

# Taking an Institutional and Programmatic Pause to Incorporate the Value Proposition in a Mixed Evaluation Approach to Evaluating the EdD Program

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## Introduction

We start this chapter with the cultural and indigenous context setting that is valued by the authors in answering the question, “Who you?” Not what is your name and academic pedigree, but who are you in terms of your ancestral knowledge, beliefs, mindset, and biases juxtaposed with Western, professional, and life experiences, and brought to the act of evaluating? Both authors come from an ancestral knowledge base that is rooted in family, places, and communities represented by a range and mixture of ethnicity (e.g., Hawaiian, Japanese, East Indian), societal (e.g., plantation, rural, urban, international), professional (e.g., academic, business, education, health, criminal justice, government), and life experiences. “O ke kahua ma mua, ma hope ke kūkulu” (the foundation comes first and then the building) (Pukui #2459)—learn all you can, then practice—is the ‘ōlelo no‘eau (proverb or wise saying in Hawaiian) chosen to frame the foundation-setting work needed to establish the value proposition approach of evaluation to the University of Hawai‘i (UH) EdD program.

Using this frame, we think that any valuing of the EdD program needs to ask these questions: What is the foundation upon which the EdD program is built? How does it help the community? How does it strengthen the family? How does it help Hawai‘i? How does it help the student?

Evaluation is derived from the French verb *évaluer*, meaning “to value.” An evaluation can have many purposes, including assessing the merit and worth of an intervention, improving an organization or program, performing oversight and compliance, and promoting knowledge development (Henry, Julnes and Mark 2000). In this chapter, we bring a mixed approaches lens to develop a framework to evaluate the EdD program. We argue that bringing an explicit process of “valuing” can, in itself, enhance the value of the program. Our own cultural backgrounds guide us to raise fundamental questions on values. Key questions that

emerge from our frame include “What is the foundation needed?” and “How can we measure the value of such foundations?”

The EdD program seeks to prepare professionals in leadership roles in education and other settings. Consider the goal of the EdD program from the UH College of Education’s website: “The Education Doctorate in Professional Educational Practice (EdD) is in line with the call from the American Educational Research Association (AERA) to offer advanced degrees of professional practice that are distinct from doctoral research degrees in education. Doctorates in professional educational practice are advanced degree programs aimed *at preparing professionals for leadership roles at all levels of education, as well as in other positions where the main interest is the application of research in education settings*” (emphasis added).

Our goal in this paper is to develop an initial framework for how to evaluate the EdD program. We restrict ourselves to conceptual issues and introduce ideas that help argue for the need for multiple evaluation approaches. We do not focus on the actual design or data needs to conduct the evaluation.

## Evaluation Question and Stakeholders—the Different Roles of Evaluations

We make three arguments in this chapter. Our first contention is that evaluation can help understand the value of the EdD program. Second, such evaluation needs to be informed by multiple approaches that incorporate diverse ways of valuing, including indigenous lenses. A third argument is that evaluation itself can add value to the EdD program. We argue for a mixed set of evaluation approaches. These evaluation approaches can help us determine the value of the EdD program, but also the explicit act of evaluating can add value to the program (by improving and further developing the program).

We argue that the evaluation of the EdD program at the University of Hawai'i provides a unique opportunity to explore the mechanisms by which an "intervention" such as the EdD program can lead towards enhanced leadership through an application of research in education settings.

A key focus of our paper is our view that the EdD program needs to be evaluated using multiple lenses. These lenses need to correspond to different needs that stakeholders might have of the evaluation. For example, university administrators, such as the dean of the College of Education, might want to know what the impacts of the EdD program are and in what tangible ways is the program achieving its goals.

However, such a focus on impacts needs to be complemented with clarity on the "theory" of the intervention (Pawson et al. 2004; Pawson and Sridharan 2009; Pawson 2013; Sridharan and Nakaima 2011). Note that the claim that applications of research are associated with enhanced leadership in education settings is a theory that needs to be tested. A few evaluative questions emerge in taking a theory-driven lens to evaluating the EdD program: What are the mechanisms by which an application of research can lead towards enhanced leadership or towards better outcomes for students, schools, and communities? What support structures and contexts are necessary for the application of research to lead towards leadership or better outcomes for students, schools, and communities? Are there unintended outcomes and displacement effects as a result of focusing on research as a means of enhancing leadership? Answering all of these questions requires a theoretical frame that can help address the question of how an EdD program actually brings about leadership through research.

The documents, brochures, and website that support the EdD program provide descriptions of the aspirations of the program. The basic pathways by which a journey from providing face-to-face coursework, participation in a field-based project, and completing a dissertation actually leads towards enhanced leadership in the field still need to be described, or surfaced. The evaluation provides a chance to build such a theory of change.

A theory of change typically connects program activities to outputs to outcomes. It also makes explicit the risks and assumptions that underlie an intervention such as the EdD program and describes the contexts and mechanisms that underlie such a journey. As far as we are aware, no such

framework with explicit clarity on the mechanisms and assumptions exists that describes how the EdD program impacts leadership outcomes.

The above two goals—a focus on impacts and a focus on theory of change—provide an instrumental focus on addressing the following two questions: Does the intervention work? If so, how does it work? There is also a more fundamental question of values and principles: How did the values and principles that guided the intervention such as the EdD program help achieve its outcomes?

A more recent use of evaluation is to help develop the intervention itself. Developmental evaluation starts with the proposition that in complex systems and complex societies, most interventions are incomplete (Patton 2010). They need to be developed over time based on the values and principles of the key stakeholders, in this case, the students themselves. Given that the intervention is being developed and delivered in an indigenous society with mixed populations, it is vital that the evaluation framework incorporate indigenous perspectives within it. The EdD program is envisioned by its primary designers and champion to be a social intervention for leadership in education in Hawai'i. Now that two cohorts of students, with a large majority being indigenous, have completed the EdD program, it is vital to also pause and reflect on whether the program as planned is consistent with indigenous perspectives and values—both of what constitutes leadership and what constitutes research—and to better understand indigenous perspectives on the conditions under which research can lead towards enhanced leadership.

### *Initial Steps: Towards a Framework of Evaluation*

One starting point in this "pause and reflect" is to define what *success* means to the multiple stakeholders. How do different stakeholders involved with the EdD program, including the community, education leadership, the dean, the chair, and the students, view the short-term and long-term successes of the program? In what specific ways are the views of success informed by indigenous perspectives? The two cohorts of students provide an especially rich opportunity to explore what "success" of the EdD program means to them and how their own views of success have changed over time. It is important that success not be defined purely at the individual level; eventually an EdD program like this one aspires to bring about changes in schools, education systems, and communities.

The following four principles have helped to guide the planning for this degree. The preparation of quality educators in professional practice should

- ❖ take place, as far as possible, in the context of thinking and acting as a leader in the profession;
- ❖ be conducted in ways that provide opportunities for individuals to work collaboratively in solving problems and implementing appropriate plans of action;
- ❖ include opportunities for the development and application of inquiry skills so that practitioners can apply their research skills to bring about improvements in practice; and
- ❖ provide opportunities in critical and ethical reflection on matters of educational importance.

*Table 1. Planning Principles Guiding Development of EdD Degree*

As a first step, it would be useful to create “space” for individuals to reflect on what success means to them and how those views have changed over time. Note that such an exercise provides the basis for a summative focus, a theory-driven approach as well as a developmental one. At a summative level, clarifying views of success can help define measures to assess if the program was successful. From a theory-driven evaluation approach, a focus on success helps bring clarity on the pathways by which the EdD can lead to success. At a developmental level, it provides the basis for the EdD program planners to better understand what else needs to happen in order to achieve success based on different stakeholders’ values and perspectives.

As a second step, we would develop, in close collaboration with the multiple stakeholders, a theory of change that can help describe the pathways by which the EdD program can achieve the multiple outcomes. As noted earlier, a theory of change provides the opportunity to understand the mechanisms by which an intervention such as the EdD program can bring about change. A theory of change also provides an opportunity to reflect on whether the program as presently implemented and delivered is consistent with the principles guiding its development. Table 1 describes the principles that guided the development of the EdD program.

It is vital in the evaluation process to reflect on the mechanisms by which the EdD is presently structured to actualize these principles. For example, are opportunities for critical and ethical reflections on matters of educational

importance being provided to students? Further, a theory of change is an opportunity to connect such principles and mechanisms to outcomes. Some of the pertinent questions that a theory of change can address include “What does leadership mean and what are the consequences of critical and ethical reflections?” Similar questions can also be asked of other EdD guiding principles. Examples include raising questions on the consequences of working collaboratively to solve problems and applying inquiry skills in practice settings. The critical idea here is we need to move beyond buzz words like collaborative, ethics, critical thinking, and inquiry skills, towards concretely and measurably reflecting on what these mean in practice.

A theory of change will also challenge us to be explicit about the assumptions that link our activities to intended outcomes (Sridharan and Nakaima 2011). For example, one assumption that is worth exploring is whether the guiding principles sufficiently capture indigenous perspectives on collaboration, ethics, and inquiry skills.

### ***Developmental Evaluation: Reconfiguring Future Versions of the EdD Program***

A third approach which we believe is entirely compatible with an impact orientation as well as a theory-of-change focus is developmental evaluation (Patton 2010). A developmental evaluation engages the range of stakeholders to further develop an intervention such as the EdD program. At its heart, the EdD program has an ambitious goal. It is fundamentally about making a difference in practice.

McKegg and Patton (2014) illustrate where and when developmental evaluation is appropriate (14):

<i>Appropriate contexts</i>	<i>Inappropriate contexts</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Highly emergent volatile situations (e.g., the environment is dynamic)</li> <li>❖ Situations that are difficult to plan or predict because the variables and factors are interdependent and nonlinear</li> <li>❖ Situations where there are no known solutions to issues, new issues entirely, and/or no certain ways forward</li> <li>❖ Socially complex situations, requiring collaboration among stakeholders from different organizations, systems, and/or sectors</li> <li>❖ Innovative situations, requiring timely learning and ongoing development</li> <li>❖ Situations with unknown outcomes, so vision and values drive processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Situations where people are not able or willing to commit the time to participate actively in the evaluation and to build and sustain relational trust</li> <li>❖ Situations where key stakeholders require high levels of certainty</li> <li>❖ Situations when there is a lack of openness to experimentation and reflection</li> <li>❖ Situations where organizations lack adaptive capacity</li> <li>❖ Situations where key people are unwilling to “fail” or hear “bad news”</li> <li>❖ Situations when there are poor relationships among management, staff and evaluators</li> </ul>

Table 2. *When is Developmental Evaluation Appropriate?*

Developmental evaluation value proposition. Patton, McKegg, and Wehipeihana (2016) note that the developmental evaluation niche focuses on evaluating innovations in complex dynamic environments in which social innovation is at work (Preface). Patton et al. (2016) quote colleague James Radner regarding the value proposition of a developmental evaluation:

The discipline of *evaluation* has something to offer social innovators that can really help them succeed. Developmental evaluation is based on the insight that evaluative thinking, techniques, practice, and discipline can be a boon to social innovation—that data systemically collected and appropriately tied to users’ goals and strategies can make a difference, even in open-ended, highly complex settings where the goals and strategies are themselves evolving. Developmental evaluation has something distinctive to offer through the way it marries empirical inquiry focused on the *innovation* to direct engagement with the *innovator*. What development evaluators do helps innovators advance social change, but it only works when customized to the very special context of each social innovation.” (1)

In the context of the developmental evaluation for the EdD program, a starting point itself is not research for research’s sake, but rather is about reflecting on how research can lead to improved practice. Understanding how this can happen and what else needs to be further developed are the foci of developmental evaluation.

This process by which educational “research” can lead to improved practice is guided by values. This of course implies better understanding the values that drive both the students and the community. The developmental evaluation provides an opportunity to understand the principles and values of stakeholders.

Developmental evaluation can also be helpful in understanding indigenous perspectives on the EdD program. In what specific ways is the EdD program sensitive to indigenous perspectives on leadership? In what way is the program different because of its presence in Hawai‘i? These are fundamental questions of principles and values that could guide the development of the program. And a developmental evaluation provides opportunities to learn from both present and former students, school leadership, and EdD staff, as well as the community.

We think that principles are easy to apply only in sterile, homogeneous conditions. Developmental evaluation is an invitation to explore the heterogeneities of options that can exist based on multiple cultural perspectives.

Culture-based evaluation framework. From native/indigenous Hawaiian kūpuna (elders), it is understood that there is a physical and mystic linking of the body with forbears of old and descendants to come; this linking was believed to be in the piko of the head (i.e., fontanel), of navel and umbilical cord, and of genitals (Pukui et al. 1975, 294). Aligning the proposed program evaluation work to this concept—*nā piko 'ekolu*—provides an evaluation foundation and framework that can guide and frame data collection, discussion, discourse, activities, and actions toward the crafting of a programmatic evaluation and broader developmental evaluation plan, considering the following three *mana'o nui* (big ideas) and possible question prompts:

Past—Where have we come from? What is the program's *mo'okū'auhau* (genealogy, history, background)? What were the intended outcomes of the program and for the participants, in the short term and long term? What impact was hoped for in the program design? How was the program intended to operate as a social innovation or intervention in the education industry/sector in Hawai'i? How did the institution anticipate reciprocal learning from the program? How did the program anticipate success for itself and the participants?

Present—Where are we now? What have been the experiences of and impact on program leadership; program implementation processes; cohort participant experiences; faculty, advisor and community mentor experiences; institution (within college, university, and system); education sector collaborators; and public education as a whole?

Future—Where are we going? How can programmatic data and experiences shape an evaluation of the larger social innovation of leadership in education and educational leadership in Hawai'i? What intersections and systemic elements must be considered in the unique context of Hawai'i where there are constitutionally two official languages—Hawaiian and English?

The cultural framework—*nā piko 'ekolu*—guides the authors to recommend that the way forward to designing and completing a programmatic evaluation begins with an institutional and programmatic pause to consider the systemic implications and bigger picture.

The institutional and programmatic pause would entail an assessment of the current conditions and whether such conditions would support proceeding with a developmental evaluation approach, utilizing a culture-based evaluation framework of the EdD program.

## Discussion

Our contention in this chapter is that each of the above approaches, impact, theory-driven evaluation, and developmental, are necessary to help better understand if the EdD program is working, how it is working, and what further developments are needed to ensure that the program is relevant to its Hawaiian context and the aspirations of leadership and community in Hawai'i. We think that taking a narrow lens that focuses simply on impacts and is driven by the needs of a single stakeholder group, such as the school leadership, for example, can privilege one stakeholder over another.

There are multiple problems with such privileging: there is a need for surfacing of values? A narrow focus on impacts does not do that. There is also the danger that a very narrow impact evaluation does not even focus on theory or impact pathways: there might be limited knowledge at the end of the evaluation about how such a program can benefit the community and the educational system.

Evaluations provide an opportunity to enhance democratic processes in decision-making, and we think one way forward is to involve key stakeholders in the future development of the EdD program. We also think that taking such a pluralistic stance towards evaluation can help recognize that different stakeholders have different perspectives, standpoints, and constraints.

In any long-term process of transformation, short-term wins are often needed, and a summative orientation can help understand what some of the short-term successes and failures of such a complex intervention were. It is useful to recognize that most educational programs focus on activities and outputs; there is rarely understanding of how these activities impact outcomes (that are often aspirational).

A theory-driven evaluation provides an opportunity to better understand the linkages between activities and long-term outcomes as well as the support conditions necessary for these activities to lead towards outcomes.

Perhaps most of all, there is value in recognizing that even our best planned interventions are incomplete and

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in need of further development. The developmental focus helps us understand what else needs to happen to achieve the full potential of a program. Such a developmental perspective is especially necessary given the cultural context of Hawai'i. Given the rich indigenous setting of Hawai'i, it is imperative that the principles also reflect and incorporate that indigenous world view. It is in this light that the developmental evaluation holds promise in ensuring that a program, such as the EdD, explores what leadership, working collaboratively, inquiry skills, and ethical reflection mean through an indigenous lens. Given the heterogeneity of indigenous cultures that exist, in all likelihood, understanding such principles will lead to richness and confusion (in its best sense). We, however, think that such diversity of views can only strengthen a program that serves such a diversity of individuals.

### Conclusions

Finally, we return to the overall goal of the program with its focus on leadership through an application of research. We think it is vital that we ask questions around what is relevant research that is meaningful to bring about meaningful change in societies. Are the traditional/standard academic definitions of rigor sufficient for such goals? How does a view of rigorous research also incorporate the social relevance and the translatability of such research? We think these are questions that a comprehensive evaluation needs to address, and can address, using the pluralistic approaches described in this paper.

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