

## Workshop 6

Tuesday 10th November, 14.15 - 15.00

## The power of research: an exploration of critical dialogue as a model for the development of professionals

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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.

Facilitate sharing of experience with approaches to training & profession development:

- Illustrate a range of good practices in the development/delivery of generic and transferable skills for Professional Doctorates in different national and professional contexts

**The power of research: an exploration of critical dialogue as a model for the development of professionals**

In his exploration of 'the material conditions of thought' whereby something becomes established as a particular form of knowledge Michel Foucault focused upon the power of

the abstract institutional processes at work in founding such facts. In his selection of the title, *Power/Knowledge*, in one stroke Foucault (1980a) identified knowledge in terms of its conjunction with relations of power and information seeking. In his essay, entitled 'Prison Talk', Foucault (1980b: 52) elaborates on this complex inter-dependent relationship in his statement that 'it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge and it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power'. Hence, although by no means universally acknowledged as such, the production of new forms of knowledge as a measure of doctoral research has become closely associated with the ubiquity of power practices.

More concretely, in looking to the professional doctorate research programme that we are developing at Nottingham Trent University the conflation of power practices and the production of knowledge is manifest in both the much debated phenomena of 'work intensification'<sup>1</sup> and 'deprofessionalisation'<sup>2</sup>, which have been explained in terms of classical labour process theory<sup>3</sup>. In terms of language such phenomena can be seen to emerge from the almost insatiable appetite of institutional machineries of identity for the repetition of difference and polysemy.

This paper seeks to explore and to critically examine a research model of good practice for the professional doctorate. It is an attempt to open further debate about the application of such a model for the development of research within a professional doctorate programme.

The pedagogic model for the programme, adapted from Hans Kögler's (1992), *The Power of Dialogue*, works essentially as a structure for the repetition of a series of hermeneutic circles mediating practice and in so doing it opens the basis for a pedagogy which is essentially reflexive and research oriented. Practice is constituted as a series of workshops designed to encourage discussion and reflection about the process of undertaking research at doctoral level. In concert with the multi-professional environment in which most professionals now operate, the programme of research that we are developing at Nottingham Trent currently incorporates education, legal practice and social practice within a single programme which is used to structure students' research projects.

The model for research that we are using as a basis for exploring and developing the professional doctorate research programme has been located in the space opened up for critical enquiry between power<sup>4</sup> and the domination of extant power practices, including those associated with the process of research itself. In other words, the research model for the development of the programme occupies that abstract space between on the one hand the capacity to be able to do something in research and, on the other, what is done in practice as reflected in the discourses brought to the table by those professions represented within the professional doctorate.

Pedagogically this paper will illuminate how the adapted model has been designed to guide students in 'making strange the familiar' in terms of what they experience being reproduced each day within the

professional discourses that constitute the real hub of machineries of identity.

As a model for research used in the pedagogical development of the programme it is structured by an adaptation of Kögler's (1992) critical hermeneutics, which is based on a synthesis of discourses drawn from Hans Gadamer and Jürgen Habermass. The model privileges interest upon the 'preunderstandings' that individuals bring to any research based dialogue, including the pedagogical exchanges within the series of workshops constituting the programme. These are structured around three co-original issues of the individual's life history, the symbolic order and the power practices mediating social interaction.

This paper will present the outcomes of recent research which sought to explore the complex inter-relationship of individuals' life histories and their perceptions of what is done in practice within an aspect of their professional work that has created the grounds for their own doctoral research within the context of an extant symbolic order of the discourses in which the researching professional were situated. In so doing, and in the spirit of the dialogical pedagogy, the dialogue is shown to open a reflexive conversation about both students' own developing understandings of their own generation of knowledge through research and of the changes that such a process has wrought upon their own lives.

Philosophically and pedagogically the model creates an opening for reflexive self-determination and self-empowerment which will be highlighted in the paper.

In providing a structure for a circular dialogical process Kögler's model is represented to produce an agreement over the meaning of 'the thing itself' or 'real referent' of what has been discussed. It was developed under the rule of meaning. Yet the first year of our programme is structured around the methodological framing of research in order to open ways of thinking that challenge particular orders of meaning by recourse to other possible framings.

The development and adaptation of Kögler's model for the programme, presented in the final step of the paper provides a focus upon the structure of 'bricolage' adapted from Joe Kincheloe and Kathlene Berry (2004), which not only lays bare the constitution for a multiplicity of possible framings for research, it also affords a rational basis for resisting extant practices of power.

1. Burchielli, 2006; Edwards and Whitson, 1991; Easthope and Easthope, 2000; Guest, 1990; Hargreaves 1993, 1994; Mather et al., 2007; Nichols, 1991

2. Banks, 2004, 2001; Benyon, 1975; Braverman, 1998; Buttny, 1993; Etzione 1969; Haug, 1973; Hugman, 1991; Illich 1977, 1976a,b, 1975a,b, 1971

3. Braverman, 1974; Marx, 1976; Mather et al., 2007

4. Etymologically, of course, power derives from the Latin: posse, 'be able'.

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