

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Toward a Better Understanding of Doctoral Degree Completion: A 17-Year View of an Executive Leadership Doctoral Program

This study attempts to analyze factors that contribute to doctoral degree completion in one cohort based doctoral program over a period of seventeen years. Four research questions were identified: What is the relationship between doctoral degree completion and student perceptions of three doctoral program factors: research preparation, faculty involvement, and dissertation advisor/advisee relationship; between doctoral degree completion and student perception of a cohort experience; between doctoral degree completion and doctoral student personality type as measured by the Singer-Loomis Type Deployment Inventory (SL-TDI); and between student perception of cohort experience and SL-TDI scores?

The population consisted of 364 doctoral students in a nontraditional cohort based program. Two samples were identified as “survey sample” and “personality sample”. A 68-question survey was administered with a response rate of 61%. A quantitative associational study using descriptive statistics, reliability tests, correlational analysis and linear and logistical regression was designed to analyze the data.

Results of the study indicated that there was no correlation between degree completion and demographics. Three program factors were found to be significant in predicting completion: “Dissertation committee members experienced problems that hindered my progress”; “Faculty members have encouraged me to pursue research questions that are of interest to me”; and

“Required coursework in my doctoral program prepared me for writing my dissertation”. No significant relationship was found between personality and cohort experience; however, two personality trait types (extroverted sensing and extroverted feeling) were significant in predicting doctoral degree completion and noncompletion. Finally, a relationship was found between “I rely a great deal on other students in my cohort” and “small group work is beneficial to me” and degree completion. The study also demonstrated that the constructs of the study were reliable.

Nine recommendations were made including expanding the use of the survey, recommendations regarding three significant program factors, accountability measures for dissertation committees and chairpersons, improved monitoring of attrition; further research in exploring the relationship between research efficacy and degree completion and among leadership, personality and research efficacy.