EXPLORING EDD PROGRAM DIRECTORS' EXPERIENCES CONCERNING EXTENDED DOCTORAL STUDY DURATION

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Abstract

Recent studies revealed that the phenomenon of extended duration of doctoral study (i.e., study duration exceeding the predetermined program schedule) exists at many universities around the world, and most commonly occur during the dissertation phase. In this study, which was conducted at different universities across the United States, the experiences of directors of Education Doctorate (EdD) programs in which students can extend the dissertation time, were investigated. The study employed a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Results highlighted factors relevant to EdD timely completion, and aspects that need to be developed for better dissertation experience and more efficient EdD programs. Research outcomes could be helpful for graduate school leaders and professionals in higher education who could review and adopt policies and practices affecting the dissertation experience. A Recommendation for future research scope was included.

Keywords

Dissertation, EdD Program, Extended Duration, Higher Education, Professional

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1. Introduction

The extended doctoral study duration is when students exceed the predetermined program schedule, and this phenomenon occurs worldwide (Backlund, 2017; Cruz, 2014; Frasier, 2013; van de Schoot, Yerkes, Mouw, & Sonneveld, 2013; Vekkaila, Pyhältö, & Lonka, 2014). Studies revealed that only about 50% of students entering doctoral programs succeed in receiving the degree (Brill, Balcanoff, Land, Gogarty, & Turner, 2014; Powers & Swick, 2012). Among those receiving a degree, 41% finished their studies within 7 years, while 57% took up to 10 years to finish their program (Brill et al., 2014). Data from the Survey of Earned Doctorates 2018 indicated that median years to complete a doctorate exceeded 5 years for people who received the degree from accredited American universities (selected years: 1993-2018) ("Survey of Earned Doctorates", n.d.). According to Dupont, Meert, Galand, & Nils (2013), extended durations most commonly occur during the dissertation.

Education Doctorate (EdD) programs focus on preparing practitioners in leadership positions and applying research to organizational, leadership, or educational problems more than developing new research (Perry, 2010). Professionals in education used to enroll in studies that required 5–7 years of study including a theoretical dissertation, which doesn't line up with their professional goals. Developing the dissertation experience for EdD students, to line up with their professional goals increases the degree value and thus students' motivation to earn the degree and graduate promptly with lower attrition rates (Zambo, Zambo, Buss, Perry, and Williams, 2014). It was necessary to investigate the effectiveness of continuing to embrace the traditional dissertation, which was designed for Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) programs, for EdDs. This study employed a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach to investigate the experiences of directors of EdD in higher education programs through the lens of extended study durations. Exploring why extended durations happen in EdDs highlighted many program aspects that need to be developed.

2. Literature Review

The review focused on two themes, which aligned with the research purpose and provided a good understanding of the gaps in the literature related to the study. These themes were: Extended durations and EdD programs.

2.1 Extended Durations

Research has sought to explain the reasons behind the extended durations phenomenon (Aina, 2015; Barnes & Randall, 2012; Brailsford, 2010; Chan, Heaton, Swidler, & Wunder, 2013; Cruz, 2014; Larivière, 2013; Liechty, Liao, & Schull, 2009; Lin & Chiu, 2014; Lowrey, Conrad, & Beier, 2015; Motseke, 2016; Scott & Miller, 2017; Stock, Siegfried, & Finegan, 2011; Vassil & Solvak, 2012; Wamala, Ocaya, & Oonyu, 2012; Wao, Dedrick, & Ferron, 2011), leading to it being classified according to the following categories: selection, advising, funding, program environment, study requirements, and research approach (Main, 2014). Extended durations commonly occur during the dissertation (Dupont et al., 2013). Up to 60% of doctoral candidates are classified as *all but dissertation* (ABD) (Kelley & Salisbury-Glennon, 2016).

However, research has mostly focused on the first years of doctoral programs, and limited research has investigated the dissertation (Dupont et al., 2013). Of the researchers investigating the dissertation phase, some have focused on understanding its challenges and finding ways to overcome the problems (Hudson & Laken, 2015; Locke & Boyle, 2016; Williams & Todd, 2016). Hove and Nkamta (2017) cited coaching, cluster group tutorials, and dissertation seminars as critical elements of success. Many researchers have focused on the importance of collaborative work for ABD students (Brady et al., 2015; Browne-Ferrigno & Jensen, 2012; Holmes, Birds, Seay, Smith, & Wilson, 2010; Holmes, Robinson, & Seay, 2010; Holmes, Seay, & Wilson, 2009; Robinson & Tagher, 2017; Scott & Miller, 2017). According to Liechty et al. (2009), dissertation completion needs to be studied at multiple levels; however, it was difficult for many researchers to suggest appropriate frameworks and they tended to study factors affecting the timely completion of dissertations separately. As this study investigates the dissertation of EdD programs through the lens of extended durations, an integrative framework to understand many of the multilevel factors impacting the timely completion of the dissertation was used.

Previous research has also discussed the institutional role in students' timely completion (Aina, 2015; Barnes & Randall, 2012; Horn & Lee, 2016; van de Schoot et al., 2013). The most important institutional factors discussed in research as contributors to doctoral completion time

are funding, supervision, program design, students' isolation, and admissions quality (Aina, 2015). Deng, Santos, and Mathieu (2018) indicated that institutions should focus "on improving students' academic achievement, continuous attendance patterns, and navigation toward a degree" (p. 124). An institutional supportive climate motivates adult learners to pursue their education and advance their professional level/goals (Arceňo, 2018).

Although the extended duration phenomenon has been widely discussed in research from a variety of aspects it continues to exist in doctoral education. Literature regarding higher education leaders' perspectives about extended durations was recognized to be insufficient. Elgar and Klein (2004) reported that many deans lack knowledge about the durations for doctoral completion at their institutions, which might hinder development in doctoral education outcomes. They recommended phenomenological research to provide insights into the factors affecting doctoral education administration.

2.2 EdD Programs

The first EdD degree as an alternative for the Ph.D. was introduced by Harvard in the 1920s (Anderson, 2011). Later, in 1934, the establishment of an EdD program at Teachers College, Columbia University, was a major development in doctoral education that was followed by other universities (Perry, 2010). The research sought to differentiate EdDs from PhDs revealed "few differences in content, research methods, minors, or comprehensive examinations ... the type of dissertation was the only significant difference" (Anderson, 2011, p. 23). However, the traditional dissertation is still adopted in most EdD programs (Wergin, 2011). Traditional doctoral studies allow students to enter, register, and progress in their studies in a personalized timeline, and mostly work independently (Tierce, 2008).

The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), 2007, was initiated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, USA, to adjust EdDs to become professional degrees in education. It suggests that a Ph.D. is a traditional degree in which graduates are prepared to be researchers and professors in education while EdD graduates are prepared to be leaders and practitioners (Perry, 2010). Institutions affiliated with CPED redesign EdDs, to become more relevant, according to a set of design concepts which include that a capstone "is a culminating project, different from the traditional dissertation" (Perry, 2010, p. 34).

2.3 Summary

The Reviewed literature above revealed the following gaps in the research:

- Insufficient research regarding higher education leaders' perspectives concerning extended durations

- Limited research investigated the dissertation phase

Also, it revealed that EdDs require different dissertation experience than PhDs. We believe this study fills *a significant gap* by providing the directors' perspectives and insights on EdDs' dissertation through the lens of extended durations. Results that highlighted the need to develop the dissertation process could be helpful for institutions still adopting traditional EdDs to redesign more relevant programs that align with students' professional goals. This will provide better learning and scholarship experience that increases students' motivation to earn a degree promptly.

3. Conceptual Framework

Factors affecting the timely completion of dissertations exist at several levels: individual, institutional, relational, and financial (Liechty et al., 2009). To understand many of the multilevel factors affecting the timely completion of dissertations, we used *Carroll's model of school learning* as an integrative framework for research. It interprets differences in learning, using five categories of variables; three can be described in terms of time, and the other two in terms of achievement (Carroll, 1989).

As shown in Figure 1, learners' aptitudes are inputs that affect the learning process and academic achievement. The learning process includes four levels of academic achievement: the ability to understand instructions (individual level), perseverance (individual level), quality of instructional events (institutional and relational levels), and the opportunity to learn. In this study, the perspectives of EdD program directors, who experience the extended duration phenomenon through many factors including the enrolled students, were investigated at the four indicated levels.

4. The Study

This research study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the primary researcher's doctoral university. The purpose of the study was to investigate the experiences of directors of EdD in higher education programs through the lens of extended study durations. The question guiding our research was the following: How do directors of EdD in higher education

programs describe their experiences concerning students extending the time of dissertation completion beyond doctoral course study?
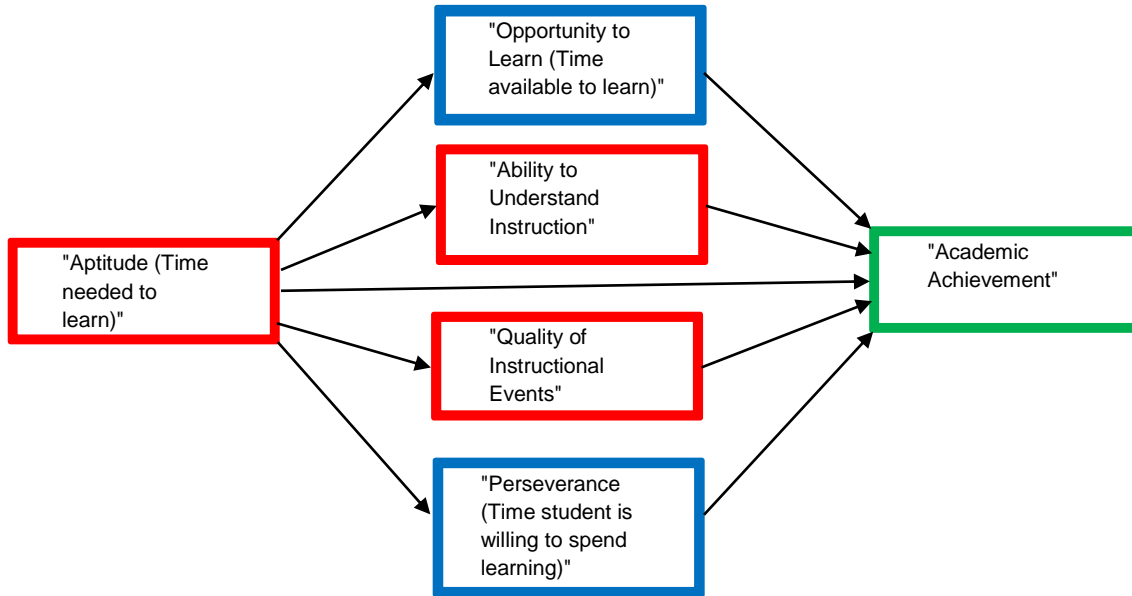

Figure 1: *Carroll's Model of School Learning.*

(Adapted from Park, Jung, and Reeves (2015). Copyright 2015 by International Council for Educational Media)

5. Method

A qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach was selected for this study. According to Deepa and Panicker (2016), "when the research problem is to understand the common experiences of several individuals about a phenomenon, a phenomenological approach is appropriate. A phenomenological study describes the meaning of several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 585).

5.1 Research Design

To answer the research question, the qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach was applied according to a specific outline as follows: Semi-structured interviews were used to provide participants with an opportunity to describe their individual experiences. Interviews were conducted via phone since each participant was located in a different state. To

ensure that interviews would adequately answer the research question, we created an interview protocol that contained six questions (see the appendix).

5.2 Participants

Inclusion criteria for participants were to be a director of an EdD in higher education program in which:

- The dissertation is undertaken after all coursework is complete
- Students can extend the time to complete the dissertation if necessary

Twenty-four program directors, who met the inclusion criteria and were listed on the websites for the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA: http://apps.naspa.org/gradprograms/search.cfm) and/or the American College Personnel Association (ACPA: http://gradprograms.myacpa.org/), were contacted. Some of the information on these websites was outdated, and contact information was obtained from the institutions' websites. The final study sample included 11 participants, who are described in Table 1.

Table 1: *Participants' Description*

Pseudonym	Gender: Male /Female	Type of University	University Region	State	Experience as a director (years)
Dr. Baker	F	Public	South	E	5
Dr. Bank	M	Public	West	D	Not mentioned
Dr. Ford	F	Public	Midwest	K	7
Dr. Harrison	F	Private	Northeastern	I	3
Dr. Henry	M	Private	Northeastern	G	11
Dr. Hudson	M	Public	South	B	2
Dr. Jones	M	Private	East coast	H	5
Dr. Kimberley	F	Public	Midwest	L	6
Dr. March	M	Public	Upper Midwest	F	2-3
Dr. Mayher	M	Public	Southeastern	J	2
Dr. Patrick	M	Public	Southeastern	C	Not mentioned

5.3 Pilot Testing

To support the effectiveness of the semi-structured interview, the feasibility of gathering data, and optimizing interview quality, a pilot test was conducted with a director of an EdD in higher education program. This individual was not included in the study sample.

6. Procedures

Participants were contacted via an email that included an invitation to participate in the study and a Qualtrics survey. This survey contained the informed consent form and allowed participants to select a preferred interview time and provide their phone number. We used the interview protocol to ensure all participants received the same questions and information.

6.1 Data Collection

The interviews were audio-recorded and sent to rev.com to be transcribed. The transcripts were then sent to participants for member checking to support the trustworthiness of the study. The revised transcripts were used for data analysis. Participants' confidentiality was maintained in the data analysis and the final report, where personal information was de-identified.

6.2 Analysis of Data

We used *a* thematic analysis guided by Stage and Manning *(2016)* as the strategy for analyzing the data. All data were carefully read, impressions were developed about what the participants conveyed about their experiences, and different codes were identified. The codes were used to categorize data, which helped in determining the essential experience aspects, developing themes, and making the analysis more objective. Guided by the research question, the study purpose, and Carroll's model, we grouped the identified codes into categories and subcategories. The similarities and commonalities between different experiences helped to identify the main themes. Direct quotations from the interviewees were used to support the identified themes. The findings were peer-reviewed by a higher education research professor to add another layer of trustworthiness to the study. Figure 2 illustrates the thematic analysis procedure to ensure that the developed themes were elements of the participants' experiences.

7. Findings

Findings were classified into themes and subthemes as shown in Table 2.
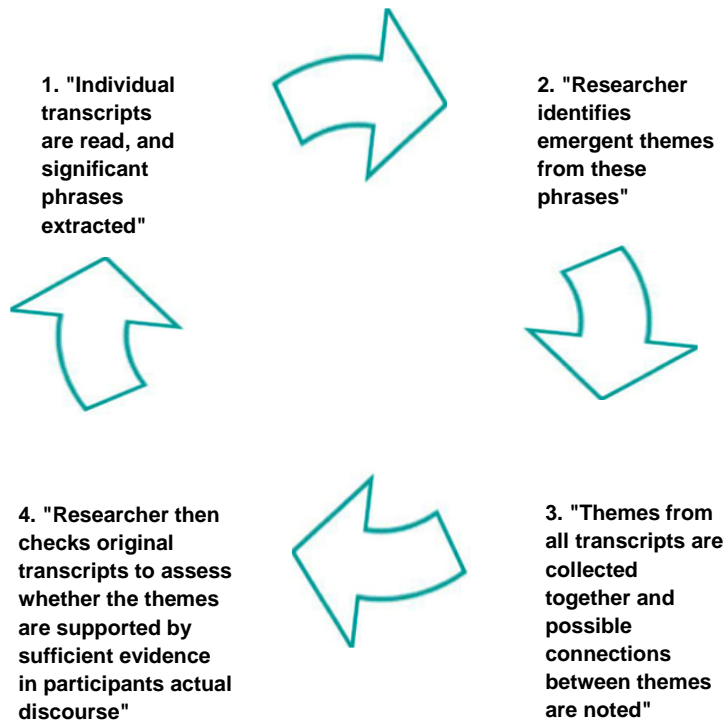
1. "Individual transcripts are read, and significant phrases extracted"

2. "Researcher identifies emergent themes from these phrases"

4. "Researcher then checks original transcripts to assess whether the themes are supported by sufficient evidence in participants actual discourse"

3. "Themes from all transcripts are collected together and possible connections between themes are noted"

Figure 2: *Thematic Analysis Procedure.*

(Adapted from Lewis, Lloyd, and Farrell (2013))

Table 2: *Identified Themes*

Themes	Subthemes
1. Faculty Role	• Constant Contact • Early Action
2. Dissertation Process	• Structuring the Dissertation • Timely Feedback • Early Action
3. Institutional Collaboration	• Disincentive Policies/Systems • Perceptions
4. Student Groups	• Informal Groups • Views on the Cohort Model

7.1 Faculty Role

Ten of the 11 participants emphasized that faculty have a significant role in students' timely completion of their dissertations. This role includes tracking students and keeping the process going. Dr. Henry mentioned, "faculty need to have a process ... that they keep in touch with ... students." Dr. Patrick stated, "Keeping on faculty to make sure that they're keeping in touch with all of their students if a student disappears." Two participants considered the quality of faculty-student relationships as being equally important, with Dr. Kimberley mentioning, "We have ... a high completion rate ... because we have ... The chair has a relationship with those students." Dr. Bank said, "... the quality of those relationships "is" extremely important when you are designing a study. Because you're working as a team."

The directors' perspectives regarding the faculty role converged in two subthemes: constant contact and early action.

7.1.1 Constant Contact

The participants expressed that many factors might contribute to faculty losing contact with students, such as faculty unavailability, workload, faculty shortage, and the misalignment between the timeline of the student and the advisor. Dr. March noted, "... faculty are nine-month contracts and aren't required to do work in the summer, ... the program is a twelve-month." Dr. Hudson said, "... when they ... submit stuff, it's in the summer when the faculty aren't around." Dr. Baker indicated, "... faculty ... have many things to do as well ... So, in many cases, we don't see that the period on the dissertation is valued as ... it should be."

7.1.2 Early Action

Seven participants agreed about the importance of faculty being able to identify emerging issues early and address them immediately, establish milestones and checkpoints for each student's progress, and develop plans to monitor it. Dr. Patrick mentioned, "We rely ... on very specific academic advisement and a high level of faculty-to-student mentoring to identify issues ... and to address them as quickly as possible." Dr. March said, "We have set up milestones for them. Usually, after the second year is complete, they're able to do their qualifying exam, which is like a prospectus. And that's the first checkpoint." Dr. Ford stated, "... "develop" a ... clear plan that "they" and their advisor agree to and that they revisit at the end of each semester and that ... determines whether they're making satisfactory academic progress or not."

7.2 Dissertation Modification

As findings illustrated, doctoral education curriculum development focuses on the courses, and changes are rarely made to the dissertation portion of a program. The dissertation differs from previous educational experiences, and it is where delays occur and concerns about timely completion increase. Dr. Jones stated, "... when we move into the dissertation ... It becomes a challenge that we're switching a model that we spend 15 or 20 years developing into something where now you have to work with a small committee to make progress towards a larger study. That can be overwhelming." Dr. Patrick said, "... all of a sudden, they go into a dissertation world where they don't have ... schedule anymore." Dr. Ford mentioned, "... there's no real concern before the dissertation." Dr. March said, "Usually it's during the dissertation ... when we all get concerned." All participants agreed on the need to develop the dissertation process, and their perspectives fell within the following three subthemes: structuring the dissertation, timely feedback, and early action.

7.2.1 Structuring the Dissertation

In traditional doctoral studies, students may be floundering in the dissertation process, because there is no scheduled timeframe as was the case during the courses. Some participants considered it necessary to incorporate a framework for achieving the dissertation process. Dr. Baker mentioned, "... as much as we help to outline and set a framework of study and moving forward ... We have handbooks. We have all of these kinds of things. But I think the key to that is setting the framework." Dr. Henry explained that his institution created an accelerated EdD model (i.e., the doctoral candidates enter a dissertation cohort after the comprehensive exam) as another option for earlier completion compared with the traditional model "We did not want to continue the history of our doctoral students ... extending on too long. So, we created an accelerated degree."

7.2.2 Timely Feedback

According to some participants, timely feedback is critical for completion. In traditional doctoral programs, there is a need to come up with effective ways of how students in the dissertation process can utilize the feedback on coursework. Dr. Bank mentioned, "... the program ... can do better providing more thorough and more timely feedback to students, particularly throughout the dissertation . . ." Dr. Kimberley stated, "... the further students get away from their coursework, the more difficult it is for them to do their dissertation not only promptly, but successfully." Dr. Harrison said, "... I think ... if we could figure out a way to help students ... use

... feedback the faculty give them in the course of the program, it would be extraordinarily helpful . . ." Lastly, Dr. Mayher stated, "We are looking at reframing the curriculum ... we have tried to deliver the content right when students need it."

7.2.3 Early Action

Many directors believed that explaining the entire dissertation process in advance and controlling students' progress once they start it is critical. Dr. Mayher mentioned, "we haven't been talking about those things until the second semester ... we are realizing now that we may want to talk a little bit more about it in the first semester so that they can better begin to orient themselves." Dr. Baker stated, "We have a requited pro-seminar for every doctoral student at the beginning ... We go through the whole process ... It's a tactical approach to our students when they start the program." Dr. Hudson and Dr. Jones believed in the importance of including a course about dissertation during the coursework. Dr. Hudson stated that "... providing a credit class about writing your dissertation proposal, so ... they get a start on that during their coursework." Dr. Jones mentioned, "We ... eliminated an institutional barrier by placing a class in the first year ... called Critical Review of Literature."

7.3 Institutional Collaboration

Nine of the 11 participants believed that timely completion of doctoral studies needs institutional collaboration. Findings included views on disincentive policies/systems and the directors' perceptions about institutional collaboration.

7.3.1 Disincentive Policies/Systems

Dr. March's indicated, "One is that faculty are nine-month contracts and are not required to do work in the summer." Dr. Henry focused on the importance of having a study time limit: "The lack of policy may be leading to students taking longer to get their dissertation done because we don't throw them out at a certain point." Dr. Jones' view pertained to the bureaucratic system inside the institution: "... "there're" multiple layers of curriculum review ... we have not changed our dissertation process in this period, but it would undergo the same process I described earlier." Finally, Dr. Patrick stated, "... policies regarding not being able to start ... dissertation until ... coursework is done… certainly do not help with timeliness."

7.3.2 Perceptions

Dr. Harrison believed more levels of student support would be beneficial: "We have a dissertation support manager who gathers from the students when they first start, a timeline for

completion, ... she is completely distinct from the higher education department. She's also ... distinct from the chairs, and she monitors the students' progress." Dr. Harrison also highlighted the importance of coaching: "I ... think that it would be wonderful if they had a professional coach ... to see how they're developing professionally, and to just talk about the things that are their struggles." Dr. Patrick focused on flexibility: "... synchronous courses are difficult. Asynchronous courses are better. We do have a high population of single parents ... They need to know that the courses are very flexible and that they can work with the courses around their schedules." Dr. Mayher pointed to the language used in marketing the program: "... we kept saying the program is a three-year program ... what we learned was that set up an artificial layer of additional pressure on students ... we've now changed our language ... saying it's designed so that it's possible to be finished in three years." Dr. Ford mentioned the program design: "... because of the scaffolding we've done in the ... curriculum as well as the design of the dissertation to focus on a problem of practice ... we are seeing an increase in folks who are doing it in three to three and half years." Finally, Dr. Bank's mentioned, "... If something is missing for some students ... is some resource supports for technology, for things like transcription, which can be costly."

7.4 Student Groups

Six participants mentioned the importance of creating student groups during the dissertation for support and collaboration. Participants' experiences in this regard were different. Some have adopted the cohort model for the entire EdD program, and others adopted cohorts only during the coursework. Meanwhile, some are still using the traditional model of independently achieving the dissertation.

7.4.1 Informal Groups

Even though some directors follow the traditional model, they believed in the positive impact of student groups during the dissertation and encouraged the formation of informal groups. Dr. Jones stated, "... organizing our students into a dissertation support group has been very effective." Dr. Baker expressed, "We don't have a cohort program. We have a cohort program for our master's students and we know how that helps them."

7.4.2 Views on the Cohort Model

Dr. Henry stated, "I'm doing a cohort, that's intense scaffolding, and ... 99% get done in one year and graduate." Dr. Ford expressed, " ... we're a cohort, everybody moves through ... coursework and into comps as a group…what we're looking at is how do we ... build that cohort

feeling that exists during coursework into the dissertation." Also, Dr. Kimberley mentioned, "... cohort is a very strong model of support ... cohort members will keep each other's feet to the fire."

8. Discussion and Conclusion

Previous research focused on the first years of doctoral programs, and only limited research investigated the dissertation phase (Dupont et al., 2013; Kelley & Salisbury-Glennon, 2016). Factors affecting timely completion of a dissertation are present at several levels, from the individual to the institution, and studies have tended to explore each level separately. Some scholars were aware of the need to study dissertation completion at multiple levels, but they could not suggest appropriate frameworks (Liechty et al., 2009). The conceptual framework of this study encompasses several levels affecting the timely completion of dissertations and was used to guide the design of interview questions. Findings provided insights into the dissertation process of EdD programs.

Serial dissertation models, where the study requirements follow a linear pattern (e.g., the dissertation starts after completing the coursework), could be counterproductive (Willis, Freitas, and Valenti, 2010). Willis et al. indicated two reasons for the traditional dissertation dilemma: First, it "lacks organized support systems other than the major advisor and the dissertation committee" (p. 56), and secondly, students recognize skills and knowledge required for the dissertation when starting their researches after coursework is complete. We believe this study represents an adequate exploration of the disadvantages of serial models for EdDs. Our findings revealed the need for more efficient paths to the degree, where all participants agreed on the need to develop the traditional dissertation. Using the lens of extended duration phenomenon for the investigation not only highlighted the factors relevant to expedient completion, but also many aspects which need to be considered when designing more efficient EdDs.

First, interviews revealed that the majority of EdDs' students are employees who are working full time. Dr. Patrick mentioned, "... our students, ... over 95% ..., are full-time employees who are at jobs that are pushing them to finish their doctorates." Dr. Baker said, "... we talk about what arrangements they make with their work so that they will have the time and dedication." This increases the need for a different dissertation experience in terms of shorter time to degree and lining up with students' professional goals. Many professionals in education seeking doctoral degrees want to stay in the same roles or field and are not seeking faculty roles. They want a degree

that prepares them to " (1) apply theory to their practice, and (2) learn how to better solve on-the-ground problems" (Zambo et al., 2014, p. 124). Secondly, participants emphasized the importance of institutional collaboration in terms of actions/expedient policies regarding the following: students' readiness for the dissertation/research experience (e.g., Dr. Jones mentioned placing research-related classes in the first year), structuring the dissertation (e.g., Dr. Henry explained an effective accelerated EdD degree "designed specifically for practicing professionals who are working full time"), integrating the coursework with the dissertation (e.g., Dr. Patrick pointed to policies which don't allow students to start their dissertations before coursework is complete), and continuous contact with faculty (e.g., Dr. March's mentioned reviewing faculty's nine-month contracts which highlight lack of organized student support systems in the summer). Lastly, Findings revealed that even participants who still adopt traditional dissertations for EdDs strongly believe in the importance of student groups during dissertations (e.g., Dr. Baker and Dr. Jones). Participants who have experience with cohort-based EdDs emphasized the effectiveness of this model (e.g., Dr. Henry, Dr. Ford, and Dr. Kimberley). Adopting cohort-based programs reduces the time to degree (Hardy, 2015) and improves program efficiency (Tierce, 2008).

Recently, Professional practice doctorates (PPD) have exponentially increased in many fields in the United States including the new professionally-oriented EdD (Zusman, 2013). In many programs, a development in the dissertation requirement has occurred. For example, some PPDs replaced the dissertation with certain forms of documentation (e.g., portfolio), others integrated the dissertation into the different experiences of the program, few allowed collaborative and team research, and in some programs, the dissertation has been concurrently achieved with the coursework.

The concurrent approach addresses the disadvantages of the serial dissertation models through embedding dissertation work across the program. It is oftentimes a better educational experience for the student (Willis et al., 2010). Also, it allows a shorter time to degree; Interviews revealed that many directors tend to favor shorter EdD programs. For example, Dr. Bank said: " ... a program that promoted a much longer period of engagement would be much more difficult to construct those partnerships because the organizations that they intended to work with ... wanted work much more quickly." Dr. Henry mentioned: " ... we did not want to continue the history of our doctoral students ... extending on too long. So, we created our accelerated degree." Dr. Harrison expressed: "the length of the program is predetermined for ... courses, and ... dissertation

... we intend that the dissertation is going to take 4 semesters, however, it may ... take a little longer than that." The corresponding author has studied in a cohort-based EdD program of a concurrent approach, which afforded knowledge and advantages to conduct this study; However, "there is a scarcity of research on students in newly designed or redesigned EdD programs"(Zambo et al., 2014, p. 127) and further research is recommended.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself and your experience as a director of an EdD program.

- Tell me about the process used to determine the length of your EdD program.

- What academic skills do you believe are necessary for the student to be able to finish timely the doctoral study in general, and the dissertation phase in particular?

- Do you believe there are any institutional factors/policies in place that could cause a delay in program completion for a student in the dissertation phase?

- What additional support, if any, do you think could be provided for students during the dissertation phase?

- Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your program or your experience concerning extended doctoral study duration?