

Power, participation and partnership: methodological reflection on researching professional doctorate candidates' experiences of researching in the workplace

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This study aimed to explore the candidate experience in order to understand more deeply aspects of the development in work based research. Delphi technique was chosen as an approach in order to capture a range of experience and data, to inform how we may best support candidates on practice based doctorates. Many such programmes include a stakeholder learning agreement between the candidate, the university and the employer organisation with the common aim to bring about transformational and sustainable change. Our research to date indicates a disparity within the agreement in the level of stakeholder participation. Where the organisation stakeholder is not fully engaged and involved in supporting the research, there is a potential threat to the effectiveness of any change outcome. Current practice based doctoral research participants were invited to relate to a range of temporal themes in their research project cycle, for example: Setting up the project; implementing the project; changes/ contingency planning within the project; project completion and post completion. Of particular interest in relation to the above was the availability of resources and how they were used within the project life cycle. In this respect, resources are deemed to include, human, material, time, personal and organisational culture influence. The allocation, manipulation and distribution of such resources can be understood in terms of power relationships.

The paper presents our experience and reflections from two iterative Delphi cycles and proposes a final stage of greater integration with existing academic resources within the professional doctorate programme. The study has enabled the researchers to gain a new understanding of how power may operate in a work based research project through the experience of undertaking the Delphi approach. Furthermore, by thinking about affordances of the project life cycle, it may help us to better understand needs and strategy for the

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curriculum in order to more effectively support candidates through their transformational learning experience. The consequences of such change might have implications for participation and power distribution within the management and leadership of doctoral work base research projects.

Keywords: Delphi, professional doctorate, affordance, culture, participation, power.

Introduction

The study on which this paper is based arose from an earlier exploration of professional doctoral candidate experience which highlighted a potential transformational learning process. In order to understand more deeply aspects of this development in work based research our study aimed to explore the candidate experience of undertaking the work based project. We chose to use the Delphi technique as an approach to capture a range of experience and data, to inform how we may best support candidates on practice based doctorates. Many such work based programmes include a stakeholder learning agreement between the candidate, the university and the employer organisation with the common aim to bring about transformational and sustainable change. The earlier research of Weller et al. (2010) indicates a disparity within the agreement in the level of stakeholder participation. Where the organisation stakeholder is not fully engaged and involved in supporting the research project, there is a potential threat to the effectiveness of any change outcome. In a review of research literature addressing learning in work, Fenwick (2008) identified that the analysis of power relations is a neglected aspect of understanding relations of individual-collective learning.

Current practice based doctoral research participants were invited to relate to a range of temporal themes in the research project cycle, for example: setting up the project; implementing the project; changes/ contingency planning within the project; project completion and post completion. Of particular interest in relation to the above was the availability of appropriate resources and how they were used within the project life cycle. In this respect, resources are deemed to include, human, material, time, personal and organisational culture influence. The allocation, manipulation and distribution of such resources can be understood in terms of power relationships, as postulated by Avelino and Rotmans (2009).

During the process of undertaking the work, the methodological approach moved away from an initial consensus based model of Delphi. This was in response to the very limited return to the first cycle, in terms of both the number and richness of the data. The response may have been low due to our concern to minimise potential power relations operating in the dual role of researcher / and academic advisor for the participants. This led us to adopt an anonymised approach to consent via third party support; direct contact may have resulted in a much greater uptake. Following the outcome of the first round we discussed a potential transactional element to participation on behalf of the participant candidates, which may stem from the candidate / advisor interactions during the programme. Reflecting on these two aspects and the low response rate, we decided to move towards a qualitative method that would be a more reflexive and pragmatic interpretation of Delphi. Such an evolution of Delphi seemed to be in keeping with Linstone and Turoff (2002) on emerging values based perspectives informing the approach.

In the paper we offer some methodological reflections on our approach to researching the liminal space of power, participation and partnership in doctoral practice based research in operation. We discuss some of the insights gained that led us to a conclusion to continue the research through greater integration with existing academic resources within the professional doctorate programme.

Formulating the problem

The initial stimulus for this project came from an earlier study (Weller et al., 2010), where we became aware of critical incidents within two professional doctoral projects. Briefly, these concerned the sense of stakeholder involvement and commitment on the part of the organisations supporting doctoral candidates. These examples provided some discussion and reflection on the experience of researchers in the workplace and stimulated us to explore active doctoral research projects. We felt that at heart there may be opportunity for re-assessing how the stakeholder learning agreement is negotiated.

Example 1: Community leadership development

The first critical incident example occurred when a candidate had finished his final doctoral project and was at a stage in planning implementation in terms of organisation practice. This was to involve the organisation in offering a new training and development programme for community leaders. The candidate's organisation had agreed to the research and had signed a learning agreement at the outset of the project

The research aimed to test out a potential organisation training and development programme aimed at community voluntary sector leaders in their role of questioning how government funds are allocated. This innovative training was well received by the community leaders. The concept of constructive awkwardness was postulated as a method to encourage the process of questioning within a true learning organisation, and overcome slavish adherence to often flawed management hegemony. Naylor's employer organisation was not supportive of the concept of constructive awkwardness and at heart there seemed to be a conflict of interest with his organisation, where it was felt that the proposed development programme may result in tarnishing relationships with potential funding institutions. The research was successfully completed, though Naylor parted company with the organisation.

Example 2: A study of how professionals cope with trauma

The second example concerns ongoing research that was arranged in relation to an emergency service organisation. The research examined how individuals adapt to trauma in their work. Participants included emergency service personnel, Hospital out-patients and Student volunteer participants. The study utilised a combination of qualitative and quantitative tests, administered through means of a series of questionnaires involving psychometric methods and also considering emotional intelligence responses to trauma. The researcher is a qualified counselling psychologist and had been working previously with the emergency service organisation on a therapeutic consultancy basis. The research study was discussed with the emergency service organisation, and the senior management agreed that the service personnel could be invited to participate.

However, after the first round of questionnaires, which were administered to active emergency service personnel, the organisation did not support a second round of questionnaires. One factor that may have caused some irritation for the organisation was that the research was delayed due to extra time needed to validate the questionnaires and also to gain ethical approval via the university. There was no discussion of the reasons why the organisation chose to halt involvement of its personnel in the study. The senior manager involved simply refused to speak with the researcher. The researcher has latterly considered the cultural factors in the organisation and believes that the refusal to enter into dialogue about the research may be due to an attitude endemic amongst those in the emergency services of avoiding discussion and analysis of dangerous incidents. In this case the senior manager may not have wanted the research to continue as it had the potential to dredge up memories or subjective feelings about the risks of fire death and dying. There may have also been senior management concerns that the study might encourage claims for compensation from employees who consider that they are suffering from trauma as a consequence of their work. The research was able to continue by seeking additional participants from hospital out-patients and university student volunteers and re-focusing experiences of trauma. Such research is essential in understanding how individuals cope with trauma and was considerably delayed as a result of the withdrawal of support from the emergency service organisation.

The above examples illustrate the complex and situated nature of professional doctoral projects and highlight the need for organisations as key stakeholders to engage in the research that they propose to support. However, the ownership of the project and the means of producing the research might provide an insight to the problem; who will gain most from the project, the individual researcher or the organisation?

Developing an approach

The situated nature of the doctoral programme in the professional work of the candidate constructs the work based project as a case of individual – collective learning. From our work to date we are left asking two questions. In the reality of the work place; 1) is the project an individual project for a professional doctorate award with the organisation

supporting the development of the individual? and 2) is the project a collective project of the organisation with the individual participating to achieve organisational outcomes and a professional doctorate award?

To try and 'get a handle on' and make sense of candidate relations of learning and resources as they transit the final project phase of their professional doctorate, we set up a project on candidates' experience of researching in the workplace. We hoped to capture some of the main opportunities and tensions, with a view to illuminating future support needs of candidates during the life course of the project. Our inquiry emerged from the previous work introduced above, together with conversations from candidates and academic colleagues and we wished to continue this productive collaboration of ourselves and the candidates without causing undue additional work for them. Another aspect for investigating the power relations of individual – collective learning of the work based research project, was the 'in the moment' experience of candidates involved in undertaking the final project, rather than using retrospective accounts of completed projects.

A number of research methodological approaches were considered and initially an action frame of reference seemed possible. In a participatory action research project to show how narrative research can generate clinical knowledge, Aranda and Street (2001) undertook a series of interviews with twelve nurses to elicit stories and develop indepth narratives of nurse-patient friendship experiences. They all met as co-researchers over a 10 month period and through the collaborative dialogue of group participatory analysis developed a reflexive awareness of structural influences on nurse-patient relationships. Whilst this approach had attractions we thought it unlikely that the candidates would be able to make the time commitment.

We were also aware of our own academic position of power and resources of the academy we bring to the relationship with candidates – two of the 'research team' were programme leaders and all three were academic advisors to the candidates. It was unlikely that the university research ethics committee would allow direct data gathering with the candidates eg interviewing or to approach candidates to gain consent to participate. Against these considerations of methods and ethics we thought the interaction of panel and monitoring

team proffered a collaborative process for validation of emergent themes and issues alongside exploration and evaluation of differences arising from the range of work research settings of professional doctorate candidates, and would enable us to use a third party to overcome any potential criticism from the research ethics committee. In addition, the iterative method of Delphi rounds which feedback a group response to participants would enable candidates to develop a similar reflexive awareness of structural issues to that of Aranda and Street (2001). In the invitation to candidates to participate this was identified as a benefit of participating in the study

There is no intended direct benefit to taking part. Future candidates on the M/D Professional Studies programme are likely to benefit through possible development of current support structures. Nevertheless, completing the questionnaires may evoke a process of reflexivity as you recall your experiences of researching in the workplace. New insights may emerge in the process that you will want to include in the writing up of your final project. (Source; Participant Information Sheet, section 9. What are the possible benefits of taking part?)

Linstone and Turroff (2002) define Delphi technique as a method of group communication that effectively helps a group of individuals to deal with a complex problem. Of the seven properties for when Delphi technique is appropriate for an inquiry project (Linstone & Turroff, 2002: 4), five were relevant to our inquiry:

The problem does not lend itself to precise analytical techniques but can benefit from subjective judgments on a collective basis
More individuals are needed than can effectively interact in a face-to-face exchange
Time and cost make frequent group meetings infeasible
... a supplemental group communication process
Heterogeneity of participants must be preserved to assure validity of results ...

Using a Delphi approach seemed to have alignment with the complexity and context of the problem with the added benefit of preserving difference and avoiding domination by any one field or personality. Before going on to present the approach in action, it is appropriate to state at this point that our approach to the Delphi method was that of using a panel of experts to gain consensus reflective of literature we accessed to learn about using the Delphi method for example, to set research priorities (Grundy & Ghazi, 2009), to develop curricula (Dowling et al., 2005; Rohan et al., 2009).

Experiencing Delphi technique

Seventeen programme active candidates were identified as undertaking the final project stage and gave access to a cross section of the project life course, from having just received approval to start to almost completion. These were senior level professionals from a range of organisations with an interest in the subjects of risk, environment and health. Of the seventeen prospective participants, seven were started and at an early stage in their research, five were established and at a mid point in their work based research and two candidates were at the end point of their research. Three candidates had completed their research project during the period of the research study. They were invited to participate as a panel and in so doing we constructed the candidates as experts on understanding the learning resources they were using at a specific point in the life course of their project from which we could generate a consensus about future support requirements of researching in the workplace. The services of an administrator were engaged to approach the candidates to participate and seek consent and receive, track and anonymise responses for each round before they came to the monitoring panel. By using an administrator in this way, we hoped to overcome the dynamic of the monitoring team also being 'assessors/ supervisors' of the candidates. Three rounds were planned:

Round 1: information gathering of relevant themes and issues

Round 2: confirmation and clarification of themes

Round 3: based on responses to round 2

In response to the invitation to participate in Round 1, 5 expressions of interest were received from candidates who would complete the questionnaire at a later date and 2

completed responses. Two further requests to return their completed questionnaire realised no result. We decided to go ahead with Round 2 based on our analysis of the two responses to Round 1 (see Appendix 1) and hoping that this might encourage more participation. We took the view that not completing Round 1 did not bar participation in Round 2 (see Appendix 2) since the feedback of findings from others could promote interaction and realise an increase in completed responses. Out of the 17 invitations for Round 2, 8 expressions of interest and 3 completed responses were received.

We were now quite concerned by the lack of response to the questionnaires for each round. We asked ourselves 'what is going on here' and in so doing began to reflect on our Delphi methodology using the writings of Scheele (2002) on reality construction as a product of the Delphi interaction and Linstone (2002) on basic pitfalls which are thrown up by the structured approach of Delphi technique. One of these pitfalls is how the Delphi design structures and manages the interaction of the rounds. In relation to the lack of response, there are several possible aspects to our design including the selection of the panel, construction of the first round questionnaire and underlying philosophy of the approach.

When we started out, the articles we drew on used a conventional Delphi approach where the panel is positioned as experts in the field, a small team undertakes the iterative process of design and analyses of the questionnaires to reach a consensus concerning the topic. With the limited panel and response we began to question our Delphi design. In reality, whilst the candidates may be construed as experts in their field or work, they cannot be considered experts in undertaking work based research projects as part of a doctoral programme. In keeping with other academic programmes most candidates do this only once. What our Delphi design possibly created was a panel of novices struggling to understand what the questionnaire was asking for, partly due to the questionnaire having been written in the language of the designer, alongside the panel not being in an immediate position to be able to articulate their own position in relation to the questions except at a superficial level. There is some support for such an interpretation from the thinness of the responses to both rounds and the expressions of interest to complete the questionnaire at a later date, perhaps showing the candidates themselves recognised the questions required

reflective thinking and making time to complete the questionnaire. Indeed Linstone and Turroff (2002) give emphasis to the demanding nature and time requirement of the Delphi technique if robust responses are to be obtained.

Linstone and Turroff (2002) highlight the need for effective communication for the group interaction processes of the Delphi to produce a collective human intelligence capability. The outcome of the Delphi technique is the *'product of a carefully designed and managed interaction and not a set of answers to a set of abstract questions that are obtained by following prescribed methods'* (Scheele, 2002: 36). In retrospect there is a sense of failing to value and capitalise on initial communications with the candidates about the project using the normal programme communication process. At the annual review meeting earlier in the year, we presented the two cases as a basis for exploring the candidates' views of researching in the workplace. In our design of the questionnaire for Round 1, we unintentionally omitted any reference to this earlier conversation inadvertently creating a discontinuity of communication. What might have been facilitative of candidate response was building on the initial group communication approach by using a summary of the conversation for background information specific to Round 1 rather than relying on the formal participant information sheet accompanying the consent form.

Another aspect of the communication was the method of analysis of the responses. The panel had no way of knowing how the monitor team was going to analyse individual responses and how these would feedback to the panel. On reflection this seems particularly important since the questionnaire was set in the present and without sufficiency of information on analysis and feedback, candidates may have felt exposed in answering questions that asked for stories and expanded answers of a potentially sensitive nature. Depending on how responses were re-presented in the feedback the potential existed for the panel to link candidates and responses compromising assurances of confidentiality.

There was also the inclusion in our Delphi design of the use of a third party to gain consent and mediate the communication of responses and feedback in an attempt to preserve confidentiality and reduce the programme power dynamic of advisor and candidate. Yet the questions asked carried with them the possibility that the monitoring team would recognise

the respondent even though the response had been anonymised by the third party. In retrospect such a power dynamic is a quality of the circumstances that prompted the inquiry and to be incorporated into the Delphi design rather than designed out (Scheele, 2002). The project emerged from conversations with candidates during the programme process of candidate-advisor interaction. This point was also raised during the workshop presentation at the International Conference on Professional Doctorates (Weller et al., 2011) as to why we had not used the 'everyday' academic advisor candidate conversation: the normal communication process in the programme. Following such a course of action brings with it the partnership of learning constituted by the professional doctorate programme. The use of a third party to bring some objectivity to the research process is at odds with the pedagogical practice of the doctoral programme.

Reflecting on our early research conversations in light of the IPCD workshop, it is now apparent that we structured the inquiry outside of the normal doctorate programme. We have come to understand that setting up the inquiry as external to the programme has created an unnecessary complication. And indeed if the research was set up as an insider inquiry from the beginning, as a programme evaluation for further development of programme resources, then the need for a favourable opinion from the research ethics committee might not have been required and our path of inquiry for development would have been somewhat different.

By implementing the research in the way we did, we were creating and experiencing how power dynamics arise in the process of undertaking our own work based learning project! Our conversations on the Delphi design and implementation generated a reflexive space in which to consider the situatedness of power, participation and partnership of the doctoral researcher, within the impact of the organisation cultures, leaders and colleagues, on the research effectiveness.

We returned to the ethics committee to present a case for offering a telephone interview conducted by the three researchers to candidates. Consent would still be obtained via the third party. This amendment was subsequently approved. Two interviews were undertaken

by one of the researchers and these now form the basis for analysis and the following discussion.

Analysis

The concept of social affordance, may be relevant in understanding the dynamics of intention and action within social institutions, which produces and maintains affordances in the form of interpersonal interactions, as postulated by Kono (2009). This emerged as we engaged with the analysis of the interview data carried out as part of the second round of the Delphi study. These participants were happy to be interviewed by a member of the DProf team and indeed commented at the outset, that it was easier to be interviewed rather than complete the questionnaire. This point was raised in relation to time and convenience, once an interview had been booked, then it was easy to make time for it (Allmark et al., 2009). The second round questions are shown in appendices and a selection of quotes are drawn for the responses in order to illustrate some of the points about understanding complexity and power relationships. One participant mentioned that he was experiencing difficulties with his research as the participants in his study were likely to be losing their contract with his (public sector) organisation. The contractors provide an essential service related to health and safety management and were contributing to his doctoral research as interview participants. The researcher indicated that the situation was beyond his control and that he was helpless in the face of policy decisions taken at a higher level that would have likely consequences for his research.

In response to the question 'What is happening for you now in relation to your project?'

At the moment? Considerable input of thoughts and reflection regarding massive change in public sector impact due to the economic downturn. It means changes in procurement especially in contracts for supply chain contractors to finish the work. It is impacting the relationship and leading to a reduction in the work as my research is to do with communication and workforce consultation, not only safety and performance. Its' influenced by the downturn and resulting in cuts to personnel in all the participating

organisations, including my own, I don't know how it will affect my research.

(Interview participant 1)

When questioned if there was any support that the university might provide or if there were a way of considering the data collected thus far, he commented:

no it is a national and global phenomenon of workload reduction. The workload is increasing as and there is not enough time to research, which represents a marked change since starting the doctorate. (Interview participant 1)

The participant refers to the organisation. This statement seemed to go beyond descriptions of organisational based power relationships from individuals and suggested a type of complex cultural form of social affordance in relation to how the individual employee responds to the organisation culture. The concept of social affordance, may be relevant in understanding the dynamics of intention and action within social institutions, which produces and maintains affordances in the form of interpersonal interactions, as postulated by Kono (2009). In terms of our work based learning doctoral researchers, we wanted to consider the situatedness of the research, in respect of impact on the organisational culture, and also the liminal 'in the moment' experiences of leading their research project (see for example Patterson, 2009). Billett et al. (2005) have considered the complexity of the work situation, where, dependent upon the level of social affordances (deemed as support, opportunities, interaction and guidance), the work based learner must make and re-make their professional practice through their own agency as well as in a transformative way with others:

individuals' learning is neither a wholly solitary nor a wholly socialised process. Moreover, more than learning through this process, individuals are actively remaking and potentially transforming their work practices and activities. So not only is there a legacy in terms of ontogenetic development/individuals' development across the lifespan/but also in terms of situated practice, which in turn shapes the cultural practices (Billett et al, 2005:220).

The doctoral researcher also has access to the social affordances of the university and yet in this case these resources cannot be brought into play because they are not recognised as having relevance to the particular situatedness of the project.

A second interview participant alluded to difficulties he had experienced in gaining time to undertake his research. In a clinical setting he described a competitive senior manager who made life difficult by not approving his leave requests. Furthermore, at the organisation where he was collecting data, the research became viewed with suspicion as senior managers may have begun to feel that the findings may be used against them in some way.

It was a definite tension when the organisation pulled the project right before I got any significant data sets and I had to start over again. (Interview Participant 2)

In understanding the social affordance, which can present barriers as well as opportunities, the situatedness of the work based learner, especially at doctoral level, can be seen as higher risk and potentially more complex than university based researchers:

Workplaces are not benign environments. Co-workers may not support other workers' development and progression. The degree of support is likely to be dependent on how learning and advancement are seen to affect co-workers' interests. For instance, expert workers may be unwilling to assist other workers if they believe that they may be displaced by those whom they have supported. (Billett, 2006: 40)

In this respect the social affordance presents as a change in the way that the research could influence other (more senior) actors within the organisation. At some point there was a liminal moment in which the change or attitude – affordance toward the researcher had occurred. In understanding the liminal nature of the way that social affordance can become positive or negative towards the research is an illustration of the influence and cultural ecology of the sponsoring organisation (see Young et al., 2002: 48 for further discussion on the ecological perspective).

The researcher did not have access to the affordance of social relations within the organisation so he turned to the university, in the form of research seminars, which the university could provide.

The above examples are an illustration of liminal space occurring in the research journey, which demonstrate the complexities of work based doctoral research and going beyond a simplistic notion of project ownership.

Conclusion

Our methodological reflections and our related learning are pointing us to a 'round three' of the study where the panel and monitoring team is more closely aligned with the participatory action research process of Aranda and Street (2001). The third round of the Delphi may become never ending where past, present and future merge in the creation and re-creation of a community of inquiry where research is done with and done by insider co-researchers of the professional doctorate programme rather than the inadvertent done on and done to we had set up in our Delphi approach.

Throughout this paper we have explored the 'in the moment' experience of professional doctoral researchers in relation to how power, situatedness and social affordance influence workplace research and researching in the workplace. Through the analysis we have recognised the complexity in advancing understanding. The need for further research will continue in a collaborative form with the workplace researchers through the third stage. Using a participatory group analysis of co-researchers, candidates can tell their stories of power, participation and partnership emerging during the project journey to generate in-depth narratives for critical reflective analysis to generate understanding of social affordances in the making of the project.

Future themes for this research will explore aspects of organisation ecology that may be helpful in building theory around the researcher lived experience. Further exploration of researcher stories/narratives could aim to encourage the researcher to consider the 'in the moment' happenings of their journey as reflexive data for their own project in order to

recognise the affordances of the workplace and the influence on the project outcomes. In this way the stakeholders of the workplace research may better understand the learning journey as an integral part of the research.

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Appendix 1: Delphi Round 1 questionnaire

Professionals' experiences of researching in the workplace

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research on candidate experiences of researching in the work place. In our last letter we mentioned that the study will involve using the Delphi technique and listed below are the themes and questions for the first round.

Please insert your responses into the directive and tell us about your experiences as fully as you can. We would especially like to read any stories you have to tell about your research in the workplace.

The themes centre on four stages of doing a work based project:

1. Setting up the project
2. Implementing the project
3. Changes/ contingency planning within the project
4. Project completion and post completion

Please answer questions 1 and 2 below in relation to the stages you have experienced to date and write as much as you would like. We would particularly value expanded answers.

1. What resources did you draw on at these stages? *Insert response against the relevant sections*
 - a. Persons (e.g. Academic Adviser, Consultant, work colleagues, professional colleagues, other):
 - b. Monetary:
 - c. Time:
 - d. Materials / objects:
 - e. Professional organisations / communities:
 - f. Anything else from your experiences:
2. Of the resources you have identified, please explain how you used them within each of the stages you have experienced.
Insert response here
3. Please tell us about any challenging experiences you have had whilst undertaking your research project.
Insert response here
4. Given your experiences to date, what advice would you give to anybody wishing to undertake research in the work place at Master or Doctoral level?
Insert response here

As noted on the consent form all your stories and responses will be treated with high confidentiality.

Please insert your responses into the directive as indicated above and send completed directive by email to xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@hei.ac.uk

Thank you for your participation. We will analyse the responses to round 1 and circulate the findings to you in Round 2 to get your feedback.

Appendix 2: Delphi Round 2 questionnaire

Professionals' experiences of researching in the workplace

Some findings from round 1:

Thank you for participating in this research on candidate experiences of researching in the work place. In our last letter we mentioned that the study will involve using the Delphi technique. The feedback from the responses to round one highlighted some interesting themes that we would like to explore further in this second round.

Some key features from the round one response concerned the way that the consultant role is used, and other forms of specialist support for your project. There were also references to tensions and issues that emerge during the project. The questions below encapsulate the essence of the round one feedback and have led us to start a process of qualitatively ranking the emerging statements. We are particularly interested in learning about these experiences whilst you are at critical stages and how these affected you. Please do feel free to write as much as you are able to about your experiences, we are interested in the stories and incidents in your ongoing research journey. Don't worry about the questionnaire layout, pages and lines will extend automatically as you write.

Knowledge / expertise

Please explain the process that you went through in arranging specialist consultants, were these formal or informal contacts. How and when did these people become involved in your project?

Which networks were used and when? Please rank order in terms of importance to achieve your project aims, please provide commentary on the following statements

Statement	Rank Order 1, 2, 3....	Comments
Ethical approval processes		
Academic approval processes		
Experts in the field		
Professional networks		
Enabling / facilitating individuals within the organisation		
Friendship groups, including virtual / social networking		
By chance encounters with knowledgeable others		
Were there any other facilitative processes or networks that you would like to add including those that you would like to rank higher.		

Interaction / communication

What stage are you at with your work based project?

What is happening for you now in relation to your project?

Tell us about a situation or event that stands out for you as making a significant impact / difference to reaching this stage of the project?

Appendix 2: Delphi Round 2 questionnaire continued

<p>Emerging issues</p> <p>Over the period of your project describe some of the tensions you have experienced in leading, managing and implementing your project</p> <p>How have you attempted to resolve any incident / tensions / problems; please give an example that involved you in resolving a tension or difficult issue?</p> <p>Please rank order the main tensions and emerging issues and feel free to make as many comments as you wish:</p>		
Statement	Rank order: 1, 2, 3...	Comments
Work time line for the project v academic time line		
Work demands and expectations v academic processes		
The project is always given priority over other competing demands		
Organisation approval for using work time to undertake project activity		
Time management and performance / self learning / time demands		
Alignment of academic processes and organisation project requirements		
What other tensions and emerging issues would you add to the rank order		
<p>As noted on the consent form all your stories and responses will be treated with high confidentiality.</p> <p>Please insert your responses into the directive as indicated above and send completed directive by email to xxxxxxxxxxx@hei.ac.uk</p> <p>Thank you for your participation. We will analyse the responses to round 2 and circulate the findings to you in Round 3 to get your feedback.</p>		