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Stakeholders and the Design of Doctorate Curricula for Practising Professionals

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Abstract

The complex and changing situation in doctoral education together with the recent expansion in doctoral provision have challenged universities to provide relevant programmes that meet the needs of the various stakeholders. Park (2007) identified 8 broad categories of stakeholder, including the candidate, employers, the university institution/supervisor/department/discipline, funding bodies and the wider society, but did not include professional bodies. Consideration of stakeholders has included how doctorates can be configured in conjunction with industry (Borrell-Damian, 2009) and to offer advanced development of practice for a range of professional groups (Fell et al, 2011). The shift in stakeholder power and influence has been investigated by Halse and Mowbray (2011) who suggest that the stakeholders who are most often neglected are 'students, doctoral supervisors (known as advisors in some countries), universities and industry partners' (513).

While an agreed definition of curriculum is elusive, holistic conceptions such as Barnett and Coates (2005) can provide a focus. In developing curricula, the values and purposes, structure and content, and pedagogy of the provision are key considerations. This work investigated the views of HE practitioners involved in the development and delivery of Professional Doctorates on the current issues in designing and delivering an appropriate curriculum, including the importance of various stakeholders. Feedback from 66 people who took part in one of two international workshops (IAPD2014 and ICDE2015) generated 100 issues or discrete ideas. Results showed that whilst staff felt the social benefits of implementing practitioner research were important, they struggled with tensions in the HE context to manage the practitioner elements, including the balance between theory and practice, recognition of practitioner methodologies and the provision of appropriate supervision. The presentation outlines the results and conclusions of this study. These help to clarify the values and purpose of doctoral education, and how stakeholder needs can be further considered in curriculum design.

Barnett, R. and K. Coate (2005) *Engaging the Curriculum in Higher Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press/McGraw-Hill Education

Borrell-Damian, L. (2009) *Collaborative Doctoral Education: University-Industry Partnerships for Enhancing Knowledge Exchange*. European Universities Association: Brussels.

Fell, A., Haines, I. and Flint, K. (eds) (2011) *Professional Doctorates Report*, UKCGE

Halse, C., & Mowbray, S. (2011). The impact of the doctorate. *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(5), 513-525.