

Chapter 24

Dissertation Redesign for Scholarly Practitioners in Educational Leadership: Increasing Impact through Dissemination-Ready Sections

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to describe 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. The chapter includes the history of the program and a description of the process through which program faculty redesigned the dissertation from a traditional five-chapter model to its current six section form. This restructuring, which includes dissemination to scholars and practitioners, is detailed. The chapter concludes with emerging supports for the scholarly practitioner graduates.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, scholars have argued for the need to reconsider the traditional five chapter dissertation (e.g., Archbald, 2008; Duke & Beck, 1999; Maxwell & Kupczyk-Romanczuk, 2009; Willis, Inman, & Valenti, 2010), particularly in terms of dissemination. For example, a key question asked by Duke and Beck (1999) is, “Will the format of this dissertation make it possible to disseminate the work to a wider audience?” (p. 33). This was one of the major intended outcomes of the Dissertation-in-Practice as it was developed at the University of Missouri (MU). Indeed, the redesign efforts were guided by a desire to create an experience that is truly beneficial to both the student and the field of educational leadership, similar to Archbald’s (2008) statement, “The product must have value beyond merely demonstrating the candidate’s knowledge and skills. It must contribute to the betterment of a community” (p. 708). Efforts such as the dissertation redesign are indicative of the transformational framework that continues to guide program development and implementation at MU. The overall focus is always on providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to become change agents within their particular institutions and the broader field of educational leadership.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the innovative Dissertation-in-Practice model being implemented in the MU Statewide Cooperative Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership (EdD Program). More specifically, this chapter will discuss how the MU EdD 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. This chapter begins with a history of the MU EdD Program in order to provide a background for a description of the current program. Following the program description, the chapter will detail the process through which program faculty redesigned the dissertation from a traditional five chapter model to its current six section form. This restructuring, which provides for an intentional plan for dissemination to scholars and practitioners, is detailed in the next part of the chapter. The final section of the chapter describes emerging supports for the scholarly practitioner graduates.

HISTORY OF THE MU EdD

In the mid-1990s, several deans of Education from around the state of Missouri began to explore the possibility of having a statewide educational leadership program. Beginning in November of 1995, a task force met and developed the foundation of the Statewide Cooperative EdD Program. This included conducting a needs assessment in 1996 that resulted in the identification of over 600 prospective students. In August of 1996, the Board of Curators endorsed the proposed program. Then, as stated by Mountford, Ehlert, Machell, and Cockrell (2007), the program was “approved by the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education in 1996 as a collaborative venture supported by a \$1.8 million annual line item budget” (p. 193). This history of state-level funding, combined with the statewide cooperative focus of the program, contributes to the continued programmatic mission to serve the state of Missouri, and surrounding areas.

The original memorandum of understanding, which was signed in April of 1997, established the University of Missouri-Columbia as the degree granting institution as well as the institution responsible

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