Key Issues for Ph.D/Ed.D doctoral programs
CADREI meeting
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The Council of Academic Deans of Research Education Institutions recently met in Sedona, AZ to discuss a range of issues impacting their colleges. One of these issues was the need to draw a clearer distinction between the Ph.D education research doctorate and the Ed.D practice doctorate. Historically, the distinction has been honored more in theory than in actual practice at most institutions (leaving aside well known places that have only offered the Ed.D degree – Harvard and Teachers College/Columbia as the most notable examples), with the end result that both degrees have failed to fulfill their original intent, and with attenuated quality in some cases. Two recent initiatives have brought this long standing debate into sharper focus: the report issued by Arthur Levine, Educating Researchers, which was the third report in a series outlining his critique of education schools, and the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), a national project involving 20 institutions that are developing pilot programs to design (or substantially revise) an Ed.D program based on principles derived from other professional practice doctorates.

In a lively discussion session with well over 40 deans present from institutions around the country, the following concerns and questions emerged as factors that needed to be considered if both doctorates are to undertake significant reform.

1. The mission and purpose of each degree program needs to be more carefully conceptualized. This concern was echoed in the Levine Report.
2. The student pool for each degree program should be clearly identified. However, several deans frankly noted that if their Ph.D. programs were revised to meet Levine's criteria for strong research doctoral programs, the impact on enrollment would be significant. For public universities that derive a major portion of their state appropriation budget from student credit hours (SCH), this would be an unsustainable loss.
3. The issue of student enrollment is closely linked to the placement issue in terms of where students seek employment upon completion of their program. Rather surprisingly, the dean at one major research institution commented that only about 20% of their graduates seek academic positions; the majority of graduates are employed by school districts, research organizations, and state/federal government agencies. If this pattern holds true across a wider pool of institutions, it would lend credence to the claim that a professional practice doctorate is more in demand for the field than a research doctorate.

4. Deans at the CPED institutions noted that they now face the complications of managing competing versions of the same doctorate: the 'old' Ed.D vs. the emerging 'new' pilot program. One major complication reported was that faculty who hold degrees based on the 'old' model now feel they are "second class" citizens, as the emphasis on the nature of research is debated between the two degrees.

5. The impact of the two degree programs on the preparation for future faculty in higher education generated considerable concerns. Two related problems were identified: a) the number of faculty who hold a Ph.D but who have insufficient research expertise to conduct research that meets IES standards, and to guide dissertations at this level; and, b) the lack of faculty who are unable to connect appropriately with practitioners in terms of courses/internships related to ongoing practice in the field although they may have considerable research expertise. The ideal faculty member would be a person who had both strong research knowledge and experience *and* who could connect well with practitioners, but such faculty are almost impossible to find.

6. One dean noted having two well differentiated programs would also require having separate courses, and that would entail the hiring of additional faculty. A related issue was whether colleges would need to focus more on the acquisition of competencies rather than emphasizing course work, particularly in the professional practice program.

7. The nature of the culminating experience for each degree was a source of concern. The research doctorate typically features the classic dissertation based on an original research study; in several institutions, they are exploring the idea of a 'capstone' project for the professional practice doctorate. Concern was voiced over whether the capstone concept would conflict with each institution's graduate school requirements. Several deans also commented that dissertations for the Ph.D often lacked sophisticated research designs, and that in many cases, this study was the student's *first* participation in a research project.

8. It was generally agreed that students in each degree program need strong mentoring and well designed research or clinical experiences appropriate for each degree. While students in the professional practice program may not be as heavily involved in research projects coordinated by faculty, it was widely agreed they need to be exposed to different research models, and to understand the principles by which good research is conducted in order to reach sound decisions based on research findings.

9. All deans agreed that clear guidelines and/or standards should be identified for each degree program. The CPED initiative may produce guidelines for the professional practice doctorate, and NCATE standards for advanced programs may be useful as well. Sources

identified for the research doctorate included the Carnegie five year study on the Ph.D., and the Levine report.

10. The impact of offering advanced degree programs online or as hybrid models (e.g., Saturday classes, onsite facilitators) provoked a lively debate. Several deans resisted the idea of limiting Ph.D. programs to full-time students by noting that high quality programs can be constructed for part-time students. Other deans suggested that providing Ed.D programs online can result in delivering very high quality programs to reach a potential audience that cannot come to the main campus, especially given the increasingly sophisticated software tools available. For many institutions, creating online programs will become a necessity to compete successfully with for-profit providers, and to overcome geographical limitations (rural campuses with declining local populations).

11. Admission requirements for each degree program were noted as a source of concern. The GRE is widely perceived to be an ineffective predictor of graduate school performance (particularly for returning professionals) and may not be appropriate for the professional practice programs. The fact that national rankings are dependent in part on having high GRE scores for graduate students was mentioned as an impediment for identifying alternative admission criteria for the Ed.D.

12. Several deans suggested that the curriculum requirements for the doctorate in educational/instructional leadership were beginning to merge with those for C & I degrees, especially given the changing nature of leadership for school reform. This is an issue that will need to be factored into the revision of Ed.D degree programs.

13. Another curriculum issue debated was whether the two doctoral programs needed to identify common core requirements in terms of coursework, and then develop separate tracks related to research/clinical experiences. Apart from the concern noted in #6, several deans suggested that the need for very different types of research training may make this idea impractical, except for some very broad common courses.

14. Several deans pointed out that the greater emphasis on student learning outcomes in terms of accountability will need to be factored into the structure of each doctoral program. The question of what students need to know and be able to do after they complete either program is intricately linked to the related issues of the purpose and mission of each degree, and the potential audience for each one, and appropriate outcomes cannot be established without considering these two components.

15. AERA is collaborating with the National Academy of Education to conduct a national study of Ph.D doctoral programs in education. The impact of this study on these issues is yet to be determined. Several deans were unclear about the rationale for this study apart from the concern that the National Research Council did not include education

doctorates (Ph.D. or Ed.D) in its proposed taxonomy of research doctorates.

Next Steps
Proposed actions that CADREI could take to move the discussion of these issues were as follows:

- A task force could be formed to examine the question of whether guidelines/standards could be developed that paralleled the work of CPED. Data compiled from the AERA/NAE study may be useful for accomplishing this task.
- Invite Chris Golde, one of the authors of the 2006 Carnegie Report, <u>Envisioning the Future of Doctoral Education: Preparing Stewards of the Discipline</u>, to moderate a roundtable at the next CADREI meeting to discuss the findings and their implications for education research doctorates.