Reshaping Leadership Development Through Distance Doctoral Education

Charles F. Webber

University of Calgary

Abstract

This paper describes the recent creation at a western Canadian university of a distance-delivery Doctor of Education in educational leadership and administration that was developed in response to ongoing requests from the field. A rationale for the design of the program is presented based on the need for national and global graduate study networks that are accessible, affordable, and sustainable, and consistent with the boundary-breaking leadership development model offered by Robertson and Webber (2002). Pedagogical and practical considerations-such as content articulation, staffing, supervision, financing, support infrastructures, and access – are highlighted in relation to the strengths, limitations, and politics of distance-delivery technology-mediated formats for senior graduate study.

Introduction

University programs in educational leadership and administration must respond to the changing expectations for those in formal leadership positions in schools and postsecondary institutions. Clearly, much of the content traditionally studied by master's and doctoral students in leadership programs remains relevant. For example, students can learn a great deal that is useful by reading Wolcott's (1973) classic ethnography of a school principal or Sergiovanni's (1995) description of what he called a 'reflective practice perspective'. These insights remain instructive for those who want to consider the complexities and 'scruffiness' of managerial work. Similarly, aspiring educational leaders can gain insights from more recent reports, such as Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) account of the changes that principals go through in terms of role conception, socialization into the principalship, shifts in role-identity, and engagement with their studies in relation to their career goals. Also, Mulford's (2002) discussion of educational leaders' reduced influence on

policy development and concurrent greater responsibility for policy implementation offers valuable understandings for aspiring and current leaders in schools, technical institutes, colleges, and universities.

However, both what is being taught in educational administration programs (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005) and how those programs are delivered (Foster, 1998; Grogan & Roberson, 2002; Van Patten & Hold, 2002) are being questioned. Leadership programs are being examined in order to identify the characteristics of exceptional programs. For example, Jackson and Kelley (2002) note that promising leadership programs are demanding, admit carefully, attend to scope and sequence of courses, collaborate with school districts, utilize summer institutes, and include a focus on ethics. Others have looked at the links between leadership and student achievement (Youngs & King, 2002) and conducted comparative analyses of international leadership development programs (Su, Adams, & Mininberg, 2000).

Clearly, the evolving local, national, and international complexities of educational leadership require those who deliver graduate programs in educational leadership and administration to continue to rethink and reshape what educational leaders learn and how and when they learn. Therefore, this paper presents the experiences of one Faculty of Education as it began to deliver Doctor of Education programs in a distance education format. Although distance education doctoral programs have existed in various countries for some time, the program described here is the first Canadian doctoral program delivered primarily from a distance. Because of its uniqueness in the Canadian context, it merits close examination.

This paper offers a rationale for the design of the distance-delivery Doctor of Education degree programs. As well, readers are provided with a description of the practical and pedagogical considerations that guided program planners. The experiences of developers and students are used to offer a set of lessons learned.

The Context

The Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary in western Canada has offered Master of Education degree programs on campus for nearly four decades and in distance-delivery formats for about two decades. Students in distance programs have been able to complete their master's degrees in fields such as educational leadership, curriculum,

educational technology, and adult and higher education. Over the years, other distance-delivery specialization areas have been added, including workplace learning, educational contexts and community rehabilitation and disability studies. Specializations in gifted education and teaching English as a second language are being developed. More recently, students have been able to 'ladder' through their graduate studies by completing a graduate certificate that can be carried for full academic credit into a graduate diploma program that, in turn, can be credited toward a Master of Education degree program. The university labelled the progression from graduate certificate through graduate diploma through Master of Education as its *Post-Degree Continuous Learning* initiative (University of Calgary, 2004). As this paper is being written, 309 (or 56per cent) of the 552 students in Master of Education degree programs are studying via distance education. The largest majority consists of Canadians from across the nation while others are living and working in a range of other countries. As one might expect, most of the students in Master of Education degree programs are teachers and principals in public and private schools. However, an increasing proportion consists of students employed in other sectors such as health care, social services, and business and industry.

The success and credibility of its distance graduate degree programming led to the University of Calgary being asked repeatedly by school and district leaders plus the presidents of colleges and technical institutes in western Canada to consider offering doctoral programs in educational leadership and in higher education administration that can be completed mainly from a distance. As a result, the Faculty of Education spent approximately one year investigating the viability of a distance-delivery doctoral program and, once the decision to proceed was made, it took another year to plan the content and structure of the degree program. After a brief student recruitment period, the distance-delivery Doctor of Education program admitted its first cohort of 23 students in July 2003. Currently, there are 68 students registered in distance-delivery Doctor of Education degree programs.

Conceptual Framework

Earlier studies of distance-delivery and face-to-face graduate programs (Robertson & Webber, 2000, 2002; Webber & Robertson, 1998, 2003) resulted in the formulation of the *Boundary-Breaking Leadership*

Development Model. The model consists of a learning process based on a set of clearly defined attributes and specific practices that lead to four major learning outcomes: emotional engagement with learning, development of a critical perspective, movement beyond self, and development of a sense of agency. A key objective of the distance-delivery Doctor of Education is to achieve the same four learning outcomes for graduate students studying leadership and administration in schools, colleges, and technical institutes.

In addition, program planners wished to avoid considering the educational technology employed in the distance-delivery teaching from a 'conservative ICT leadership perspective.' Rather, they strove to demonstrate 'educative ICT leadership' (Webber, 2003a) as portrayed in Table 1.

Table 1

New Technologies and Educative Leadership

Conservative ICT Leadership	Educative ICT Leadership
Technology	Possibilities
Role rigidity	Layered participation
Resource acquisition and management	Vision building
Policy implementation	Problem solving
ICT manager	ICT user
Safety	Innovation
Hoarding	Open access
Compliance	Engagement
Isolation	Seamless integration
Reactive	Agile
Fair play	Social justice
Demanding equity	Positioning for equity
Individual	Network
Professional deskilling	Enabling
Isolated in-service	Ongoing professional development
Recipient	Entrepreneur
Exclusionary	Boundary breaking
Power broker	Power builder
Privacy	Public demonstration of learning
Standard, predictable, change resistant	**Flexible, fragile, high reward**

(Webber, 2003a, p. 123)

From this educative base, planners intended to create a degree program that would allow students to participate in a learning network characterized by the professional, role, environmental, and emotional dimensions described in Table 2.

Table 2

Educative Network Profile

Professional Dimensions	Role Dimensions	Environmental Dimensions	Emotional Dimensions
Focus on possibilities, not technology	Challenger of standardization	Tension between seeking equity and positioning for equity	Passion
Learning	Scholar	Learning from but moving beyond the past	Creativity
Role flexibility	Explorer	Layered participation	Competition
Content	Entrepreneur	Flexible time and space	Sensitivity
Empirical evidence	Politician	Globalization	Trust
Future-oriented	Responsible failure	Technological leaps	Collaboration
Open access	Public performer	Serendipity	Curiosity
People	Practitioner		Compassion
Collegiality	Translator		Caring
	Networker		

(Webber, 2003b, p. 214)

In summary, the planners of the distance-delivery Doctor of Education operated on the assumption that well designed online teaching and learning environments can and should be constructive, meaningful and empowering. Indeed, Markham (2005) noted that 'this capacity is now taken for granted' (p. 794).

The Design Stage

A decade ago, Willis (1993) advised distance education planners to follow a design strategy that identified the need for instruction, analysed the potential learners, and established instructional goals and objectives. Believing that this advice continued to be sound and supported by Howell, Williams, and Lindsey's (2003) highlighting of the critical nature of informed planning in distance education, planners of the distance-delivery Doctor of Education conducted an extensive telephone needs assessment. The use of telephone interviews was consistent with the pervasive reliance on interviews among social scientists and even the general public (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Input was provided by 63 educational leaders in Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and the

Northwest Territories. Respondents indicated an overwhelming need for a distance-delivery Doctor of Education degree program based in western Canada that would assist with the preparation of the next generation of educational leaders.

Respondents indicated that the content areas most important to the future leaders of their educational communities included strategic planning, educational leadership, human resource management, finance, marketing, student services management, government relations, politics of education, diversity, and internationalization. They identified the importance of learning 'how to manage within an institution in a complex and continuously changing environment.' They said that leaders 'must learn to manage more responsive and customer-driven systems ... where there is a continuous redefinition of publicly funded, quality' educational organizations. 'There's too much focus currently ... on administrative expertise rather than on positioning the institution for the future and organizational leadership issues.' 'Previous assumptions ... do not apply today and we need to rethink them.'

With regards to the structure of the proposed program, participants in the needs assessment stressed the importance of 'one-week intensive face-to-face institutes on the University of Calgary campus or an appropriate site,' 'web-based tele-collaborative work,' 'independent study,' 'videoconferencing,' resources that can be used asynchronously, and 'project-based group work/team projects.' The respondent who perhaps most clearly articulated the mood of the participants in the needs assessment stated that, 'There are three pillars to the proposed programs that are essential: (1) convenience, (2) flexibility, (3) relevance.'

All but four of the respondents agreed with the statement that the Doctor of Education program should be 'cohort-based, with about 20 qualified candidates working together, with a certain amount of flexibility, permitting students to investigate and conduct scholarly research on a wide variety of topics.' The most preferred time frame for completion of the degree program was four years (17 out of 40). Respondents commented that it would be important that individuals with non-thesis master's degrees qualify for the program.

The needs assessment also covered the financial dimension of the proposed program. Our financial plan indicated that we needed a minimum of 15 students in each admission group paying a total program fee of $35,000 per person to make what had to be a cost-recovery program financially viable. Approximately half of the

participants in the needs assessment felt this was not affordable and recommended a total program fee that ranged from a minimum of $10,000 to $30,000. Other respondents indicated that $35,000 seemed reasonable compared to other programs or even low-cost compared, for example, to some American programs. The actual cost-recovery tuition for Canadian residents ended up being approximately $10,000 in Canadian funds per annum for four years, making the total cost of the degree program $40,000. International students pay a 30 per cent surcharge to cover the extra costs of working with them and to reflect the fact that, as individuals who do not pay Canadian taxes, they are not contributing as Canadian residents do to the overall university infrastructure.

Program Overview

Willis (1993) advised distance education program planners to include in the development stage the creation of a content outline, to review existing materials, to organize and develop content, and to select/develop materials and methods. Similarly, the designers of the Doctor of Education used the information gathered during the needs assessment, drew upon their knowledge of educational leadership and administration, and consulted with colleagues within the university and in other institutions to create a program overview with four major themes to be covered in the first two years of the four-year program (See Appendix A). It is worth noting here that the development of the distance-delivery Doctor of Education, particularly the program in school and district-based educational leadership, was influenced by ongoing discussions in the United States of how the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards for school leaders (see Murphy, 2002, 2005) may be causing the reconceptualisation of the role of educational leaders. However, the Canadian context of the distance-delivery Doctor of Education program meant that planners were informed by ISLLC standards but not tied to them.

Both the educational leadership (See Appendix B) and the higher education administration (See Appendix C) programs addressed the following themes, although in slightly different ways (See Table 3.)

Table 3

Themes and Course Content

Themes	Educational Leadership Content	Higher Education Administration Content
Leadership values, beliefs, and interpersonal styles	• Leadership and personality • Interpersonal communication • Ethics and values in administration • Gender and diversity	• Leadership and personality • Interpersonal communication • Ethics and values in higher education • Gender and diversity
Change and influence in education	• Organizational theory • School culture • Leadership development • Planning and evaluation • Shared governance	• Organizational theory • Adult and organizational learning • Communication in organizations • Change management • Human resources/team building
Educational environments	• Politics of education • School choice • Reconceptualizing schooling • Accountability • School reform	• History and philosophy of higher education • Planning and governance • Labour relations • Student affairs • Planning • Program evaluation
Education in a global context	• Law • Policy and politics • Globalization • Information technology	• Law • Policy and politics • Globalization • Information technology • Community development • Fund development

Students in both the areas of study are required to participate in a doctoral seminar with three specific goals:

1.   To understand the most important principles of epistemology and ontology as they relate to the study of social phenomena,

2.   To use these principles to critically analyze the limits to scientific knowledge of social phenomena, and

3.   To use this understanding to help clarify the doctoral thesis proposal including topic, research design, concepts, methods, study and conclusions' (Heyman, 2003, p. 1).

In addition, all students must take courses in both qualitative and quantitative research.

It should be noted that the first two years of the Doctor of Education program consist of graduate courses that in traditional campus-based degree programs at the University of Calgary would take the form of some coursework and some semi-independent study completed under the guidance of students' academic supervisors. The 'coursification' of traditionally semi-independent study is a response to the needs assessment findings that it is important for students to be a part of a cohort in which individuals support, pace, and challenge one another. Also, most of the courses offered during the first two years of the program are delivered in a distance-delivery, web-based format that incorporates multimedia learning tools, including synchronous audio components. Students conclude year two by submitting research proposals to their supervisory committees and by undertaking their candidacy examinations which consist of a major paper on a topic selected by students' academic supervisors followed by an oral examination based on their candidacy papers and on all of their coursework.

Year three begins with participation in an annual international conference called 'Linking Research to Professional Practice' held concurrently on campus and online. The annual conference involves students and faculty members from within the Doctor of Education program plus researchers and graduate students from partner institutions in other countries. This is followed by an optional international travel study in which students engage with educational leadership and/or higher education issues in another country. Following the international travel study, year three continues with the implementation of the research plan, i.e. data collection and analyses. Students continue with their thesis research and analyses through the first half of year four and write their theses in preparation for a final oral examination normally held at the end of year four. Although students are expected to complete their degrees within four years, they have up to six years to finish.

Program developers decided that the face-to-face components of the first two years of the Doctor of Education would consist of two-week institutes held on the University of Calgary campus each July. The first campus institute provides a basic orientation that introduces students to one another, to their supervisors and course instructors, to campus and distance library services, and to the software that students will use

throughout their degree programs. The year-two summer course on campus is two weeks in duration while the year-three campus component of the degree program is a three-day international conference held prior to the optional travel study.

For the distance components of the Doctor of Education program, planners decided to use a well-known instructional platform called Blackboard, primarily because it was the instructional software licensed and supported by the University of Calgary. However, when choosing a software program to be used for synchronous and asynchronous audio communication, program planners selected a program called Elluminate Live! that is produced by a Calgary-based company called Elluminate. Together, Blackboard and Elluminate Live! provide a learning environment in which students and faculty members can post readings, participate in synchronous and asynchronous text messaging, and take part in synchronous audio conferencing sessions. Further, they can access audio recordings of class meetings and guest lectures, share and modify Word or PowerPoint documents, and do all of this from anywhere in the world where there is Internet access.

Early-Stage Lessons for Faculty

Several important lessons were learned as the distance-delivery Doctor of Education was planned and implemented. These lessons relate to cross-campus considerations, admission decisions, staffing support, technical support, and program flexibility.

Cross-campus considerations. Distance education has been around for many years and has served professional faculties well. However, faculties of education operate within the larger university community in which peer approval of new initiatives is required and where distance education challenges understandings of graduate programming that have served universities well for centuries. That is, the university traditions of valuing face-to-face interactions among students and professors and of subsidizing graduate studies are well entrenched.

Therefore, it took a great deal of time, numerous careful presentations of program content and of distance-delivery formats, and repeated cross-campus scrutiny of the budget plan for this cost-recovery degree program to be approved. Careful consideration of any academic change, particularly one in a doctoral program, is to be expected and

even demanded. Nonetheless, we did not anticipate the time and energy that it would take to gain approval from university governance committees to begin offering the Doctor of Education in a distance-delivery, cost-recovery format, particularly when this is a degree program that had been offered on-campus for many years. Therefore, lesson one was: *Anticipate lengthy approval processes within the university governance system and pay particular attention to providing colleagues with a clear rationale for the change, a carefully articulated program overview, a well researched business plan, and strong evidence of support from the field and within the academic unit for the change.*

Admission decisions. Our market research indicated that there was a strong need for this program. Despite this, we did not anticipate that we would receive such a large number of applications from well-qualified individuals. As a result, we went beyond our anticipated admission of 15 students to the first cohort to offer placements to 23 very strong applicants. In hindsight, this large number of admissions was fortuitous. Two students declined the offer of admission for good reasons. One applicant was offered a significant promotion at a university in the United States and needed to withdraw the application because of the expected workload associated with taking up the new position, and another applicant who initially accepted the offer of admission subsequently withdrew because of a change in personal circumstances. A third individual withdrew in the first semester after deciding that the program was not as closely associated with personal and professional goals as was thought in the first instance. As a result of these changes, the first Doctor of Education cohort has maintained a steady state of 20 individuals. Had we admitted only 15 students as we had planned, then the number of students, once the program achieved a steady state, could have been sufficiently low that the energy and momentum of the program might have been jeopardized. Therefore, another lesson was: *Admit enough students so that early attrition does not jeopardize the energy and momentum of the degree program.*

Also, despite a wide array of master's degrees held by applicants, they shared a common strong interest in educational leadership and administration because of their common professional interests. Therefore, we learned: *Focus on the alignment among students' prior academic studies, professional experiences, research interests, and anticipated career trajectories, rather than only on prior academic experiences.*

Staffing and technical support. We involved senior faculty members and one external instructor, all with strong scholarly and professional reputations, in teaching the first modules in the Doctor of Education program. We wanted students to experience the intensity of working with scholars of this calibre and interested observers to note that this degree program is of top quality and a clear priority within our institution. Based on early feedback from students, we believe that we are achieving these goals.

However, senior faculty may or may not be familiar with the differences between teaching on campus and online. In particular, faculty members' technical expertise may not be sufficient to move quickly and easily to using distance education software such as Blackboard and Elluminate Live!. Indeed, senior faculty members did not all own a personal or office computer that was capable of using the necessary software and, even if they did, they often needed help using it, particularly when they first started teaching online. Therefore, we learned: *Faculty members need to bring to the work or be provided with a personal or office computer that was sufficiently current to operate well using the necessary software.* In addition, we learned: *It was extremely important to provide strong technical support to developers and instructors while concurrently articulating reasonable and sustainable limits to that support.*

We were very fortunate that one of the program developers, a junior academic with expertise in both educational leadership and technology, was able and willing to provide extensive hands-on support to planners, instructors, and administrators involved in the creation of the Doctor of Education distance program. As a result, we learned: *Critical leadership for change initiatives can come from individuals in all career stages, including early, mid, and late-career professors.*

Moreover, we came to recognize and depend heavily upon the leadership that was provided by individuals in technical and administrative support positions. In fact, we learned that the support staff members were able to identify critical strengths and weaknesses in our planning and to anticipate accurately the potential responses of students to program components. Therefore, *we learned to trust and greatly respect the leadership provided by colleagues in support staff positions.*

Program flexibility. The Doctor of Education in higher education administration and in educational leadership was portrayed by us as a 'direct response to the needs of working professionals in K-12 through post-secondary educational leadership settings.' Further, we stated that the 'programs are compatible with the busy lifestyles of professionals in education who may continue to work in their communities while developing new leadership skills, engaging in scholarly discourse, and conducting research' (Graduate Division of Educational Research, 2003, p. 3). Nonetheless, we were challenged with how to assist the two or three students in each year's group of newly admitted students who are unable to attend the two-week orientation session on the University of Calgary campus. Similarly, we were challenged by our need to modify (but not lower) expectations and assignment formats for doctoral students were required to work within unexpected time restrictions in their own institutions, and who had to travel nationally and internationally as part of their assigned professional duties. Fortunately, we have been able to negotiate changes and to share information so that the students in the Doctor of Education, who confront our assumptions about what doctoral study should look like, can succeed. In short, we learned: *We must do what we say we are going to do for students.*

Lessons from Our Students

When asked how they were feeling during the early stages of their doctoral programs, students provided information that focused on the vision for the program, student demographics, relationships, and technology.

Vision. There appears to be an understanding among students that the Doctor of Education in a distance-delivery format is a new venture in the Canadian postsecondary environment and that the program planners want it to be excellent. One person observed:

> As a student in the first online doctoral program delivered by the University of Calgary, I am extremely impressed with the level of integrity and rigor the program demonstrates and provides... The depth of knowledge and thought-provoking presentation demands further research and discussion to a level that is at times overwhelming. It is extremely rewarding... working and studying is a natural match and it can only help to insure that theory and practice remained tied. I have seen too many theoretical concepts that in reality don't work. By integrating work and study, I can test theory and evaluate in tandem with practice.

The same individual noted that:

> The lack of day-to-day contact is both good and bad. I find that while face-to-face allows for more dialogue and interaction, it can also be focused on areas that detract from my interest and needs. It is highly group dependent. The online program allows more flexibility for me to participate in those areas that directly apply to me. It also allows me to sit back and 'work' on other discussions but at the time and place of my choosing. I can still engage at the same level but can skim when it was too far away from my direction. The professor in the course online can ensure that I get what is needed and allow me to choose from other aspects.

Other students also were enthusiastic about the vision of the Doctor of Education degree program, e.g:

> The state-of-the-art in distance education communication technology has come of age. It is possible to form a class, a learning group, that is bound together enough to enable teaching and learning across long distances... across the North American continent, linking North America with the Middle East... AND it works!!!

> This program is long overdue and has tremendous potential. I think this is such exciting work. As a participant in the program, I am not only learning content information, I am learning firsthand the potential of this technology for education. I would love to be involved in creating programs that provide access and opportunity for communities of learners that function across boundaries and across the world. Thank you for giving those of us who are working the chance to participate in this groundbreaking program.

> It has been tremendously hectic, overwhelming, and exciting. I am energized by the readings and wanting to do a lot more than is humanly possible in the time available. From a theoretical standpoint, all of the topics are new ground... This is my first opportunity to explore the theory behind the concepts. Great stuff!

> I think such a program is essential; the application of theory in educational leadership has to happen through those engaged in the practice. They are the persuaders, models, and interpreters of the literature into the trenches. Also their wisdom informed the literature.... to be able to stay on-the-job and learn is fantastic.

Nonetheless, students also were able to discern weaknesses in the program design and delivery. For instance:

> It would appear to me that instructors within the program are struggling themselves with the technology, which provides comfort to those of us who also are struggling, but also generates concern as to

the impact this may have on the learning environment. If they are struggling, do they need additional support, in order to support us?

The structure coupled with the full-time working status of most disciplines imposes time limits on serious reflection and writing and study of scholarly work beyond the assigned readings... The formalized structure is worthy of close scrutiny to determine its benefit (positive or negative) compared to other more conventional forms of study at the Doctor of Education program level.

Students also offered cautions:

The highly structured learning system (group work, posting requirements, aggressive pace to produce applied writing assignments) serves to keep the learner on track. It is however far more structured than conventional study at the doctoral level.

Overall, students feel positive about the Doctor of Education and program developers feel a strong obligation to maintain student enthusiasm and respect for their studies. We learned: *The Doctor of Education students are highly motivated and perceptive. Their collective advice must continue to help shape this program.*

Demographics. Typical of the students registered in the Doctor of Education program, 18 of the original 23 students admitted to the Doctor of Education program were women. Of the 20 students remaining in what appears to be a steady state of registration, 17 are women, 15 of them older than 40, and 11 of them in senior management (academic and senior support staff) positions within their educational organizations.

Related to this, a student observed:

I find it very interesting to see the age and gender data of the group. When addressing the trends of higher education, and responsiveness to needs, this would appear to be a reaffirmation of meeting a need.

Further, the Doctor of Education program offers a:

challenge to mid-career individuals, continuing to maintain full-time administrative or managerial positions

and

Most of us cannot leave positions and attend a graduate program full-time; most colleges are currently in a leadership crunch.

We learned: *The distance-delivery Doctor of Education is offering access to graduate studies that may not have been available to individuals in the past.*

The total cost of approximately $40,000 in Canadian funds is not a major deterrent or roadblock to doctoral studies. Interestingly, the Doctor of Education in a cost-recovery, distance delivery format actually increases access to doctoral studies for many women and some men rather than decreases access. The $40,000 cost appears to be more than offset for students by their ability to keep earning an income that would be lost entirely in a traditional full-time campus-based doctoral program.

Relationships. Students described the supportive network that has formed among the doctoral students, for example:

> The group work has been very rewarding. We have really 'jelled', and … [when people have had to be away because of work or family commitments] they have been given permission to be away from class and yet still involved, with no resentment, just support… I don't know how it happened that we have a strong consensus building group.

> The insights that I have gotten from those in this program are amazing. I am pleased to be working with people with such professional experience and integrity.

Based on what students told us, we need to continue to pay close attention to maintaining and improving our ability to facilitate positive relationships among students and between students and faculty members:

> I'm feeling that our group is not able to do the extensive work that others are doing. No fault of individuals within the group – I'm pleased with my colleagues – but I have a sense that other groups are performing considerably higher.

> Is there a better way to organize and structure group assignments to enable better processes? Is it only our group that had difficulties? What kinds of conversations or resources could help the establishment of stronger group processes?

> There is a very interesting dynamic to the class… I found the small group work very stimulating and it has led to a much richer perspective for me for my individual assignments and for me as an individual. I have had less satisfaction from large group discussions. They have been helpful but there are too many students to get good quality discussion and insight from. While this is good, it seemed that the postings were there because they were supposed to be as opposed to the natural flow I see happening in the small group. People ask questions because they want to post to the small group not because they [have to].

The group work coordination is hard—people are busy and have such different interpretations. Group writing is hard. Styles do not jive—some are essayists and others are point form thinkers! We need to post material on time and sometimes cannot get everyone's feedback, especially as threads grow. We need to be flexible and kind to ourselves if we are to survive.

I am pleased... that our small group is functioning very well. However, the interaction with the larger group is still artificial.

Despite these cautions around group work, it is clear that a shared sense of caring has developed. For example, when a member of the class withdrew from the program, individuals wrote:

I worry about X...

I am sad at the loss of one of our cohort.... I felt she had a lot to offer, but she obviously had her reasons for going. While I am not grieving as such, I do feel a sense of loss. I'm surprised at how close I already feel to some of the cohort, and I am certain others feel the same way. We've even started calling each other. The need to hear a familiar voice going through the same challenges is compelling. Two people I have never met in person, I feel I have now gotten to know very well. This is an unusual state for me.

We learned: *Students feel a sense of loyalty to their small groups and, to a lesser extent, to the large group members, but expect careful attention to group culture and morale.*

It is not clear that these doctoral students experience more or fewer connections to their groups than students in campus doctoral programs. What is clear is that they enjoy shared connections and wish to build connections when they are not readily apparent.

Technology. I included this section on technology more because of what students did not say rather than what they did. Students commented on the challenges of online learning:

The issues for me have been the challenges of technology (server down, viruses)—interruption of information flow is frustrating.

We need some refinement of which discussion forums to post to – large group, cafe, home group, file exchange, e-mail, etc. It was a daunting task trying to read all of the postings.

Do we need more hands-on time during orientation to practice v Class, searching databases, Endnote...?

> The Blackboard architecture continues to be too layered. It could be more effective if the design were simpler and more consistent.... however, the tech support is consistently excellent.

However, the fact that the program has been operating primarily online with few major challenges and relatively few student concerns suggests that efforts to provide a strong technical support system are well worth maintaining. Indeed, one student noted that, 'Everyone seems to be more comfortable with the [online] environment and now it is the glitches that stick out as opposed to the everyday questions.'

A clear lesson from students is that technical support for online teaching and learning is critical. An appropriate goal for developers is to keep the technology in the background and the content and learning processes in the foreground.

Conclusion

The issue of time pervaded many student comments. Students worried about the pace and the time commitment required in the Doctor of Education program. They cautioned that some potential students might not be able to access the time required by the present program framework. They also described the need for them to balance very carefully the demands of families, work, and doctoral studies, and alluded to the frustration they felt when they wanted to pursue ideas in more detail but needed to get on with assignments.

However, these concerns about time are balanced by other comments such as:

> I am LOVING the readings and the corresponding reflection in discussions with my small group, the large group, my family, and my friends!... I'm doing a lot of personal reflection upon my own ethical principles, etc., and I am thankful for the opportunity to do so with all of the available readings. This is something I have been meaning to do for some time now. In fact, as I get older it becomes increasingly important to me, so theme one has been a real pleasure for me. With each assignment I'm growing more confident. I now believe that I can do this. I am enjoying it much more than I thought I would.

Clearly, there is more to do in terms of assessing the ongoing impact and sustainability of the distance-delivery Doctor of Education and we intend to continue our research of this program. However, the information gathered to date indicates that the distance-delivery Doctor of Education is a valid and valuable addition to the Canadian and international post secondary educational environment.

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APPENDIX A

Doctor of Education Requirements

- Doctoral seminar
- Required content courses
- Required research methods courses
    - Qualitative
    - Quantitative
- Research proposal
    - Developed with supervisor input
    - Approved by supervisory committee
- Research ethics
    - Ethics proposal developed
    - Ethics proposal approved by supervisor
    - Ethics proposal submitted to office of Associate Dean Research
    - Ethics proposal submitted to agencies involved with your study
    - Ethics proposal approved by Research Services and relevant agencies
- Candidacy exam
    - Topic area identified with supervisor
    - Paper written and submitted to GDER office

- Supervisor compiles examination committee
- Oral examination completed
- International program components
  - International summer institutes
  - Optional international travel study
- Research study
  - Site entry
  - Implementation of research design
  - Ongoing data analyses
  - Chapter writing and revisions as needed
    - for example   Introduction
      - Conceptual framework
      - Literature review
      - Methodology
      - Findings
      - Discussion
      - Implications
      - Conclusion
  - Approval of chapters by supervisor
  - Approval of chapters by supervisory committee
- Final dissertation oral examination
  - Committee compiled by supervisor
  - Date determined
  - Completion of oral examination
  - Revisions as necessary
  - Write acknowledgements section of dissertation
- Graduation
  - Application for degree
  - Submission of required copies of dissertation
  - Attend convocation

APPENDIX B

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership
Taken verbatim from http://www.ucalgary.ca/per
cent7Edistdoc/index/LEAD/lead_home.htm
Leadership has been viewed as a behaviour, group processes, the exercise of power, structurally based, and many other ways. As a noun or verb, the definition of leadership is as varied as the personal viewpoint of the beholder. However, educational leadership, as a sub-category of leadership, is a bit more specific as it begins with the premise that the purpose of leadership is the betterment, defined intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, of students. Within the Canadian context, public education is the fountainhead from which our Canadian democracy inculcates in its youngest citizens the fundamental concepts of justice, fairness, equity, acceptance of

socio-cultural differences, and, among other things, community, which comprise the bed rock for the democracy itself. Unlike political, economic, ideological, and religious leadership, which have changing purposes, various constituencies, educational leadership's purpose is, among others, to equally serve all of society's constituencies in espousing the above mentioned fundamental values within the institution. The Graduate Division of Educational Research offers its Doctorate in Educational Leadership to candidates who wish to better understand and to participate in the role of educational leadership in the 21st century both in the Canadian and global context.

Campus Courses: It is important to have an on-campus experience in order to acquaint students with the program philosophy and to build a strong academic community. Students normally will take these classes at the beginning of their program of studies: EDER 719.04 Doctoral Orientation EDER 705 Doctoral Seminar in Educational Leadership

Research Courses: Students must take core research classes: EDER 700 Seminar for First-Year PhD/EdD Students EDER 701.01 Qualitative Research EDER 701.02 Quantitative Research

Educational Leadership Content Courses: Students normally are required to take all core content courses related to the advanced study of Educational Leadership. EDER 719.03 Leading Change EDER 719.05 Planning and Governance EDER 719.06 Introduction to Educational Law EDER 719.14 Advanced Study in Educational Leadership I EDER 719.15 Advanced Study in Educational Leadership II EDER 719.16 Policy and Politics EDER 719.17 Globalization and Technology

International Study: Students are strongly encouraged to participate in an international travel study course that allows students to travel to foreign countries where they will study, visit, and experience different systems of educational leadership. Travel study destinations will vary each year but may include, for example, Australia, Taiwan, and Mexico. Information about each year's international travel study may be obtained from students' supervisors and the GDER office.

* The possibility exists for students to take alternative courses subject to approval from their supervisors and co-supervisors. The approvals must be documented in students' files using the Faculty of Graduate Studies Change of Registration form.

APPENDIX C

Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration
Taken verbatim from
http://www.ucalgary.ca/percent7Edistdoc/index/HEA/hea_home.htm

This program:
- serves current and future administrators
- offers learners membership in local, national, and international scholarly communities
- responds to student initiatives and individual needs
- encourages and supports research within the workplace
- provides intellectual stimulation, a scholarly environment, and opportunities for reflection

The program is compatible with the busy lifestyle of professionals in higher education who may continue to work in their communities while developing new leadership

skills, engaging in scholarly discourse, and conducting research. The program will include web-based and face-to-face courses. Structured support is built into the program to facilitate program completion in a timely manner. Participants normally will complete the Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration in four years. Graduates will:

- understand issues in higher education administration
- appreciate links between theory and practice in rapidly changing, complex environments
- analyze ethical and legal issues in administration
- value respectful, collaborative environments
- gain career-enhancing executive preparation

Campus Courses:It is important to have an on-campus experience in order to acquaint students with the program philosophy and to build a strong academic community. Students normally will take these classes at the beginning of their program of studies: EDER 719.04 – Doctoral Orientation EDER 719.13 – Doctoral Seminar in Higher Education

Research Courses: Students must take core research classes: EDER 700 – Seminar for First-Year PhD/EdD Students EDER 701.01 – Qualitative Research EDER 701.02 – Quantitative Research

Higher Education Administration Content Courses: Students are normally required to take all core content courses related to the advanced study of Higher Education Administration. EDER 719.08 – Program Planning in Higher Education EDER 719.09 – Higher Education Governance EDER 719.10 – Higher Education Leadership EDER 719.11 – Organizational Dynamics in Higher Education EDER 719.12 – Global Context of Higher Education EDER 719.18 – Faculty Development EDER 719.19 – Advanced Study in Higher Education I EDER 719.20 – Education and International Development

International Study: Students are strongly encouraged to participate in an international travel study course that allows students to travel to foreign countries where they will study, visit, and experience different systems of higher education. Travel study destinations will vary each year.

* The possibility exists for students to take alternative courses subject to approval from their supervisors and co-supervisors. The approvals must be documented in students' files using the Faculty of Graduate Studies Change of Registration form.