

What do we mean by Impact?

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ABSTRACT

A history of change efforts by philanthropic agencies and government organizations directed at graduate schools of education has not produced long-term or sustained changes in their form and function. The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), however, has been able to demonstrate that external change efforts can result in change in schools of education when bottom-up efforts are combined with top-down support. Such change is an important "impact" of CPED. In this short essay, the CPED Executive Director and Chairman of the Board provide an overview of CPED's impact and then challenge authors and reader to help CPED further extend the definition of impact as it related to all aspects of the Education Doctorate.

INTRODUCTION

Harry Judges' *American Graduate Schools of Education: A View from Abroad* (1982) remains a seminal work on understanding the challenge of change for professional schools of education in the US. Judge wrote of the emulation of scholarly endeavors in the social sciences and the abhorrence of anything having to do with schools and schooling; he wondered at the separation of schools of education from neighboring schools and the absence of attention to practical problems encountered by graduates of these programs. In the nearly thirty-five years since Judge wrote his little book on behalf of the Ford Foundation, many would contend that little has changed. Many graduate schools of education remain resilient to change and impenetrable to new ideas.

A history of change efforts by philanthropic agencies and government organizations directed at graduate schools of education (GSEs) has not produced long-term or sustained changes in their form and function. From the Commonwealth Fund Teacher Training initiatives in the late 1920s to the efforts of the Ford Foundation in Arkansas in the 1950s, from the Federal government's intervention through the National Teacher Corps in the 1960s and 70s to the Carnegie Corporation's Teachers for a New Era in the early 2000s, change has been illusive when it comes to transforming GSEs. The Holmes Group (later the Holmes Partnership) and the National Network for Educational Reform, the Carnegie Foundation's DELTA Project and other philanthropic initiatives have largely failed to produce enduring results. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested by federal and state agencies over the course of the past century with little to show for those investments in terms of lasting impact.

While some will argue that fundamental changes have occurred – in scholarly methodologies and the addition of new areas of concentration (particularly having to do with students living in poverty), a focus on school and the addition of policy in their offerings – few would argue that GSEs are much different from those described by Professor Judge. Yes, there are some school-university partnerships and curricula efforts, expanded clinical experiences and new teaching strategies, revamped candidate recruitment and comprehensive "placement and support" schemes, altered faculty appointment and promotion efforts and the expanded use of technologies – but these changes have been slow to be adopted and remain isolated at far too few GSEs. Given faculty workloads and scholarly expectations, service commitments and advisement responsibilities, the identification of new ideas is often difficult to realize. The purpose of *Impacting Education: Journal on Transforming Professional Practice* (IE) is to identify promising practices for GSEs and to then both understand what makes change so difficult to achieve and to highlight successful efforts for change that has had an impact – with a particular focus on the adoption of a new model for doctoral education in education.

CPED AS CHANGE

Given this history of change efforts, it is not surprising that many foundations and government programs have been skeptical of funding new initiatives for education schools. Several years ago we were told by the FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education) program officer (a former college provost, department chair and long-time faculty member) that "*change in large educational organizations – like GSEs - is generally not funded by government agencies because change is not believed to be pos-*



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sible.” This comment surprised us greatly. We were at our first meeting after being awarded \$700,000 to study how the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) was changing GSEs at twenty-one member universities. The program officer highlighted several examples of organizational change that he described as “failures.” This was at a time when several large philanthropic foundations had announced their decisions to no longer fund GSEs and we were seeking support from the US Department of Education. We were convinced that he was predicting we too would fail in our efforts when suddenly his expression changed and he commented, “*your project is the first I have seen in my tenure at the Department of Ed that is working... because the change effort is coming from the bottom – it is focused on enabling faculty to understand and design, test and implement an innovation whose time has come – and to do so in partnership with lots of peers.*” He went on to explain that he predicted our success because of the unique nature of CPED as a collaboration of education faculty and education school deans working together across a wide variety of GSEs to distinguish the EdD as a practitioner degree (Perry, 2015; Perry & Imig, 2008). This model contrasted sharply, he explained, with those of other change efforts by professional organizations that relied on top-down strategies that largely excluded faculty.

The FIPSE grant enabled the CPED consortium to raise and study the questions: *What changes had been made and what was the impact on doctoral preparation at member universities?* The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word impact as: *The effect or influence of one person, thing, or action, on another.* Today, CPED encompasses all aspects of this definition as an innovation that is action-oriented, led by faculty and supported by university administrators, with the goal of improving the EdD for professional practice preparation (Perry, 2014). Its impact lies in innovations in the assignment of faculty and the recruitment of students, the design of programs and the reliance on guiding principles, the adoption of new research methodologies and mentoring structures, and partnering with PK-12 schools (and other learning organizations), creating new funding models and considering new capstones. The evaluation design had to be as ambitious because CPED’s original GSE members were from an array of colleges and universities across the US.

Exploring ways to evaluate just how programs had changed and what impact the CPED initiative had was the challenge. We utilized Rogers’ *Diffusion of Innovation* model as a guide because his elements of diffusion offered a lens for understanding change within a complex social system such as graduate schools of education. Rogers (1995) defines diffusion as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system” (p. 10). The diffusion process involves four elements—the innovation, the communication channels used, the time taken from introduction to implementation, and the social system into which the innovation is introduced. These elements helped CPED researchers understand if and how institutions viewed CPED’s principles and design-concepts as innovative and if EdD programs changed as a result of this framework. Was CPED having an impact?

Looking across data from twenty-one GSEs, researchers discovered that CPED had had an impact at institutional, programmatic and individual levels. At the institutional level, changes happened in terms of program policies, types of faculty positions and in a general understanding of the EdD degree (Perry, Zambo, & Wunder, 2015). CPED offered GSEs a means to address the confusion between the purpose and role of the EdD and PhD degrees, improve enrollment and graduation rates, change degree structures including time to degree, dissertation and advising formats, and to hire more clinical

faculty. Programs changed in terms of purpose and goals, types of research preparation, reliance on cohort models and group dissertations. Additionally, these changes impacted local context by addressing the leadership preparation needs of PK-16 administrators as well as faculty advising and teaching structures. The data overwhelmingly showed that in the early years of CPED, member institutions made great progress in rethinking and redesigning their education doctorate and, as a result, impacted the way GSEs considered doctoral preparation for practitioners.

As part of the FIPSE study, an independent evaluator was tasked with evaluating the aims of the project. Data and comments from this evaluation (Crowe, 2013) also validated CPED’s impact by suggesting three important implications of the overall CPED initiative: first, ***the initiative itself***—through project leaders, graduate assistants, and others—***was influential as a source of interest in doctoral program changes across the country.*** Secondly, ***initiative leaders did more than talk about the CPED work***—campus leaders indicated they also provided important information and technical assistance that facilitated the work at individual universities. And finally, ***the network of CPED institutions proved important to the work of individual member campuses.*** This combination of central and distributed leadership offers a broad lesson for promoting change in higher education: peer-to-peer support is more effective, under the umbrella of initiative leadership, and central leadership functions best when it also enables initiative members to work with each other.

A CHALLENGE

In 2007, former Teachers College, Columbia University president Arthur Levine outlined six disincentives that he maintained would prevent schools of education from ever making the distinction between the EdD and PhD degrees or redesigning doctoral degree programs to accommodate the distinct and different purposes of those degrees. His sixth point made the claim, “politics and inertia [will] inhibit schools of education from change.” While Levine’s point may have reflected the status quo at the time, we have seen CPED challenge this claim as many member GSEs in CPED are changing. For example, Crowe (2013) observed several necessary conditions that have allowed CPED to be a catalyst. First, that it takes a “combination of central and distributed leadership” to realize change; and second, CPED offers something unique—a network of “peer-to-peer” faculty members and leaders who are both charged and resourced to make such change.

CPED has demonstrated that external change efforts can result in change in schools of education – but only under the conditions described above. This is one example of what *Impacting Education* seeks to demonstrate. As CPED continues to grow and learn and the EdD continues to change and improve across more and more schools of education, we hope to see a variety of examples of impact presented in the virtual pages of IE. We envision demonstrations of how the practitioner degree impacts graduates who practice in schools and colleges, how faculty members are impacted in terms of their own practices, and how the field of education, including higher education, changes as a result of more scholarly practitioner leaders. And to continue in the collaborative nature that was the foundation on which CPED evolved, we invite our authors and readers to help us expand our understanding of *impact*. We issue the following challenge to our authors, reviewers, and readers.

We challenge you to make IE into an outlet for studies of change by GSEs – particularly as they relate to the EdD and its im-



Impact on practitioner practices and successes. Study and inform, evaluate and communicate, assess and measure, gather data and examine every aspect of programmatic change in EdD programs. Offer evidence and learning that helps us understand the best ways to prepare practitioners to be able to address the educational challenges of the 21st century.

Make IE the place where ideas and avenues for collaborative program design are shared across institutional contexts. Help all GSE faculty members learn strategies for building and implementing programs in their own contexts. Provide synthesized 'ways of doing' – ideas that translate to actions and strengthen the skills of faculty in GSEs to design better EdD programs.

Make IE the place where **practitioner authors** write about the impact their education doctoral experience has had on their professional practice. And make IE the place where books that meaningfully contribute to the development of theory, policy and practice for the improved preparation of PK-20 educational leaders in education doctorate programs are reviewed.

Offer IE as the avenue for demonstrating that GSEs can change and impact a variety of educational settings through the appropriate and rigorous preparation of high-skilled leaders and practitioners who know how to address seemingly intractable problems in practice. Provide evidence and examples of these program graduates in action and the ways in which they utilize their scholarly practitioner skills to be change agents.

By accepting this challenge to expand our understanding of what impact means in terms of redesigning professional preparation, help GSEs "reclaim" (Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, & Garabedian, 2006) the education doctorate and make it the degree of choice for practitioners who want to transform the field of education (CGS, 2007).

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