

Chapter 12

A Reimagined EdD: Participatory, Progressive Online Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an overview of an innovative design for an online doctoral program in educational leadership. The authors begin with an outline of the participatory, progressive pedagogy framework that guides their work with students. They analyze the use of two illustrations that exemplify their pedagogy in an online environment: digital storytelling and Flip Grid, a video-based online discussion forum. The chapter demonstrates the importance of relationships prior to engagement in critical dialogue and pedagogies both online and in person and identifies key principles for online teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION

The innovative educational doctorate at East Carolina University (ECU) has a single goal: to build the capacity for school and district leaders that our communities deserve. To do so, we have reimagined the educational doctorate (Ed.D.). The reimagined Ed.D. is a practitioner focused doctoral program that addresses the common issues that are associated with completing an Ed.D.. Earning a doctorate in educational administration is cumbersome; national data reveals that less than 40% of educators obtain their degree within seven years. The low yield is commonly pathologized with student-related issues – most common is failure to complete the dissertation. However, a deeper investigation indicts the systemic issues of programmatic design, including who, how, when, and where courses are taught. There is a clear dissonance between when and how working educators can find the physical and mental space to learn in an online environment that is often too individualized and the design of many programs (Levine, 2005).

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The pedagogies that best engage a multiplicity of learning styles and the instructors who have the facility to bridge theories that matter and practices is the subject of this article – we need to change online learning from threaded discussions and webinars and banking method pedagogies to active dialogical spaces that foster what we know best about how people learn (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Freire, 1990; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998).

Our program is a purposeful rejoinder to the admonitions issued in Arthur Levine's *Educating School Leaders* (2005). He analyzed 28 case studies of leadership programs in Schools of Education, and drew the following conclusion about 228 schools and departments of education that offer doctoral degrees: *Collectively, education administration programs are the weakest of all programs at the nation's education schools* (p. 13). Institutions are using doctoral programs as cash-cows by lowering admission standards, hiring former superintendents and principals as adjuncts or professors who received degrees from their institution as instructors who often "tell war stories" as a form of instruction, and offering what they bill as "quickie" degrees; however, they are often not quick at all, and result rather in many unfinished programs and dissertations. Often,

they have awarded doctorates that are doctoral in name only. And they have enrolled principals and superintendents in courses of study that are not relevant to their jobs. (p. 24)

His recommendations are one guide for the development of an Ed.D. with rigor, relevance, and an equity focus:

1. Be purposeful, inclusive, and values driven;
2. Embrace the distinctive and inclusive context of the school;
3. Promote an active view of learning;
4. Be instructionally focused;
5. Reach throughout the school community;
6. Build capacity by developing the school as a learning community;
7. Be futures-oriented and strategically driven;
8. Draw on experiential and innovative methodologies;
9. Benefit from a support and policy context that is coherent, systematic, and implementation driven; and
10. Receive support from a national college that leads the;
11. Discourse on leadership for learning (p. 54).

We redesigned the Ed.D. by incorporating a number of frameworks that address the dissonance we see in existing programs. First and foremost, we rest on the pillars of student equity and social and academic success. We believe that educators, working in concert with a community of a cohort of learners as well as students themselves, are uniquely positioned to be the champions of student success for all students. Consciousness – what Freire calls *conscientização* – means that the problem-posing students do as a part of their action research project, with each other in person, and in online learning environments, requires a belief in the generative themes that animate curiosity and engagement. Agency is a critical element as the students' address issues of equity and justice in their daily work and in reframing the issues and actions in systematic ways through an equity lens (Rigby & Tredway, 2015). The pedagogies with which we engage students help them develop a critical consciousness and academic muscle that is necessary

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