

TITLE: Duquesne University IDPEL Cohorts: A Laboratory for Leadership

RESEARCHER: Phillip F. Diller
School of Education
Duquesne University
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OBJECTIVE: This qualitative evaluation study examined the longitudinal contribution of the Duquesne University Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders (IDPEL) cohort participation to the school leadership practices of IDPEL students.

METHODOLOGY: The target population were members of the second and third (2000 and 2003) IDPEL cohorts currently working as school leaders, and resulted in five subjects. Each completed the Leadership Practices Inventory and distributed copies of the LPI-Observer form to colleagues with whom they had worked prior to the program and a similar number of colleagues from their current workplace. The usual response rate for the LPI-O was 78 percent. Each participant was also privately interviewed about their experiences before and after the program.

KEY FINDINGS: Review of the pre- and post-IDPEL experience data on the LPI-Observer showed a negative change for all five participants, although only one reached statistical significance ($p < .05$). “Qualitative interviews conducted with the five individual participants...quickly suggest why positive change in leadership practices may not be noted” (p. 58). The author suggests this was due to “situational changes experienced by participants” as well as a “structural feature of the survey instrument” (p. 62). The latter meant that the time lapse between the two “experiences” of the participant was too great, and that many people rated (as noted on hand-written comments) the participant’s program rather than his/her behavior.

The author concludes that “the grouping of students pursuing the doctorate as a cohort does offer a laboratory for leadership” (p. 77).

Also presented at the University Council on Educational Administration National Conference (Kansas City), November 2004: “The Contribution of Graduate Cohort Participation to School Leaders’ Knowledge and Leadership Practice.”