

Keynote 6

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Challenging the PhD: managing the alignment of an EdD programme alongside a traditional PhD pathway

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I am an Assistant Head of Teacher Education at the University and have worked in H.E. since 2003, following 22 years of teaching in secondary schools. My main research area is middle leadership in secondary schools particularly related to school improvement processes and how research can support practitioners in schools. I teach on the MA in Education and was appointed programme leader for the Doctor of Education (EdD) in January of this year.

The impact of undertaking a professional doctorate on professionals is now well documented (Wellington and Sikes, 2006, Butcher and Sieminski, 2006). However, the cultural and pedagogical challenge the Ed D brings to the traditional research PhD is less well recognised. The aim of this paper is to examine the cultural and pedagogical changes currently being experienced by the University of Derby in two aspects: (1) from the 'master/apprentice' model traditionally reserved for Ph D degrees to a more flexible and responsive pedagogy; (2) managing the integration of the Ed D within already well-established university systems that do not easily support its wide and diverse approach. The programme at Derby supports UK/European-based participants as well as a burgeoning off-site provision located in Cyprus; drawing on a mainly Israeli population who range from Arabs (Christians, Muslim and Palestinian) to Israeli

Jews. The University has a strategy of Widening Participation and encourages participants from a wide range of professions, from education (predominately), social work, health-based professions and the business sector.

This paper argues that the best practice of Ph D and Ed D routes can be used for the mutual benefit of all doctoral participants. Gaining parity for professional doctorates alongside Ph D programmes is giving rise to tensions as numbers of participants on the Ed D programme outstrips the traditional route coupled with faster completion rates compared to the Ph D. Coming to terms with the challenger has not been easy, but the thesis here is that while pedagogy might be different for the traditional and professional route there is much to be gained in opening up Research Offices to allow equity and opportunity for Ph D and

Ed D participants. Furthermore, the opportunities to bring national and international Ph D and Ed D groups together for study would enhance the research capacities at level 8 as well as provide a solid basis for on-going staff development offered by both doctoral routes; currently many staff undertake the more flexible Ed D route, as compared with the PhD route.

This work is not based upon any empirical research but centred on personal reflections of a relatively new programme leader for the Education Doctorate. Therefore, any conclusions must only be seen as speculative, tightly context bound (one university) but which illuminates the 'struggle' for recognition that is only just being fully recognised at a wider university level. It may not true to say, even given the widening participation agenda that a post-1992 teaching university has given increased recognition to the professional doctorate. Taylor's (2008) point about older research-led universities using the increased numbers of EdD students to strengthen their research base has not been captured in the same sense by this university. The management of all professional doctorates resides within faculties rather than the central University Research Office that exclusively manages the PhDs. This emergence of a 2-tier system may indeed strengthen Neuman's (2005) perception of a different status for the professional doctorate, which is reinforced by these very university systems. Only recently has it been recognised that recruitment, retention and completion rates on professional programmes is impressive and therefore programme leaders have been invited to share expertise at Faculty and University Research meetings, previously held exclusively for staff supervising PhDs. The recent validation of a 'New Route' PhD would appear to reinforce this separation; especially as the taught element is a common pedagogy to all research students, yet actively ring-fenced to PhD students alone.

The flexibility of the Ed D award in particular is well recognised at both national and international level at Derby. Currently there are far more university staff who engage (from a wide range of disciplines) in the EdD rather than PhD programme. Internationally there is a large cohort (over 60) of Israeli and Arab students who similarly face the challenge of the status issue of the EdD in their own country. Israeli universities do not recognise the EdD as a doctoral qualification (only the PhD); therefore many successful students have to undertake a further viva with the Ministry of Education in order to 'validate' the degree for its doctoral worthiness. Rather than affecting recruitment to the programme this has not been seen as a barrier by busy Israeli professionals who value the opportunity to

undertake research into an area of their professional expertise on a part-time basis.

As a programme leader I am coming to the conclusion that the flexibility and impact on professions offered by the EdD is not in any way 'inferior' to the PhD programme. Indeed, there have been few barriers to students transferring from one programme to another, which, in terms of quality and standards, moves us towards parity between the programmes. I am further heartened that recognition of the EdD cohorts at Derby is now becoming more widely recognised at University level, which might indicate a cultural 'shift' in those academic staff previously wedded to the PhD philosophy (Boud and Tennant, 2006). The struggle continues.

References

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