

Address on the Occasion of the State of Hawai‘i’s Recognition of the Doctor of Education Program at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa by Governor Neil Abercrombie and Lieutenant Governor Shan S. Tsutsui, at the State Capitol Executive Chambers, Honolulu on November 20, 2014

Hunter McEwan

Introduction

Thank you, Governor Abercrombie and Lieutenant Governor Tsutsui, for honoring the graduates of cohort I in this very special way and for giving me the opportunity to tell you about our new doctoral degree at the College of Education (COE) at the University of Hawai‘i. I hope this short address will provide some background to what a professional practice degree is as well as acquainting you with some of the accomplishments of the very first group of graduates of our new EdD—the Doctorate in Professional Educational Practice.

We started planning for the degree in fall semester 2008, and we received Board of Regents’ approval on January 20, 2011. This may seem a long time, but as university degree approvals go it is something akin to Olympic qualifying time, especially for innovative programs like this one. What really helped to speed things along is that we had very strong support from the community—especially from Robert Witt of the Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools (HAIS) and the Hawai‘i Department of Education (DOE) Superintendent, Kathryn S. Matayoshi. Robert Witt expressed the support of both HAIS and DOE leaders in a letter to me dated July 10, 2009: “a professional practice degree program, serving practitioners from public, charter, and private/independent schools, has the potential to catalyze transformational and urgently needed improvements throughout the PK–12 academic community, and possibly inclusive of early childhood education.”

But what helped us to get this program off the ground, and what were our goals in pursuing a degree of this kind? Dean Christine Sorensen gave her strong backing to the degree and was a vital link in connecting the program planning committee with the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). She was also instrumental in securing membership of CPED in 2010 during the second phase

of their ongoing initiative to redesign doctoral preparation for educators. Graduate Division and the office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs also provided their encouragement and support in establishing an EdD that they felt would better address the needs of educators.

Our membership in CPED has been a great help in shaping aspects of the EdD. Participation in a national movement aimed at reforming doctoral education helped legitimate our design and offered frequent opportunities to attend CPED convenings. These meetings provided invaluable networking with other universities addressing similar reforms.

Towards a Professional Practice Doctorate

Early planning for the EdD involved faculty from several departments across the COE as well as educators from public and private schools. The initial planning group included Neil Pateman from Curriculum Studies, Ellen Hoffman from Educational Technology, Jeff Moniz from the Institute for Teacher Education, Ernestine Enomoto and Stacey Roberts from Educational Administration, Marie Iding from Educational Psychology, Lysandra Cook from Special Education, Louise Pagoto of Kapiolani Community College, Steve Shiraki and Robert Campbell from the DOE, Walter Kahumoku from Kamehameha Schools, and Dan White from HAIS. Nathan Murata represented the Dean’s office and the Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Science Department. Hunter McEwan, from the Department of Educational Foundations, chaired the committee.

We held several key meetings in addition to our regular planning sessions. In January 2009, David Imig, the CPED Director, was invited to the College to tell us about developments in practitioner doctoral degrees at other universities across the nation. CPED began in 2007 as an initiative of twenty-three universities across the nation that are looking at EdD reforms along the lines advocated by Lee

Shulman—namely that of distinguishing between doctoral research degrees and professional practice degrees. In 2010, CPED expanded its membership to include an additional twenty-four universities, including the University of Hawai'i. Dean Sorensen and I also met with the University of Hawai'i Council of Chief Academic Officers (CCAOs) to sell the idea of a new degree. As a senior group of university administrators from all UH campuses, it was essential for us to gain their approval to proceed with planning the degree. Their approval was obtained in March 2009.

We also set up some focus group meetings with aim of gathering information for a needs assessment. HAIS set up the first of these meetings at the Pacific Club on May 8, 2009, which was attended by twenty leaders from various independent schools. I provided a brief outline of the program focusing on our aim of building on group projects that engaged students in problems of practice. They were enthusiastic in their response to this approach. Other information meetings were held with the DOE district superintendents, and these meetings also served to disseminate information about the degree.

Of course, not everything went smoothly. The year 2009 was not a good one to seek approval for a new degree. Fall semester—the semester in which we hoped to obtain approval for the degree from the COE Senate—began with a university moratorium on spending and the prospect of cuts across all the departments, with attendant gloomy prognoses and furtive glances around to see who was heading for the chopping block. Not a good time to launch a new degree. In spite of the dean's insistence that it would be financed by program tuition and fees, faculty opposition was strong. However, by spring semester 2010, the fiscal situation seemed to improve and the forces that had held up the approval process began to recede. Finally, on May 14, 2010, at the very last meeting of the COE Congress for the academic year, before we all took our leave of the college for the summer, at a special meeting of the Senate, the EdD was unanimously approved with no abstentions. The delay, although frustrating, proved not to be damaging, and we were able to make quick progress on the next steps of the approval process.

During the summer, the planners got down to work on preparing the EdD proposal for a number of campus-wide reviews, beginning with the university Graduate Council. It went through that process quite speedily and was passed

unanimously by the full council in September. Next, it was on to the VCAA's office, and we were required to add some further refinements to the plan such as the budget and what fees to charge. Sheryl M. Tashima, the COE's Chief Administrative Officer, provided her expertise and was invaluable in helping to develop the program budget and get the proposal into the proper format for review.

The Mānoa Senate review was a challenge, not because they were opposed to the proposal, but because it was difficult to get a quorum. The proposal had passed muster with the Senate Curriculum Committee earlier in the semester, and the final step for faculty approval was to get it on the Mānoa Senate calendar. It would have caused a little less stress if it had passed as scheduled at the November meeting, but it was short a few members, and we had to wait until December 8, which was the last week of instruction and difficult at the best of times for faculty participation in committee matters. Fortunately, there was a decent turn out and the proposal passed, again unanimously, after a few questions from the floor. Earlier on the same day, Dean Sorensen and I attended the CCAO's meeting at College Hill and received their blessing, once Senate approval had been obtained, to proceed to the Board of Regents at their next meeting on January 20, 2011.

Confident as we were of final EdD approval, the EdD committee continued to meet, but now with the goal of actually implementing it. Our ranks were now enhanced by a number of very experienced ex-DOE administrators, including Catherine Payne, Louise Walcott, Karen Maruyama, Diane Iwaota, and Ray Sugai. The expertise of these highly respected administrators was an invaluable addition to the planning group, and the meetings were very helpful in thinking through how we might achieve lift off. Subgroups were then set up to tackle issues such as the role of the advisors, summer coursework, and the consultancy project. These groups were also of great assistance in planning details of and helping to publicize the EdD information meeting for prospective students.

The EdD was officially approved by the Board of Regents at their January 20, 2011 meeting. On January 29, we held the planned information meeting in the Architecture Auditorium. The information meeting was a sell-out, being attended by over one hundred and ten prospective doctoral students. We were now ready for applications and a plan to launch the program with our first

cohort, which would be in Fall 2011. The first semester of the program would be preceded by a brief, week-long program orientation in the summer.

We put out the word and started recruitment for cohort I in January and by April we had received over eighty complete applications. We selected a group of thirty students—anticipating some attrition over the three years of the program. However, only two people dropped out—both of them at the beginning of the program—and the other twenty-eight, to their great credit, saw the program through to graduation. Twenty-three students received their EdD in the summer of 2014 (three years after commencing their studies); the remaining five postponed completion until a later date. Since then a further three have graduated—quite an achievement and a tribute to the efforts of the EdD faculty, mentors, and students.

One of the consequences of our haste in getting the program started was that we were unaware that we required approval from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) as the EdD constituted what they referred to as a “substantive change” to existing programs. We hastily submitted a report and held our first telephone conference with the WASC team on December 5, 2011. I have to admit that we were not as prepared as we should have been at this time, and the WASC interviewers asked us to submit responses to a further set of questions. This motivated us to renewed effort and in this task we were greatly helped by Associate Dean, Beth Pateman. In fall semester 2012, we submitted a much more polished, “substantive change proposal” to WASC. On October 26, 2012, we received official approval from them. We now had a legitimate, WASC-approved doctoral degree. Their report commended the program on five points, including the quality of the report, and recommended to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Reid Dasenbroch, that it be used in future as “an exemplary strong proposal.” Our membership in CPED also met with their approval, and the consultancy project was highlighted as a commendable approach to having students “work together to solve a real problem in educational practice.”

What Makes the EdD a Professional Practice Degree?

So what makes the EdD at Mānoa different from the PhD? From a design perspective PhDs are pretty

rudimentary—just a bunch of courses with a dissertation tacked on at the end. Perfectly okay, I expect, if you’re preparing researchers in academic specializations; but there is plenty of evidence to show that this approach is woefully inadequate in preparing practitioners who wish to advance their professional skills as educators. In addition, major problems arose with PhD programs once students had got beyond the obligatory coursework and were faced with the challenges of gathering together a committee of five faculty, developing a satisfactory research project and dissertation proposal, and then following through with the research. These were especially challenging tasks for full-time educators. A typical experience for people who start work enthusiastically in PhD programs is that they too often simply fade away or else cling on determinedly for years hoping to find time to do the research work required for graduation. In contrast, in the EdD, we aimed at building a challenging doctoral degree that would be professionally transformative and that could be completed in a reasonable amount of time by people who were also in full-time professional work.

So what does a professional practice degree look like? Let me answer that question under three headings: the EdD Curriculum, faculty and mentors, and cohort structure.

The EdD Curriculum

An important guiding principle in our planning was that the preparation of quality educators in professional practice should take place, as far as possible, in the context of thinking and acting as leaders in the profession. Students in the EdD, therefore, complete two major problems of practice over the three years of the program. There is coursework, but this is designed to provide them with the tools (information technology and research methods, for example) to become practitioner researchers—agents of change who are equipped, both technically and methodologically, to bring about improvements in practice. The first project is a group consultancy project; the second is an individual practitioner/action research project (we call it in keeping with CPED terminology, a dissertation in practice—not just a piece of writing completed, but a piece of work implemented). At the end of the program the students present their findings at a specially arranged conference, open to the public. We held the first one at

the East-West Center in July 2014, just a short time before holding our first EdD graduation ceremony.

The consultancy is really a service learning project that benefits the clients by providing them with data that can help them in future decision making. I might add an important point, here—it's a service provided free to the clients. But it also has the important value of being an excellent learning experience. Cohort I completed seven consultancies: one project, for example, evaluated the Character Education program in the Mililani School Complex; another interviewed graduates at Samuel M. Kamakau School to provide feedback to the staff on the strengths and weaknesses of the school's program; and another gained insights into the financial sustainability of small independent schools.

Faculty and Mentors

We could not do this work without partnering with experts in the community. To address this need we were fortunate in obtaining the assistance of both UH faculty advisors and field mentors who teamed to support students in their project work. UH faculty were drawn from different areas of specialization in the College: Jeff Moniz (ITE); Nathan Murata (Kinesiology); Baoyan Cheng and Gay Reed (Educational Foundations); Sarah Twomey (Curriculum Studies); and Truc Nyugen (CRDG).

Our field mentors were drawn from the group of experts who had provided such valuable assistance during the planning stage, and who are all recognized leaders in either public or private schools. Catherine Payne, Louise Walcott, and Steve Shiraki drew on years of experience in the Hawai'i Department of Education; Ruth Fletcher (Punahou); Val Iwashita (Past Head of School at 'Iolani); Dan White (Head of School at Island Pacific Academy); Rod Chamberlain and Walter Kahumoku (Kamehameha Schools); and Lori Ideta (Associate Vice Chancellor of Students at Mānoa) provided key expertise and their knowledge of leadership based on years of experience at their respective institutions.

Cohort structure

One of the great strengths of the program is the cohort model and its diverse make up. Cohort I included experienced teachers and school administrators. We had DOE faculty from Leeward, Windward, Central, and Honolulu

districts and from elementary and secondary schools, and higher education. Two students were based in Hilo and one in Maui, and thirteen out of twenty-eight students were Native Hawaiian. Bringing such a range of experience into working relationships was incredibly synergistic, and this created a high degree of critical reflection in our small group sessions. I think that one of the values of the program that really helped promote this level of collaboration and discussion is that we regarded the students, from the start, not as novice researchers, but as experienced educators. The consultancy project, for example, was based on the assumption that each of the students in a consultancy group had much to offer in the way of educational experience, practical awareness, and initiative.

I could talk about the many conference presentations made by cohort I, the publications that are coming out, but let me give two examples of student-led initiatives. One group made a trip to Aotearoa to study indigenous schools and immersion programs there. They established continuing connections with Maori educators and the EdD program at Auckland University of Technology. One of the results is a strong interest in culturally responsive approaches to education that is continuing with cohort II.

Another initiative is the partnership with Oxford Brookes University in England. The program director at Oxford Brookes noted our program online, thought it was similar to their program, and proposed that we team up and learn from each other. Six of our graduates traveled to Oxford during the early part of summer 2011 to participate in an EdD conference arranged by Oxford Brookes. They made presentations on our program and shared details of their individual EdD research projects. We are planning to reciprocate with a conference in Hawai'i. We'd like it to be focused on the relationship of practitioner research to professional development.

In Conclusion

Cohort I has set a high standard of excellence for future cohorts, and I am happy to report that the twenty-seven students that we selected out of approximately eighty applicants to cohort II, under the direction of my colleague Sarah Twomey, are maintaining the same high standard set by Cohort I.