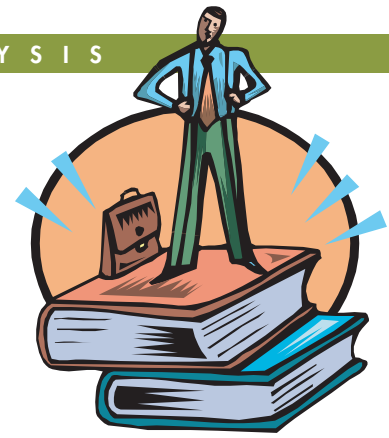


Accountability

Are Doctoral Programs in Education Practicing What They Preach?

MARTHA McCANN ROSE AND CYNTHIA V. L. WARD



Now that the ethic of “accountability” has become entrenched in education, institutions at all levels are working to develop a cadre of leaders who can manage resources, document progress and answer to consumers and others. Many of these future leaders are being groomed by their institutions through on-the-job training and mentoring. Others are pursuing doctoral programs in education.

More than 250 institutions nationwide offer doctorates in education. The degree, however, has long been under fire from scholars in traditional fields who say doctoral programs in education lack rigor and from some educators who find the programs out of step with real challenges facing schools and colleges. In response, program faculty have been revamping curricula to delimit the field of study and increase academic rigor.

Paradoxically, however, even these recharged doctoral programs in educational leadership offer little evidence of accountability in terms of desired outcomes, at least not in the materials proffered to prospective students.

From the information sent, prospective students would be unable to gather even rudimentary information on completion rates, career prospects and intended measurable knowledge and skills.

Writing in *CONNECTION*, education reformer Paul Reville recently called on colleges to institute a new level of accountability by clarifying their missions, establishing standards and implementing strategies. “This will be a major shift from the current ‘black box’ culture of many postsecondary institutions where what goes on within the institution is a mystery to

the public, and performance results are seldom discussed,” wrote Reville [*CONNECTION*, Spring 2006].

Regional accrediting bodies are among those looking to measure outcomes rather than inputs. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, for example, now requires graduate programs to demonstrate that students have a “mastery of a complex field of study” and that doctoral programs develop in students “the capacity to interpret, organize and communicate knowledge and to develop those analytical and professional skills needed to practice in and advance the profession.” These are difficult requirements to meet, but all doctoral programs must do so as part of the accreditation process.

As importantly, prospective students are entitled to information on what doctoral programs are designed to produce. After all, pursuing a doctorate is costly in terms of time, energy and money. Yet those who wish to be leaders in education and pursue the art and science of accountability are strangely willing to spend their time and money at institutions that do not publicize information on program standards or outcomes.

We reviewed the materials commonly sent to prospective students at 13 educational leadership doctoral programs in New England—eight campus-based programs and five on-line programs. These institutions provided general information on

the programs, including mission and purpose, program structure, delivery methods, courses offerings, entrance requirements and procedures, graduation requirements, location, cost and minimum duration of the program. Missing, however, were markers of outcomes.

From the information sent, prospective students would be unable to gather even rudimentary information on completion rates, career prospects and intended measurable knowledge and skills. Instead, the end-results to be gained from doctoral studies in educational leadership were described in the broadest of terms: *creating leaders who can transform the learning environment ... producing leaders who can manage dynamic change in a variety of contexts ... preparing leaders for the schools of tomorrow ... generating leaders able to manage continuous renewal.*

Promotional materials provide neither the rationale for targeted outcomes nor measures for desired competencies. Also unclear, was whether the outcomes reached beyond those required at the master’s level.

If higher education institutions are to keep pace with the new demand for accountability, they should begin with those programs designed to prepare education leaders. This is a good starting point both because the outcomes-based approach will be important to students of educational leadership in their future careers and

because these doctoral students are taught by faculty familiar with the tenets of program accountability.

To be sure, doctoral programs in educational leadership may have defined program outcomes in terms of intended knowledge, skills and abilities for graduates. Plans, strategies and standards may have been designed to measure these outcomes and track results over time. But in none of the recruiting materials were program outcomes highlighted. If doctoral programs in educational leadership are truly designed to develop leaders to serve the needs of education systems and institutions, the architects of these programs must themselves show the way toward greater accountability by assessing the merits of these programs and making the results known.

Opening the black box of accountability should begin in programs designed to produce future educational leaders—if not there, where?

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DATA CONNECTION

- n Ratio of total student enrollment at the University of Phoenix's Online Campus to total enrollment at the nation's largest "bricks and mortar" campus, Florida's Miami-Dade College: **2-to-1**
- n Ratio of total enrollment at Miami-Dade to total enrollment at New England's largest campus, Boston University: **2-to-1**
- n Percentage of Boston residents age 25 and older who have bachelor's degrees: **41%**
- n Number of major U.S. cities with higher percentages: **7**
- n Median age of Boston residents: **32.5**
- n Number of California, Texas and Utah communities with populations of 50,000 or more where the median age is under 27: **20**
- n Number of California, Texas and Florida colleges and universities among the top 100 U.S. grantors of bachelor's degrees to minorities: **47**
- n Number of New England colleges and universities among the top 100: **0**
- n Minorities as a percentage of working-age Massachusetts residents in 1990: **13%**
- n Projected percentage in 2020: **28%**
- n Minorities as a percentage of working-age Rhode Island residents in 1990: **11%**
- n Projected percentage in 2020: **25%**
- n Number of consecutive years that *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked Pine Manor College No. 1 nationally among bachelor's-level liberal arts colleges in terms of diversity: **4**
- n Increase between 1990 and 2000 in number of Lawrence, Mass., Latinos holding bachelor's degrees: **164%**
- n Increase during that period in homeownership among Lawrence, Mass., Latinos: **166%**
- n Increase in number of Lowell, Mass., Southeast Asians holding bachelor's degrees, 1990 and 2000: **177%**
- n Increase during that period in homeownership among Lowell, Mass., Southeast Asians: **164%**
- n Percentage by which Ohio school districts see home values rise for every 20 percentage-point increase in pass rates on state proficiency tests for public school students: **7%**
- n Percentage of New Hampshire businesses that believe home and rental prices are out of reach for their employees: **96%**
- n Number of civilian and military jobs lost as a result of closings of Loring Air Force Base in Maine, Fort Devens in Massachusetts, and Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire: **3,889**
- n Number of new jobs created at those sites as of October 2004: **10,465**
- n Growth in wages for high-paid New Hampshire workers since 1979: **43%**
- n Growth in wages for low-paid New Hampshire workers since 1979: **21%**

Sources: 1,2 CONNECTION analysis of U.S. Department of Education data; 3,4,5,6 CNNMoney.com analysis of U.S. Census data; 7,8 Diverse: Issues in Higher Education; 9,10,11,12 Nellie Mae Education Foundation; 13 Pine Manor College; 14,15,16,17 The Immigrant Learning Center Inc.; 18 Donald Haurin of Ohio State University and David Brasington of Louisiana State University; 19 New Hampshire Workforce Housing Council; 20,21 Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Department of Defense; 22,23 University of New Hampshire Carsey Institute