. Relationships with executives in the industry leads to venues for experience and research by university faculty and doctoral students. In context research is preferred over research on the practice for professional doctorate programs as they develop scholarly practitioners for the industry. With accountability for graduates' workplace outcomes increasing in the US, the impetus for enhancing program effectiveness and support by industry executives is increased. Partnerships that include industry executives, university faculty, and doctoral students can foster collaboration that enhances the professional doctorate program and impacts the practice in positive ways.*

Type of Paper; Professional

Words; 3266

**Key words;** leadership, change, development, community, practitioner, scholarly practitioner, education doctorate (Ed. D.)

Leadership for change and continuous improvement is essential for professional doctorate programs. Alignment with current and future industry practice is inherent in effective professional doctorate programs regardless of the industry. An outdated program, one that prepares graduates for the past will not attract future students, serve current students, nor garner the respect of executives in the industry. Industry executives have the potential to fuel the program with ideas, resources, students, and employ graduates in significant positions. University and program leaders who are regularly connected to the practice through relationships and research, and are influenced by the practice are poised to develop effective programs. Professional doctorate graduates are scholarly practitioners who understand research, create new industry knowledge, and value informing their industry with research to impact the practice with enhanced workplace outcomes.

One professional doctorate improvement initiative is the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) which was established in the United States in 2007 and focused on clarifying the difference between the Ed. D. (professional practice doctorate) from the Ph. D. in terms of program purpose and content. From the Council for Academic Deans of Research Education Institutions (CADREI) 24 US institutions were selected to participate in CPED and the deans made these commitments;

- To envision new ways of preparing professional practitioners for schools and colleges,
- To design new programs that will enable professional practitioners to function effectively,
- To examine recent advances in the learning sciences and human cognition, statistics and technology, leadership and discipline-based knowledge, and alternative pedagogies.

([www.cpedinitiative.org](http://www.cpedinitiative.org), 2008)

The author's institution is one of the founding 24 and the author led the redesign of the Ed. D. in Educational Leadership at this institution. As a result, the author has perspectives informed through observations and experience in leading the redesign of a program, through participation in the CPED, and in the role of critical friend (Storey and Hartwick, 2010; Storey and Taylor, 2012) during the (re)design process of programs across the United States.

This professional article has the purpose to explore the concepts of leadership in higher education that may influence creation and maintenance of effective professional doctorate programs and necessary connections to professionals in the practice (Astin and Astin, 2000; Davis, Hides, and Casey, 2001; Storey and Taylor, 2011). Leadership theory and research from pre-collegiate education are applied to leadership in higher education as the call for change and accountability for graduates' outcomes in the US has ascended from pre-collegiate levels to the university graduate levels.

### **Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework that underpins this article includes leadership and connection to scholarly practice through job embedded research and experiences. The author considers leadership at the university level, then at the program level with connection to the practice of a particular professional doctorate. The professional doctorate used as the example is the Executive Ed. D. in Educational Leadership, but the concepts are applicable to other professional doctorate contexts.

### **University leadership**

Transformational leadership to empower faculty through capacity building (Bass, 1997; Bass and Riggio, 2006) may be helpful to engage faculty and develop faculty for the purpose of continuous program improvement. Although transformational leadership is cited in education literature as being desirable, effect sizes for transformational leadership ( $d=.36$ ) tend to be lower than for instructional leadership ( $d=.54$ ) or leadership focused on student outcomes

(Hattie, 2009). Concepts of transformational and instructional leadership are found in education literature for primary and secondary schools but the author suggests that they can be applied similarly to university leaders focused on improving outcomes for professional doctorate graduates. Effect sizes of  $d=0.66$  for instructional leadership and for transformational leadership constructs effect sizes of  $d=0.36$  for consideration and  $d=0.40$  for inspiration (Brown, 2001) support this notion. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) found that instructional leadership focused on outcomes had the effect size of  $d=0.55$ , again larger than the effect size of transformational leadership  $d=.09$ . Further support for employing a combination of leadership theories is provided by Lezotte and Snyder (2012; 56), “effective leaders evolve in their leadership styles as their organizations move from groups of autonomous individuals to collaborative learning communities committed to the learning-for-all mission”.

Consistent with Astin and Astin (2000) when university leaders identify program leaders to collaborate with faculty to design and implement the professional doctorate, transformational leadership is represented. The hierarchical structures usually found in universities can be at odds with collaborative cultures that empower and are advocated for in transformational leadership (Astin and Astin, 2000; Bass, 1997; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Davis, Hides and Casey, 2001; Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond, 2004). Such collaboration among faculty, who are generally rewarded for their individual work (research, grant acquisition, theoretical and patent development, etc.), can be in conflict with the institution’s cultural norms unless university leaders develop a culture of shared values and alignment of individual and institutional goals among administrators and faculty (Astin and Astin, 2000; Davis, Hides and Casey, 2001; Storey and Taylor, 2011; Morgan-Flemming, Simpson, Curtis and Hull, 2010). University leaders should consider the possibility of marrying the concepts of reward for individual accomplishments representing competition (e.g. publications, research, grants), with long term collaborative program development which would be transformational leadership. By focusing on graduates’ workplace outcomes (instructional leadership) fostered through a culture of collaboration

(transformational leadership) there is short term and mutual long term benefit for university leaders, faculty, professional doctorate programs, and scholarly practitioner graduates.

For leaders to encourage rapid program change and implementation consideration of a distributed leadership model (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004) may be useful. According to Goldman and Acker-Hocevar, "Distributed leadership assumes participation and involvement within a collaborative school culture that builds collective organizational efficacy to solve problems and build capacity," (2011; 3). Strategic analysis of faculty strengths and providing distributed faculty leadership opportunities aligned with these strengths, may accelerate design processes, acceptance, and implementation (Gronn; 2002).

The aforementioned concepts are aligned with Senge (1990) who espoused the development of the learning organisation. At the center of Senge's concept is creating a system that informs itself and is self-correcting, unlike organizations that have top down decisions, by those uninvolved with implementation and feedback. In other words, those involved with decision making (university faculty in program development) see outcomes quickly, and then adjust the system university program to improve outcomes.

At the core of program development where there is acceptance and mutual agreement on change, is the learning and adoption of new concepts envisioned in the learning organisation (Senge) developed through distributed leadership (Gronn) and implemented for long term change through transformational leadership (Bass, 1997; Bass and Riggio, 2006). Instructional leadership (Hallenger and Murphy, 1986; Henchey, 2001) focuses the change efforts on graduates' work place outcomes, rather than other potential targets. With the concepts identified that may strategically bring together various perspectives through distributed leadership, the potential to conduct problem analysis and solution development by framing and reframing from various perspectives may provide better outcomes (Bolman and Deal, 2009).

In universities it is often assumed that motivation is external such as in the progression from novice faculty status to professor or to emeritus status. While participating as a faculty member has these realities for continuation in universities, there are day to day motivational considerations. The self determination and power to be creative and have self-mastery to influence is described by contemporary researcher Pink (2009). Pink's research supports that financial rewards are short term and that they can serve to dis-incentivize work rather than to incent work as is often thought (Pink, 2009). In contrast to financial rewards alone, the idea that faculty roles are creative and designed to impact others is supported by the progress principle which identifies the need for recognitions and feedback along the way, and not only at the achievement of long term goals (Amabile and Kramer, 2011). Both of these authors identify that internal motivation, empowerment, autonomy with continuous feedback foster motivation. Faculty who are motivated by impacting the practice through their research and the preparation of scholarly practitioners value the creation of improvements as is needed in the design or redesign of continually developing professional doctorate programs.

### **Program leadership**

In the US economic and political entities are pushing university leaders to think more like businesses with profits to be made and measureable outcomes in terms of graduates' performance in the workplace, not seats filled in classes (Davies, Hides and Casey, 2001). This sentiment is pushing university decision-makers to view the roles of faculty members as differentiated, who are either an entrepreneur seeking individual specialization research and funding or who are working towards outcomes in the practice that reflect favorably on programs and generate funding. Hence, in the US the National Governors Association (NGA) has recommended that universities be held accountable for their graduates' outcomes in the work place and that future funding be dependent upon those measured outcomes (Sparks and Waits, 2011).

Leadership at the program or faculty level is different from leadership at the university level, but as important since program faculty are the link to the practice and work directly with professional doctorate students in the application of research to the practice and in researching in the practice. Colleague leadership builds changes in the day-to-day work of faculty and should be grounded in the practice of the target content, which in the author's case is educational leadership. As an example, Greenburg and Walsh (2012) found that educator preparation programs provide introductions to data-informed decision-making, but rarely provide practice or application in data-informed decision-making. A question for program faculty collaboration was, "Where do we have the data-informed decision-making in coursework and to what extent does it extend to the practice?" As a result of this query data-informed decision-making has been included through modeling by scholarly practitioners from the field and introduction of new data systems which were implemented as recently as summer 2012.

Furthermore, by engaging highly respected scholarly practitioners to partner in co-teaching and in serving on dissertation committees, the theory to practice link is made. Questions of university faculty related and recent experience or knowledge of the context of the work of educational leaders are not raised. Partnerships at the doctoral level build on diverse strengths of those who share a goal commitment and hold each other accountable creates high performing teams (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993). Partnerships represent teams, driven by inquiry and who hold each other accountable are high performing with positive outcomes (Curry, 2008). By extending the concept of the high performing team from the Ed. D. program faculty to the education community, the mutual commitments and accountability become powerful forces for change in developing, implementing, and continuously improving professional doctorate programs and providing scholarly practitioner graduates who are productive in the workplace (Bryck, Gomez and Grunow, 2010; Garber, Creech, Epps, Bishop, and Chapman, 2010; Lee, Brennan, and Green, 2009; Sparks and Waits, 2011). The university

faculty and executives in industry have invested in the graduates' success and graduates have demonstrated their value in new ways of excellence.

Just as accountability for graduates' workplace outcomes is moving forward in the US, it is expected that graduates create new knowledge to improve their practice and the practice of others (Lee, Brennan and Green, 2009). Improvement in the practice of others takes place through informed dialogue with policy-makers, practitioners, and executives. One of the ways to promote improvement of the practice is for professional doctorate students to research in the practice, but access to people and contexts, along with data and evidence may be withheld to protect the flow of information by industry. On the other hand, as in the author's Executive Ed. D. program, when critical problems of practice for research are identified by education industry, the research presents benefit to the industry. Therefore, research in the practice can provide mutual benefit to the professional doctorate program, doctoral student, and industry (Garber, Creech, Epps, Bishop and Chapman, 2010). Costley and Flint (2011) identify the idea of artificial separation of context from the data source when research is on the practice, rather than in the practice. Removal of research from the context may lead to conclusions that are not accurate or not meaningful for the practice. Bryck, Gomez, and Grunow (2010) take the concept of research in the practice one step further and advocate for networked improvement communities that would be composed of university faculty, graduate students, organizations and educators.

It (improvement) demands new arrangements for disciplined inquiry where the work of research and practice join in a more dynamic and interactive fashion. It invites strong scholars to engage in applied R & D, but now in quite different ways in the pursuit of a science of improvement. (p. 4)

As advocated by Bryck, Gomez, and Grunow the professional doctorate students and faculty can become dynamic participants in collaboratively researching in the practice and result in improvement of the practice. In context research and continuous learning will push forth new



ideas which are not common to universities or the education organization with which they partner in areas of pedagogy, policy, or useful resources (Morgan-Flemming, Simpson, Curtis and Hull, 2010).

University faculty lack of recent experience in the practice in which they teach and supervise research has been raised as an issue by those in the practice and in the university professional doctorate programs (Storey, Bryant, Fulmer, Hawley, Iceman-Sands, Scheurich, Shakeshaft, Storey and Taylor; 2009). Seventy-nine percent of faculty with less than 5 years experience in educator preparation programs surveyed criticized professors as out of date who had either never been in the practice or not in the practice for up to 20 years (Farkas and Duffet, 2010). Collaborative improvement communities (Bryck, Gomez and Grunow, 2010) and research in the practice (Costley and Flint, 2010; Morgan-Flemming, Simpson, Curtis and Hull, 2010) will also serve to promote recent involvement in the practice by university faculty while providing research opportunities for doctoral students to improve the practice.

### **Conclusions and final thoughts**

Leaders at the university level who understand and strategically implement transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and instructional leadership concepts have the potential to create collaborative cultures among program faculty and across program faculties that improve professional doctorate program effectiveness. The traditional hierarchical structure and independent work of university faculty does not lend itself to continuous program improvement focused on measuring scholarly practitioner graduates' workplace outcomes. Because of the nature of professional doctorate programs and their students, university faculty experience in the target industry and on-going connection to executives in the industry are important to provide meaningful academic experiences for students and for venues for research on critical problems of practice. Examples, like networked improvement communities, doctoral student research for industry clients, co-teaching of doctoral courses, and creation of high performing teams of university faculty and industry executives can ensure contemporary experience and understanding of the industry on the part of long-time university faculty. With

mutual goals and accountability for results, the development and continuous improvement of programs will enhance the value of the professional doctorate degree as the graduates are seen as scholarly practitioners and more valuable to industry than graduates of other programs who may be scholarly alone.

If university leaders provide strategic leadership that has the characteristics of transformational leadership and instructional leadership they will empower leaders in professional doctorate programs to create a learning organisation focused on improved graduate outcomes. With this distributed leadership the purposes of the professional doctorate programs will be achieved as will other mutual benefits.

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### **Notes on author**

The author served as a volunteer researcher for funded research (US FIPSE P116B100134). However, this manuscript uses no data from that research.