Professional doctorates: An Australian perspective

Margaret Malloch[1]

University of East London

Abstract

Professional doctorates proliferated in the Australian academic environment in the 1990s with programs being developed in diverse academic fields and with overseas partnerships. By 2000, the numbers of professional doctorates doubled (Maxwell and Shanahan, 2001), with courses in 19 areas of study offered in 30 universities (CDDGS, 1999). In England and America, professional doctorates similarly have grown in number of programs and students. The Australian experience is that this growth has been followed by a retraction and diminished popularity paralleled by a change in government policies, funding and the realities of delivery of the qualification.

This article explores these national trends whilst drawing upon data gathered from interviews with course coordinators and doctoral students carried out for a study into links between learning in the workplace and the academy at (professional) doctoral level. Qualitative, ethnographic research methodology was employed to gain perspectives through interviews of the professional experience of course coordinators of the Doctor of Education, from a range of universities, interviews of students from a regional university and participant observation by the researcher.

The interviews enabled the students to reflect on their learning, and links between study and work. They also reflected on potential models for the shape of a professional doctorate.

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[1] Email: m.e.malloch@uel.ac.uk

Coordinators interviewed have moved on to a range of transformations of the professional doctorate program, influenced by the impact of the 21st century economics and commitment to providing alternative pathways for doctoral study. Their views contribute to a consideration of the future of professional doctorates in Australia.

Keywords: Professional doctorates in Australia; Models in doctoral programs; Work; The academy; Learning.

Introduction

Professional doctorates in a diverse range of fields proliferated in Australia in the decade of the 1990s. In Australia the trend from 1991 on was for a burgeoning number of doctoral courses, with 131 professional doctorate programs and a doubling of research students of whom two thirds were doctoral enrolments. By 2000, the numbers of professional doctorates had doubled (Maxwell and Shanahan, 2001), with courses in 19 areas of study offered in 30 universities (CDDGS, 1999). Such rapid growth contributed to a reputation of strong doctoral programs. This growth has been followed however by a retraction and diminishing popularity in Australia. The earlier growth and optimistic take up of professional doctorates has been impacted upon by changes in government policies and funding and the realities of delivery of the qualification.

This paper explores these national trends through a consideration of literature and the data from the Coordinator and student interviews and from the author's own professional experiences in coordination of a professional doctorate, in this case, the Doctor of Education.

Defining the Professional Doctorate

Professional doctorates provide a doctoral level qualification as an alternative to the Doctor of Philosophy. The Doctor of Education programs referred to are all professional doctorates. The definition of the professional doctorate provided by the Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (CDDGS, 1998: 1) is that it is:

"A program of research, scholarship and advanced study which enables candidates to make a significant contribution to knowledge and practice in their professional context. In doing so, a candidate may also contribute more generally to scholarship within a discipline or field of study. Professional doctorate students should be required to apply their research and study to problems, issues or other matters of substance which produce significant benefits in professional practice."

The Doctor of Education programs in Australia are characterised by taught subjects and substantial independent enquiry presented in the writing of a thesis for which the professional practice and workplace learning of the participant is important. Contemporary coursework, professional practice and research within the profession of the students is complemented by a thesis or creative work and exegesis assessed for originality and significance by external examiners.

Numbers

It is difficult to ascertain just how many are enrolled in professional doctorates in Australia, given that the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) refers to as categories of doctorate, a doctorate by research and a doctorate by coursework (McWilliam *et al.*, 2002). Professional doctorates fall between these categories in that they may be one third coursework, two thirds research and thereby a research doctorate, or they may be more focused on coursework. This is not clarified in the presentation of the data.

There appears to be a perception that Australia has a healthy and vibrant professional doctorate presence which is not necessarily the case. Numbers of students in both category of doctorate have decreased slightly in recent years. Some universities have closed down their doctor of education programs, and some have absorbed valued professional doctorate course components into their delivery of the Ph.D. By 2008, the numbers of domestic doctoral enrolments in Australia are now showing a decline. Domestic numbers are

bolstered by international enrolments, particularly the keen desire of Asian countries to acquire doctoral graduates which fuels both an internal and external market.

Table 1: Taken from the table for All Students by Age Group and Broad Level of Course, Full Year 2008.

	2008	**2007**	**Percentage change on 2007**
Doctorate by Research	**42,366**	**41,427**	**2.3%**
Doctorate by Coursework	**1528**	**1626**	**-6.5%**

Source: From Students 2008 Full Year Selected Statistics
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/students/2008_full_year.htm

Table 2: Taken from All Domestic Students by Age Group and Broad Level of Course Full Year 2008.

	2008	**2007**	**Percentage change on 2007**
Doctorate by Research	**32,680**	**32,914**	**- 0.7%**
Doctorate by Coursework	**958**	**976**	**-1.8%**

Source: From Students 2008 Full Year Selected Statistics
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/students/2008_full_year.htm

Table 3: Award Course Completions for All Students by Citizenship and Level of Course 1996 – 2007

	1996	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**Percentage change from 2006**
Doctorate by research	2326	2707	2853	3018	3813	3290	3629	3940	3945	4250	4326	4405	1.8%
Doctorate by coursework	3	9	14	13	44	52	62	86	118	138	146	138	-5.5%

Source: Award Course Completions –selected higher education statistics 2007
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/statistics/publications_higher_education_s

Table 4. Overseas Students Completions

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Percentage change from 2006
Doctorate by research	579	639	593	647	610	643	662	788	955	944	1193	1316	10.3%
Doctorate by coursework	0	3	7	9	11	25	41	48	85	129	146	136	-6.8%

Source: Award Course Completions –selected higher education statistics 2007
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/statistics/publications_higher_education_s

The percentage changes in the numbers undertaking professional doctorates are modest but indicate a decline nevertheless. Research doctorates and overseas students remain important to the Doctoral level profile. Two of the universities of the coordinator interviewees collapsed their Doctor of Education programs, taking some professional doctorate modules and learnings to enhance their Ph.D programs.

Phases of development

Historical background

Status is a feature as to how professional doctorates are viewed and such perceptions contribute to the viability of their development, delivery and future. Historically the professional doctorate may have a longer ancestry than the Doctor of Philosophy, which generally in Australia is rated more highly than professional doctorates in academic circles. Professional doctorates are perceived as recent arrivals, however, Bourner *et al.* (2000) provide a rarely referred to genealogy for doctorates, noting that the professional doctorate, in theology, law and medicine, has a longer ancestry than the Doctor of Philosophy, given their existence in twelfth century Paris (2000). The Ph.D began in Berlin in the early nineteenth century. The first U.S. Ph.D. was conferred at Yale, 1861, the first in England at Oxford, 1920; the first Doctor of Education, Harvard, 1921, the first in England in 1992. The first Ph.D for Australia was in 1948 (Evans, 2003), and the first professional doctorate in Australia was in 1991 (McWilliam *et al*., 2002).

First generation

Despite such early beginnings, professional doctorates re- entered the academic arena in the 1990s. The development of professional doctorates in Australia was paralleled by developments in England in particular. In the UK there was a similar increase in numbers of doctoral courses to 153 by 1999 (McWilliam *et al.*, 2002: 5) There was an interest in opening up doctoral level study to more people, and those undertaking the programs tend to be mid career, middle aged professionals who study part time, work full time. This period is referred to as the 'first generation' of professional doctorates. The programs were generally structured with course work followed by a thesis, dissertation, or exegesis.

The allure of the orient

It became fashionable in the 1990s for Australian Universities to form partnerships with neighbouring Asian universities for the delivery of a range of academic programs, including professional doctorate programs. Altbach and Knight (2007) noted that "The international activities of universities expanded dramatically in volume, scope, and complexity during the past two decades." Efforts to enhance research, knowledge capacity and increasing of cultural understanding (Altbach and Knight, 2007) contributed to such enterprises, with Asian countries interested in expanding their intellectual capacity. They developed a commercial presence, whereby facilities in other countries could be established and joint ventures undertaken with local institutions (Altbach and Knight, 2007). For the Australian universities, as well as these goals, commercial efforts were very much part of the agenda, with local funding supports in decline. As Marginson (2006) reported, with government funding per student falling below 30% in Australia, there was a financial imperative with revenues rather than status driving the expanding market.

This was part of the process of establishing professional doctorates in Australia, and especially the Doctor of Education. A financial imperative was paramount, although providing opportunities for doctoral study and modeling of programs were motivating considerations. Given the shift in federal government policies towards universities and funding declining, it is not surprising that oriental affairs were entered into. These programs were established with good intentions but were and remain challenging, with language

demands, and the differing comprehension of the concept of the study to be undertaken. The critical mass of large numbers of students at this level of study, requiring proposal and ethics approval, supervision, support and then assessment created stresses on faculty structures, processes and staff. The optimistic visions of educational outcomes with financial benefits proved very challenging to achieve indeed. Successful outcomes are hard won.

These connections have also been initiated by the Asian universities exploring partnerships spurred by their own goals to increase the achievement of higher level qualifications in their own countries. Such alliances as were forged caused the Australian coordinator interviewees concerns as to cultural differences in relation to research and study, to modes of operating, to expectations of outcomes and how these could be achieved. In most cases two or three cohorts were undertaken, with some still enrolled to complete their studies. Marginson (2007) noted that with mass education have come changes to administration and to organisational cultures. Coordinators in the study had experienced the delivery of doctor of education programs with Asian university partners. The injection of a critical mass of students at doctoral level challenged university processes for enrolments, monitoring, candidature and ethics, stretching committee and administration capacities. Language abilities and differing academic cultural traditions created challenges for the partner universities, students and staff. With attention to quality procedures and with increasing bureaucratisation, processes were amended, new forms designed, monitoring increased and communication processes became more sophisticated. A critical mass of doctoral students led to changes in supervision, with the use of learning sets of students supporting each other and of group supervision to support individual supervision sessions. The need to have more staff with doctorates able to supervise increased numbers of doctoral students was also heightened. These challenges were certainly the experience of the interviewed coordinators and the author.

Methodology

This article reports on research into professional doctorates, specifically the Doctor of Education, providing a perspective from Australia. A qualitative research methodology was

employed informed by a phenomenological paradigm, in which the observer is part of the study. A small sample of individuals were utilised for the collection of data with models being developed from the data. Interviews and participant observation were drawn upon, supported by ethics approval. Interviews were conducted with coordinators past and present of Doctor of Education programs in a cross section of Australian universities to gain their perspectives and perceptions. These participants provided very open reflections on their work which were pivotal for the study. This methodology was selected to facilitate in depth contributions to the study. Their interpretations of their experiences, work and ideas for future developments in doctoral education contributed to the models for doctoral programs discussed in this article (Gray, 2004). The universities included a sandstone, that is, older and elite research university; a university with a technology background, modern, more recent universities; a regional suburban university and a regional rural university - some with an emphasis on research, others with an emphasis on teaching, but all at some stage having offered a doctor of education. The semi-structured interviews of up to an hour were by phone and face to face, with notes taken and with all but one audio taped. The questions invited discussion of their experiences of coordination, observations of development and delivery, consideration of learners' needs, links with workplace practice, impact of the doctorate on the students and their work, and the future for such programs in Australia. Interviews were also conducted with students from a professional doctorate, the Doctor of Education at the one regional university. The semi structured interviews invited research participants to discuss their experiences in detail and reflection. This study is a pilot for a more extensive cross-national study into professional doctorates. The interviews of both the learners and the coordinators contributed to a consideration of the future of professional doctorates in Australia.

Findings from the research

The coordinators shared experiences and learning from their leadership and management of doctor of education programs. They reported rethinking their approaches to professional doctorates and revising the delivery of the programs raising serious issues as to the future of the Doctor of Education as a professional doctorate. The learners deliberated on their

learning, their goals and achievements and also contributed ideas on course structure and delivery.

The learners

The coordinators shared observations of the career opportunities for their students. To attract mid career professionals with all the financial and social responsibilities that attend that age bracket into postgraduate study in Australia is a challenge. To attract people into a full fee paying professional doctorate was, and still is, an even greater challenge. Despite the awareness of strained resources and uncertain status, cohorts of students have undertaken the various Doctor of Education programs with a commitment to lifelong learning and professional development.

The people enrolled in the course are professionals from the fields of nursing, school education, higher education, adult education and training, law, occupational health and safety, agriculture and business. There is therefore a new market for this level of study. Pearson (1997) had identified that the diverse doctoral students have diverse career goals, with older students interested in career change or advancement or enhancement of professional learning. Coordinators interviewed for this study also commented that very few of the students in their programs were from schools; but rather were professionals from a diversity of areas linked with education and training.

The focus of professional doctorates is very much influenced by the professional identity of the student, as is the Doctor of Education at the regional university of the student interviewees. The students tend to be busy professional people from education, training and related fields wanting to enhance their learning and their careers. For the units of study, assessment tasks enable students to draw on their own workplace learning. Theses focus on issues related to specific work challenges.

Professional doctorates offer opportunities to bring together work and learning, professional practice and research. Theses typically research issues and challenges at work, leadership, change, professional development, mentoring, reorganisation. Participants

generally do not envisage an academic career (Pearson, 1999). The student, or course participant and their work are the focus of the program of study.

Links between study and work

The focus of professional doctorates is very much influenced by the professional identity of the student. Their professional work is important, and hence their workplace learning. Lunt (2002) identified several challenges for the future of education professional doctorates. She considered the appropriateness of the thesis as the product of the qualification. The nature of professional knowledge and relationship to academic knowledge was questioned. The coordinators in their interviews stressed the links between work and study. Taylor and Maxwell, for example, in reporting the development of the Doctor of Education at their university in regional Australia moved to enhance the connections between the university, the profession and the workplace. (2004: 62)

The Student Interviewees identified links between their study and work. In the Australian Doctor of Education programs the links with workplace learning are strong in that the course participants theses are linked closely to their work and professional practice. The students interviewed for this study reported that they hesitated to discuss their study with colleagues and line managers, one reporting negative treatment. Support and interest by employers and line managers was negligible. The coordinators interviewed also reported the lack of links between industry, employers, students and the universities. Coordinator Interviewee #6 (2009) noted that links with the workplace were professionally relevant but there was real difficulty in persuading people in these workplaces of the relevance of their study to their work. Because of this students don't get enough time and support even though they are doing something useful for their job. Where linkages had been made, the students initiated them.

Motivation to undertake a Doctor of Education has to be very much a personal goal, career and monetary rewards are not to be expected, but linking ideas from study back into work was a benefit. Student Interviewee # 3 noted *"I'd come to the course with some ideas; if you can link it with your work, then it is easier."* Such linkages with workplace practice had been anticipated and contributed to choosing a professional doctorate. They also noted that

changes in the workplace can create challenges for the student and the progress of their thesis, even to change of research topic.

The student interviewees were full fee paying, common for this type of professional doctorate. Access to the research load for postgraduate study was not initially permitted, and access to scholarships limited. These restrictions were eased over time, however they contributed to a sense of lower status and people undertaking the program had to be highly motivated indeed. People considering undertaking a professional doctorate frequently check, for example, as to the recognition of the qualification, the status within the academy, and the career opportunities that may be opened or constrained by the qualification.

Gaining a professional doctorate generally will not be expected to bring tangible benefits to career or income. A few may enter the academy, or undertake a doctorate to maintain a university position, others may enhance a career transition locally or internationally, others add to their repertoire in their already established careers. Coordinators observed that the majority of students did not aim for a career in the academy but rather professional enhancement and enrichment of their learning. In the interviews the students reported wanting to undertake the study in order to gain status, personally and professionally and to have the title.

Student Interviewee # 1 (2009) observed of fellow students that status and title were strong motivators for them. For this student, the program was challenging, "I enjoyed it – I would go and follow up and acquire new knowledge." "It was partly a journey of self actualisation." Student Interviewee# 2 (2009) loved looking up the policies, which were like a dream compared to the reality of the classroom for a study on TAFE teachers' perceptions and professional development to be able to implement new training policies in her own workplace. Study was approached with passion and love of research. *"*It's polished me up from a pebble stone to a polished stone that can roll around, a gem!" The doctorate, "I feel excited, it's given me a pocket of excitement; I've got so much more inside me, just give me a go!" Student Interviewee #3 (2009) in comparison, decided to advance career prospects as a lecturer in nursing by gaining a doctorate. Their theses all linked their work and study.

Clark (2007) in her doctoral thesis researched the motivations of the cohort of doctoral students of which she was a member, finding that the men wanted better jobs, either in Australia or overseas with the benefit of the title, and the women wanted the status of the title. For the student interviewees, support and a sense of a community of learners were important. This developed during the course work to be followed by the isolation of developing a thesis. The cohort established their own regular support gatherings sharing readings and getting feedback on their writing.

The learners in voicing needs and providing formal and informal feedback on their courses of study contributed to the reshaping of the programs. Student Interviewee #1 would have been happy with a course structure entirely of units and an action research project rather than a thesis. Coordinator Interviewee #6 reported a program to build a research culture, which would be supportive of learners in the doctoral program.

Feedback from the coordinators

Always the bridesmaid!

One coordinator described the professional doctorate as "always the bridesmaid, not the bride" that the old image of the Doctor of Education is that it is always the bridesmaid to the Ph.D. *"I always say no-one asks what type of doctorate you have and the qualification can help."* "With academic work, the Ph.D may still be the bride." (Coordinator Interviewee # 1, 2009) This issue of perceived status is part of the discussions within university communities delivering professional doctorates and to potential students in such programs. As a coordinator myself, potential applicants constantly question the status and reputation of the professional doctorate in relation to their own career plans, and enrolled students worry at the concerns of status and usefulness of the qualification. There were and are some in the university community for whom the Doctor of Education, a professional doctorate was perceived as 'not a real doctorate'. Whilst a Ph.D is a university level award, the doctor of education is categorised as a faculty level award. This coordinator oversaw the termination of the Doctor of Education at his/her university.

Ph.D. plus

"There is panic about rigor.' 'It is a hybrid space.' "(Coordinator Interviewee # 5, 2009)

With uncertainty as to status and with different funding opportunities the delivery of professional doctorates can end up demanding more of the candidate than a Ph.D. Entry requirements are similar, with an additional expectation of significant professional experience. Candidates undertake course work modules, subjects and then a research project, thesis or dissertation. For those more familiar with supervision and examination of the PhD. it perhaps is only to be expected that they would measure a professional doctorate from within their existing framework of experiences. Therefore the product of a professional doctorate, the thesis, project or creative product has tended to be examined with an expectation of meeting the same conventions and requirements as a Ph.D. thesis. However, as noted by several of the interviewees, many doctoral projects/research theses could be undertaken as either a Ph.D or a Doctor of Education.

The argument continued throughout the decade as to what type of knowledge was being pursued; whether mode 1 or mode 2, with mode 2 being implicitly of lesser status. Mode 1 is more traditional academic practice of disciplinary knowledge production and mode 2 is knowledge in more transdiciplinary social and economic contexts (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994).

This first generation of professional doctorates featured over optimistic planning and conceptualisation and limited, even poor, understanding of human and financial resource requirements. It was new territory that was being explored. Such optimism was however curtailed by changes in the federal policies for higher education.

The Australian federal policy context entering the 21st century

The learners interviewed reported wanting to meet the challenge of high level study, gain a qualification and a title. The policy context may appear distant to the individual study program, however, key national policies have impacted on the form and delivery of doctorates. The 1980s and early 1990s were expansionary, with a focus on inputs, on numbers entering programs. Students were encouraged to enrol and continue on attempting

to complete their doctorates. For the universities there was an excitement at the thought of fees from increased numbers of doctoral students.

The economic climate has changed, even prior to the current economic depression and this has influenced changes to the doctoral study agenda and programs. The federal Labour government determined that universities should be more self sufficient, focus more on outputs and contribute more to the national economy. More people were to have the opportunity to attend university (McWilliam *et al*., 2002). Federal government policies of the late 1980s, early 1990s, the Dawkins Reforms, set an agenda of universities contributing to the national economy and being more independent financially (McWilliam *et al.*, 2002). David Kemp, Minister for Education in a conservative federal government in the late 1990s, instituted a focus on competition between universities, more emphasis on quality assurance, education seen as a direct individual benefit and hence an indirect national benefit (McWilliam *et al*., 2002). There was also concern as to poor completion rates. The emphasis shift from entry into study to outcomes, to completions has refocused enrolment and delivery strategies. Australian Universities tend to look to international students to prop up their flagging incomes. Postgraduate outcomes were to be improved. (McWilliam *et al*., 2002) This impacted on selection of candidates, with a focus on full time younger Ph.D. students (McWilliam *et al*., 2002). Doctoral places at universities were allocated based on immediate previous completions, again limiting places. The period of study was reduced as well, from five to four with an expectation of three years full time. These factors all contributed to changes in doctoral programs in general and professional doctorates in particular. A 'research risk averse' culture began to develop, with potential students being viewed in terms of likelihood of successful completion and to undertake research manageable within the limited timeframe.

Second generation - transforming the Professional Doctorate

The Coordinators were closely involved with program development and delivery and have moved on to a range of transformations of the professional doctorate program, influenced by the impact of the 21st century economics and with a commitment to providing alternative

pathways for doctoral study. They have also moved on in their roles in their respective universities.

"The winds that blow from Canberra are pretty chilly."
The coordinators were acutely aware of the shifting federal agenda for higher education. *"From the beginning of the 21st century the Ed.D has slowly withered away. And as the climate shifted you must be financially viable."*(Coordinator Interviewee #1, 2009) *"The chilly winds of Canberra"* the nation's capital, (Coordinator Interviewee #4, 2009) have contributed to a rethinking of doctoral study, and to changes in the programs offered and to consideration of new models. The Doctor of Education programs in the universities of the interviewees have been reviewed and changed forming the second generation of professional doctorates. As Coordinator Interviewee #5 noted, *"There is a need to be aware that the professional doctorate is not in safe space."*

Coordinator Interviewee#1 (2009) *"You can't run classes of 2 or 3 students in the current climate of the 21st century. Small classes are not viable. Students don't find it satisfying, you can't get teaching staff. Postgraduate classes must have ten students. …University policy is to have 15 for a course or be fined."* In marketing for a new cohort in 2009, the target set for me was 16 plus, preferably at least 20. For another Coordinator, Interviewee #6, (2009) a cohort of 10 is still acceptable.

The first coordinator interviewed had inherited a Doctor of Education program immediately perceived as conceptualised attractively but delivered with difficulty. This resonated with the author's experiences of inheriting a program designed for an optimistic period of economic support and with a naïve concept of how the program would actually operate. The mid 1990s when most of the professional doctorates, the doctor of education programs were developed, were vastly different in academic culture and finances compared to the mid 2000s. These experiences and the shift in federal government policies have led to consideration of different models of doctorate and delivery.

From my own experiences and observations there were many challenges to be addressed in the delivery of a doctoral program to more people than had previously undertaken that level of study. The critical mass of doctoral students requiring supervision led to experimenting with group supervision. Regular face to face meetings for local students were held; for the Thai cohort, efforts were made for visiting supervisors to meet with their own and other students providing support meetings and seminars. Proposal presentations and ethics submissions were streamlined; committees had to meet more frequently. The role of the supervisor changed as well, going "from sage on the stage to guide on the side" (Olson and Clark, 2009: 219), becoming facilitators of learning, not field experts. Student feedback informed revised practices. Budgets changed to focus more on actual expenses. Such experiences have contributed to the development of new modes of delivery and to new models for the Doctor of Education. The majority of the coordinators' universities no longer have cohorts in Asia, with a small number of students still to complete. The coordinators reported experiencing steep learning curves in their roles.

Transformation into new models

Elimination

Each Coordinator interviewed reported changes to the professional doctorate programs at their respective universities, and presented a range of models, of approaches to the structure and delivery of the Doctor of Education. The first model was that of elimination, to shelve the Doctor of Education and to develop a revised Ph.D program, a Ph.D by Project at one university and at another to blend valued modules from the Doctor of Education into the Ph.D program.

Coordinator Interviewee #1 (2009) stated baldly "the future for professional doctorates: none!" In his/her university they have moved to a model of a PhD by Project, which is, work integrated and ideally suited to people who are working. The coordinators are aware of the blurring of distinctions between different types of doctorates, that the PhD may incorporate research units of study from a retired Ed.D as highlighted by Coordinator Interviewees #1 and #4. Coordinator Interviewee #4 had brought together the course work component of an Ed.D into a Ph.D program, whilst retaining two distinct pathways with a

thesis or folio. This interviewee takes a grim view of opportunities for doctoral program in Australia with load for research places not growing, budget cuts, resources issues, however the university has a healthy number of participants scattered internationally in an enriched doctoral program with close links to the students' work.

Constant reinvention

The case study university Doctor of Education has been revised regularly building on the feedback from students, staff, the professional community, and the partner university. The revisions continue providing a second model of approach to the professional doctorate in the 2000s. Modules have been decreased in number, an exit point created and an alternative to the thesis in the form of two workplace research projects has been provided. Student Interviewee #1 (2009) argued for a professional doctorate consisting of course work and action research projects rather than the thesis which the interviewee did not enjoy at all. The possibility of completing two research projects as equivalent to the thesis provides such an alternative.

Coordinator Interviewee # 6 (2009) had oversight of a cohort based Doctor of Education of course work and thesis which has been revised to a focus around key tasks in research addressed in blocks with a focus on skill development. Students are encouraged to present at conferences, write papers as part of the development of a research culture. The revision was a positive development.

Watchful waiting

Some of the Coordinators prefer to celebrate their successes with modest course improvements and to monitor developments. The third model is maintenance of the status quo. Coordinator Interviewee #3 adopted a 'watchful waiting' approach. His/her university has very "healthy, robust and highly marketable" "well populated Ph.D and Doctor of Education programs." The model employed for the Doctor of Education was of shared units selected in consultation with a supervisor followed by a thesis, three years full time equivalent, with 75% of students part time. The provision of a timetabled cohort experience was positive for the students who are busy professionals. As the university was making major changes in course structures and offerings, and with successes for the existing

doctoral program, it was a wait and see scenario dependent upon overall university policy development.

Transdisciplinary

The fourth model has been influenced by the Middlesex University work based learning based professional doctorate. After many years of involvement with a Doctor of Education program, with a slowing down in numbers, Coordinator Interviewee #2 is now reviewing the situation and with a grant is working on the development of a *'pan university'* transdisciplinary doctorate across the professions. This university had moved from a cohort approach to an electronic cohort, from a Doctor of Education to the possibility of an across professions, across university professional doctorate. There was still a passionate commitment to the professional doctorate.

Five pillars of wisdom

The fifth model is to focus attention on the learner. Coordinator Interviewee # 5 (2009) declared as a cautious advocate for the Doctor of Education, feeling that the days of professional doctorates have been and gone. S/he identified a fundamental issue of how universities operate with such programs, that they were good at the supply side but not the demand side, at what the students as learners, as practitioners want. They also struggle with the 21st century learning, using pre internet texts. "There has been a regressive and arrogant approach." But along with the criticism of the approaches to and delivery of the professional doctorate, there is still a passionate commitment: "it's because you want it to go ahead that you ask the hard questions." "There is wisdom born of failure."

For the next generation of professional doctorates consistent scaffolding throughout was advocated with the final six months to be full time. Commitment from the learner, industry and the university are important. "Living learning and earning are the realities for the students." "…need fewer professional doctorates', 'need more students' and 'need to follow five principles!" "…we have to theorise the transition and the learning journey of the people in the program." "Moving into zones of discomfort" is important.

The five principles presented by Coordinator Interviewee #5 (2009) emphasise the consideration of what the learner brings with them to the course and that this be valued by the university.

Respect rich

Structure rich

Conversation rich

Information rich

Challenge rich

Future directions

In considering the views of the coordinator and learner interviewees, it is important to continue to explore and evaluate the different models being developed for the delivery of professional doctorates and as explored in this article, the Doctor of Education.

This study has provided access to the views, reflections and experiences of coordinators of professional doctorates and of a group of Doctor of Education students. The Coordinator Interviewees closely involved with program development and delivery have moved on to a range of transformations of the professional doctorate program, influenced by the impact of the 21st century economics and commitment to providing alternative pathways for doctoral study. There is also the practical consideration of financial viability in challenging times. In the models being developed it is possible to see the influence of professional doctorates such as that at Middlesex University which is an across disciplines, across university award strongly focused on the learner and workplace learning. The emphasis on workplace learning has proven important for learners and coordinators. Coordinator Interviewee # 2 (2009) found that students were happier and more interested if they could do something related to the workplace. "There is interest in research that makes a difference, that doesn't sit on the shelf." "People want another award that is more readily in accord with what they're doing." Coordinator Interviewee #6 (2009) noted that there is a tension to manage

the difference between support and independence, with the goal of having independent and confident learners.

The Bologna Declaration has raised the challenge of international academic programs consistency and quality, a challenge the English speaking countries have been slow to address. The status and future of the professional doctorate as part of the suite of doctorates possible is not clear. However in Australia they still are in operation, albeit in transition. There are still champions of the qualification. "Professional doctorates do occupy a place, occupying much the same space as the Ph.D." "Professional doctorates are very good, they provide an option. Because of this stranglehold (of the Ph.D) professional doctorates are a very important space." "A lot of good practice in them has crept into the Ph.D and enriched that." However, it was noted that if there was a move in relation to research funded places available to use in professional doctorates, "a change of policy from Canberra", then they "could be wiped out at a stroke." "They are fragile."

Pearson raises important "issues of quality, accountability, and responsiveness to students' personal and career needs as all important in a differentiating system, and a sound conceptual framework for analysing and understanding doctoral education becomes more necessary to address the resulting complexity" (1999: 282). Over a decade later, the Coordinator Interviewees had each in their respective workplaces amended, revised, reviewed and redeveloped the professional doctorate. The Student Interviewees enjoyed their learning for relevance, reward and enrichment. All were aware of the need for the learner to be the focus of the university programs with support and encouragement of independent learning. The professional doctorate is an important and viable form of doctoral study which is endangered by government emphases on the Ph.D, by insufficient funding and continued argument as to the status of professional doctorates. It is crucial that this pragmatic form of doctoral program be maintained. The form of the professional doctorate can be amended, revised and updated. As put forward in the five pillars of wisdom model, the learner and their learning should be paramount. The Australian experiences serve as an indication of trends and a cautionary warning of what may develop in other countries.

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