Consensus Is a Journey: A Programmatic Framework for EdD-activism

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ABSTRACT

EdD programs affiliated with the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate encourage dissertations in practice (DiPs) focused on equity, social justice, and transformative practice. Conversations in our program revealed surface-level or late-stage social justice connections in our students' DiPs. Therefore, inspired by an existing framework that aimed at empowering EdD-activists, and needing more data from our own program, we formed a committee to design a program-specific EdD-activism framework. Through surveys, structured discussion, and other sources of qualitative data, an EdD-activism definition emerged that informed a program-wide equity statement and catalyzed changes in our practice as educators. This essay presents our process, applications of our work, and our next steps.

KEYWORDS

action research, activism, dissertation in practice, social justice

On May 25, 2020, the social climate shifted when a Minneapolis police officer murdered George Floyd, as the United States was already grappling with the profound tragedy of over 100,000 deaths from the COVID-19 pandemic (Brimmer, 2020). As Brimmer argued, the pandemic shed light on pervasive racial disparities in health care, and Floyd's murder brought scrutiny to another inequitable system—the criminal justice system. What to do in response may not have been completely clear, but the need to do something was undeniable, and many took to the streets to demand change.

These pivotal events occurred shortly after our program began delving into the concept of activism, in support of a sober assessment of our capacity to produce equity-centered educational leaders. The inhumanity and injustice of George Floyd's murder fueled the urgency of our discussion and similar discussions happening elsewhere. Educators from kindergarten through the college level joined with students and colleagues to identify system-wide changes that could yield "more equitable outcomes for all students, regardless of race or ethnicity" (Wise, 2021, p. 107). Long-standing conversations about social justice and equity brought activism to the forefront—not as a superficial Band-Aid, but the kind of activism that comprehensively considers community members' shared responsibility "to recognize structural inequalities in ways that prepare us to change them" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 2).

EdD programs are distinctly suited to this work. Like many institutions affiliated with the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), we require students to complete dissertations in practice (DiPs), demonstrating their responsibility as scholarly practitioners to pursue social justice in their communities (Perry, 2012; Shulman, 2005). The Fall 2019 CPED convening theme, *Interaction & Activism in the Education Doctorate*, invited us to another level: whereas *social justice* can be "diluted, trivialized or co-opted" (Cochran-Smith, 2010, p. 445), *activism* is bolder, suggesting a path for moving students' DiPs beyond technical or managerial topics (Charest, 2019; Fulmer & Bodner, 2017) to focus on systemic inequities.

Program-wide conversations leading up to, during, and following the convening acknowledged examples of surface-level or late-stage social justice connections in our students' DiPs while highlighting how some students enter the program predisposed to engage in equity work. By surveying our CPED peers during a convening session, we developed a tentative framework for meeting students where they are and promoting their growth as EdD-activists (Becton et al., 2020), yet the lack of data from our *own* program troubled us. As facilitators of the session that gave rise to the CPED-wide framework, we saw a need to ask ourselves the same questions we had posed to others to determine what EdD-activism

means to us and for our program.

This task, although smaller in scope, was strikingly complex. As in Cochran-Smith's (2010) effort to theorize teacher education for social justice, we saw complex and interconnected aims with implications for our practice. Just as a DiP centers on a problem of practice (PoP), a job-embedded dissatisfaction demanding urgent action (Ma et al., 2018), we faced a context-specific challenge: we needed to deepen students' commitments to social justice in ways that would be more discernible in their dissertations—and more likely to impact communities beset by racial tensions, economic woes, and other inequities. Our program offers an EdD in Educational Practice and Innovation with a concentration on Curriculum Studies. Our students are mostly K–12 teachers, some are higher education faculty, and others have administrative roles in both settings. Occasionally, we have students who work in corporate, military, or health settings. As educators, they all navigate daily challenges to improve the learning experiences and outcomes of their own students. While eager to address these challenges in their dissertations, they seldom see themselves as activists and agents of change. Moreover, they often view their PoPs solely from an academic lens whereas we strive to prepare them to function as education activists.

This essay describes our development of a programmatic framework for EdD-activism in response to this PoP. Aspiring toward more impactful practice, we adopted the same pose expected of EdD students (Ravitch, 2014). After discussing scholarship that guided our approach, we share our effort to augment our program's social justice emphasis with a more precise and personalized focus on activism.
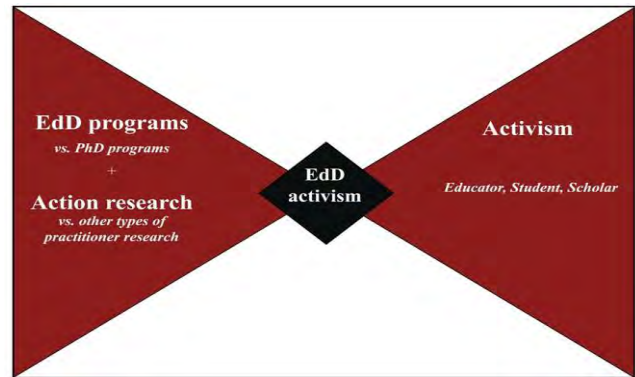
BACKGROUND

Conceptualizing EdD-activism required engaging its constituent concepts: EdD and activism. Activists operate outside of EdD programs, and EdD programs function without activist-oriented frameworks. To merge these concepts in ways that would expand our graduates' capacity to serve as change agents, we consulted related scholarship, bolstered by Cochran-Smith's (2010) three-part framework for social justice teacher education. To arrive at a theory of teacher education for social justice, Cochran-Smith first articulated a theory of justice and a theory of practice, cognizant of their overlap. Similarly, this section surveys existing understandings of the EdD and activism, and Figure 1 illustrates the concepts' interdependent nature. Rather than beginning with activism to parallel Cochran-Smith's initial focus on justice, we start by exploring the EdD—the existing entity we sought to transform.

The Education Doctorate

Distinct from PhD programs, EdD programs cater to practitioners positioned to apply their learning in real time, gleaning knowledge for the sake of change, as opposed to for knowledge's sake (Arslan-Ari et al., 2018). Such an orientation requires EdD students to identify as researchers and educational leaders, or *scholarly practitioners* in CPED parlance, yet dominant conceptions of research can inhibit that process (Buss & Avery, 2017; Dailey et al., 2016). The history of practitioner research highlights teachers' tendency to feel more comfortable consuming rather than producing research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Corey, 1952), reinforced by

Figure 1. EdD-activism at the Overlap of Existing Concepts

methodological critiques of educators' alleged inability to meet rigorous scientific standards (Hodgkinson, 1957; Huberman, 1996; Kemmis, 1980; Wiles, 1953). Thus, EdD programs must make research applicable and accessible to students, endowing them with sufficient scholarly confidence to obtain the degree.

However, cultivating scholarly practitioners without focusing on equity risks reinforcing the status quo (Weiler & Lomotey, 2021). By definition, "Practitioner researchers draw upon their identities and experiences to question established systems and create more equitable arrangements" (Simon et al., 2012, p. 9), yet EdD students and their mentors must balance institutional expectations for terminal degree-seekers with these guiding principles. Like some CPED colleagues, we pursue that equilibrium via action research (Buss, 2018), a version of practitioner research flexible enough to serve a diverse population of educators and historically employed for social justice aims (Neilsen, 2006). According to Beaulieu (2013), action researchers are "not necessarily scholars who are trained in research, or activists who understand political maneuvering," but rather, people "struggling with [local] power structures" and seeking collaborative solutions (p. 34). By meeting students in that middle ground, where PoPs surface, we can gradually encourage them to identify as scholars *and* activists.

Activism

An extensive review of literature on activism is beyond the scope of this essay, but three subtopics help situate EdD-activism: educator activism, student activism, and scholar-activism.

Educator Activism

Although *teacher activism* may be a more familiar phrase, *educator activism* is inclusive of our program's diverse population. Looking beyond isolated, individual actions, Valdez et al. (2018) conceptualized the latter term as "*struggle for* rather than only *resistance against*" (p. 246), a distinction that might guide EdD students to see beyond their dissertations. Recognizing the common roots of their PoPs could illuminate the societal implications of their action research. Similarly, Sachs (2000) described practitioner research as "shared inquiry into patterns of practice," foundational to the collective project of "activist professionalism" (p. 89). Across both texts, activism is integral—as much about *being* as *doing*.

Even so, we recognize the copious scholarship on the history of teacher activism, exploring seemingly discrete instances with broad

resonance. Fultz (1995) identified a clear pattern of Black teacher activism in the U.S. South prior to World War II, echoed in Alridge's (2020) compelling account of teacher activism during the civil rights movement, which itself acknowledged the potential ripple effect in contemporary classrooms. Even more direct, Hale (2019) attributed recent teacher strikes to 20th-century antecedents: the efforts of Black educators in the segregated and notoriously anti-union South, who "tilled the soil for larger movements" (p. 854). Likewise, Baker's (2011) earlier study of Black educators in the mid-20th century articulated their then-overlooked role in the long civil rights movement—including their inspiration of nascent student-activists. Focusing on two such teachers, and examining gender as well as race, Ramsey (2012) illustrated how leadership experiences furthered their activist aims and reflected "caring as a form of activism" (p. 262). D'Amico's (2017) work on teacher organizing in the early 1900s also employed a gendered lens, elucidating the harmony of women's economic and social interests. Existing scholarship thus outlines the legacies EdD-activists can inherit—and maintain.

Departing from traditional historiography, Loder-Jackson (2011) adopted a multigenerational approach, interviewing a broad sample of Black educators in Birmingham, Alabama to consider how activism evolves. The participants contrasted "the activism heralded during the 1960s (e.g., marches, sit-ins, organized protests)" with "more subtle and at times, clandestine activism" (Loder-Jackson, 2011, p. 163). Their nuanced views, shaped by distinct histories, manifested in their everyday practice, showcasing "activist strategies in their own right" (Loder-Jackson, 2011, pp. 164–165).

Other empirical studies of contemporary educator activism exhibit a range of methods, from Collay's (2010) life history of teacher leaders' origins, which positioned activism as a combination of commitment and capacity; to Gilbert's (2021) intentionally participatory approach; to DeMatthews and Tarlau's (2019) unique focus on activist principals, which also illustrates the global reach of educator activism. Race, gender, and class continue to motivate 21st-century educator activism (Brown & Stern, 2018; Lund, 2003; Picower, 2012), which also has discipline-specific variations (Kokka, 2018) and distinct policy catalysts (Warren & Ward, 2020). Despite consistent emphasis on grassroots efforts, scholars have also attended to teacher educators' responsibilities for inspiring and supporting activism, focusing primarily on pre-service programs (Ho, 2015; Montaño et al., 2002; Riley & Solic, 2017). A notable exception, Sachs (2000) called for "new kinds of teacher educators, new cultures in schools of education, and altered university structures" to fuse activism and professionalism (p. 92).

Student Activism

Scholarship on student activism can also inform EdD-activism, reinforcing our roles as teacher educators and recognizing EdD students' vulnerability within institutional hierarchies. Unsurprisingly, undergraduates loom large in this literature (e.g., Logan et al., 2017; Reynolds & Mayweather, 2017), yet Dodd and Mizrahi (2017) illuminated how social work graduate programs can be conducive to activism, and other scholars have described how activism can be an important outlet for marginalized graduate students (Cadenas et al., 2022; Lantz et al., 2016; Phelps-Ward, 2021). We see the same potential for EdD programs.

Reflection is one means of moving students along "the continuum from problem identifying to problem solving" (Jacoby,

2017, p. 4). Acknowledging the danger of inertia, Cabrera et al. (2017) outlined several reflective prompts for helping students avoid *slacktivism*, activism's ineffectual, performative impostor. Much like Valdez et al.'s (2018) emphatically nuanced definition of educator activism, Cabrera et al. (2017) insisted that students envision the broader social resonance of their "localized actions" (p. 8). Similarly, Cole and Heinecke's (2020) critical discourse analysis of campus activists' demands surfaced their self-identification as both outsiders and insiders and their view of higher education as both "a flawed community" and "a potential site of re-birth and revolution on a societal scale" (p. 102), paradoxes on par with the complex work of scholarly practitioners.

Scholar-Activism

As doctoral students, scholarly practitioners also share common ground with their PhD counterparts and faculty mentors, making EdD-activism a form of scholar-activism, which necessitates an audience. Preferring the term *activist scholarship*, Davis et al. (2019) applied it to "researchers with a desire to put their scholarship to work in service of the marginalized" (p. 94). Although the quality criteria they proposed were designed for higher education faculty, EdD-activists can benefit from the guidance to employ intersectional analyses and remain "grounded in the work of activism […] rather than simply the words" (Davis et al., 2019, pp. 99–100). EdD students are less likely to experience the ivory-tower pressures Davis et al. and others have decried (Flood et al., 2013; Grey, 2013; Smith, 2007), yet those in K–12 spaces certainly risk backlash, further reinforcing our protective responsibilities (Dunn, 2016).

Other texts expound on such tensions, like the intense emotionality and blurred boundaries of scholar-activism (Askins, 2009; Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020; Couture, 2017). Describing the painstaking task of cultivating and maintaining community support, Cook (2014) warned of the "sacrifice, vulnerability, and accountability" (p. 221) required of scholar-activists. As insiders, EdD students may be less prone to some of these challenges, but fellow scholar-activists' accounts could be instructive, modeling autoethnographic and reflexive coping mechanisms (Hughes, 2020; Valente, 2019).

OUR PROCESS

Constructing a program-specific framework for EdD-activism enabled us "to model the commitment to continuous improvement that we seek to build in students while also learning from the process ourselves" (Leach et al., 2020, p. 15). We took a pragmatic approach, cognizant that knowledge is experiential and therefore socially constructed (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). We three authors began in earnest in April 2020 by forming a committee devoted to the EdD-activism framework; establishing a shared space for cloud storage; and scheduling virtual meetings the first, second, and third Tuesday of each month, knowing we would be accountable to our colleagues during program-wide virtual meetings at the end of each month. In addition to the background literature we reviewed, self-study scholarship also guided us, such as LaBoskey's (2009) application of a social justice framework to a course for pre-service teachers and Ritter et al.'s (2019) endeavor to foster students' critical inquiry.

In May 2020, we developed an anonymous digital survey (Figure 2). Before posing the questions to our colleagues, we first answered them within our group to ensure the instrument's accessibility and alignment with our aims. Intrigued by the range of

Figure 2. Initial Survey Questions

1. Discuss your understanding of activism. What does it look like? What does it encompass?
2. How would you describe the EdD degree? In other words, how is an EdD different from other degrees (M.Ed., Ph.D., etc.)?
3. How, if at all, does the addition of the EdD- prefix to the term activism (i.e., to create a new term, EdD-activism) influence your view of activism?
4. Based on your interpretation of the term EdD-activism, how is it similar or different from other forms of activism?
5. What do you think are the characteristics or attributes of an EdD-activist?
6. Do you see our students as activists? Why or why not?
7. Do you see yourself as an activist? Why or why not?
8. What additional ideas would you like to share with the committee at this time?

our responses in this pilot phase, we made no changes before distributing the survey to our colleagues, assuring, "We want to include your voice in this work," and noting, "The questions are all open-ended, so feel free to share as little or as much as you want." Five of seven colleagues (71%) completed the survey.

In June 2020, we individually coded the survey data and met to discuss, combine, and refine our codes, enacting collaborative constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2009). Rather than expecting to eliminate all biases, we sought committee-wide (and ultimately program-wide) consensus, achieved with respect to everyone's views (Anderson et al., 2016). Agreeing to a holistic approach motivated by conceptual clusters (Aronson, 2017), each of us made an initial pass to identify salient ideas within and across responses, note any patterns for each question, and arrange similar patterns in categorical groups. We had gone through a smaller-scale version of this process with our own responses prior to disseminating the survey link. Table 1 illustrates Elizabeth's approach, using one participant's response to one question.

This complex, iterative work extended into July, and as anticipated, we observed both shared and divergent understandings of EdD-activism and its constituent concepts. Using one of the more straightforward questions, Table 2 exemplifies our efforts to reach consensus. Some colleagues questioned the need for EdD-activism as a distinct concept, suggesting activism is inherent in education and that all activism is equity-oriented. Others indicated the new terminology would not require much change on our parts, given our reputation as a social justice program. Few colleagues voiced concern. However, rather than dismiss the survey response that prompted Elizabeth's use of the code "unwelcome change" as an outlier, we redoubled our commitment to consensus.

At the committee level, continually juxtaposing our analyses yielded, for example, five major descriptors our program associates with activism: (a) voluntary, (b) goal-oriented, (c) service-oriented, (d) equity-focused, and (e) change-seeking. Hitting a word-choice impasse, we drafted two possibilities: "intentional engagement in service to, for, and/or with others to promote equity and improve the lived experience for a group or an individual" or "choosing to engage in service to, for, and/or with others to promote equity to improve the lived experience of a group or an individual." Using the same procedure, we proposed a programmatic definition of the EdD as "a unique, terminal degree for those who intend to improve, transform, or better understand educational practice through the application of theory, research methods, and collaboration with stakeholders in diverse educational contexts." Finally, we posed a definition of EdD-activism: "a personal decision to apply advanced knowledge of

Table 1. Example of Elizabeth's Coding Process

Process	Output
Raw Data for Question 1—*Discuss your understanding of activism. What does it look like? What does it encompass?*	My understanding of activism is broad encompassing actions (sometimes strong, vigorous and sometimes more low key) related to making a difference or encouraging changes in one's setting, community, region, state, nation, etc. While social justice is a focus in our program, activism can focus on social justice as well as other areas to encourage better practices for the greater good (or that is the hope—it can also be used negatively).
Reduced/Coded Data—using bold for key phrasing, italics to indicate paraphrasing or naming the observed concept, and colors to show commonality with other respondents	o requires **actions (sometimes strong, vigorous and sometimes more low key)** i.e., *varies in style* o *aim* = **making a difference** or **encouraging changes** in one's setting, community, region, state, nation, etc. (i.e., *varies in scope*) o **can focus on social justice** o *aim* = **to encourage better practices for the greater good (or that is the hope--it can also be used negatively)**
Example of a Category—creating a conceptual cluster of multiple codes from looking across participants' responses and drawing on the analytical paraphrasing/naming illustrated above	**Aim/Impact of Activism** • (social/political) change • awareness • betterment (better/greater good) • equity • making a difference • better practices • de-marginalization

critical theory, research, and practice to resolve injustices or inequities through collaboration with diverse communities."

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Table 2. Assemblage of Analyses

Survey Question	Elizabeth's Analysis	Suha's Analysis	Yasha's Analysis
3. How, if at all, does the addition of the EdD- prefix to the term activism (i.e., to create a new term, EdD-activism) influence your view of activism?	**Improvement** -Moves students/faculty forward -Adds skills, theory, perspectives, knowledge -Intentionality -Adds a degree	**Nature of activism** -Move students on a continuum -Become an agent of change -Faculty support the development of strong action plans in the real world	-Embedded in theory, skills, and knowledge related to education -Incorporates critical feedback from peers and professors -Primary focus on education or educational reform -Provides a focus for the degree
	Qualifier -Implies a focus for the activism -Implies a process -Implies who is engaged in activism -Program implications (refines our mission)	**Activism grounded in scholarly practice** -Linked to theory and concepts -Linked to socio-cultural historical understanding -Linked to the doctoral degree	As a possible complement to social justice theme
	No change -Activism is inherent in education -All activism is a/b equity -Not different -Needs a context		-Uncertainty around what it means -Disagreement about the use -Not necessarily needed because the emphasis is inherent in the degree
	Unwelcome change		

Figure 3. Follow-Up Survey Questions

Activism

Definition 1: Activism is intentional engagement in service to, for, and/or with others to promote equity and improve the lived experience for a group or an individual.

OR

Definition 2: Activism is choosing to engage in service to, for, and/or with others to promote equity to improve the lived experience of a group or an individual.

1. Do you see yourself in either of these definitions of Activism?
   a. Yes, I prefer the first one.
   b. Yes, I prefer the second one.
   c. No, I do not see myself in either definition.
2. Are these definitions compatible with our program's commitment to social justice?
   a. Yes
   b. No
3. Use this free-response space to add ideas you would like to share at this time:

EdD

The EdD is a unique, terminal degree for those who intend to improve, transform, or better understand educational practice through the application of advanced knowledge of theory, research, and practice in diverse contexts.

4. Does this definition reflect your understanding of the degree?
5. Use this free-response space to add ideas you would like to share at this time:
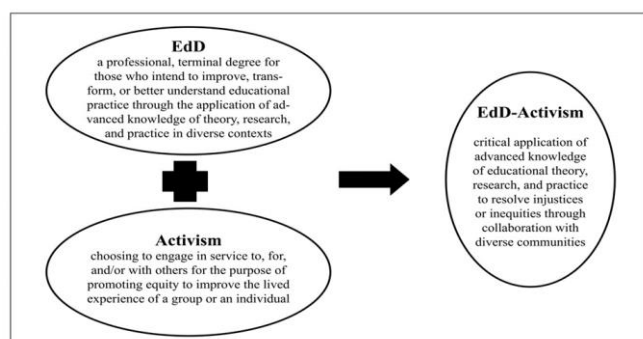
EdD-activism

EdD-activism is a personal decision to apply advanced knowledge of critical theory, research, and practice to resolve injustices or inequities through collaboration with diverse communities.

6. Does this definition of EdD-activism reflect your understanding of the term?

These definitions anchored a second anonymous survey (Figure 3), which we distributed to our colleagues in August 2020. Akin to member-checking (Merriam, 2009), this approach, like our no-outliers policy, fostered democratic validity (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The survey's preface emphasized the definitions' "tentative" status and informed our peers, "we want to ensure these definitions reflect your contributions and invite any additional comments." Again, five of seven colleagues (71%) completed the follow-up survey, but 100% participated in the subsequent focus group we conducted to examine the results.

Using a structured protocol (National School Reform Faculty, 2004), we acted as facilitators and note-takers, rather than participants, inviting our colleagues to "notice" and "wonder" in response to the follow-up survey data, which indicated total agreement for Questions 1, 2, and 4 and 80% in favor of Question 6 (See Figure 3). Along with the open-ended responses to Questions 3, 5, and 7 as possible discussion starters, the focus group instructions articulated our intentional selection of the protocol to focus the group's attention, respect everyone's time, welcome all voices, and ensure a supportive atmosphere. The virtual meeting platform, which enabled recording and transcription, also served our needs through the chat box and hand-raise features. Although our colleagues were reticent during the "noticing" phase, likely because of the consensus reflected in the data and the unfamiliar protocol, as we transitioned to the "wondering" phase, every faculty member spoke. Our committee's subsequent reflection throughout September and October yielded the modified definitions in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Program-Specific Understandings

APPLICATIONS

As we reflected on our journey, Suha noted how our colleagues' remarks during the focus group "echoed the discussions we've had," and Yasha reiterated, "We're more on the same page than not, suggesting we can embrace this as a program and incorporate it in what we're already doing." However, although we had learned a lot about ourselves and each other through near-weekly conversations about activism, we did not want our committee to be a bubble. Intentional application of the framework was vital to transcend the committee's boundaries.

For example, Suha redesigned a course on curriculum leadership to integrate social justice and activism. Instead of focusing on leadership theories in advance of students' generating their own position statements, the course extended students' repertoires as change agents. First, students reviewed, summarized, and synthesized literature on leadership, activism, and social justice in separate groups and presented their knowledge to the class through screencasts. Second, regrouped with *experts* from the other groups, they prepared virtual panel discussions of their vision of the interplay among these constructs in educational settings. Taking ownership of their learning while making connections to their practice, students shared their and complemented each other's knowledge, embedding their insights in collective artifacts (Hecker, 2012). As in previous years, students submitted individual leadership position statements—but in relation to activism and social justice.

Additionally, realizing the need for students' perspectives on the EdD-activism framework and sensing a high level of student engagement in the redesigned curriculum leadership course, Suha initiated a participatory action research (PAR) study with volunteer students to explore how the framework might look from their positionalities and unveil both strengths in our program that cultivate change agents and challenges that need addressing. Initially, nine students volunteered to participate in the study, but due to busy schedules and work commitments, only three persisted. Mirroring the work of our committee, the PAR study group responded to a survey geared toward their views as graduating students on EdD-Activism. Based on the survey data, the group developed a definition of EdD-Activism and generated a list of EdD-Activism attributes to turn into a framework. Additionally, they reflected on the coursework that strengthened their understanding of social justice. Data analysis is still ongoing, but the group hopes to share their findings and reflections with the program faculty and in other avenues.

Likewise inspired by our group, Elizabeth intentionally adapted some of the program's dissertation-embedded courses. In an introductory action research course in which students begin to draft a tentative prospectus, assigning DeJaynes and Curmi-Hall's (2019) illustration of youth activism helped students imagine more radical possibilities for their own eventual projects. Providing a blueprint worksheet later in the term placed such possibilities even more in reach: the resource cites the programmatic definition of activism and encourages students to articulate how their current best thinking about a potential dissertation topic reflects such a commitment.

In a course on curriculum inquiry, wherein students draft research designs, the new definitions also proved useful, informing a syllabus rife with examples of activist-oriented research. Such texts reinforced action research principles while highlighting relevant methodological skills: Upton's (2020) endorsement of decolonial, co-conspiring approaches; Rademaker's (2021) conversation about feminist lenses; and vivid illustrations of critical data collection techniques (e.g., Asakura et al., 2020; Caraballo & Lyiscott, 2020). Discussing these texts with peers and applying pertinent insights to individual assignments, students demonstrated their capacity to connect their learning from content-focused courses to the not-so-neutral methodological logistics of a DiP.

Beyond these individual efforts, our work also led to three distinct program-wide shifts. First and foremost, as a program, we experienced the benefits of collaboration, in contrast to our prior habit of working in isolation, a byproduct of the program's asynchronous online format. As Drago-Severson et al. (2020) argued, team members are better positioned to meet one another where they are and unite as individuals committed to shared goals when they give voice to their commonalities and differences. Our increased interaction around EdD-activism has led to joint publications and presentations, thus benefiting individual faculty members and the
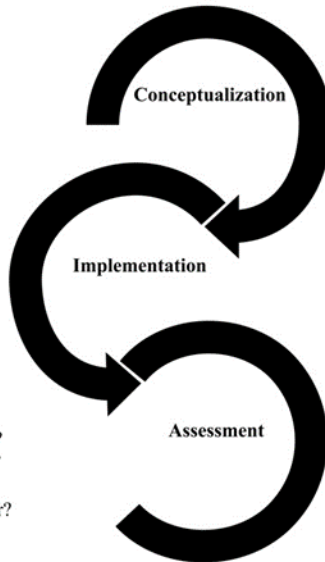
Figure 5. Overall Aims

OVERARCHING WONDERING: How can we help our students become EdD Activists?

Conceptualization Wonderings:

• What is EdD-Activism?
• What does it look like?
• How is it similar to/different from other forms of activism?
• What are the characteristics or attributes of an EdD-Activist?

Conceptualization

Implementation

Assessment

Implementation Wonderings:

• What does/might activism have to do with our existing courses?
• Which courses or program experiences are most conducive to EdD-Activism?
• How can we thread EdD-Activism throughout the program?

Assessment Wonderings:

• What is the ideal impact of EdD-Activism?
• How can we measure our and our students' growth?
• What quality indicators should we consider?

overall program. The collaborative work even led to revamping our admissions process.

Second, our small-group meetings demonstrated the need for more intentional dialogue about program objectives. To that end, monthly program meetings during the 2021–2022 school year included a book study of *Is Everyone Really Equal?* (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017), which prompted strategic conversations on critical social justice. Each month, different faculty members led a discussion around designated chapters. To extend this dialogue to students, we adopted the book as the primary text for one of our introductory courses.

Third, our increased communication also spurred more intentional communication with students, anchored by an equity statement based on program-wide faculty input. Students sign a copy upon entering the program and see the pledge in each course syllabus. The statement thus conveys our unified commitment to equity, social justice, and activism.

Despite these promising examples, we recognize that developing a program-wide conceptualization of EdD-activism was but the first step in a longer process of resolving our PoP. Therefore, reminiscent of continuous cycles of action research, Figure 5 also recalls Cochran-Smith's (2010) recognition of the interconnected theoretical complexities of teacher education. The journey continues.

NEXT STEPS

Our early committee meetings followed a loose protocol, designed to ease us into the complexities of our shared task: What have we done? What now? What next? This essay adopted a similar structure: we articulated the process through which we arrived at a shared understanding of EdD-activism, our ongoing efforts to implement that understanding in our everyday practice, and our clear-eyed view of our unfinished journey toward the social justice associated with high-quality EdD programs (Weiler & Lomotey, 2021).

Among our long-term goals, we hope to synthesize the results of the PAR study with the faculty-driven framework into an action plan to guide continued reflection on the courses we offer to enrich students' learning about social justice and activism.

We consider our fellow CPED members partners in this regard and encourage readers to adapt our working model of EdD-activism to their own contexts or engage in similar processes to construct their own program-specific understandings. The collective project of EdD-activism is never done because teacher education, like the world at large, is ever becoming (Cuenca, 2010; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Indeed, our program has experienced an ebb and flow of students and faculty members since *EdD-activism* first entered our lexicon. Although we have learned that consensus is a journey, we must invite others to walk with us and be willing to explore new paths they illuminate.

NOTE

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