

Special Edition of Work Based Learning e-Journal International for the 3rd International Conference on Professional Doctorates (ICPD) 2012.

Editorial: April 2013

Welcome to this special edition of the journal, which includes a range of papers that have been developed on from the 3rd ICPD, which was held in Florence, Italy in April 2012. Over the past two decades interest in Professional and Practice-led Doctorates has generated some major questions on the global positioning of these programmes at the leading edge of doctoral education. ICPD-3 offered an up-date on current developments across the range of Professional and Practice-led Doctorates, with an opportunity to reflect on their wider impact on the international horizons of doctoral education. The evolution of professional and practice-led doctoral research could be seen in many ways to encapsulate a new direction in higher education research. The traditional university boundaries and validation of knowledge are further expanded to include more practitioner led studies of work based learning research.

Every so often in history there is a small, often technological, revolution which changes the way humans interact with the sources of knowledge. Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the 15th century was an agent that accelerated the distribution of knowledge to the masses. In Europe, this enabled an increasing number of individuals to take control of spiritual and cultural developments. This contributed to the coming of the Reformation and the Age of Enlightenment in the 16th and 17-18th centuries respectively. The Reformation introduced the concept that man has a direct/personal relationship to God and by implication truth (or knowledge), righteousness and morality (modes of behaviour and actions) without the intermediary of the Church (in the form of organised religion in Europe). It broke the monopoly of the institution of the priesthood in the management of this connection and transformed their role into that of facilitators. The subsequent spread of literacy led to a logarithmic growth in the development of knowledge and the democratisation of education. The pathways to this exploration has been opened and have proliferated in the 20th and the 21st centuries through new means such as the increase in travel opportunities, audio and image broadcasting and most of all the development of the World Wide Web in the mid 1990s. This process has led to an increase in interaction and information sharing across the world and where new ideas are examined and adopted, adapted or rejected. Knowledge acquisition and development infiltrates all walks of life (formally and informally), and individuals increasingly take ownership of their own development and follow their exploration knowledge into all corners of their life including work and leisure. They also build wide networks across subjects and across countries. Access is now global and is nearly there for all, but notions of understanding,

critical insight and innovative thinking are hugely influenced by individual backgrounds , cultural outlook, language and personal and social meaning. The gateways to knowledge have broken open and the academic institutions who have been their keepers and guardians for centuries, now have to adapt to the role of facilitators (as oppose to instructors) and find new ways for the validation of knowledge.

One could argue that this unleashing of the control of knowledge and meaning (once the bastion of the university), in effect a new modernism or globalisation, has arisen from cultural change brought about by the proliferation of travel and communication systems and the emergence of the world wide web. This new perspective on learning and its facilitation, could also be seen to be developing through research and development within organisations and institutions.

The process of work based learning research could be understood as offering similar opportunities for knowledge and emancipation. The insider researcher may now be recognised for undertaking real organisation change, where they take responsibility for knowledge generation modelled on their development endeavours.

In this edition of the Work Based Learning e-Journal International we have a stock of literature which provides the basis for stimulation and examination of work based insider research form a range of scenarios.

The first paper by Boyce – Tillman invites us to consider the basis for our own rationality and the assumptions, and importantly, western thinking that has been derived for Cartesian philosophy. This implicit understanding that it is argued, forms the basis for much western knowledge and understanding, eludes the other, perhaps more esoteric and subjective meaning that humans have. Essentially, this important paper facilitates inquiry into an alternative way of knowing and understanding cultural events. This is a provocative and forward thinking paper and relevant to policy makers and interpreters of the social policy within a practice context.

Paper two, by Marg Malloch, provides an exploration and comparison, based upon research findings, of the approaches taken by two universities in two countries, England and Australia, for the implementation of government initiated postgraduate research skill development. In England the VITAE, and QAA bodies have established attributes, skills or competencies to be achieved whilst undertaking doctoral research. Australia has also introduced attributes to be achieved. Progress in

the achievement of these is reported upon in the individual annual student progress reports. The paper questions the extent to which this focus on skill development contributes to the thesis development, and whether these goals for postgraduate researchers are in conflict or complementary.

Our third paper in this special edition, by Bain et al, considers how professionals can be culturally 'blinkered' in terms of changing practice, which has implications for professional researchers. The authors explore how alternative approaches can be used to encourage professional doctorate candidates to think differently. They propose a particular technique of storytelling to demonstrate how an established professional manager was able to achieve a better understanding of his own professional world through development of empathy with a partner professional.

Paper four by Burgess et al considers the impact upon personal and professional practice of undertaking a professional doctorate. It explores the connection between the professional doctorate and the workplace from the student perspective. The paper critically considers the strategy, skills and processes professional doctorate practitioners use as they strive to transfer their research outcomes and contribute to their organisation practice. The research focuses upon whether there is a 'symbiotic relationship' between the doctoral student and their workplace practice.

The paper by Burton and Kirshbaum explores academic, personal and professional challenges associated with the increasing recruitment of international students to university programmes, particularly professional doctorate programmes. The discussion notes the 'culture shock', 'adaptation' and a 'change in self-perception' that international students face and highlights the need for intercultural awareness.

The last paper in this section by Cook & Weller describes a problem around sustainability of change programmes within an NHS Hospital and research to develop a more inclusive and 'balanced' strategy, incorporating all stakeholders. The model was developed and tested through the study and has contributed to practice for implementing change. The paper provides an example of professional doctoral research that has much potential for transferability to other practice scenarios.

The dialogue and debate section includes shorter papers that focus upon new developments and interpretations of practice development and research, which may be ongoing and work in progress. The first of these papers by Anderson et al describes a doctorate in public health, which is offered in Europe, North America and Australia. There is thus an opportunity to promote internationalisation

by supporting students on different programmes in different countries to exchange information, experience and insight. The second paper by McGloin and Wright, is a discussion from the perspective of practitioners who work directly with postgraduate researchers (PGRs) in order to help them develop their non-research-related skills. It explores issues of constantly interpreting demand and shifting focus in researcher development, based around what it is that ensures researchers are able to contribute to the UK economy. Current thinking regarding development requirements for this group, in the context of recent developments, are also examined.

Rosemarye Taylor discusses leadership at the university and programme level, which is important for effective professional doctorate development and implementation. Theories are applied to the university to demonstrate how reframing the role of university leaders in relation to faculty and faculty leaders can enhance professional doctorate development and success. The paper explores learning partnerships with doctoral students, industry managers and university faculty to enhance learning and practice.

Jean-Joseph et al report upon an international workshop on research education involving participants from the UK, USA, Norway, and France. Four sets of actions were identified: I) empower the new researcher, II) provide success indicators connected with the market, III) connect supervisors with society as well as the job market, thus promoting the academia-industry connection, and IV) promote the new researcher's awareness and knowledge of his/her scientific accomplishments (or skills). Outcomes included an introspective procedure for better understanding of the context/impact of the research project, its relevance to society, and its impact on the advance of knowledge.

Bjørke and Braut consider an alternative qualification path in higher education in Norway leading to doctoral level that is built upon approval of a portfolio, by a commission. Only a few universities or colleges have a teaching programme for this path, which can be compared to those for the traditional doctoral programme. Mostly university or college teachers on the "portfolio path" apply for approval of their qualification level on the basis of their teaching experiences, research and development, which are gained over years. This is a lonely path, even lonelier than the individual work with a doctoral thesis. Through peer learning and supported by a team of mentors in a collegial setting the candidates are empowered to become not only learners on their own individual path, but also, as a side-effect, able to establish a collaborative culture of sharing and discussions of common tasks.

The final paper in this section by Amanda Mulcahy Maddocks, reports on research carried out over three years to evaluate two partnership models for an education doctorate. The study considers the preparedness of the doctoral graduates to undertake research as critical practitioners.

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