



Emerging Directions in Doctoral Education

Differentiation and Integration: Managing the Paradox in Doctoral Education

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Article information:

To cite this document: Jon F. Wergin Laurien Alexandre . "Differentiation and Integration: Managing the Paradox in Doctoral Education" *In* Emerging Directions in Doctoral Education. Published online: 31 Mar 2016; 225-242.

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S2055-36412016000006019>

Downloaded on: 04 April 2016, At: 12:24 (PT)

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DIFFERENTIATION AND INTEGRATION: MANAGING THE PARADOX IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

Jon F. Wergin and Laurien Alexandre

ABSTRACT

We review the two dominant models of doctoral education, and argue that both of them are limited in their effectiveness by excessive differentiation. The traditional doctoral model is characterized by highly specialized faculty training new academics; the new wave of professional doctorates is characterized by disaggregated faculty roles, standardized curricula, and a managerial culture. Both models overemphasize differentiation, albeit for different reasons, with negative impacts on student completion, faculty engagement, and needs of the larger society. Differentiation is an antagonistic force to effective integration, and in this chapter we describe how one program, Antioch University's PhD in Leadership & Change, intentionally holds this essential tension by: (1) optimizing faculty's professional expertise while nurturing collective responsibility; (2) ensuring both individual and organizational efficacy; and (3) nurturing a culture of critical reflection. By intentionally

Emerging Directions in Doctoral Education

Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning, Volume 6, 225–242

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ISSN: 2055-3641/doi:10.1108/S2055-364120160000006019

restoring equilibrium through effective integrating devices, doctoral programs can mediate the excesses of extreme differentiation in ways that benefit individual and organizational health, student learning, and ultimately society as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

One of the many challenges doctoral education struggles with today is in providing learning environments where learners thrive, completion rates are high, and faculty are valued, productive, and engaged. We have been struck by an apparent disequilibrium: Leaning too heavily on faculty expertise and scholarly productivity, as traditional doctoral education is prone to do, can lead to academic cultures in which student learning comes in second and completion rates suffer; on the other hand, too much emphasis on narrowly defined learning at the expense of engaged and expert faculty, as some newer models promote, can diminish the quality of the curriculum. The problem with both the traditional and the newer online models is one of excessive *differentiation*. In this chapter, we argue that doctoral programs of quality require an equal attention to *integration*.

Doctoral programs offered by traditional research universities have been the object of significant criticism over the past several decades: They are often considered overly specialized, oblivious to societal needs, and inattentive to employment demands within and beyond the academic marketplace. Furthermore, rigid on-site residency requirements exclude many talented “new majority” students whose professional and personal circumstances make them unable to devote four or more years to fulltime, on-campus study. All of this results in high attrition, low completion rates, and dismal job prospects for many of those who do graduate (Berliner, 2006; Golde, 2006; Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2009; Wulff & Austin, 2004).

A recent wave of professional and online doctorates has addressed these problems, at least in part, by serving those excluded from traditional doctoral programs – namely, practicing professionals and other “non-traditional” students who seek a doctoral degree for career advancement and need to do so on their own time and in their own place. For-profit institutions offering doctoral education have tapped into a huge market for these students, promising degrees that require little if any travel, flexibility in residency requirements, and curricular attention to marketplace demands

(Ghezzi, 2007). In a market seemingly focused more on job competencies than human capabilities, these new entries have gained a strong foothold, although recent enrollment declines suggest that the bloom may be fading (Hodgman, 2014; Korn, 2012; Lamar, 2013; Rubin, 2012; Stynes, 2015).

Even though the traditional site-based research university doctorate and the new wave of professional doctorates serve different students and have different purposes, they face similar limitations, due to *excessive differentiation*. Traditional doctoral programs are differentiated by design: They are characterized by highly specialized scholarly expertise as the path to faculty productivity, and a culture that expects students to become “stewards of a discipline” by becoming as equally specialized as their mentors. This is only reinforced when the route to promotion and tenure lies primarily in differentiating oneself from others through specialized scholarly work. Given the primacy of this focus, inattention to student learning is a chronic problem.

The newer models are differentiated in an entirely different way: Every part of the curriculum – planning, delivery, assessment, advising – is segmented, disaggregated, and often farmed out to individuals performing different roles – the designer, the instructor, the evaluator, the advisor, and so forth. One type of differentiation has been replaced by another. A disaggregated faculty workforce is matched with a narrowly defined, career-specialized curriculum designed to train students as “stewards of a specific profession.” Integration of student learning is assumed to occur through the accumulation of course credits, which paradoxically is exactly what higher education reformers have been arguing against for decades (Guskin, 1994).

In this chapter, we argue that designing doctoral programs to educate students to be stewards of a traditional discipline serves only a small sliver of those interested in doctoral education. Likewise, designing programs with the primary purpose of educating students to be stewards of a specific profession by demonstrating sets of skills does not fully serve their interests, either. Excessive differentiation in both models leads to a less-effective teaching/learning culture (Singleton & Session, 2011). Instead, we want to encourage a model of doctoral education that focuses on preparing students as scholar-practitioners to be “stewards of *society*,” and with this as its focus, departmental structures need to incorporate faculty expertise and productivity in ways that are more collaborative, cross-professional, and integrative. This is *differentiation with integration* for the benefit of students, faculty, and the larger society. Later in this chapter we describe what such a model in practice looks like; but first we describe the organizational lens we use.

DIFFERENTIATION WITH INTEGRATION: AN EARLY BUT USEFUL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

A half-century ago, Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch published a seminal article in *Administrative Science Quarterly* titled, “Differentiation and Integration in Complex Organizations” (1967). Their work has been widely cited ever since in numerous business and industry contexts (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Smith & Tushman, 2005; Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996). The authors defined *organization* as a “system of interrelated behaviors of people performing a task that has been differentiated into distinct subsystems, each performing a portion of the task, and the efforts of each being integrated to achieve effective performance of the system” (1967, p. 3). The authors argued that effective performance depends on the organization’s ability to interact with, and adapt to, a changing environment. They proceeded to define *differentiation* as a “state of segmentation of the organizational system into subsystems, each of which tends to develop particular attributes in relation to the requirements posed by its relevant external environment” (pp. 3–4), and *integration* as “the process of achieving unity of effort among the various subsystems in the accomplishment of the organization’s task” (p. 4).

Lawrence and Lorsch studied six companies in the chemical industry, created composite scores on both differentiation and integration, and then compared these with scores of overall organizational performance. What is remarkable and most relevant for this chapter is that the low-performing organizations were high on one or the other scale, but not both, whereas the two high-performing companies were both highly differentiated and well integrated.

Since the high-performing companies were able to optimize two seemingly antagonistic pulls, differentiation and integration, Lawrence and Lorsch investigated how they were able to do this, and found that the high-performing companies used “integrative devices” in the form of cross-functional teams and task forces. The effectiveness of these integrative devices depended on six “determinants”:

1. An intentional balancing of interests: between short-term and long-term problems, and an “intermediate structure” that allowed for an “interpersonal orientation”;
2. A focus on professional expertise rather than blind adherence to hierarchical authority;

3. A concern with organizational performance rather than just individual achievement;
4. Perceived “high influence” throughout the organization rather than a concentration of power at the top;
5. Influence and decision-making centered at the “requisite level”; and
6. Modes of conflict resolution that focus primarily on problem-solving and a relative absence of conflict avoidance. Effective integrators recognize that conflict among differentiated units is normal, even critical for organizational health and growth.

Most recently, attending to both differentiation and integration has been cited as a way to manage the “strategic paradoxes” leaders face (Smith, 2014). Paradoxes are an essential part of an organization’s strategic decision-making – they represent neither problems to solve nor dilemmas to resolve. Instead, paradoxes must be managed and held in an appropriate tension. After looking at how six top management teams managed one of these paradoxes – introducing innovation versus finding efficiencies in producing existing products – Smith concluded that balancing differentiation with integration was central to sustaining commitments to the healthy tension this and other paradoxes pose.

APPLICATIONS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

This organizational lens has promise, especially given that doctoral programs are characterized by high degrees of differentiation and specialization. Scholars of academic organizations will immediately recognize the similarity of the six determining factors to what is known about effective leadership practice in colleges and universities. For example, one of us (Wergin, 2003) has written extensively about the academic department and has found that effective departments share a set of qualities that, in retrospect, bear a striking resemblance to Lawrence and Lorsch’s integrative devices: a balance in focus on students, community, institution, and discipline (Determinant 1); a high value on professional autonomy (Determinant 2); cultures of collective responsibility, where all stakeholders feel accountable for the success of the department as a whole, rather than just their own individual work and career trajectory (Determinant 3); group commitment to the welfare of the institution and the community (Determinant 4); support for innovation, entrepreneurialism, and reasonable risk (Determinant 5); and a setting conducive to constructive discourse

(Determinant 6). In other words, effective academic departments have strong integrating devices. Furthermore, Lawrence and Lorsch's work presaged much of the current thinking on topics such as relational leadership (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011), and complexity leadership (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007), both of which have been extensively applied to academic organizations of all types (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Oddly however, despite the pervasive influence of the Lawrence and Lorsch research, the overarching theme of balancing differentiation and integration has only rarely been applied to higher education contexts.

Nevertheless, we find differentiation with integration to be a particularly useful explanatory concept when applied to doctoral education. As we have noted, extreme differentiation has been a consistent theme in both traditional and more recent professional and online doctoral programs; and in our view, the lack of attention to the need for corresponding *integration* has stifled faculty engagement and collective creativity, negatively impacted student learning, and diminished stewardship of society's complex challenges by foregoing reflective practice and concentrating instead on what Schon (1983) called "technical rationality."

At the same time, directly applying Lawrence and Lorsch's six factors to academic organizations, as is, does not take into account the distinctive qualities of academic culture in general, and doctoral programs in particular. Further, the authors themselves suggested that these "integrative devices" are likely not independent determinants but highly interrelated – that is, the presence or absence of one likely enhances or diminishes another.

Evidence available to us suggests that this is certainly true in academic organizations. We have reconceptualized the six factors in the following way. First, what the authors described as "intentional balancing of interests" (Determinant 1) we choose to call *holding essential tensions* – that successful integration depends on an academic program's ability to hold certain paradoxes in a healthy equilibrium. We see the next two pairs of "integrative devices" as two of the essential tensions. The first pair is *optimizing faculty's professional expertise* (Determinant 2), while also *nurturing a culture of collective responsibility* (Determinant 3). The second pair is ensuring that faculty, despite their specializations, have influence both in their individual professional practices, or *individual efficacy* (Determinant 4), and on the program as a whole, or *organizational efficacy* (Determinant 5). Finally, we see the sixth factor, an "emphasis on problem-solving," as necessary for the tensions to be held in appropriate balance. We call this last factor a *culture of critical reflection* (Determinant 6). We elaborate on

the renamed factors below, and then demonstrate how they work in one doctoral program, Antioch University's PhD in Leadership & Change.

Holding Essential Tensions

Doctoral education programs must acknowledge and deal with “strategic paradoxes” (Smith, 2014). Paradoxes are different from “dilemmas”: one is not making a difficult choice between competing values, but rather figuring out how to accomplish conflicting purposes, without choosing among them. In highly differentiated organizations like universities, the natural tendency is for each sector to maximize its own productivity: Offices of admissions and recruitment want to maximize enrollment, while academic advisors want fewer students with academic challenges; those in finance want to see increased revenue, often from gifts and contracts, while students want faculty attention focused on their studies and not on cultivating donors and writing grants; assessment offices want evidence of value-added student learning, while faculty want to have smaller classes and teach what they want, not what they “have” to. In some ways, these interests overlap; in some ways – maybe most – they do not. The conflicting interests are evident. To adapt Lawrence and Lorsch's terms, short-term goals such as increasing enrollment to avoid budget shortfalls conflict with long-term goals such as maintaining an institution's reputation for high academic standards and attracting excellent students and faculty. These are tensions that cannot be easily resolved, and should not be. Living with tensions does not mean ignoring them. Effective academic organizations transcend comfortable collaboration (Walwood et al., 2000) by participating freely and openly in issues of importance, and by realizing that transformative growth and change occurs most frequently through discomfort (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). As we noted earlier, two key tensions are optimizing faculty expertise while nurturing a culture of collective responsibility, and ensuring both individual and organizational efficacy.

Optimizing Faculty's Professional Expertise/Nurturing Collective Responsibility

One of the problems with extreme differentiation and disaggregation in the new wave of online degrees is that faculty members have little say in the program's curriculum, or even in how their own courses should be

designed, taught or evaluated. One of the most unfortunate side effects of online “market-focused” programs are “standardized” curricula: there is little room for individual faculty to display the professional expertise that brought them to the classroom in the first place. Faculty expertise is not optimized in these programs, it is essentially eliminated and thus, an effective integrating device is fundamentally diminished.

In traditional doctoral programs, the problem goes otherwise. Faculty expertise is highly optimized, faculty’s academic knowledge and professional autonomy remains sacrosanct. Of course, we see this as positive. Yet, the outright rejection of managerial hierarchy in the traditional academic culture has had its own unfortunate side effect, namely the expectation that faculty are responsible *only* for displaying specialized professional expertise, making more difficult a focus on collective responsibility, unit accountability, or shared governance in the truest sense of the word.

Given the above we suggest that managing the essential tension between faculty expertise and collective responsibility means valuing expert knowledge *and* team teaching and a curriculum built through collective negotiation. It would mean rewarding *both* solo initiatives *and* the collective work of the unit. It would mean valuing diverse perspectives *while also* negotiating agreement through constructive contention.

Ensuring Individual/Organizational Efficacy

In an academic culture, “influence at the requisite level” (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) means that faculty members have appropriate authority over the curriculum and what happens in the classroom, whether face-to-face or virtual. As we pointed out earlier, in many newer wave professional online programs where academic work is so highly differentiated that faculty become merely agents for carrying out a curriculum designed by others, the influence that one would expect from an experienced professional is lacking. Faculty treated as interchangeable parts inhibits organizational efficacy as well, as faculty lose the sense of how their work connects with the larger whole. Ensuring individual efficacy would mean that faculty had authority over their own work, including the design, delivery, and evaluation of the curriculum. This characterizes the traditional “collegial culture” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008), where a managerial hierarchy is assumed not to exist, at least not in academic affairs, where faculty make all key academic decisions. In most institutions however the collegial ideal has all but disappeared, replaced by an “administrative lattice” (Zemsky & Massy, 1993)

that has become self-sustaining. Thus, despite the enormous cultural differences in university environments, a belief that individual faculty are responsible only for displaying professional expertise, coupled with the administrative overlay, can lead to the conclusion that integration is somebody else's job, and organizational performance suffers.

Given the above we suggest that managing the essential tension between individual and organizational efficacy means placing a high value on professional autonomy *while also* nurturing a shared mission and vision. It would mean encouraging *both* individual growth and systems thinking. It would mean focusing on individual teaching excellence *as well as* connected program requirements and coherent curricula.

A Culture of Critical Reflection

Academic cultures are notoriously conflict-avoidant (Massy, Wilger, & Colbeck, 1994), and in an academic culture characterized by extreme differentiation, and an absence of collective responsibility, it is easy to rationalize that issues facing the academic unit or the institution as a whole are somebody else's problem. Healthy academic cultures, on the other hand, recognize that conflict is important, what one of us calls an atmosphere of "constructive contention" (Wergin, 2003). A culture of critical reflection does not just focus on problems and how to solve them, but is an intentional effort to step back occasionally and ask, "What's working? What isn't? What's to be learned here?" Here we go beyond Lawrence and Lorsch's focus on "problem-solving," to a deeper recognition that in order to make complex organizations like universities work effectively, a culture of reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983; Vaill, 1996) is necessary. And because most essential tensions occur across individuals or units with different interests at stake, the best critical reflection occurs in dialogue.

DIFFERENTIATION AND INTEGRATION: ANTIOCH'S PHD IN LEADERSHIP & CHANGE

We now apply this lens to a specific doctoral program, Antioch University's PhD in Leadership & Change. While surely other doctoral programs successfully balance differentiation and integration, we know this one intimately as we both have been part of it since its founding in the early

2000s. It is a high-performing doctoral program based on internal and external metrics including 70–75% completion rate, which is much higher than the U.S. national average of 10-year 50–60% completion rates (Council of Graduate Schools, 2008); extremely high student and alumni satisfaction as evidenced by internal survey results that show over 90% of our alumni have recommended the program to a colleague and over 30% are donors to the program's scholarship fund; and high faculty productivity and satisfaction as evidenced by publication output, service contributions, and faculty self-reflections and performance evaluations. The program's inquiries and applicant pools have grown steadily; enrollment projections have been achieved and expenses kept under control every year since its founding. Taken as a whole, these are indicators of high performance typically associated with program quality in higher education.

After a brief context-setting description of the program's design and delivery, we examine how the program has achieved a balance between high differentiation and high integration: how, in other words, we live with the paradoxes.

The program is a cohort-based, outcomes-based and hybrid model designed for experienced professionals who are leading change in their respective fields of practice. With an interdisciplinary and multi-sector learning community of faculty and students, the curriculum is designed to provide an integrated learner-centered structure for both peer-paced and individualized study, with an emphasis on academic rigor, applied research, experiential learning, and reflective practice. Students are awarded credit for a developmentally sequenced set of demonstrations of learning leading to the dissertation, as opposed to seat-time in courses. The curriculum is organized around two interwoven multiyear learning paths, one focused on the study and practice of leadership and change, the other on the development of research and inquiry skills. The culmination of these pathways is an original dissertation that has implications for professional practice.

Perhaps one of the most interesting program features is that we are geographically dispersed. The 10 fulltime senior faculty work from home offices across the US and world, coming together for quarterly face-to-face residencies with students. All other program work is done at a distance, using both audio and video technology. One might think that distance and time zones would inhibit our ability to integrate and do the work of the unit collectively. In fact, to a person, faculty members feel more engaged and interdependent in this program than in any site-based program in which they have previously worked. Using the language of this chapter,

the program's integrative devices have been highly effective in holding a geographically dispersed interdisciplinary group of seasoned and differentiated faculty in common and in collective.

Another important program feature is the program's overall purpose to educate scholar-practitioners with the knowledge and skills to lead change that improves the lives of those they serve in workplaces, organizations, and communities around the world; in other words, we are training stewards (leaders) of society and not stewards of a specific discipline or profession. This requires us to offer an interdisciplinary and cross-sector curriculum that draws together the theories, research, and practices of leading change. It also requires us to have a pedagogic model that infuses theory with practice and supports students' intellectual and professional development as reflective learners, practitioners, and scholars. Thus, the imperative for integration is at the very core of the curriculum and its delivery.

Yet, at the same time, we educate over 160 active students who are seasoned professionals working in many different sectors and holding a wide variety of leadership roles. Each student enters the program with curiosities based on his or her own professional practice. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all standardized approach to teaching or learning would be at cross-purposes with the nature and expectations of our students. In fact, within the integrated curriculum students tailor the developmentally sequenced assignments to deepen their own highly differentiated individual path and they design individualized learning modules in their final pre-candidacy year. Thus, paradoxically, the imperative for curricular integration and delivery is equally matched with the imperative for differentiation of, by, and for each learner.

Albeit brief, we hope this introduction sufficiently illustrates how the program is both highly differentiated in the realms of learners, faculty, and curriculum and yet also highly integrated in terms of those very same categories. The PhD in Leadership & Change Program has found a way to thrive in spite of, or rather because of, these antagonistic tensions, which is precisely what Lawrence and Lorsch believed to be the essential magic for high-performing organizations.

In order to stay within the chapter's limited space, we now look only at those integrating devices that relate to faculty life and work in the program. It remains for another time to engage in an examination of the integrating devices for the learners. That said, we of course recognize that these are interrelated components and the presence or absence of one determinant affects the presence or absence of another.

Optimizing Faculty's Professional Expertise While Nurturing a Culture of Collective Responsibility

How does one honor disciplinary expertise without it becoming a differentiator that devolves collective responsibility into individual turf wars? Strange as it sounds, we have never approached hiring faculty by discipline. Every search has brought us seasoned expert faculty whose disciplinary training and research interests enrich and strengthen our interdisciplinary breath in the study of leadership and change, whether they come from management, education, psychology, political science, humanities, or so forth. They are hired to teach and facilitate learning within a curriculum designed by faculty as a whole along multiyear learning pathways, not discrete courses, and they bring their expertise to that part of the curricular pathway with which their disciplinary expertise and professional practice most align. If one's expertise happens to align directly with a core aspect of our curricular design, such as relational leadership or complexity theory, then that faculty member typically is responsible for residency sessions focused on that component; nevertheless, faculty know coming into the program that there is little room for highly specialized discipline-defined teaching. Thus, the pull of discipline as differentiator is held in check by an interdisciplinary curriculum that requires generalist integration.

One of the highly effective integrative devices we use to optimize faculty expertise while nurturing collective responsibility is that each quarterly residency is designed collectively, from the identification of specific sessions to the selection of assigned readings, ensuring fair distribution of talent, time, and topic. We also regularly team-teach sessions, bringing together in synergistic and integrative ways the expertise of several faculty into a dynamic classroom experience for students. When faculty are not facilitating sessions, they often choose to sit in colleagues' sessions, not for purposes of evaluation, but rather to observe the cohorts' learning and find threads that they can integrate with their own sessions.

Another significant way in which the program optimizes faculty expertise while nurturing collective responsibility is by differentiated job responsibilities. It comes as no surprise that some faculty are better at advising than others, some are energized by face-to-face classroom contact whereas others are equally comfortable engaging with students online; some have administrative talents and others abhor project planning, and so on. To the degree possible, while still satisfying the necessary work of the unit, we aspire to differentiate individual faculty work based on expertise, interest, talent, and career span. To ensure that this does not become a perception

that someone is not doing his or her share, an integrative device we use to manage the tension is to have the entire spreadsheet of work responsibilities for the upcoming year reviewed and discussed by the full faculty at our Spring meeting. We all see who is doing what and we all have input into how the work of the unit is being distributed.

Another integrative device relates to our use of distributed team ownership over tracks in the curriculum. As stated previously, there are two multiyear learning pathways, one focused on leadership and change and one focused on research and inquiry. The full faculty is divided into two groups: one composed of faculty with expertise in a range of research methods and the other composed of faculty who lean more heavily on the theories and practices of leadership and change. Each faculty team is responsible for the pathway's design, developmentally sequenced sessions, integrated readings, and threaded themes such that the program assures the student learning outcomes to which the entire faculty have agreed. That team is expected to bring forward to the full faculty any recommendations for changes in the design or delivery, for example, recommendations for additional sessions on particular research methods to be taught more heavily, or recommendations about which leadership theories will be emphasized by the program's pathway. Our differentiated expertise comes together to build something greater than the sum of the parts, an integrated learning experience. Each successful graduate is the result of the hard work of the entire faculty, not of a single talented mentor.

Thus, the extreme differentiation witnessed in many doctoral programs by highly specialized faculty expertise and prized workloads based on seniority is counterbalanced in our program by high integration and a value placed on equity of contribution. In a paradoxical way, leveling the playing field allows for both high differentiation and high integration.

Ensuring both Individual and Organizational Efficacy

Individual efficacy, the sense of accomplishment within organizations and teams, has long been recognized as essential (Staw, 1983). In our program, that sense of accomplishment comes both from the fulfillment of one's personal achievements and from the achievement of our collective aspirations. In a traditional doctoral program, individual efficacy might typically derive from public recognition of one's own research and/or the skill and talent one brings into the classroom. It emerges from one's knowledge of a field and the authority over what one teaches. While individual faculty members

may be proud to be part of a top tier program or university, their sense of efficacy is about their own work and perhaps how the reputation of that work earned them a place at the table of that institution. This is very different from having one's very sense of accomplishment derived from the organization's accomplishments as a unit.

So, how is the tension between individual and organizational efficacy in our program effectively managed?

The tension stems from the necessary redefinition of faculty productivity, away from building a reputation in a particular academic niche, to becoming part of an academic team. Occasionally faculty, particularly in their early years in the program, have expressed a sense of loss of the fullest recognition of their hard-earned expertise; our task therefore has been to counterbalance this loss by recognizing and rewarding individual contributions to the work of the faculty team. We do this in two ways: first by differentiating faculty workload as described earlier, which acknowledges the distinctiveness of individual faculty contributions, and second by valuing all faculty work equally. This is more than rhetoric in our program. Core faculty are paid the same salary whether they are just joining the program or whether they are in their second decade. We only hire experienced professors at senior level. This has not only assured seasoned educators to work with our student body, but it has also entirely eliminated the often-destructive process of judging one another for rank and tenure. Not having a star system does more than equalize pay: It equalizes contribution, creates conditions for equity, and increases collective responsibility.

This is not to say that tensions do not exist – for example when an individual's need to meet a deadline conflicts with time needed to redesign a set of sessions, none of which he or she is actually teaching. Particularly for faculty relatively early in their careers, whose fullest professional aspirations we want to support, finding ways for them to achieve their personal goals is difficult. We are not sure we have successfully managed the paradox in all cases. The tensions are difficult to hold when deep pride in the success of the program comes at a cost to one's individual achievement.

Nurturing a Culture of Critical Reflection

One of the most effective integrating devices that enable organizations to thrive in the midst of antagonistic tensions is the system's ability to deal with these conflicts as a normal byproduct of differentiation. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) found that instead of smoothing things over or passive

sabotaging, the healthiest of organizations confront to problem solve. We are reluctant to classify this aspect as “problem-solving” because the first part, “problem,” starts from a deficit approach; the second part, “solve,” suggests that inherent tensions are resolvable, which they are not. Given that, we want to call this integrative device the ability to nurture a culture of critical reflection, one in which constructive contention across units and constructive reflection in action among teams and individuals is normalized and valued. *The ability to create this culture is a precondition for both differentiation and integration to exist simultaneously.*

Critical reflection requires respect for difference and a trust that members are all working for the common good. Despite all of the leadership literature’s tools and tips, it is hard to pinpoint how to build and sustain trust. Of course, behaviors like honesty, transparency, and dependability all have their place. As an integrative device, our program creates intentional space for reflection at annual retreats that focus on big issues like program growth. We also create the space for critical reflection when we, as a full faculty team, review students’ annual academic progress for indications of where the program is serving student learning well or where we may need improvement. We create space for reflection by developing appreciative listening skills at meetings, being sure everyone has a chance to contribute if they choose, and resisting the impulse to find quick solutions to complex issues.

In many ways, however, all space reserved for reflection will only be as constructive as the participants’ abilities to engage with an appreciative spirit and non-defensive stance. We have been fortunate in the PhD in Leadership & Change Program. When conflict has arisen between individuals, we have been able to address it with constructive and at times facilitated conversations. At the extreme, we have had to address more toxic behaviors more directly. However, for the most part and for over 15 years, conflicts are about distinct interests and/or differences of opinion about direction, not about individual personalities.

Perhaps it is a bit of “chicken and egg” in terms of who is drawn to this type of program model. The faculty who have joined the program – who said they had “butterflies” when they read the job announcement – know themselves, have their careers in order, have their egos in check, and want to be part of a team of collaborative faculty. They have had enough of the highly differentiated, highly isolated, highly competitive lives of many academics. As individuals they are at a personal and professional stage where they want to find satisfaction in joining with others to build a truly unique doctoral program.

With that as a baseline, mutual respect allows individual difference to thrive because no one's career trajectory depends on being passive until tenure is assured; everyone's professional satisfaction depends on each member doing his or her best at whatever they contribute in whatever way they contribute. Thus, building a culture of critical reflection is also about tempering the extreme differentiation that emerges from individually driven career aspirations with the pride one feels in the collective achievement of excellence. This may not be for everyone, nor may it satisfy different needs at different career stages. But it has worked for us.

CONCLUSION

We recognize that Antioch's PhD program benefits in design and purpose in ways that make managing the paradoxes easier. The inherently interdisciplinary curriculum and flexible practitioner focus allows for a robust integrative model. Experienced faculty are drawn to our program in mid- to late-career because they desire a different kind of faculty role and collaborative academic culture. All faculty hold the same rank and earn the same salary; yet, each brings different disciplinary perspectives and offers distinct talents. These unique characteristics provide integrative devices that hold differentiation and integration in creative tension.

What lessons emerge for doctoral programs that do not – and may never – look like ours? As a start, we suggest the following.

- Identify how the particular program's purpose and design manifest strategic paradoxes, and examine if and how these essential tensions between differentiation and integration are kept in balance.
- Be intentional about creating integrating devices that might be adapted to the individual program. For example, optimizing both faculty expertise and collective responsibility will take different forms, requiring fresh thinking about supporting faculty growth throughout their career span while also making sure that program needs are being met. Be sure that faculty reward structures address equally individual performance and contribution to the team and unit.
- Make space for individual and group critical reflection as an imperative for program excellence. Maintaining a healthy equilibrium will be impossible without it.

In conclusion, we have found value in applying the organizational lens of differentiation and integration to the doctoral education setting.

Our review leads us to conclude that both traditional and new wave doctoral programs tend to overemphasize differentiation, albeit for different reasons, with negative impacts on student completion, faculty engagement, and social impact. By intentionally establishing and maintaining equilibrium through effective integrating devices, doctoral programs can mediate the excesses of extreme differentiation in ways that benefit individual and organizational health, student learning, and ultimately society as a whole.

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