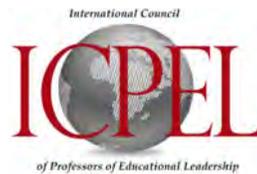


Changing the Mindset from Practitioner to Scholarly Practitioner: Admission through the First Two Semesters of an EdD Program

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership (ICPEL) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



Travis Lewis

East Carolina University

Heidi Puckett

East Carolina University

Marjorie Ringler

East Carolina University

The Doctor of Education (EdD) in Educational Leadership at East Carolina University incorporated advising into the admissions process through the first two semesters of the program. This study examined how, through the first year of implementation of this process, student knowledge of the role of the scholarly practitioner evolved from pre-admission advising through the second semester of this CPED-influenced EdD program. CPED is the Carnegie Project for the Educational Doctorate, a consortium of colleges of education which aims to prepare scholarly practitioners to solve problems of practice through the lens of equity, ethics, and social justice (CPED, 2009; Hoffman & Perry, 2016). The study describes how faculty utilized the Model of Improvement framework with three Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles to intentionally teach this concept. The results of this study indicated that there was a mindset change for students from practitioners to scholarly practitioners. Accordingly, the findings herein may be beneficial to educational leadership doctoral programs in replicating the program's successes with growing practitioners into scholarly practitioners through embedded activities from admission through early coursework.

Keywords: *scholarly practitioner, PDSA cycle, problem of practice, educational doctorate*

This article describes ways to incorporate advising beginning with the admission process and through the first two semesters in a Doctor of Education (EdD) program for students to develop the knowledge and skills needed to be scholarly practitioners. The EdD program in this study is a member of the Carnegie Project for the Educational Doctorate (CPED). The goal of CPED is to prepare scholarly practitioners to solve problems of practice, and they do so by framing solutions through the lens of equity, ethics, and social justice (CPED, 2009; Hoffman & Perry, 2016). Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, and Garabedian (2006) described the key indicators of EdD programs as the use of signature pedagogies, requiring practice-related research skills, expecting students to be engaged in continued research, and suggesting that program participants will develop skills to conduct local research and evaluations to guide practice at their institutions.

Students who enter EdD programs, such as the one in this study, are experienced practitioners in educational leadership and do not view themselves as researchers (Buss, Zambo, Zambo & Williams, 2014). According to the Council of Graduate Schools (2007), a professional doctoral degree should represent preparation for the potential transformation of a field of professional practice, just as a PhD represents preparation for the potential transformation of basic knowledge in a discipline. CPED indicates that scholarly practitioners use practical knowledge and professional skills to name, frame, and solve problems of practice. Recognizing the importance of equity and social justice, scholarly practitioners utilize research and theories as tools to help disseminate their work. They feel an obligation to resolve the identified problems of practice by collaborating with key stakeholders, including the university, the schools, the community, and individuals (Perry, 2015; Stark 2019).

The EdD program in this study joined CPED in 2014. This CPED influenced EdD utilizes meaningful and interactive activities that engage students to view themselves as valued practitioners who own their doctoral studies and experiences. These experiences begin with the admission process, especially at admission interviews where EdD program faculty engage students in self-reflection and self-identification of their role as scholarly practitioners.

The traditional apprentice model has been replaced by a more egalitarian and communal one, in which faculty and students collaborate in learning. In most cases, group advising has become a more manageable way to work with a larger number of EdD candidates (Perry, 2015).

Additionally, many programs are utilizing the cohort model to meet the needs of the students. This model helps students build support systems and the collaborative nature of the program teaches them how to deal with difficult situations and nurture close, beneficial relationships (Mansfield & Stacy, 2017).

Scholarly Practitioner Tenets at ECU

In considering the purposes of the EdD program, the intentional development of scholarly practitioners, and the importance of advising and collaboration, the faculty affiliated with the EdD program at East Carolina University (ECU) identified four main tenets to define the scholarly practitioner: research, leadership, practitioner, and social justice. The review of literature will develop these tenets.

Research

The research a scholarly practitioner conducts refers to the research-based knowledge and skills a practitioner needs to enhance their practice. Levine (2005) criticized EdD programs for the lack of

preparation and poor skills to conduct research relevant to the educational improvements connected to EdD students' practice. Levine also asserted that scholarship in these EdD programs must be connected to practice to effectively prepare leaders. Practitioners in the EdD at ECU are adept at leading but lack knowledge about research concepts and processes. For this reason, practitioners entering EdD programs need a clear understanding of education research. Showing practitioners the similarities and differences between education and scientific research helps clarify their knowledge of research expectation.

In addition to research connected to practice, research in EdD programs influenced by CPED teaches practitioners to utilize rigorous, sophisticated, and relevant research methodologies (Hoffman & Perry, 2016; Levine, 2005; Shulman et al., 2006). The EdD program at ECU subscribes to continuous improvement methodologies that encourage practitioners to conduct research over a period of three years utilizing methodologies that allow several iterations or cycles of research where each cycle is informed by data and reflections about the data on practice. The Model of Improvement (Langley, Moen, Nolan, Nolan, Norman, & Provost, 2009) is one such framework utilized by practitioners for studying cyclical improvement efforts.

Another methodology commonly utilized in education research and taught in EdD programs that are influenced by the CPED model is action research. The process of action research involves five sequential steps (Sagor, 1992): (a) problem formulation, (b) data collection, (c) data analysis, (d) findings, and (e) action planning. One EdD program conducted a study to examine their students' perceptions of themselves as learners, leaders, and action researchers. The students in the program utilized action research as their signature pedagogy for research. The results of the study indicated their students identified themselves as scholarly and influential practitioners (Buss et al., 2014). In this same study, EdD students conducted action research for a two-and-one-half year period. During this time students utilized various research methodologies that resulted in rigorous education research.

For scholarly practitioners research and writing the dissertation are two areas that need advising and support. These processes are very different for a practitioner and require many opportunities to change their mindset of practitioner to scholar and to balance their professional, personal, and educational demands (Klocko, Marshall, & Davidson, 2015). Practitioners often tend to address their scholarly work as an application of theory to practice. This is ideally the goal; however, many students in the EdD program at ECU tend to quickly act and solve problems and by doing so may fail to address the root of a problem.

Leadership

The CPED-influenced EdD prepares leaders who can construct and apply knowledge to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and communities. The programs also provide opportunities for candidates to develop and demonstrate collaboration and communication skills, to work with diverse communities, and to build partnerships (Boyce, 2012; Stark, 2019). As leaders, EdD students learn to be change agents who work to improve the lives of those in their communities using inquiry strategies to inform the process (Belzer & Ryan, 2013; Stark, 2019). Students are prepared to lead complex organizations, while attempting to provide students of all backgrounds with equitable access and success in rigorous educational opportunities (Peterson, 2017).

If the goal of an EdD program is to prepare social justice leaders skilled at reducing educational disparities, the focus of the program must move away from the standard technical

aspects of educational leadership. Focusing only on the standard technical aspects perpetuates the inequities in schools by ignoring the individual communities and their culture. A critical characteristic of social justice leaders involves becoming skilled in leading processes that create the space for hearing the voices of and including the perspectives of all members of the community in decisions is a critical characteristic of social justice leaders (Peterson, 2017).

Practitioner

The literature refers to a movement from subject-centered pedagogy, where subject information is taught by an expert, to learner centered andragogy, where active teaching and learning processes emphasize teaching the learner about the content (Buss, 2019; Forrest & Peterson, 2006; Long, 2018). Therefore, leadership preparation programs are more “focused on collaborative research and communities of learning, where critical thinking, authentic learning, and real-world application are key” (Mansfield, & Stacy, 2017, p. 303). Faculty and advisors in the EdD program at ECU strive to develop practitioners to value feedback, collaborate with communities, and to think creatively.

Practitioners in EdD programs influenced by CPED are typically part-time students who maintain full-time professional roles as they engage in their studies. The practical experience practitioners bring to their EdD programs makes them valued partners in the dissertation study thus changing their mindset from mere students in the program to a program that stimulates their professional growth.

EdD students have difficulty meeting the writing expectations associated with writing a dissertation. One factor is that as practitioners they have not developed their writing skills in the dissertation style simply because their roles do not require this skill (Ferguson, 2009; Long, 2018). Often students write as they speak, and not in academic language. As a result, many EdD students are unsure of their writing skills and misunderstand faculty feedback. In a study conducted by Klocko et al. (2015) beliefs about their critical writing expectations and stressors of practitioner-scholars in a Midwestern state were examined. The findings of this study indicated that practitioner students have difficulty using writing time efficiently, organizing writing projects, and displayed high levels of emotional stress related to writing to be critiqued. Faculty must begin enhancing writing skills and providing strategies for success as early as orientation (Klocko et al., 2015).

Social Justice

In 2007, CPED was launched as a response to the criticism of the purpose and rigor of the EdD program. CPED consortium members articulated principles to guide the implementation and direction of the program across institutions. Many of the principles focus on issues of social justice and educational equity related to the EdD program, including framing the program around questions of equity, ethics, and social justice to bring about solutions to complex problems of practice (Boyce, 2012; CPED, 2009; Perry & Abruzzo, 2020).

Peterson (2017) defines social justice as an orientation that includes both a goal and a process, whereby the dignity of each person’s identity is respected and enhanced. Social justice leaders ensure each person thrives as a learner and member of the community, whose perspective is considered. CPED-inspired EdD programs must serve as places where social justice leaders are prepared to interrupt systemic inequities in schools.

Methodology

The researchers of this study, in their efforts to continually improve the EdD program for their students, sought to gain greater insight into student knowledge and understanding of the role of a scholarly practitioner as they began their immersion into a CPED-influenced EdD program at ECU. As such, the resulting research question for this study asked how did student knowledge of a scholarly practitioner evolve from pre-admission advising through the second semester of a CPED-influenced EdD program? To address this research question, the researchers determined that data would need to be collected at different points in time to assess students' baseline knowledge and then the changes in knowledge through time. In addition, this study needed to study the effects of faculty efforts and involvement in this process. The researchers studied minutes and field notes from discussions the faculty had throughout the various planning and data analysis sessions.

The Model of Improvement (Langley et al., 2009) was utilized as a framework for the development and implementation of this study (see Figure 1). To answer the research question with this framework, the researchers utilized subquestions to guide various Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles. Langley et al. (2009) describe the PDSA cycle as a tool to be used to turn ideas into action and connect action to learning. Each of the subquestions were developed during collaborative discussions among the EdD faculty. The first subquestion was: *How did student knowledge of a scholarly practitioner evolve from pre-admission advising through the second semester of a CPED-influenced EdD program?* In other words were they able to change the mindset of students from practitioners to scholarly practitioners. The next question in the Model of Improvement was: *How will we know that a change is an improvement?* For this second question the research about the scholarly practitioner and the CPED framework provided the convincing arguments that changing the mindset would lead to improvement. Therefore, the third Model of Improvement question was: *What change can we make that will result in improvement?* The researchers designed three PDSA cycles that built upon the previous to provide increasingly greater depth of insight in the research question. The PDSA cycles helped assess changes made and if those changes resulted in mindset changes towards scholarly practitioners.

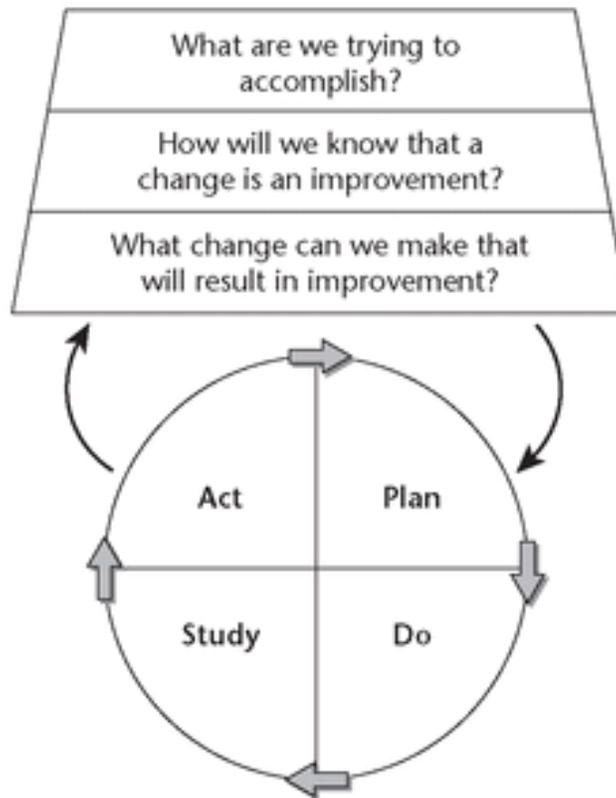


Figure 1. The Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle (Langley et al., 2009).

Data Analysis and Findings

The findings of this study were intended to provide a more thorough understanding of the development of students in their conceptualization of scholarly practitioners within a CPED-influenced doctoral program. Faculty analyzed the data collected from 75 interviewed program applicants (Cycle 1) and the resulting 52 admitted students (Cycles 2 and 3) to examine patterns of responses. The 3 PDSA cycles of this study occurred over the course of a calendar year 2018-2019. The results of each cycle provided the foundation for the subsequent cycle, in alignment with the PDSA model.

PDSA Cycle 1 – Admission and Advising

Plan. Faculty met regularly to plan the admission process, to determine ways to advise applicants about the tenets of the EdD program, and to incorporate advising regarding development as scholarly practitioners. Faculty developed an advising-enhanced interview protocol where groups of applicants engaged in a collaborative manner through various exercises. The exercises were group advising, individual interviews with faculty doing the advising, group discussion around a scholarly article grounded in equity and social justice, a team challenge to gauge interpersonal, leadership skills, and creative skills, and a final reflection opportunity. Advising was infused into each activity within a three-hour period in the following ways:

Group advising. All applicants were present in this session with many faculty from the program. In this group advising, applicants were provided an overview of the program philosophy

and a preview of the applicant criteria that faculty were trying to assess. These qualities align with the tenets of the EdD and the faculty's definition of a scholarly practitioner. These were: commitment to improving own professional skills, commitment to lead through service, potential to complete a problem of practice dissertation, professional demeanor, creative problem solving through the lens of equity and social justice and, ability to establish respectful relationships. The faculty compared the EdD program to running a marathon and indicated the major milestones along the way.

Individual advising with faculty (interview). Faculty developed a list of interview questions that would lend themselves to advising applicants, while gathering information regarding their fit in the program. Sample questions that faculty developed included: (a) Is there a specific program of practice related to equity or social justice at your educational institution that you may be interested in pursuing? (b) Share a time when you made a mistake, and someone gave you feedback. What did you do with the feedback? What did you learn about yourself? (c) How would you describe the level of support you have from your current administrators for your enrollment in this EdD program and your pursuit of a problem of practice dissertation?

Group article discussion. Applicants were sent an article prior to the interview to read and be prepared to discuss at the interview. Faculty chose an article that presented a study about an equity issue in education. At the interview, applicants in groups participated in a group discussion where two faculty posed questions for applicants to ponder and discuss. Sample discussion questions were: (a) How do we as educational leaders overcome issues related to stereotypes to be effective leaders and good role models? (b) Can you think of a situation where you initiated critical conversations? What was your strategy?

Team challenge. Applicants in groups engaged in a team challenge activity where they were provided random objects and asked to create a story/statement focusing on social justice and equity in education. There were no restrictions or requirements related to the content of the story, other than it must use all the objects provided, and it must focus on the topic. Faculty observers collected data on ways applicants contributed to the challenge in meaningful ways, professional demeanor, interpersonal skills, feedback, and communication skills.

Reflection at the end (ticket out the door). Applicants completed a written feedback form anonymously where they reflected about the interview process by responding to the following sentence starters:

- I came expecting...
- I learned...
- What excites me about the EdD...
- What concerns me about the EdD...

Do. Applicant interviews were conducted Spring semester 2018 utilizing the various activities described in the previous, Plan, section. Faculty screened all 150 applications to select the applicants to be interviewed. The application materials that were reviewed for each applicant included a resume, letters of recommendation, the applicant's personal statement about why the EdD at ECU fits their professional goals, and a written response to an educational leadership prompt. Faculty reviewed the application materials utilizing the following criteria: a) professional experiences such as skills, title or role, years of experience, and types of leadership experiences; b) academic experiences and qualifications outlined by ECU's Graduate School; c) writing skills that clearly communicated ideas, articulated a coherent, persuasive, and well organized argument; d) leadership potential; e) alignment of applicant's professional goals with the EdD's program; and f)

a written response relevant to an issue of educational equity. Faculty selected 75 applicants from the applicant pool to interview.

The selected 75 applicants were interviewed on four different days with various activities planned by the faculty. Candidates completed three activities during their interview time. The purpose of the activities was to determine the applicants' interpersonal and communication skills, collaboration skills, critical thinking skills, and potential for action space to complete a problem of practice dissertation. One group activity was a discussion of a scholarly journal article about a study grounded on equity and social justice. A second activity was a group challenge to develop an educational statement about equity and social justice with objects that had no apparent relation to education or leadership. A third activity was an individual interview with an EdD faculty. All 75 applicants were provided the opportunity to complete a reflection at the end of the interview process utilizing the ticket out the door that is analyzed in the next section.

Study. The applicant responses were analyzed for the four main tenets of the EdD program (see Table 1) social justice, research, practitioner, and leadership. Of the 75 submissions, 43 interviewee responses had at least one response related to the four main tenets. Several interviewee reflections addressed multiple tenets. Responses were coded and grouped into the four tenets: Social Justice, Research, Practitioner, and Leadership. The implementation of the plans described in the previous section occurred Spring semester 2018. Faculty screened 150 applications to select the applicants to be interviewed. A total of 75 applicants were interviewed and advised on four different days with the various activities planned by the faculty. All 75 applicants were provided the opportunity to a reflection at the end of the interview process utilizing the ticket out the door described in the planning section of PDSA Cycle 1.

Table 1

Applicant Response Totals by Four Main EdD Program Tenets (Cycle 1)

EdD Program Tenets	Applicant Quotations
Social Justice	13
Research	8
Practitioner	18
Leadership	7

Responses to the informal assessment, the ticket out the door, indicated that applicants were most drawn to aspects of the EdD program related to the work of practitioners, with 18 of 46 included responses (39.1 %) noting such. Several responses listed below epitomize the feedback of the applicants who were intrigued by this tenet, stating that what excites them about the EdD is:

- “putting my research into practice.”
- “reading articles, writing papers, discussing real-life problems.”
- “the practical application of learning leadership.”
- “being able to investigate problems and potentially implement solutions in my building/district.”
- “to learn an approach to systematic problem solving.”

- “having another tool to serve my students and my community.”
- “it provides an opportunity for me to research and devise solutions to some of the issues facing my school/system.”
- “developing skills to solve current problems.”
- “using what I learn to make needed improvements to myself and the way my college operates.”
- “increasing my knowledge about educational leadership and passing that knowledge along to positively impact students.”

The confluence of continued practice as school leaders while having the opportunity to address problems of practice in the respective educational setting was an appealing aspect of the EdD program to applicant practitioners. This was their first initial exposure through the program into the work of scholarly practitioners and provided the foundation upon which further knowledge would be developed if admission was granted.

Social justice was another prominent response tenet for applicants. Of the 46 responses, 13 (28.2%) referred to their affinity for the EdD program having a focus on addressing issues of equity and social justice. When asked what excited them about the EdD, applicants made comments such as the ones listed below:

- “the opportunity to reflect on social justice and equity in K-20.”
- “collaborating to learn other points of view.”
- “the prospect of being able to develop globalized skills.”
- “learning more about diversity, as it is such an important factor in today’s global economy. I want to learn more about how I can prepare my staff and students.”

Responses for the areas of leadership and research were less prominent and indicated that additional instruction and exposure to these aspects of the program model were necessary.

Act. Based on the study of the various points of data during the interview process, 50 applicants of the 75 interviewees were admitted into the program. The selected 50 applicants demonstrated exceptionally high interpersonal and communications skills. These applicants showed positive and proactive collaboration skills while addressing problems with strong critical thinking skills. In addition, all selected applicants provided concrete examples to show that their current professional context would support their dissertation in practice by addressing a problem of practice. The selected applicants were selected to work on one of two Educational Leadership concentrations. Higher Education Administration students totaled 19 and PK-12 Administration students totaled 31. Of those admitted, 58% were Caucasian, 40% were African-America, and 2% were other. Seventy percent worked in rural settings and 64% were women.

The study of the applicants’ feedback indicated that advising during the admission process clearly explained how the program would help them become better practitioners by addressing real problems of practice. In addition, the interview process indicated that applicants understood that the problems of practice needed to address an issue of equity or social justice issue. Responses indicated that applicants needed more instruction and interaction with the tenets of research and leadership to help them grasp the meaning of scholarly practitioner. This would be the purpose of the planning activities for the PDSA Cycle 2.

PDSA Cycle 2 – First Semester in the EdD Program

Plan. Faculty met regularly to plan the learning outcomes and activities for the first semester courses. Such planning included developing meaningful ways to advise applicants about the tenets

of the EdD program, especially the tents of leadership and research that would lead to a better understanding of what was meant by the term scholarly practitioner. The plan for the students included reading research articles about scholarly practitioners, comparing researcher to scholarly practitioner, and starting to think about a problem of practice to tackle in the dissertation study.

Do. During the first semester of coursework, students were introduced to the topics of research and scholarly writing. During this period, faculty emphasized that they were experts in certain educational leadership topics and student were also considered experts in practical leadership experiences and skills. Students explored with their instructors the distinction between scholarly practitioners versus researchers. Readings included *The Role of Research in the Professional Doctorate* by Hochbein and Perry (2013). The students and professors thoroughly discussed the differences between a researcher and scholarly practitioner relative to the differences between PhD programs and EdD programs, as outlined in Table 2.

One of the differences highlighted was the purpose of the programs, where the PhD was described as attempting to fill a gap in the literature, add knowledge to the field, and contribute to growth of a theory, to name a few commonly purposes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In contrast, the purpose of scholarly work in ad EdD program is to address problems of practice and provide useful information to stakeholders to help make collaborative decisions around practitioner-based issues (Perry & Abruzzo, 2020; Stark, 2019; Young, 2006). The audience that reads and evaluates studies developed in a PhD program are researchers and academicians, compared to the audience that will read and benefit from the EdD study results, which include practitioners, stakeholders, and employers (Perry & Abruzzo, 2020; Schulman et al., 2006). Additionally, PhD researchers tend to explore and establish statistical causal relationships and study subject matter in depth compared to EdD scholarly practitioners who examine, implement solutions and innovations, and consider the impact of their work while engaging with a variety of stakeholders in interdisciplinary fields (Archbald, 2008). One additional aspect discussed was the

Table 2

Comparison and Contrast between Researcher and Scholarly Practitioner

	Researcher	Scholarly Practitioner
Purpose	Attempts to fill a gap in the literature, add knowledge to the field, contribute to growth of a theory	Address a problem of practice, provide useful information to stakeholders to help make decisions
Audience	Researchers or academicians	Practitioners, stakeholders, employees
Methods	Explore and establish causal relationships, depth in subject matter	Examine and describe to consider impact; interdisciplinary
Who sets the agenda?	Researcher	Stakeholders

Generalizability	Maximize	Relevant to the context of the study
Degree	PhD	EdD

generalizability of the studies. PhD studies try to utilize methodologies to maximize generalizability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) while EdD studies concern themselves with findings that are relevant to the context of the study (Archbald, 2008; Shulman et al., 2006).

Near the completion of the summer semester, students were placed in groups and were asked to complete the following sentence starter by using their knowledge acquired through summer instruction in conjunction with their extensive practical experience: “Being a scholarly practitioner means...” The analysis of these sentence starters is explored in the next section.

Study. All 50 admitted students participated in this summative course activity whereby students were assigned to small groups to develop their own definition of what it meant to be a scholarly practitioner. The following four statements were voted by the students to most clearly capture their understanding of what it means to be a scholarly practitioner:

1. “reframing a problem in our work to support those we serve using research, best practices, and our own experiences.”
2. “using relevant research to guide decisions which will impact all stakeholders.”
3. “applying applicable research to one’s field to solve problems utilizing research-based best practices.”
4. “analyzing the information for deeper knowledge while applying it to your practice or problem of practice.”

Faculty reviewed the student responses and were satisfied that the instruction hitherto had adequately informed students on the role of the scholarly practitioner and the distinction between a scholarly practitioner and a researcher. This analysis was a formative assessment of the students’ knowledge about scholarly practitioner. Faculty decided that now that the students understood this concept the next step would be to help students understand how this knowledge would influence their approach to addressing a problem of practice.

Act. Faculty investigated ways for students, as scholarly practitioners, to use this knowledge to frame problems of practice. Faculty read research, consulted with other university professors in the CPED consortium, and collaborated to design the instructional and learning activities to be incorporated in the second semester of the EdD program.

PDSA Cycle 3 – Second Semester in the EdD Program

Plan. Faculty met regularly to plan instructional and learning activities for the second semester in the EdD program. One of the activities planned was centered on several discussion topics that would lead students to describe a problem of practice which they wanted to study and how the problem addressed issues of equity and social justice. These discussions also prompted students to consider the people affected by the problem and the stakeholders that should be involved in the study. Faculty planned an activity that helped students describe the differences between academically sound and not sound literature sources in an effort to guide their research strategies. Another activity involved helping students understand their writing strengths and weaknesses and the practice of providing feedback. Faculty also developed a lesson to help students formalize their

description of their problem of practice. To do so, faculty included activities that had students create the initial stages of their literature reviews.

Do. The course syllabus required students to engage in discussion around topics of defining problem of practice, literature reviews, and identifying the context of the study. As part of the students' fall coursework, they were asked to respond to the following online discussion assignment: "Why do scholarly practitioners focus on a problem of practice?" Students were instructed to engage with one another regarding the prompt and then respond to classmates' online responses accordingly. Most of the student postings and subsequent responses either directly or indirectly referenced at least one of the four EdD program tenets. The student responses on this assignment are analyzed in the next section.

Study. A qualitative analysis was conducted on the written responses to the discussion board prompt: "Why do scholarly practitioners focus on a problem of practice?" The responses were first grouped under each of the four EdD program tenets: social justice, research, practitioner, and leadership. Within each tenet a qualitative analysis was conducted using a grounded theory approach to determine patterns of responses (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). When reviewing the responses, the researchers discussed all the responses within a tenet and agreed on general themes. The researchers then read the written responses for a second time and coded the individual responses in themes within each tenet. See Table 3.

Table 3

Student Response Total by Four Main EdD Program Tenets and Prominent Themes (Cycle 3)

EdD Program Tenets and Themes	Student Response Total
Social Justice	66
Promotes equity, social justice, and quality of life	31 of 66
Understands complexity of diverse learners & environment	23 of 66
Research	99
Applies research and professional knowledge	59 of 99
Practitioner	156
Significantly contributes to improvement	43 of 156
Names and frames problems of practice	39 of 156
Develops professional practitioners	38 of 156
Leadership	31
Communicates with and engages stakeholders	16 of 31

Student responses were coded and analyzed to determine the frequency in which each of the four EdD program tenets were included, as well as the development of themes within the responses. According to the results, the tenet of practitioner was the most prominently referenced, with 156 different substantial postings across all discussion board posts. The most prominent theme within the practitioner tenet was that scholarly practitioners focus on a problem of practice because it "significantly contributes to improvement," with 43 of the 156 postings, or 27.6% being coded within this theme. This was closely followed by the theme of "names and frames problems of

practice,” with 39 of the 156 responses, or 25.0% noting such. “Develops professional practitioners” was the final theme worth inclusion, being referenced in 38 out of the 156 postings from students, or 24.4%.

Research was the next tenet of the EdD program most frequently cited in the responses of students, with 99 different substantial postings in the discussion board. Of those, 59 of the 99, or 59.6%, made reference to the theme that scholarly practitioners focus on a problem of practice to “apply research and professional knowledge.”

Social justice and leadership were the remaining tenets of the EdD program noted in student postings, with aspects of social justice being addressed in 66 student postings and leadership being addressed in 31 student postings respectively. Themes within the student postings on social justice included scholarly practitioners focusing on a problem of practice because it “promotes equity, social justice and quality of life,” with 31 of the 66 student discussion board postings, or 47.0%, alluding to this theme. An additional noteworthy theme within the tenet of social justice was that scholarly practitioners focus on a problem of practice because they “understand the complexity of diverse learners and environment,” with 23 of the 66 postings, or 34.8%, tying into this theme. The tenet of leadership had one prominent theme among students, which was that scholarly practitioners focus on a problem of practice because they “communicate with and engage stakeholders,” with 16 of the 31 postings, or 51.6%, referencing this aspect of leadership.

As with the results of cycle 1, the tenet of leadership needs to be further emphasized during the instructional activities of cycle 3 to help students see the connection between the work of the scholarly practitioner within the realm of school leadership.

Act. Faculty in this EdD program met to analyze the three cycles of data to determine a response to the research question: How has student knowledge of a scholarly practitioner evolved from pre-admission advising through the second semester of a CPED-influenced EdD program? The findings and discussions are outlined in the next section.

Findings and Discussion

During the first two semesters in the EdD program, students as practitioners advanced in their own practice by applying the research in the literature they read to their own practice. Prior to beginning the EdD program, students implemented their school districts’ initiatives and goals without much thought to the underlying research supporting the initiatives. Instead of simply following mandates as previously done, the students shared with faculty how they had begun asking critical questions to better understand the rationale behind these mandates. In addition, the EdD program had afforded these students the opportunity to read and analyze literature relevant to their practice and apply findings accordingly in their day-to-day work. Students shared in class meetings how they relished the time to read relevant scholarly articles and texts, noting how their readings revitalized their work by providing new perspectives and evidences of successes and failures.

Faculty also noticed that students were embracing the scholarly language of educational leadership. Discourse among students and with faculty evolved from talking about personal experiences utilizing social language to talking about broader leadership concepts and connections to their practice using language of leadership. Students invoked personal experiences described with language from practical interpretations of research and their readings.

Faculty noted that the change of mindset from practitioner to scholarly practitioner took time and that each individual student did so at their own pace. However, overall, the time it took to achieve this change in mindset included all the activities from pre-admission through the first two

semesters in the program. Change takes time, and all students in the program were working professionals who spent a significant portion of their time each day addressing problems of practice. The program has helped practitioners take the time to think about a problem of practice and determine the root causes of a problem. In doing so, students were able to name the various contextual aspects that affected the problem, state the procedural or institutional policies that embedded the problem of practice, and read about other educational leadership situations that may provide valuable information on how to effectively address the problem of practice.

The researchers reflected on the findings with three main questions posed in the Model for Improvement Framework (Langley et al., 2009). First question: Did faculty achieve what they set to accomplish: change the mindset of students from practitioners to scholarly practitioners? Faculty noted that shifting the students' mindsets to that of a scholarly practitioner was a work in process. Faculty realized that this process takes time and that meaningful instructional activities must be deliberately structured to coach students on this path. At the time in which this study concluded, faculty had determined that all students had a good sense of what a scholarly practitioner was and that the next step to deepening the knowledge was to tackle the investigation of a problem of practice from this perspective.

Second question: How will the faculty and students know that a change is an improvement? The three PDSA cycles indicated that students benefitted from this mindset change from practitioner to scholarly practitioner. Evidence of these benefits became apparent when students discussed practitioner issues and substantiated their assertions with examples from practice and literature reviews. In addition, students changed the way they attempted to address problems of practice by taking time to study the root causes in more depth rather than jumping into action as their practitioner roles often required them to do. Students devoted time for reflection and investigation prior to taking action.

Third question: What change can faculty make that will result in improvement? Faculty were pleased with each of the three PDSA cycles because each cycle improved the learning experiences for students. Students were active participants in growing as scholars from the admission stages. Advising provided prior to and during the admission process provided a clear picture of the program tenets and how these tenets were embedded in all the learning opportunities in the program. The first semester served to solidify the program expectations and to initiate change in the mindset from being traditional students where faculty had the answers, to valued practitioners, where faculty provided activities and opportunities for students to grow professionally while reading research and defining a problem of practice to address as their dissertation.

In conclusion, the new approach by faculty within the EdD program to aid students in the transition from practitioner to scholarly practitioner has been a success, at least preliminarily. Replication with future cohorts of students, accompanied by continued refinement of the processes outlined from admission through the first two semesters of the program, will ultimately determine whether these measures to instructing students on the role of the scholarly practitioner should be permanently embedded within the EdD program. However, the results thus far are worthy of consideration by other CPED-influenced programs facing the same challenges with preparing students to become scholarly practitioners in their respective settings.

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