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'Beyond Disciplinarity: Insights into the Development of Teaching Ontology, Epistemology and Philosophy on an Interdisciplinary Professional Doctorate Pathway'



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Framing Interdisciplinary Doctoral Praxis

Higher Education approaches to interdisciplinary Professional Doctoral teaching, provide both academic staff and candidates with valuable opportunities to collaboratively explore contested, positional, situated and debated assumptions about professional practice, in abstraction from wholly theoretical approaches.

Epistemic perspectives provide a substantial mechanism by which candidates can openly challenge their long held pre-suppositions and assumptions. Where critical introspection and reflection define and frame processes of reflexivity due regard for epistemic cognition is an absolute necessity both in framing prospective research design and articulating methodological approaches.

With doctoral candidates, for whom epistemology is not only a new addition to their academic lexicon but something largely unfamiliar to their professional practice, it can also provide an opportunity to adventure into centuries of philosophical literature. How the real life application of epistemology in 21st Century professional practice can be applied, as a consequence of this is often more challenging and less accessible than it ought or ever needs to be.

Providing a means of comprehensively grounding and considering the epistemological and philosophical underpinnings of approaches to research that incorporates an historical perspective but which also permit their contemporaneous understanding is imperative for doctoral educators.

Reconnecting Disciplinarity at an Epistemological Level

The aim our scholarship in the field of reconnecting disciplinary knowledge is six fold, namely to...

Frame and contextualise the epistemological and philosophical underpinnings of approaches to disciplinary based research, providing conceptual, contextual and theoretical insight into the process.

Develop an understanding of the distinctions between practice led research, practice based research and question led research, acknowledging the contextual significance of each.



Enable comprehension of the historical relationships between academic disciplines and the value of re-connecting each, at an epistemological and philosophical level.

Provide a strategic focus of descriptive, exploratory and experimental studies from practice; fostering higher order critical thinking in relation to methodological implementation in research.

Encourage deep learning processes which underpin confidence in transcending the limits of one's own discipline in order to work collaboratively with researchers in parallel or alternative fields.

Epistemic Reality



Authenticity



Researcher Positionality



Knowledge

Facilitating Doctoral Candidates in Practice

Facilitating and supporting doctoral candidates to build confidence in being able to add to new epistemological approaches entails extending their capacity to transcend disciplinarity in their address of both question led research and creative artistic praxis.

Research and scholarship at the University of Sunderland is currently ensuring that the array of methodological tools and concepts that doctoral candidates are introduced to facilitate not only the applications of them in practice but also in their understandings of where the disciplinary disconnect in the history of epistemology actually occurred.



This approach affords doctoral candidates the opportunity to delineate the historical relationships between academic disciplines that demonstrate the commonality of approaches across ontologies and epistemologies that often reveal themselves in the context of classroom delivery in the interdisciplinary professional doctorate.

Examining the epistemological disconnect at key periods of history such as the Enlightenment, has enabled the integration of several varied and disparate academic disciplines, each of which encapsulate a unique insight into the temporal and contextual significance of epistemology in practice.

Postmodern Approaches to the Transcendence of Disciplinarity

In the empirical sciences, post-modernism has ensured that processes of research design and methodology have increasingly become characterised by the systematization and logic of recognised academic disciplines. In health and medicine for example, this has been further compounded by the concept of evidence based practice and the need to legitimise, rationalise and make tangible research outputs.

This progressive delineation in academic disciplinarity has led to a progressive disconnect in the historically recognisable epistemologies that once shaped very disparate disciplines.

At an epistemological level, research in arts and social sciences has a longstanding shared origin but consequently an often disparate approach to implementation in the creation and acquisition of new knowledge. In turn this impacts on how research is interpreted, disseminated and deemed as relevant in the context of discipline specific research.

It can be debated that this conceptual dichotomy can be used as a means of widening the appreciation of discipline specific approaches to research methodology and can provide academic staff supervising postgraduate students at Doctoral and Masters level with a greater level of conceptual and theoretical underpinning,



From the forthcoming book 'Beyond Disciplinarity: Historical Evolutions of Ontology and Epistemology' (Authored and Co-edited by Prof Catherine Hayes and Dr John Fulton; Illustrated by Prof Kevin Petrie; Foreword by Dan Jones).