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What Light Do Professional Doctorates Throw on the Question On the Question of What Counts as Knowledge in the Academy at the Start of the 21st. Century

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‘What light do professional doctorates throw on the question of what counts as knowledge in the academy at the start of the twenty-first century?’

(Bourner *et al.* 2001: 81)

Sandra Fisher

Abstract

In their article, ‘Professional Doctorates in England’, Bourner *et al.* (2001: 81) pose the question ‘What light do professional doctorates throw on the question of what counts as knowledge in the academy at the start of the twenty-first century?’ This article attempts to address this question.

The article provides some background to the development of professional doctorates. It looks at forces, such as the rise of the knowledge society, economic drivers, and the demands of lifelong learning, that are shaping knowledge in the academy in the twenty-first century. I attempt to interpret these forces in the context of the development of professional doctorates.

I argue that the development of professional doctorates has unmasked some of the limitations of the ‘traditional’ Ph.D. as a vehicle for the production of knowledge. However, the development of professional doctorates brings new challenges to the academy of the twenty-first century.

The evolution of doctoral study

The traditional Ph.D. is frequently referred to as the ‘gold standard’ of academic achievement. However, the awarding of the first Doctor of Philosophy in 1920 by the University of Oxford took place amid ‘a significant amount of resistance from the vice-chancellors of English Universities’ (Bourner *et al.* 2001: 66). In the USA, Yale University awarded the first Ph.D. in 1861, but it was the establishment of the John Hopkins University in 1876 and its attitude to higher degrees that led to the growth of the Ph.D. Originally within the John Hopkins University the Master of Arts Degree (MA) and the Ph.D. ‘were not considered separate degrees, or more accurately, they were awarded for different things’. However, by 1909 the University deemed the MA appropriate to ‘college teachers’ while the Ph.D. was ‘reserved’ for a ‘small group of individuals who it judged able to make a first-rate contribution to original research’ (Baez 2002: 49).

Professional doctorate awards originated in the USA, where the first award of such a degree was conferred in 1921. It was ‘calls by the professions for high credentials’ that led to a ‘rethinking on doctoral education’ and ‘to a recognition that the Ph.D. was not actually producing researchers’ and hence that other degrees were needed (Baez 2002: 50). During the 1990s professional doctorates were introduced in Australia and the United Kingdom (Bourner *et al.* 2001: 66).

The professional doctorate is mainly subjected to critical comparison with the traditional Ph.D. that is attained either through research or publication. However, five categories of doctorates have been identified:

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- 1 the traditional, research-based Ph.D.;
- 2 practice-based doctorates;
- 3 professional doctorates;
- 4 the new route doctorates;
- 5 Ph.D. by publication.

(Hoddell *et al.* 2002: 62)

Despite the original controversy surrounding the introduction of what is now termed the ‘traditional’ doctorate there is:

a reasonable level of consensus about the nature of the traditional Ph.D. degree. It is a programme of study requiring an extended research investigation leading to a significant original contribution to knowledge and recorded in a written dissertation.

(Bareham *et al.* 2000: 394)

In the United Kingdom the traditional Ph.D. may have difficulty aligning itself within the National Qualifications Framework which includes provision for defined skills not typically specified as outcomes within the traditional Ph.D. Professional Doctorates are defined as ‘the personal development of the candidate (either in preparation for professional activity or to advance further personal skills and professional knowledge) and advancement of the subject or profession (United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE), quoted in Hoddell *et al.* 2002: 65).

As will be outlined later, professional doctorates have a number of defined learning outcomes and these learning outcomes are strongly linked to the development of the student.

As institutions seek to align their doctoral programmes within the National Qualifications Framework this may result in a ‘convergence towards doctorates with a significant amount of teaching’ (Hoddell *et al.* 2002: 69). Tinkler and Jackson (2000), in their study of institutional policy and the Ph.D. examination process in the UK, concluded that while there is commonality among institutions in respect of key criteria for the award of Ph.D. there is not uniformity among institutions as to how these criteria are conceptualised and operationalised (Tinkler and Jackson 2000: 179).

The growth of professional doctorates

Bourner *et al.* (2001) conducted two surveys plotting the growth of professional doctorates in the United Kingdom. The first survey undertaken in 1998 found 109 professional doctorates. The second survey in 1999 showed an increase of 16 per cent, with 128 professional doctorates in existence. The surveys indicated increasing diversity in the disciplines offering professional doctorates ranging from education, medicine, business administration, psychology, architecture, fine art, social work and work-based learning. They also uncovered the development of ‘subspecies’ among professional

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doctoral programmes. For example, a new designation being applied to the Doctor of Finance (D.Fin.) that differentiates it from the older Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) (Bourner *et al.* 2001: 68–69).

When developing professional doctorates academics are concerned whether their proposed doctorate will stand up to the ‘inevitable’ comparison between it and the traditional Ph.D. (Portwood and Thorne 2000: 109). In Middlesex University it took three years to obtain approval for the professional doctorate in work-based learning (D.Prof.). The academic team involved in developing the D.Prof. were able to argue that the traditional Ph.D. was for the development and socialisation of academics and researchers. They demonstrated that there was demand from a wide range of professionals for a D.Prof. Opposition to their proposal emanated mainly from the social sciences and engineering (Portwood and Thorne 2000: 109).

In Ireland I have so far only found two¹ professional doctorates currently being offered, namely, the Doctor in Clinical Psychology (D.Clin.Psych.) provided by Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and University College Dublin’s Doctoral Degree in Clinical Psychology (D.Psych.Sc.). Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), which is the largest higher educational institution in the state, does not offer a professional doctorate. DIT is an amalgamation of a number of established vocational educational colleges. It was statutorily established as an autonomous institution in 1993 with its own degree-awarding powers. To date DIT has only awarded doctorates by research.

In 2003, DIT arranged to host the University of Sheffield’s professional doctorate in education on-site in Dublin and provides facilities and local support for the provision of the programme by the Sheffield based academics. This programme is aimed at staff of DIT and also is open to staff from other institutions. A similar such education doctorate is now being advertised by the National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

While the main impetus for the initial development of professional doctorates in the United Kingdom originated with the ‘old’ institutions, the ‘new’ universities accounted for three quarters of the growth rate between the 1998 and 1999 surveys (Bourner *et al.* 2001: 69).

Maxwell (2003) outlines the development of ‘second generation’ professional doctorates in Australia. First generation professional doctorates tended to follow a ‘coursework plus thesis model’ and ‘appeared to be dominated by academe’ (Maxwell 2003: 279). However by 2000 the emergence of ‘second generation’ professional doctorates indicated:

that there are some programmes in Australia that have the features of what have been termed second generation professional doctorates. In these the realities of the workplace, the knowledge and the improvement of the profession and the rigour of the university are being brought together in new relationships.
(Maxwell 2003: 290)

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The development of professional doctorates designed to appeal to professionals employed outside the academy is gaining momentum. The University of Western Sydney (UWS) Ed.D. programme is based on partnership between UWS and educational employers (Maxwell 2003: 280). I can only speculate as to whether this sort of initiative represents co-operative education between higher educational institutions for the development of their academic staff or whether the training of academics like other professions has become marketised.

Professional doctorates in practice

In its promotional material for the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) programme the University of Sheffield indicates that the main aim of the Ed.D. professional doctorate is ‘to offer a structured programme that will develop high standards of research and will be relevant to a range of professional and managerial careers’ (University of Sheffield 2003: 3).

Trinity College Dublin (TCD) describes the aims of its Doctor in Clinical Psychology as follows:²

The core purpose of the course is to produce professionally qualified clinical psychologists who are equipped with the skills to respond flexibly to changing demands of the Irish health services, with the ability to work at different levels of health care systems and the ability to adapt those skills to different settings and client groups. The Doctoral Programme in Clinical Psychology is a three-year doctoral degree course integrating the practical, academic and research aspects of the profession of clinical psychology in order to promote the highest quality of practice.

(Trinity College Dublin 2004)

Professional doctorates are designed to develop ‘research-based career development for experienced and senior practitioners in the professions’ (Bourner *et al.* 2001: 70).

A core aim of professional doctorates as defined by UKCGE is the development of the professions and professionalism. The aim appeals to the aspirations of the individual student and their organisation/professional body. The University of Sheffield Ed.D. specifies its programme is suitable for both professional and managerial careers. The TCD programme also indicates its programme is suitable for diverse roles within the health service.

The TCD programme emphasises the acquisition of skills and as well as stating the programme includes ‘practical, academic and research’ aspects. The University of Sheffield programme offers a ‘structured’ programme, which could be interpreted as providing the student with some certainty as to the content, direction, and duration of the programme.

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The aims of both the University of Sheffield and TCD programmes include reference to standards. The University of Sheffield speaks of ‘high standards of research’ and TCD is promoting ‘the highest quality of practice’.

It is useful at this stage to introduce a summary table, which provides a comparison between the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) and the traditional Ph.D. Table 1 provides a comparison of career focus and intended learning outcomes between the two doctoral programmes.

Principal career	DBA senior managers	Ph.D. lecturers (especially in Higher Education)
Intended learning outcomes	<i>Research</i>	
	1. An appreciation of the potential contribution of research to the work of senior managers.	1. Knowledge and skills required to design and carry out a research project in a particular field of study.
	2. The capacity to plan and carry out a research project in the field of business administration.	2. Ability to make an original contribution to knowledge in the chosen field of study.
	3. The capacity to make an original contribution to knowledge of practice in the field of business management.	
	4. The capacity to implement research findings in terms of management practice within an organisation.	
	<i>Personal development</i>	
	1. The capacity to plan and manage own learning and continuing professional development.	
	2. The skills of improving own performance through reflection on past practice.	
	<i>Knowledge of business and management</i>	
	1. Knowledge and understanding of theories and practices in business and management to at least the level of a Master’s	

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	degree in the field of study.	
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Table 1: Career focus and intended learning outcomes of DBA and Ph.D.

Source: Bareham et al. 2000 in Bourner et al. 2000: 482

In the following three sections I look at some of the learning outcomes of professional doctorates in the context of the forces shaping the development of the award.

The rise of the knowledge society

The purpose of the traditional doctorate is to develop ‘professional researchers’ and the purpose of the professional doctorate is to develop ‘researching professionals’ (Bourner *et al.*: 70–71). It could be argued that the development of professional doctorates represents a shift from Mode 1 science to Mode 2 knowledge production (Scott 2000).

Within Mode 1 science the academy engages with science and society through its production of knowledge and through the education of students as a ‘producer of knowledgeability’ respectively. This divided the academy’s role into comprising of ‘scientific’ and ‘social’ responsibilities (Scott 2000: 192). With the advent of what is termed the ‘knowledge society’ the university is not now the main site of knowledge production. The contention that the university was ever the dominant site of knowledge production is relatively recent (Scott 2000: 193). Within Mode 2 knowledge production the number of players who are engaged in the production of knowledge increases (Scott 2000: 200).

The career focus of the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) indicates it is aimed at senior managers. In contrast the Ph.D. is intended for lecturers in higher education (Bareham *et al.* 2000). The DBA is designed for professionals based outside the academy. After completion of the DBA these professionals are likely to continue to remain outside it. Thus the DBA allows for temporary admittance of professionals to the academy for the pursuit of research related to their professional life.

Differences in the domain of the research topic, research type and research focus between the traditional Ph.D. and a professional doctorate have been identified:

	Domain of research topic	Research type	Research focus
Prof.Doctorate	Contribution to professional practice	Concerned with application	On topic that relates to candidates’ own field of professional practice in their working lives
Ph.D.	Any topic within the field of study (research as end in itself)	Original investigation to create new knowledge	Gap in literature in a subject or discipline

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Table 2: Research topic/type/focus – traditional Ph.D. and professional doctorates compared

Source: Bourner et al. 2001: 71

One reason for the development of professional doctorates may be that the academy is recognising that externally based professionals can contribute to the development of knowledge at the highest academic level. By undertaking a formalised programme, such as a professional doctorate, professionals can direct their enhanced knowledge to the improvement of their profession or organisation. The type of knowledge ‘industry needs is problem-specific and is increasingly generated in the context of application’ (Delanty 2001: 109). Baez (2002) recounts how Veblen (1918) described the function of lower and professional schools as being ‘occupied with instilling such knowledge and habits as will make their pupils fit citizens of the world in whatever position in the fabric of workday life they may fall’. In contrast Baez (2002) indicates Veblen believed the university’s function is to prepare ‘men for a life of science and scholarship; and it is accordingly concerned with such discipline only as will give efficiency in the pursuit of knowledge and fit its students for the increase and diffusion of learning’ (Baez 2002: 53). Ironically ‘most holders of the Ph.D. do not pursue research (and never have) and now the difference between degrees seems more ideological than material’ (Baez 2002: 54).

The growth of the knowledge society has resulted in questioning of the role of the academy. The admittance of applied knowledge as expressed in degrees like professional doctorates has resulted in debate over what the academy stands for. ‘We use the term ‘university’ but we no longer have any clear sense as to what it might stand for: we no longer have a concept of “university”’ (Barnett 2000a: 115).

The ‘gold standard’ Ph.D. appears to sit comfortably with the academy’s conceptualisation of knowledge, despite the fact that its inception, as outlined earlier, was not without controversy. Perhaps it is the bringing into the academy of those mainly externally based researching professionals who are intent on taking their enhanced knowledge out of the academy to locations outside its control is the concern. Another possible explanation is the academy is unsure these temporary researching professionals merit the awarding of a doctorate. Maybe the inclusion of application, skills development and career development aspirations within professional doctorates does not sit comfortably with the academy. A more positive explanation is that while the academy is not quite comfortable with all aspects of professional doctorates it is endeavouring to give recognition to the multitude of locations where knowledge is produced and applied.

Baez (2002), as noted earlier, alluded to the fact that the Ph.D. has not succeeded in its aim of developing practising researchers. It could be argued that the Ph.D. simply became valued as the route for academic progression and its ‘gold standard’ nature was incorrectly attributed to disinterested inquiry and the creation of new knowledge. Researching professionals and professional researchers may therefore share a common goal of career advancement or recognition within their discipline or organisation.

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Baez (2002) suggests simply making comparisons between professional doctorates, such as the Ed.D, and the traditional Ph.D. hides ‘the power of academic institutions to create and legitimate classifications of the social world, and thus, to dominate it’ (Baez 2002: 47). It could be argued that the development of professional doctorates symbolises that the power of the academy is now shared with other knowledge producers in the spirit of Mode 2 knowledge production. Alternatively, the academy’s power is diluted by the influence of other knowledge producers on its programmes resulting in programmes, such as professional doctorates, where application has become a significant part of the academy’s highest award.

Knowledge and economic imperatives

The academy now recognises it has lost its ‘traditional status as primary producer of “worthwhile” knowledge’. The shift from Mode 1 science to Mode 2 knowledge production means that the academy is one of many players in the knowledge market. Due to the ‘demands of the knowledge economy and the sheer explosion of information enabled by IT’ universities are ‘now largely unable to control the production, legitimation and exchange of knowledge as they once did’ (Usher 2002: 8).

The ‘struggles over the nature of appropriate links between education, vocationalism and wealth creation are as old as universities’. The ‘troubled history of opening up university education to wider sections of the community can be traced back for centuries’ (Winter *et al.* 2000: 27).

Barnett (2000b: 24) poses the question ‘Can the university be a site of disinterested reason while also giving to society the new forms of knowing that society calls for?’ However, the question could be posed whether the academy was ever a site of disinterested reason or inquiry. Whether in fact the awarding of the Ph.D. as the highest academic accolade was not an attempt to reserve this award for members of the academy. Is the academy’s engagement with the knowledge society simply an act of self-interest (i.e. survival in a Mode 2 knowledge production society) or more optimistically is it now recognising that society comprises of many knowledge producers who are worthy of inclusion and recognition.

Barnett (2000b) contends the university ‘wants it both ways’: its knowledge to be ‘value-free’ and ‘yet not value-less’. Perhaps Barnett (2000b) is correct that attempting to ascribe ‘value freedom’ to knowledge is only leading to a ‘cul de sac’ in trying to formulate a role for the academy in the twenty-first century (Barnett 2000b: 25). In my view, the production of value-free knowledge is not possible. The recognition that vested interests lie both within and outside the academy is more realistic. It is not the presence of vested interests that is of concern. It is not the expectation that knowledge production might result in some sort of return either to the economy or the academy. The concern is: Will it become unacceptable within the academy to contest knowledge production when it is presented as contributing to the enhancement of the economy?

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Now ‘concerns are being expressed within the polity that HE needs to contribute in measurable terms to the creation of the knowledge society’ (Robertson 1999: 19). In Ireland the Higher Education Authority (2002) argues that investment in basic research yields ‘returns to society’:

The primary justification for investment in basic research is health and social gain, and economic development and advancement. Furthermore there are two primary economic justifications for investment in basic research: The first relates to the return on investment and the second to the enhancement of human capital.

(Higher Education Authority 2002: 24)

While return on investment might be interpreted as bringing wealth to private industrialists, it must not be overlooked that individual academics have benefited financially in engaging in commercial activities. The statistics as outlined in *The Times* newspaper (16 April 2001) record that ‘more than a third of Oxford’s dons are now multimillionaires’ and Oxford ‘has a share in over 32 companies which were founded to profit from ideas by academics’ (Evans 2002: 5). It may be a case of the ‘pot calling the kettle black’ if the academy expresses distaste that private industry or the state seek a return on investment in education. There is now a rise of academic capitalism, which is a result of a shortage of research funds and has ‘forced academics to sell their capital on the market’. The appeal for industry in purchasing academic capital is that higher education institutions contain ‘publicly subsidized academic researchers, so private costs are absorbed at the public expense’. Universities are better placed to bear the cost of failed research (Robertson 1999: 26).

The reason for the small number of business graduates undertaking Ph.D.s, is due to the Ph.D.’s association with the ‘scholastic traditions in arts and humanities and the traditional culture of the physical sciences’. The development of MBA programmes specifically for the practice of business management is being supported by the development of a doctoral level programme in the shape of the DBA (Bareham *et al.* 2000: 400). It appears students too want a return on their investment and to obtain a relevant qualification. In the UK some members of the nursing profession believe the Ph.D. is too academic and does not provide a link between theory and patient care. Nurses undertaking professional doctorates wish to pursue their career as advanced practitioners rather than as university based academics (McKenna and Cutcliffe 2001: 9)

Usher (2002) refers to Lyotard’s (1984) argument that knowledge is now ‘legitimated by its performativity or capacity to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the socio-economic system. It is usefulness rather than its adherence to epistemological canons that is of most significance’ (Usher 2002: 6).

The state, employers, and society question the cost of the production of knowledge within higher education. Costs have to be justified on whether the knowledge produced through the programme/research is of a type which will result in a return to society in

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economic/social terms and/or is sufficiently valued by society to justify the cost of the programme/research. The academy is producing more ‘quality graduates’ and many of these ‘subsequently become competent to pass judgement on university research and belong to organisations which might do the job just as well’ (Gibbons *et al.* 1994: 11).

If the production of knowledge in the academy is determined by cost considerations alone or by its potential to bring direct (e.g. attract more funding) or indirect (e.g. prestige) reward does the academy have a clear mandate from society for this? Will all stakeholders in the knowledge economy have an equal say in the development of higher education? The growth of professional doctorates as outlined by Bourner *et al.* (2001) has not, I believe, been matched by a similar growth in prestigious programmes for the unqualified within industry.

In 2003/04 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conducted a review of higher education in Ireland. The OECD invited interested parties to make submissions on the future of higher education in Ireland. In its submission to the OECD the Confederation of the Heads of Irish Universities (CHIU) indicated that among the issues facing higher education is:

Creeping bureaucratisation in the system in making excessive demands on universities in terms of resources and in terms of compromised autonomy. It is essential that the right balance between accountability and autonomy is achieved if universities are to have the freedom required to fulfil their transcending role of developing students to their full potential and pursuing knowledge for its own sake.

(CHIU 2004: 5)

The submission by CHIU also commented that ‘the priority given by universities to various objects and the balance between them are largely dictated by the source and quantity of funding/income and the constraints/conditions attaching’ (CHIU 2004: 5).

The globalisation of knowledge production is changing the role of the nation state from ‘government to governance’. This is resulting in the state’s role in knowledge production shifting from that of ‘sole financier of knowledge production’ to ‘regulator’ (Delanty 2001: 103). Among the challenges facing Irish higher level institutions is the need to ‘increase and diversify sources of university income: sale of services; consultancies; partnerships; management of intellectual property; rents from wider, year long use of facilities; fee-paying students; and a wide range of entrepreneurial activities’ (Skilbeck 2001: 11). Accountability on cost and the capacity to self-finance projects are expected of the academy of the twenty-first century.

The academy and lifelong learning

The Report on the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002) cites the definition of lifelong learning as defined by the European Commission: ‘All learning activity undertaken through-out life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a

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personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective’ (Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 2002: 6).

The issue of lifelong learning has become an area of debate and priority due to ‘the realisation that developed economies are moving into a post industrial phase where the emphasis is increasingly on the ability to continuously acquire knowledge, skills and competencies in an environment of constant change’ (Report on the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 2002: 5).

It could be argued that professional doctorates, such as the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), represent the demands of and response to the lifelong learning agenda. These demands emanate from various sources, for example the state, employers, professional bodies, and individual students.

The massification of higher education has led to graduates of higher education undertaking higher degrees in order to ‘regain positional advance in an overcrowded labour market, to secure enhanced status in an increasingly volatile society or to satisfy cravings for self-realisation in an anomic post-modern world’ (Scott 2000: 195). In order to facilitate students undertaking doctoral studies the academy has developed programmes such as the DBA that are structured in such a way as to appeal to professionals based outside the academy. Universities ‘gain their public prestige and income by being validating bodies’ (Gray 1999: 11). While higher education currently has the monopoly on accreditation, if it fails to respond to the needs of other knowledge producers, such as industry, it may run the risk of this monopoly being challenged.

The admission criteria for the professional doctorate is a little more flexible than the traditional Ph.D. In respect of professional doctorates, the admission criteria may be ‘a ‘good’ first degree’ with students generally initially enrolling or participating on subjects on a master’s programme. In contrast the Ph.D. generally requires either a ‘relevant’ or ‘good’ undergraduate degree or participation on a ‘conversion’ masters degree. (Bourner *et al.* 2001: 72). The admission criteria for both the Ph.D. and professional doctorates are still very much based on the prior completion of a course of study or participation on a conversion course both of which derive from the academy.

The entry criteria for professional doctorates generally includes that the student is an ‘experienced practitioner within a profession’. In contrast the Ph.D. is intended for ‘apprentice researchers who may have no experience in the field beyond the possession of a good first degree in the proposed field of study’ (Bourner *et al.* 2001: 72). The admission criteria for the academy’s highest level award are still based on criteria understood, controlled and granted by the academy.

Universities are ‘under increased pressure from the state to make their teaching programmes relevant to employment’ (Delanty 2001: 108). In Ireland the submission by the government-established Expert Group on Future Skills (EGFS) to the OECD’s Review on Higher Education in Ireland expresses concern that courses undertaken by students ‘often do not reflect the changing skills needs of the economy’ and that ‘priority

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should be given to the critical importance of embedding a culture of life-long learning in Ireland' (EGFS 2004: 2).

In the United Kingdom a trend has developed to 'accredit work-based learning and to bring vocational qualifications and academic qualifications into closer alignment' (Winter *et al.* 2000: 27). The learning outcomes of professional doctorates, such as the DBA, include learning outcomes related to research in the field of business administration, a follow-up learning outcome of implementation by the student of their research findings, and the student's own personal development comprising of self-management skills and knowledge acquisition (Bourner *et al.* 2000: 482). These learning outcomes are very unambiguously presented and are expressed in terms readily understood by the student and professional bodies/industry. It is easy to understand the benefits of undertaking a professional doctorate. The language used to describe professional doctorates promises application in the workplace and personal development of the student.

In the USA 'unemployment is not a major problem for Ph.D. recipients, but *underemployment* may be a serious predicament about which there are few meaningful data' (Rhodes 2001: 131):

Many universities and colleges – though not the major research universities – are replacing full-time tenured faculty, for example, by adjunct, part-time, and temporary instructors, and in some cases young Ph.D.s may find themselves with part-time appointments in several institutions at the same time. Others are employed in fields far distant from their own, performing tasks for which the lengthy Ph.D. apprenticeship is generally poor preparation.

(Rhodes 2001: 132)

The professional doctorate may offer a more certain future for students. The universities offering professional doctorates claim to understand and be responding to the development needs of the profession/industry. Professional doctorates promise relevance to and application in the profession/industry. They imply enhanced employment/career prospects and encourage employers to sponsor employee participation.

The rise of the 'knowledge user' has led to concern that 'as a result of new relations between university and industry, "knowledge for use" instead of "knowledge for its own sake" has transformed the late modern university' (Delanty 2001: 108). Students like academics pursuing the traditional Ph.D. may desire a qualification relevant to *their* environment. Employers subventing employees' participation or facilitating access to their organisation may also desire outcomes relevant to their industry. The question is whether decisions on knowledge production and application are open to challenge by all members of the learning society.

Professional doctorates offer students flexibility in delivery and support. They include features such as a taught component, modularity, generally part-time attendance,

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integration of work and study, and recruitment on the basis of a cohort of students which leads to the establishment of a group of professionals studying together. Assessment is based on assignments linked to taught modules and the production of a thesis that is smaller in scope than the traditional Ph.D. (Bourner *et al.* 2001: 73–75). The structure of professional doctorates meets the demands of students and employers for a flexible approach to learning. Programmes, such as the University of Sheffield's Ed.D., wherein taught modules are held over weekends, reduces the inconvenience to both employers and students. In contrast, Ph.D. students' support can vary in quality and 'all too frequently students are allowed to drift' (Rhodes 2001: 129).

The stated duration of professional doctorates (i.e. generally three or four years' part-time study) may be more appealing to students. A perception that the duration of the traditional Ph.D. is uncertain caused one student to remark 'I just couldn't contemplate spending the next fifty years writing learned footnotes on the relationship of sixteenth-century economic development to marriage and kinship in the western cities of the Hanseatic League' (quoted in Rhodes 2001: 129).

Assessment within professional doctorates generally includes deadlines for the submission of assignments and thesis if students are to complete within the lifetime of a particular programme. Perhaps these deadlines stimulate student motivation as well as providing feedback on progress. The deadlines associated with assessment within professional doctorates perform practical functions. They provide for a cohort of students who enrol at the same time to complete together. They also facilitate the commencement of the next cohort of students. It could also be argued that the deadlines associated with assessment within a professional doctoral research programme are rooted in cost efficiency. Whether the imposition of deadlines for assignments and thesis submission impacts on the quality of a student's work and acts as a limitation on the production of knowledge are issues that need to be examined.

Unmasking the 'gold standard' Ph.D.

The aim of the traditional Ph.D. is to promote 'the capacity to make an original contribution to knowledge in a particular discipline through research' (Bourner *et al.* 2001: 72). The traditional Ph.D. is seen as the appropriate vehicle to provide an 'apprenticeship' for practising researchers, i.e. academics. However, as indicated earlier in this article Rhodes (2001) and Baez (2002) dispute the effectiveness of the Ph.D. to produce practising researchers. It has been argued earlier that the Ph.D. has become valued as a prerequisite for academic progression. If this is the case it could be further argued that the aim of the Ph.D. as outlined by Bourner *et al.* (2001: 72) has lost its connection to its intended function of making a 'significant original contribution to knowledge in a particular discipline' and is instead serving academic career progression.

A doctoral programme, the 'new route Ph.D.' specifically developed to prepare students for careers as academics has emerged (Hoddell *et al.* 2002: 66). The 'new route Ph.D.' is similar to a professional doctorate in that it is a taught programme delivered over four years. It would appear that students of the 'new route' Ph.D. may also be attracted to the more flexible and supportive nature of this award and share the same needs as students

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undertaking professional doctorates. Frame and Allen (2002) in their review of the training of Ph.D. students who are sponsored by the Wellcome Trust note there was some agreement among Ph.D. supervisors that it was ‘neither realistic nor necessarily appropriate to train students solely for a career in academic research’ (Frame and Allen 2002: 99).

To participate in lifelong learning is possibly less attractive and feasible when learning is delivered via the traditional Ph.D. Perhaps when promoting post-doctoral studies among both researching professionals and professional researchers, this should be borne in mind.

I have argued in this article that value-free knowledge production is not possible as there are always interests involved whether these emanate from the academy, academics, industry, etc. I think terms such as ‘disinterested inquiry’, ‘academic autonomy’ and ‘academic freedom’ have become inappropriately connected to each other. ‘Disinterested inquiry’ I do not think is possible. However, freedom to challenge and contest knowledge needs to be separated and guarded in a new ‘ivory tower’. While the academy might maintain this new ‘ivory tower’ it must be situated in society. The introduction of professional doctorates aimed at the development of researching professionals is not a reduction in the influence of the academy in the production of knowledge. Rather it is a recognising and sharing of knowledge gained through research, experience, and application produced by and with members of society located outside the academy. It may also be the academy’s admission that the ‘gold standard’ Ph.D. is not the sole or perfect expression of high standards of knowledge creation in society in the twenty-first century.

The academy, knowledge and professional doctorates

An aspect of professional doctorates that appears to be neglected in the literature I have reviewed for this article is whether an institution can move to delivering professional doctorates without providing for the professional development of academic staff. Professional doctorates have become recognised as a form of work-based learning (Bourner *et al.* 2001: 75). However, work-based learning challenges ‘academic identity’ and academics may be concerned that their academic knowledge may not stand up to testing and review by the world of work (Boud and Symes 2000: 25).

The development of professional doctorates requires a more radical overhaul of institutional doctoral and post-doctoral policies lest these awards become subjected to the same criticism that undergraduate awards are receiving from industry (which sometimes maintains these do not prepare students for employment). Also, will professional doctorates result in more practising researchers beyond a student’s completion of assignments/thesis while on the programme?

An argument for consensus and conflict

Professional doctorates represent the recognition by the academy of work-based learning at the highest level and as such the ‘legitimisation of alternative forms of knowledge within the academy’ (Bourner *et al.*: 74–75). I hope there might be consensus within the academy that knowledge and its origins, form, purpose and application are always open

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to contestation and new development. Chomsky (2003: 192) in discussing the barriers to reform and innovation in the academy calls for a spirit of ‘radical social inquiry’, ‘a loosening of institutional forms’ to permit ‘experimentation’ and a ‘home for the free intellectual, for the social critic, for the irreverent and radical thinking’. Chomsky comments:

The primary barrier to such development will not be the unwillingness of administrators or the stubbornness of trustees. It will be the unwillingness of students to do the difficult and serious work required and the fear of the faculty that its security and authority, its guild structure, will be threatened.

(Chomsky 2003: 192)

The concern is that a costs and benefits approach to the production of knowledge may lead to a compliant academy: a place where contestation becomes ‘politically incorrect’, a place where for the doctoral student the last full stop at the end of their thesis signifies the end and not the beginning of their engagement with knowledge creation.

Conclusion

This article has examined the growth in popularity of professional doctorates and attempted to interpret what this growth implies for knowledge in the academy of the twenty-first century.

Professional doctorates and other new forms of doctoral study are subject to not unexpected comparison with the traditional or ‘gold standard’ doctorate by research or publication. The development of professional doctorates has led to a questioning of the suitability of the traditional doctorate to develop professional researchers.

Professional doctorates reflect a move on the part of the academy to facilitate a larger number of professionals undertaking a doctoral programme that is relevant to their profession and promotes application in the workplace. The development of professional doctorates allows for the inclusion of a wider range of knowledge producers and importantly provides for the inclusion of knowledge producers based outside the academy. Professional doctorates have conferred recognition on the contribution that experienced practitioners bring to the production of knowledge.

The development of professional doctorates highlights how the academy, by responding to the demands of lifelong learning and economic drivers, has made doctoral study a more attractive proposition for students. While it may be unrealistic to expect that all students who complete a professional doctorate will go on to undertake post-doctoral study, examining how post-doctoral work might be conducted and supported is I believe worthwhile. The students who have undertaken professional doctorates provide the academy with a link to many professions and organisations. These students and their organisations are potential sites for ongoing knowledge production.

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Finally, a challenge facing the academy is whether in responding to economic demands the academy will have to compromise on the possibility of developing an academy where all stakeholders are free to contest the production and application of knowledge in the twenty-first century.

Notes

1 Since this article was written Trinity College Dublin (TCD) has introduced a professional doctorate in education.

2 It could be argued that TCD's D.Clin.Psych. in Clinical Psychology falls under the category of practice-based doctorate. However, Hoddell *et al.* (2002: 64) note that in the United Kingdom programmes, such as the D.Clin.Psych, which have a 'significant taught element' the national qualifications framework locates them in the category to include the name of the discipline in the title and thus includes them in the category of professional doctorate. In Ireland, the national qualifications framework, launched at the end of 2003, has not so far included any categorisation of doctoral programmes.

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