

The Doctor of Education in Australia: Some Comparative Data

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Abstract

Initially established in America, in the 1920s, the Doctor of Education (EdD) is a recent addition to awards in many Australian universities. From the beginning, an ambivalence was observed: whether its orientation was professional or academic. In order to investigate the nature of the Australian EdD, prospectuses from Australian universities were examined for their program rationale and mode of study as well as nature of course work and thesis components of the awards. Clearly, Australian awards are professional in orientation though there may be some questions raised about the ways in which this professionalism is articulated. While all 19 of 38 universities adopted a research approach to the award the research proportion compared to the course work varies from one third to wholly research. Other variations across awards are outlined

Introduction

Almost unheard of in Australia five years ago, the professional doctorate in education is available in various forms in a number of states. Melbourne and Monash universities enrolled candidates in their doctoral programs for the 1991 academic year, as did the University of Newcastle (Crump, 1991) and the University of New South Wales. The first graduates of EdD programs in Australia appeared only in 1994 (Jones, 1994).

The move to introduce the EdD in Australia appears to have first emerged in Melbourne where the University of Melbourne in 1988 published its strategic plan "Looking to the Future". There was a parallel development at Monash University where "Strategy for the Future" was approved by that university in the same year. Both policy documents emphasised the importance of advancing knowledge through research and its practical application. In both documents the introduction of the Doctor of Education degree was seen as a challenging strategy to enable the universities to achieve their objectives of supporting new and innovative research in areas not already accommodated within existing doctoral programs. At the University of Melbourne:

The new doctorate was designed to improve relationships with its industry, the educator profession, in that it offers an alternative and a more accessible avenue whereby outstanding experienced educators are able to engage in advanced study (Lakomski, 1991, p. 148).

At Monash University, according to Chapman (1991, p146), "the major emphasis of the degree will be on research but the principal orientation will be towards improving professional practice". Monash University also had discussions around this time with the Victorian Ministry of Education, the Catholic Education Office and the Victorian Association of Independent Schools. These bodies expressed great interest in the proposal and indicated that they would see the EdD as providing "an important avenue for the continuing professional growth of their staff. Interest and support was also expressed by subject associations and some teacher associations" (Chapman, 1991, p143).

Chapman indicated that the move to establish Doctor of Education programs at Melbourne and Monash Universities was partly political in origin and reflected the broadly based challenge to universities by the Higher Education Council of the National Board for Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) in its July 1989 report (NBEET, 1989). In the report chapter entitled "Future Directions for Postgraduate Education", universities were urged to review their patterns of awards and to consider professional doctorates in engineering, accounting, law, education and nursing (NBEET, 1989, p28). The professional

nature of these doctorates was emphasised (NBEET, 1989, p28). Further work (Shanahan, 1996) will show that of the five professions specified only law, education and nursing have developed such doctorates. Professional doctorates (other than the EdD) are currently being offered by at least twelve Australian universities with the named awards ranging from Juridical Science and Business Administration to Architecture, Psychology and Public Health. New named awards are emerging each year, for example, the Doctor of Technology at Deakin.

The introduction of professional doctorates in education in Australia has not been easy. For example, Chapman (1991) indicates that at Monash University some of the opponents of the proposal to introduce an EdD raised the issue of increasing numbers of doctoral candidates and the effect this would have upon the workload of academic staff in times of financial cutbacks to publicly funded universities. Others seem to have had concerns more political in nature and questioned the role of the new Dean of the Faculty at Monash at the time who was urging review and change, and his perceptions of his responsibility to exercise leadership in regard to innovative programs (Chapman, 1991).

The most serious objections however were on matters of principle in regard to the status of the doctoral concept generally, and its traditional emphasis upon research. There were those within that university, and particularly within its faculty of education, who believed as noted by Chapman (1991, p 143) that "there is only one appropriate approach to doctoral level study at a leading university, such as Monash University, and that is the approach already adopted in the delivery of the PhD". Those advancing this view cited as evidence the review of professional doctorates recently conducted at such leading overseas universities as Harvard and Stanford. Some level of general dissatisfaction had been expressed with the traditional academic and theoretical approach of many universities to the preparation of senior educators, and in particular to their role in the development of high-quality educational leadership (compare Murphy and Hallinger, 1989). Carter (1994) sees this as part of a wider debate and as reflecting the traditional tension between the two cultures of theory (academe) and practice (profession).

PhD or EdD?

While it is clear that the PhD is the most common doctorate in Australian universities, as we approach the year 2000, Shannon (1995, p16) predicts that the number of professional doctorates will increase. Perhaps Australia will follow North America where doctorates other than the PhD appear to have become accepted. For example, an investigation of doctorates awarded in a random month in the United States (based on Dissertation Abstracts International for the month of May, 1990 [vol. 5 [11]) indicated that just 53% were PhDs and of the remaining doctorates the vast majority were EdDs. These latter awards were able to be obtained from such institutions as Harvard, Fordharn, Universities of Syracuse and Massachusetts and Southern California. In Britain, the EdD has been introduced in seven universities (Gregory, 1995).

After an inauspicious start at Harvard in 1920 (Sroufe, 1982, p3-4) over time there is evidence that the EdD did come to be seen as a professional award (Walton, 1934, in Sroufe, 1982, p3). A difference between the EdD and the PhD (which in America might include course work) some 60 years after their introduction was that more EdD programs accepted study of a "practical problem" (Andersen, 1983, p56-57). However, the California Commission (CSPEC, 1987, p8) observed:

despite a lingering sentiment in some academic circles that the PhD is the more prestigious degree, the EdD seems to be firmly established, gives no indication of declining in popularity, and differs only slightly in requirements from the PhD.

These kinds of conclusions support the notion that the professional doctorate, in some areas of education at least, in the United States might well have lost its way. The introduction of the EdD in Britain has also lead Gregory (1995) to question the nature of the doctorate in education.

By choosing a named doctorate it would appear that students are wanting a doctorate different from the PhD. Perhaps the reasons why students are choosing to take the alternative; one which is not only not totally research oriented but which is directly relevant to their professional field, perhaps more applied in

nature. More than that, it may well be that a named doctorate allows them to work on significant issues directly related to their professional life; issues related to the problems of the workplace. It could be too that the course work of many of the EdDs in Australia gives them a structured way into up-to-date literature in their field of interest since many will not have had an opportunity to study for some years. These are empirical questions but some insight into the nature of the EdD can be gained by an analysis of the reasons given for this named doctorate being different from the PhD in advertising for the EdD at the various institutions that offer them. We could also use this literature to investigate a range of questions including entry requirements, the different academic structure of the awards and the different kinds of outcomes from the awards. These are amongst the range of questions that our research set out to address. However an important question that is not addressed here is the uniqueness of the actual programs of professional doctorates in education, that is their implementation, but we content ourselves with an analysis of the rationales for these programs and their broad structures.

Methodology

A letter was sent to all 38 universities in Australia (and all in New Zealand) requesting information regarding the availability of a Doctorate of Education. The Australian prospectuses and the supporting information were used as the primary source material for the analyses of the nature of the EdD program and the administration requirements at each university. Where information was incomplete, a follow up telephone call was made.

The data concerning the rationale for the programs were collected using a content analysis of the prospectuses. Initially, categories were brainstormed and codes defined. Then two researchers separately analysed three prospectuses and compared the results. Thereafter, each of the prospectuses was analysed separately by the two researchers, coding compared, agreed on and entered on an Excel spreadsheet. Where there was a discrepancy in coding, the relevant prospectus was revisited by the researchers together and the code finalised. The most difficult coding category resulted from the ambiguity in the nature of the course work. A second difficulty was the lack of information in many of the prospectuses. Specific information concerning each award that set it apart from the coding categories was also noted. The data presented here are in an aggregated form. (More detailed analyses are available from the senior author.)

Results

Altogether 39 responses were received. Four universities did not reply and we assume that they did not have an EdD. More responses than letters sent is accounted for in the Australian replies since different campuses from the same university sent information. Of these, 19 Australian universities indicated that they currently offered an EdD, though two more Australian universities indicated theirs would commence in 1996. (All seven universities in New Zealand also responded to our request for information. One [Auckland] already offers the EdD and another [Victoria] is developing one.)

These data are interesting in that they represent, as far as the authors are aware, the first analysis of a significant recent innovation in the Australian higher education sector. They provide a sound basis for comparison. The data are presented beginning with the distribution, year of introduction of the EdDs and numbers of students. The rationale and aims/purpose for their introduction are discussed followed by admission requirements, length of candidature, and finally the nature of the degrees themselves.

Place and Year of introduction

Half the universities in Australia, 19 out of 38, developed doctorates in education within five years of the appearance of the first one (Table 1). In 1994, nine universities around the country introduced the EdD. All states, except South Australia and the two territories, currently have at least one Doctor of Education program. In New South Wales all universities except Southern Cross offer an EdD. This represents a significant response to the NBEET challenge. There were 573 students undertaking Doctorates in Education in 1995 in the 19 universities for which data is available. It is not surprising that at this early

stage to some extent the size of the program is correlated with the length of time that the program has been in operation.

Table 1: EdD Year of Introduction of Australian University and Enrolment

Year of introduction	Universities (Total program enrolment in 1995)
1991	Melbourne (79); Monash (70); Newcastle (3); New South Wales (35)
1992	Deakin (70); Macquarie (23); Sydney (45)
1993	Wollongong (15)
1994	Australian Catholic (16); Central Queensland (7); Charles Sturt (7); La Trobe (35); Murdoch (10); Queensland University of Technology (55); New England (35); Technology Sydney (20); Western Australia (n/a).
1995	Tasmania (13); Western Sydney (14)

Rationale for the EdD Programs

Universities would expect potential students to be interested in why they should apply for an EdD as opposed to a PhD, and such reasons could be expected to be found in information sent to students. In these rationales and specification of aims and purposes one can also see some of the reasons for the introduction of the EdDs. Alternatively, we can view a rationale as an expression of distinctiveness of the EdD from the university's stand point. At the same time it is possible to see if there is confusion at present in Australia that is apparent in the United States. The quotations which appear below are taken from prospectuses and these illustrate differing perspectives.

An explicit rationale for the EdD was discerned in ten of the 19 prospectuses. To some extent it is a matter of some concern that nine did not provide such a rationale. Broadly, the rationales for the ten EdDs concentrated on their professional orientation, that is, on the relation between the components of the award and the practices of workers in the field of education. A typical rationale is that given by the University of Western Australia (UWA): "The principal orientation is not only the development of knowledge *per se*, but the extension of knowledge towards the improvement of professional practice". For most, where a rationale was made explicit, the rationale was framed in relation to the PhD, presumably to highlight the differences between the two doctorates from the one institution. "The applied emphasis in the {EdD} program is its main distinction from the PhD program" (Macquarie). Also, within a rationale, a number of universities were at pains to point out the parity between the PhD and the EdD.

The research is to be carried out at a scholarly standard similar to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree, but whereas the PhD thesis focuses on advancing theoretical knowledge in a field, and is' required to '... make a distinctive contribution to the knowledge of a subject with which it deals and provide evidence of scholarship and originality" the EdD thesis focuses on advancing the level of professional practice and is required to '... make a distinctive contribution to the profession and provide evidence of scholarship and originality'. ... the difference is primarily one of emphasis (Murdoch).

The Doctor of Education ... is considered an equivalent of but as an alternative to, a PhD degree in that both degrees represent supervised research training. The amount of research performed by candidates in both degrees is equivalent. The principal difference from the PhD lies in the form of guidance for research and writing, which is provided through a sequence of research training components completed under conditions of group supervision as well as individual supervision (Sydney).

The comparison in the last quotation from the University of Sydney, which focuses upon research training, also indicates an essential difference between the processes of achieving the awards, as does the following when it also stresses the importance of professional responsibilities:

The emphasis of the Doctorate in Education (EdD) is on the scholarly and research foundation of professional practice. It is a degree of equivalent standing to the PhD in that an equally rigorous scholarship is expected, and both are research based. The EdD however, stresses broad preparation for advanced professional responsibilities rather than solo scholarship and intense research on a single topic (La Trobe).

The next quotation from the University of Western Sydney (UWS) prospectus refers to the differences between the intended target student audience.

It is not intended to replace the PhD program, which will continue to be the most appropriate qualification for education specialists seeking to work primarily in the academic field or in research agencies. The EdD has the same admission requirements as the PhD but is designed specifically for education practitioners.

The analysis of the rationales indicates that the EdD is intended as a doctorate equivalent to the PhD but with a different intended student population, a different orientation, and different processes to achieve the award. There is a clear professional orientation evident in these distinctions indicating no confusion in the rationales of the awards in the various universities' communications with prospective students, though the structures of the awards do have differences.

Mode of Study, Admission Requirements and Length of Candidature

As can be seen from Table 2, internal candidature was the most common mode of study offered by these universities and there was a clear correlation with large population centres. Of the seven external providers, only three, Charles Sturt, Deakin and New England (UNE), were designated distance education centres.

All awardees allowed part-time and full-time study with the exception of Deakin and Sydney where only part-time was available. For Deakin the rationale for this was that the part-time candidate was more in touch with professional practice. Full time candidature, where available, was projected to take somewhat less than half the time of part time candidature.

Admission requirements rested largely upon formal academic qualifications (Table 2) and previous professional experience which was required in all but one university. In ten of 18 cases the formal academic qualifications required for entry were a bachelor honours or masters honours degree. In eight universities, a masters degree was required, implying that a course work masters was sufficient.

Table 2 : Mode of EdD Candidature and Admission Qualifications

Mode of candidature	Universities (Admission Qualifications) †
Internal	La Trobe (1); Melbourne (3); Monash (1)*; Murdoch (1)*; Newcastle (1); Queensland University of Technology (1); Sydney (1); Tasmania (2); New South Wales (2); Western Australia (1); Western Sydney (1)
External	Central Queensland (2); Deakin (2)*
Either	Australian Catholic (2); Charles Sturt (2)*; Macquarie (1); New England (1)*; Technology Sydney (2)

† (1) = B (Hons) or Masters (Hons); (2) = Masters; (3) = other

* = Distance Education

The analysis of documentation also revealed that eight universities offered probationary candidature. The kind of probation varied from special minor research projects at Charles Sturt University and the UWA to successful completion of masters units at the UNSW and QUT. Indeed at UNSW it was possible to begin with only a pass degree and proceed toward an EdD under probationary candidature.

Full Fee and Scholarships

No university offers an EdD on a full fee basis to Australian students. This is despite a view gaining currency that the professional doctoral degrees should be financed fully through avenues other than the government.

In Australia, DEET (the Department of Employment, Education and Training) defines “research” degrees to consist of less than 34% course work. Research degrees attract a form of scholarship known as all Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) with or without stipend. APAs without stipend are made available to universities and enable holders of them to proceed with their degree without paying HECS. It is assumed that EdD students would be granted APAs without stipend where the award is a research degree.

Course work and Thesis

The percentage of course work of the total requirements of the award required the resolution of a practical difficulty of finding some common basis for comparison of course work and thesis between awards. Where the percentage of course work was not explicitly stated, we attempted an estimation. For example, we compared the number of words or the time that were required for the two areas of course work and research. These data concerning the percentage of course work to thesis should be taken as indicative only (Table 3). From the analysis of these data over half of the EdDs are considered “research” degrees using the DEET definition. That is these awards have, at most, about one third course work. In fact the percentage of course work varies from zero at UWS to about two thirds at UNSW and UTas.

Nature of Course Work

As already hinted at, there were differences between universities concerning what constituted a unit of course work although the decision about whether a unit was course work or not was sometimes difficult to determine. For example, Deakin has 11 “structured research tasks” yet does not consider these as course work.

On the other hand, Macquarie has research seminars that they consider represent course work. All universities offering an EdD, except for the UWS and Deakin, had course work as part of their degree. Perhaps it is worth noting here that the UWS allows a variety of experiences including conference participation to be built into its 100 percent research program.

Where course work was required, students were able to choose from a range of offerings except in so far as five of the universities had compulsory programs. Nine EdDs had compulsory units as well as electives. These varied from one choice from two to nine from twelve. At a small number of universities it was possible to include masters units in the EdD program. The extreme of this situation was Murdoch where six of seven units could be masters units. Both The University of New England and Charles Sturt University had compulsory units which were similar but had no counterpart at other universities. A broad descriptive term for these units would be “practicum”. In the case of UNE the Professional Extension unit is individually negotiated with the unit co-ordinator so that students have “had the supervised experience of applying one or more of the theoretical insights of the course work units of the program to their own practice, and written a report which *critically reflects* upon this experience” (UNE, 1994).

Being a doctorate and since some could claim to be research doctorates in DEET terms, the degree of research training offered is of interest. About half of the universities had compulsory advanced research methods units (these appeared to be specifically designed) (Table 3) while another four had research methods training that was specialist in some form or another. For example, Macquarie and the UWS had research seminars. Two other universities offered advanced research methods but these were not compulsory.

Early in the development of the EdDs in Australian universities, there was a meeting of academics who were closely involved with the development of some of these early professional doctorates. Some collaboration was proposed but little appears to have been achieved. One form of collaboration suggested was the accreditation of course work units from one EdD to the other (Thomas, 1994, pers. comm.). To

some extent this is reflected in the data as eight universities provide for at least one credit for course work obtained at another university. The co-operation does not appear to have developed far, however.

Table 3 : Research (%) and Research Methods

Research	Universities (Research Methods) †
> 33%	Australian Catholic (9); Charles Sturt (4); Deakin (2?); La Trobe (9); Macquarie (9); Melbourne (2); Monash (2); Queensland University of Technology (2); New England (2); Western Australia (2); Western Sydney (9)
< 33%	Central Queensland (2); Murdoch (2); Newcastle (2); New South Wales (1); Sydney (2); Tasmania (2); Technology Sydney (3); Wollongong (n/a)
† (1) = advanced (not compulsory); (2) = advanced (compulsory); (3) = Masters level (not compulsory); (4) = Masters level (compulsory); (9) other	

The Thesis

All universities, except one, required the presentation of a thesis. Seven universities indicated the length of the thesis in terms of a minimum number of words for which the average was 43,000 and ten indicated a maximum for which the average was 65,000 words. Seven universities specified an approximate number varying between 45,000 and 60,000 but averaging 55,000 words. The range across all universities was 40,000 to 75,000 words. Only the UWS did not have a thesis as a formal part of its award. This university requires a review of a portfolio which includes six research papers of which four must be published.

Universities were less explicit about examination of the thesis. Where data were available, all universities indicated they examined using from two to three persons. Nine of these nominated they would only use external examiners. The University of Sydney went against the trend by using two internal and one external examiner. The University of Western Sydney did not specify internal or external examiners. Instead they use three of their 20 external moderators to make a judgment about the quality of the portfolio that is produced by the student during candidature. Deakin has something similar in that the thesis is only part of the portfolio that the examiners consider. Two universities (Monash and UWA) also indicated that they required an oral examination.

Other administrative matters

There were a number of other administrative issues that were able to be determined from the analysis of the prospectuses. Ten of twelve universities indicated that course work began at the beginning of the academic year. We also conducted an analysis, albeit a rather crude one, of the nature of the materials that contained the information on the EdD. These, we thought, would give an indication of the apparent importance placed upon the EdD within the university. One third of the prospectuses were glossy and EdD specific. Five prospectuses about the EdD were contained within a general booklet, generally one that contained the faculty's offerings. The remaining seven universities provided information about their EdD via an EdD specific mimeoed sheet or sheets.

Conclusion

The EdD has become an established award throughout Australia. It is clear that there has been an extraordinary growth over the past five or six years in the availability of the degree of Doctor of Education throughout Australia. The situation has changed in five years from few offerings at all to one in which well over 500 candidates will be working in programs offered by at least 21 institutions by 1996. The objectives of programs involved in such expansion are admirable - "preparation for advanced professional responsibility in education", "the application of intellectual skills to problems of practice", "improvement of the quality of service as educators and expanding theoretical understanding of educational practice", "addressing problems of teaching, learning and curriculum implementation", "advancing practitioners' capacity to question, analyse, critique and develop the profession and its practices", and so on. These intentions are consistent with an award that is professional in orientation.

Although there is the explicit statement of these intentions by a number of universities, there is an important question for universities that have introduced the EdD which arises from such enormous expansion of the number of candidates at doctoral level. It is whether educational faculties have developed and enunciated clear understandings of the nature, purpose and value of their EdDs at the course work and thesis levels; whether the programs they have developed reflect these understandings.

As Carter (1994) pointed out, such understandings would include a clear relationship between theory and practice in education, the relevance of research to that issue, and as a result, how a professional doctorate may be more appropriate for some persons actively involved in education than the traditional research doctorate. Consideration of these issues is likely to ensure the professional nature of the EdD award, its excellence, credibility and standing. It is arguably not good enough to introduce a professional doctorate because it is well established in other countries, because other competing Australian universities are marketing it or because it is a way of attracting government research funds. While we did not gather data specifically on this latter issue, the burgeoning of the award together with the coincident unification of the tertiary system and the down turn of per capita funding do, *prima facie*, give some evidence for a degree of concern.

Part of this concern is related to the degree of support for the new awards at the various universities. Examination of the literature put out by some, but not all, provides evidence that some have thought through, and are prepared to articulate, the principles underpinning their understandings of the nature of their EdD, both in relation to content, methodology and overall program structure. Implicit in this is a university's commitment to service the program effectively, and especially so in the case of the key element of the appropriate supervision of candidates. This was the precise issue which Chapman (1991) indicates as being raised by the faculty of education at Monash University when the concept of the EdD was first mooted there. In some universities in the unified system, the question of adequate numbers of qualified persons for supervision is of vital importance, particularly as it relates to such issues as choice of an integrated program of study and research, the preparation and presentation of research proposals, and implementation of the proposal. For those universities offering the degree by external studies, such questions are arguably of even greater significance.

It is noteworthy that EdD programs in the majority of cases have remained research awards in the DEET definition. In maintaining this strong research element, most programs appear also to have set up specifically designed courses in advanced research methodology. This would seem to demonstrate a widely held conviction about the value of scholarship, and of research in particular, and of the lasting value of research which perhaps only personal involvement over a sustained period can bring. As a result, professional educators in leadership positions who are EdD graduates are more likely to be in a position to make reliable judgments about the value of research available to them, and about the way they can undertake or get others to undertake research to throw light upon contemporary issues as they arise in their professional occupations. At the same time this can be a decided disadvantage over time as the demands for research within academe may supplant the professional orientation of the awards as appears to have happened in the United States. Australian professional educators need to be vigilant on this issue.

Within the article there have been a number of suggestions for further research. One of these was the reasons why current EdD students have elected to enrol in the new EdD rather than the PhD. In addition, the nature of the pedagogy of course work in the awards and specifically whether there is application of sound principles of adult learning in course work remains unclear. These issues deserve further attention. There is recognition too, expressed within some programs, of the importance of some form of practicum or professional engagement. This might be a planned immersion within a carefully chosen and relevant educational situation to which candidates can apply the principles they have learned in other course work, critically reflect upon that experience and produce professionally oriented reports as is the case at UNE. Whether this is so is another issue worthy of further study.

In broad terms most EdD awards have around one third course work and two thirds thesis. Perhaps only the University of Western Sydney digresses from this generalisation especially in terms of its range of formal products of research presented as a portfolio, its examination procedure where examiners are drawn from a panel of external persons who are known ill the program, and its model of teaching. Apart

from the UWS EdD, there is a sameness to the award structure and opportunities certainly exist for innovation at this professional doctorate level. Such innovations might well include problem-based and/or team approaches to learning. Special arrangements with sponsors of candidates could also be considered.

The EdD is here to stay. Over time the quality of the various awards will become known and the criteria used for making these judgments will no doubt include the quality of research and research training as well as criteria concerned with the contribution of the research to practice and to the profession (broadly speaking). However, given the American experience, it is likely that the awards may become less professional in orientation perhaps because of the importance of the research element together with the fact that these awards are taken through universities where, arguably, basic research is valued more highly. For those considering the introduction of a professional doctorate in education or any other profession, it is our contention that the "professional" doctorate needs to retain its professional character since it is this that distinguished it from the PhD, the research training doctorate. Such professional character will be reflected in the blend between the course work and the products of the students' research (conceived broadly) and the special character of the students in the program, many of whom will be leaders in their field. Just what constitutes a professional orientation at the doctoral level is an elusive but essential characteristic.

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