

THE IMPACT OF STUDENT COHORT GROUPS ON THE SUSTAINABILITY
OF A DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN A
MEDIUM SIZED UNIVERSITY IN THE SOUTH

A Dissertation

By

JO ANNE ELAINE WRAY

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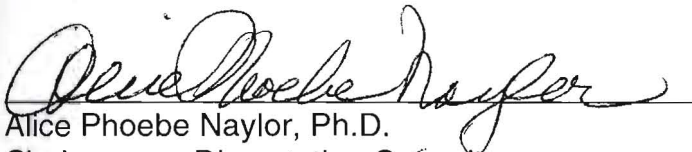
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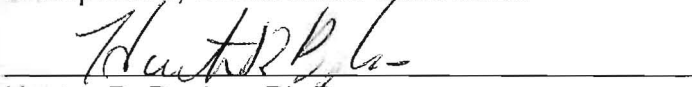
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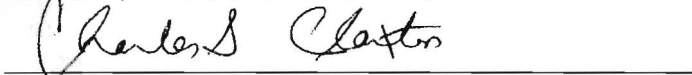
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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF STUDENT COHORT GROUPS ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF A DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN A MEDIUM SIZED UNIVERSITY IN THE SOUTH

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The purpose of this case study was to investigate the effect of student cohort groups on the organizational sustainability of a doctoral program in educational leadership at a medium sized southern university. The fundamental questions being addressed were: What are the characteristics of the organizational structure and management in a select doctoral level educational leadership program in higher education? What influences did student cohort groups have on the organizational structure and management within that select higher education system? And, what influences did student cohort groups have on the sustainability of the educational leadership program within the select higher education system? The theoretical foundation of the study was based on Margaret Wheatley's view of organizations as living systems, "a network of processes in which every process contributes to all other processes."

Qualitative methodology was employed to review organizational development and design, student and university cultural characteristics and impacts, along sustainability factors as applied to the doctoral program being studied. Through the review of the program's historical data and interviews with

administrators, faculty and cohort members, a series of trends were identified influencing program sustainability. A common theme threaded throughout the data was the evidence of a “human factor” in supporting program sustainability, whether it was through cohort members, faculty or the program's director.