

Professional Doctorates as Opportunities for CPD and the Lifelong Learning agenda

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An interesting title... with some problematic terms

- } 'professional doctorate' (PD): how does it differ from a 'PhD'; what about vocational PhDs? 'taught' PhDs (an oxymoron)? Many PhDs are professionally related
- } CPD: continuing PROFESSIONAL or PERSONAL development?
- } The LLL agenda: what does this mean nowadays?



Five quick slides about context:

1 – What has changed?

Doctorates are now characterized by:

- } diversity not uniformity (an increased number and range of students with a range of ages, attendance patterns, background, 'class', location and origins; plus a range of models and versions of the doctorate and modes of study)
- } globalization (influences and competition from Europe, USA, South East Asia, Australia and so on)
- } regulation: quality control, auditing and accountability
- } An increasingly different view of what learning, teaching and supervision are (more constructivist, less didactic??) .



2- Shifts from to.....

A SHIFT FROM

TO.....

- } Self regulation External regulation, prescription
- } Autonomy External control and monitoring
- } ResponsibilityAccountability
- } Trust (implicit)... Checks, guarantees, contracts
- } 'behind closed doors'Visibility, transparency
- } A community of scholars.....A degree factory



3 – Plus ça change... what has really changed?

- } the traditional academic virtues required of doctoral study, and in the written and oral examination of them, have remained unchanged (I think ??)
- } Students are still required to make a 'contribution', to have a thesis in its most literal sense, and to complete a substantial body of writing, which is clear and coherent.
- } Have the demands of 'doctorateness' perhaps evolved less than the context surrounding them?

On a more tangible level, if you observed a supervision session in 2009 would you observe a huge difference between the kinds of activities and interactions going on then as compared with 1989?



4- The big issues (still)?

What is 'doctorateness'?

- } Is it different in the PhD as compared with the professional doctorate?
- } What is meant by 'originality' and a 'contribution to knowledge'?
- } What is theory in the PhD and the professional doctorate?
- } What is 'professional knowledge'? Are professional doctorates always practice/ profession related? Should they be?



5 – A new context... but with recurring tensions around the doctorate

- } Are students part of a peer group (a community of practice), a cohort... or is it an isolated journey?
- } Are students (or should they be) autonomous ... Or directed (by a supervisor, a sponsor or an employer)? *Is this a false dichotomy?*
- } What is supervision? Is it a form of teaching.... or guidance Or just 'letting them get on with it'?
- } Is the purpose of a doctorate to develop the professional researcher ...? Or the researching professional? Or neither?
- } Is it primarily to make a contribution to knowledge (students as producers of knowledge) ... Or a personal journey, a personal project, personal development?
- } Who and what is the doctorate for? The individual or the 'body of knowledge' or industry/ employers or the public good..?
- } Should the doctorate be purely 'the pursuit of knowledge' Or should it involve imparting generic skills for all students?



Back to the question: the PD, CPD and the LLL agenda

The PD- who, why and what for?

Who does doctorates these days? (our own case: 212 students, most PT, most prof.doc., wide age range, more women than men)

Next....why do people do them? what are doctorates for in 2009/ 10/11..?



Why do people do Professional Doctorates?

First...a short story (with permission)

- } Extrinsic motivations e.g. a career step
- } Intrinsic e.g. self esteem, kudos, to 'prove' themselves, 'compensate for professional frustration', professional renewal....
- } Personal/social reasons e.g. meeting new people; becoming part of a community...

Wellington, J and Sikes, P (2006) A doctorate in a tight compartment.....
Studies in Higher Education, 31(6) 723-734



What are doctorates for?

1. Process: personal and/ or professional development? Skills acquisition; research 'training', 'academic apprenticeship'; the 'researching professional' / the professional researcher....
2. Product: knowledge production; pushing forward the boundaries of knowledge; adding new or 'original knowledge; creating a novel thesis (position) on an area of research; to generate knowledge which can be 'transferred', to industry perhaps, or at least to be disseminated.

Does product carry more 'esteem' than process?



CPD and 'what are PDs for'?

- } Is CPD about personal or professional development?
- } Is 'impact' intrinsic/ internal e.g. the person, her/his development... or extrinsic/ external e.g. promotion, developing the profession?

Do these distinctions 'hold up' or make sense?



A shortage of research on this?

- } The PD is founded on a range of statements relating to: its 'impact on professional practice'; its aim of producing 'reflective practitioners'; and its role in developing 'professional knowledge' and 'work based research'.
- } Sometimes these claims are used as a means of marketing the PD, whilst sometimes they are used as a way of separating it from the traditional PhD.
- } Some of the rationale and rhetoric 'behind' professional doctorates involves the claim that we are developing 'researching professionals' and that the PD will improve practice and enhance professional development.

What do we know about the impact of the professional doctorate on students' professional practice? My answer: not enough!

Are all of the above terms and claims problematic?



A few key research questions?

- } What evidence do we currently have about the impact of professional doctorates on CPD and the LLL agenda?
- } Do the claims often used to market and to distinguish the PD from the PhD live up to the evidence (what we have of it) on this issue?
- } To what extent does the activity of doing and completing a PD really impact on a student's professional life and career?
- } Exactly how does it make an impact? Is it a visible impact or a tacit one? Does it make the student a 'better professional' or practitioner? Is it a result of process or product?



OK – so what are my main points? (my ‘thesis’)

- } A lot of problematic terms are flying around at present!
- } Change but what change? Recurring tensions
- } Perhaps the main question now is: what, and who, are doctorates (including PDs) for?
- } Students’ motivations for doing PDs are many and varied
- } Parity of esteem is still an issue for the PD
- } We have little evidence about the influence of PDs on people’s:
 - a. CPD (either C P_{rof.} D or C P_{ers.} D)
 - b. the LLL agenda, whatever that is now

And finally: How can we collect more evidence? Would anyone like to join in?



References and some (I hope) useful reading

- } Green, H. & Powell, S. (2005) *Doctoral Study in Contemporary Higher Education*. Buckingham, SRHE & Open University Press
- } Lester, S. (2004) Conceptualising the practitioner doctorate. *Studies in Higher Education* 29 (6); 757-770
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