Trust me, I'm a doctor: academic knowledge and professional practice in the criminal justice sector.

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Introduction

Since the first professional doctorates were introduced in the UK in 1992 (Bourner, Bowden and Laing, 2001) there has been a considerable growth in the number and range of programmes being offered. The most recent national survey undertaken in 2005 by the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) identified 192 programmes offered across a broad field of disciplinary areas (Powell and Long, 2005). Whilst programmes in areas such as education, engineering and business administration have become well established, it is only in the last few years that programmes targeted specifically at the Criminal Justice Sector have begun to emerge. In this article, we outline the history, structure and characteristics of the professional doctorate and position the qualification in the wider context of education and training within the Criminal Justice Sector. We offer a comparison of the professional doctorate programmes that are currently available and consider how different structures, curricula and modes of assessment may reflect different conceptions of what constitutes valid knowledge. We conclude that the professional doctorate provides an exciting opportunity for criminal justice professionals to receive a higher level award that provides recognition of their contribution both to academic knowledge and to professional practice. However, the nature of the award also has some implications for the relationship between higher education and the Criminal Justice Sector, which may require further consideration.

Professional Doctorates--The Background

The UKCGE survey defined professional doctorates as 'An award at a doctoral level where the field of study is a professional discipline and which is distinguished from the PhD by a title that refers to that profession' (Powell and Long, 2005: 7). Although professional doctorates as currently constituted are a relatively new phenomenon in higher education, they have their roots in the subject-based doctorates such as Doctor of Law and Doctor of Theology that were offered by European universities from the 13th century onwards (UK Council for Graduate Education, 2002). The first modern professional doctorates were launched in 1992: a Doctorate of Education (EdD) at the University of Bristol and a Doctorate in Engineering (EngD) at the University of Warwick, the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST)/University of Manchester, and the University of Wales (Bourner et al., 2001).

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualification does not differentiate between the PhD and the professional doctorate. Doctoral degrees are awarded for 'the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication' (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008: 23).

Nevertheless, perceptions of the status of the award vary both in the academic community and in the professions. Some of the concerns about parity of quality and standards have been traced to differences in the time requirements for completion, entry qualifications and the length of the final thesis (Ellis and Lee, 2005; Neumann, 2005; Pearson, 1999).

It is certainly the case that there are structural differences between professional doctorate and PhD programmes, although as some commentators have noted, these differences are perhaps becoming less distinct with changing practices in the structure and delivery of PhDs (Thomson and Walker, 2010). The defining features of the professional doctorate can, however, be discerned in part through comparison with the PhD. A key difference lies in the taught element of the programme. Although many UK PhDs now include an element of research methods training, and the 'new route' PhD contains a more significant taught element, the traditional doctorate in humanities and social sciences requires a three year period of research supported by a supervisor. A more usual model for a professional doctorate programme is a two year taught programme delivered on a cohort basis, followed by a research stage taking a minimum of two years. The content of the taught element varies across the programmes but will typically include research methodology, publication and dissemination, professional reflection or practice, and some subject-specific content. This is delivered and assessed through a series of modules credited at D level. Although students write an amount over the course of the programme that is broadly equivalent to the total words required for a PhD thesis, the final professional doctorate thesis is often shorter.

A second key difference is that the professional doctorate is embedded in professional practice. For entry to named professional doctorate awards there is typically a requirement that the student is employed in or otherwise engaged with the profession. The QAA Framework for Higher Education (2008: 25) notes that 'Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge'. Assessments undertaken for the taught element of the programme therefore often involve an element of work-based learning, professional reflection or action research. The final research project undertaken for the thesis is also undertaken in the context of the student's professional practice. This focus on the individual's professional practice means that professional doctorates are also characterised by a greater degree of reflection and reflexivity than may be the case in a PhD.

However, debates over the equivalence between the PhD and the professional doctorate can also be seen to have an epistemological dimension, in that they are concerned with what constitutes a legitimate source of knowledge. Although professional doctorate students are undoubtedly engaged in the creation of new knowledge, this is often informal, situated and contingent knowledge generated through professional practice (Eraut, 1994, 2000) rather than with the more formal disciplinary-based knowledge of the academy (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Although Gibbons et al. (1994) have argued that disciplinary knowledge is being challenged by new 'Mode 2 knowledge', which is produced outside the academy in the context of application, and characterised by transdisciplinarity and heterogeneity, disciplinary boundaries in the organisational framework of the university have remained relatively intact. Furthermore, this Mode 1/Mode 2 model may be insufficiently sophisticated to capture the complexity of the relationships between academic and professional knowledge in the context of the professional doctorate.

Scott, Brown, Lunt and Thorne (2004) propose an alternative explanatory framework, which includes four different modes of knowledge: disciplinary; technical rationality; dispositional; and critical knowledge. Whilst they suggest that disciplinarity is indifferent to the practice setting, technical rationality '... prioritises outsider knowledge over practice-based knowledge' (Scott et al., 2004: 53). Dispositional knowledge generated through reflection and reflective practice is well established in educational and health disciplines, but may also be viewed with suspicion in some academic contexts. Critical knowledge, where the purpose is 'explicitly

or implicitly political and change oriented' may also be regarded as insufficiently objective. They suggest that professional doctorate programmes draw on different configurations of these modes of knowledge, and that specific patterns are shaped by the relationship between the student, the profession in which he or she is located, and the higher education institution. It is to these specific relationships to which we will now turn.

The Criminal Justice Context

Tensions between academic and professional knowledge can be clearly observed in the Criminal Justice Sector. The production of knowledge about crime and criminality has had a long and established presence outside the academy, in government institutions and in professional practice. Crime and the reduction of crime has also become central to modern political agendas and the government drives evaluation and research priorities and shapes the production of knowledge. Rock (2007: 35) notes the consequent growing influence of government funding in 'shaping the form, mode and content of the discipline'. The production of criminological knowledge in government departments or research units is referred to by many academic criminologists as 'administrative criminology' and has been the subject of significant critique for its failure to adequately theorise or critique managerialist approaches. Presdee (2004: 276), for example, criticises it for a pseudo-scientific approach which has 'produced an overdetermined descriptive criminology'. The contested discourses and practices of academic and administrative criminology are also evident in education and training programmes for criminal justice professionals, which reflect the different ways that professional experience is constructed within different programmes.

The relationship between policing and higher education is perhaps the one which is most well documented and researched (Lee and Punch, 2004; Punch, 2007). The police service was traditionally a non-graduate profession with a reputation for scepticism about, or even hostility towards, university education (Lee and Punch, 2004). Even where the official rhetoric embraced higher education, Young (1991: 38) noted that the police service still held to 'a central ethic of distrust of the academic'. However, there have been a number of changes in both policing and in higher education over the past 20 years, which have impacted on the relationship between the police service and universities. With participation rates in higher education reaching 45% of 17-30 year olds in 2008/9 (National Statistics, 2010), more graduates are being recruited into the police service. Several higher education institutions have developed part-time distance learning degrees in policing and related subject areas, which are targeted at serving police officers. Other institutions have entered into partnerships with local forces to deliver a foundation degree as part of the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP). As a consequence of these developments there are an increasing number of police officers with graduate qualifications. There were, for example, over 5,000 graduates (16% of the total number of full-time employees) serving in the Metropolitan Police by 2008 (Metropolitan Police, 2008).

Despite the trend towards contractual partnerships between individual police services and higher education institutions in delivering foundation degrees, most police graduates have acquired their qualification outside of the police education and training framework. This is in sharp contrast to the position in the Probation Service where, until 2010, trainee probation officers were recruited to a two year full-time programme leading to a BA Honours Degree in Community Justice (incorporating a Level 4 NVQ in Work with Offending Behaviour), successful completion of which led automatically to the award of the Professional Diploma in Probation Studies (Annison, Eadie and Knight, 2008; Nellis, 2003; Treadwell, 2006). The arrangements for establishing and delivering the new award were set out in a series of eleven Probation Circulars issued during 1997 and 1998 (Probation 2000, n.d.) and the programme was offered in partnership with a number of higher education institutions who provided external accreditation and delivered the academic elements of the programme to the specification provided initially by the Home Office. The new National Probation Qualifications

Framework (Ministry of Justice, 2010) introduced a more flexible curriculum and structure with three different learner pathways through which individuals can become qualified probation practitioners.

The picture across other parts of the Criminal Justice Sector is complex and differentiated. Before the decision to transfer its functions to the Ministry of Justice, the Youth Justice Board developed a range of qualifications in youth justice with the Open University, including a Professional Certificate in Effective Practice and a Foundation Degree in Youth Justice (Youth Justice Board, n.d.). Custodial care is the third largest of the strands making up the sector after police and community justice (Skills for Justice, 2008), and includes prisons, immigration detention, secure escorting and electronic monitoring of offenders in the community. Many of these agencies are in the private sector and qualifications and training, where available, tend to be at the NVQ level. Courts and tribunals, prosecution services and forensic science agencies include a huge range of occupations, with a diverse range of entry requirements and relationships to higher education. As the overall level of qualifications attained by people working in these sectors increases, however, the potential for offering a generic or specialist professional doctorate route is likely to increase.

Professional Doctorate Programmes

The UKCGE survey in 2005 identified professional doctorates in a large number of disciplinary fields including education, clinical psychology, medicine, business administration, engineering, health and theology. Whilst some of these programmes, in education, social work and psychology, for example, recruited students working in relevant aspects of the Criminal Justice Sector, the development of programmes targeted specifically at criminal justice professionals has been relatively recent. Current programmes include professional doctorates in Criminal Justice (University of Portsmouth), International Criminal Justice (Sheffield Hallam University), Policing Security and Community Safety (London Metropolitan University), and Leadership in Children's and Young People's Services (including Youth Justice pathway) (University of Bedfordshire).

The drivers for the development of these programmes from the institutional perspective include: an increase in the number of graduates in the sector eligible to undertake doctoral level research; increasing demands for a higher level postgraduate award for students already in possession of masters level qualifications; and a desire to increase the numbers of students successfully completing research degrees. Taylor (2008) suggests that universities are also motivated by the potential to build up relationships with the sector which can lead to opportunities in other areas relating to research, consultancy or teaching.

The evidence from the student perspective suggests that students are motivated by a range of extrinsic factors, such as differentiating themselves from other candidates in the job market or seeking career advancement, and intrinsic factors, such as achieving personal satisfaction in acquiring a doctoral level qualification, or contributing to academic knowledge or professional practice (Scott et al., 2004). Wellington and Sikes' small scale study of the motivational factors for a group of Doctor of Education students found that there was a tendency to privilege the personal and social factors. They note:

> ... even if someone states that they are doing the course for promotion or in order to keep their job, other intrinsic motivations are also likely to be implicated, such as wanting to be seen as a good provider for one's family, pride in attaining seniority, fear of being unemployed, making others proud, and so on (2006: 732).

The marketing, structure, content and delivery of these programmes do, however, have some interesting differences. Whilst the Portsmouth and Sheffield Hallam awards have generic

titles and seek to recruit from across the Criminal Justice Sector, the other two awards are targeted at more specialist groups of criminal justice professionals in policing, community safety (London Metropolitan) and youth justice (Bedfordshire). The Youth Justice award is the only one of the four programmes which has been developed explicitly with employer engagement, in this case the Nacro Youth Crime Unit. However, all four programmes articulate the benefits of the programme in terms of both professional and personal development. The suggested benefits for the student include: improved practice in the workplace; the opportunity to lead on policy developments; and being equipped for leadership. Programmes also, perhaps in anticipation of employers contributing to student funding, identify some of the wider benefits for the workplace and the profession more generally.

In terms of structure of the programmes, there are some differences in the amount of time that can be taken to complete the programme. Depending on which institution the student attends, the qualification can be achieved in a minimum of three years part-time, or up to seven years part-time. The difference in study periods may be linked to entrance qualifications; whilst some programmes require a master's degree, others suggest that substantial professional experience may be adequate. Just one institution offers a full-time option, with the assumption being in relation to other courses that students will combine professional practice with study. There are also differences in the balance between the taught and thesis elements of the course, with the taught elements taking between one and two years to complete. These elements of the programme are credit-rated (the professional doctorate comprises 540 credits) but there is diversity in the number and weighting of the different modules.

However, the most significant differences lie in the conceptual underpinnings of the programmes and the different pattern of relationships between the sector, the individual student and the profession, which are critical to the delivery of professional doctorates. Scott et al. (2004) identify three different models of integration between professional and academic knowledge: adaptation; colonisation; and reverse colonisation. In the colonisation model, academic knowledge takes precedence and professional knowledge is subsumed by the 'colonising' tendencies of the university. There are few links between the university and the student's employer and students tend to be motivated by the achievement of personal educational goals rather than by the strategic priorities of the employer. In the professional doctorate context, Scott et al., 2004 find this model to be characteristic of the EdD and the education sector. However, this model seems to capture the relationship between the police and higher education, where a decision to undertake higher education is (with the exception of recent foundation degree programmes) largely an individual one and is carried out largely autonomously from employer constraints.

The reverse colonisation model, in contrast, privileges the practice setting as the primary site of knowledge production and application. The role of the higher education institution is to provide the theoretical underpinnings for and accreditation of professional knowledge. However, the employer retains control over the identification of appropriate learning outcomes and how they might be demonstrated. According to Scott et al., universities become '... players in the game required to move much more into the territory of the practice setting and adjust their way of working so that knowledge is produced which has practical applications ...' (2004: 54). This model perhaps captures the relationship between the Probation Service and higher education described above, in which the practice setting takes priority.

The final model, the adaptation model, integrates academic and professional knowledge and has much weaker boundaries between academic and practice settings. Partnership working between the academic institution and the practice setting have developed to an extent that tensions between academic and professional modes of knowledge have been largely resolved. Scott et al. (2004) suggest engineering as a discipline where this has been largely

achieved. The foundation degrees developed by some police forces and higher education institutions may represent the best examples of this model in the Criminal Justice Sector, in attempting to integrate academic learning and professional practice. Although some of the providers have reported successful evaluations of these programmes (Blakemore and Simpson, 2010; Wood and Tong, 2009), Heslop (2010) provides a more critical perspective. He suggests that university tutors undermined the development of the professional identity of recruits through the dismissal of the value of practical policing knowledge. Drawing on Bourdieu's work on symbolic violence, he suggests the university remains a site of struggle where tutors '... devalue or minimise professional experience and subordinate it to academic perspectives' (Heslop, 2010: 11).

Of the four professional programmes currently being offered, the Youth Justice Professional Doctorate appears to have the most explicit engagement with employers, advertising itself as being developed in collaboration with the Nacro Youth Crime Unit. However, all four programmes appear to take a fairly conventional approach to the assessment of the degree, adopting models which have been developed largely in the context of the production of academic knowledge. All four assess the degree through a combination of coursework assignments and final written thesis plus viva, rather than some other form of assessment which might be more appropriate to a work-based or practice-related award. One institution does also require students to give a presentation prior to the viva to an audience of practitioners and in recognition of the need to demonstrate the ability to contribute to professional practice, but this is as a supplement to the traditional modes of assessment.

Maxwell (2003) suggests that programmes which continue to privilege academic knowledge and outputs are characteristic of 'first generation' professional doctorates, which are understandably hesitant to challenge the institutional status quo. However, as professional doctorates become more established, he suggests that 'second generation' doctorates offer a more radical potential to reshape the academic and professional partnerships. In second generation professional doctorates the 'realities of the workplace, the knowledge and the improvement of the profession and the rigour of the university are being brought together in new relationships' (Maxwell, 2003: 290). This is reflected in alternative assessment strategies more suited to the assessment of different types of knowledge generation, including, for example, a portfolio of different outputs.

Conclusion

Professional doctorates clearly have considerable potential in contributing to the personal and professional development of criminal justice professionals. The award provides an attractive alternative to a PhD for potential candidates who are seeking to become a 'researching professional' rather than a 'professional researcher'. The nature and structure of the programme may also provide a more supportive and collaborative environment for students juggling employment with part-time study. For the Criminal Justice Sector, professional doctorates provide the opportunity for research to be undertaken which will have a direct impact on professional practice and which will equip the workplace with an experienced researcher.

However, if professional doctorates are to have a future beyond a qualifications undertaken by individual enthusiasts, some additional consideration needs to be given to the nature of the enterprise in which the student is engaged and the type of knowledge that they are generating. As we have seen, in many of the educational ventures in which the higher education and Criminal Justice Sectors have been jointly engaged, the value of professional knowledge and experience has often been subsumed to academic ways of knowing, understanding and writing. The professional doctorate offers the opportunity for universities and criminal justice professionals to becomes involved in a genuinely productive dialogue about the nature of criminological knowledge and how it can best be strategically deployed in

the interests of all those working in the criminal justice arena.

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