WKU Educational Leadership Doctoral Program Dissertation-in-Practice

Chapter 1 Quality Rubric

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This tool is designed to help WKU EdD students, course instructors, and chairs/committee members understand the features of a high-quality Chapter 1 as it appears in WKU improvement science dissertations in practice. Chapter 1 articulates the problem of practice that will be the focus of the improvement science study. This tool should be used in conjunction with the dissertation-in-practice framework found in Appendix A of the *WKU EdD Student Handbook*, the *WKU EdD Writing Rubric*, and relevant improvement science sources like Chapter 3, "Actionable Problems of Practice," in *The Improvement Science Dissertation-in-Practice: A Guide for Faculty, Committee Members, and Their Students* (Perry et al., 2020), and Chapter 3, "Collaborating to Define Problems" in *Improvement Science in Education: A Primer* (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020).

Chapter element	Proficient	Developing	Unacceptable
Introduction to the problem *-the overarching problem-*	States the overarching problem and makes a compelling case that this problem is indeed endemic for practitioners in a broad educational context (K-12, higher education, public service sector, health care, etc.; see Perry et al., p. 54, for the difference between overarching problem areas and the local problem – the intro should address the overarching problem for educators broadly).	States an overarching problem but the case that this problem is endemic for practitioners in a broad context needs to be strengthened.	It is not clear that what is being described is truly an overarching problem impacting educators in a broad educational context. The problem being described may only be local in nature and not representative of a broader problem for the field.
-evidence of the ubiquity and relevance of the overarching problem-	Presents evidence in the form of data and literature from practitioners and scholars that this problem interferes with educational organizations accomplishing their core	More sources and evidence are needed to make a convincing case that the stated problem interferes with educational organizations accomplishing their core mission.	The statement of the problem is not supported by data or scholarly or practitioner sources.

-clarity of the problem from any possible solutions-	mission (examples: reading and math proficiency, graduation rates, college/career readiness, etc.). The statement of the overarching problem does not refer to possible solutions or imply that the solution to this problem is already known.	There may be some evidence of confusion of the problem and potential solutions.	The statement of the problem is a proposed intervention or solution.
The problem of practice in context *-the local problem-*	Describes how this overarching problem for the broader field appears *within the student's chosen professional context of study*. Describes in broad terms the general characteristics of the context (an individual school, university, hospital, business, or unit within such an organization). Explains how the problem currently figures as a prominent, vexing, long-term challenge to organizational success, using institutional data as appropriate.	Description may need some additional data, evidence, or argumentation to explain how the problem currently figures as a prominent, vexing, long-term challenge to organizational success, using institutional data as appropriate.	Fails to provide evidence that the stated problem figures as a prominent, vexing, long-term challenge to organizational success. Statement of the local problem may be a restatement of the broader, overarching problem.
-the student's role/positionality in context-	Describes the student's role or position within the organization and how they experience the problem first-hand.	Describes the student's role or position within the organization but may need to explain why the stated problem is relevant to their role.	Fails to describe the student's role or relevance of the problem to their position.
-"users" of the local problem-	Makes a case for why various "users" of the problem within	Describes "users" of the local problem but may need to make	Fails to identify "users" of the local problem.

	the organizational context experience the issue as an obstacle to organizational success (see Hinnant-Crawford, p. 45; examples: students, parents, faculty members, staff members, administrators, business leaders, etc.).	a stronger case for how users actually experience the problem as an obstacle to the organization accomplishing its mission.	
-variation in the local problem-	Describes "variation" in the way users experience the local problem (see Hinnant-Crawford, Ch. 4). For example, does this problem seem to have a disparate impact on freshmen students, first-generation students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, etc.)?	Student may still be trying to identify variation in users' experience of the problem that root cause analysis may further illuminate.	Does not describe variation in how users experience the local problem.
-actionable nature of the local problem-	The local problem described should be actionable, reflecting something over which the student in their role has some influence to impact.	There may be some lack of clarity about how the stated problem is actionable within the student's role. This too may be further illuminated during root cause analysis.	The problem described is something over which the student has little to no ability to influence.
Purpose of the study	A brief statement that explains that this study will use improvement science to examine how _____ (x problem) can be improved in _____ (x context).	Purpose of the study may not explicitly reference improvement science.	Purpose of study is unclear to the reader as written.

Research question(s)	States a research question that directly addresses the problem of practice through the application of improvement science. Examples: "How can we use improvement science to improve kindergarten readiness among preschoolers at Preschool X?" "How can we use improvement science to improve second-year retention at University X?" "How can we use improvement science with health educators to promote positive health changes in diabetes patients at Hospital X?"	Further connections needed between the problem and application of improvement science.	No research question presented or RQ is not clearly connected to the stated problem.
Overview of research methods used	Describes the various quantitative and qualitative methods used in this particular study.	Describes the typical kinds of methods used in improvement science.	Does not describe anticipated or utilized research methods or does so inaccurately.
Conceptual framework: Improvement science	Describes the improvement science process (identification of a problem, collaborative root cause analysis to understand the sources of the problem in the local context, and the deployment of iterative cycles of interventions – plan, do, study, act – to gather data to assess the impact of the interventions and directions for subsequent intervention efforts. Cites appropriate	Key components of the improvement science process are not described or the appropriateness of improvement science to address this problem of practice needs to be strengthened.	Fails to accurately describe the improvement science process.

	sources in this description, for example, Perry et al., Hinnant-Crawford, Bryk et al., Mintrop, Langley et al., etc.). Briefly describes why improvement science is an appropriate method for examining this problem of practice in this particular context.		
Conceptual framework: Leadership theory	Describes the key features of a leadership theory that will inform the design of this improvement science study, citing appropriate primary authors. For most students, adaptive leadership will figure prominently here, but other leadership theories may be appropriate (examples: followership, leader-member exchange, transformational, etc.). Clearly makes a case for how this leadership theory applies to and enhances the effort to carry out improvement science in this particular context.	Description of leadership theory may need some additional sources or citations.	Fails to describe (or accurately describe) a leadership theory applicable to this study.
OPTIONAL: Conceptual framework: Other theories	Describes features of any other theories that might be relevant to this study and why they are relevant, citing appropriate primary source authors. (Examples: Bandura's self-efficacy theory, Dweck's	Description of other theories may need some additional sources or citations.	N/A

	mindset's theory, Drago-Severson's adult learning theory, etc.).		
Significance of Study	Describes why this study makes an important contribution to the field of practice and to empirical research. Answers the question: why should similarly situated practitioners read this completed study?	Case for the study's significance could be further strengthened.	Fails to make a case for the significance of the study.
Limitations/delimitations	Explains that improvement science studies are not intended to be generalizable but makes the case for the relevance and importance of contextualized research. Within that context, accurately articulates the limitations and delimitations of the study.	Accurately describes limitations and delimitations but may need to strengthen that discussion relevant to the purposes of improvement science.	Fails to articulate limitations/delimitations or does so inaccurately.
Definitions/glossary of terms	Describes terms that may need to be operationalized for purposes of the study, and which may be unfamiliar to readers without specific expertise in the subject.	Definitions may need further development based on additional study of the literature or clarification during root cause analysis.	Does not include definitions of terms

Hinnant-Crawford, B. (2020). *Improvement science in education: A primer*. Myers Education Press.

Perry, J. A., Zambo, D., & Crow, R. (2020). *The improvement science dissertation in practice: A guide for faculty, committee members, and their students*. Myers Education Press.