Towards an Anti-Racist, Culturally Responsive, and LGBTQ+ Inclusive Education:
Developing Critically-Conscious Educational Leaders

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter summarizes the ongoing efforts of faculty to develop a program of study embedded in an educational doctorate (EdD) program intended to develop critically conscious educational leaders and change agents. It discusses how courses were collaboratively developed as well as how faculty decided on and began to employ an experimental self-study action research Dissertation in Practice. This chapter then outlines what was learned as a team of collaborators about the best ways to establish coherence and cultivate deep learning to support students' ability to work with adults in the context of instruction and curriculum to address historically entrenched inequities that differentially disadvantage some students while granting privileges to others.

INTRODUCTION

Confronted with the stubborn reality of an educational system that resists transformative change and the recognition that educational leaders are best positioned to be change agents in their local contexts,

the Educational Leadership doctorate (EDL) program at the University of Southern California was redesigned to prepare leaders to be critically conscious change agents. This chapter describes ongoing efforts undertaken by faculty to develop a concentration[1] titled Leading Instructional Change within the redesigned educational doctorate (EdD) program[2]. Critical consciousness is a central tenet of both the EDL program and the driving force for the concentration redesign, as only through a mindset that prompts critical reflection and subsequent action that disrupts normalized policies, practices, and procedures can leaders work to improve their own and others' practices and bring about lasting change.

This chapter will explain the process of changing the concentration, in purpose, coursework, and the Dissertation in Practice. The three authors are white, cisgender, clinical faculty/teacher educators, hold terminal degrees, and work at a private research-intensive university. The authors' experiences as teachers and researchers in both large "urban" public school districts and in education programs in a private baccalaureate granting institution solidified their realization of the importance of leading teaching and learning in ways that disrupt the status quo. While all three authors are committed to working towards anti-racist education to change the material conditions for the most marginalized in our society, they also recognize their complicity in maintaining the status quo given their collective privilege. The authors are committed to justice-oriented, culturally responsive, anti-racist, and LGBTQ+ inclusive instructional practices, and regularly spend time thinking and talking about hegemonic forces that reproduce and sustain racism, monolingualism, ethnocentrism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and cisgender normativity while interacting in their institution, in their teaching, and in their daily lives. Even before the EDL program overhaul, the Leading Instructional Change faculty wanted to reframe the concentration's purpose, its curriculum and instruction, and the approach to the dissertation in ways that interrogate and dismantle dominant and hegemonic ideologies in the preparation of instructional leaders.

This chapter explains the first cycle of development of a series of four courses embedded in a 3-year EdD program, how the authors decided on a self-study action research Dissertation in Practice despite significant push back from colleagues and went about differentiating the process and product from a traditional 5-chapter dissertation. This chapter also summarizes what was learned as a team of collaborators about the best ways to establish coherence to support students' ability to address historically entrenched inequities that both impede historically and systemically marginalized[3] students' learning opportunities and disrupt hegemonic narratives in settings that serve predominantly White students. This chapter begins by describing the EDL program within which the concentration is situated, the school within which the program is situated, and how these nested settings informed the work faculty embarked upon. Then, evidence-based frameworks that guided the redesign work will be shared, focusing on the theories of adult learning, leadership, critical reflection, and organizational change that informed everything from curriculum development to discussions about instructional practice.

The chapter will then summarize two specific examples to concretize the authors' central argument about the importance of faculty collaboration and the centering of Rossier's mission and core values when engaging in a program redesign. The first case illustrates a recent experience where a subset of concentration faculty met during a series of monthly meetings to revise the third concentration course, in a series of four courses, drawing on what was accomplished in the first and second courses. The authors highlight the efforts to coherently build a program of study that intentionally connects the dots between the concentration and the Dissertation in Practice courses so as to develop students' skillset in critical consciousness and culturally responsive[4], anti-racist, and LGBTQ+ inclusive leadership. The telling of this story allows a glimpse into the vulnerability necessary to engage in collaborative work (especially on the part of the course lead), the need for faculty to let go of individual goals for what the course

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