



Special Issue for Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education: Opportunities and Dilemmas in Interactions between the Education Sector and Academia

Guest editors:

Erlend Dehlin, Professor, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Mari-Ana Jones, Associate Professor, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Tony Burner, Professor, University of South-Eastern Norway

Tessa Grevle, Doctoral Research Fellow (Public Sector PhD programme in Education) and Teacher at Glemmen High School

Sara Bubb, Associate Professor, University College London

How can interactions between the education sector and academia create knowledge which addresses key societal challenges? What opportunities for innovation do PhD/Ed.D/professional doctorate (PD) programmes for education practitioners and the education sector create? How are interactions between the education section and academia experienced by those involved, both in the Nordic region and internationally? This special issue invites contributions that respond to these key questions, exploring the possibilities and challenges of collaborations between the education sector and academia in the context of PhD/Ed.D/PD programmes. We also seek to include submissions which present novel research produced as part of such collaborations, and contributions from PhD candidates enrolled in the Public Sector PhD programme within the field of education (Norway) or other professional doctorate programmes within education will be welcomed.

Background

The development of doctoral programmes which are more closely connected to the field of practice (often called professional doctorates) is not a new phenomenon. For instance, the Ed.D. has been around for more than a century, initially offered in the United States for the purpose of developing educational leadership and preparing university researchers (Perry, 2012). In recent years, however, change has accelerated, and doctoral programmes worldwide are in a period of transition (e.g., Wildy et al., 2015; Kowalczyk-Wałędziak et al., 2017; Prøitz & Wittek, 2020). Traditional perceptions of a PhD as an apprenticeship for entering academia are being contested by the increasing growth of professional doctorates which aim to produce expert practitioners with research competence. This is particularly the case of the Ed.D. programme, where the dissertation is “more a description of a project rather than based on original research” (Altbach, 2007, p. 69). Practice-oriented doctoral programmes also differ from traditional counterparts as they incorporate “collaborative,

interdisciplinary knowledge activities which are considered crucial for twenty-first century success” (Holley, 2015, p. 642) and producing research with direct relevance for practice. Internationally, there is general agreement that the number of doctoral programmes should continue to increase, because of the ever-growing need for more knowledge and development (Altbach, 1997), but it is the *kind* of doctoral education and the different ‘researcher identities’ (Corr et al., 2022) needed which continues to be under discussion.

In Norway, the Research Council (RCN) has focused on the need for greater innovation in the public sector, highlighting considerable stumbling blocks (The Research Council of Norway, 2018). These include a general climate of risk-aversity, a lack of resources allocated to innovation, ineffective decision-making processes, piecemeal approach to improvements and too great a divide between research and practice. One response to these challenges has been RCN’s establishment of a public sector PhD programme (OFFPHD) comparable to professional doctorates outside of Norway. In the program practitioners complete a doctoral research project at an academic institution, whilst maintaining their position of employment within the public sector. Education has been afforded particular attention in OFFPHD, with specific funds being earmarked for education practitioners, and PhD candidates within the field of education represent the largest group. A 2021 report on OFFPHD within education (Mausethagen et al., 2021) revealed that doctoral candidates interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about the programme, appreciating the opportunity for specialisation. However, challenges were also revealed. PhD candidates reported having a limited sense of belonging to their academic institutions, and the report from Mausethagen et al (2021) describes candidates’ struggles not only with practical considerations such as access to resources, but also with managing the formalities of academia. In response, the Norwegian Research Council has funded a national network for all those involved in public sector PhD programmes within the field of education (NATPRONET). This network aims to support candidates to explore and develop their identities and competencies as researchers and practitioners as well as facilitating collaboration.

The example of Norway’s work with OFFPHD presents an interesting starting point for further, international exploration of professional doctoral programmes within the field of education. They appear to present exciting opportunities for the development of research-competent professionals, the production of rigorous and relevant research and the development of dynamic partnerships between the practice-field and academia (e.g., Boud et al., 2021; Ceballos et al., 2021). The growth and completion rates in such programmes indicate successes. They are not, however, without limitations, and more knowledge is needed. Hawkes and Yerabati (2018) point to a lack of understanding of the ‘wider value’ of professional doctorates, and higher education institutions have been reluctant to acknowledge professional doctorates as equal in status to traditional PhDs, whilst at the same time being aware of their advantages in terms of recruitment and financial gain (Jones, 2018). New knowledge and approaches provided by professional doctorates create flexibility and openings for both academia and the practice-field to adapt and develop, but this can also be unsettling. This Special Issue seeks, therefore, to explore the opportunities and dilemmas created in the interactions between practitioners and academia within the context of PhD/PD programmes for education professionals.

Rationale

An exploration of the knowledge created in interactions between academia and the field of practice is, at its heart, a consideration of the very nature and purpose of educational research. As an alternative to a somewhat transactional framing of educational research, in which funders of research pay for the production of knowledge, Boyd and Smith (2016) suggest the idea of 'knowledge exchange', in which researchers interact and inquire with other stakeholders to bring about new, better understandings. Taking a social constructivist view, 'knowledge exchange' can be understood as a process of co-creation (Dewey, 1938; Mead, 1934). Scientific progress in educational research is thus largely a social venture in which people are an essential part of designing solutions (Bason, 2018). As a result, scientific rigor is underpinned by reflexivity, operationalised as ongoing critical self-investigation and context-sensitivity (Gadamer, 1994). Arguably, researchers who are situated within the field of practice, such as professional doctoral candidates, are best placed to facilitate educational research understood in this way.

The increasing number of professional doctorates, and the decreasing likelihood of employment in research-oriented universities (Altbach, 2007), highlight a need for more research on the significance and impact of professional doctoral candidates' roles and research both in academia and the field of practice. Internationally the literature on the emerging wave of professional doctorates, their work, research, and impact are somewhat scarce and outdated. A further rationale is found in the continuing potential for innovation as pointed out by Townsend (2002, p. 72), who expanding on Brennan (1995) sees the Ed.D. as "a means for restructuring relations between academic and other sites of knowledge and practice by demanding a reconfiguration of university research relations with other professionals in the field".

This Special Issue considers what doctoral research within education (specifically, in Ed.D, OFFPHD and PD programmes) means in our current and future world. By comparing structures, opportunities and experiences of OFFPHD/PD/Ed.D in different contexts, and reflecting on both the potential for and barriers to the co-creation of educational research, this Special Issue refreshes and contributes to ongoing discussions at an international level about interactions between academia and the field of practice, and how these interactions can produce relevant and impactful educational research.

Focus and Scope

For this Special Issue, we welcome (but will not be limited to) the following submissions:

- Papers which address and compare the changing nature of and the experiences of those involved in PD/Ed.D/OFFPHD programmes offered in Nordic and international contexts
- Papers which address and compare the opportunities, challenges and experiences of interactions between academia and the field of practice connected to PD/Ed.D/OFFPHD programmes in Nordic and international contexts
- Papers by PD/Ed.D/OFFPHD candidates which present novel empirical research within the field of education

We are interested in receiving contributions that critically consider researcher position, knowledge creation, and the particular ways in which research carried out by practitioners is viewed and utilised.

Type of Call

The papers will be invited through an open call and selected according to their relevance to the call, the scientific quality, and the extent to which they meet the [Author Guidelines](#) for NJCIE. The guest editors are happy to respond to queries concerning the relevance and eligibility of potential submissions.

Proposed Progress Plan (dates are approximate at this stage)	
Submission of abstract as an expression of interest (150-300 words)	15 May 2023
Notification of accepted abstract	30 May 2023
Deadline for submission of papers	24 August 2023
Publication of Special Issue – no later than	5 January 2024

Contact information and guest editors:

Erlend Dehlin, Professor, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, email:

erlend.dehlin@ntnu.no

Mari-Ana Jones, Associate Professor, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, email:

mari.a.jones@ntnu.no

Tony Burner, Professor, University of South-Eastern Norway, email: tony.burner@usn.no

Tessa Grevle, Doctoral Research Fellow (Public Sector PhD programme in Education), email:

tessaeri@oslomet.no

Sara Bubb, Associate Professor, University College London, email: s.bubb@ucl.ac.uk

References

- Altbach, P. G. (1997). Doctoral Education: Present Realities and Future Trends. In *International Handbook of Higher Education* (pp. 65–81). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4012-2_5
- Bason, C. (2018). *Leading Public Sector Innovation* (2nd ed.). Policy Press.
- Boud, D., Costley, C., Marshall, S., & Sutton, B. (2021). Impacts of a professional practice doctorate: a collaborative enquiry. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(3), 431–445. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1765744>
- Boyd, P., & Smith, C. (2016). The contemporary academic: orientation towards research work and researcher identity of higher education lecturers in the health professions. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(4), 678–695. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.943657>
- Brennan, M. (1995). Education Doctorates: Reconstructing Professional Partnerships Around Research? *Australian Universities' Review*, 38(2), 20–22.
- Ceballos, M., Vitale, T., & Gordon, W. R. (2021). Educational leaders and the professional doctorate dissertation: an analysis of leaders' interests within the educational leadership corpus. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 26(3), 312–332. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2021.1920261>
- Corr, C., Love, H., Snodgrass, M. R., Kern, J. L., & Chudzik, M. (2022). Methodological Training in Special Education Doctoral Programs: A Mixed-Methods Exploration. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08884064221103902>
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. Henry Holt and Company, Inc.
- Forskningsrådet. (2018). *Innovasjon i offentlig sektor: Forskningsrådets strategi*. Forskningsrådet. <https://www.forskningsradet.no/sok-om-finansiering/hvem-kan-soke-om-finansiering/offentlig-sektor/strategi-for-innovasjon-i-offentlig-sektor/>

- Gadamer, H.-G. (1994). *Truth and Method. Translated and revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall* (2nd ed.). Continuum.
- Hawkes, D., & Yerrabati, S. (2018). A systematic review of research on professional doctorates. *London Review of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.16.1.03>
- Holley, K. (2015). Doctoral education and the development of an interdisciplinary identity. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 52(6), 642–652.
- Jones, M. (2018). Contemporary trends in professional doctorates. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43(5), 814–825. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1438095>
- Kowalczyk-Walędziak, M., Lopes, A., Menezes, I., & Tormenta, N. (2017). Teachers pursuing a doctoral degree: motivations and perceived impact. *Educational Research*, 59(3), 335–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2017.1345287>
- Mausethagen, S., Prøitz, T., Fekjær, S., Stenersen, C., & Finnanger, T. (2021). "En fot i begge leirer hadde vært ypperlig" En studie av offentlig ph.d. i utdanningsfeltet.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self and society (Vol. III)*. University of Chicago Press.
- Perry, J. A. (2012). To Ed.D. or not to Ed.D.? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 41–44.
- Prøitz, T. S., & Wittek, L. (2020). New directions in doctoral programmes: bridging tensions between theory and practice? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 25(5), 560–578. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2019.1577813>
- Townsend, B. K. (2002). Rethinking the Ed.D., or What's in a Name? *Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (27th, Sacramento, CA, November 21-24, 2002)*.
- Wildy, H., Peden, S., & Chan, K. (2015). The rise of professional doctorates: case studies of the Doctorate in Education in China, Iceland and Australia. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(5), 761–774. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.842968>