Preface

This comprehensive and timely publication aims to be an essential reference source, building on the available literature in the field on the form, function and design of capstone products of professional practice doctorate programs. As the professional practice doctorate gains global traction in educational leadership, the results make important contributions that improve practice from the classroom to the policy arena. This applied degree provides a nexus between professional practice problems and theoretical frameworks, offering practitioners a way to create new knowledge that influences the field.

Chapter contributors discuss the various dissertation models and research methodology currently being implemented by professional practice doctorate programs in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Additionally, authors address two pertinent questions:

1. Is their program graduating scholarly practitioners with rigorous research skills involving real theory and inquiry, not only able to address critical problems of practice but also to demonstrate the impact of their research?
2. Are their program graduates producing new kinds of doctoral level practitioners who engage with practice-oriented knowledge and seek to undertake doctorate level awards by creating valued purposes and products relating to professional work?

These questions provide a significant foundation on which leadership preparation programs can engage in effective redesign.

Section 1 of the book, “The Nature of the Dissertation in Practice,” is comprised of chapters considering how doctoral programs are designed, the different types of courses available, the relationship between program design and capstone in the U.K. and U.S.A, and samples of theoretical frameworks from actual dissertations. Having discussed the dissertation framework, the focus becomes the integration of theory and practice to cultivate the capacity of scholar practitioners to act as catalysts for change in the world of practice. Guiding principles for quality professional practice dissertations are presented, and alternative dissertation formats such as a three-paper dissertation, a lengthy one-paper manuscript, a novel, a portfolio, and a six-section format are discussed.

Chapter 1, “The Consequential Relationship between Doctoral Course Design and Capstone Design,” by Valerie A. Storey and John Fulton, considers how doctoral programs are designed; the different types of courses available; and the relationship between program design and capstone in the UK and USA. The authors explore the variety of ways in which professional doctorate programs prepare candidates for their research study in the UK and the USA by drawing on quantitative data obtained from a survey of 150 higher education institutions in the two identified countries. The diversity of program design,
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courses taken by doctoral candidates; and capstone artifact i.e. thesis/dissertation (model) are examined. The chapter will increase the reader’s understanding about the relationship between the program design and delivery, the nature of the research produced, and methods for disseminating this new knowledge.

Chapter 2 titled, “The Role of Theory in EdD Programs and Dissertations in Practice,” by Debby Zambo, focuses on David Labaree’s difference between the experiential and the theoretical. Varied definitions of theory are presented, and what this means for practitioners working to find answers to problems of practice while seeking doctorates is discussed. The theories that EdD students find most relevant are provided, along with samples of theoretical frameworks from actual dissertations. Conclusions lead to a critical, yet hopeful, view of theory and practice.

Chapter 3, “Identity, Commitment and Change Agency: Bedrock for Bridging Theory and Practice in Doctoral Education,” by Carol Anne Kochhar-Bryant, delves into the previously uncharted territory of cultivating scholar practitioner’s capacity to act as catalysts for change in the world of practice. The author explores the intersection of core constructs or strands for creating scholar practitioners as change agents — identity, commitment and civic agency. These elements are examined from a theoretical framework, as well as in the context of a professional practice doctoral program case example.

Chapter 4, titled “Alternative Dissertation Formats: Preparing Scholars for the Academy and Beyond” by Kimberly Nehls and Doris Watson, proposes that alternative dissertation formats should be considered; namely a more creative, flexible model, while still maintaining high intellectual standards for the academy. Several options are specifically described in this chapter: a three-paper dissertation with distinct yet cohesive manuscripts, suitable for publication in scholarly journals, a lengthy one-paper manuscript, a novel, and a portfolio. They assert that the format must be suitable for both the discipline and the future faculty or administrative role.

In Chapter 5, “Creating an EdD Structure, Program and Process: Applying Lessons Learned from the Redesign of a Principal Preparation Program,” Marla Susman Israel, Susan Sostak, and Felicia P. Stewart, describe the program redesign, development and essential components of Loyola University Chicago’s EdD principal preparation program for the Chicago Leadership Collaborative (CLC). This program provides a pipeline of candidates prepared to be transformational principals within the Chicago Public Schools. Using the foundational principles from this new program redesign process, in conjunction with dissertation completion and graduate outcome data from Loyola’s traditional EdD program, this chapter explores next steps in the EdD program development process, framed within the reality of rising policy-based expectations and continuous legislative change within the state of Illinois.

Chapter 6, titled “Adapting and Advocating for an Online EdD Program in Changing Times and ‘Sacred’ Cultures” by Elan Nicole Paulson, draws our attention to the importance of recognizing how complex cultural and structural forces shape the design and delivery of a fully online professional doctorate (EdD) program. The chapter considers various challenges and opportunities of a new distance-delivery EdD program in Educational Leadership offered by a leading Canadian university in order to examine how the pressures of educational reform and academic cultural norms shape professional doctorate programs and their components. Ultimately, this chapter calls for promoting greater adaptability within EdD program designs and stronger championing of the program’s value and distinctiveness, especially its capacity to be adaptable to the expectations of student stakeholders.

Chapter 7, “Practice as Research: Developing the Workplace Project” by Stan Lester, highlights the potential for live pieces of work, rather than specifically designed research projects, to be used as the basis for the outputs of professionally oriented doctorates. Drawing on some examples from a transdisciplinary ‘practitioner’ doctorate in an English university, it discusses how work that is designed to result
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in change or development can, if approached with sufficient methodological consideration, provide an intellectually robust basis for developing new knowledge that not only has application in practice but can also be worthy of academic dissemination. A case is made for what Lester terms ‘practice as research’ being regarded as an archetypal model for the practitioner or ‘Type 3’ doctorate.

Building upon the foundational chapters in Section 1, the focus in Section 2 is “Innovative Approaches to the Professional Practice Doctorate.” Authors discuss how dissertations are conceptualized, cultivated, and framed. Chapters explore the relationships amongst coursework, dissertation research, inquiry-based leadership practices, and the cultivation of scholarly practitioners in leadership.

Chapter 8, titled “Guiding Principles for Quality Professional Practice Dissertations” and written by Kara Dawson, and Swapna Kumar, shares guiding principles for professional practice dissertations developed and studied within an online EdD in Educational Technology at the University of Florida. The guiding principles highlight the importance of addressing critical problems of practice, applying research rigor involving real theory and inquiry, and demonstrating the impact of research. The authors make explicit connections between their guiding principles and these themes, and provide examples of how the themes have played out in dissertations completed in their program. The authors then provide implications for others seeking to structure (or restructure) the way dissertations are conceptualized in their professional practice problems.

Chapter 9, “Enacting a Cycle of Inquiry Capstone Research Project in Doctoral-level Leadership Preparation” by Shelby Cosner, Steve Tozer, and Paul Zavitkovsky, examines the redesign of the doctorate in Urban Education Leadership at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The program was redesigned in response to two distinct but important challenges:

1. The challenge of creating greater distinction between the academic and professional doctorates, and
2. The challenge of improving the nature and quality of its principal preparation program.

The culminating research experience for their doctoral students emphasizes the leadership cycles of inquiry for school-wide improvement, and the subsequent analysis of this work using empirical and scholarly literature. The detailed description provided in this chapter advances existing literature by making visible many of the important granular details associated with this innovation, as well as considerations associated with its design and implementation within a doctoral-level leadership preparation program.

Chapter 10, titled “Conducting A Design-Based Research EdD Dissertation by Stanley Pogrow, argues that Design-Based Research (DBR) provides a different and expanded view of the role of science and knowledge generation in educational improvement, as compared to the traditional model that currently dominates educational research. This expanded view of science provides the potential to:

1. Produce more effective interventions and practices,
2. Produce more authentic knowledge about how to improve education,
3. More actively involve leaders in the production of new practices and knowledge, and
4. Provide EdD students with an applied option for conducting EdD dissertations.

The author explores the background to DBR and provides several examples of dramatically effective interventions, describing how they were designed. In addition, it describes some of the characteristics of an EdD DBR dissertation.
In Chapter 11, “An Adaptive Model for a Rigorous Professional Practice Doctorate: The Disquisition” Robert Crow, Kofi Lomotey, and Kathleen Topolka-Jorissen respond to the mandate that in order to differentiate herself from her sister, the research-based PhD dissertation, the EdD’s capstone exercise and culminating product arise through a practice-based, pedagogically appropriate application. This reflects the philosophy and principles established for a problem-based dissertation in practice. This chapter presents a model that engages improvement science methods, the four dimensions characterizing a problem-based thesis, and the lens of contemporary thinking on the professional practice degree. The disquisition is an alternative capstone framework that affords doctoral candidates the opportunity to develop the qualitatively distinct ‘empirically-grounded know-how’ of scholar practitioner thinking.

Chapter 12, titled “Educational Leaders and the Program Evaluation Dissertations with Logic Model” by Tricia J. Stewart, explains what educational evaluation is, why it makes sense to teach about evaluation (program, policy, and curricular) in educational leadership programs including information about two programs (the University of Rochester and Alabama State University) that have successfully incorporated evaluation dissertations. The author describes the components of an evaluation based dissertation that include a logic model and other items to consider for those who are interested in implementing this type of dissertation into a professional practice doctorate program. Incorporating evaluation into doctoral coursework yields many benefits to students. Initially, it provides a real-world approach for teaching the rigorous research skills required for the eventual completion of a dissertation.

Chapter 13, “Addressing Critical Problems through Leadership Portfolios: A Content Analysis” by Joan L Buttram, Doug Archbald, and Elizabeth Nash Farley-Ripple, reports on a content analysis of portfolios used as the capstone requirement in the University of Delaware’s Educational Leadership EdD program. The portfolio is focused on the demonstration of leadership to address a significant problem of practice within the candidate’s organization. The findings indicate that such portfolios are likely to be rooted in the accountability and policy mandates facing the districts and other education organizations in which candidates typically work; these are the challenges that define and shape their work. Similarly, these portfolios are more likely to be focused at the organizational level; this focus reflects where the majority of doctoral students are situated in their organizations, where they have the most control and influence, and where they will likely see the greatest return on their investment of resources and effort. This study also offers a framework to examine other non-traditional capstone projects.

Chapter 14, titled “Assessing the Performance of a Cohort-Based Model Using Domestic and International Practices” by Lou L. Sabina, Katherine A Curry, Edward L Harris, Bernita L. Krumm, and Vallory Vencill, discusses the successes, strengths, and lessons learned during a five-year international EdD program. This process took place from 2007 to 2012 in Belize, through a partnership with the Consortium for Belize Educational Cooperation. The objectives of the chapter are to:

1. Provide a brief history and explanation of the program, including an overview of the Belizean educational system;
2. Explain how the program filled a need for both our institution and the country of Belize;
3. Discuss the strengths and lessons learned in this cohort model for international educators;
4. Offer a framework for other educational leadership preparation programs that might attempt international cohort-model doctoral programs; and
5. Suggest implications for improving domestic practices through faculty and student participation in an international doctoral program.
In Chapter 15, “Principles of Discussion in Qualitative Educational Research”, Shaoan Zhang offers perspectives of basic principles of writing the discussion section in a qualitative research article or dissertation. The first portion of the chapter explains how to link the discussion of the findings to each component: brief summary of the findings, contribution to previous studies, contribution to the theory, implications, and limitations. The explanation includes examples that help readers get a glimpse of the connection. Built on the aforementioned explanation, this chapter also raises the common problems related to each element and further discusses the challenges for novice scholars. The second portion of the chapter focuses on scholarly practitioners expected development of knowledge and abilities for meaningfully connecting these five elements. Additionally, the importance of seeing findings through a holistic lens is discussed, and meaningful implications for educational research, practice, and/or policy are provided.

In the third and final section of the book, the focus is on the “Impact of the Professional Practice Doctorate on the Scholarly Practitioner.” Chapters examine the role of the practitioner as scholar; overviews doctoral completion statistics and time to degree (TTD), review the literature on barriers and facilitating factors to dissertation completion, and outlines ongoing departmental strategies for improving doctoral completion rates and reducing the time to degree.

Chapter 16, titled “Dissertation Redesign for Scholarly Practitioners in Educational Leadership: Increasing Impact through Dissemination-Ready Sections” by Jennifer Fellabaum and Cynthia J. MacGregor, describes the innovative Dissertation-in-Practice model being implemented in the University of Missouri Statewide Cooperative Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership (EdD Program). This doctoral program develops scholarly practitioners who are able to address critical problems of practice through the use of theory, inquiry, and practice-oriented knowledge. While these skills are utilized to create purposeful, professional products throughout the program, the redesigned Dissertation-in-Practice at MU is intended to further showcase the impact of the students’ work as scholarly practitioners through dissemination-ready components.

Chapter 17, “Becoming Practitioner-Scholars: The Role of Practice-Based Inquiry Dissertations in the Development of Educational Leaders” by Sharon M. Ravitch and Susan L. Lytle, explores how educational leaders learn to engage in site-based inquiry within a leadership-focused doctoral program through coursework and dissertation research. The authors argue that there is considerable value, for mid-career leaders as well as for the field, in doing rigorous research as part of their doctoral studies. The chapter describes how dissertations are conceptualized, cultivated, and framed within the Mid-Career Doctoral Program in Educational and Organizational Leadership at the University of Pennsylvania. It explores the relationships among coursework, dissertation research, inquiry-based leadership practices, and the cultivation of scholarly practitioners in leadership.

In Chapter 18, titled “Supporting Scholar-Practitioners Toward Doctoral Degree Attainment: Intentional Strategies for Dissertation Completion,” Sarah Marie Marshall, and Barbara A. Klocko provide an overview of the role of practitioner as scholar, overviews doctoral completion statistics and time to degree, reviews the literature on barriers and facilitating factors to dissertation completion, with particular focus on part-time students who work full-time, and outlines ongoing departmental strategies for improving doctoral completion rates and reducing the time to degree. The aim of this chapter is to serve as a resource for doctoral students, faculty dissertation advisors, and program directors that wish to strengthen programs and practices to achieve the common goal of timely dissertation completion leading to the earned doctoral degree.
Chapter 19, “The Scholarly Practitioner as Steward of the Practice” by Jill A. Perry, reports on the results of a study that analyzed how students have become scholarly practitioners as a result of their education doctoral (EdD) program. Applying the theoretical frames of the education profession and the Steward of the Practice, the chapter utilizes a qualitative approach to learn how students and graduates of CPED-influenced EdD programs describe becoming scholarly practitioners, and apply theory to their own practice as a means to change local context.

All chapter contributors have built upon available literature in the field on the form, function and design of capstone products of professional practice doctorate programs. It is the hope of the editors that this book will add to provoking reflective inquiry, by providing insights and supporting professional practice doctorate program leaders in the design and impact of a program’s capstone.

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