

Chapter 15

The Emergence of the Professional Doctorate: An Analysis of Career Paths of Black EdD/Doctor of Education Awardees at Historically Black Colleges

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ABSTRACT

While extensive research exists for both the doctoral experience and career paths after the doctorate, the bulk (if not all) of these studies are limited to those attaining the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree. By contrast, less is known about Doctor of Education (EdD) awardees, and even less is known about Black EdD awardees within the context of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). However, as Black EdD graduates from HBCUs are among the fastest growing segments of doctoral graduates, it is important to determine the career trajectories of “Black Docs”. Using a quantitative comparative case-study approach, along with qualitative analysis and in-depth interviews of Black EdD HBCU alumni, this chapter, per the author, will illuminate the experiences of Black EdD graduates with regard to the long-term career impact of attaining the terminal degree, and provide insight toward ensuring the support and career preparation necessary toward assisting Black doctoral students and alumni to reach their career goals.

INTRODUCTION

While extensive research exists for both the doctoral experience and career paths after the doctorate, the bulk (if not all) of these studies are limited to those attaining the PhD or Doctor of Philosophy degree. By contrast, less is known about EdD or Doctor of Education awardees, and even less is known about Black EdD awardees within the context of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0308-8.ch015

Adding an additional layer of developing research and policy recommendations for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Black doctoral students attaining the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree within these institutions provides additional challenges---particularly with regard to an examination of career paths and employment status of this population. With the implementation of the Obama administration's *Gainful Employment* legislation, universities must meet the challenge of reporting employment outcomes of graduates by developing effective career services programs for their students, and seek to design methodologies useful toward highlighting the career outcomes of graduates. Particularly within the realm of doctoral education at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), these challenges are even more necessary relative to the increased demand for enrollment in doctoral and professional degree programs (of which the EdD is most prominent).

However, with this urgent need in mind, documenting the experiences of Black doctoral graduates presents a bevy of research challenges, including the following:

- The scholarly literature is severely limited.
- Few empirical studies are available on best practices or factors associated with Black doctoral retention, completion and failure.
- Institutional research to track the progress of Black doctoral students and make changes in programs is very limited.
- Studies of Black doctoral alumni are few and graduate programs are deprived of a feedback loop to know how their programs relate to the actual careers of their alumni.

To date, no one study has examined this population with the narrow focus on EdD recipients. However, with such a large number of doctoral recipients holding Doctor of Education degrees (36.5% of Black doctoral awardees), and with the implications of the data on doctoral degree completion rates from Black graduates from HBCUs signaling that HBCUs may significantly influence the retention and completion rates of doctoral candidates (Britt & Griffin, 2007), it is necessary to begin to develop a research agenda toward examining the career trajectory of Blacks with Doctor of Education degrees within the HBCU community.

OVERVIEW

While studying for a doctorate has traditionally been seen as preparation for a job in academic teaching and research, for many candidates today, this is a prelude to a wide range of careers. Historically, the traditional path to a career in the professoriate has typically began with the pursuit of the terminal degree—the PhD. With the evolution of doctoral education, and the emergence of “professional degrees” (i.e. EdD/Doctor of Education), today’s doctoral students are different in many ways from those of just thirty or forty years ago. Academia was once composed largely of men who, for most of their careers, were in traditional single-earner families. Today, men and women fill the doctoral student ranks in nearly equal numbers, with more doctoral students of color, and an increasing number of Black doctoral candidates among them joining the ranks, while, bringing along with them, a varied outlook for earnings and employment options post-graduation. Specifically, this generation of doctoral students has different career expectations from previous ones, primary among them the desire for flexibility and balance

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