Educational Doctorate Dissertation Options for P-12 and Higher Education

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1. Traditional Research Dissertation

This option is for Ed.D. students particularly interested in producing knowledge in response to a research problem from within a disciplinary or theoretical perspective. The quantitative research dissertation may seek to test or generate hypotheses or to establish generalizable propositions. The qualitative research dissertation may seek to explain phenomena or events by exploring the multiple meanings experienced by individuals, to explore and advance theory, or advance an argument. Mixed methods research dissertations involve both collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data to provide a better understanding of a research problem through more comprehensive evidence than if either dataset had been used alone.

2. Program Evaluation Dissertation

This option is for Ed.D. students particularly interested in exploring the effectiveness of educational interventions and developing implications for practice. The Program Evaluation Dissertation will identify, clarify, and apply defensible criteria to determine the effectiveness of an educational program, project, process, policy, or product. The program evaluation is intended to improve student learning and achievement or institutional effectiveness. The program evaluation dissertation must address a significant program that involves sizeable budget expenditures and affects a substantial number of people. The program evaluation dissertation will use accepted evaluation models, methods, and practices. When program evaluations are done well, they have the scope and depth of a traditional dissertation.

3. Policy Formation Dissertation

This option is for Ed.D. students interested in impacting education issues through the review, research, and development of educational policy. This option begins with the review of an educational issue ranging from federal involvement in public education to accountability and standards to something as specific as vouchers, charter schools, or safety on campus. Through this review, new or revised policy recommendations and implications are developed by considering internal requirements, external requirements, existing policy, and stakeholder recommendations. Methodologies for data collection and analysis most useful in completing a policy formation dissertation include quantitative methods, educational assessment, legal research, historiography, and document analysis. Policy formation dissertations can include implementation plans.

4. Organizational Problem Analysis Dissertation

This option is for Ed.D. students particularly interested in exploring an issue, problem, or need in a school, district, or postsecondary campus to develop and implement plans for improving organizational effectiveness. The focus is ultimately on improving student learning and achievement and institutional effectiveness. Tasks and skills used in an organizational problem analysis (OPA) dissertation include: understanding and using local data sources; using data to evaluate and document performance; using research to guide decisions; identifying/prioritizing organizational needs; understanding the structure and logic of problem definitions; establishing an improvement vision and performance goals; analyzing causes systemically and objectively; employing multiple perspectives in
causal analyses; applying cost-benefit analyses, organizational values, and ethical criteria to solutions; and using appropriate technologies to support problem analysis, decision making, and communication. OPA dissertations will often require mixed quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

5. **Systems Analysis Dissertation**

This option is for Ed.D students particularly interested in exploring an educational concept based on order and the interdependence among phenomena within the system of education whether at the micro, macro, or supra level. The focus of the dissertation is using the study to break down existing wholes into their constituent parts or elements for the purpose of depicting the relationship of the parts to the whole and to each other. At its base level, the student will include an analysis of the purpose, the content, and the process of the system. Each system will have a purpose, the content is the sum of the operations and functions of the system, and the process is the operations and functions in which the content is engaged to accomplish the purpose of the system. Students will have developed a sound and relevant understanding of system’s theory to inform their research design. Methodologies for data collection and analysis include quantitative methods, historiography, document content analysis, and mixed method(ology) research.
Step 1: Determine the SO WHAT?

Explore the Literature/Field about your topic to determine if it is a Contemporary Educational Issue. Is there a:

- Gap in the Literature?
- Theoretical Perspective?
- Researchable Approach?
- Significance to Ed Leadership?

If NO, reframe your topic.

Step 2: Conduct Literature Review

Use the literature and research to build a case for your study by:

- Creating a Comprehensive Literature Map
- Describing Canons of Thought
- Focusing the topic
- Framing the Research Problem
- Showing how your study will address an educational leadership problem

Step 3: Determine Appropriate Research Design

Use the Literature Review to construct a Research Framework that will address the Research Purpose and help to answer your Research Questions by:

- Determining the Ontology/Epistemology of your inquiry
- Addressing knowledge claims
- Exploring inquiry strategies
- Defining specific methodologies
- Describing methodological requirements
Step 4: Preprospectus Defense

Make necessary revisions to your research design as per committee feedback.

Complete a more structured dissertation document containing Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Step 5: Prospectus Defense

Reflect on revisions/suggestions by committee and prepare for Data Collection

Seek Internal Review Board (IRB) Approval

Step 6: Data Collection and Analysis

Analyze data as per methodology requirements

Organize data and present in Chapter 4. Prepare Chapter 5 by developing findings and conclusions. Assess significance of findings in your study to existing literature/research. Make recommendations for further study.

Step 7: Final Dissertation Defense
Program Evaluation Dissertation

Step 1
Determine the SO WHAT?
Explore the Literature/Field about your topic to determine if it is a Contemporary Educational Issue. Will this have a significant impact on:

- Large scale Educational Programs, Projects, or Processes?
- Assessing methods to address an Programmatic Issue?
- Addressing Educational Best Practices?
- Responding to either internal or external educational problems?

Refine your topic
YES

NO

Step 2
Conduct Literature Review
Use the literature and research on Program Evaluation Theory to build a case for your study by:

- Creating a Comprehensive Literature Map
- Describing Canons of Thought
- Focusing the topic
- Framing the Research Context and Problem
- Showing how your study will address an educational leadership problem

Step 3
Determine Appropriate Research Design
Use the Literature Review to construct a Research Framework based on Program Evaluation Theory that will address the Research Purpose and help to answer your Research Questions by:

- Determining a relevant Program Evaluation Model
- Making specific research design choices
- Defining variables of analysis
- Describing the educational context and problem
Preprospectus Defense

Make necessary revisions to your research design as per committee feedback.

Complete a more structured dissertation document containing Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Prospectus Defense

Reflect on revisions/suggestions by committee and prepare for Data Collection

Seek Internal Review Board (IRB) Approval

Data Collection and Analysis

Analyze data as per methodology requirements and Program Evaluation Model

Determine program requirements
Develop criteria for determining the program solution
Organize findings into a Draft Evaluation Report
Review the draft report and implementation plan with stakeholders
Finalize report into Chapter 4
Prepare Chapter 5 by developing conclusions, assessing significance of your study to literature/research, and linking analysis to program evaluation models. Make recommendations for further study.

Final Dissertation Defense
Policy Formation Dissertation

Step 1
Determine the SO WHAT?

Explore the Literature/Field about your topic to determine if it is a **Contemporary Educational Issue**. Is there a:

- Possible need for New or Revised Policy?
- Impact on Educational Leadership?
- Focus on responding to a Macro Educational Issue?
- Response to both internal and external Educational Contexts?

Reframe your topic

NO

YES

Step 2
Conduct Literature Review

Use the literature and research on Public Policy Theory to build a case for your study by:

- Creating a Comprehensive Literature Map
- Describing Canons of Thought
- Focusing the topic
- Framing the Research Context and Problem
- Showing how your study will address an educational leadership problem

Step 3
Determine Appropriate Research Design

Use the Literature Review to construct a Research Framework based on Public Policy Theory that will address Policy Claims and focus the Research Purpose to help you answer your Research Questions by:

- Determining a relevant Public Policy model
- Making specific research design choices
- Defining variables of analysis
- Describing the educational context and problem
Step 4

Preprospectus Defense

- Make necessary revisions to your research design as per committee feedback.
- Complete a more structured dissertation document containing Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Step 5

Prospectus Defense

- Reflect on revisions/suggestions by committee and prepare for Data Collection
- Seek Internal Review Board (IRB) Approval

Step 6

Data Collection and Analysis

- Analyze data as per methodology requirements and Public Policy Theory
- Define Policy requirements
- Develop criteria for determining the Policy formation
- Organize findings into a Draft Policy Report
- Review the Draft Policy Report with relevant stakeholders
- Finalize Policy Report into Chapter 4
- Prepare Chapter 5 by developing conclusions, assessing significance of your study to existing literature/research, and linking analysis to public policy formation/models. Make recommendations for further study.

Step 7

Final Dissertation Defense
Organizational Problem Dissertation

Step 1

Determine the SO WHAT?

Explore the Literature/Field about your topic to determine if it is a Contemporary Educational Issue. Will this have a significant impact on:

- Educational Programs, Projects, Processes or Student Learning?
- Assessing methods to address an Organizational Problem?
- Addressing Educational Best Practices to solve the problem?
- Responding to either internal or external educational problems?

Reframe your topic

YES

Step 2

Conduct Literature Review

Use the literature and research on Educational Organization and/or Educational Leadership Theory to build a case for your study by:

- Creating a Comprehensive Literature Map
- Describing Canons of Thought
- Focusing the topic
- Framing the Research Context and Problem
- Showing how your study will address an Organizational problem

NO

Step 3

Determine Appropriate Research Design

Use the Literature Review to construct a Research Framework based on Educational Organization and/or Educational Leadership Theory that will address the Research Purpose and help to answer your Research Questions by:

- Determining a relevant Educational Analysis approach
- Making specific research design choices
- Defining variables of analysis
- Describing the educational context and problem
Step 4

Preprospectus Defense

Make necessary revisions to your research design as per committee feedback.

Complete a more structured dissertation document containing Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Step 5

Prospectus Defense

Reflect on revisions/suggestions by committee and prepare for Data Collection.

Seek Internal Review Board (IRB) Approval.

Step 6

Data Collection and Analysis

Analyze data as per methodology requirements and Educational Organization Analysis Approach.

Determine program requirements
Develop criteria for determining the Organizational/Leadership solution
Organize findings into a Draft Solution Report
Review the Draft Solution Report and implementation plan with stakeholders
Finalize report into Chapter 4
Prepare Chapter 5 by developing conclusions, assessing significance of your study to existing literature/research, and linking solution to organizational analysis models. Make recommendations for further study.

Step 7

Final Dissertation Defense
**Systems Analysis Dissertation**

**Step 1**
Determine the SO WHAT?

Explore the Literature/Field about your topic to determine if it is a **Contemporary Educational Issue**. Is there a:

- Identified systems issue, problem, or need?
- Potential method for addressing the systems need?
- Delineation among the parts to the whole?
- Problem of significance worthy of study?
- Educational Leadership component to the topic?

**NO**
Reframe your topic

**YES**

**Step 2**
Conduct Literature Review

Use the literature and research on Systems Theory to build a case for your study by:

- Creating a Comprehensive Literature Map
- Describing Canons of Thought
- Focusing the topic
- Framing the Research Context and Problem
- Showing how your study will address an educational leadership problem

**Step 3**
Determine Appropriate Research Design

Use the Literature Review to construct a Research Framework based on Systems Theory that will address the Research Purpose and help you to answer your Research Questions by:

- Determining a relevant Systems Theory Approach
- Making specific research design choices
- Defining variables of analysis
- Describing the educational context and problem
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