Illuminating the Professional Doctorate: the purpose, role and relevance of the professional doctorate of educational practice. (work in progress)

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Abstract:
The paper reports on the progress of the ongoing collaborative research project between academics at one institution in the UK, and their doctoral students, into innovatory curriculum development in, and the delivery of, the international professional doctorate of educational practice (EdD). The work is based on the development of an educational learning community of practice within one cohort of the EdD (Israel, 2007-2010) and the impact of the programme on career, personal and professional development, and the communities of the programme participants.

The research approach is located in the constructivist interpretivist philosophy of research using qualitative methodology. It uses the case study approach and sociobiographical methods to frame data collected from biographies, interviews, focus groups and observations. The team of researcher tutors operate in partnership with the participant students throughout the research process. It also draws on principles of ethnographic research.

The research uses grounded theory, with the participants and researchers drawing from the use of narratives through structured, biographical and observational accounts of the respondents and the research is based on listening to the voices of the participants.

The research investigates four main interconnected areas:

1. The key factors or critical incidents that encouraged cohort members to choose to study for a professional-practice doctorate.
2. A discussion of the specific nature of (a) the professional-practice doctorate, its relevance for participants and tutors, and (b) an emergent curriculum theory for the Professional Doctorate programme.
3. How a ‘learning community’ can best be established, maintained and developed with a varied cohort at doctoral level.
4. The impact and benefits of participation in the programme on developing professional practice, personal development, research, and its impact on the community.

The two key overarching aims of this research are (i) to gain insight into participants’ experiences on this particular doctorate and identify how programme can be improved in relation to professional practice and doctoral study, and (ii) to explore a theoretical position on the development of a professional doctoral curriculum, the nature of its perceived knowledge base and its relevancy.
Rationale for the research

The paper reports on the progress of the ongoing collaborative research project between academics both in the UK and Israel and their doctoral students. The research investigates theory and practice of innovatory curriculum development in, and the delivery of, the international professional doctorate of educational practice (EdD). Although the EdD programme at the researchers’ institution is not designed specifically to create a “community of practice” (as defined by Wenger 1998, 2002), or a “learning community” (Lingard 2003, Senge 2006), we have observed some features of such a learning community emerging. The work is based on this development within one international cohort of the EdD, the Israel cohort beginning their study in 2007, and the impact of the programme on personal and professional development, on workplaces and on communities.

Although this paper does not seek to focus on the PhD/professional doctorate debate, nevertheless the underpinning of the paper and indeed of the development of the EdD in the researchers’ institution, is based on a concern that the professional doctorate contributes to both academic and professional knowledge (Trafford & Woolliams 2002, Green and Powell 2005).

The overarching aim of this first phase of the research is to gain insight into participants’ experiences on this particular professional practice doctoral programme and to identify how such a programme could be improved in relation to professional practice and doctoral study.

The programme’s recruitment tends to fall within two areas:

- The university’s strategy for widening participation which encourages participants from a range of contexts
- The tendency for the programme to appeal particularly to professionals in mid-career: feedback from participants suggests that this is partially due to the strong theory/practice focus of the programme.

Our preliminary survey of career backgrounds demonstrates that many doctoral candidates, especially in the groups from Israel, have experienced lateral mobility, and have varied career trajectories and ranging professional and personal biographies. The 28 students participating in the third cohort of the professional practice doctoral programme in Israel are a diverse group. Areas of diversity include:

- **Gender** - the group comprises two thirds male and one third female.
- **Identity** – the majority of the students in the cohort describe themselves as Israeli; within the sample they described themselves as Arab Christian, Arab Muslim or Israeli Jew. However, one of the sample of
nine identifies himself as “Palestinian Arab”. Their religious identities cover Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths.

- **Language** – all the students speak Hebrew as a first or second language, with many speaking other languages including Arabic and English.

- **Geographical location** – this ranges from large cities to small villages to Kibbutzim; from traditional Arab Muslim villages in the Galilee and Triangle and the larger urban sprawls of Israel to the suburban, newer settlements of the country.

- **Previous study** – students are post graduates of Israeli, European or Canadian universities. Several completed a Masters degree with the researchers’ institution.

- **Professional lives** – students work in education or in roles which involve aspects of education and training within, for example, health, alternative therapy, small businesses and large companies. By the nature of Israeli society, the majority have more than one main occupation.

Equality and widening participation are key themes of this particular doctoral programme. The professional practice doctoral programme is an example of how ‘widening participation ‘can extend to the highest academic levels. Tutors express the value of flexibility and “listening to the student voices”, with a view to empowering participants to make informed choices about the value and nature of their research within their workplaces and to take ownership of that research.

A key aim of the programme is to enable reflexive praxis and articulation of issues for development. This involves students in an interrogation of the theory base and a generation of knowledge, not merely a demonstration of received knowledge. This vision is reflected in the pedagogy and structure of this particular EdD, in which it is deemed important to factor in time for tutorials to explore individual needs in their situated learning (Lave & Wenger 1991). We might characterise the pedagogy as transformative: the aim is that participants become reflexive in all aspects of their very diverse lives (Mezirow 1991). We are supporting the generation of social enquiries and of social knowledge which affects identity and concepts of the self (Giddens 1991). One of our challenges on the programme is in resolving the dilemmas and tensions of the very diversity we encourage (Mezirow 1981;1991).

However, there is limited research on the motivation of people to undertake doctoral study, whether personal or professional, to meet the labour market needs of the wider economy (Diamond 2006) or for the good of the wider society (Nyquist 2002). **Therefore, one strand of the investigation covers the key factors or critical incidents in the participants’ decision to choose to study for a professional-**

The role and purpose of the doctorate remains ‘contested’ (Wellington 2006, Park 2007) and there is persistent uncertainty and an enduring lack of consensus over the purposes and benefits of the doctorate. The second strand, therefore, explores the specific nature and relevance of the doctorate for participants, and an emergent curriculum theory for the professional-practice doctorate programme.

We believe that a learning community which is concurrently a community of practice draws upon the experience of the ‘self’ and on significant levels of self-awareness (Wenger et al 2002, Lave and Wenger 1991, Senge 2006). Both educationalists and career development specialists are interested in the role of learning at doctoral level and how this can best be developed and sustained. The third strand investigates the meaning participants themselves ascribe to their studies and work as part of a ‘learning community’ and how such a community can best be established, maintained and developed through the programme, both pedagogically and as a support mechanism.

At doctoral level, learners on the EdD are operating at a high level of critical and self-reflective awareness in relation to their employment and in respect of the demands of professional practice made upon them. In fact, we expect them to be a particular kind of ‘learner’ in that they are knowledge producers as much as knowledge consumers. Therefore, the fourth strand focuses on the impact of participation in the programme upon individuals, their workplace and community.

The Professional Doctorate as a learning curriculum

The starting point in this project is the experience of adult life itself, including its essential engagement with work and the workplace as a primary object of education, and therefore as a key source of learning (Mezirow 1991, 2000, Freire 1996, Habermas 1987, Senge 2004).

The professional doctorate, if it is embedded in a practitioner environment, is rooted in a less structured and less ‘pre-determined’ view of learning and education. This involves a focus on the learner, the ‘constructivist’ and sometimes on new social movements (Seidman, 1998) rather than on the traditional ‘sanctified’ knowledge objectives and subject disciplines of the classical past. The content of a practitioner doctorate is determined therefore by the interests of practitioners who can themselves be viewed as knowledge producers. Furthermore, if we want to locate the professional doctorate in the context of social enquiry and advocate its capacity to generate critical and transformative knowledge, we need to identify its distinctive principles.
The theoretical status of the professional doctorate

It could be argued that the professional doctoral curriculum achieves distinctiveness through its relevance to the experience and existential status of the learners themselves (Walsh 2004). Therefore it is not within the structure of knowledge itself that such distinctiveness lies, but rather in its application to the lived experience of the learners. How knowledge is appropriated and is actually used by individuals and groups differs. Therefore we are forced to consider the sociological significance of who gets to acquire and own knowledge and the purposes to which it is put. This may likewise yield key insights into how ‘learning’ and ‘knowledge’ are conceptually or operationally linked. Certainly, if we conceive the curriculum to be rooted in social enquiry and analysis, then we can expect to engage with the unequal distribution of knowledge and learning opportunities as well as the fact that learning itself is highly charged with meaning when it engages with such distinctions as social class, race, ethnicities and religious affiliation.

These are important claims and force us to ask ourselves – what are the distinctive principles which inform the professional doctorate and constitute the elements of a theory of professional doctoral practice?

Elements of a theory of professional practice:

(a) The individual as a creator of practitioner knowledge.

"...If intuition or creativity is at work, it occurs within the possibilities and limits of a body of ideas held by the community within which a researcher works." (Blaikie 2007, p78). It is our contention that professional doctoral learning communities can constitute distinctive contexts for the development of individual achievement when this is based on the recognition of self-understanding which is shaped within a social environment.

One of the methods we have used is that of socio-autobiography as a tool for reflection and action. This follows the tradition of C. Wright Mills (1970) who argued the case that personal troubles were located within social narratives and larger social forces. We have also used the work of Mezirow (1991) to explore the notion of perspective transformation where individuals typically engage in disorienting dilemmas of a personal nature to resolve their problems.

(b) Cognitive and critical thinking

Cognitive and critical thinking is supported within the doctoral learning programme in a variety of ways. The research procedures used by the doctoral teaching and research team (the writers of this paper) insist on the centrality of critically evaluated experience within a focussed work environment. Knowledge of self and the application of rigorous self-
analysis is sought and the skills and techniques of academic writing are taught and learned through practice. Individuals in this process reach out to re-constitute meanings and to close gaps and make sense of things that have lost sense. The existential possibilities (David Grossman, Saturday Guardian 15.09.07) without which as Grossman says... “no act of empathy or commitment or responsibility can be possible” are realised and meaningful connections made with the fate of others. For the practitioner doctoral programme this means that authentic learning and knowledge production is an inherently social activity; it is about the forms of social cognition and collaboration that are available to us in modernity.

(c) Understanding through immersion

Immersion in the subcultures of work and social life by the doctoral students is seen as a key to the generation of what Giddens(1979:251-253) has called “mutual knowledge”. By this is meant the understandings that in our case, the professional research/doctoral students, achieve in relation to the meanings of what people say and do within their circle of respondents (the object of the practitioner research). The professional research approach is not imposed via a pre-existing schema or fixed structure, however, it does pre-suppose that doing something in practice is accompanied by a critical evaluation which draws upon the academic disciplines.

(d) Operationalising knowledge

The practical application of knowledge at work is setting the agenda for change in higher education. The elements comprising this operationalisation of knowledge include the use of work and productive life as a progressive principle for the making of the curriculum. This is more than just the use of work as a simple focus for the acquisition of skills, important though such skills may be to the persons involved. A narrow vocationalism is not envisaged. What is needed is recognition of new forms and meanings which are emerging as part of the new ‘globalisation’ of work processes. What seems certain is the need for greater expertise and professionalism in an era of apparently constant social and economic de-and re-construction.

(e) Reflexive practice

It is Anthony Giddens who provides us with a potential framework for conceptualising the role of the self as a reflexive agent in the process of knowledge production (Giddens 1979;1991). People are engaged in producing and reproducing their own social world and have the capacity to make some choices, within limits, and to act differently.
Within a conceptual frame of “reflexive modernity” (Giddens 1991), we can identify certain critical concepts and value perspectives which are essential to the practitioner doctoral programme. These include the capacity for autonomy, the role of individuality and the notion of equity and fairness. Responsibility for oneself and for others within the constraints of culture and power are also key concepts with which the reflexive practitioner works to uncover the perceived and actual realities of experience. Giddens has used the idea of the ‘self’ as a reflexive project itself in modern life, where critical engagement with the meaning and actions of one’s own life is the focus of attention. If the nature of social research is essentially anthropological and has a duality of structure involving “action” and “structure”, then the role of the professional doctorate is to provide the conditions for ‘immersion’ in social life and critical awareness and analysis which is co-terminus with it.

There is, according to Giddens, a constant interplay of the reflexive processes between the personal and social levels of experience. Both institutional and individual reflexivity can be enhanced by conscious and reflexive action and can therefore offer possibilities for social progress.

It is our contention that the current professional doctoral programme offers a theorised and practical curriculum for social enquiry which facilitates the creation of new knowledge(s) and is commensurate with its practitioners’ values of having a greater role in the rules and realities that govern their lives.

**Scope of the research methodology**

In order to investigate the practical dimension of theorised curriculum development and its impact on participants, initially those within the researchers’ institution, the first stage of the research concentrates on the third cohort of twenty eight Israeli participants who began their studies in January 2007. The intention of the research plan is to track a sample of this cohort over the next two to three years to completion. The research will later also focus on the experiences of those who have already completed their doctorates or are about to do so, and both participants and graduates of the equivalent UK programme. Of the twenty eight “third cohort” participants, fifteen declared their interest in taking part in the research. Indeed, a number expressed the view that (a) participation would provide them with an insight into research issues and procedures to the benefit of their own research, and that (b) they felt that they were sharing an experience of learning with their tutors. Biographies were received from eleven, and twelve participated in the focus groups. Of these a purposive sample of nine were identified for further interview and observation of workplaces. The criterion for the sample selection was to create a balance of gender, location, ethnicity, religion, and workplace type.
Research methodology

The research approach is located in the constructivist/interpretivist philosophy of research using qualitative methodology. It uses a case study approach to frame data collected from biographies, interviews and focus groups. The team of researchers (tutors who deliver the programme) operate in partnership with the participants throughout the research process.

The research uses grounded theory and is based on listening to the voices of the participants, with the participants and tutors drawing from the use of narratives elicited from the methods outlined above. As such it uses a phenomenological narrative and draws on principles of ethnographic research. In order to address the research question: what is the purpose, role and relevance of the professional doctorate of educational practice, the research project investigates four interconnected areas:

- The key factors or critical incidents that encouraged cohort members to choose to study for a professional-practice doctorate.
- A discussion of the specific nature of (a) the professional-practice doctorate, its relevance for participants, and (b) an emergent curriculum theory for the Professional Doctorate programme.
- How a ‘learning community’ can best be established, maintained and developed with a varied cohort at doctoral level.
- The impact and benefits of participation in the programme on developing professional practice, personal development, research, and its impact on the community.

The learner experiences of the doctoral programme are tracked and analysed through a variety of methodological tools to identify their changing experiences, views and perceptions:

- **Narratives and biographical accounts** to elicit life stories in order to reflect the diversity of the group (Mills 1970, Ellis & Bochner 2000).

- **Focus groups** as ‘a carefully planned series of discussions designated to obtain perceptions in a permissive, non-threatening environment’ (Krueger and Casey 2000). Group interaction can stimulate participant ideas that might not have been forthcoming on an individual basis

- **Individual interviews**, within a conceptual framework which itself is related to professional doctoral studies (Holstein & Gubrium 2003)

Ethical considerations

The research is being conducted in accordance with BERA guidelines for ethics in research and with the University of Derby, research ethics committee guidelines. It is also in conformity with the requirements of

Method of analysis

Focus groups and interviews of the first phase were all audio-recorded and transcribed. These along with the written biographical accounts were analysed using a coding and categorisation method of content analysis of recurrent themes emerging from the data. This was done manually in the first instance in order to capture the intended meanings within context and checked for accuracy with participants. Data from focus groups, interviews and biographies were cross-referenced in order to maintain internal validity.

Participant voices:
An initial analysis of findings

The study is work in progress and we report in this paper on the initial analysis of findings from biographies, focus groups and interviews within workplace settings. Our overarching aim, in the first instance, is to gain insight into participant experiences through hearing their voices. Our research will continue to develop by exploring an emergent curriculum theory in greater depth. However, in our initial investigation of the four interconnected areas outlined on page 9, we, at this stage, have to date identified six emerging themes which are briefly highlighted in this paper. The data analysis is currently in progress.

1. Relevancy motivating choices

Participants combine further study whilst working. The research project indicates that the main purpose in undertaking further study is to investigate a topic of their own choice to make a contribution in their chosen professional field. They stress their desire to research a particular topic which would be difficult elsewhere: “I wanted autonomy….to choose a field and topic…not have to fit in with a professor’s own agenda, as you have to with a PhD here” (male, Israeli Jew: interview). They want to identify new ideas and make a difference to their workplaces and communities, for example:

“This is the best way to bring myself and my own personal interest into research and implement my knowledge into a contribution to the academic world” (male, Israeli Jew: biography)

“I am studying a topic that is close to my heart both emotionally and professionally and I am convinced that major changes can be made in education in the Israeli society” (male, Israeli Jew: biography)
“I have some problems in my school and the WBP is a wonderful chance to investigate these. I want to change things and I believe that changes begin from the micro scale to the macro” (male, Arab Muslim: focus group)

A number of the participants articulate a belief that the doctorate will bring them recognition and status and open up further opportunities for them both in Israel and abroad. Several participants have already received promotion within their professions following their enrolment on the EdD programme, although promotion was not necessarily stated as the main motivating factor.

2. The search for identity

A number of participants describe their difficulties with identity in various forms. This is reflected in the complexity of identity illustrated on pages 2-3. Some describe an experience akin to Mezirow’s “disorienting dilemmas” as catalysts for transformative learning for the self and role in Israeli society. For example one female participant said in her interview: “I always felt different in Nazareth…as an Arab Christian I feel alienated (as a Christian because the city is now majority Muslim, and as an Arab in Israel)…I feel restricted…in prison (partly because of the current restrictions for her “market”; partly for personal reasons: she expressed a feeling of greater acceptance in the UK).” She told us that her learning on the doctoral programme had been “a challenge” and had “changed (her) career path”.

“It’s complex actually as now we are considered Israeli Arabs so I am an Israeli Arab. My parents were born as Palestinians, now they are also Israelis also. We have lived in Nazareth for 400 or 500 years. My identity has changed and my perception of identity has changed through the years and now today I can talk about it and I am more aware of it” (male, Arab Christian: interview)

3. The mode of learning

Participants describe three ways in which their learning has been helped to move forward:

(a) Support from the whole student group.

Most of the participants say that they enjoy the team-work developed during the three seminars. This encourages them and supports their learning, for example:

“It’s the interrelationship of the group. This is about group support and thinking about the group. You are not alone, you are inside the group and it’s group learning with your peers” (male, Israeli Jew: focus group)
“think we have an amazing group, interesting people. Gathering abroad you can concentrate on the things you have to do and share ideas with friends” (female, Arab Christian: focus group)

“I like the group of people. I think each one can contribute to my work and I can contribute to theirs” (female, Israeli Jew: focus group)

(b) The formation of ‘learning communities’

Many of the participants have formed themselves into small ‘learning communities’. In some cases this constitutes two or three people communicating regularly by telephone or e-mail sharing ideas and materials. In others, five or six students meet regularly to share and improve their work, for example:

“I think of it as a support group. We shared the experiences from the seminar at the beginning and it was more of a friendly, social meeting. Then it was clear that we would meet again as it was difficult for us after the methodology seminar. We are able to learn from each other by checking and reviewing our work” (male, Israeli Jew: interview)

(c) Tutor support for learning

All the participants expressed their appreciation of the tutors’ approachability and interest in their topic and context. For example:

“What you present is very different from what lecturers in Israel do. You are more relaxed and thinking more from the educational point of view. The process is important not just the outcome. I want to see a different approach even if it’s against our nature and culture.” (male, Israeli Jew: focus group)

“I think the tutors were amazing people: friendly and very willing to answer any questions”. (female, Arab Christian : focus group)

4. The impact on workplace and community.

Several participants describe how their learning is impacting on the work environment. This includes both improvements to their own work through increased reflection on practice and also to work colleagues by involving them in their discussions:

“My principal encouraged me. I feel that what I am doing is real and I am now making a film. The teachers and principal are supporting me. The school now has a new stage for dancing which vibrates with the music for those young people who cannot hear.” (female, Israeli Jew: interview)

“I promise you that my research will be focused on the town of S----- and my community because the contribution of my results will be for the people of S-----.” (male, Arab Muslim : focus group)
5. The value of critical thinking

Many participants reflect upon the impact that the EdD programme has had on the level of thinking they have developed. They have moved on from a consideration of factual knowledge and descriptive accounts of their work to a deeper level of thinking, for example to a critical reflection of theory and its use to explain phenomena in professional practices. Analytical reflection is leading to a deeper level of understanding of these relationships.

“I have changed my way of thinking a lot. I see a difference in me after three seminars and I don’t want to forget it” (female, Israeli Jew: interview)

“I was very impulsive. This has made me more gentle with the children. I am so proud with this this programme and learning in English and to succeed in English: to be a self-learner as I learn a lot by myself. Doing my WPB (thesis), it taught me that when I see a new book or new article I look at the criteria and this makes me more concentrated about what I am going to read and with more understanding. Now I think about every step that I am going to do. Now I think why did this happen, why did I succeed in this way of learning. I do a lot of thinking about why I succeed. I am looking for new books about movement. I compare my work to books and other peoples research, then I go back to see how it matches up. I have changed a lot” (female, Israeli Jew: interview)

“It’s changed because I write more. I felt good knowing that its time to start generating and I feel I can generate more. Now if you see the proposals that I give to customers, I increase the amount of unstructured information. Once it was very narrow, you do this and this and this. Now I am adding all kinds of stuff like the R & D position, to position it differently in the organisation. They are still in the paradigm of supplier and client. I want to move them to be a business partner. For example, things that I have added are I want to examine the learning inside the organisation and the issue of innovation. That’s changed as I wouldn’t do that before. That’s good” (male, Israeli Jew)

6. The impact on personal and professional development

Participants in this study identify a number of experiences from their first year of the EdD programme. Initial analysis identifies the emerging benefits of participation:

(a)Exposure to new ways of thinking through:

- the diverse learning environment;
- hearing others talk about their research interests;
- meeting different opinions; for example, on methodologies;
- the development of critical thinking skills
- self-learning;
- promotion of new ideas and opinions.

“I now have the ability to learn and to think differently and see things from different viewpoints and not accept everything as self-evident”
(female, Israeli Jew: biography)

(b) Strengthening professional expertise through:
- the personal challenge of the work-based project (thesis);
- exposure to others who come from different fields but who broaden knowledge and provide tools;
- reading theory to enable them to be more critical of their professional work and improving practice;
- studying as a learner which is making them behave differently with children as learners.

“I feel that what I am doing is real, it’s me. It’s part of me, part of the children, part of my work, part of my belief” (female, Israeli Jew: interview)

(c) Enriching personal self-esteem through:
- pursuing a high-level qualification;
- combining both personal and professional development;
- improving confidence;
- greater personal recognition by being a doctoral candidate.

“In my personal life I feel more comfortable. The programme gave me courage to do things that I have never dreamed before” (male, Israeli Jew: biography)

“When you are doing a doctorate, you are considered in other ways. It is immediate. You get status, but I am still the same person. This is already opening opportunities, especially for my community. They are treating me as specialist now. I feel as a specialist now, as an educator” (male, Arab Christian: interview)

A conceptual shift for the professional doctorate?

Whilst it may be argued that our approach to the question of an appropriate method for the professional doctorate is overly ‘individualistic’, in that it focuses on the individual student practitioner, we believe we can identify the elements of a conceptual shift which is “systemic” in character.
Following in the footsteps of many social theorists (Jurgen Habermas, C.Wright-Mills, Anthony Giddens,) we believe we can ‘observe’ social structure through the critical observation of people in action. The professional doctorate, we believe, foregrounds the impact of knowledge via the practitioner on the profession and community which is the object of practice. It foregrounds the observation of processes at work which are part of the wider reality of social life and its interactions. No simple ‘correspondence’ of behaviour is possible but we believe we can observe a shift from the behavioural aspects of what is researched and explored to the perceptual aspects of what is experienced. This is, we should like to argue, a crucial and critical element of professional doctoral practice. Sociobiography (narratives, biographical accounts) is seen therefore as a methodological approach which asserts that personal experience, when appropriately interrogated and reflexively analysed shapes perceptions and values and in so doing, informs practice and future behaviour.

The professional doctorate is therefore potentially a transformative form of learning. Its curriculum is potentially a catalyst for self-transformations and social change. Individual narratives can be ‘explained’ through this embeddedness in what are really communities of practitioners, or what we might recognise as people struggling to bring about change and social action.

Conceptually the practitioner doctorate is irreducibly about the practice and engagement of individuals and their biographical identity and continuity. Individual learning encounters are, we believe, continuously present in everyday life. This provides the academic programme with its rationale for looking at and recognising the “everyday” and taken-for-granted knowledge which makes up the actual operating level for professional practice at the workplace. However, the workplace is not the totality of existence and neither is it hermetically sealed off from the rest of life. The everyday encounters of what Jurgen Habermas (1983 and 1987) called the “lifeworld” are critically part of the cognitive maps of understanding which people use to make sense of their lives (Welton, 2005).

The new approach of doctoral learning advocated by this project puts collaborative learning at the heart of the curriculum and models the learning process within what we describe as a “dynamic curriculum “, which is the totality of interactive practices which constitute knowledge in action and professional practice. This is the curriculum of doctoral professional practice. It is substantially generated by those “students” who co-operatively generate the knowledge, the understandings and the attitudes needed to apply critical, scientific and intelligent insights to real problems in the actual world. It rests upon the assumption that in both the worlds of practice and the doctoral circle or learning community it is possible to identify and use disciplined, scientific imagination to build upon the richness of personal and reflective biographical experience.
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