Proceedings of Informing Science & IT Education Conference (InSITE) 2015

Cite as: Card, K., Chambers, C. R., & Freeman, S., Jr. (2015). Core curricula in higher education doctoral programs: Becoming an academic discipline. *Proceedings of Informing Science & IT Education Conference (InSITE) 2015,* 127-143. Retrieved from http://Proceedings.InformingScience.org/InSITE2015/InSITE15p127-143Card1927.pdf

Core Curricula in Higher Education Doctoral Programs: Becoming an Academic Discipline

Karen Card
University of South Dakota, Varmillion, SD, USA
Karen.card@usd.edu

Crystal Renée Chambers
East Carolina University, Greenville, NC, USA
Chambersc@ecu.edu

Sydney Freeman, Jr.
University of Idaho
Sydney.freeman.jr@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the status of the core curriculum in higher education doctoral programs from the perspective of program directors. We used online survey analytic techniques to query program directors about their EdD and PhD programs in higher education, credit hours, and curricular content. Our study confirms previous work finding that there is common agreement in the subject matter areas of organization, leadership, administration, and history. What our work adds is that there is a growing consensus among higher education doctoral programs about the position of higher education law and finance in the curricular core. In addition, we find there is a growing interest in public policy and community colleges over time, with a majority of EdD programs including instruction in these areas. Nevertheless, majoritarian agreement does not meet at a level wherein consensus can be inferred, especially within PhD programs where requirements are more varied across programs. In addition, while there is an increasing trend in the inclusion of multiculturalism in higher education doctoral programming, multiculturalism is not currently part of higher education's core. We conclude with research and practice implications for doctoral programs in higher education as a field of study.

Keywords: Academic Discipline, Doctoral Education, Higher Education as a Field of Study.

Introduction

A core curriculum representing the core knowledge and values of a field is necessary to solidify the status as an academic discipline (Bray, 2007; Goodchild, 1991). However, within the field of higher education, program directors and faculty members identified a lack of agreement on a common knowledge base as an ongoing challenge for higher education graduate programs (Wright & Miller, 2007). According to Wright (2007), although higher education has made great progress as a specialized field, there is still

Editor: Eli Cohen

a "limited amount of research-based teaching materials in higher education" (p. 23) and "no commonly accepted knowledge base" (p. 24). The purpose of the present study is to investigate the status of the core curriculum in higher education doctoral programs from the perspective of program directors. We used online survey analytic techniques to query program directors about their degree programs (EdD v. PhD), credit hours, and curricular content. For the purpose of this study, core curriculum is defined as a subject matter or research subjects that all doctoral students are required to learn in a higher education doctoral program. We further inquired if the subject matter or research methods was embedded in the core curriculum, taught as a course, or not included in the core curriculum.

We compared our findings with previous studies by Crosson and Nelson (1986) and Bray (2007). Our study confirms previous work finding that there is common agreement in the subject matter areas of organizations, leadership, administration, and history. What our work adds is that there is a growing consensus among higher education doctoral programs about the position of higher education law and finance in the curricular core. In addition, we find there is a growing interest in public policy and community colleges over time, with a majority of EdD programs including instruction in these areas. Nevertheless, convergence in subject matter curricular content does not meet at a level wherein consensus can be inferred, especially within PhD programs. Requirements in higher education PhD programs are varied and raise questions regarding the purpose and aims of those programs. In addition, while there is an increasing trend in the inclusion of multiculturalism in higher education doctoral programming, multiculturalism is not perceived as part of higher education's core. We conclude with research and practice implications for doctoral programs in higher education as a field of study.

Review of Literature

Prior Studies of Higher Education Doctoral Program Curriculum

In 1893, G. Stanley Hall offered the first course in what would become the field of study known as higher or tertiary education. That course, college and university problems in the United States and Europe, focused on the evolving role of colleges and universities in a modernizing world (Goodchild, 1996). Hofsteader (1960) named this era from the 1890s into World War I as the age of reform, and this age did not escape institutions of higher learning. By the 1920s, Hall and colleagues added courses, worked with master's and doctoral students, and created the first graduate program in higher education as a field of study. Today, that field spans 253 master's and 145 PhD, programs worldwide in addition to 75 EdD programs across the United States and United Kingdom, Canada, China, Japan, Australia and Egypt. Moreover, across 48 nations there are 217 centers and/ or institutions devoted to the study of higher and tertiary education (Rumbley, Altbach, Stanfeild, Shimmi, deGayardon, & Chan, 2014).

Much of the above growth is attributable to the expansion of higher and tertiary education globally, the need to develop leadership, as well as a need to understand trends and respond to a multiplicity of stakeholders in both public and private sectors. Works, such as that of Freeman (2012), Freeman and Kochan (2014), and Haynes (1991) distill competencies needed for higher education leadership from both the perspectives of senior executives in higher education in addition to the vantage of academic scholars. The present work adds to the conversation by presenting surveys of higher education doctoral program curriculum over time.

General Course of Study

The first comprehensive study of higher education programs was conduct by Dressel and Mayhew in 1974. They identified academic administration, student personnel, and community col-

lege administration as the most common specializations in early higher education programs in the 1960s They found a range of requirements that were general in nature and not consistent across programs requirements in education, higher education, research methodology, specialty in higher education, and practicum or internship, a minor within education, a minor or cognate outside of education, foreign language, and dissertation. Most programs required three to six courses in the higher education core which generally included courses in foundations of higher education, student personnel work, community colleges, and administration.

Looking specifically at doctoral level, Dill and Morrison (1985) found in their study of EdD and PhD programs that research core courses in higher education programs were different only in the number of credits that were required but not in content of the research core courses. They suggested there should be more distinction between what is required in the research core of EdD and PhD program. In that regard, PhD programs "should require students to have master's level training in a discipline, including its research courses, and to undergo a research internship in which a research paper based on data collected during the internship is written" (pp. 177-178). EdD programs, in turn, should have research core curriculum that prepares administrators to with research literacy skills and to use data to make better decisions as practitioners. This thought is echoed in Townsend (1990), advancing a view of higher education as not a discipline but as a field that has consequences for the program curriculum. "The primary one is acknowledgement that study in this field is not confined to future scholars and researchers but should also embrace current and would-be administrators who desire training to become more effective practitioners" (p 12). Distinctions between the EdD and PhD in higher education doctoral programs are furthered through efforts such as the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED, 2015).

Regarding curricular content, Crosson and Nelson (1986) conducted a descriptive study of 72 higher education programs. Most frequently offered core courses in these programs were administration/management, general higher education, the history of higher education, and students which is reflective of the programs' specializations. They concluded that higher education programs appear to be more homogeneous than heterogeneous. In consideration of studies outside of the United States, namely Uzoigwe (1982) and Wang (2002), with some exceptions, one could conjecture that the homogeneity Crosson and Nelson (1986) find in the United States extends more broadly. Uzoigwe in his (1982) dissertation entitled, "A Model for Establishing a Higher Education Administration Degree Program at a Nigerian University", identified the following topics as areas that should constitute the core courses offered at the doctoral and masters level in Nigerian Universities: 1) History and Philosophy of Higher Education (with particular reference to the Nigerian Higher Education System), 2) The Organization and General Administration of Colleges and Universities, 3) Student Personnel Administration, 4) Academic Administration, 5) The Administration of Business and Financial Affairs, 6) General Education, and 7) Institutional Research. The study went on to identify the following as appropriate elective course offerings: 1) Comparative Higher Education, 2) Educational Statistics, 3) Unionism in College and Universities, 4) Higher Education and the Law, 5) Management Information Systems, 6) Continuing Education, 7) Teaching in Colleges and Universities, and 8) Research Seminars. This study was important as it was the first time that a research study had been conducted regarding higher education program curriculum outside of the United States. In (2002) Wang identified that Chinese higher education programs shared core knowledge offerings. Of particular interest were five courses that each of the four programs in the country provided which included: 1) History of Chinese Higher Education, 2) Higher Education Administration, 3) Studies and Foundations of Higher Education, 4) Comparative Education, and 5) Research Methodology in Higher Education.

Bray (2007) made an effort to gain a sense of the core curricula across higher education programs by surveying the administrators of 217 higher education programs affiliated with the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), but he received only a dearth of survey responses.

Instead, he reviewed the programs' websites and was able to find course information for 169 of the 217 programs. Bray (2007) and Harris (2007) both identified limitations in using the web-based approach to studying higher education programs. They both noted that program information collected from websites is not always current nor does it provide thorough explanations of the content or sequencing of courses offered in higher education programs. Nevertheless, he found commonly offered courses that could be considered to represent the core knowledge of the higher education field, especially in these areas: history of higher education, organization and administration, student development/affairs, multiculturalism in higher education, foundations, and philosophy. Goodchild and Hyle (2014) findings concur that there seems trending towards a core emphasis of diversity and inclusion within the field.

Most recently Valerin (2011) conducted a comparative analysis of 105 higher education doctoral programs in the United States, disaggregating the course offerings og PhD and EdD programs. The study identified that 46 of the programs offered a doctor of education degree and 59 offered the doctor of philosophy degree. The doctor of education degree generally included the following as course offerings: 1) finance of higher education, 2) legal studies, 3) policy studies in higher education, 4) teaching and learning in higher education, 5) research/educational statistics, 6) advanced quantitative research methods, and 7) advanced qualitative research methods. Although these courses were most frequently identified, other courses such as 1) general administration of higher education, 2) history of higher education, 3) philosophy/theory of higher education, and 4) a dissertation seminar.

The doctor of education typically offered these courses according to Valerin's (2011) study: 1) general administration of higher education, 2) legal studies, 3) history of higher education, 4) teaching/learning in higher education, 5) student affairs administration, 6) college student research, 7) research/educational statistics, 8) advanced quantitative research methods and 8) advanced qualitative research methods. Valerin (2011) did not find any statistically significant difference between the numbers of required courses by the doctor of education as compared to the doctor of philosophy. The same results were true regarding the amount of required statistical courses. There were no statically significant differences between the two different degree offerings.

In analyzing the literature on higher education doctoral program core curricula, there seem to be some standardized content over time. See Table 1. Courses in organization, leadership, and administration are the most commonly taught as part of the core and that has remained stable over time. History of higher education (with or without philosophy) historically is a staple; however, analysis by Vallerin (2011) could be indicative of changes in the field or are reflective of sampling. There was a growing emphasis on student affairs, student development, and college student research over time. Areas like law and finance which were contained in some core curricula, but also offered as electives were more decisively found as part of the core in Vallerin (2011).

Table 1. Prior Studies of Higher Education Doctoral Program Core Curricular Content

Uzoigwe (1982)	Crosson & Nelson (1986)	Wang (2002)	Bray (2007)	Vallerin (2011)*
History & Philosophy of Higher Education (Nigerian emphasis)	History	History of Higher Education (Chinese)	History	
Organization and General Administration	Organization, Leadership, and Administration	Higher Education Administration	Organization, Leadership, and Administration	General Administration of Higher Education (EdD)

Uzoigwe (1982)	Crosson & Nelson (1986)	Wang (2002)	Bray (2007)	Vallerin (2011)*
Student Personnel Administration	Student Affairs		Student Development	Student Affairs Administration (EdD)/ College Student Research (EdD)
Academic Administration				
Administration of Business and Financial Affairs				Finance of Higher Education (PhD)
General Education				
Institutional Research				
	Philosophy	Studies and Foundations of Higher Education		
		Comparative Education		
		Research Methodology in Higher Education		Research/Educational Statistics (EdD & PhD), Advanced Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods (PhD)
	Faculty			
	Curriculum			Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (EdD, PhD)
			Public Policy	Policy Studies (PhD)
			Community College	
				Legal Studies (EdD, PhD)

* Note – courses disaggregated by inclusion in EdD and/ or PhD programs

Theoretical/Conceptual Frameworks

To understand the present state of core curriculum in higher education, we draw on Kuhn's (1962) theoretical three-phased process in the development of new sciences. Kuhn's theoretical framework guides this study of the status of higher education core curriculum and assist in the understanding of the field's development into a potential academic discipline. In The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Thomas Kuhn (1962) described a three-phased process in the development of new sciences and new fields of study. The first phase he calls pre-paradigm, which is marked by the existence of nascent theories that are often incomplete and contradict each other. The second phase is the transition period wherein consensus around core theories and knowledge is developed. The third phase is dubbed, "revolutionary science." This phase erupts amid conflict between widely accepted theory and new theories and research. This process is cyclical, and the revolutionary science phase can give way to a new pre-paradigm period. Currently, higher education is arriving towards that second phase but has not yet reached what Kuhn (1962) calls paradigmatic status. Consensus exists among experts on what people graduating from higher education should be able to do (Crosson & Nelson, 1986; Miller & Nelson, 1993). However, an understanding of what higher education graduates should know is not quite firm.

Paradigmatic status requires: (a) a common set of research problems; (b) a common knowledge base; and (c) a set of commonly accepted research methods. This work inquiries into the common knowledge base and research methods. For the explanation and application of Kuhn's (1962) work in the field of higher education see Biglan (1973a, 1973b), Braxton (1989), Braxton and Hargens (1996), Favero (2006), and Smart and Elton (1982).

Research Method

To answer our overarching research question of what is the commonly taught core curriculum in higher education doctoral programs from the perspective of program directors we used a researcher-designed survey was developed and managed electronically through Survey Monkey®, an online survey firm that specializes in survey development and analysis. The survey is divided in two parts. Part 1 focuses on the subject matter core curriculum and Part 2 focuses on the research core curriculum. The questions were specific to EdD or PhD programs. The survey items were developed through the previous curriculum studies, a review of current program websites, and a critique of the survey items by four program directors. Program directors were asked the following questions:

1. What subject matter were all doctoral students required to learn in the higher education program?
2. What research subjects were all doctoral students required to learn in the higher education?
3. How was the subject matter or research methods taught in core curriculum?
   a. Embedded in existing core courses
   b. Taught as a course
   c. Not included in the core curriculum

As the survey was designed, program directors could click boxes to identify courses and how subjects were taught, whether embedded, as a course focal point, or not included. As in prior studies, this study was exploratory and descriptive in nature with the purpose to describe what subject matter or research topics are included in the core curriculum of higher education doctoral programs. Given the exploratory nature of this study, hypothesis testing is inappropriate. Nevertheless, comparison of our work with the previous research of other scholars gives a sense of the development of core knowledge in the field over time. In addition, this work would not be appropriately classified as qualitative in nature as the inquiry is positivistic rather than interpretivist in design.

Directors of the 132 doctoral programs identified from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) directory were sent an email through Survey Monkey®, asking them to participate in this study. Fifteen program directors had previously indicated that they did not want to participate in Survey Monkey® surveys so surveys were sent to the remaining 117 program directors. Two program directors responded that their program no longer existed. Of the 115 program directors who had programs and were willing to complete the survey, 44 responded (38.2%). Within the social sciences, a 30% response rate is sufficient for survey validity. Nineteen programs (43.2%) participating offer both an EdD and PhD. Another 16 programs offer only the EdD (36.4%) and nine programs offer only the PhD (20.5%). See Table 2.

Table 2. Type of Doctoral Programs Offered

Program Types	N	%
Both Ph.D. and Ed.D	19	43.2
ED.D.	16	36.4
Ph.D.	9	20.5

In reporting the results of this study, the findings are compared to previous studies by Crosson and Nelson (1986) and Bray (2007) to identify any trends and changes in the core curriculum of higher education over time. These studies were selected as there is significant overlap among programs sampled, which provides some consistency for descriptive trends analyses. We identify as part of the core curriculum those courses in which 66% or more of respondent programs require a given subject matter. A two-thirds majority seems a fitting benchmark given the level of variation among programs. In addition, in no prior study has that benchmark been met, which is part of the justification of this study, the inability to identify a common knowledge core in higher education doctoral programs (Wight & Miller, 2007). We identify as emergent core, those courses where between 50% and 65% of programs require a given subject matter and there is an upward trend in the requirement of the given course from Crosson and Nelson (1986) and Bray (2007) to the present study. Courses where there is between 50% and 65% of programs require a given subject matter, but the trending across studies is downward we identify as descendant.

Results

Subject Matter Core Curriculum

History of higher education and a course in organization, leadership and administration are two subject matters consistently taught as courses in the core curriculum of higher education programs in this study and in previous studies (Crosson & Nelson, 1986; Bray 2007; see also Uzoigwe, 1982; Vallerin, 2011; Wang, 2002). See Table 3. History of higher education is a commonly taught core course in both EdD (n=27, 77%) and PhD (n=19, 68%) programs. However, it is the only course meeting at a core curriculum status as a standalone course across both EdD and PhD programs. Among EdD programs, three additional courses can be considered as part of the knowledge core and are taught as separate courses. They are organization, leadership, and administration (n=24, 69%), legal aspects or law (n=28, 80%), and higher education finance (n=26, 74%). Legal aspects or law (n=18, 64%) and higher education finance (n=17, 60%) are part of an emergent core in PhD programs. For both EdD and PhD programs, the prominence higher education of finance has grown by a factor of approximately 20% from Crosson and Nelson (1986) to Bray (2007) and an additional 30% from Bray (2007) to the present study. A progression in law/ legal aspects seems similar; however, as data were not collected in Bray (2007) on this course, a definitive trend seems unclear.

With respect to organization, leadership, and administration in PhD programs, there seems to be a descendent trend. Whereas there was a 20% increase in identified required core coursework from Crosson and Nelson (1986) to Bray (2007), reaching the 66% mark for the PhD in Bray, in the present study only 54% of PhD programs (n=15) require the course. Another 29% of PhD programs (n=8) embed this material in other courses. With the exception of 1 PhD program, all higher education doctoral programs require attention to this subject matter. As such this subject matter can be considered as core across higher education doctoral programs, although the mode of delivery, standalone course or embedded, varies. See Table 4.

Table 3. Trends in Subject Matter Core Curriculum in Higher Education

	Crosson & Nelson (1986)	**Bray(2007)**		**Card, Chambers, & Freeman (2015)**	
	Doctoral (N=36)	EdD (N=58)	PhD (N=73)	EdD (N=35)	PhD (N=28)
Organization, Leadership, and Administration	16 44%	37 64%	48 66%	24 69%	15 54%
Governance	a	a	a	16 46%	11 39%
History	12 33%	29 50%	40 55%	27 77%	19 68%
Philosophy	15 42%	16 28%	14 19%	6 17%	6 21%
Legal Aspects or Law	7 19%	a	a	28 80%	18 64%
Finance	9 25%	26 45%	28 38%	26 74%	17 60%
Student Affairs	11 31%	18 31%	36 49%	15 43%	9 32%
Student Development	a	27 47%	44 60%	17 49%	a
Faculty	16 44%	2 3%	5 7%	14 40%	7 25%
Education Foundations	a	15 26%	25 34%	9 26%	8 29%
Public Policy	a	15 26%	22 30%	20 57%	10 36%
Curriculum	10 28%	22 38%	23 32%	15 43%	10 36%
College Teaching	8 22%	9 16%	14 19%	14 40%	7 25%
Community College	7 19%	13 22%	16 22%	21 60%	7 25%
Multiculturalism	a	10 17%	17 23%	9 24%	8 29%

a=data not collected

Table 4. Mode of Delivery, Subject Matter Core Curriculum in Higher Education

	EdD Embedded	PhD Embedded	EdD Course	PhD Course	EdD Not Included	PhD Not Included
Organization, Leadership, and Administration	17 49%	8 29%	24 69%	15 54%	0 0%	1 4%
Governance	22 63%	12 43%	16 46%	11 39%	2 6%	1 4%
History of Higher Education	11 31%	3 11%	27 77%	19 68%	2 6%	2 7%
Philosophy	25 71%	13 46%	6 17%	6 21%	8 23%	5 18%
Legal Aspects or Law	5 14%	2 7%	28 80%	18 64%	7 20%	4 14%
Finance	4 11%	2 7%	26 74%	17 60%	7 20%	3 11%
Student Affairs	12 34%	5 18%	15 43%	9 32%	12 34%	8 29%
Student Development	14 40%	a	17 49%	a	9 26%	a
Faculty	16 46%	11 39%	14 40%	7 25%	9 26%	5 18%
Focus						
Education Foundations	15 43%	11 48%	9 26%	8 29%	13 37%	4 14%
Public Policy	15 43%	5 23%	20 57%	10 36%	4 11%	7 25%
Curriculum	13 37%	6 26%	15 40%	10 36%	9 26%	7 25%
College Teaching	13 37%	4 18%	14 40%	10 36%	12 34%	7 25%
Community College	8 23%	4 18%	21 60%	11 39%	10 29%	7 25%
Multiculturalism	23 66%	10 44%	9 26%	8 29%	7 20%	5 18%

Note – percentages do not total 100%
a=data not collected due to technical glitch in survey software

Within EdD programs, there is an emergent core growing in the areas of public policy and the community college. Public policy is required more frequently as a core course in this study than in prior studies. In EdD programs, 57% required a course in public policy (n=20) and 43% of programs report embedding public policy content in other courses (n=15). Crosson and Nelson (1986) did not collect data on this course, but in Bray (2007) only 26% of EdD programs required public policy as part of their core. Interestingly, in Bray (2007) more PhD than EdD programs required public policy. In the present study, only 36% of PhD programs (n=10) required the

coursework. With respect to the community college, 60% of EdD programs require coursework as part of the core (n=21). Twenty-three percent embed this subject matter. In both Crosson and Nelson (1986) and Bray (2007), about 20% of programs included this coursework, an indicator of substantial growth, at least within EdD programs. In PhD programs, the percentage remains stable at 25% (n=7). The same percentage of PhD programs does not include community college content at all.

Almost half of all undergraduate students in the United States are educated in community colleges (AACC, 2015a) and this added emphasis on the community college may reflect both those trends as well as federal efforts highlighting the role of community colleges (AACC, 2015b). Globally, post-secondary education outside of traditional colleges and universities are a growing option for many people to build the skills necessary for knowledge and service based economies. Introducing doctoral candidates to this context as well as program specializations devoted to community college and technical education is important for continued leadership in these organizations.

A core course in student affairs is required in less than half of the programs in this study. Among EdD programs 15 (43%) required this coursework. Among PhD programs the percentage was lower at 32% (n=9). This subject matter is not included in the core curriculum either as a course or embedded by an almost equal number of programs (EdD n=12 [34%]; PhD n= 8[29%]). See Table 4. These findings are similar to Bray (2007) with Crosson and Nelson (1986) finding even fewer programs with this coursework as part of their core. Thus, while there may have been some growth in these courses over time, that growth in this snapshot looks stunted. It may be the case that coursework in student affairs including courses in student development theory, student affairs, and student services is being offered in more specialized programs aimed at student affairs personnel.

We found governance, philosophy, and multiculturalism as more embedded in other core courses than taught as a separate core course. Governance is embedded in the core curriculum of EdD programs at a rate indicative of an emergent trend: 63% (n=22). Forty-three percent of EdD programs (n=12) embed governance content and only 2 respondent EdD programs did not offer governance content as part of their core. Data was not collected on this subject matter in neither Crosson and Nelson (1986) nor Bray (2007), so we cannot delineate any trend. In PhD programs, governance content is offered almost equally between embedded (43%, n=12) and separate required core courses (39%, n=11).

Philosophy is embedded in 25 (71%) of the EdD program core curriculum, with 13 (46%) PhD programs embedding it in their PhD program. This difference is curious as a doctorate of philosophy would seem to lend itself towards greater immersion in philosophical content. Only 6 EdD and 6 PhD programs offer philosophy as a core course, 17% and 21% of respondent programs respectively. These findings are similar to those of Crosson and Nelson (1986) and Bray (2007). It is also interesting to note that education foundations is taught in one-third or fewer programs. In our study, 9 EdD programs (26%) and 8 PhD programs (29%) offered education foundations as part of their core. Data was not collected on this course in Crosson and Nelson (1986); however, Bray's (2007) findings were similar with respect to the EdD and slightly higher in the PhD. Future work could identify whether this is indeed a downward trend.

Multiculturalism is embedded in the core curriculum of 23 EdD programs (66%) and meets at the level of an emergent trend. Bray (2007) documented 17% of programs with multiculturalism course; however, due to the web based design of his study, he could not ascertain whether this subject matter was taught embedded in other courses. In PhD programs, only 10 (44%) programs embed multicultural content and even fewer offer it as a standalone course (n=8, 29%). It tends not to be taught as a separate course in the core curriculum. The inclusion of multiculturalism

coursework as identified in our study and Brays may indicate a need for curricular content devoted towards building the multicultural competence of higher education doctoral students. That said, it may be that programs are struggling with where to add this content as part of the curricular core and embedding may be a viable solution. In the alternative, it may be the case that this work is being offered at the master's level and students at the doctoral level have a baseline of familiarity. That said, multicultural competence is a life long journey, not a destination (Pope & Reynolds, 2004). Future work should assess the efficacy of embedded multicultural content on multicultural competence building among higher education doctoral students.

In terms of the number of subject matter core credit hours required, EdD programs tend to be more prescriptive with 42.1% (n=16) programs requiring 22 hours or more of subject matter core curricula. On average EdD programs require 16-18 hours. Variation among PhD programs is wider and the distribution is bimodal with 28% of programs (n=7) requiring 22 or more hours and another 28% requiring 13 to 15 hours of core. The 13 to 15 hour range is the median. See Table 5. Overall, there is no statistically significant difference in the number of subject matter core requirements between EdD and PhD programs ($t=1.12$, $p> 0.05$).

Table 5. Number of Credits Required, Subject Matter and Research Core Curriculum

Research Core					Subject Core				
	EdD		PhD			EdD		PhD	
# of Credits	N	%	N	%	# of Credits	N	%	N	%
<6	2	7	0	0	**≤9**	1	2.6	1	4.0
6	2	7	1	4	**10-12**	4	10.5	4	16.0
9	6	21	0	0	**13-15**	10	26.3	7	28
12	12	39	6	26	**16-18**	5	13.2	3	12.0
15 +	7	25	16	70	**19-21**	2	5.3	3	12.0
					22+	16	42.1	7	28.0

Research Core Curriculum

Introductory coursework in qualitative research methods meets at the level of core curricula in EdD programs (n=24, 69%) and emergent core in PhD programs (n=18, 64%). This course is the one most often taught as part of the research core across EdD and PhD programs. Introductory quantitative research methods meets at the emergent trend level in EdD programs with 57% of programs (n=20) offering this course as part of their research core. PhD programs were less likely to offer introductory quantitative research coursework (n=7, 25%). See Table 6.

Advanced quantitative experimental methods and correlational methods were taught most often as core research courses in PhD rather than EdD programs. Experimental design is taught in 61% (n=17) of PhD programs reporting and 41% (n=17) of EdD programs. Correlational methods are taught in 15 (54%) PhD programs and 14 (40%) EdD programs. In this vein, advanced quantitative research coursework in experimental and correlational analysis meets at the emergent core level in PhD, but not EdD programs. Future work should ascertain student access to higher levels of statistical analyses such as structural equation modeling and hierarchical linear analysis, especially in PhD programs. In addition, more information about advanced qualitative research training should be gathered.

Table 6: Research Core Curriculum in Higher Education Doctoral Programs

	EdD Embedded	PhD Embedded	EdD Course	PhD Course	EdD Not Included	PhD Not Included
Quantitative Methods						
Introductory Methods	9 26%	6 21%	20 57%	7 25%	0 0%	0 0%
Experimental Analysis	5 14%	5 18%	17 49%	17 61%	6 17%	1 4%
Correlational Analysis	6 17%	7 25%	14 40%	15 54%	8 23%	2 7%
Qualitative Methods						
Introductory Methods	5 14%	5 18%	24 69%	18 64%	0 0%	0 0%
Other						
Measurement	8 23%	5 18%	13 37%	13 46%	8 23%	4 14%
Dissertation Seminar	7 20%	7 25%	19 54%	15 54%	3 9%	1 4%
Evaluation/ Assessment	7 20%	6 21%	18 51%	13 46%	4 11%	3 11%
Research Design	15 43%	9 32%	12 34%	13 46%	2 6%	1 4%

Note – percentages do not total 100%

Other research courses taught as part of the core were dissertation seminars emphasizing the development of dissertation problems and proposals, courses in evaluation and assessment, as well as courses in measurement, instrument construction and design were also reported. Dissertation seminars were taught in 54% of programs (n= 19, EdD; n=15, PhD). Courses in evaluation and assessment were taught in 18 (51%) EdD programs and 13 (46%) PhD programs. Given the applied practitioner focus of EdD programs, it makes sense that they would be more likely to require evaluation and assessment as part of their core. However, the difference between EdD and PhD programs perhaps should be greater to reflect program differentiation. Measurement topics (reliability, validity, and item analysis) were more often taught as a core in Ph.D. programs (n=13 [46%]), but that difference is small. Thirteen EdD programs (37%) reported courses in measurement topics. Research design was more often embedded in other research core courses in EdD

programs (n=15 [43%]), but taught as its own course in PhD programs (n=13 [46%]). But this difference also is slight. See Table 6.

More significant than the differentiations among the research courses and content taught in EdD and PhD programs, there is a significant differentiation in the number of research courses taught. See Table 5. The bulk of EdD programs (39%) require 12 credit hours in the research core, whereas the gross majority (70%) of PhD programs require 15 credit hours or more. In addition there was wider variance among EdD programs (M=3.59, S.D.=1.12) than PhD programs (M=4.61, S.D. = 0.72) in the number of hours required. This difference is statistically significant ($t = -3.868$, $p \leq 0.0001$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the status of the core curriculum in higher education doctoral programs from the perspective of program directors in an effort to identify if there was a common core curriculum used across programs. Unfortunately the response rate to the online survey in this study was not as high as was expected. However, many of the findings for this study are consistent with previous studies that identified common courses that could be determined as core curriculum for higher education programs.

Courses in the history of higher education and organization, leadership, and administration are two courses that have been consistently identified as core courses in higher education programs (Bray 2007; Crosson & Nelson, 1986; Uzoigwe, 1982; Vallerin, 2011; Wang, 2002). Of especial interest here is the relative difference in the prominence organization, leadership and administration coursework between EdD and PhD programs. It appears from this study and previous studies that common knowledge based in higher education doctoral programs is organization, leadership and administration which may be the paradigm of higher education programs (Kuhn, 1962). However, we notice a flux, a descendant trend here, although the trend in history seems more stable, more paradigmatic. More in-depth study of organization, leadership, and administration such as content analysis of syllabi and qualitative interviews with faculty who teach this course is needed to better understand the theories knowledge base from which organization, leadership and administration are taught (Bray, 2007).

The present study's most significant addition to the literature on higher education doctoral programs is the increasing prominence of legal aspects or law courses and finance courses as part of the core curriculum of most programs. The percentages are higher percentages than in previous studies (Crosson & Nelson, 1986; Bray, 2007; Vallerin, 2011) and meet at the level of core curriculum in EdD programs, emergent core in PhD programs. In an age of increasing accountability, accreditation oversight, and connections between accreditation and institutional fiscal health, the knowledge of finance may have become more important for administrators to learn. Regulatory aspects of law, as well as an understanding of employment law, discrimination, and student constitutional rights may to be of increasing report. A current example of prominence is that of the increase in sexual assault reporting on American (U.S.) campuses, and the observation that many campuses are ill equipped to conduct investigations, counsel students, or manage crises (Lipka, 2014). In this vein, a knowledge foundation in due process and regulatory procedure is of increasing significance to practitioners.

Governance, philosophy, and multiculturalism are more embedded in the core curriculum than taught as separate core courses has interesting implications for higher education programs and their graduates. The focus on governance, even if embedded, may be connected to the increasing prominence of courses in law and finance. With respect to multiculturalism, given the growing emphasis on multicultural competencies, program faculty may wish to discuss the role this subject area should have in the core curriculum (Goodchild & Hyle, 2014). In addition, it would

seem that PhD programs advancing scholarly knowledge in the field of higher education would better serve their students with a stronger emphasis in philosophy and education foundations.

With respect to core subject matter curriculum, there is a discernable core/ emergent core in EdD programs, but not in PhD programs. As identified in the Council for Higher Education's Proposed Doctoral Guidelines, coursework in the history of higher education; finance; organization, leadership, and administration; and law are central to an understanding of higher education as a field of study, a foundation for higher education practitioners and perhaps higher education scholars as well (Council for the Advancement of Higher Education Programs, 2015). Further study is needed into the nature and focus of higher education PhD programs to understand their purpose and how they prepare students. PhD programs may benefit from identifying an organizing principle for their curriculum (Conrad, 1976; Townsend, 1990). Hendrickson's (2014) core knowledge taxonomy may be helpful towards this end.

A core curriculum in research is easily visible in higher education programs. Introductory courses in quantitative methods and qualitative methods followed by advanced quantitative methods and dissertation seminars emphasizing the development of a dissertation problems and proposals are offered in the research core of most programs. Courses in evaluation and assessment are taught in both degree programs which again may reflect programs preparing administrators for higher education. The major difference between EdD and PhD research course requirements appears to be in the number of credits offered and not the content which is similar to the findings in Dill and Morrison (1985) study.

As paradigmatic status requires (a) a common set of research problems, (b) a common knowledge base, and (c) a set of commonly accepted research methods, the fact that there is a set of common research topics taught in both in EdD and PhD programs demonstrated that the study of higher education meets the requirement of Kuhn's (1976) paradigmatic status. Nevertheless, there are questions as to whether there sufficient differentiation aligned with program goals (Dill & Morrison, 1985; Lattuca & Stark, 2011). With respect to curricular content, there seems to be a solid emergent core impinging towards paradigmatic status, at least in the EdD. What appears to missing is an agreement on core curricular content PhD programs. Across the board, future work can confirm whether there is a common set of research problems in the higher education field.

Limitations of the Study

The low response rate to the online survey is a limitation of this study. While a rate of 38.2% is sufficient for a preliminary inquiry, and the absolute numbers of respondents are in line with prior studies, a higher response is needed to garner a better sense of the field. Researchers plan to follow up with a mailed paper survey to programs that did not respond to the email survey. In addition there are some issues with regards to the internal validity of the survey. Three program directors emailed the researcher to share aspects of the survey they found confusing, such as what defined core curriculum and what the difference was between an embedded and a free-standing course, which may have influenced the response rate and/or the results. Moreover, future work should endeavor to include the perspectives of more programs globally given the proliferation of programs internationally.

Conclusion

Contemporary higher education research published in journals, including but not limited to the Journal of Higher Education, The Review of Higher Education, and Research in Higher Education, in addition to research generated through doctoral dissertations and theses, will further the knowledge base of higher education as a field of study. However, core curricula embodies essential theories, philosophies, and commonly held understandings as well as holding the memories of

why a field develops through its history and provides continued justification for the field's existence. It also provides the linguistic core, the language contemporarily spoken by researchers and practitioners. In the classroom, the core curriculum is the knowledge base passed from one generation to the next. Having a defined core is a necessary, albeit not sufficient, predicate towards developing higher education, an interdisciplinary field of study into an academic discipline, with a stand-alone knowledge base as supplemented by the social sciences and allied professional fields.

This study is just one more step towards the establishment of a commonly agreed upon core curriculum in the field of higher education. This work is important as it is foundational in the preparation of higher education scholars and practitioners, people who through their research and/ or leadership help guide the direction of colleges and universities. In an age of increasing accountability and competing demands it is important that doctoral candidates are well prepared to navigate policy and procedural terrain. Towards that end, more information is needed not just about core subject matter in title, but actual content within courses. With respect to research courses, we examined introductory and advanced research methods, but omitted higher levels of statistical and qualitative inquiry. Moreover, work connecting the subject matter and research core to competencies, demonstrated knowledge by doctoral graduates is needed to ascertain the difference made in colleges and universities.

References

AACC. (2015a). *Community college trends and statistics*. American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Washington, D.C. Retrieved from http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Trends/Pages/default.aspx

AACC. (2015b). *21st Century initiative*. American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Washington, D.C. Retrieved from http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/21st_century/Pages/default.aspx

Biglan, A. (1973a). The characteristics of subject matter in different academic areas. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 58*, 195-203.

Biglan, A. (1973b). Relationships between subject matter characteristics and the structure and output of university departments. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 57*(3), 204-213.

Braxton, J. M. (1989). Institutional variability in faculty conformity to the norms of science: A force of fragmentation in the academic profession? *Research in Higher Education 30*(419), 433.

Braxton, J. M., & Hargens, L. L. (1996). Variations among academic disciplines: Analytical frameworks and research. *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, 11*, 1-45.

Bray, N. J. (2007). Core curriculum for American higher education programs. In D. W. Wright & T. Miller (Eds.), *Training higher education policy markers and leaders: A graduate program perspective*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Bynum, T. B. (2000). *An analysis of the content of community college leadership programs in the United States: A delphi study*. Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Council for the Advancement of Higher Education. (2015). S. Freeman, Jr & L. F. Goodchild (Eds.) *A commitment to research quality and professional practice: Voluntary guidelines for higher education administration preparation programs at the doctoral degree level-working draft*. Las Vegas, NV.

Crosson, P. H. & Nelson, G. M. (1986). A profile of higher education doctoral programs. *Review of Higher Education, 9*, 335-357.

Dill, D. D., & Morrison, J. L. (1985). Ed.D. and Ph.D. research training in the field of higher education. A survey and proposal. *Review of Higher Education, 8*, 169-186.

Dressel, P. L. & Meyhew, L. B. (1974). *Higher education as a field of study: The emergence of a profession*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Favero, M. D. (2006). An examination of the relationship between academic discipline and cognitive complexity in academic dean's administrative behavior. *Research in Higher Education, 47*(3), 281-315.

Freeman, Jr. S. (2012). The Future of Higher Education Preparation: Implications for Policy and Practice. *Journal of Education Policy, 1*, 1-8.

Freeman, Jr. S., & Kochan, F. (2014) Towards a theoretical framework for the doctorate in higher education administration. In S. Freeman, Jr., L. Hagedorn, L. Goodchild, & D. A. Wright (Eds), *Advancing higher education as a field of study: In quest of doctoral degree guidelines - Commemorating 120 years of excellence*. (pp. 145-167). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Goodchild, L. F. (1991). Higher education as a field of study: Its origins, programs, and purpose, 1893-1960. In J. D. Fife & L. F. Goodchild (Eds.), *Administration as a profession*. New Directions for Higher Education, 76, 15-21.

Goodchild, L. F. (1996). G. Stanley Hall and the study of higher education. *The Review of Higher Education, 20*(1), 69-99.

Harris, M.S. (2007). The current status of higher education programs: Findings and implications. In D. W. Wright & T. Miller (Eds.), *Training higher education policy markers and leaders: A graduate program perspective* (pp. 33-42). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Haynes, L. J. (1991). *Basic knowledge and competency needs: Perspectives on the content needs of higher education administration programs*. The University of Minnesota.

Hendrickson, R. (2014). The core knowledge of higher education. In S. Freeman, Jr., L. Hagedorn, L. Goodchild, & D. Wright (Eds.), *Advancing higher education as a field of study: In quest of doctoral guidelines - Commemorating 120 years of excellence* (pp. 229-240). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Hofsteader, R. (1960). *The age of reform.* Random House: New York.

Hyle, A. & Goodchild, L. F. (2014). Contemporary conditions of higher education programs in the United States and Canada: An initial 2012 report. In S. Freeman, Jr., L. Hagedorn, L. Goodchild, & D. Wright (Eds.), *Advancing higher education as a field of study: In quest of doctoral guidelines - Commemorating 120 years of excellence* (pp. 51-75). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Kuhn, T. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lattuca, L. R. & Stark, J. S. (2011). *Shaping the college curriculum: Academic plans in action*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Lipka, S. (2014). Proposed federal rules would raise oversight of campus assault. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/blogs/ticker/proposed-federal-rules-increase-oversight-of-campus-sexual-assault/80183

Miller, M. T. & Nelson, G. (1993). *Graduate programs in the study of higher education selected syllabi*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama. ED363238.

Nelson, G. (Ed.) (1990). *Graduate courses in the field of higher education: Selected syllabi*. Occasional Paper No. 4. Institute for Higher Education, University of Pittsburg, Pittsburgh, PA.

Pope, R. L., Reynolds, A. L., & Mueller, J. A. (2004). *Multicultural competence in student affairs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rumbley, L. E., Altbach, P. G., Stanfield, D. A., Shimmi, Y., de Gayardon, A., & Chan, R. Y. (Eds.). (2014). *Higher education: A worldwide inventory—Research centers, academic programs, and journals and publications* (3rd ed.). Science Management series. Boston and Bonn, Germany: Center for International Higher Education, Boston College and Lemmens Media.

Smart, J. C., & Elton, C. F. (1982). Validation of the Biglan model. *Research in Higher Education, 17*(3), 213–229.

Townsend, B. K. (1990). Doctoral study in the field of higher education. In J. C. Smart (Ed), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research, VI* (pp. 161-199). New York: Agathon Press.

Uzoigwe, C. N. (1982). *A model for establishing a higher education administration degree program at a Nigerian university*. University of Toledo, Ohio.

Valerin, M. P. (2011). *Comparative analysis of 105 higher education doctoral programs in the United States*. University of North Texas, Denton, Texas. (Unpublished Dissertation).

Wang, X. (2002). *A study of the curriculum structure and content of doctoral programs in higher education in the People's Republic of China*. Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Wright, D. (2007). Progress in the development of higher education as a specialized field of study. In D. W. Wright & T. Miller (Eds.), *Training higher education policy markers and leaders: A graduate program perspective*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Wright, D. W. & Miller, T. (Eds.). (2007). *Training higher education policy markers and leaders: A graduate program perspective*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Biographies

Karen Aldred Card, Ph.D. is Interium Chair of Educational Administration at the University of South Dakota. Dr. Card received her Ph.D from The Ohio State University in Educational Policy and Leadership. She received her Masters degree in Student Personnel from Bowling Green State University. Dr. Card research focuses on college administration, student affairs, and college teaching. She currently serves as the Pre-Conference Chair and Syllabus Project Chair for the Council for the Advancement of Higher Education Programs. Additionally, she is the coordinator of the Association for the Study of Higher Education's Higher Education Directory that catalogues over 150 higher education programs throughout the United States and Canada.

Crystal R. Chambers is associate professor and program coordinator of the doctoral program in higher education leadership in the Higher, Adult, & Counselor Education Department at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Her research focuses on the impact of race and gender on college student access and experiences, faculty employment, and equality of opportunity in public higher education systems. Chambers is an inaugural year participant of the Council for the Advancement of Higher Education Program's Early Career Workshop and has been an active participant in CAHEP since 2008. She is the associate editor-in-chief of *The Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education*.

Sydney Freeman, Jr., is associate professor of higher education at the University of Idaho. He is a former National Holmes Scholar, a certified faculty developer through the Learning Resources Network, and an affiliate of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Minority Serving Institutions. His research investigates the challenges facing higher education administration programs, specifically, higher education as a field of study and the university presidency. Dr. Freeman has published numerous journal articles and is the lead editor (with Linda Serra Hagedorn, Lester F. Goodchild, and Dianne A. Wright) of *Advancing Higher Education as a Field of Study: In Quest of Doctoral Degree Guidelines* (Stylus Publishing, 2014). He also was recently named to the Board of Directors of the American Association of University Administrators and was honored with the *"2015 Emergent Leader of the Year"* award by the same professional society. He is editor-in-chief of *The Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education*.