

## **Outputs or Impacts: End or Beginning?** **A Commentary**

Many doctoral finishers see the degree (EdD or PhD) as the ‘output’ and view as the *end* – degree is granted, dissertation is finished, and the Dr. is now in front of the name. And the dissertation is registered in the online library data base (likely to spend eternity). Yes, these are examples of *outputs*.

Rather than view the dissertation as the finish line, educators have the responsibility and obligation to share their research with the profession and education at large. How will your research help to improve teaching and learning in our schools? In what ways can your dissertation research address effective leadership in our schools? These are examples of *impacts* and occur AFTER the dissertation. In a real sense, the dissertation is only the *beginning*.

Impacts are not often considered in most Ed.D. program evaluations because impacts generally take place after Ed.D. graduates leave the university (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2007a). We rarely conduct follow-up studies to observe and evaluate what our graduates accomplish years after they receive their degrees. Even more rare is the assessment of impact that faculty have on the effectiveness and improvement of the Ed.D. program. One might posit that impact is the essence of good evaluation plans and the only true measure of our success or failure in preparing school leaders who will make a difference in school improvement. Examples of impact might include (1) the Ed.D. graduate is directly responsible for the improvement of student achievement at their schools; (2) through improved relationship with area schools, faculty have helped to improve the reputation and prestige of the Ed.D. program among school superintendents and communities; and (3) the Ed.D. graduate has moved into positions such as state superintendent of instruction, director of elementary or secondary education, or other positions impacting education policy. “Impacts are organizational, community, and/or system level changes expected to result from program activities, which might include improved conditions, increased capacity, and/or changes in the policy arena” (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2007b, p. 8).

So, how does one make certain that impacts are addressed? Some strategies and examples are: (1) presenting your research at professional conferences, (2) sharing your findings and recommendations with colleagues at your school site and community, and (3) publishing in peer reviewed educational journals.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2007a). W.K. Kellogg Foundation Handbook. Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2007b). W.K. Kellogg Logic Model Development Guide. Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation.