

Discussion Lecture - Session 1

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Space for personal development: an exploration of student experience involving one professional doctorate programme

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Kevin Flint is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Nottingham Trent University. Kevin has worked in secondary education in various schools, with first hand experience of discourses of improvement. Doing doctoral study while teaching and engaging in mountaineering led to an interest in European philosophy and grounds for reflection that has changed his understanding of schooling and education. Heideggerian philosophy and some of its descendants has provided both a framework for rethinking the fundamentals of education and a framing of a new trans-disciplinary professional doctorate programme, incorporating education, social science and law, that Kevin has taken a lead role in setting up at Nottingham Trent. Kevin has published work challenging dominant ideas of teaching and learning, on the performance culture in teaching, on the framing of lifelong learning, on the pervasive ethic of improvement (with Nick Peim) and on the development of professional doctorate.

General issues:

- Opportunities for personal development through professional doctoral training

Space for personal development: an exploration of student experience involving one professional doctorate programme

Personal development planning (PDP) is high on the agenda at all levels of education in the UK (Department of Education and Skills, 2003; Quality Assurance Agency, 2004). These moves represent one strand in a broader employability agenda and reflect global transformations, which

according to Edwards and Usher (2000) are replacing the dominant identity of the 'enlightened student' with that of the 'autonomous /self-directed/ flexible lifelong learners' (ibid: 55). Barnett (2003) has similarly observed the emergence of new technologies of performance reflecting a shift towards the self-generational capacities of students and away from the presentation of a more hierarchically structured disciplinary culture.

At issue in this paper is the extent to which the personal embodied identity of the 'researching professional'¹ engaged in the professional doctorate programme that is

1. Bourner et al., (2000) have used the term 'researching professionals' to describe the activities of students engaged in professional doctorate programmes.

always situated within horizons that extend beyond the world of professional milieu. Our particular concern is that there is always the danger of the individual reproducing institutional machinery in which the 'polymorphous and polyvalent' capillaries of 'biopower'² are ever present, ensuring wherever possible that human being becomes 'available for use', co-opted and micro-managed in the seemingly insatiable drive for performativity. At issue in this paper is an attempt to open resistance to such 'technological framing' (Flint and Needham, 2007) and modalities of biopower mediating 'lifelong learning' in which the professional doctorate is situated.

Perhaps nowhere have the effects of biopower and of 'technological enframing' been more acutely felt than in relation to the emergent issue of 'emotional intelligence' within the field of social-psychology. For example, Elaine Clarke (2009) connected emotional intelligence with the process of research as a basis for a more analytical approach to personal auditing. In a similar vein Dulewicz and Higgs (2004) study of emotional intelligence identifies a series of significant 'drivers' and 'enablers' for the development of research. They follow in the footsteps of Daniel Goleman's (1996) pioneering study which first began to open debate about any possible relationship between emotional intelligence, personal development and improved levels of performance.

In this particular field recent studies of emotional intelligence along with 'managerial intelligence' and 'intellectual intelligence'³ provide a number of categories and quantitative measures of personal competencies as a basis for what some might regard as a more analytical approach to self assessment⁴ and auditing used in PDP and in raising performance in research.

In taking issue with this approach, and in developing the Professional Doctorate programme at Nottingham Trent, this study provides a narratological case study of students' personal developments mediated by their engagement in research. Contrary to the infinite space which is tacitly assumed to be available within the foregoing socio-psychological studies, this study details the outcomes of dialogue with our own 'researching professionals' and reveals the extent to which the space of institutional machinery bears down upon their work in different professions and gives little

room for scholarship and thinking demanded by the professional doctorate.

As Edwards and Usher (2007) have suggested, in their explorations of *Globalisation and Pedagogy*, there is a need for 'putting space back on the map' (ibid: 35).

A year ago a *representation* of the structure, form and function of our professional doctorate programme remained an abstraction incorporating the institutions of law, education and social science⁵, a series of ordered signs on the pages of the university's 'context document'. Once marked with an official seal of approval the programme too, came to life as a structure for professionals to engage in a three year research project. In the production of that structure last year we were also intuitively conscious of the need to create space, possibly imaginative and intellectual space, for student-professionals to do their research. But, what exactly does the term 'space' signify? Indeed, to what extent is it meaningful to speak of producing space for research? And how much space is actually available to our research students working on a doctoral level programme?

Lefebvre (1991) invites us to give up the view of 'public space' as 'merely the stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds' (Carr et al., 1992: 3); instead his thesis moves us towards an understanding of space as constituted through, productive of, and permeated by social relations. Consequently the issue of personal development in the context of an analysis of the body and of identity are central to an exploration of social space in this paper. At issue is *the question of the implications for personal development mediated by the professional doctorate given the space imposed by existing forms of institutional machinery reproduced by researching professionals themselves?*

Lefebvre argued for a vision of 'life lived as a project', flowering concurrently rather than as fragmented pieces. But, what space is available for such flowering given the imperatives to reproduce extant forms of institutional machinery? In the first part of the paper, drawing on Foucault's analysis of biopower the paper illuminates the extent to which the institutional apparatus of Higher Education delimits and circumscribes the availability of space for personal development through engagement within a

2. The phrase is borrowed from Michel Foucault (2000: 82-83).

3. See, for example, Dulewicz and Higgs's (2000: 357-366).

4. Although centred upon school based education systems Peim and Flint's (2009) paper opens questions and further debate about the place of self-assessment for researching professionals engaged in professional doctorate programmes.

5. The current organisation (2008 - 09) of the professional doctorate programme, or simply, 'the programme' at Nottingham Trent University is structured by a common focus upon research and incorporates three degree programmes leading to either a Doctor of Education (EdD), or a Doctor of Legal Practice (D Legal Prac.) or a Doctor of Social Practice (D Soc. Prac.).

professional doctorate programme. At issue remains the question of the extent to which more space could be made available for such research programmes within extant forms of institution reproduced by researching professionals.

The second part of the paper explores the personal development mediated by engagement in the professional doctorate programme in the context of a dialogical hermeneutic framing for the research suggested by Hans Kögler (1992) in *The Power of Dialogue*. Methodologically it opens a way of thinking that is reflexive in its orientation. The paper will report our findings regarding personal development mediated by research from a preliminary and exploratory case study of three researching professionals based upon dialogue with our students about their own experiences of working through the first year of the programme.

It will be concluded by exploring some of the possible implications for personal development mediated by research in the context of issues concerning 'biopower' and 'technological framing'.

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