

New perspectives and dynamics in doctoral supervisor training

The Institute for Work Based Learning (IWBL) and Koc University, Istanbul, Turkey, have been collaborating on professional doctorates and joint research projects since Spring 2013. As part of these exchanges, Dr Kate Maguire and Dr. Mehmet Ali Dikerdem were invited to the Facilitating Post-graduate Research for the Future : Sharing European Directions in Research in Higher Education' conference organised by Koc University Graduate School of Health Sciences on November 5-6, 2014. Dr Maguire was the key note speaker and led the workshops throughout the two days. The participants came mainly from Istanbul based universities which account for a considerable proportion of all Turkish higher education institutions (HEIs) and were overwhelmingly associated with nursing education.

As the primary provider of professional doctorates adviser training at Middlesex University, Dr Maguire has been involved with the issues of doctoral supervise and has published in this field. Dr Mehmet Ali Dikerdem provided additional interventions on European Union (EU) based initiatives in doctoral education through the Bologna Process with its so-called 'third cycle' initiatives, and the 2005 Salzburg Principles on international collaboration, exchange of good practice and sharing of innovations in doctoral education among EU partners.

In the new terminology based on these initiatives, terms such as *postgraduate education*, *research training* and *doctoral education* were tied to 'doctoral descriptors' (The Dublin Descriptors) setting out specific capabilities and competences which needed to met by postgraduate and doctoral level learners. The 'third cycle' included headings such as *knowledge and understanding*, *applying knowledge and understanding*, *communication*, *learning skills*.

The conference provided a good opportunity to discuss three related issues: probing the notion of 'doctoralness' (or 'third cycle' in EU terminology) its changing structures and functions in today's world; developing new doctoral supervision and advice approaches to meet the new strategic requirements of the doctorate; and the emergence of new research principles ('the research integrity agenda) and methodologies for the 'modern doctorate'.

One convenient or *ad hoc* way of summing up 15 or more years of European Union initiatives shaping doctoral programmes in member states would be the motto, 'one goal, different routes' which has acknowledged the diversity of doctoral forms across Europe. These have ranged from the type of 'generic' or 'transdisciplinary' programmes like the ones offered by the Institute of Work Based Learning at Middlesex University in London, through Doctorates in Engineering, Business Administration, Psychotherapy which have included accreditation of previous experience and / or work based 'applied research' components, through Industrial PhDs to the 'classical' PhD.

Although some were aware of the existence of other doctoral forms, the experience of the Turkish colleagues at the conference was overwhelmingly the traditional 'Master-apprentice' model of the PhD, with the supervisor as an all-powerful *Doctovater* (Doctor Father) as in the classical 19th Century German model from where the PhD was historically derived. It was common practice in Turkish doctoral programmes for supervisors and doctoral research topics be allocated to candidates often on the basis research grants commanded by

professors. It was also taken for granted that the function of the PhD was to train, habituate and thereby supply a steady stream of academics for the particular disciplinary field concerned.

One of the main focuses in Dr Kate Maguire's key note presentation and her facilitation of the accompanying workshops was precisely the changing nature doctoral advice and supervision to adjust to new demand for doctoral level expertise to be deployed, for an ever increasing range of functions, *outside* academia. The steady increase in the number of mature learners, leading professionals in their field or holding high-level managerial or executive positions in organisations, engaged in a range of *professional practice* doctorates, necessitated a revision of the classic PhD model towards a more contractual and partnership oriented supervision styles.

EU initiatives referred above have called for substantial improvements in the timely completion of doctorates, putting issues of supervision and the adequate training of supervisors high on the list of higher education priorities of member states. The considerable amount research generated by this renewed interest in doctoral pedagogy was emphasised by Drs Maguire and Dikerdem. It was also pointed out that EU initiatives also called for renewed emphases on employment outcomes, transferrable skills and interdisciplinary capabilities in doctoral programmes as well as timely completions.

These drivers of the doctoral process are now reorienting the tasks and responsibilities of doctoral supervisors towards a range of functions which include mentoring, coaching, sponsoring, advocacy as well as teaching and discipline centred guidance, all these elements requiring certain levels of emotional intelligence as well as academic leadership. At the heart of these approaches is the notion of a learning or supervision agreement between the supervisor and the doctoral candidate which takes into account the learning styles, life work balance and learning needs of the latter.

The key note speakers noticed that the postgraduate students who had remained silent throughout most the proceedings of the first day of the conference found their voice when invited to a closed session without the presence of their supervisors. Their comments clustered clustered around issues of time management, access to supervision, circulation of information and relational issues. They were particularly enthusiastic about ideas of learning relationships and contracts which, they felt, introduced transparency and efficiency into the supervisory relationship.

The EU initiatives mentioned have also included supporting and improving research capacity across HEIs in member states, the setting up of research networks, hubs and alliances to generate economies of research scale. It was also suggested that the agendas of employability, multiplicity and transferability of skills were needed in an increasingly *interdisciplinary* world. Inter- multi- and transdisciplinarity now further inform the choice of doctoral research methodologies.

Dr Maguire put it to the conference that the complexities of the global world require rigorous as well as imaginative combinations of problem solving as well as knowledge creation methodologies. She suggested that many researchers found themselves tackling complex, 'sticky' problems and issues which negotiate and cross disciplines or professional practice boundaries.

Since such research would impact upon social and organisational structures, it was necessary for plurality of voices and issues of social justice to be built into the ethics of the research process. The growing literature around transdisciplinarity suggested that a meta-level this might provide useful tools for dealing with contemporary post-modern states of complexity.

She also drew special attention to the concordat to support research integrity, the comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance. This committed researchers to the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of their research; ensured that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards; and that the supporting research environment should be underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice for the support for the development of researchers.

Dr Mehmet Ali Dikerdem

Middlesex University