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Theory and Practice in Doctoral Dissertation Research, 2007-2017: A Content Analysis by Degree Type

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Theory and Practice in Doctoral Dissertation Research, 2007–2017:

A Content Analysis by Degree Type

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William P. Friel has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the

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Abstract

In response to the overwhelming presence of professional practice doctoral degrees in the early 2000s, universities offering Doctor of Education (EdD) and/or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees in higher education studies began to question the purpose and value of each degree. These universities asked: What is the value of academic research if it does not aim to improve the condition of what is being studied? This led to a theory-practice debate among departments offering the EdD and the PhD from the perspective of the goal of the dissertation research: Truth or improvement. To address this tension, the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) was formed in 2007 with 22 founding members increasing to 100 by 2017 to examine the EdD critically. To assess dissertation development over the 10-year period of CPED's existence, through content analysis, this study examined 761 EdD and PhD dissertation abstracts in higher education studies from 2007 and 2017. The goals were to understand how the theory-practice tension is reflected in higher education dissertations and to assess the degree of differentiation between EdD and PhD dissertations. Boyer's (1990) expanded definitions of scholarship served as the theoretical framework, and the coding form designed by Melendez (2002) captured a range of dissertation characteristics for analysis. Results indicated more applied research characteristics focusing on improvement for the EdD from 2007 to 2017. In contrast, PhD dissertations in higher education studies exhibited more applied scholarship in 2007, but they had reverted to more traditional discovery- or truth-oriented research goals in 2017. These findings suggest greater differentiation between the EdD as application- and the PhD as theory-based over the 10-year period since the establishment of CPED.

Dedication

For Connor and Mae

Acknowledgments

I would first like to acknowledge my dissertation committee members, Dr. John Melendez, Dr. Robert Kelchen, and Dr. Martin Finkelstein. I specifically sought out each of these scholars when it was time to begin forming a dissertation committee, and this team supported my efforts in their own unique way as I hoped they would. First, my dissertation was in fact inspired by the work of committee member Dr. John Melendez, a 2002 Seton Hall University PhD graduate. Reading his dissertation created the impetus to build upon his research while attempting to offer both truth and utility for higher education professionals. Dr. Melendez was gracious with his time and subject-matter expertise during this dissertation experience.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20 years, a marked increase in literature and rhetoric was evident about the disparity between professionally oriented higher education doctoral students and the academically oriented higher education doctoral programs in which they are enrolled. Higher education scholars and practitioners alike have called for widespread reform related to meeting the more practical needs of the practitioner-scholar in higher education doctoral studies. This practice-research tension is reflected in the crafting of higher education doctoral programs to meet the needs of a diverse student population (Golde, 2006).

It has become imperative that higher education research strike a balance between addressing immediate problems in higher education and constructing a body of work that has long-term implications for the field (Perna, 2016). As higher education doctoral programs continue to review, analyze, and implement incremental curricular reform in response to these calls for change, arguably the most important feature of the higher education doctoral journey has remained resistant to reform—the dissertation.

Within the field of higher education studies, it has been increasingly accepted that a research gap exists between theory and practice. The dissertation in higher education doctoral programs has traditionally been a theory-based, truth-seeking research study regardless if the doctoral candidate intends to enter the professoriate or engage in academic research upon graduation (Archbald, 2010). This traditional, positivist approach to conducting research in higher education studies has been influenced by numerous factors. For one, higher education research has mirrored research conducted in the social sciences: those disciplines that have long-standing and accepted research methods that aim to discover, validate, or refute knowledge

within their respective academic subject matter. Second, higher education doctoral students employed in the higher education enterprise have been trained from the positivist research perspective from which their own doctoral faculty members were trained. Consequently, at many universities, the knowledge-transfer that occurs from faculty to the practitioner-scholar doctoral student may be incongruent with the primary motivations of many doctoral candidates seeking to earn a terminal degree in higher education studies.

What is most important in the positivist approach to research is truth. Positivist research is not concerned with making things better or improving matters in any sense. This positivist research approach has over 300 years from which to illustrate its strong standing, and rightly so; however, a tide is forming in scholarly research. Scholars and practitioners in higher education are beginning to ask the question: What good is research if it does not aim to improve the condition of what is being studied? This question is at the forefront of the theory-practice tension in higher education. Two segregated perspectives appear on what should be considered valid or *good* research in higher education studies. One perspective aims for *truth* as a research goal, while the other focuses on *improvement* as a research goal. Couple this research perspective conundrum with a diverse student body of higher education doctoral students, and the theory-practice tension becomes even more intense.

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in most social science disciplines is designed so that students immerse themselves in the literature to become familiar with what is already known in a specific field of study (Boyer, 1990; Gardner, 2009). PhD students are encouraged to search for what is yet unknown by identifying gaps in the literature. It is the unknown in the literature that PhD students study in order to make contributions to the field (Offerman, 2011). Traditionally, these PhD students employ theoretical frameworks in research studies to aid in the formation of

new research findings or expansion of theory(s) on a specific topic. The primary research goal for the PhD student is discovering *truth*.

In contrast to the PhD, programs that confer the Doctor of Education (EdD) do not always teach students research methods solely based on theory (Perry, 2012; Wergin, 2011). EdD students are sometimes encouraged to conduct research based on existing real-life problem(s) with the goal of solving or improving the condition of the research subject. This type of research study is frequently referred to as applied or action research (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). It is important to note that applied research may also be crafted around theory, as most commonly found in PhD research. The research goal for applied research, however, is *improvement*.

Thus, two terminal degrees are offered in higher education studies: (a) the PhD and (b) the EdD. Two recognized research platforms also exist from which doctoral students may conduct investigation; one is based on theory and one is based on professional practice. The problem is that the answer to which type of research contributes more organically to academe depends on who is asked. Argyris and Schön (1974) asserted that "integrating thought with action effectively has plagued philosophers, frustrated social scientists and eluded professional practitioners for years" (p. 1). With two terminal degrees and two primary research protocols in higher education studies, one might conclude aligning research agendas to degree type seems like a simple proposition. This conclusion, as idealistic as it may be, is not based on any evidence found within the realities of higher education as a living, breathing enterprise of learned beings. As this dissertation attempts to illustrate, academic research is the beating heart of higher education. The dissertation in higher education studies should therefore accurately reflect the research motivations of doctoral students in higher education studies.

As scholars in higher education wrangle with effectively differentiating the design of the EdD from the PhD in higher education studies, one of the strongest points of contention has been how to handle the dissertation. Perry and Imig (2008) provided a succinct summary of this conundrum:

> This has been the toughest design component for most institutions. On the one hand, a common sentiment has been, "We don't know what good criteria for a capstone are." On the other hand, many faculty who were trained in traditional ways are determined to break the mold of the traditional five-chapter dissertation and replace it with something that meets the demands of leading 21st century schools, colleges, and other organizations. What are the merits of a group project or one rooted in an ongoing practical problem faced by a school or college or other learning institution? Should the emphasis be on "original knowledge" (and the generation of a dataset) or should skills be developed to interpret and analyze data that might be generated by a school system or district or other source? (p. 2)

This dialogue on different approaches to doctoral education research from the viewpoint of the scholar and the practitioner continues to shed light on what it actually means for the 21st century higher education stakeholder whether professor, graduate student, department, or institution. Both scholar and practitioner have unique perspectives on what should qualify as valid research, but a rising consensus seems evident that segregating the EdD from the PhD has merit and has potential to elevate the relative value of each degree.

Whereas faculty publication productivity may decrease with age (Finkelstein, 1984), the majority of practitioners entering doctoral programs are already middle-aged and mid-career professionals and have different research agendas (Costley & Lester, 2012). For practitioners in the higher education enterprise, the traditional dissertation may be neither motivating nor useful for the work that practitioners with doctorates are called upon to do (Shulman, 2010). Thus, it is with these factors in mind that a study was proposed. This study aims to identify how theory-practice tension is reflected in doctoral dissertations within the field of higher education studies,

utilizing Ernest Boyer's (1990) scholarship model to examine selected dissertations over a 10-year period.

Ernest Boyer's (1990) pioneering publication *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* introduced an expanded view of research that initiated debate within American higher education on what should qualify as relevant and valid scholarship. Melendez (2002) suggested that while the focus of *Scholarship Reconsidered* centered on the professoriate, Boyer's challenge for an expanded view of scholarship included the graduate experience. Melendez referenced Boyer's (1990) call that "if scholarship is to be redefined, graduate study must be broadened, encompassing not only research, but integration, application, and teaching, too" (p. 16). This expanded view of research has become a centerpiece from which deliberation on differentiating the EdD from the PhD in higher education studies has blossomed in recent years. Boyer's four dimensions of scholarship—the scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration, scholarship of application, and scholarship of teaching—spurred higher education scholars to reexamine their pedagogical values and question conclusions on rigor and quality in research.

Boyer's Scholarship Model

Scholarship of Discovery

With a mission to acquire knowledge for its own sake, the most traditional form of scholarship is discovery (Boyer, 1990). Originality in research and contribution to a body of knowledge is the standard from of scholarship and the research domain from which American higher education has gained worldwide respect (Braxton, Luckey & Helland, 2002). Discovery in scholarship seeks the unknown with the goal of finding truth without regard to implication.

Scholarship of Integration

If the discovery researcher's enthusiasm is based on finding new truth, the integration researcher is most anxious to uncover the meaning of this new knowledge (Boyer, 1990). The scholarship of integration is meant to be interpretive by nature. This type of research is more social than discovery. Integration in scholarship connects truth to context. The purpose of this type of research is to connect knowledge across disciplines and, when possible, interpret knowledge in either a larger or more granular context. Integration in scholarship is more flexible than discovery, but maintains the overall mission of creating new knowledge.

Scholarship of Application

As the scholarships of discovery and integration focus on finding and interpreting truth, the scholarship of application concentrates on inserting knowledge into a real-life problem to measure effectiveness. The scholarship of application emphasizes improvement of a situation, rather than truth. It is practical in nature, and the goals of this type of research are utilitarian and service-oriented. The objectives of the scholarship of application are to serve the external environment (Braxton et al., 2002).

Scholarship of Teaching

As the scholarship of application emphasizes the value of applied research, the scholarship of teaching underscores the value of communicating knowledge effectively. Boyer (1990) referenced Aristotle's declaration, "Teaching is the highest form of understanding" (p. 23). The scope of this kind of scholarship is not found in the processes in which research is conducted, but how research and knowledge are transferred from one entity to another. What is the value of research if no one knows about it? It is scholarship in this sense that offers insight into the value of teaching as a valid scholarship domain.

EdD Versus PhD

The arguments to which scholars have alluded more recently (Golde, 2006; Levine, 2005), however, comprised the belief that scholarships of teaching and scholarships of application may not warrant conferrals of a PhD degree. The premise here is that true or valid scholarship is based on theory and theoretical development, and not on the utility of knowledge or applied research. Especially in an academic field of study such as higher education, an area where practitioners outnumber nascent faculty members, calls to segregate the mission of EdD from PhD have gained significant momentum (Perry, 2012, Storey & Maughan, 2016). This momentum has, in fact, finally spurred a formal response in the form of a university consortium to distinguish the research mission of the EdD.

Beginning with a network of 25 schools of education across the United States, the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) was formed in 2007 with a primary mission to differentiate the EdD from the PhD effectively in order to better meet the needs of the practitioner-scholar graduate student population. CPED Executive Director Jill Perry (2015) suggested this endeavor to distinguish the EdD from the PhD is more than an intellectual exercise; in fact, it has transcended the debate that took place over much of the 20th century and is the first proactive effort in the United States aimed at producing the frameworks for changing the meaning and design of the EdD. Shulman's (2010) challenge to encourage universities to develop doctoral degree programs in a more purposeful way that recognizes the more collaborative nature of practitioner-scholars has indeed gained momentum. Storey and Maughan (2016) suggested that although a gradual shift in educational research has occurred via the recognition of less positivist forms of scholarship, they have seen significant progress on transforming the mission of the EdD. This would suggest, perhaps, that at institutional and

departmental levels, general agreement in concept is evident to restructure the EdD, but actually implementing CPED's values in form and function, especially via the dissertation, is still a work in progress.

Statement of Purpose

This study proposed to analyze dissertation characteristics over a 10-year period at selected institutions that confer both EdD and PhD degrees in higher education studies to document how dissertation research in the field of higher education has developed from 2007 to 2017. Two hundred forty-two institutional members of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) award terminal degrees in higher education studies. From ASHE institutional membership, 48 universities offer both the EdD and PhD in higher education studies. A content analysis was performed on dissertations produced by these 48 ASHE institutional members in 2007 and 2017 with the intent to accomplish the following: (a) Gain clarity in understanding how theory-practice tension is reflected in higher education dissertations, and (b) Test the degree of differentiation between dissertations undertaken for the EdD and for the PhD.

Significance of the Study

Calls from scholars to differentiate the EdD from PhD effectively in higher education doctoral programs warrant an investigation of research in the field of higher education studies. Researchers continue to identify a need for more professionally prepared administrators and leaders who are qualified to resolve current practical educational issues (Jackson & Kelley, 2012). For those who do not intend to conduct original scholarly research or become tenure-track faculty members, the true need is sufficient preparation of practitioners with necessary skills for becoming successful administrators (Jackson & Kelly, 2012; Wergin, 2011).

Universities must demonstrate their relevance by delivering real benefits to their constituency—the students (Wiewel & Proenza, 2010). Accountability to students is a fairly new phenomenon. Kelchen (2018) maintained that institutions of higher education have always faced pressures from internal stakeholders, including students, to hold themselves accountable. Program-level accountability, Kelchen posited, is a likely next step in the process of demonstrating measurable benefit.

The mission of The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate's aim is to enhance the reputation and utility of the EdD while ensuring the degree and the institutional departments that confer this degree are accountable to their practitioner-scholar constituents. Dissertation research, as referenced, finds itself at the center of this significant struggle to maintain departmental accountability while also offering curricular utility in higher education studies. Examination of published dissertations from doctoral students in higher education studies provides a unique snapshot of this theory-practice tension in higher education doctoral research.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How has dissertation research in the field of higher education changed in reflecting theory-practice tension between 2007 and 2017?

2. To what extent are dissertation changes between 2007 and 2017 associated with differentiation between the EdD and the PhD degree in the field of higher education studies?

Additionally, the following subsidiary questions were answered as well:

a. How many dissertations in higher education studies were completed in 2007 and 2017?

b. How many dissertations were guided by an existing theory in 2007 and 2017?

c. Is the origin of the problem based on theory or practice in 2007 and 2017 dissertations?

d. What are the primary research methodologies in 2007 and 2017 dissertations?

e. How are Boyer's scholarship domains distributed among 2007 and 2017 dissertations?

Organization of the Study

In the first chapter, the introduction, statement of purpose, significance of the study, and research and subsidiary questions were presented. The second chapter presents the review of relevant literature and theory related to dissertation research and higher education as a field of study. In the third chapter, the methodology utilized in this study is offered, and the fourth chapter reports the findings and limitations of the study. The final chapter contains the conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter begins with a brief overview of doctoral education, followed by a descriptive section on the historical development of scholarship in doctoral studies. Recent literature on the professional practice doctorates provides substance from which the purpose of dissertation research is explored and defined. This is followed by recent literature on dissertations in higher education studies and concludes with a perspective on both strengths and weaknesses of the literature and a summary of the literature review.

Overview

The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) reported that in 2006-2007, 8,261 terminal degrees in education were conferred in the United States. This represented the EdD and PhD in both K-12 and higher education studies. Fast forward 10 years. NCES indicated 12,687 doctoral degrees earned in education, representing 7% of all doctorates conferred in 2016-2017. Although this nearly 50% increase in conferrals of both EdD and PhD is significant by sheer numbers, it is also significant that between 40% and 60% of doctoral students do not even persist to graduation, including approximately 20% of doctoral students leaving their programs at the dissertation stage (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). From an organizational perspective, Bowen and Rudenstine submitted that doctoral student attrition is a significant problem, namely by way of departmental reputation and loss of high-level resources. Institutions that offer an enhanced level of clarity to doctoral students on career pathways as well as curricular expectations and capstone experiences via the dissertation may be well served in curbing this disturbing trend. To add pressure to the situation, Ehrenberg (2010) claimed the overall decline in tenured faculty, the *deskilling* of the professoriate, is likely discouraging prospective students from entering doctoral

programs. The evolution of the professoriate and characteristics of future faculty in higher education, Ehrenberg posited, should be both more concerned with student success and more aware of market forces affecting higher education.

Shulman (2007) argued that academe has done a poor job in attempting to create both scholars and practitioners in higher education simultaneously. Gardner (2009) and Shulman (2005) noted that as professions continue to evolve, so do the educational requirements necessary for successful performance in these professions. Stemming from these sentiments, a lack of understanding continues about the signature product of a practitioner performing scholarly research who must satisfy the demands of both scholar and practitioner (Dawson & Kumar, 2014; Willis, Inman, & Valenti, 2010). This organizational conundrum in higher education doctoral studies presents an important issue that academia has only started to address proactively over the past decade: the appropriate forms and functions of the doctoral dissertation in higher education studies.

Historical Development

Originating in Germany in the 1800s, the PhD was the product of combined research and philosophy in which scholars advanced current knowledge through their work (Baez, 2002). The first PhD in the United States was conferred in 1861 at Yale University (Baez, 2002) and the first PhD in education at Columbia University's Teachers College in 1893 (Perry, 2012). The original design of the PhD was fashioned so students could begin their scholarly research through immersion in the literature in order to become more familiar with what was already known in a particular field of study. Students in the social sciences typically did this by employing theoretical frameworks and research methodologies to aid in the formation of new knowledge or the expansion of current theories regarding a specific topic (Offerman, 2011). The PhD was

intended to be a research-based degree that students pursued with the intent of ultimately becoming scholars and contributing to a current field of knowledge (Archbald, 2011; Offerman, 2011).

The EdD has existed for nearly a century with the establishment of the first EdD degree conferred at Harvard in 1920 (Toma, 2002). The Harvard EdD was not originally designed for those intending to pursue tenure-track faculty positions with an emphasis in conducting original research (Basu, 2012; Gardner, 2009). With the purpose of training school practitioners, Harvard's dual degrees in education created the appearance of a functional difference between the EdD and PhD when in fact no such difference existed (Powell, 1980).

Clear distinctions between the EdD and PhD in education have never existed (Levine, 2005; Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, & Garabedian, 2006). For example, some schools of higher education created EdD programs specifically aligned to a research-intensive experience in postsecondary studies, while other institutions intended the EdD to serve solely as a professional practice doctoral degree (Offerman, 2011; Perry, 2012). This has resulted in many universities continuing to offer EdD programs that mirror PhD programs. Critics argued that one consequence of this has been a generation of ill-prepared education practitioners serving in leadership and administrative capacities in today's education system (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Redden, 2007). No agreed-upon suggestions for an EdD program design has appeared that would produce the highest level of doctorally prepared students, while also meeting the needs of the nontraditional graduate student population (Archbald, 2011; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Offerman, 2011). The historical debate regarding purposes of doctoral research in education as well as the quality of research preparation has maintained a prominent role (Levine, 2005).

With the influences of traditional academe as well as educators' aspirations to gain full acceptance within the community of scholars from other disciplines, both EdD and PhD degrees in higher education have gradually focused more on developing a professional knowledge base through scientific research than on maintaining a utilitarian approach to preparing practitioners. In doctoral programs, the research emphasis and dissertation writing have remained traditional despite more recent arguments to modify this work more toward the needs and preparation of practitioners (Archbald, 2008; Shulman et al., 2006).

When Ernest Boyer published *Scholarship Reconsidered* in 1990, he challenged the traditional ideals for conducting valid research. Boyer introduced a new framework of knowledge creation from a social constructionist perspective. He argued that along with the scholarship domain of discovery as the accepted component in research, he introduced the domains of integration, application, and teaching as valuable extensions of valid scholarship. Boyer introduced this paradigm shift that almost 30 years later is still being debated and implemented in various ways within higher education.

Many credit Lee Shulman, then president of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and co-founder of the CPED in 2007, as a primary figure in the epistemology debate, and rightly so. Ernest Boyer, president of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching from 1979-1995, directly preceding Shulman, however, laid the first brick that built the philosophical foundations of practitioner-scholarship from which CPED has been constructed.

The mission of CPED is to redesign doctoral curriculum for the professional practitioner in education. In 2007, CPED began with 25 member institutions committed to finding new ways

to develop doctoral practitioner-scholars in K-12 and higher education studies appropriately. The primary goals of this undertaking were two-fold:

1. From a departmental perspective, establish clear capstone pathways for each terminal degree allowing for more direct and efficient fiscal and human resource appropriations with the goal of maintaining and enhancing the status of both degrees.

2. From the doctoral student perspective, enhance clarity on dissertation expectations allowing students to forge pathways that most appropriately suit their needs, lowering doctoral student attrition rates, and increasing the likelihood of graduating (CPED, 2018).

Despite making strides in helping CPED member institutions distinguish programmatic goals, pathways, and curriculum, resistance to alter the dissertation format has remained an obstacle. The CPED consortium readily admitted that the most difficult components to conceptualize and change in EdD programs are the culminating projects and the associated elements of research (Hochbein & Perry, 2013). Shedding some light on both institutional and departmental cultures in higher education, Hochbein and Perry acknowledged that time-honored traditions that surround research and dissertation completion often preclude even the discussion of innovation or alteration of dissertation requirements.

In 2017, CPED celebrated its 10th anniversary with 105 schools of education from the United States, Canada, and New Zealand listed as member institutions, indicating the EdD and PhD dissention is a national issue and quite worthy of examination (CPED, 2018). Over a decade ago, Perry and Imig (2008) reported 142 schools of education offered the EdD and PhD, suggesting that a significant number of schools have already taken measures over the past decade either to differentiate their education degree programs or dismantle one of them altogether. The

following institutional examples provide recent evidence of dissertation research agendas influencing the differentiation of degree type in higher education studies.

University of Denver

EdD students at the University of Denver choose from numerous doctoral projects, including a program evaluation, a policy formation, a technical report, or an organizational problem analysis (Storey & Hesbol, 2014). Doctoral students work with a "partner in the field" to identify a viable problem of practice, and a proposal committee is formed that includes one person from the "client-partner organization" who also serves on the final hearing committee (Storey & Hesbol, 2014). This functions as an example of a final research project that has real-life consequences and a measurable impact on the stated problem of practice.

University of Virginia

A recommendation of the University of Virginia's EdD committee resulted in replacing the traditional dissertation with a capstone project encompassing a worthy problem and the requirement to do something with the results (Miller et al., 2008). The revised goal of the EdD at the University of Virginia was to "create a multidisciplinary doctoral program for individuals who aspire to create new and innovative learning environments that embrace the rapid changes taking place in society" and to help shape what constitutes knowledge in this century (Tucker, 2010).

Vanderbilt University

At Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of Education, the Department of Leadership, Policy and Organization revised its EdD program so that it is now distinctly differentiated from the traditional PhD. The EdD is designed specifically for midcareer practitioners seeking terminal degrees and career advancement in their chosen fields. Vanderbilt's EdD is structured to

generate solutions to complex problems of practice, and it works toward the goal of placing graduates into senior educational organizational leadership positions (Goldring & Schuermann, 2009). The EdD dissertation at Vanderbilt is presented by doctoral students in the form of an *action research capstone hearing* where solutions to specific problems are identified with an action plan for implementation.

Disciplinary Perspectives

In the United States, professional practice doctoral programs (PPDs) have sprouted from near zero in 2000 to roughly 650 programs in 2015, with more than 12,000 doctoral degrees awarded in 2014 (Zusman, 2017). The majority of these doctoral programs are in health-related fields, but they span many of the traditional disciplines in some form. Zusman identified 13 new doctoral fields that 20 years ago, simply did not yet exist. In alphabetical order, they are as follows: (a) Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (DAOM), (b) Architecture (DArch), (c) Art Therapy (DrAT), (d) Audiology (AuD), (e) Bioethics (DBioethics), (f) Information Management (Doctor of Professional Studies [DPS]), (g) Marriage and Family Therapy (DMFT), (h) Medical Physics (DMP), (i) Nursing Practice (DNP), (j) Occupational Therapy (OTD), (k) Physical Therapy (DPT), (l) Plant Medicine (DPM), and (m) Speech-Language Pathology (SLPD or CScD).

Most of these professional practice doctorates do not require original research, but they do include clinical components and are intended to create leadership pathways toward nonacademic careers in professional practice. Other than these basic programmatic characteristics, little agreement is evident on what these doctoral degrees are or what they should be (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007). Zusman (2017) appropriately made the point that this rapid rise in new doctoral degrees raises questions about access to professions and the very

meaning of a doctorate. Her study utilized three theoretical frameworks to offer explanations on the driving forces that may be influencing the doctoral degree phenomenon.

Human Capital Theory

The first theory driving the doctoral degree phenomenon is human capital theory (Zusman, 2017). This theory claims that in today's *knowledge economy*, the labor market requires more highly educated workers. This demand drives the expansion, diversification, and upward extension of graduate and professional education (Walters, 2004). Through the lens of human capital theory, advocates for new PPDs would argue that practitioners need advanced training to deliver superior professional services in ever-increasingly complex social and technological environments (Zusman, 2017).

Educational Credentialism Theory

Educational credentialism theory, the second influence for the doctoral degree phenomenon, asserts that the rise in postsecondary credentials primarily reflects a social and labor system created by the elite, distributing rewards based on social or cultural capital, including educational achievement and credentials. This theory makes the assumption that individuals with higher credentials will be hired at higher rates and with higher wages; however, this assumption is based on cultural capital rather than the job-related value of their skills (Brown, 2001). As educational attainment has expanded, then, the distinctiveness of the degree and its value in the labor market has declined; consequently, demand for higher levels of education was created (Collins, 2002).

In connection to the Zusman (2017) study, credentialism theory would explain the creation of PPDs as an example of occupations imitating high-status professions in response to the loss of distinctiveness and value of master's level degrees. As master's degree requirements

earlier supplanted baccalaureates in many professional areas, credentialism theory would consider the expansion of master's degrees as creating pressure for additional credential inflation (Glazer-Raymo, 2005).

Neo-Institutional Theory

Finally, neo-institutional theory suggests that organizations are motivated primarily by the need to maintain legitimacy within their environment, and struggles for legitimacy influence organizations in the same field to become more like one another, even if it makes them less efficient or economically competitive (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In relation to the Zusman (2017) study, neo-institutionalism would classify this organizational behavior in higher education institutions as the organizational pursuit of increased legitimacy, otherwise known as institutional isomorphism.

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education report (Borden, 2016) reflected this doctoral boom trend, with 43 colleges moving from master's or baccalaureate to a doctoral classification from 2010-2015. Kelchen (2018) offered a prime example of this institutional strategy, referring to Villanova University's premeditated plan to enter Carnegie's national university classification. By strategically offering 20 new doctoral degrees in 2013-2014, the minimum number of doctoral degrees required to be classified as a national university, Villanova now ranks as a top 50 national university in *U.S. News & World Report* (Kelchen, 2018). As more programs become doctoral-granting, making the doctorate the field's legitimate degree, even more programs and institutions will follow suit (Zusman, 2017).

The Zusman (2017) study on professional practice doctorates reflected that most of these new programs do not require a capstone, dissertation or culminating project. For the most part, PPD program requirements are defined in terms of credit units and clinical hours, and unlike the

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PhD, they include little or no research training (Zusman, 2017). It is important to note that although the EdD has been offered for almost a century, Zusman characterized the EdD as a professional practice doctorate. Yet Spurr (1970) contended that older professional doctorates like the EdD modeled their methodology and research dissertation requirements after the PhD in arts and sciences disciplines with which they were allied.

Doctoral studies in higher education represent a unique field of study. Located within the arts and sciences disciplines, this field of study is a specialization naturally rooted from graduate-level education studies. Even more uniquely, doctoral research in higher education focuses on the very enterprise that confers the doctorate. Berelson (1960) introduced numerous arguments pertaining to the dominant objectives of the doctorate. He proclaimed that although few doctorates make real contributions in research, the most proper conception of graduate study, at least in the arts and sciences, should be based on research and scholarship regardless of the candidate's post-degree career path. Market drivers like shifting populations, subject area specializations, and the other utilitarian forces should not affect the primary purpose of graduate study (Berelson, 1960).

Berelson (1960) spoke of *craftsmanship* as a motivating factor in doctoral study. Craftsmanship as a purpose of scholarship should certainly be a motivating, if not dominant, factor of the dissertation process regardless of the degree sought. With a small percentage of doctorates continuing with research as a vocation, it is the dissertation that reflects the individual's legacy and contribution to scholarship and knowledge.

The Purpose of Doctoral Dissertation Research

The dissertation process is an intense experience in socialization and training for the candidate; it includes rituals via comprehensive examinations, dissertation defenses, and

revisions (Archbald, 2008). The research dissertation has also become a time-honored tradition. Doctoral mentors and candidates have a clear understanding of the purpose, content, and form of a research study (Duke & Beck, 1999). The intent of a dissertation is grounded in the concept that a worthwhile culminating project will result in some form of contribution to original research. Both university faculty and doctoral candidates understand the research study's logic of scholarly training and advancement of knowledge (Trow, 1984).

The traditional research study is based in scientific methods in gathering evidence with the aim of proof or refutation of theoretical ideas and contributing to an existing body of literature on the subject (Shavelson & Towne, 2002). Other literature expanded on different perspectives and goals related to dissertation research. The *community enlightenment* perspective contended that the traditional focus on scientific advancement is unnecessarily narrow and restrictive (Boyer, 1990), while the *practical contribution* perspective stressed research aimed at tangible benefits for the community (Toma, 2002). The general arguments were that other forms of research are beneficial beyond the traditional scientific method.

The standard dissertation format has typically been five chapters, and the dissertation audience is the dissertation committee serving as a proxy for a larger scholarly audience. Any initiatives to alter the doctoral thesis should recognize the historical context from which the dissertation originated and expect resistance because of it (Archbald, 2008). Almost always, Archbald (2010) observed, the dissertation is a research study whether or not the candidate is going to be a researcher. Challenges to the status quo of dissertation form and function are not a concept that has been or will be taken lightly among faculty members. Redesigning the culminating research projects may require faculty in institutions of higher education to reexamine many of their long-held beliefs on the purposes of doctoral training (Boyce, 2012).

Scholarship Redefined

Higher education in the 21st century is conflicted on what constitutes quality research. Higher education faculty, for the first time in their professional careers, is being asked to reconsider the basic tenets of appropriate scholarship. The general debate has two sides. One side is the traditional, positivist approach to scholarship. This positivist, objective-laden value of knowledge creation in American higher education was siphoned from early European academe, and more specifically the German model, conducting intellectual research for the sake of discovering truth. Schön (1995) traced the evolution of this epistemology to the second half of the 19th century, as *technical rationality*, the standard for original knowledge creation at research universities, crossed the Atlantic Ocean.

Anderson and Herr (1999) defined technical rationality as seeing social problems as discrete parts rather than as interdependent systems, utilizing positivist research designs, and viewing knowledge as accumulating through a process of incremental and linear progressions. Valid and reliable research is based on these principles, and rigor is defined as a qualification that can be accomplished only by an objective researcher detached from contexts and systems (Anderson & Herr, 1999).

The other side of the scholarship debate centered on more recent recognition of the merits of research conducted through a social constructionist lens; the idea that multiple perspectives are a valid measurement tool and changes to evidence are inevitable. This kind of scholarship poses an epistemological challenge to technical rationality by placing problems of practice within a specific contextual perspective and embraces the researcher's role as a stakeholder in that context (Kennedy, Altman, & Pizano, 2018). Scholarship and the creation of knowledge in this sense are influenced by the researchers themselves. This is qualitative scholarship by

definition, but it is not the primary source of debate. The tension or debate in higher education studies is how appropriately to direct research for the 21st century practitioner-scholar. Melendez (2002), for example, found that 78% of doctoral students in higher education studies were already employed within the field of higher education. Further, many did not see themselves conducting research for the sake of generating new or original knowledge in an academic discipline. A majority of higher education doctoral students, rather, may work to earn a terminal degree in the field in which they are employed in order to differentiate themselves in an ever-tightening higher education labor market.

Ravitch and Lytle (2016) argued that practitioners as producers of knowledge represent a *constructive disruption* from current understanding about knowledge and practice. Practitioner research emerged from the series of movements to shift research paradigms in order to better address social problems (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994). Applied scholarship assigns the researcher as an *agent of change* and positions the dissertation as the vehicle for change. As agents of change, Kennedy and colleagues (2018) contended that the purpose is not to protect a phenomenon from researcher bias in order to describe it, but to insert practices in a format that effectively transforms the phenomenon.

The contrasting epistemologies found in technical rationality and practitioner scholarship have created tensions as the professoriate debates various dimensions of research and rigor. Schön (1995) explained the scenario: "All of us who live in research universities are bound up in technical rationality. . . . hence, introducing the new scholarship into institutions of higher education means becoming involved in an epistemological battle. It is a battle of snails, proceeding so slowly that you have to look very carefully in order to see it going on. But it is happening nonetheless" (p. 30).

How do programs in higher education studies appropriately respond to the burgeoning of practitioner-scholars? This question has largely fueled the EdD versus PhD debate in this century's knowledge economy. Further, what are the primary process, function, and format that academe is now measuring and critiquing to distinguish these degrees? One way may be through the dissertation.

Research on Higher Education Studies Dissertations

John Melendez

Melendez (2002) examined how theory-practice tension was reflected in doctoral dissertations within the field of higher education studies by utilizing Boyer's (1990) scholarship model as the conceptual framework. A content analysis was performed on 106 dissertations written in 1977 and 86 dissertations written in 1997. The study identified several differences in higher education dissertations between these 2 years, including an increased use of a conceptual framework and a shift in research methodology from quantitative design in 1977 to qualitative design in 1997.

Over the 20-year period studied, Boyer's scholarship domains of discovery and integration were observed as dominant in both 1977 and 1997. The results of this study indicated that overall, dissertations appeared to be reflecting less tension in regard to the theory-practice gap as demonstrated by an increased use of conceptual frameworks, a broadened use of disciplinary perspective and research methodology, and a heightened awareness in relating research to practice (Melendez, 2002).

Doug Archbald

Archbald (2010) analyzed a random sample of 200 recent EdD dissertation titles, tables of contents, and abstracts and found that they overwhelmingly reflected an empirical social

science research orientation. The format was the traditional five-chapter dissertation model, beginning with research questions, then a literature review, and presentation of data analysis and results, concluding with generalizations that formed the findings and implications for theory and practice. The average dissertation length was 190 pages.

In 2013, the CPED Dissertation in Practice Award Committee replicated Archbald's analysis with the dissertations submitted for the award and found that the average length of submitted dissertations was 212 pages, with a range from 85 to 377 pages. Of the 25 dissertations submitted for the CPED award, 4 used quantitative methods, 17 used qualitative methods, and 4 used mixed methods. The research methodologies utilized in these dissertations were based on the following: (a) action research (10), (b) case study analysis (10), (c) grounded research (3), and (d) phenomenology (1). Only one entry from this group did not follow the traditional five-chapter dissertation format (Storey & Hesbol, 2014).

Susan Auerbach

Auerbach (2011) conducted a qualitative case study on how doctoral faculty and program directors at one university conceptualize the purpose and nature of the applied dissertation and the professional and institutional factors that shape their views. Results of this study suggested that doctoral faculty and program directors are "still feeling our way" regarding the expectations of dissertation research and cited that enhanced collegial deliberation is needed (p. 59). Auerbach proposed that state legislation, accreditation requirements, faculty's own doctoral experience, and other factors tended to reinforce the status quo and inhibited the development of applied approaches to dissertations.

Debby Zambo

Zambo (2010) completed a content analysis of action research dissertations from one university to provide evidence that action research influences stewardship in education leadership. She investigated the challenges that initiated students' response to create an action research dissertation and the benefits these doctoral candidates gained from their experiences. The analysis of dissertations reflected that action research can be used as a signature pedagogy to create school leaders who are stewards of practice with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to identify educational problems, design solutions, and lead change (Zambo, 2010).

Audrey Amrein-Beardsley, Debby Zambo, David W. Moore, Ray R. Buss, Nancy J. Perry, Suzanne R. Painter, David L. Carlson, Teresa S. Foulger, Kate Olson, and Kathleen S. Puckett

This study focused on exit survey data from a cohort of doctoral students at one university (Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2012). Seventeen doctoral students were employed in K-12 public school settings, and three worked in higher education. The authors executed a content analysis on each dissertation from this doctoral cohort as a way to validate the data received in the program exit surveys. They concluded that overall, these doctoral graduates valued being engaged in action to improve their local settings and reported changes in their professional identity (Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2012). These results were validated by dissertations reflecting authors' expansion of their individual identities as leader, scholar, and practitioner.

David W. Walker and Shannon Haley-Mize

This study compared EdD and PhD dissertation characteristics from 1997-2010 (Walker & Haley-Mize, 2012). This content analysis included the gender of the dissertation authors, age of the participants being examined, and target populations, along with identifying the research design, statistical analysis, and significance of the results. Results from this study reported that

while PhD dissertations in education tended to use correlational, experimental, and single-participant research designs, the EdD dissertations focused more on qualitative research designs. Walker and Haley-Mize also concluded that a large number of PhD dissertations examined younger subjects, while more EdD dissertations were conducted with adult participants as the subjects of examination.

Karen Osterman, Gail Furman, and Kathleen Sernak

Osterman and colleagues (2014) produced an exploratory study that gathered information about the use of action research in education leadership doctoral programs and explored faculty perspectives on action research. Survey data concluded that action research is used infrequently to meet dissertation requirements primarily based on a lack of clarity regarding the nature of action research and concerns about methodological legitimacy. Osterman et al. contended that because collaborative leadership skills and the pursuit of social justice objectives are inherent to the action research process, the results of their study call for more discussion regarding the distinctive methodology of action research and its role in preparing educational leaders at the doctoral level.

Vera Wei Ma, Nancy Fichtman Dana, Alyson Adams, and Brianna L. Kennedy

A document analysis was performed on 28 EdD dissertations to investigate the extent to which students actually focused on problems of practice at a large research-intensive university (Ma, Dana, Adams, & Kennedy, 2018). According to the authors, problems of practice (PoP) is a signature feature of the EdD dissertation where the origin, nature, and context of the problem as well as the impact the problem has in a local context can be analyzed. Document analysis is a "systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic material" (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). The purpose of the study (Ma et al., 2018) was to understand the

different ways that problems of practice influenced EdD candidates' dissertation experience. The stated intent was to offer evidence that PoP is a key factor in distinguishing the EdD from the PhD dissertations. Although formats and emphases for EdD dissertations vary across institutions, a defining feature that distinguishes them from the PhD is that they target a PoP (Ma et al., 2018).

Findings from this study revealed that all 28 dissertations were derived from a "felt difficulty" or "real-world dilemma" with which each doctoral candidate had a "deep concern," or the individual expressed an "urge to take action" (Ma et al., 2018, p. 13). Across the 28 dissertations' PoP, 8 fell into the category of "felt difficulty" and the remaining 20 were categorized as "real-world dilemma." The coding distinction was addressed by the authors, suggesting that unresolvable dilemmas are felt more often or more deeply by EdD students than problems that they felt could be greatly alleviated or completely resolved.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Literature

In the review of the literature on doctoral dissertations in higher education, the past 10 years of commentary offered a rich array of perspectives from which to draw insight. Prior to Levine's 2005 critique of the EdD and his notion that the degree lacked relevancy and rigor, the literature was much less robust in the areas of dissertation research. With that said, the formation of the CPED breathed life back into the debate on addressing appropriately the theory-practice gap in doctoral education. Numerous studies were produced as a result of CPED's initiative to differentiate the EdD from the PhD in education, and some of them provided analysis on the appropriate forms and functions of dissertations. Patterns of thought within the literature also offered specific strategies for both institutions and education departments to influence

organization change, including re-imagining and redesigning research to meet the needs of practitioner-scholars effectively.

Shulman (2005) used the term *signature pedagogies* to describe the forms of teaching and learning that organize the ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions. In addition, Gardner (2009) made the claim that doctoral students who are most successful in completing their dissertation research studies and earning their degrees are those who have been successfully socialized into the research community through interaction and collaboration with faculty and peers.

The primary weakness within the literature was found in describing doctoral studies in the field of education itself. Many authors did not segregate K-12 education studies from higher education studies. Very few studies made specific reference to the dissertation cohort types they were analyzing, making it rather difficult to distinguish between K-12, K-16, or K-20 (as CPED refers to it) and dissertation analysis specific to higher education studies.

A secondary weakness in the literature to date was, in fact, the date. Although the debate on scholarship can be recalled as far back as the early 1900s, only very recently has the debate on dissertations come to fruition. Student-centered learning, project-based learning, problems of practice, action research, and dissertations in practice are all fairly new concepts that continue to take shape in both K-12 and higher education environments. Depending on how a person chooses to look at the maturity of these 21st century developments in learning, the individual could perceive a weakness in the literature.

Summary of the Literature Review

It has been argued that the dissertation process is designed to measure the intellectual stamina to stay the course through completion, but dissertation research may not be particularly

useful for the real work that individuals with doctorates are called upon to do (Costley & Lester, 2012). Professional practitioners in higher education are innately motivated toward action, a desire to improve practice, and are guided by authentic problems or opportunities for improvement; that is, they thrive when organizational vision and mission are aligned to the culminating research project (Storey & Maughan, 2016). The dissertation process for many EdD and PhD programs remain largely identical, regardless of doctoral students' motivation to complete the degree.

Terminal degrees offered in higher education studies reflect a unique doctoral student population. Unlike other fields of study where a terminal degree is typically awarded to nascent scholars motivated to conduct research as a career, higher education programs have traditionally awarded doctoral degrees to both future scholars and practitioners with little regard for the type of degree. Further, a majority of newly minted doctors of education are awarded PhDs despite any intentions to conduct scholarly research after graduation.

Townsend and Mason (1990) conducted research on the career paths of graduates from 36 higher education programs and found that 78% of graduates were already employed in higher education prior to beginning their doctoral journey. Thus, the problem originates from a clear lack of differentiation between practical and theoretical components of the EdD and PhD and the culminating research requirement for these terminal degrees in education. Accountability to both tradition and present-day relevance calls for innovative approaches to the doctoral capstone product—the dissertation (Storey & Maughan, 2016). Since the Melendez dissertation was published in 2002, debates on the appropriate forms and functions of the doctorate and dissertation in education have gained significant levels of attention, and to this day, arguments remain very relevant to stakeholders in higher education studies.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine dissertation characteristics over a 10-year period at selected institutions that confer both EdD and PhD degrees in higher education studies to document how dissertation research in the field of higher education has developed from 2007 to 2017. A content analysis was performed on dissertations with the intent to accomplish the following: (a) Gain clarity in understanding how theory-practice tension is reflected in higher education dissertations, and (b) Test the degree of differentiation between dissertations undertaken for the EdD and for the PhD in higher education studies.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How has dissertation research in the field of higher education changed in reflecting theory-practice tension between 2007 and 2017?

2. To what extent are dissertation changes between 2007 and 2017 associated with differentiation between the EdD and the PhD degree in the field of higher education studies?

Additionally, the following subsidiary questions were answered as well:

a. How many dissertations in higher education studies were completed in 2007 and 2017?

b. How many dissertations were guided by an existing theory in 2007 and 2017?

c. Is the origin of the problem based on theory or practice in 2007 and 2017 dissertations?

d. What are the primary research methodologies in 2007 and 2017 dissertations?

e. How are Boyer's scholarship domains distributed among 2007 and 2017

   dissertations?

Data Source

The period of analysis for this study was 2007 and 2017. These years were chosen because they provided two specific points over a 10-year span. In 2007, CPED was founded, and 2017 represented a snapshot at the end of CPED's first decade of existence.

A purposeful content sample was selected for the years 2007 and 2017. From the ASHE's 248 institutional members, this purposeful sample included dissertations from 48 ASHE member institutions that conferred both EdD and PhD degrees in 2007 and 2017. Eligible institutions for analysis were as follows:

1. University of Alabama

2. Azusa Pacific University

3. University of California-Berkeley

4. University of Southern California

5. University of British Columbia

6. University of Denver

7. Florida State University

8. University of Central Florida

9. University of Florida

10. University of Georgia

11. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

12. University of Illinois at Chicago

13. Illinois State University

14. Indiana University

15. Ball State University

16. Kansas State University

17. University of Kansas

18. University of Kentucky

19. University of Massachusetts-Boston

20. Morgan State University

21. University of Maine

22. Andrews University

23. Central Michigan University

24. University of Minnesota

25. Saint Louis University

26. University of Missouri-Columbia

27. University of Missouri-St. Louis

28. Mississippi State University

29. University of Southern Mississippi

30. University of Nebraska at Lincoln

31. Seton Hall University

32. New Mexico State University

33. New York University

34. University of Rochester

35. The Ohio State University

36. Oklahoma State University

37. Oregon State University

38. Pennsylvania State University

39. University of Pennsylvania

40. Vanderbilt University

41. Texas Tech University

42. University of North Texas

43. The University of Texas at Austin

44. University of Utah

45. The College of William and Mary

46. University of Virginia

47. West Virginia University

48. University of Wyoming

Dissertation abstracts from documents receiving either the EdD or the PhD in higher education studies served as the primary source of data for analysis in this study. The sample of dissertation abstracts was selected for this study using the following ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global Database content filters: (a) Subject Heading-Higher Education, (b) Index Term (keyword)-Higher Education, (c) Manuscript Type-Dissertations, and (d) the 48 ASHE member universities that conferred both EdD and PhD degrees in higher education studies in 2007 and 2017. The result consisted of 761 dissertations, representing 426 dissertations published in 2007 and 335 dissertations published in 2017.

This 27% drop in dissertation publication from 2007 to 2017 likely resulted from recent trends in higher education specifically related to job market prospects for doctoral candidates. Finkelstein, Conley, and Schuster (2016) suggested that deteriorating working conditions for

professors curbed academic career advancement and "undermine[d] the attractiveness of such careers to those highly talented would-be faculty members, perhaps deflecting prospective faculty on other competing career options" (p. 21). In line with this reasoning, Ehrenberg (2010) posited that instruction by faculty with doctoral degrees would be declining in the future due to the decreasing availability of tenure-track positions, thus affecting students' level of interest in pursuing doctoral study.

Method of Analysis

Content analysis was the research method utilized in this study to examine how dissertation research in the field of higher education evolved from 2007 to 2017. Specifically, content analysis was applied to classification of dissertation abstracts based on a predefined coding form originally designed by Melendez (2002). According to Robert Philip Weber (1990) content analysis is a research methodology that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. Content analysis is one of the most important research techniques in the social sciences; it seeks to understand data not as a collection of physical events, but as symbolic phenomena and to approach their analysis unobtrusively (Krippendorf, 1980).

Independent and Dependent Variables

The Melendez (2002) coding form was utilized to collect data from dissertations and was deemed appropriate for use and approved by Melendez. The coding categories were selected to assist in the identification of demographic characteristics and specific dissertation characteristics that would contribute to determining the placement of the dissertation within the theory-practice continuum (Melendez, 2002). The following descriptive data on the sample institutions helped to illustrate the overall organizational character of universities conferring both the EdD and the PhD in higher education studies in 2007 and 2017: (a) Institutional membership in the

Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) and (b) Institutional membership in the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). A coding form designed for this study collected the following descriptive information from each dissertation: (a) Author's name, (b) Dissertation title, (c) Degree year, (d) Degree conferred, and (e) Institution name.

This study examined how theory-practice tension is reflected in doctoral dissertations and is supported by the coding form designed to collect and identify the following four dependent variables: (a) Theoretical Framework, (b) Origin of the Problem, (c) Research Methodology, and (d) Boyer's Scholarship Domains. These dependent variables were deemed appropriate to reflect specific dissertation characteristics contributing to answering the research and subsidiary questions. The independent variable used for the study was the year of dissertation publication. The rationale for selecting each of the four dependent variables is presented followed by the operational criteria for coding them.

Presence of a Theoretical Framework

Traditional dissertation research is expected to be guided by a particular framework, which often serves as the theoretical underpinning of the investigation. The presence of a theoretical framework has the potential to provide insight into the extent to which a study is intended to contribute to a *body of knowledge*. In addition, the presence of a theoretical framework contributes to the determination of the scholarly focus of the study and assists in the placement of the dissertation among Boyer's four scholarship domains. The presence of a theoretical framework was determined by examining the dissertation abstract for explicit reference of an existing theory.

Origin of the Problem

The classification of the dissertation problem statement as either primarily based on theory or practice was fundamental to the overall focus of this study. This variable also served to support the placement of the dissertation among Boyer's four scholarship domains. Origins of the problem were determined by examination of the dissertation abstract. Problems were classified as primarily based on practice if they focused on informing, describing, or explaining in the service of professional practice or action. This included problems that address public policy and increased program effectiveness. In contrast, problems were classified as primarily based in theory if they focused on informing, describing, or explaining without regard to professional practice or action. This included problems that attempt to explore conceptual issues that may contribute to theoretical developments.

Research Methodology

Information was gathered that identified the mode of inquiry utilized by the researcher: (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, or (c) mixed methods. *Research method* refers to the range of approaches used by the researcher in gathering data to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Given the 10-year span between the two cohorts examined in this study, this variable provided an opportunity to examine how the research method orientation in higher education dissertations has evolved over this period.

Research methodology was determined by examining the dissertation abstract for explicit reference to a research technique associated with a methodology or reference to the methodology itself. Dissertations were coded as mixed methods when both qualitative and quantitative

research techniques were explicitly referenced in the dissertation abstract, or when *mixed methods* was explicitly referenced as the research methodology in the abstract.

Primary Scholarship Domain

This study attempted to extend Boyer's (1990) call for a broader conceptualization of scholarship in doctoral dissertation research. In this regard, the primary scholarship domain served as a frame of reference from which to view the theory-practice continuum. For the purposes of this study, the scholarships of application and teaching assumed the identification of practice-based research, while the scholarships of discovery and integration assumed the identification of theory-based research. Thus, the origin of the problem coding assisted in determining the primary scholarship domain classification.

Operational Criteria for Coding of Variables

1. Conceptual or theoretical framework (yes vs. no): Determination if the study was based or guided on an existing conceptual or theoretical framework if explicit reference is made in dissertation abstract.

2. Origin of the problem (theory vs. practice): Problems were classified as primarily based on practice if they focused on informing, describing, and explaining in the service of practice or action. This includes problems that addressed public policy and increased program effectiveness. Problems were classified as primarily based on theory if they focused on informing, describing, and explaining without regard to practice or action. This includes problems that attempted to explore conceptual issues that may contribute to theoretical developments.

3. Research method (qualitative vs. quantitative or mixed): Determination of a dissertation utilized a particular method by examining the abstract for explicit reference.

4. Boyer's four scholarship domains: Based on the decision rules originally developed by Melendez (2002), a dominant scholarship domain associated with each dissertation was chosen. The dominant scholarship is meant to suggest the framework and motivation of the dissertation researcher; it was coded as a dominant scholarship classification, intentionally leaving room for conjecture related to supporting scholarship domains associated with each dissertation.

Data Analysis

A content analysis was performed on 761 dissertation abstracts from 48 ASHE member institutions (426 in 2007 and 335 in 2017). Data were examined using percentages and crosstabs. Following is the data analysis plan according to subsidiary question, variable, and data point:

1. How many doctoral dissertations in higher education studies were completed in 2007 and 2017?	Degree Conferred Degree year	Percentage distribution by degree conferred: EdD or PhD
2. How many doctoral dissertations are guided by existing theory in 2007 and 2017?	Conceptual or theoretical framework Degree year	Frequency distribution: Yes or No
3. Is the origin of the dissertation research problem based on theory or practice in 2007 and 2017?	Origin of the problem Degree year	Frequency distribution: Professional Practice or Theory
4. What are the primary research methodologies utilized 2007 and 2017?	Research methodologies Degree year	Frequency distribution: Qualitative, Quantitative, or Mixed Methods
5. How are Boyer's scholarship domains distributed among these dissertations in 2007 and 2017?	Primary scholarship domain Degree year	Frequency distribution: Discovery, Integration, Application or Teaching

Validity and Reliability of Coding

Validity and reliability increase as diverse data are studied and other connections are considered and analyzed (Neuman, 2006). This content analysis relied on the coding of one person throughout the examination of dissertation abstracts. A sample of abstract variables ($N = 40$) was provided for a second coder to assist in providing a snapshot in coding accuracy. Coding classification from the second coder on the dependent variables of presence of existing theory, origin of problem, research methodology, and primary scholarship domain indicated a high level of agreement with 36 of 40 coding matches (90%); therefore, the original coding was deemed reliable for this study.

Limitations of the Study

Dissertation abstracts served as the primary source of data for analysis in this study. The sample was selected for this study using the ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global Database content filters already indicated. The selection process resulted in 837 dissertations eligible for examination. Thirty-two 2007 dissertations were dismissed from the sample based on evidence that the dissertation was submitted as a partial requirement for a terminal degree in another field of study, not higher education. Fourty-four 2017 dissertations were dismissed for the same reason. The remaining dissertations deemed eligible for examination was 761 (426 in 2007 and 335 in 2017).

The ProQuest Database holds dissertations from authors who are willing to submit their dissertation to the database publicly. Additional dissertations from the examined sample of 47 institutions were likely eligible for examination but were not part of this study. A full list of dissertations examined for this study is in Appendix A (2007 dissertations) and Appendix B (2017 dissertations).

Another limitation was the use of only one coder for this study, and the accuracy of coding was therefore dependent on the content analysis skills of one coder. A second coder would have improved the overall accuracy of coding in this dissertation. In addition, a relatively small number of dissertation abstracts (< 5) did not include information necessary to make an informed coding decision. For those dissertations, the tables of contents were reviewed, and coding decisions were based on information gathered outside the dissertation abstract.

Summary

This study examined all 761 dissertation abstracts that qualified to be included in this purposeful sample and compared specific dissertation characteristics by year with the goal of gaining clarity on alignment between dissertation research and the terminal degree awarded in higher education studies. Content analysis was the research technique used for examining and coding 761 dissertation abstracts to establish how dissertation research in the field of higher education changed in reflecting theory-practice tension between 2007 and 2017. From analysis of dissertation characteristics between 2007 and 2017, a summation on differentiation between the EdD and PhD degree is presented.

A coding form originally designed by Melendez (2002) captured a range of dissertation characteristics and variables designated to work within the theoretical framework of this study. Boyer's (1990) expanded definition of scholarship served as the theoretical framework for this investigation. This chapter described how data were selected, obtained, organized, and coded. The following chapter reports and discusses the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview

Scholars and practitioners in higher education ask the question: What good is research if it does not aim to improve the condition of what is being studied? This question is at the forefront of the theory-practice tension in higher education. Two very segregated perspectives on what should be considered valid or *good* research in higher education studies are evident. One perspective aims for truth as a research goal, while the other focuses on improvement as a research goal. Couple this research perspective conundrum with a diverse student body of higher education doctoral students, and the theory-practice tension becomes even more intense.

Calls from scholars to differentiate the EdD from PhD in higher education doctoral programs effectively warrant a study and examination of dissertations in the field of higher education studies. The purpose of this study was to examine selected dissertations from an institutional cohort that identify as ASHE member universities that confer both EdD and PhD degrees in higher education studies and classify dissertations using Boyer's expanded definition of scholarship. The goal was to gain a clearer understanding of how theory-practice tension is reflected in higher education dissertations since CPED's founding in 2007, with 2017 representing the first decade of CPED's existence and potential influence in streamlining doctoral research by degree type.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How has dissertation research in the field of higher education changed in reflecting theory-practice tension between 2007 and 2017?

2. To what extent are dissertation changes between 2007 and 2017 associated with differentiation between the EdD and the PhD degree in the field of higher education studies?

To respond to the research questions, a total of 761 dissertation abstracts were examined from a number of institutions. Universities were selected upon confirming their dual terminal degree offerings. Of 248 institutional members in ASHE, 48 institutional members conferred both terminal degrees in education, the EdD and the PhD. These 48 ASHE member institutions represented the purposeful sample from which the selected dissertations were identified.

This chapter begins with data on institutional characteristics in the form of ASHE and CPED affiliation, a profile of Carnegie research classifications, and an overall degree type distribution in 2007 and 2017. This is followed by coding results and descriptive summaries on each of the following subsidiary questions:

a. How many dissertations in higher education studies were completed in 2007 and 2017?

b. How many dissertations were guided by an existing theory in 2007 and 2017?

c. Is the origin of the problem based on theory or practice in 2007 and 2017 dissertations?

d. What are the primary research methodologies in 2007 and 2017 dissertations?

e. How are Boyer's scholarship domains distributed among 2007 and 2017 dissertations?

Sample Characteristics

In 2007, four of the 25 founding institutional CPED members conferred both the EdD and the PhD in education. These institutions—The College of William and Mary, The University

of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Florida, and University of Missouri-Columbia—represented

8.5% of institutions affiliated as members of ASHE. Both Table 1 and Figure 1 show the

representation of ASHE members among CPED affiliated institutions.

Table 1

CPED and ASHE Institutional Member Profile, 2007 and 2017 (N = 48)

	Year	
	2007	2017
Institutional membership	%	%
Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED)	8.5	23.4
Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)	100.0	100.0
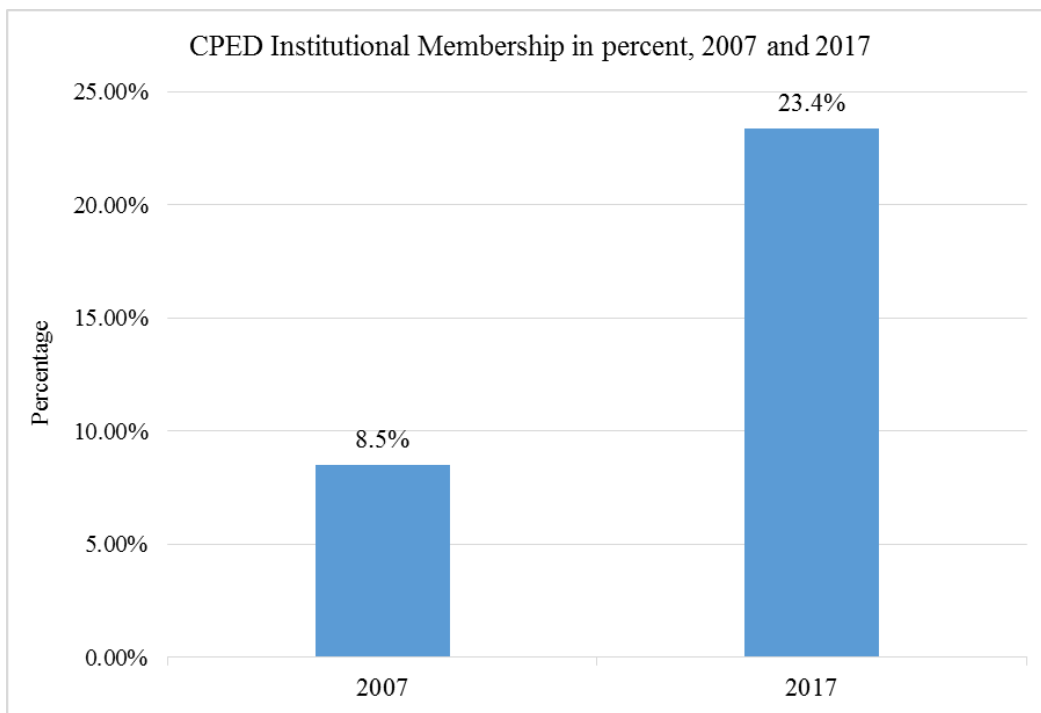
Figure 1. CPED and ASHE institutional member profile, 2007 and 2017 (*N* = 48).

In 2017, CPED celebrated the 10th anniversary of its founding with over 100 institutional

members dedicated to strengthening the value and clarifying the mission of the EdD. The

number of ASHE member institutions conferring both EdD and PhD degrees in higher education also affiliated with CPED increased to 11 in 2017. In addition to the four ASHE affiliated institutions from 2007, the University of Denver, Florida State University, Indiana University, University of Missouri-St. Louis, The Ohio State University, Texas Tech University, and University of North Texas became philosophically aligned with the CPED mission.

Table 2 reflects the Carnegie Research Classification of the 48 ASHE member universities for 2007 and 2017. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, operated by Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research, defined *doctoral universities* as institutions that award at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees during the update year (every 5 years) and also institutions with fewer than 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees that award at least 30 professional practice doctoral degrees in at least 2 programs. The first two categories (R1 and R2) include only institutions that award at least 20 research/ scholarship doctoral degrees and have at least $5 million in total research expenditures, as reported through the National Science Foundation (NSF) Higher Education Research and Development Survey (HERD). Table 2 and Figure 2 indicate the Carnegie Research Classification distribution of the 48 ASHE member universities for 2007 and 2017.

As shown in Table 2 and Figure 2, from 2007 to 2017, the Carnegie Research Classifications reflected an increase in institutions categorized as Very High Research Activity (R1) and a decline in institutions classified predominantly as Doctoral/Professional University (D/PU). This indicates that proactive measures were likely implemented across a wide majority of institutions in this sample of 48 ASHE member universities to strengthen their perceived position in the Carnegie Research Classification as research-intensive institutions.

Table 2

Carnegie Research Classification of ASHE Members, 2007 and 2017 (N = 48)

		Year	
Carnegie Research Classification[a]		2007 %	2017 %
R1	Very High Research Activity	51.1	68.0
R2	High Research Activity	31.9	29.7
D/PU	Doctoral/Professional University	17.0	2.3
Total		100.0	100.0

[a]*As reported in 2005 and 2015*
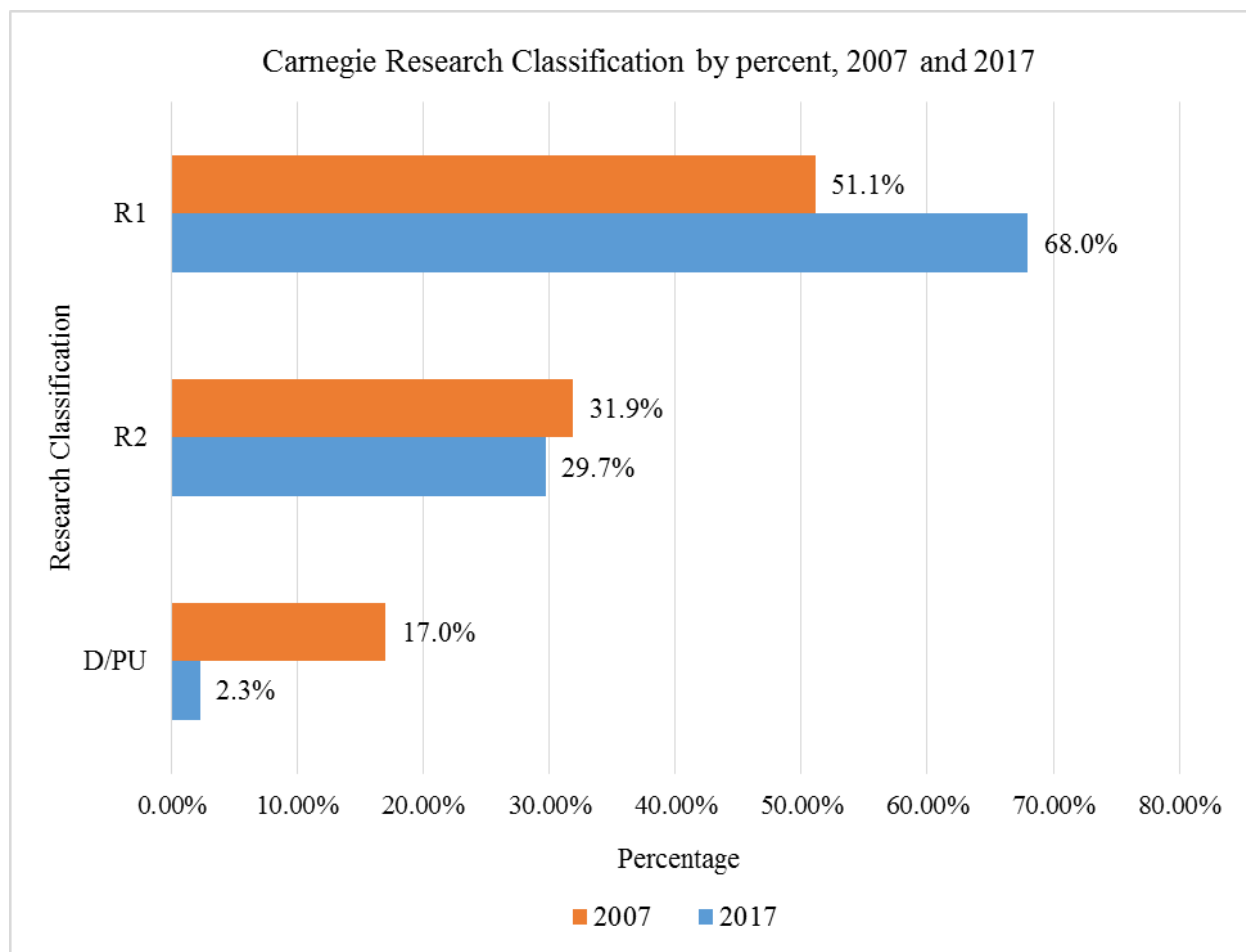
Figure 2. Carnegie Research Classification of ASHE members, 2007 and 2017 (*N* = 48).

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These sample characteristics from 48 universities suggested an overall movement toward building institutional or at a minimum departmental identities aligned with their being more research-intensive across the sample. Although inferences may be drawn on institutional or departmental actions influencing specific organizational classifications among institutional peers, the following data reports on specific dissertation characteristics appeared to shape departmental and institutional identities. Overall, institutional characteristics of membership affiliation and Carnegie Research Classification from 2007 to 2017 demonstrated that this institutional sample is departmentally enhancing clarification on doctoral research as evidenced in the increase in CPED affiliation. In addition, from an institutional perspective, these universities strategically organized themselves to enhance their perceived status among institutional peers as research-intensive universities.

Subsidiary Questions

The subsidiary questions in this study sought answers to very specific identifiers that would lead to answering the primary research questions. The following sections provide data in response to the subsidiary questions.

Number of Dissertations in Higher Education Studies Completed in 2007 and 2017

The distribution of degree type, either EdD or PhD, across selected institutions in 2007 and 2017 reflected minimal overall change in the percentage of terminal degrees awarded in higher education studies. As shown in Table 3 and Figure 3, from the sample of dissertations in 2007, 35.4% of the dissertations were completed to fulfill EdD requirements; 64.6%, for the PhD. Only a slight change in percentages in terminal degrees conferred appeared 10 years later in 2017, with 37.1% of the dissertations resulting in the EdD and 62.9% in the conferring of the PhD.

Table 3

Degree Distribution in Higher Education Studies by Percentage, 2007 and 2017 (N = 48)

	Year	
Degree type	2007 %	2017 %
EdD	35.4	37.1
PhD	64.6	62.9
Total	100.0	100.0
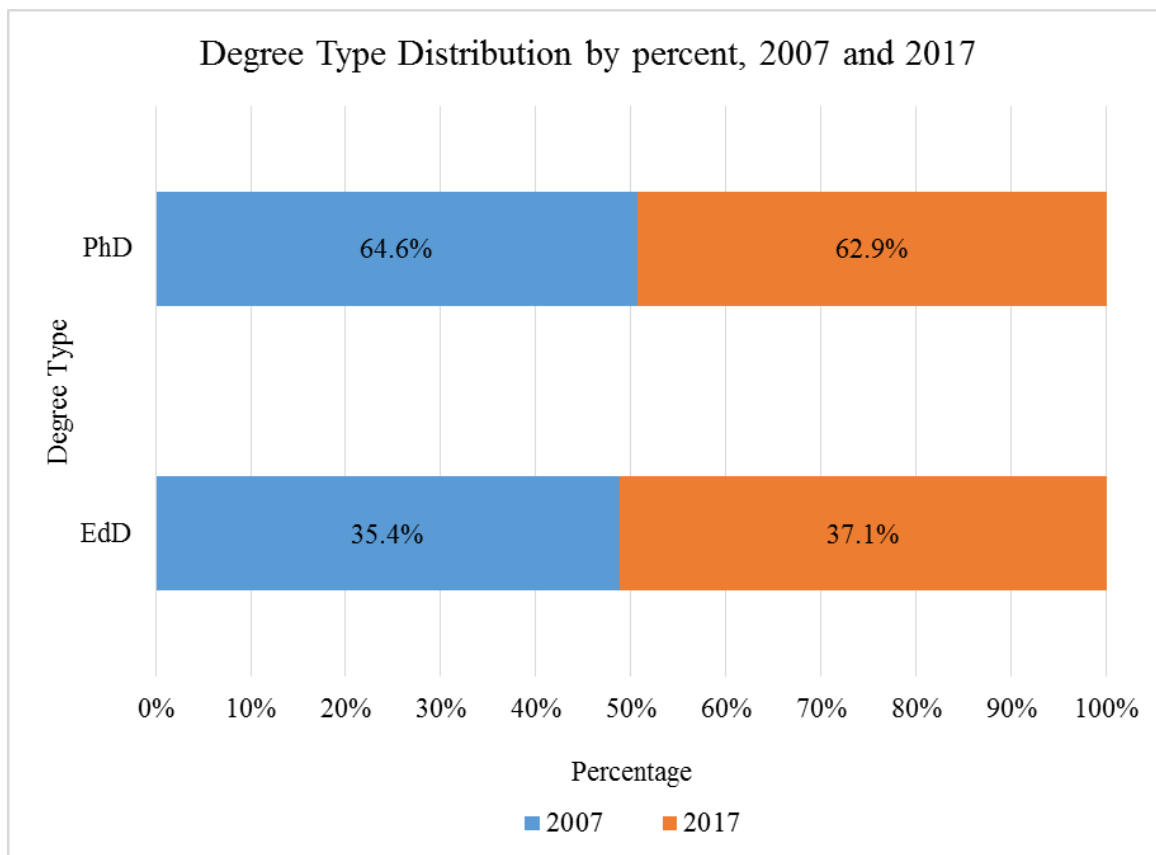
Figure 3. Degree distribution in higher education studies by percentage, 2007 and 2017 (*N* = 48).

**Number of Dissertations in Higher Education Studies Guided
by an Existing Theory in 2007 and 2017**

From 2007 to 2017, the presence of an existing theory to guide the dissertation increased

from 38.9% in 2007 to 47.8% in 2017. The lack of a conceptual framework or existing theory in

dissertations declined from 61.1% in 2007 to 52.2% in 2017. Table 4 and Figure 4 delineate the

presence of a conceptual framework or existing theory by degree type for both years. The

greatest percentage of change was indicated for the EdD. From 2007 to 2017, the proportion of

the presence of an existing theory in dissertations increased by more than 15%, from 29.6% in

2007 to 45.1% in 2017. This meant that regardless of the utility of the degree, the value of using

theory as the basis for dissertation research has been increasing over time.

Table 4

Percentage of the Presence of a Theoretical Framework by Degree Type, 2007 and 2017

	Year					
	2007			2017		
	EdD ($n = 151$)	PhD ($n = 275$)	Total ($n = 426$)	EdD ($n = 124$)	PhD ($n = 211$)	Total ($n = 335$)
Presence of a theoretical framework	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	29.6	44.7	38.9	45.1	49.7	47.8
No	70.4	55.3	61.1	54.9	50.3	52.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In 2007, 38.9% of dissertations were guided by at least one existing theory. In 2017,

dissertations guided by existing theory increased to 47.8%. By degree, EdD dissertations were

guided be existing theory 29.6% in 2007, spiking to 45.1% in 2017. This implied that although

evidence has appeared of public efforts to transform the EdD into a professional practice degree

without regard to existing theory or theory development, on an individual and departmental

level, overall the EdD dissertation does not strictly follow the protocol for professional practice

degree research. When compared to Melendez (2002), a similar increase in the presence of existing theory was found in that Melendez determined a presence of a conceptual framework existed in 47.2% of 1977 dissertations and 69.8% of 1997 dissertations.
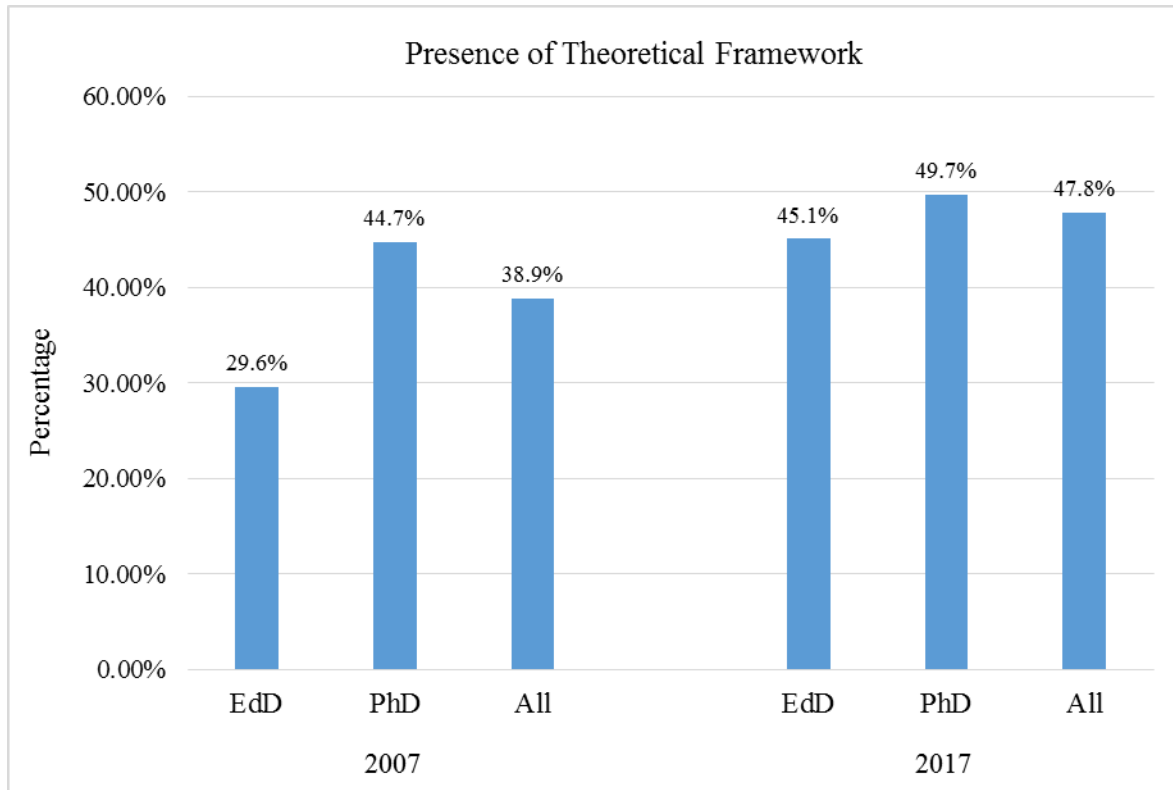
Figure 4. Percentage of the presence of a theoretical framework by degree type, 2007 and 2017.

The Dissertation Problem Based on Theory or Practice in 2007 and 2017

From 2007 to 2017, the origin of the problem based on professional practice decreased from 68.5% in 2007 to 56.1% in 2017, representing a decline of 12.4%. The origin of the problem based on theory from 2007 to 2017 increased from 31.0% in 2007 to 43.9% in 2017, representing an increase of 12.4%. When segregated by degree type in 2007 and 2017, most telling was a sharp movement of PhD research related to origin of the problem. In 2007, 62.4% of PhD dissertations used professional practice as the origin of the problem; in 2017, that percentage dropped to 45.0%. On an individual and departmental level, then, both doctoral

candidates and faculty members are increasingly becoming more cognizant of the traditional

intentions of PhD research, that of knowledge creation and theory development. These data are

presented in Table 5 and Figure 5.

Table 5

Percentage of the Origin of the Problem by Degree Type, 2007 and 2017

| | Year | | | | | |
| | 2007 | | | 2017 | | |
Origin of the problem	EdD (*n* = 151) %	PhD (*n* = 275) %	Total (*n* = 426) %	EdD (*n* = 124) %	PhD (*n* = 211) %	Total (*n* = 335) %
Professional practice	80.7	62.4	68.5	76.6	45.0	56.1
Existing theory	19.3	37.6	31.5	23.4	55.0	43.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
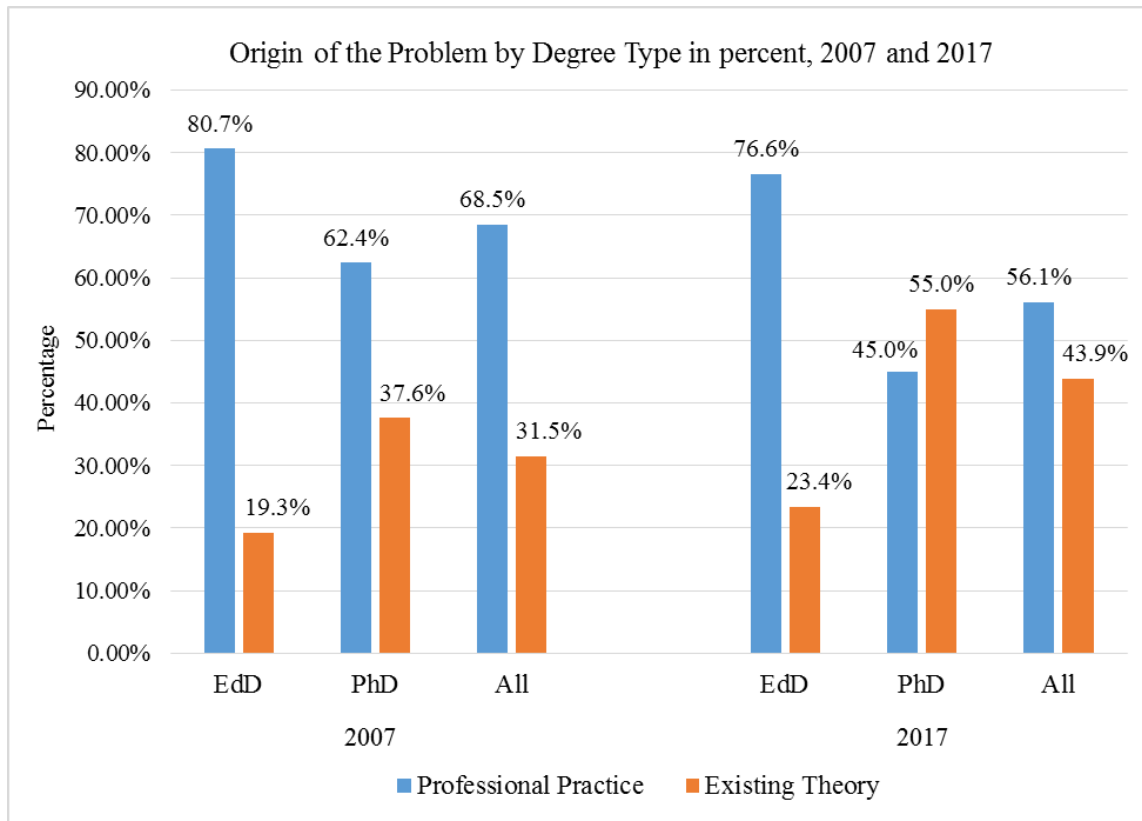
Figure 5. Percentage of the origin of the problem by degree type, 2007 and 2017.

Comparing once again to Melendez (2002), he reported that 55.7% of the 1977 dissertations had the origin of the problem based on practice and 44.3% based on theory. Those results were similar in 1997, with 53.5% and 46.5% based on practice and theory, respectively. The results in 1977 and 1997 closely aligned to the 2017 results, reflecting the origin of the problem based on practice at 56.1% and based on theory at 43.9%. With professional practice as the origin of the problem in 68.5% of dissertations in 2007, one might infer regarding the rapid growth of professional practice doctorates and the influence of curriculum and purpose of PPDs during this time. Ten years later, however, a market correction appeared in 2017 related to the origin of the problem in dissertations as becoming more theoretically based, especially when segregated by degree type.

Primary Research Methodologies in 2007 and 2017

From 2007 to 2017, overall qualitative research methods increased from 48.3% to 57.6%, and quantitative methods decreased from 36.3% to 28.8%. Mixed-methods research reflected a slight decrease in usage from 15.4% to 13.6% from 2007 to 2017. When segregating by degree type from 2007 and 2017, the greatest movement in percentage of use was found in quantitative methods. In 2007, 34.4% of EdD dissertations used quantitative methods; in 2017, that percentage dropped to 19.2%, representing a 15.2% proportional decline in quantitative methods. For PhD dissertations, the opposite trend was revealed, with 36.9% of dissertations using quantitative methods in 2007, elevating to 53.0% in 2017, a 16.1% proportional increase. Table 6 and Figure 6 present the findings related to primary research methodologies used in EdD and PhD dissertations in 2007 and 2017.

Table 6

Percentage of Type of Research Methodology by Degree Type, 2007 and 2017

	Year					
	2007			2017		
Research methodology	EdD (*n* = 151) %	PhD (*n* = 275) %	Total (*n* = 426) %	EdD (*n* = 124) %	PhD (*n* = 211) %	Total (*n* = 335) %
Qualitative	55.3	44.9	48.3	63.9	34.7	57.6
Quantitative	34.4	36.9	36.3	19.2	53.0	28.8
Mixed methods	10.3	18.2	15.4	16.9	12.3	13.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
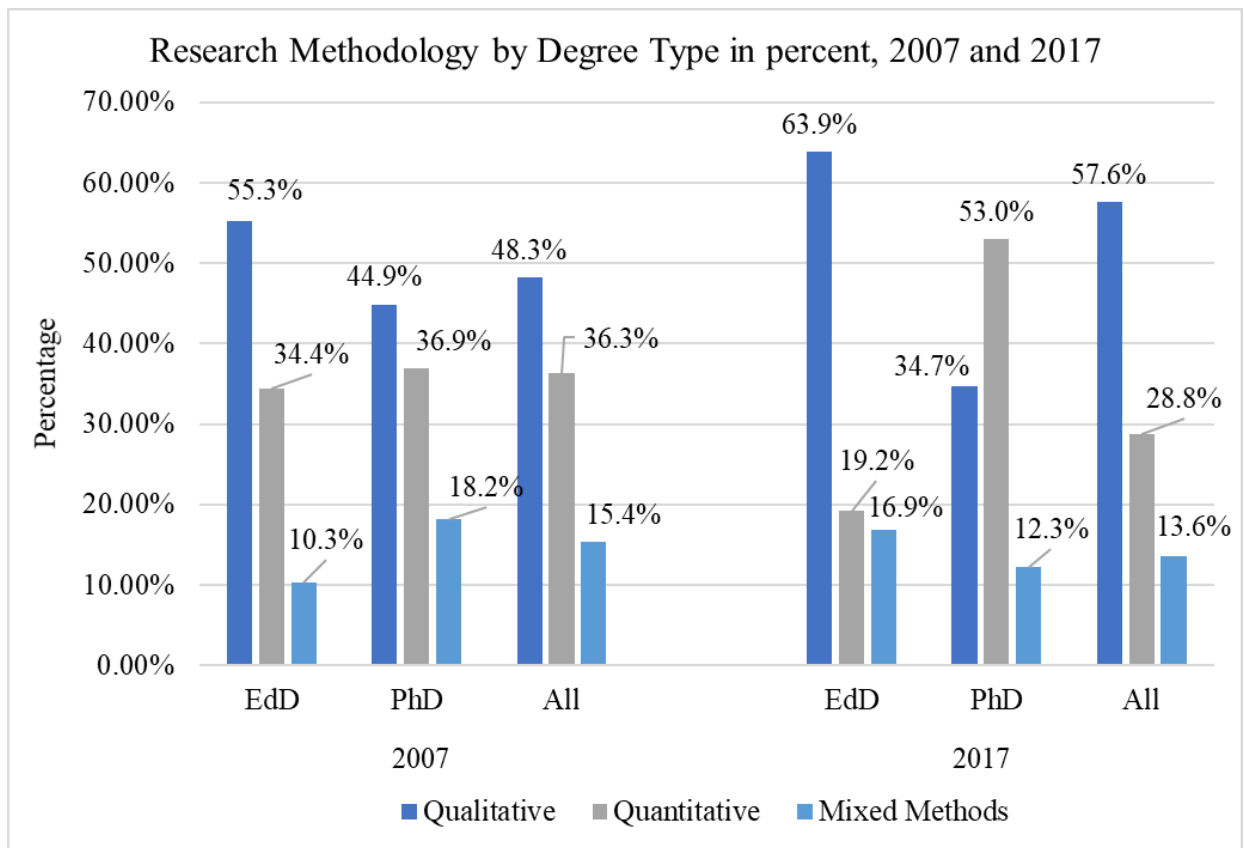
Figure 6. Percentage of type of research methodology by degree type, 2007 and 2017.

These results indicate an increased perception of value on data in the positivist sense for PhD candidates in their dissertation research. At the same time, EdD candidates were elevating the social constructionist perspectives of their dissertation research with increased vigor as demonstrated by increases in both qualitative and mixed-method methodologies. Overall, the trend reflected that EdD dissertations are becoming more qualitative, and PhD dissertations are becoming more quantitative. This overall upward trend in utilizing qualitative research design was also reflected in the Melendez's (2002) study, as only 18.9% of dissertations in 1977 used qualitative methods increasing to 47.7% by 1997. When segregating by degree type however, quantitative research methods were more closely affiliated with the PhD in 2017, utilized in 55.0% of PhD dissertations.

Distribution of Boyer's Scholarship Domains Among 2007 and 2017 Dissertations

In both 2007 and 2017, the scholarship of application was the dominant form of scholarship in these dissertations, classified as such in 54.7% of dissertations in 2007 and 47.7% of dissertations in 2017. The scholarship of discovery, however, made the greatest gains as the dominant scholarship over this time period, moving from 10.4% in 2007 to 26.8% in 2017. This finding was evidenced in both EdD and PhD dissertations when segregating by degree type in both years as well. Discovery was classified as the dominant scholarship in less than 1% of EdD dissertations in 2007. In 2017, more than 10% of EdD dissertations were classified as such. Likewise, only 15.9% of PhD dissertations from 2007 were coded with discovery as the dominant scholarship. In 2017, that percentage more than doubled, with 36.0% of dissertations coded with discovery as the primary scholarship domain, a proportionate increase of 20.1%. This suggests that knowledge creation, regardless of the research or results' impact on anything, is

gaining momentum and favor with both PhD and EdD candidates in their dissertation research. These findings are shown in Table 7 and Figure 7.

Melendez (2002) demonstrated that the scholarship of discovery was dominant in both 1977 and 1997, reflecting 50.9% and 45.3% of dissertations classified as such, respectively. Conversely, the scholarship of application in both 2007 and 2017 was the dominant scholarship, although when segregated by degree type, the dominant scholarship for the PhD is application in 2017.

Table 7

Percentage of Primary Scholarship Domain by Degree Type, 2007 and 2017

| | Year | | | | | |
| | 2007 | | | 2017 | | |
Scholarship domain	EdD (*n* = 151) %	PhD (*n* = 275) %	Total (*n* = 426) %	EdD (*n* = 124) %	PhD (*n* = 211) %	Total (*n* = 335) %
Discovery	0.0	15.9	10.4	10.4	36.0	26.8
Integration	17.9	21.5	20.4	12.1	18.4	16.7
Application	68.3	48.2	54.7	64.6	37.9	47.7
Teaching	13.8	14.4	14.5	12.9	7.7	8.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In summation, data from these tables and figures suggest that overall, doctoral dissertations in higher education studies are using existing theories as a foundation for study in greater numbers and proportion. From existing theory, dissertations were also using theory as the origin of the problem in more studies in 2017. The research methodologies differed more by degree type, with qualitative research trending toward the EdD and quantitative toward the PhD. Finally, Boyer's scholarship domains also reflected trends by degree type, with the scholarship

of application more closely associated with the EdD and the scholarship of discovery more closely aligned with the PhD.
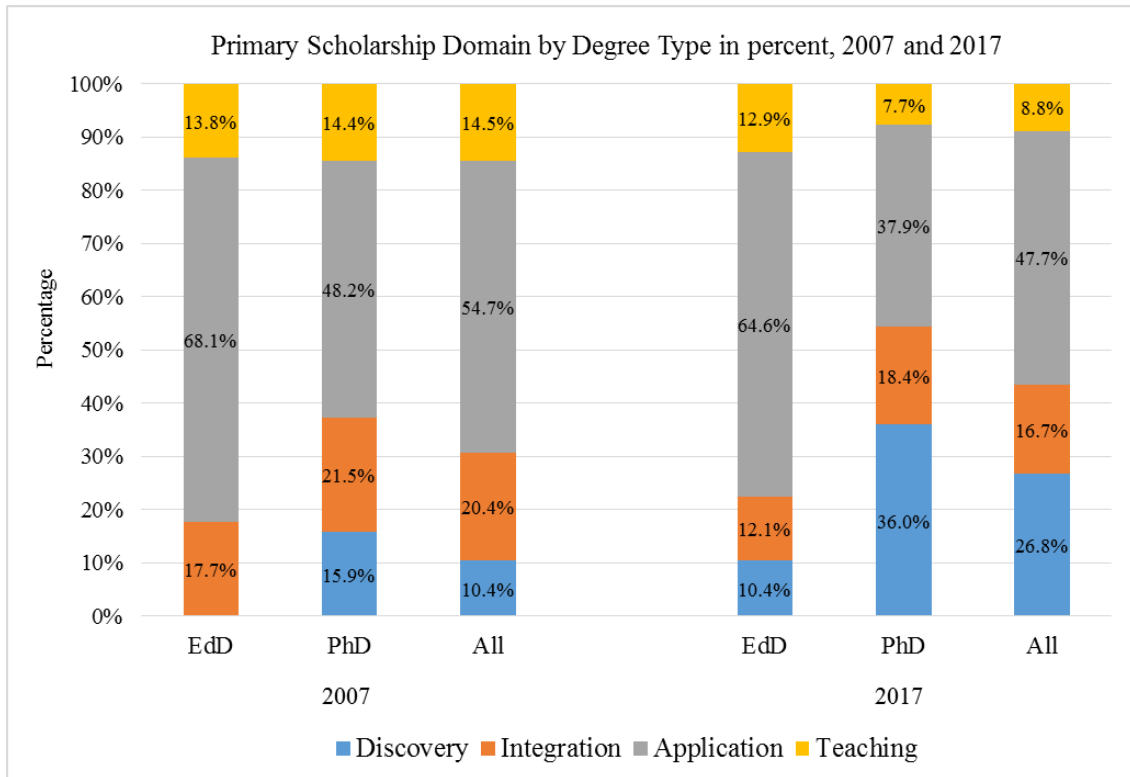
Figure 7. Percentage of primary scholarship domain by degree type, 2007 and 2017.

With the founding of CPED in 2007, the following four universities identified themselves as founding members, conferring both EdD and PhD degrees: (a) The College of William and Mary, (b) University of Florida, (c) University of Missouri-Columbia, and (d) The University of Nebraska-Lincoln. By 2017, CPED institutional membership increased to over 100 university members, 11 of which conferred both the EdD and the PhD in higher education studies. In addition to the four universities identified from 2007, the University of Denver, Florida State University, Indiana University, University of Missouri-Saint Louis, University of North Texas, The Ohio State University, and Texas Tech University joined CPED to align their doctoral students' research agenda more purposefully to the respective degrees they conferred.

Tables and figures 8-11 represent the original four universities with 57 dissertations in higher education studies published in 2007 along with 70 dissertations published in 2017. For contrast purposes, tables and figures 12-15 identify the remaining 36 non-CPED member universities conferring both the EdD and the PhD and are represented by 369 dissertations published in 2007 and 265 dissertations published in 2017. Each subsidiary question is addressed specific to CPED membership in an effort to illustrate measures of effectiveness related to CPED's mission to differentiate the EdD from the PhD in this consortium's first decade.

Number of Dissertations in Higher Education Studies
Completed in 2007 and 2017

The distribution of degree type across institutions in 2007 and 2017 reflected a slight overall change in the percentage of terminal degrees awarded in higher education studies. From the sample of CPED member dissertations in 2007, 22.8% of the dissertations were completed to fulfill EdD requirements, and 77.2% of 2007 dissertations were completed for the PhD. Ten years later, similar percentages of terminal degrees in higher education studies were conferred, with 18.6% EdD and 81.4% PhD degrees conferred. Table 8 and Figure 8 indicate the degree type distribution from CPED member institutions in 2007 and 2017.

The distribution of degree type across non-CPED member institutions in 2007 and 2017 offering the EdD and the PhD also reflected a slight overall change in the percentage of terminal degrees awarded in higher education studies. From the sample of CPED member dissertations in 2007, 37.4% of the dissertations were completed to fulfill EdD requirements, and 62.6% of 2007 dissertations were completed for the PhD. Ten years later, similar percentages in terminal degrees were conferred, with the EdD representing 41.9% and the PhD 58.1% of terminal degrees conferred in higher education studies. This information appears in Table 9 and Figure 9.

Table 8

Degree Distribution in Higher Education Studies Among CPED Member Institutions by Percentage, 2007 and 2017

	Year	
	2007 (*n* = 57)	2017 (*n* = 70)
Degree type	%	%
EdD	22.8	18.6
PhD	77.2	81.4
Total	100.0	100.0
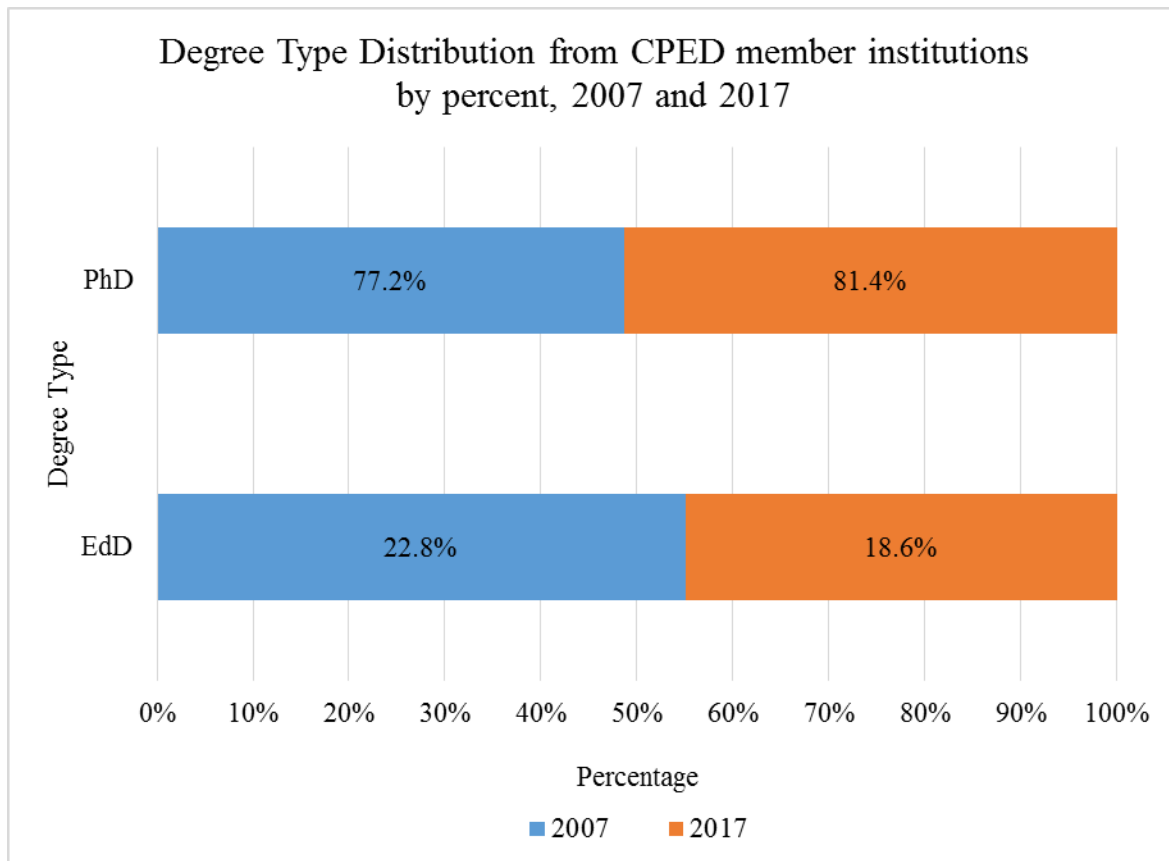
Figure 8. Degree distribution in higher education studies among CPED member institutions by percentage, 2007 and 2017.

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Table 9

*Degree Distribution in Higher Education Studies Among Non-CPED Member Institutions
by Percentage, 2007 and 2017*

	Year	
	2007 ($n = 369$)	2017 ($n = 265$)
Degree type	%	%
EdD	37.4	41.9
PhD	62.6	58.1
Total	100.0	100.0
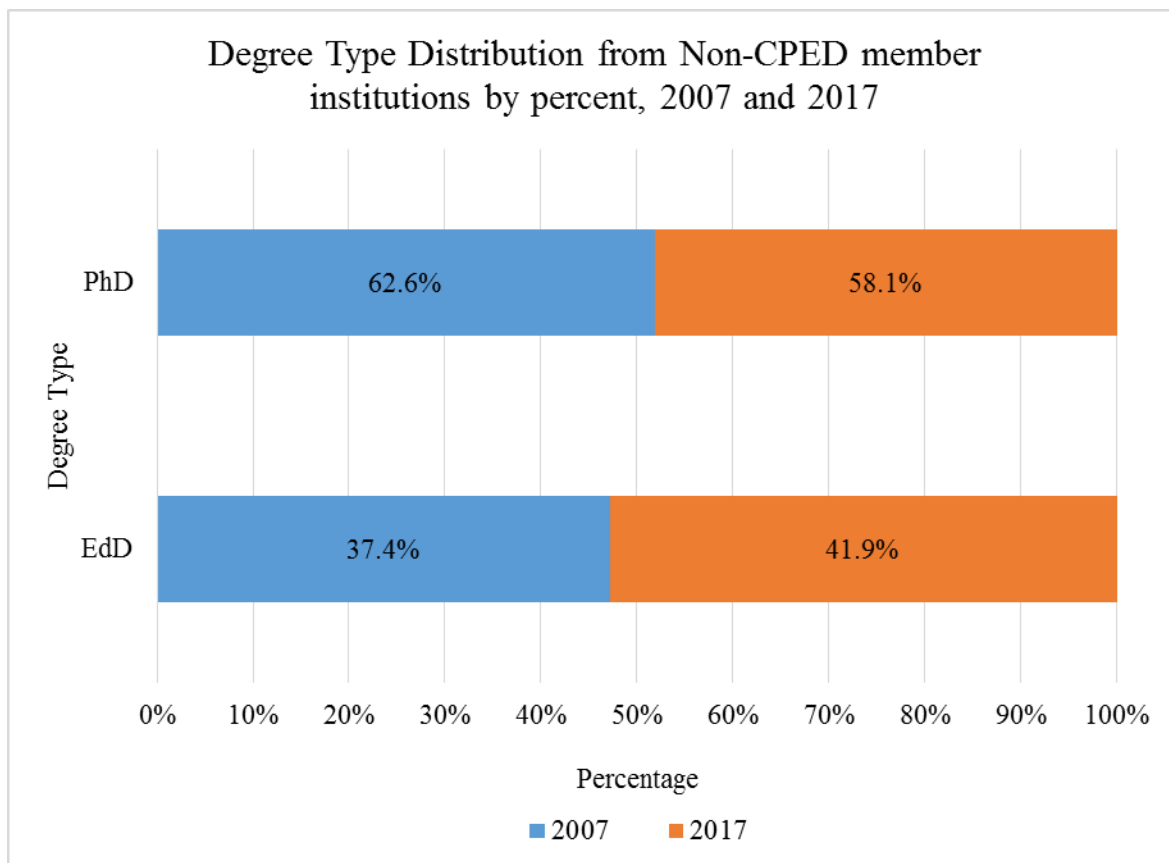
Figure 9. Degree distribution in higher education studies among non-CPED member institutions by percentage, 2007 and 2017.

Number of Dissertations in Higher Education Studies Guided
by an Existing Theory in 2007 and 2017

The presence of an existing theory in EdD dissertations in higher education studies from

CPED member institutions increased from 38.5% in 2007 to 46.2% in 2017, but also increased in

PhD dissertations from 54.5% to 59.6% over the same period of time. The use of a theoretical or

conceptual framework to guide the dissertation is a traditional tenet of dissertation research, but

this variable does not infringe on CPED's vision for applicability in research. Whether doctoral

students value a theoretical or conceptual framework guiding their dissertation research, the

majority of PhD dissertations included at least one existing theory. The EdD dissertations also

indicated an increase in the use of an existing theory, but the majority excluded an existing

theory in both sample years, as shown in Table 10 and Figure 10.

Table 10

Percentage of the Presence of a Theoretical Framework by Degree Type in Dissertations from
CPED Member Institutions, 2007 and 2017

	Year					
	2007			2017		
Presence of a theoretical framework	EdD ($n = 13$) %	PhD ($n = 44$) %	Total ($n = 57$) %	EdD ($n = 13$) %	PhD ($n = 57$) %	Total ($n = 70$) %
Yes	38.5	54.5	50.9	46.2	59.6	57.1
No	61.5	45.5	49.1	53.8	40.4	42.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
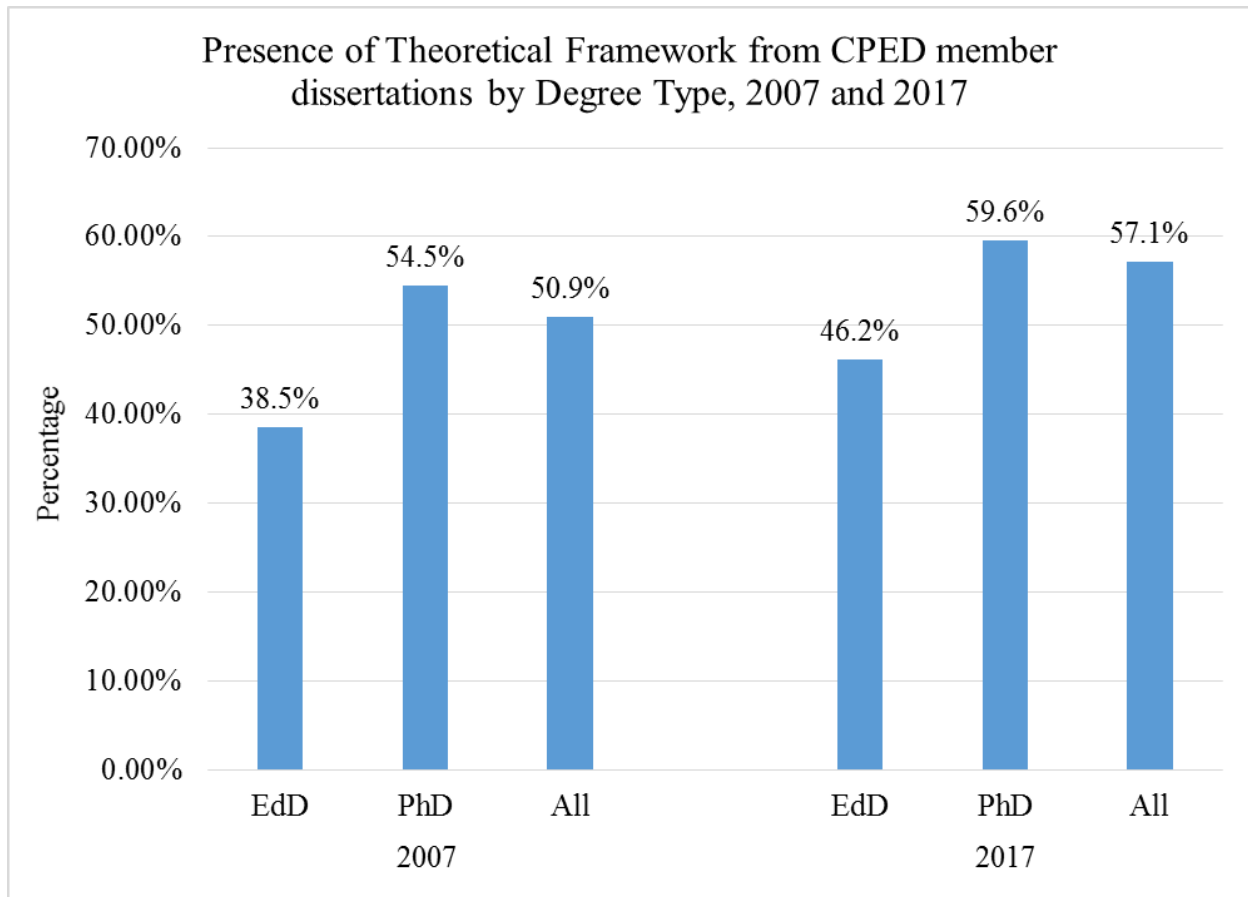
Figure 10. Percentage of the presence of a theoretical framework by degree type in dissertations from CPED member institutions, 2007 and 2017.

For institutions that were not part of the CPED consortium, the data revealed little change among PhD dissertations in higher education studies in terms of the presence of a theoretical framework. In 2007, for example, 42.0% of dissertations included a theoretical or conceptual framework, slightly increasing to 45.5% in 2017. On the other hand, EdD dissertations disclosed a sharp increase in the use of an existing theory as a foundational element in research in non-CPED institutions, from 28.2% in 2007 to 45.0% in 2017. These results specific to the EdD implied two things. First, EdD research in 2017 from non-CPED member institutions valued at least one foundational theory to use as a jumping off point in dissertations more than they did in 2007. Second, dissertations from non-CPED universities did not segregate a conceptual

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framework as a distinguishing feature in degree types in 2017. Table 11 and Figure 11 portray these findings.

Table 11

Percentage of the Presence of a Theoretical Framework by Degree Type in Dissertations from Non-CPED Member Institutions, 2007 and 2017

	Year					
	2007			2017		
Presence of a theoretical framework	EdD (n = 138) %	PhD (n = 231) %	Total (n = 369) %	EdD (n = 111) %	PhD (n = 154) %	Total (n = 265) %
Yes	28.2	42.0	36.9	45.0	45.5	45.3
No	71.8	58.0	63.1	55.0	54.5	54.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
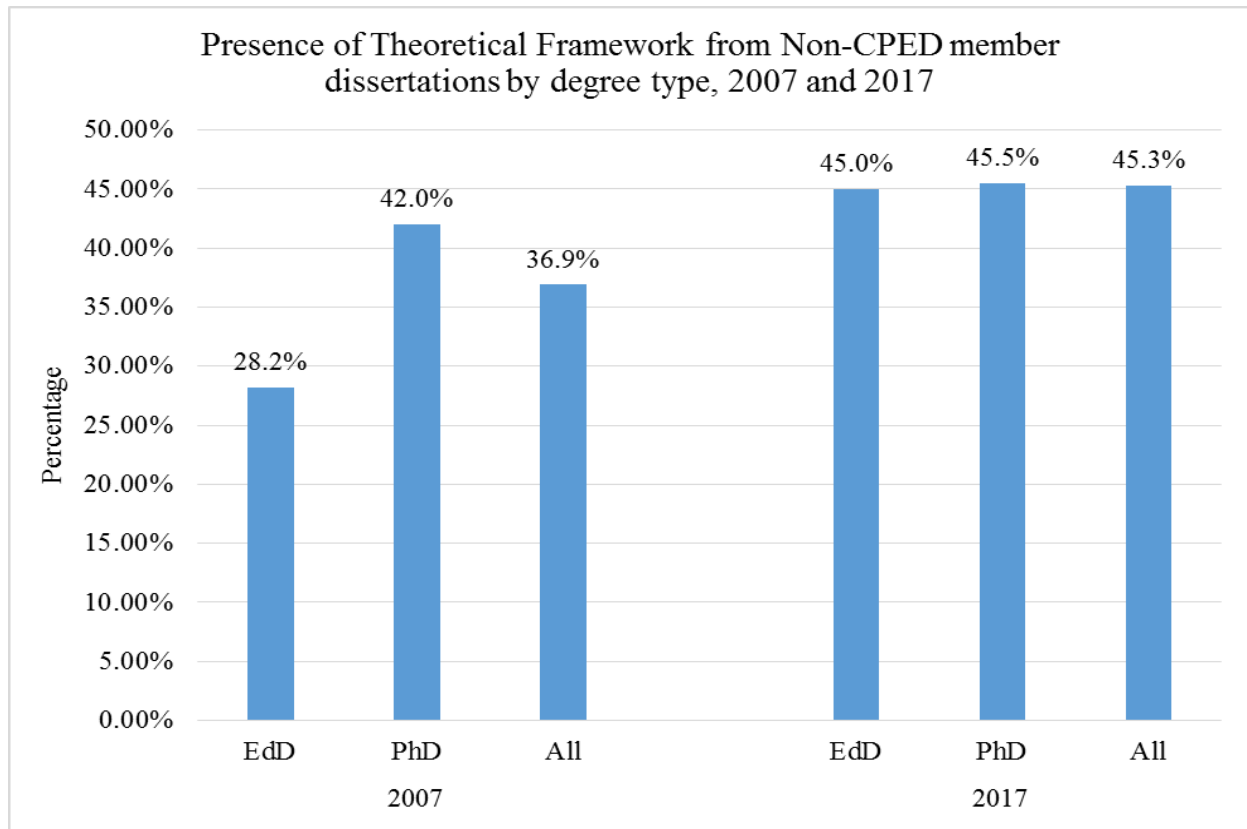
Figure 11. Percentage of the presence of a theoretical framework by degree type in dissertations from non-CPED member institutions, 2007 and 2017.

The Dissertation Problem Based on Theory or Practice in 2007 and 2017

Professional practice as the origin of the problem among dissertations in higher education studies from CPED institutions increased from 84.6% in 2007 to 92.3% in 2017, reinforcing the consortium's primary vision of elevating the relative value of the EdD by focusing on real-life, professional problems of practice. The PhD dissertations were also following suit in shaping dissertation research by degree type. From 2007 to 2017, PhD dissertations increased their focus on theory as the origin of the problem by 10% while decreasing their emphasis on professional practice, again by 10%. These data, reported in Table 12 and Figure 12, show CPED's goal to create distinctive research pathways by degree type had indeed taken hold among CPED member institutions over the first 10 years of the CPED consortium's founding.

Table 12

Percentage of the Origin of the Problem by Degree Type Among Dissertations From CPED Member Institutions, 2007 and 2017

	Year					
	2007			2017		
	EdD ($n = 13$)	PhD ($n = 44$)	Total ($n = 57$)	EdD ($n = 13$)	PhD ($n = 57$)	Total ($n = 70$)
Origin of the problem	%	%	%	%	%	%
Professional practice	84.6	59.1	64.9	92.3	49.1	57.1
Existing theory	15.4	40.9	35.1	7.7	50.9	42.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The most striking data revealed from non-CPED member dissertations were found in PhD research in higher education studies. In 2007, 62.8% of non-CPED member dissertations used professional practice as the origin of the problem. By 2017, professional practice as the origin of the problem was found in only 42.2% of PhD dissertations, a decline of more than 20%. The use of existing theory in 2007 shot up from 37.2% to 57.8% in 2017. These data implied that

although CPED has focused on elevating the status and value of the EdD, non-CPED members

are proactively returning the PhD to its traditional form: that of theory development and

extension. This information is reported in Table 13 and Figure 13.

Figure 12. Percentage of the origin of the problem by degree type among dissertations from CPED member institutions, 2007 and 2017.

Table 13

Percentage of the Origin of the Problem by Degree Type Among Dissertations From Non-CPED Member Institutions, 2007 and 2017

	Year					
	2007			2017		
Origin of the problem	EdD (*n* = 138) %	PhD (*n* = 231) %	Total (*n* = 369) %	EdD (*n* = 111) %	PhD (*n* = 154) %	Total (*n* = 265) %
Professional practice	79.7	62.8	69.1	73.9	42.2	55.5
Existing theory	20.3	37.2	30.9	26.1	57.8	44.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
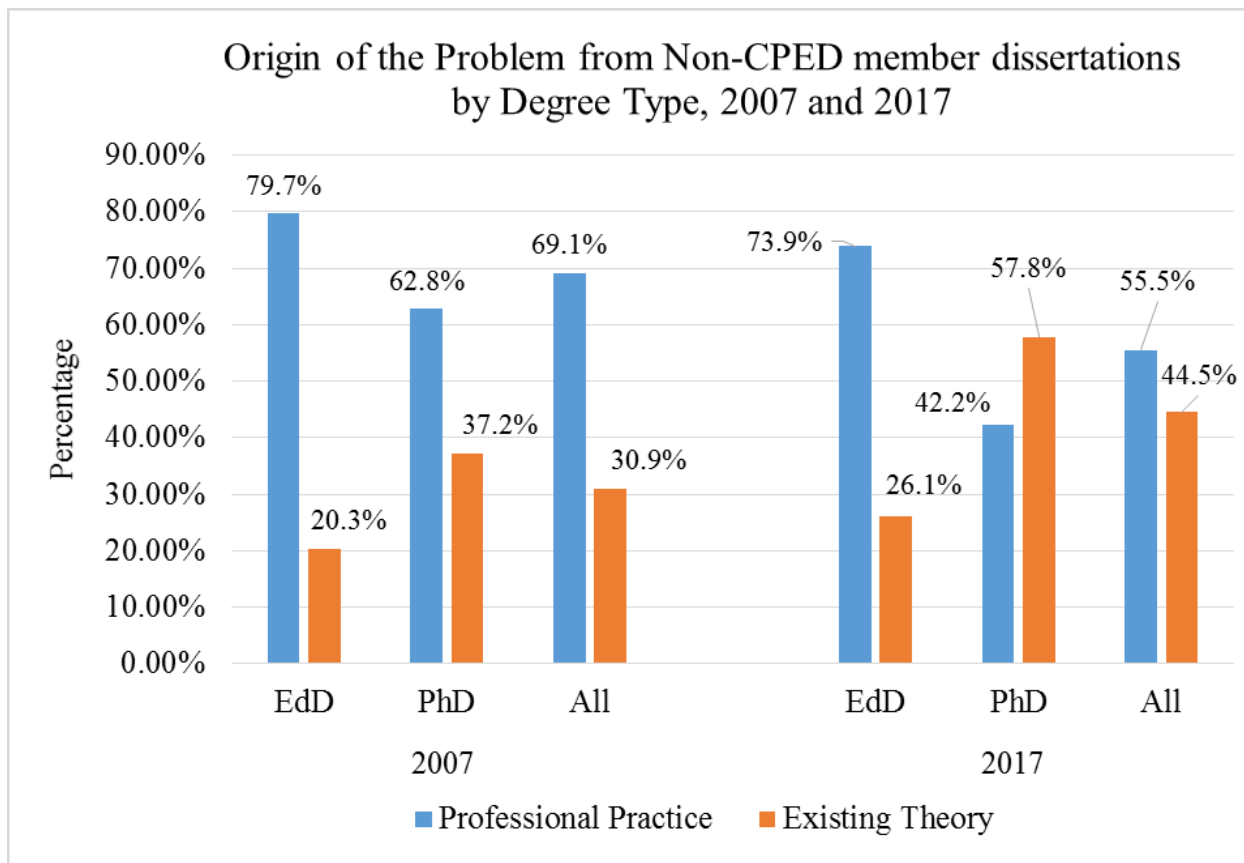
Figure 13. Percentage of the origin of the problem by degree type among dissertations from non-CPED member institutions, 2007 and 2017.

Primary Research Methodologies in 2007 and 2017

Among CPED member institutions, dissertation research methodology in higher education studies suggested a trend toward a more qualitative approach for the EdD. Beginning with 38.4% of EdD dissertations in 2007 and increasing to 61.5% of EdD dissertations in 2017, the use of qualitative methods increased. A similar pattern emerged among PhD dissertations from CPED member institutions, as 38.5% of those dissertations were qualitative in nature in 2007. In 2017, qualitative research was the methodology for the majority of PhD dissertations, with 59.7% coded as qualitative. These data are displayed in Table 14 and Figure 14.

Quantitative research fell sharply in EdD dissertations in higher education studies among CPED member institutions from 2007 to 2017, holding majority status in 2007 with 53.9% of dissertations, but only 15.4% in 2017. This finding suggests that although no prescriptions emanated from CPED on research methodology, EdD dissertations that focused on applied research seemed to gravitate toward qualitative research methodologies.

Table 14

Percentage of Type of Research Methodology by Degree Type Among Dissertations From CPED Member Institutions, 2007 and 2017

	Year					
	2007			2017		
Research methodology	EdD ($n = 13$) %	PhD ($n = 44$) %	Total ($n = 57$) %	EdD ($n = 13$) %	PhD ($n = 57$) %	Total ($n = 70$) %
Qualitative	38.4	38.5	38.5	61.5	59.7	60.0
Quantitative	53.9	29.6	35.2	15.4	31.6	28.6
Mixed methods	7.7	31.9	26.3	23.1	8.7	11.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
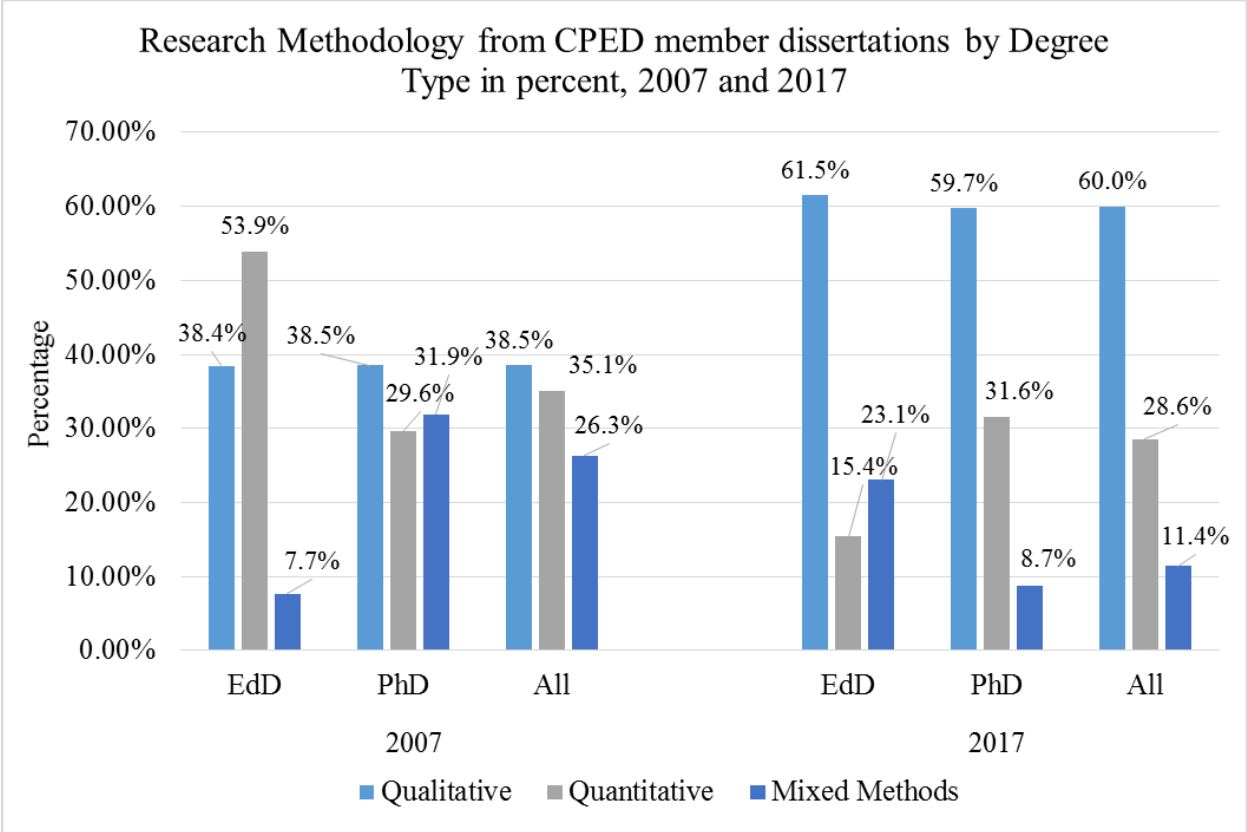
Figure 14. Percentage of type of research methodology by degree type among dissertations from CPED member institutions, 2007 and 2017.

With a larger sample size from non-CPED member dissertations in higher education studies, the greatest change in research methodology was found in quantitative methods from EdD dissertations. One out of every three EdD dissertations was quantitative in 2007. In 2017, this declined to about 1 out of every 5, with 18.9% of EdD dissertations using quantitative methods. Overall, a slight decrease in quantitative research was evident between the two sample years, with 36.3% of dissertations using quantitative methods in 2007 and 29.0% in 2017. These indicators of research methodology among non-CPED member dissertations are shown in Table 15 and Figure 15.

Table 15

Percentage of Type of Research Methodology by Degree Type Among Dissertations
From Non-CPED Member Institutions, 2007 and 2017

| | Year | | | | | |
| | 2007 | | | 2017 | | |
Research methodology	EdD (*n* = 138) %	PhD (*n* = 231) %	Total (*n* = 369) %	EdD (*n* = 111) %	PhD (*n* = 154) %	Total (*n* = 265) %
Qualitative	56.5	46.3	50.1	64.9	51.3	57.0
Quantitative	33.3	38.1	36.3	18.9	36.4	29.0
Mixed methods	10.2	15.6	13.6	16.2	16.2	14.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
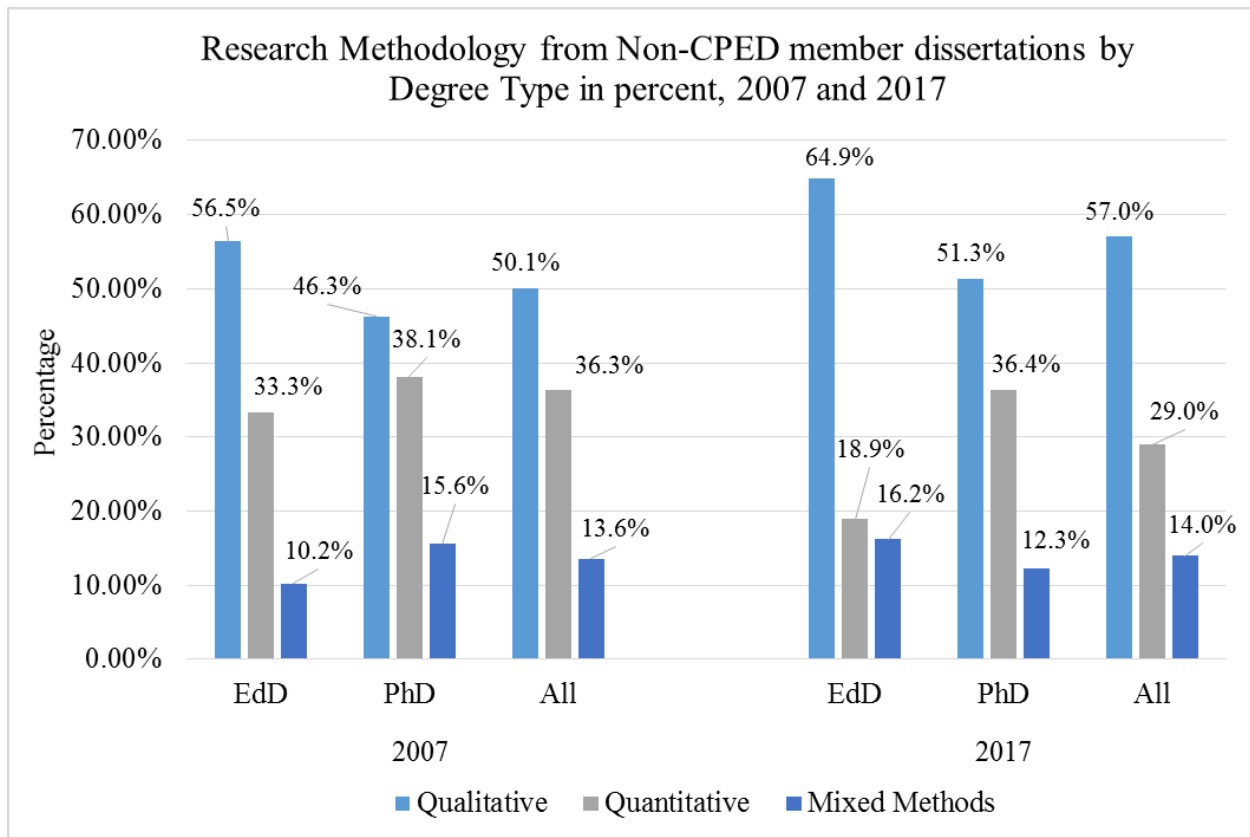
Figure 15. Percentage of type of research methodology by degree type among dissertations
from non-CPED member institutions, 2007 and 2017.

Distribution of Boyer's Scholarship Domains Among 2007 and 2017 Dissertations

Dissertations from CPED member institutions are following the basic tenets of this consortium's mission to enhance the clarity of the EdD as an applied research degree. In 2007, 61.5% of EdD dissertations in higher education studies were coded with Application as the dominant scholarship domain. In 2017, Application as the dominant scholarship domain jumped to 84.6%. PhD dissertations from CPED member institutions, in contrast, reflected a sharp spike in Discovery as the primary scholarship domain, going from only 15.9% in 2007 to 35.1% in 2017. These data appear in Table 16 and Figure 16.

Table 16

*Percentage of Primary Scholarship Domain by Degree Type Among Dissertations
From CPED Member Institutions, 2007 and 2017*

	Year					
	2007			2017		
Scholarship domain	EdD ($n = 13$) %	PhD ($n = 44$) %	Total ($n = 57$) %	EdD ($n = 13$) %	PhD ($n = 57$) %	Total ($n = 70$) %
Discovery	0.0	15.9	12.3	0.0	35.1	28.6
Integration	15.4	25.0	22.8	7.7	14.0	12.9
Application	61.5	40.9	45.6	84.6	42.1	50.0
Teaching	23.1	18.2	19.3	7.7	8.8	8.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

As shown in Table 17 and Figure 17, dissertations in higher education studies from non-CPED institutions in 2007 and 2017 evidenced a similarity in pattern among the PhD dissertations when compared to CPED member dissertations on the dimension of scholarship domain. For instance, 16.0% of PhD dissertations were coded with Discovery as the primary scholarship domain in 2007, increasing to 37.0% in 2017. In contrast to dissertations from CPED member universities, Application as the dominant scholarship domain actually decreased from

2007 to 2017 in EdD dissertations, from 66.7% to 62.2%, respectively. Overall, then, although

Application remained the dominant scholarship domain for both degrees, this type of scholarship

is losing favor to the scholarship of Discovery, especially within the PhD camp.
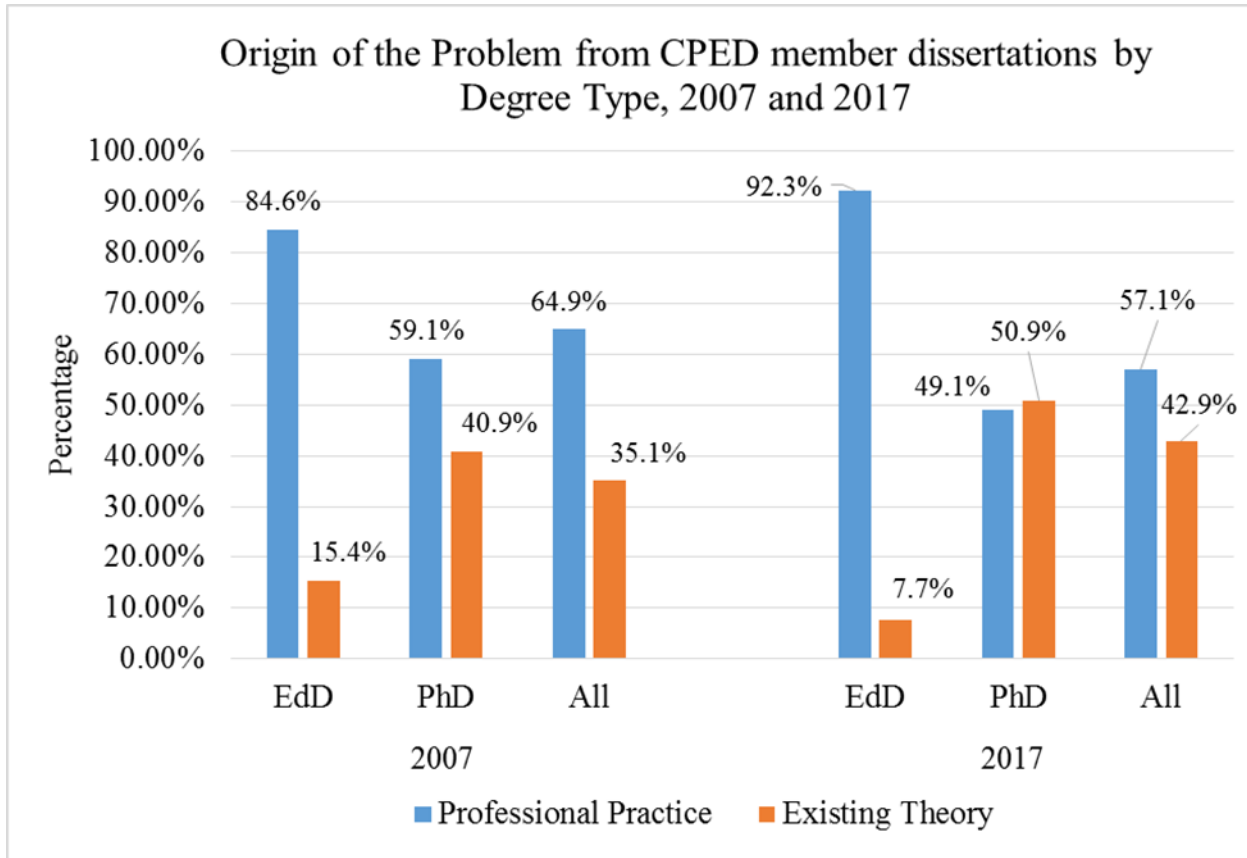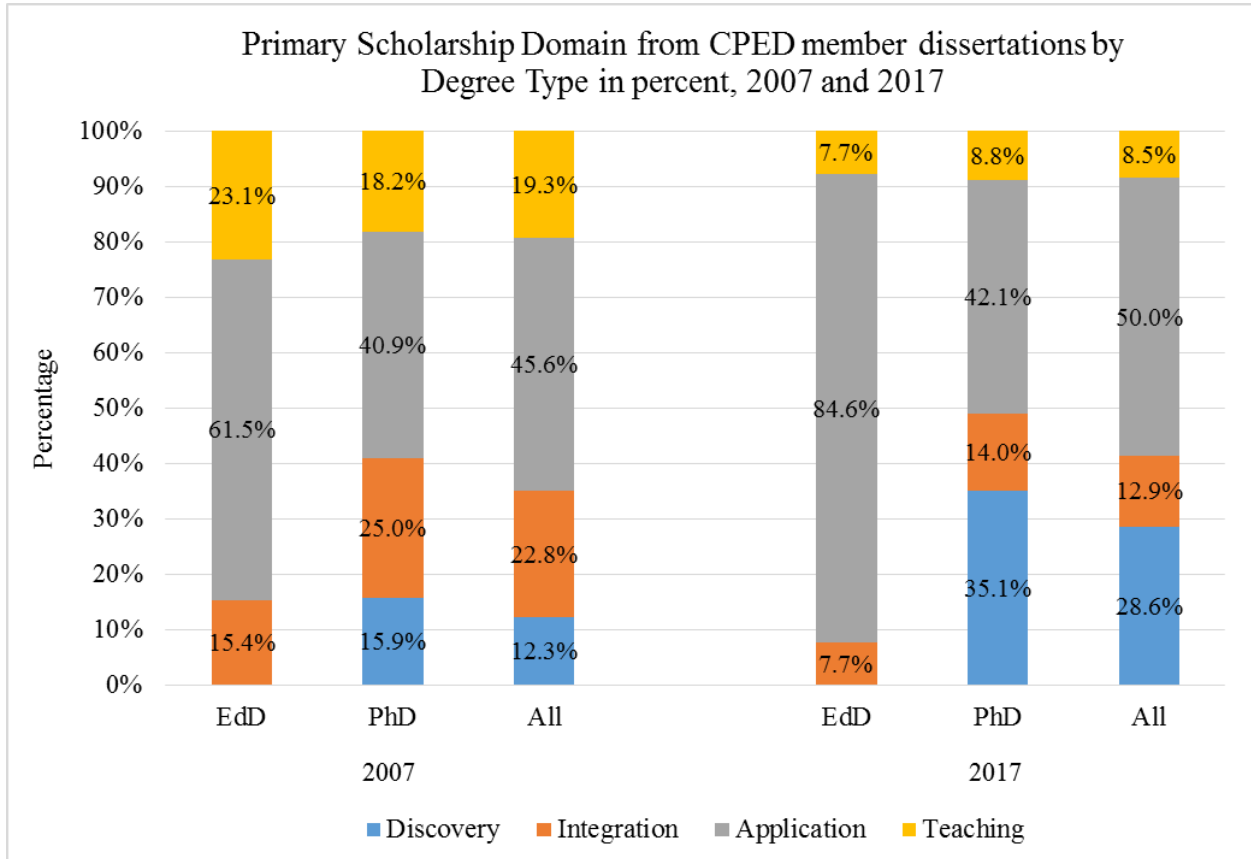

Figure 16. Percentage of primary scholarship domain by degree type among dissertations
from CPED member institutions, 2007 and 2017.

Table 17

Percentage of Primary Scholarship Domain by Degree Type Among Dissertations From Non-CPED Member Institutions, 2007 and 2017

	Year					
	2007			2017		
Scholarship domain	EdD (*n* = 138) %	PhD (*n* = 231) %	Total (*n* = 369) %	EdD (*n* = 111) %	PhD (*n* = 154) %	Total (*n* = 265) %
Discovery	0.0	16.0	10.0	12.6	37.0	26.8
Integration	19.5	21.2	20.6	13.5	20.8	17.7
Application	66.7	49.4	55.8	62.2	35.7	46.8
Teaching	13.8	13.4	13.6	11.7	6.5	8.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
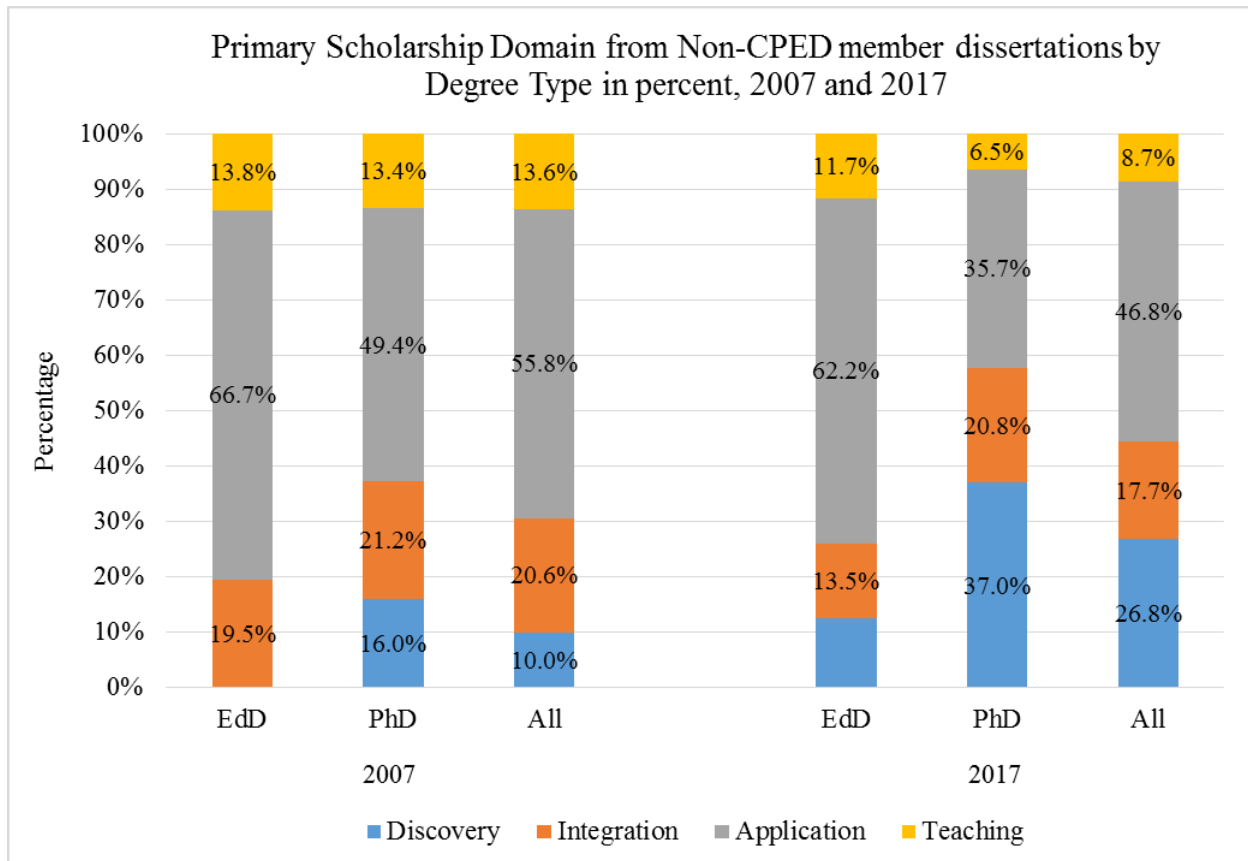
Figure 17. Percentage of primary scholarship domain by degree type among dissertations from non-CPED member institutions, 2007 and 2017.

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Summary

Clearly, the CPED's mission to enhance the overall clarity and purpose of the EdD has been effective over the first decade of this consortium's existence. The data reflected an upward trend toward applicability in dissertation research in higher education studies specific to the EdD from 2007 to 2017. Further, one byproduct of this action research movement for the EdD seems also to be reflected in the EdD's counterpart, the PhD. Dissertation research for the PhD seems to be returning to its roots in the scholarship domain of Discovery, as originally intended 2 centuries ago. It took the proactive measures of other groups, namely CPED and its supporters, for the proponents of the traditional PhD to realize they were swaying too far into applied research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

This final chapter provides a review of the purpose of this study and includes a discussion of the findings for the two primary research questions. The last sections of this chapter offer some thoughts on conclusions from this study about differentiating the EdD from the PhD in higher education studies. This discussion is followed by implications for practice and suggestions for further research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine scholarship in the form of dissertation research in the field of higher education studies over a 10-year period and determine how the theory-practice tension in scholarship is reflected in dissertation research. A high percentage of students enrolled in higher education doctoral programs are already employed in some aspect of the higher education system and may be interested in the practical aspects of scholarship rather than the theoretical (Melendez, 2002). For practitioners in higher education, the traditional model of scholarly research focusing on discovery and theory development may not be motivating or useful for the work higher education practitioners are expected to contribute (Shulman, 2010).

In addition to the motivational dissonance experienced at the graduate student level, ongoing debate on the purpose and identity of the EdD degree continues to be evident. Proclamations about the forms and functions of the EdD from higher education scholars and practitioners alike have spurred departmental investigations, initiated research in curricula, and influenced the founding of the CPED in 2007. This study supports efforts to assist in demarcating the research purposes of the EdD through the identification of specific characteristics of doctoral dissertations in higher education studies.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked: How has dissertation research in the field of higher education changed in reflecting theory-practice tension from 2007 to 2017? Tension associated with the theory-practice gap in dissertation research is based on the value the individual researcher places on truth versus utility. In placing a higher value on truth, the researcher is most concerned with creating new knowledge and new information without regard to implications. It is unadulterated knowledge creation for the sake of discovering truth. Dissertation research based on discovery is naturally perceived as superior in form, as the personal motivation to create new knowledge is forming a foundation upon which other knowledge is built. From coding of the dissertations used in this study, the presence of existing theory to guide dissertation research was found in almost 40% (38.9%) of dissertations in 2007 and almost 50% (47.8%) in 2017, regardless of degree type. Theory guiding utility, or put another way, truth guiding practice is trending upwards in dissertation research. In this sense, the theory-practice gap in dissertation research is not a tension, but a feeder of sorts. From initial truth, the researcher decides to build upon theory, refute it, or apply it to professional practice.

If the dissertation researcher decides to build upon, develop, or refute an existing theory, the origin of the problem is based in theory. Even if the dissertation researcher included an existing theory as a jumping-off point, coding reflected that the origin of the problem did not need to be theory-based. This is where the theory-practice tension resides in dissertation research—the origin of the problem. Traditionalists who experienced their own graduate school work through a positivist research agenda may deem the origin of the problem based in real-life application less vigorous. For those steadfast in thought that some people are more naturally

inclined to be idea makers and others more inclined to be idea implementers, the theory-practice tension is apparent.

The coding in the present study suggested that the theory-practice tension in the origin of the problem may rest with the degree the student earns. In 2007, PhD dissertation research focused on professional practice as the origin of the problem in 62.4% of dissertations. Melendez (2002) had previously supported this finding as evidenced in his coding of dissertations published in 1997, with 53.5% of all dissertation research focused on professional practice, regardless of degree. In the early 2000s when thought leaders were labeling the EdD as "PhD Lite" (Golde, 2006; Levine, 2005) based on conjecture that research was performed through less rigorous methods, PhD dissertations were rooted in professional practice in similar measure.

Including the Melendez (2002) study findings offers an interesting perspective on the origin of the problem. For the years 1977, 1997, and 2017, the difference in the percentage range for both practice- and theory-based dissertations fell between 3% points each; these years were all very similar. The outlier year was 2007. What conditions were observable in academia in 2007 to reflect such a substantial increase in practice-based research and such a decline in theory-based research? Table 18 and Figure 18 show the data supporting this question.

Table 18

Percentage of the Origin of the Dissertation Problem, 1977, 1997, 2007, and 2017

	Year			
Origin of the problem	1977[a] %	1997[a] %	2007 %	2017 %
Professional practice	55.7	53.5	68.5	56.1
Existing theory	44.3	46.5	31.5	43.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

[a]*Melendez (2002)*
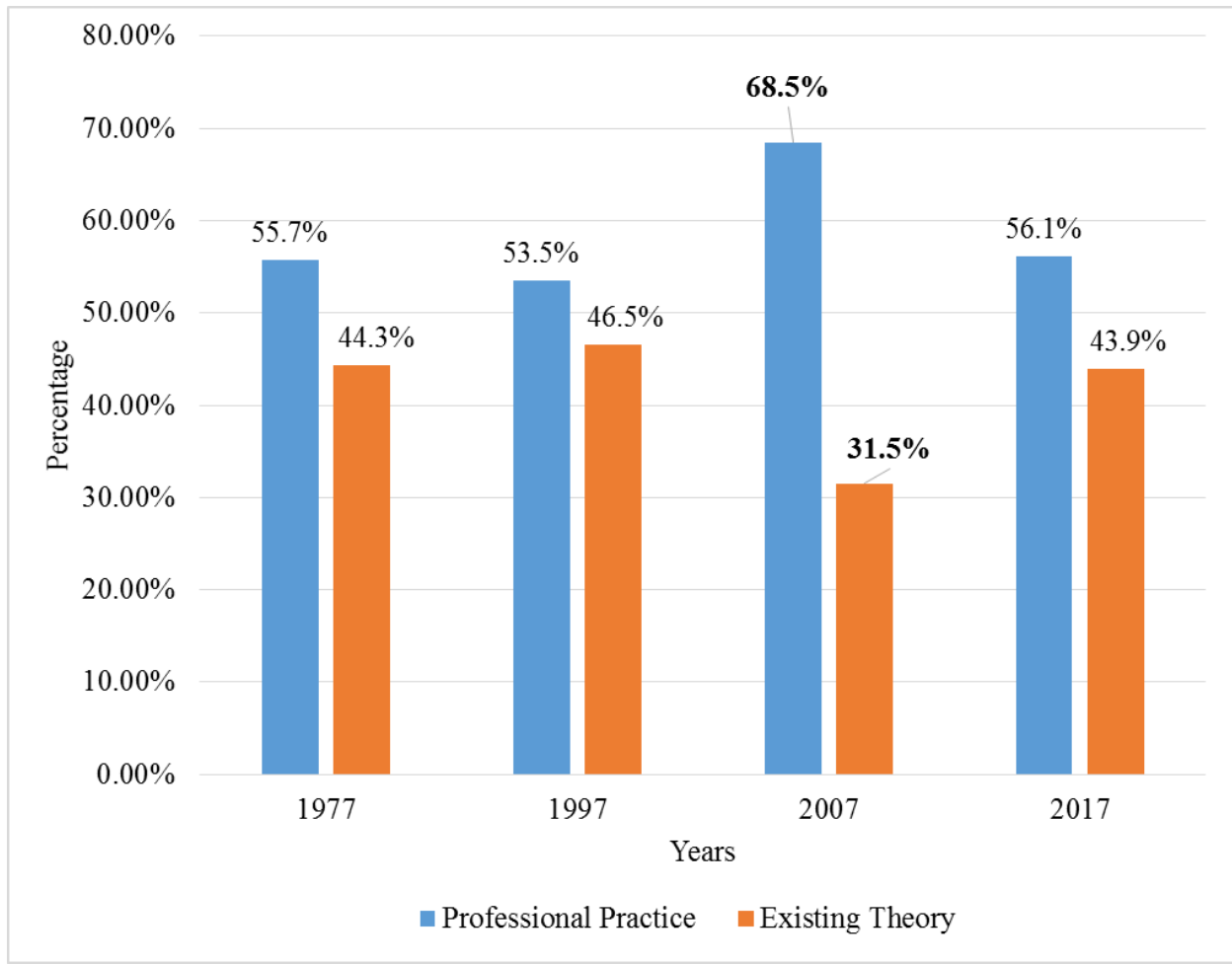
Figure 18. Percentage of the origin of the dissertation problem, 1977, 1997, 2007, and 2017.

Evidence of the applied research trend was illustrated most profoundly in dissertations coded by the origin of the problem based in theory or practice. Through comparison of the Melendez (2002) coding results of dissertations in 1977 and 1997 along with results from 2007 and 2017, the origin of the problem is clearly influenced by a variable in 2007. That variable is likely the supersonic rise of the professional practice doctorate in the early 2000s, followed by scholars' recognition of the influx of applied research dissertations created by PPDs.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked: To what extent are dissertation changes between 2007 and 2017 associated with differentiation between the EdD and the PhD degree in the field

of higher education studies? In response to the second research question, this study identified several specific changes in higher education dissertations between the 2007 and 2017 cohorts especially when segregated by degree type. The presence of an existing theory to guide dissertation research increased for the EdD from 2007 to 2017. The origin of the problem decreased for PhD dissertations over the same period of time. Qualitative research methods increased for EdD dissertations, and quantitative methods increased for PhD dissertations during this time period. In addition, the primary scholarship domain of Discovery increased for both EdD and PhD dissertations. These results support an interpretation that in general, EdD dissertations are trending toward becoming more practice-oriented, and PhD dissertations, after reporting very high applied research characteristics in 2007, are returning to the more traditional model of dissertation research.

Through formal efforts of the CPED to differentiate the EdD from the PhD beginning in 2007, the theory-practice tension in dissertation research in higher education studies has been alleviated by some measures. By segregating actively the overall form and function of both EdD and PhD, and more specifically providing clear guidelines to what constitutes an effective modern-day EdD dissertation, CPED has aided in the differentiation of the two degrees and their respective dissertations. Dissertations that evaluate the effectiveness of an independent variable (a solution) to the dependent variable (a problem) are on the way to becoming the standard of scholarship of EdD dissertations: applied research. Overall, the explicit mission of professional practice as a main focal point for CPED doctorates was observable in the coding results of 2017 EdD dissertations.

Conclusion

In reaction to the professional practice doctorate movement in the early 2000s, scholars have recognized the massive influence and, by some measures, the effectiveness of applied research. Defenders of traditional research based on the tenets of technical rationality and the scholarship of discovery have actively fought back since 2007 to reclaim the merits of the scholarship of discovery while also attempting to find meaningful avenues for applied research. CPED was formed in 2007 in reaction to scholars' explicit aversion to applied research doctoral studies in education. Although CPED's public mission is based on enhancing the status of the EdD and applied research, another way to look at CPED's mission is to suggest that it was also formed to defend the traditional, positivist form of research, that of the PhD. From either lens, the rapid escalation of PPDs has forced departmental and institutional action at a minimum to maintain the relative value of both the EdD and the PhD in higher education studies.

Healthy debate continues on what constitutes valid research. Since the Melendez (2002) study more than 15 years ago, two significant movements in research developed in higher education. First, the burgeoning of the PPDs in higher education and their effect on doctoral research is intriguing. While any explicit influence of PPDs on research is difficult to measure, the mere presence of these new doctorates in a vast array of disciplines has no doubt elevated the presence and status of applied research in higher education. Although new degrees have been created throughout the history of American higher education, no degree conferral movement has been more pronounced than that of the PPD since the beginning of the 21st century. The effect of this trend on dissertation research has become so apparent that consortiums like CPED formed to ensure the sanctity of research in higher education. The net result of the CPED's effectiveness is reflected in this study: a primary mission is to segregate the function of each degree. This

mission has gained clarity through this one lens and perspective: a content analysis of dissertations from each degree type during the first 10 years of the existence of CPED.

Implications for Practice

From an organizational perspective, the results of this study as described suggest the opportunity to self-analyze departmentally. Institutions that confer both the EdD and PhD in higher education studies may be well-served by initiating a departmental identification process whereby the department's mission could be more accurately aligned with the terminal degree(s) it confers. This is no doubt a scary proposition for many departments, as loosely coupled systems are the norm in higher education, and accountability to various factions within the system may be compromised.

The implications, however, for not doing anything may be more pronounced long-term. The scholarship of Application is based on action research, the tenets of which align much more closely to the EdD than the PhD. The motivations of many prospective graduate students of higher education studies, as referenced one way or another throughout this dissertation, are not based on developing theory for the sake of truth-seeking, as righteous as that might be. Institutions conferring the PhD degree to administrative cadres may over time diminish the value of this degree, at least as it relates to the field of higher education studies.

Suggestions for Further Research

In identifying 761 eligible dissertation abstracts, this examination was purposefully performed from a broad perspective. Additional research through a narrower lens may add value in describing and informing on the EdD versus PhD research agendas. For example, this dissertation focused on identifying the mere presence of a theoretical framework. Additional research could be conducted to identify and code specific theory to degree, for example. The

coding of the origin of the problem in this dissertation was dichotomous in nature. Research that extends the investigation into a dissertation's origin of the problem beyond "either/or" (theory/practice) is also warranted. On that same note, research methodology can be deduced to specific research techniques that help to inform the reader as Melendez (2002) exhibited in his study. In general, it is recommended that further research in this area be conducted from a micro-perspective, which is to suggest using this knowledge as reported and compartmentalizing it to discover kernels of truth.

By examining such a large sample of abstracts, the aim of this dissertation was to paint a big picture from one perspective. Patterns were formed through content analysis with the hope that a kernel of truth would be created to spur conjecture and discourse. If another graduate student were to inquire on how best to build upon the research of this work, the response, as this dissertation attempts to convey, should likely be based on the degree the individual seeks to earn.

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APPENDIX A

2007 DISSERTATIONS

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Pardamean, B. (2007). Problem-based learning in a dental school: Measuring change in students' critical thinking skills.

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Parker, C. (2007). An examination of the interrelationship between social demographic factors and multiple intelligences among college students.

Peach, H. G., Jr. (2007). Online education's effect on college professors.

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Pena, E. V. (2007). The responsive academic practitioner: Using inquiry methods for self-change.

Perkins, M. D. (2007). The dynamics of leadership and change at three small colleges.

Peters, K. A. (2007). The academic success of students at an HBCU in Maryland.

Peterson, G. F. (2007). A case study of the perceptions of faculty, administrators, and staff regarding the development of a "culture of evidence" at two Texas community colleges.

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Rampersad, C. M. (2007). Diversity in question: Inclusionary and exclusionary social interactions among international graduate students.

Rausch, D. W. (2007). Demonstrating experiential learning at the graduate level using portfolio development and reflection.

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Redmond, R. W. (2007). Faculty involvement in shared governance and decision making: A case study.

Reed, L. E. (2007). Determining the relationship between motivation and academic outcomes among students in the health professions.

Reeves, R. L. (2007). Good teaching: A qualitative study of the attitudes and teaching methodologies of effective community college history instructors.

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Wyrick, J. T. (2007). Comparisons of adult graduate student degree completion at the University of Denver's University College.

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Yang, H. (2007). The effect of technology acceptance on undergraduate students' usage of WebCT as a collaborative tool.

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Yen, L. L. (2007). Students' perceptions of college technology programs and acquired technology skills.

Yocum, C. A. (2007). Understanding the relationship between the Emotional Competence Inventory-University Edition and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in the admission of college students to an orthopaedics-based honors program.

Youssef, L. S. (2007). An examination of a course-integrated evaluation system in a junior college class toward a learner-centered evaluation of instruction.

Zheng, P. (2007). Sailing into an uncharted domain: An exploration of the changing relations between the research university, industry, and government.

Zimmerman, L. L. (2007). National cultural identity of international students: The influence of a sojourn at an American institution of higher education.

APPENDIX B

2017 DISSERTATIONS

Abiola, U. (2017). The monolith myth and myriad manifestations of melanin: Skin tone bias/colorism and Black Ivy League undergraduates.

Acosta, A. A. (2017). Haciendose un líder: Leadership identity development of Latino men at a predominantly White institution.

Adam, J. A. (2017). Identity development of Somali college students.

Adkins, M. F., II. (2017). An evaluation of the VCCS developmental math redesign from a faculty perspective.

Al Ali, F. (2017). Increasing the number of petroleum engineering students in the United Arab Emirates: An improvement model.

Alfahid, M. F. (2017). Disruptive practice in Saudi EFL student teachers' learning to teach through flipped classroom and rehearsal: A grounded theory study.

Alghamdi, A. A. (2017). Using concept mapping/pattern matching to develop a conceptual framework for successful transition of first year Saudi students into postsecondary education.

Alhamadi, A. A. (2017). The influence of social media on Saudi graduate students: An explanatory case study of six Saudi graduate students studying in American universities.

Allen, J. E. (2017). Transformative learning theory as a basis for identifying barriers to faculty confidence in online instruction.

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Argondizza, T. G., Jr. (2017). Learning among higher education instructional designers in an enterprise social network group.

Arocho, O. (2017). Understanding Latina doctoral student experiences: Negotiating ethnic identity and academic success.

Aryee, M. (2017). College students' persistence and degree completion in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM): The role of non-cognitive attributes of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and interest.

Auerbach, J. (2017). Islam, secularism and cultural conflict: How university students in Turkey negotiate collective identities across places.

Bailey, J. T. (2017). The assumed benefit: Priority registration timing in higher education honors programs.

Baker, A. R. (2017). Epistemic profiles, dissonance negotiation, and postsecondary service-learning outcomes.

Bar, A. (2017). Factors affecting the acculturation of Saudi female doctoral students in a U.S. Mid-Western research university.

Bardwell, N. B. (2017). The perceptions and usage of social media in higher education.

Barrett, B. A. (2017). A narrative exploration of college access, college choice, and multiracial background.

Benson, D. D. (2017). Supporting college students with autism spectrum disorder: College counselors' perspectives.

Berry, S. (2017). Exploring community in an online doctoral program: A digital case study.

Bish, G. T. (2017). Civic values and Christian colleges: A study of student involvement effects.

Bissonette, B. S. (2017). What's happening with internationalization at community colleges? Community college presidents' perceptions of internationalization actions, the desirability and feasibility of internationalization actions, and the importance of internationalization.

Black, W. J. (2017). The relationship between involvement in religious student organizations and the development of socially responsible leadership capacity.

Blanch, C. L. (2017). Searching for the comic book scholar: An autoethnographic study of educators' experiences with comic books.

Blankenship, M. (2017). An examination of a university success coaching program.

Blyman, K. (2017). Influences of probability instruction on undergraduates' understanding of counting processes.

Boileau, N. E. (2017). Art and knowledge: "White woman" producing knowledge.

Bolger, A. T. (2017). Higher education and employability: A case study of debt and justice in the process to becoming a work college.

Bomar, R. (2017). A phenomenological approach to understanding the development of athletic training preceptors.

Bouchard, D. D. (2017). Mutually humble collaboration in college literacy courses: Same papers, dialogical responses.

Brennan, M. (2017). Community college internationalization: The role of presidential leadership.

Bridges, L. L. (2017). Transition to the academy: The influence of working-class culture for first-generation students.

Broge, J. E. (2017). Toward a pastoral identity: A phenomenological study of the perceived impact of pedagogies of formation on the development of pastoral identity in first year seminarians.

Brown, D. M. (2017). "A world to suit themselves": Student-constructed narratives and the hidden history of college life.

Brown, G. B. (2017). Retention rate of online students in the associate's degree program in addiction education counseling: A gap analysis.

Brunson, A. E. (2017). The conceptualization of friendship by Chinese international students at a university in the Southeastern United States.

Bryan, V. R. (2017). A phenomenological study of gay and lesbian college students' spiritual experiences at religious higher education institutions.

Bryant, P. H. (2017). Predictors of student outcome in a baccalaureate nursing program.

Buckner, C. M. (2017). Exploring the academic success of Black male former student-athletes and their experiences with academic support upon re-entry to college.

Burnett, L. L. (2017). Characteristics associated with persistence and retention among first-generation college students majoring in science, technology, engineering, or math.

Burnette, M. N. (2017). College academic engagement and first-year students' intention to persist.

Butts, M. M. (2017). Examining college satisfaction in students with and without disabilities.

Caldarello, B. A. (2017). The effect of supplemental instruction on student academic achievement in a STEM-related general biology course at a public university.

Cao, P. (2017). ESL teachers' knowledge of and experience with written corrective feedback.

Casto, A. C. (2017). Redressing the adjunct staffing model in American higher education.

Chacon Diaz, L. B. (2017). A case study of technology-enhanced active learning in introductory cellular biology.

Chance, S. A. (2017). A case study of undergraduate nontraditional adult learners' perceptions of hybrid classes.

Chen, Y. (2017). The complexities of engagement: Chinese undergraduate students encountering U.S. higher education.

Chirouf, A. (2017). The role of higher education in the competitiveness of a developing nation: A case study of Algeria.

Chissoe, D. H. (2017). First-year international students' perceived impact of the international student services office.

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Cho, A. R. (2017). A panel analysis of institutional finances of medical residencies at non-university-based independent M.D. granting medical schools in the United States.

Christian, M. E. (2017). Athletics director leadership: How forces affect leadership and organizational change agendas.

Circle, K. C. (2017). College choice of veterans: Variables affecting and factors veterans consider in choosing their institution of higher education.

Cleek, S. D. (2017). Perceptions of campus racial climate and sense of belonging at faith-based institutions: Differences by ethnicity, religiosity, and faith fit.

Cline, C. D. (2017). Understanding the lived experiences of expatriate educators in postsecondary education in China.

Clouse, P. J. (2017). The departmental work lives of full-time non-tenure track faculty.

Cochran, S. L. (2017). The role of gender in entrepreneurship education.

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Craddock, D., Jr. (2017). War, civil rights, and higher education: African American Vietnam veterans, the Civil Rights Era, and the G.I. Bill.

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Cross, J. L. (2017). Characteristics of leadership styles and program development among African American males at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Cruz, D. L. (2017). "Systems not built for me": A case study exploring undocumented college student experiences influenced by environmental factors in the Trump era.

Cunha, A. J. (2017). The influence of globalization on 21st-century skills and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses and careers in Ireland in schools such as the Queen's Preparatory Hospital.

Dada, M. A. (2017). African American students' assumptions about blackness or whiteness, explored in the context of college selection: An interpretive analysis.

Darnell, C. (2017). Sharecropping in higher education: Case study of the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University-Florida State University Joint College of Engineering.

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Dobiyanski, V. E. (2017). From orientation to graduation: Diverse student experiences of campus traditions at Florida State University.

Donlan, M. J. (2017). Voiceless in medical school: Students with physical disabilities.

Donohue, D. N. (2017). The effect of formal pedagogical training of mathematics faculty on community college student success and retention.

Dostal Dauer, K. L. (2017). Parental involvement in U.S. study abroad: Helicopters or helpers.

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Dy, H. (2017). Agents of support: Faculty, family, and peer advocates who contribute to thriving in community college students.

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Ford, A. L. (2017). Adjunct life in a full time world: Evaluation of worklife experiences and risk for burnout in social work field faculty.

Foste, Z. (2017). Narrative constructions of whiteness among White undergraduates.

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Frank, D. (2017). Socioecological education: Faculty knowledge, beliefs, values, and practice in post-secondary outdoor education.

Franks, T. T. (2017). Psychological conditions of engagement among community college maintenance employees: A cross-sectional study.

Fu, Y. C. (2017). Does the project of world class university (phase I) spur scientific productivity in STEM fields?: A study of policy impact in Taiwan.

Gallagher, E. J., II. (2017). What are the experiences of students of color involved in the "A Better Chance Program" in relation to college guidance?

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Gerbers, K. (2017). Challenging legitimacy gaps: Using organizational culture to defend the value of outdoor recreation programming in higher education.

Gethers, S. D. (2017). Representation matters: The ways in which African American faculty support African American students in higher education.

Gockley, B. D. (2017). A study of faculty teaching activities at the undergraduate level.

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Goodlowe-Scott, Q. (2017). Examining the relationships between student learning habits and post-secondary educational outcomes: The missing component.

Gorny, L. S. (2017). Examining the impact of financial circumstances and disciplinary field of study on seniors' participation in high-impact educational practices at research-intensive universities.

Goyal, N. (2017). The impact of college residence halls on the student learning experiences of international, undergraduate students from India, during their first year.

Gray-Nicolas, N. (2017). Whose college readiness is it anyway? College readiness, cultural, economic and social capital, and access to pre-college transition programs.

Green, L., Jr. (2017). The factors that motivate first-generation African Americans to pursue higher education.

Greenbaum, T. A. (2017). Technobiographies: Qualitative stories examining the intersection of age, class, and technology identity within the community college Baby Boomer population.

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APPENDIX C

DECISION RULES FOR CODING

1. Degree: This will be determined based on degree listed in dissertation abstracts database.

2. Year: This will be determined by publication year listed in dissertation abstracts database.

3. Institution: This will be determined based on institution listed in dissertation abstract database.

4. Presence of Existing Theory (yes vs. no): This will be determined by examining dissertation abstract for explicit reference, or table of contents and methodology chapter if necessary.

5. Disciplinary Perspective: This will be determined based on dissertation Classification Code in dissertation abstracts database.

6. Origin of Problem (Practice vs. Theory): This will be determined by examining dissertation abstract, or Chapter 1 if necessary.

   a. Problems will be classified as primarily based on practice if they focus on informing, describing, or explaining in the service of professional practice or action. This includes problems that address public policy and increased program effectiveness.

   b. Problems will be classified as primarily based in theory if they focus on informing, describing, or explaining without regard to professional practice or action. This includes problems that attempt to explore conceptual issues that may contribute to theoretical developments.

7. Research Methodology (qualitative vs. quantitative vs. mixed methods): This will be determined by examining dissertation abstract for explicit reference to research technique, or methodology chapter if necessary.

   a. Qualitative methodology will be determined through explicit reference of research technique.

   Qualitative Techniques:
   · Qualitative logic of inquiry
   · Interviews
   · Participant observation
   · Fieldwork
   · Action research
   · Content analysis

b. Quantitative methodology will be determined through explicit reference of research technique.

Quantitative Techniques:
· Survey research
· Experimental design
· Descriptive statistics
· Inferential statistics
· Mathematical modeling
· Simulation
· Forecasting
· Meta-analysis
· Secondary data
· Secondary sources

8. Primary Scholarship Domain (Discovery vs. Integration vs. Application vs. Teaching): This will be determined through identification of practice-based vs. theory-based coding results. For the purposes of this study the scholarships of application and teaching assume the identification of practice-based research while the scholarships of discovery and integration assume the identification of theory-based research.

a. Practice-based research

Scholarship of Application:
· Includes reflection on professional practice
· Includes creation of new paradigms of professional competence
· Includes movement towards engagement or service

Scholarship of Teaching:
· Includes presentation of knowledge
· Includes conditions under which learning occurs
· Includes creation of new ways to connect teacher and learner

b. Theory-based research

Scholarship of Discovery:
· Includes exploration of truth
· Includes creation of knowledge
· Includes theory development

Scholarship of Integration:
· Includes synthesizing of knowledge
· Includes offering new insight on original research
· Includes connecting theory across disciplines

APPENDIX D

CODING FORM

Dissertation Title:

Author:

Institution:

Degree:

Publication Year:

1. Is dissertation based on or guided by existing theory?

   o Yes
   o No

2. The origin of research problem is based on:

   o Theory
   o Practice

3. The research methodology used in this dissertation is:

   o Qualitative
   o Quantitative
   o Mixed Methods

4. Per review of this dissertation, the primary scholarship domain of this research is most closely associated with:

   o Discovery
   o Integration
   o Application
   o Teaching