Identity, reflection and developmental networks as processes in professional doctorate development

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The nature of the professional doctorate can be difficult to appreciate for those more familiar with the traditional PhD. In our efforts to explain the broad difference simply, we have defined the PhD as being designed largely to produce the 'professional researcher', and the professional doctorate as designed to produce the 'researching professional' (Taylor, 2007).

Whilst these simple descriptions have helped to set the context for discussions around the different nature of the two routes, the term 'researching professional' has itself given rise to problems of understanding and interpretation which are fundamental to the very ethos of our professional doctorate programme. These problems centre on two main issues: the definition of profession; and the mind-set shift from territorialised professional knowledge to the critical curiosity required of a doctoral candidate.

A key aim of our programme is to provide experienced professionals with the ability and skills to look at their professional practice through a fresh lens, question established practices and value systems, make judgements that are better informed, and be creative in their thought. However, this means confronting them with alternative approaches and forcing them to reconsider their 'territorialised' solutions, creating a state of cognitive discomfort that encourages more genuine enquiry (Halliday and Hager, 2002).

We have chosen to address these issues by asking candidates to reflect on and classify their professional identity before they reflect on their professional practice. This is done within a

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model adapted from Sanders (2010), built upon principles of tacit knowledge transfer between multi-disciplinary developmental networks, and uses creative learning techniques to break down the boundaries of territorialised knowledge.

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Introduction

The traditional model of doctoral education focuses on the generation of new knowledge based in theory.The model most commonly used for this development is 'master-apprentice', where the relatively inexperienced and unknowledgeable student learns through role-modelling their academic director of studies. In the process they will not only develop intellectual and discipline knowledge, but a maturity and skills that will also, hopefully, enhance their prospects of employment in a range of settings.

The typical professional doctorate candidate is very different to the traditional PhD student. Various definitions are provided in the literature in an attempt to clarify these differences. For example, Lester (2004) would define professional doctorate candidates as undertaking a 'practitioner doctorate' whilst others call it a 'work-based doctorate' (Boud&Tennent, 2006; Costley& Lester, 2011).Most typically, they will be an individual who is very experienced in their professional field, or indeed, may have experience across a range of different professions. Often, they will be working in positions of significant responsibility and authority. They will already be able to compile a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate how they have contributed to their field. Far from being inexperienced and unknowledgeable, they are often much more up-to-date with state-of-the art knowledge and practice in their field than the academics that supervise them (Taylor, 2007). So, with this knowledge and experience, and the fact that most are already successful in their chosen career, what can they hope to achieve by competing a programme of doctoral study?

The question has been the focus of discussion over the last few years as professional doctorates have increased in number. There is growing recognition that the traditional PhD model of the doctorate may be no longer suitable for these types of programmes. Every doctoral candidate needs to get to the same place at the end of their doctoral journey,(i.e.

the standards required for a doctoral level of qualification defined by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education), butour professional doctorate candidates have a very different starting point from the traditional PhD students, meaning that they face a very different journey.

This, however, has not always been recognised.In a study that examined PhD and professional doctorate programmes, Thorne and Francis (2001) discovered that diversity of students' career positions was not taken into account and that a homogeneous approach was taken to doctoral study in government recommendations. Since then, there has been growing recognition that universities may need to review their approach to doctoral education. The professional doctorate programme is being increasingly seen as catalysing increased co-operation between industry and the universities EUA, 2006) and this may provide a valuable link for universities to their reach-out activities. Malfroy (2005) has proposed that the changing environment for doctoral education provides opportunities for traditional practices to be reassessed and for new practices to emerge, particularly with respect to supervisory relationships, and Taylor (2007) argues that universities need to go back to the drawing board to address some fundamental questions about student learning.

Holding on to 'old' practices can create tensions in the relationship between candidates and supervisors, with differing and perhaps unrealistic expectations of the relationship from both sides.Malfroy (2005) found that many mature professional doctorate candidates expressed a feeling of awkwardness in their positioning as 'student' in a relationship with a 'supervisor', in particular commenting on an unequal power balance that they perceived and that made them feel vulnerable. In the same study supervisors expressed some frustration with their doctoral candidates, finding them to be unwilling to be independent in their learning and research development. Malfoy (2005) argues that these tensions can in part be attributed to the retention of traditional supervisory practices that are largely unsuitable for professional doctorate students, and shows that some of these tensions can be dissipated by 'opening up' supervisory practices into a more collaborative learning environment, creating a strong sense of community of researchers

This has been an issue within our own programme; we initially replaced the term supervisor with that of advisor, but have since returned to using supervisor. Our experience suggests that the term 'supervisor' best represents both what our role is, and indeed what the candidates themselves expect. Just as with a traditional PhD student, one of the key areas where academic staff most influence the candidate is in term of providing academic rigour and research design, and here the supervisory role is very clear. Furthermore, despite the fact that the professional doctorate candidates differ from traditional PhD students in that they have already acquired subject expertise and are often already more knowledgeable than their supervisor in this respect (Taylor, 2007), their knowledge is often 'territorialised' (Baumard, 1999).The role of the supervisor here is to advise on how to locate the knowledge in the academic literature and on how to develop it further so that it becomes more 'transdisciplinary and transprofessional ' (Fell et al., 2011: 21).

We have addressed these emerging issues about the nature of professional doctorate education by focussing on the personal transformation that facilitates the process through which experienced professionals become 'researching professionals' and thought leaders in their field.

Problems of professional knowledge

Whilst acknowledging that one of the great strengths of professional doctorate candidates over most traditional PhD students is that they already have considerable practical knowledge and experience within their professional field, we are concerned that two barriers exist that can prevent these individuals from using this knowledge to its best effect:

Territorialisation

An individual who possesses knowledge of one particular organisation may become what Baumard describes as 'territorialised' (Baumard, 1999). That is, their knowledge and therefore their strategic approach to their professional practice is bounded by the cognitive map that they have created within that context, which can be a barrier to the creation of new knowledge in different situations. Individuals too may encounter barriers when moving to alternative jobs, finding it difficult to adapt to very different cultures and approaches.

This will cause problems with the systematic acquisition of new knowledge as required by the professional doctorate, and for the academic approach, since established professionals can be reluctant to adopt theoretical approaches in place of their tried and tested means.

Furthermore, this territorialisation can hinder decision making in professional practice, where there is a growing trend in interdisciplinary working, and where increasing complexity is requiring practitioners to identify and solve problems at a high level and an increasing need for an analytical approach to professional knowledge, work and roles (Taylor, 2007).

Malfroy and Yates (2003) describe candidates as being 'on the cusp' of different *cultures* of learning – the university, the profession and the workplace, which suggests quite a different model of 'what is learned' to the accepted academic knowledge-based model.

Tacit knowledge

Much of the knowledge possessed by the professional doctorate candidates is gained from experience after they finished formal schooling (Wagner, 1987). It is the practical know-how that is rarely expressed in explicit terms, and is just 'part of the way we do things around here'. (See Polyani, 1976 and Schon, 1983 for a wider discussion of practical know-how). Because the knowledge is tacit it is more difficult to tap it to address specific problems within the professionand it becomes difficult to tease out the specific contributions they have made already to the profession.

Nevertheless, tacit knowledge hascome under increasing scrutiny over recent years because of its acknowledged importance to organisational success. In today's world, where explicit, codified knowledge rapidly becomes obsolete, tacit knowledge about business environments, industry patterns and company abilities is a resource that can provide significant competitive advantage for organisations (Kogut& Zander, 1993). In a business environment where markets are constantly shifting and technologies develop almost by the minute, it is the companies that successfully create new knowledge that survive. Nonaka (2007) argues that whilst much of this new knowledge creation happens serendipitously, Japanese companies have adopted a more managed approach. Central to this is the

recognition that creation of new knowledge is not simply a matter of processing objective and explicit information. It depends on accessing and utilising the tacit resource in the organisation – the often highly subjective insights of employees and making them accessible to the organisation as a whole.

Despite this acknowledged value of tacit knowledge to organisations, there are limitations on its usefulness which stem largely from the fact that its development is contextual and confined within the territorialised boundaries described above.

Professional Identity and Learning

The territorialisation of knowledge and the development and sharing of tacit knowledge are both features of professional identity. Wenger (2008) describes how the building of identity consists of negotiating meanings of experience of membership in social communities. Learning to 'become' a particular type of professional is less to do with formal schooling and much more a social process (an apprenticeship) where new members, over time, take on the language, behaviours, and knowledge systems of the community of practice through processes of observation and role-modelling (Lave & Wenger, 2009; Ibarra, 1999). Learning within the profession then continues to take place within this context, and defined by the boundaries of the community of practice. Learning becomes a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in the individual's mind. One might perceive that this may be a barrier to new types of knowledge entering the profession.Indeed, Thomas (2011) describes how professional identity can be a common source of resistance in the workplace, for example when new regimes or practices are introduced that challenge the existing discourses.

The concept of professional identity is of growing interest to researchers, especially in particular fields such as teaching and health. In careers that are less clearly defined than in some other professions there is value in exploring how behaviours in the field are developed and what constitutes 'professionalism'. In their essay on work-based learning, Halliday and Hager (2002) discuss the work of several researchers that have linked working practice and learning with personal motives and beliefs that contribute towards an individual's identity

and explain the importance of identity providing the context within which individuals form judgements.

Within this context there is a growing body of literature on leadership, which emphasises the merits of an emerging model of what has been termed 'authentic leadership' (Gardner et al., 2005). This has, at its core, the professional identity of the individuals in leader roles. Authentic leadership has been proposed as the root component of effective leadership needed to build trust and healthier work environments (Wong & Cummings, 2009).

Thus, if our professional doctorate candidates are to be able to become true researching professional who can generate new knowledge for their profession, make valued judgements, and act as thought leaders, they must be able to work outside of the restrictions of their existing professional identity and see their professional world through a fresh lens. A first step is to understand what that identity is, how it is underpinned, and what restrictions it brings with it.

Defining professional identity

Professional identity has been defined by Schein (1978) as:

> *The relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a professional role*

Recent work has moved away from this somewhat fixed notion to suggest that professional identity is dynamic and develops over time through processes such as the exploration of possible new identities (Ibarra, 1999) or the ability to use feedback about the self and increase levels of self-awareness (Hall, 2002). Dobrow and Higgins (2005) suggest that an important mechanism for these processes is the developmental network. They define these networks in terms of both range and density, arguing that high range, low density networks are more conducive to development of professional identity than low-range, high density networks. The latter network is one that might be formed within a single context, where all members of the network know each other (for example within a single organisation). In high-range, low density networks individuals are drawn for a range of contexts such as

employers, educational institutions, and professional associations and would not necessarily know each other.

Dobrow and Higgins suggest that if the density of the individual's development network increases such that it becomes more insular the result is a decreased sense of clarity in professional identity, whereas if density decreases and their network broadens there is greater engagement in exploration of professional identity resulting in greater clarity.

The practical implications of all of this are, firstly, that greater clarity of professional identity has been associated with both objective and subjective career success (Hall, 2002; Ibarra, 1999), the argument being that when an individual is clear about their professional identity they are clear about their beliefs, values etc. through which they define themselves in their professional role. Secondly, a low density high range network gives the individual access to a much greater variety of information and resources as well as greater cognitive flexibility (Higgins, 2001), and people may be able to enhance their careers by changing their developmental networks (Dobrow& Higgins, 2005).

The professional doctorate programme offers a unique opportunity for candidates to increase the range of their developmental networks by working in learning communities with professionals from a wide variety of disciplines and organisations and thus provides the vehicle for candidates transforming in terms of how they see themselves and in how they make sense of their professional world. Our professional doctorate programme has adopted structures and processes to help our candidates achieve a personal transformation to researching professionals by designing our programme to facilitate processes of de-territorialisation, accessing tacit knowledge, and clarification of professional identity.

Interestingly, these processes have had a corresponding effect on the development of academic staff involved with the programme. Originally the programme operated with a very small team of staff who had a clear vision of what the programme was designed to achieve; with the growth of the programme more academics have become involved, many of whom are very familiar with PhD supervision, but inexperienced with models of professional learning.All potential supervisors are therefore required to undergo a

development programme which covers the professional doctorate ethos, processes and systems, and familiarises them with the taught modules. Individuals must be accredited through this programme before being accepted as a professional doctorate supervisor, and must undergo refresher training every three years. It is evident that some academics remain sceptical about the professional doctorate even after completing the programme, and so the programme leader maintains a strong presence, mentoring staff through their first supervisions. However, almost without exception, once staff become involved with the programme they quickly recognise the powerful learning experience that it offers to candidates, and appreciate the high level work that they produce. It seems that the processes that we have designed to facilitate transformative learning and de-territorialisation of knowledge for the candidates is having a similar effect on the supervisors. A recent important development is that this is producing the side effect of generating some interesting inter-disciplinary and even inter-institutional research collaborations as a direct result of involvement on supervisory teams.

Processes of transformation

Modelling tacit knowledge transfer in the Higher Education context

Sharing and transferring tacit knowledge is not going to be simple; by its very nature it cannot easily be articulated. However, by considering how tacit knowledge develops and transfers it is possible to construct a model upon which the educational process can be based. We considered three transfer processes:

- Tacit to tacit
- Tacit to explicit
- Explicit to tacit

Tacit to tacit

Development of tacit knowledge is a *social* process. Individuals acquire tacit knowledge from one another without the use of language (Baumard, 1999). It requires intense personal experience and happens most effectively when the learner is immersed in action using as

many senses as possible (McNett et al., 2004). Transfer occurs not through dialogue but through action and observation. Our programme therefore needed to involve learners in active collaboration. As our mechanism for this we chose to organise the learners into discrete cohorts that act as peer learning sets throughout their programme. Candidates attend seminar sessions at the University on a regular basis, and although some of this time is spent in formal teaching, it is largely dedicated to candidates working together on questions or issues related to their work-based studies and sharing ideas and solutions.

Haworth and Conrad (1997) found that seminars as participatory learning cultures produce positive learning experiences for doctoral candidates. They emphasise the development of a community of learners, and deemphasise traditional student-supervisor hierarchies, based on a belief that the students themselves have useful knowledge to contribute, and learn a great deal from interacting with other students as co-learners (69).

Malfroy (2005), on the other hand, reported that some academics felt that 'cohortness' impeded intellectual stimulation and that the practice of grouping inexperienced researchers together had the effect of 'pooling ignorance', so our next mechanism is an important step such that it offers the academic facilitator an opportunity to spot and correct when this occurs.

Tacit to explicit

The conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge is effected through *articulation*. For example, discussion about the way a problem should be tackled will gradually tease out tacit knowledge to form a strategy or plan of action. This is similar to the production of 'mode 2 knowledge' (Gibbons et al*.,* 1994) which is produced through a process of continuous negotiation through problem-working contexts. It follows that by engaging our learning sets in collaborative enquiry around complex problems or scenarios tacit to explicit transfer can be facilitated. Our candidates are asked to address problems or issues in groups, but then they are required to make formal presentations and write about them to submit as formal assignments. The programme team plays an integral part in this process, becoming part of the learning set. Thus, candidates not only start to share and articulate the knowledge of other members of the group but are also able to start to take on an academic

perspective and gradually make the desired change from pure practitioners to researching practitioners.

Explicit to tacit

The knowledge transfer loop is only complete when individuals can take newly-acquired explicit knowledge and *internalise* it in order to broaden, extend, and reframe their own tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 2007). This is part of the processes of 'becoming' a different type of practitioner; of adopting an alternative professional identity. Only when the knowledge becomes internalised will that individual be able to access it without conscious thought and reference to codified explicit knowledge – it simply becomes part or the toolkit with which they are able to do their job. Internalisation can be encouraged through a process of reflection on action. Formal processes of reflection therefore had to be core to our programme. However, this was perhaps one of the most difficult elements to master; whilst some candidates took to reflection quite naturally, many more found the process difficult and in some cases, painful. When asked to write about their reflections candidates tended to produce largely descriptive accounts that did not truly address the core values, motives and emotions that we were trying to get to. By depersonalising or abstracting some of the initial activities aimed at cultivating reflective development using more creative techniques, we have found that the process develops much more effectively.A description of the technique we use if offered in the next section.

Firstly, to summarise, we are using socialisation, articulation, and internalisation as the three essential elements in our programme structure to facilitate the sharing, articulation and development of tacit knowledge, the deterritorialisation of professional knowledge, and the development of professional identity. Development of tacit knowledge happens within context, andmost commonly the context is the employer organisation. A programme for learners from multiple and varied organisations in which we wish to extend the knowledge development beyond individual organisational boundaries offers a new context. For true learning to occur, the learner must experience variation, and Bowden and Marton (1998) suggest that new contexts can supply the variation. We have used the candidates themselves to provide that varied context for their own learning and development.Tacit

knowledge is transmitted through observing and modelling (Somech&Bogler 1999), and through our structured activities in learning sets our candidates can observe and model different practices of both professional behaviour *and* academic behaviour. This process is developed further after the first year of the programme (the formal taught element) when the learning set is opened up to included all programme cohorts, so that newer cohorts then have the chance to learn and model from candidates who are at a more advanced stage in their academic development.The structure is summarised in figure 1:

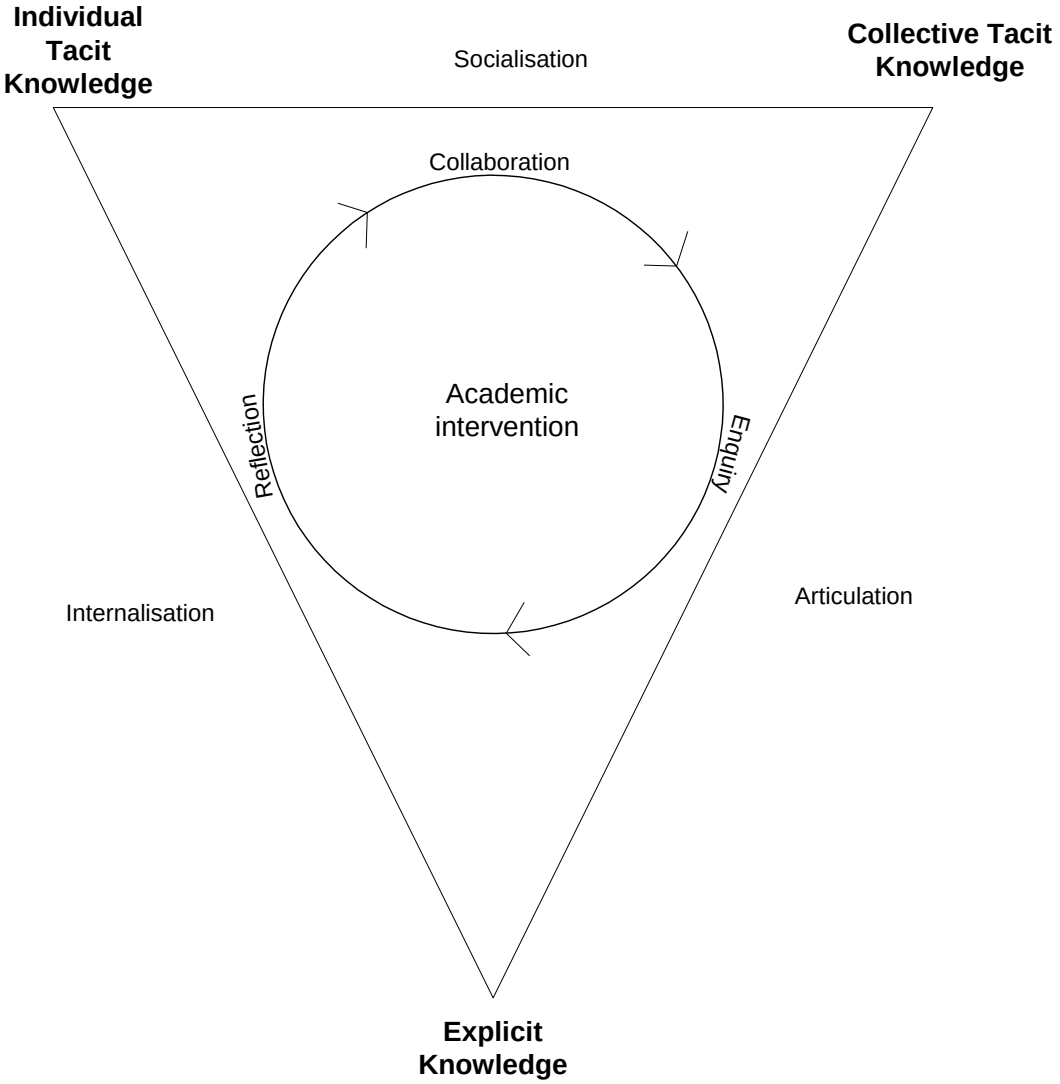

Figure 1: Conceptual model for knowledge transfer and development in a Professional Doctorate programme

(Sanders, 2010)

Practical approaches to making the structure work

Whilst we were confident in the structure that we had developed for learning in the professional doctorate the reality at first proved to be rather more difficult, and we encountered a number of fundamental barriers to the success that we hoped to achieve. Most important of these proved to be the definition and understanding of 'the profession' (and therefore, by default, the candidates' defined contribution to that profession), and also the transformation of our candidates into true reflective practitioners. It has taken several revisions of the programme to tackle these issues.

One of the University's requirements to be accepted onto the professional doctorate programme is that the candidate must be able to demonstrate their contribution to their profession. This is first explored at interview. All potential candidates are interviewed for admission by the programme leader and another academic with discipline expertise. It is important to clarify that candidates are (or have been) working at a suitably strategic level within their profession to allow them to make a contribution of the required significance, and it is worth noting that some applicants do not appreciate the demands of the programme until they go through this interview process.Once accepted onto the programme, the candidate's contribution varies according to where they are in their career structure, but importantly the programme is not intended for anyone at the beginning of their professional career. Most candidates have many years of professional experience to draw upon and they are required to reflect on those experiences at the start of the programme. They need to derive meaning from their past experiences and to be able to clearly articulate their reflections on this in the form of reflective writing. These reflections are underpinned by their review of the academic literature and their ideas about their research proposal are subsequently developed as a consequence of these reflections and review. However, writing reflectively has proven to be difficult with some candidates who are often more experienced at report writing.

When the University first began this programme, there were no formal taught modules included but candidates often struggled with how to start the academic process of study and research. Many had difficulty with reflective writing, academic writing and research

design and although the supervisor worked with the candidates to develop these skills, the candidates often felt isolated and unable to admit that they were having problems understanding how to do this. Consequently, the University introduced a more formal structure to the programme in the form of taught and assessed modules which are taken during the first year of the programme. These modules relate to reflective practice, research methodology, planning and contextualisation and their introduction has been positively received by the candidates. It has also provided a mechanism for them to develop their own academic community of practice and a strong cohort identity has clearly been developed in this process.

The first module on reflective practice aims to develop the candidates so that they recognise the necessary role of reflection in excavating learning from experience (Kuit et al., 2001). By becoming familiar with the basic elements of reflective practice the candidates will begin to act on the notion that knowledge is embedded in the experience of one's work, and to realise the importance of this knowledge in furthering one's practice.

In order for the candidates to begin this process, they are asked to identify a critical incident (Brookfield, 1990) in their past professional lives which allows them to reflect and review their own norms, values and behaviours with respect to those of their fellow professionals. This incident is described and reflected in a written assignment and submitted work clearly evidences transformational learning. These are a couple of quotes drawn with permission from candidates' assignments about this simple but effective approach.

> *As a result of starting the course and this Reflective Practice assignment, I am able to better understand and analyse why I have reached this stage in my career. This is enabling me to effectively plan my way forward.*

> *The process involved in analysing this critical incident (Brookfield, 1990) has had a huge impact not just on my professional practice, but also in my personal life.*

By reflecting on their own norms, values and behaviours and comparing it with their professional colleagues, they begin the process of defining their professional identity. For example, candidates have commented that:

> *This new conceptualisation (* as a consequence of the reflective practice assignment*) has implications for professional practice, and for researching, knowing and understanding "the profession", "the professional" and what constitutes "professional knowledge". It helps to shape new possibilities for relationships between the community of practice and the practitioner, and wider society as a whole.*

The module builds on this process of defining their professional identity by getting the candidates to attempt one of more of the following tasks in class to stimulate discussion about their professional identity.

1. Identify the people in your life, presently and in the past, who you most respect and would wish to emulate? What is it about them that makes them so admirable?
2. Which character in history would you most like to be and why?
3. Draw a rich picture that represents your professional identity.
4. Take a photograph to represent who you are. This is NOT a photograph ***of***you – it should be of something(s) that acts as a metaphor or rich picture that captures who you are as a person.
5. If you could go back in time and meet yourself when you first started off on your professional career, what important advice would you give to yourself with respect to core professional norms, values and behaviours?

This is continued by making the candidates think about their personal and professional networks (Dobrow& Higgins, 2005) by undertaking the following activities.

6. Identify the people in your life (outside of your family) with whom you have or have maintained contact. Draw a network of how these people relate to you in terms of

how they contribute to your belief system, your ethical values, norms, skills, personality and knowledge and group them under these categories. At the centre of the network put yourself and link to the others so that you can see what they have contributed to your personal development. This is your high range and low density developmental network.

7. Repeat the exercise with your professional colleagues at work. This is your low range and high density developmental network.

Finally, as the last assignment in the module, the candidates have to complete a professional autobiography which critically reviews the personal norms, values and behaviours which underpin their professional identity. In this assignment they are first asked to construct a 'contents page' which lists the chapters of their professional life. They then select what they consider to be the most significant chapter in terms of shaping their professional identity, and write a reflective report on that phase of their career. The report is required to be critically reflective and underpinned by academic literature. At first many candidates struggle with true reflection, and simply produce a descriptive account which often just describes the job that they do; however, each candidate undergoes a panel review where they receive feedback on their report which has been marked by both the module leader and their supervisor. During the review discussion we are able to unpick in more detail the match (or mismatch) between the norms of the profession and those of the candidate, help them to clearly define what they consider to be their community of practice, and to understand what is most important to them as a professional. This can yield some surprising and unexpected results, particularly with candidates who have a career spanning several professions, or whose professional practice crosses several boundaries.

As can be seen from the quotation from a professional doctoral candidate given below, these tasks evidently begin the process of deep understanding that professional knowledge is embedded in the previous experience of work, to realise the value of this knowledge in developing a professional identity and to researching in their professional field.

> *This reflective process has made me think about the epistemological aspect of research practice – about the research process as a whole. In being reflective,*

> *I have become more alert to not only issues relating to knowledge, power, professionalism and discourse, but also ethical issues in research. I have become more aware of the complex relationship between community of practice and individual practitioner, and in doing so am much more conscious of checking and reflecting on how the research that I do actually embodies my own and my community of practices' principles (which are often conflicting).*

Another recognised that the things he found discomforting at work and had blamed on the management were within his power to change. He said simply:

> *I have realised that I need to change my psychological approach.*

Conclusion

Here we have responded to the debate about the nature of the professional doctorate by developing a programme that acknowledges and utilises the existing knowledge and experience of candidates as a key learning resource.The programme structure and processes give emphasis to identity shift that facilitates the transformation from experienced professional to 'researching professional'.We have found that by adopting these more formal processes candidates come to recognise the value of reflection more readily, and through debating with their peers and academic tutors varied viewpoints and approaches to real-life issues, start to appreciate different paradigms that help them to see their professional lives through a different lensand identify alternative solutions to professional problems.

A measure of the success that our design has achieved was provided in 2011when we surveyed all fifty-six students currently on the professional doctorate programme by means of an online questionnaire. The questions were designed to explore the perceptions and expectations that the students have of the doctoral programme. Thirty students (54%) responded. At the time of the survey four students had graduated from the programme; they also elected to respond to a questionnaire slightly modified to their circumstances. In addition to the questionnaire a number of focus groups were held to explore further some of the themes emerging from the questionnaire responses.

Of the candidates responding to the questionnaire, 93% said that they used reflective practice principles in their work context. The mixed cohort experience was noted as one of the best features of the programme, as evidenced by the following quotes from various candidates:

> *It makes you think differently and it's really interesting to see what others are interested in and doing.*

> *It is fantastic to work with a range of professionals from other backgrounds.*

> *Stepping outside the normal run of things in the workplace and taking an informed view of the wider picture.*

The exploration of professional identity and the individual's position within their own profession has been equally valued:

> *One of the best things has been the autobiography assignment and reflecting on professional and personal life.*

> *This process has helped me to make sense of my working life*

We are continuing to explore and improve on these processes as we develop the programme, and our recently-validated DBA builds upon our experience of the generic professional doctorate by adopting a similar cohort structure but with increased formality in terms of professional identity development and transformation. Ongoing comparison of the effectiveness of these two programmes will inform our developments for the future.

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