

Enabling intellectual leadership in precarious times: the contribution of the professional doctorate

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Abstract

This chapter explores higher education as a site of developing professional intellectual leadership. By this we mean the opportunities for professionals (e.g., law, social work, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, business) to undertake postgraduate doctoral projects. Here we focus on educational professionals who have undertaken a part-time Doctorate in Education (EdD), whereby study has been combined with full time employment. The EdD programme requires educational professionals to undertake independent primary research that is original and makes a contribution to a research field. In addition, the EdD interplays research methodology, methods and analysis with professional identities, practices and agendas, and as such it challenges educational professionals to critically reflect on their daily practices, and intellectual leadership within and beyond the organisation where they are employed. Such intellectual leadership is required to engage with the purposes of education, as well as the design of the curriculum, assessment, and pedagogical practices, and increasingly the focus is on organisational prowess within a competitive market. Undertaking doctoral work is therefore risky for educational professionals in a number of ways: first, it requires the individual to engage in learning that may challenge accepted professional strategies and tactics within the organisation; and second, such learning may make people vulnerable within performance management processes, and so their employment and livelihood could be in danger. Precarity therefore operates in two ways; it is both a productive change process through enabling the professional to think and do otherwise, but it is also deemed to be potentially inefficient because such learning interrupts the high stakes delivery agendas that educational services are required to comply with. We will therefore examine what it means for educational professionals to seek to develop intellectual leadership—at a time when it is not required to operate in the market—in two main ways: first, we will contextualise the issues through examining recent empirical research into the development of professional doctorate student identities, the impact of professional doctorates on organisational change and the imperative of critical reflexivity as a leader negotiating the roles of practitioner and researcher. Second, we will present and use a series of vignettes from our experiences as EdD graduates, where we will examine the complexity, challenges, location and practices of intellectual leadership. The analysis of these stories highlights the relational nature of intellectual leadership and the complex relationship between the roles of leader, practitioner and researcher. Our contribution by sharing these narratives is to show how doctoral study enabled us both to welcome the challenges and to embrace the risks of intellectual leadership.

Keywords: professional doctorate; EdD; vignettes; precarity

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Introduction

The professional doctorate has, in recent years, emerged in a wide range of academic disciplines including law, social work, medicine, psychology, nursing, pharmacy and business. In the UK, of all professional doctorates, it is the Doctorate in Education (EdD) that has the largest market (Burnard et al., 2018). The drivers for this growth include an increased need for professionals to be able to critically analyse their practice, in order to develop it and to address its challenges. In this chapter, we explore the professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) as a vehicle for enabling professional intellectual leadership in education. We focus on educational professionals who, while working as experienced practitioners, have undertaken a part-time EdD alongside their employment. The EdD programme requires educational professionals to undertake independent primary research that is original and that makes a contribution to a research field. In addition, the EdD interplays research methodology, methods and analysis with professional identities, practices and agendas, and as such it challenges educational professionals to critically reflect on their daily practices, and so to contribute intellectual leadership within and beyond the organisation(s) in which they are employed. Such intellectual leadership is required to engage with: the purposes of education; the design of the curriculum, assessment, and pedagogical practices; and relationships between staff. Increasingly, the focus is on organisational positioning within a competitive market, where intellectual leadership is necessary in order to distinguish between opportunities and threats.

Undertaking doctoral work is therefore risky for educational professionals in a number of ways: first, it requires the individual to engage in learning that may challenge accepted professional strategies and tactics within their organisation or their profession more generally; second, such learning may make people vulnerable within performance-management processes, and so their employment and livelihood could be in danger. Precarity therefore operates in two ways: it is a productive change process through enabling the professional to think and act otherwise; but it is also deemed to be potentially inefficient because such learning interrupts the high-stakes delivery agendas that educational services are required to comply with. We therefore examine what it means for educational professionals to seek to develop intellectual leadership at a time when it is not required to operate in the market and indeed may actually be unwelcome there. We do so in two main ways. First, we contextualise the issues through examining recent empirical research into the development of professional doctorate student identities, the impact of professional doctorates on organisational change and the imperative of critical reflexivity as a leader negotiating the roles of practitioner and researcher. Second, we present a series of vignettes from our experiences as EdD graduates. These vignettes were developed through our discussions and analysis of our experiences of the EdD, which we have previously written about (see Rayner et al., 2015). We use the vignettes as the basis upon which we examine the complexity, challenges, location and practices of intellectual leadership.

The Doctorate in Education

If the traditional PhD seeks to prepare students to become 'professional researchers', the professional doctorate prepares them to become 'researching professionals' (Lunt, 2018). The distinctiveness of the

professional doctorate then sees experienced professionals, and usually leaders in their organisations, challenged to explore the relationships between research and practice by stepping outside of their usual role, reflecting on their own practice and deepening their understanding. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education proposes that: 'in both practice-based and professional doctorate settings, the candidate's research may result directly in organisational or policy-related change' (QAA, 2020, p. 9). The United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education goes further by suggesting:

A professional doctorate is a programme of enhanced study which, whilst satisfying the University criteria for the award of a doctorate, is designed to meet the specific needs of a professional group external to the University, and which develops the capability of individuals to work within a professional context. (UKCGE, 2002, p. 62)

It is important to note here, that the outcomes for a professional doctorate are for the wider professional group as well as for the individual working within it. In the case of the Doctorate in Education, participants from across the education sector usually research within their own professional context, such as schools, colleges, universities and local authorities, while at the same time working there. This insider, outsider and 'in-between' research involves an element of risk-taking, where negotiating new ways of thinking, doing and being are unsettling and potentially risky for the professional (Burnard et al., 2018).

The delivery of the EdD programme typically differs from that of a PhD. While EdD students work with a supervisor on their research projects throughout their programme, there is also a taught element in which EdD students engage with their cohort. This taught stage usually lasts between 18 months and two years. Wellington and Sikes (2006) highlight the value that professional doctorate students tend to place on the cohort experience. Collegiality, support, friendships and social interactions are all cited as important and effective in the programme. This sharing of the journey for professionals suggests that not only is the Doctorate in Education an opportunity for professional and personal development but is also suggestive of a social perspective on learning with shared processes, languages and regulation (Wenger, 2010). These processes, languages and routines form part of the professionals' identities as researching professionals and how they understand the world around them (Rayner et al., 2015). The professional doctorate therefore facilitates collective intellectual discussions about the thinking and doing of educational leadership, thus providing opportunities for precarity and conflict to be articulated, shared and explored.

Our particular contribution in this chapter is to recognise the distinctive opportunities afforded by an EdD programme to navigate and practise the thinking and doing of professional intellectual leadership. To do this, we review and discuss empirical evidence from published literature and our own experiences. We consider first the development of professional–doctoral student identities, then the impact of professional doctorates on organisational change, and finally the imperative of critical reflexivity as a leader, negotiating the roles of practitioner and researcher. We argue that the EdD extends learning and understanding beyond the functionality of leadership within a single institution, so that EdD

graduates, by developing professional identities, understandings of educational change and critical reflexivity, can theorise on purposes and practices in educational leadership. This, to us, is the essence of professional intellectual leadership.

The development of professional doctorate student identities

Each doctoral student brings past experiences with them when they start doctoral study (Paterson, 2021); EdD students bring a current professional experience with them too, often associated with a role label and an internalisation of the expectations of that role (Colbeck, 2008). This added complexity of negotiating an existing professional identity alongside a developing student identity means that EdD students' developing identity becomes a nexus of multi-membership (Wenger, 2010). During the doctorate, students must negotiate how to successfully integrate these multiple identities (Dollahide et al., 2013) and this integration of identities can be risky if it causes the student to challenge their existing professional identity. This integration of identities is far from a linear transformation, but rather a navigation of different terrains. The non-linearity of EdD student identity and its interplay with the student's professional identity may cause precarity for the student by interrupting the agenda that their professional role requires them to comply with. There is always a risk that these multiple identities may not become integrated but instead fragmented (Colbeck, 2008) and in tension with each other. Professional doctorate students are likely to examine, or at least reflect on, their own professional practice during their doctoral studies. The scrutiny of professional practice, and hence of professional identity, may be problematic (Scott et al., 2004). Whilst some professional doctorate students may overcome this tension by attempting to compartmentalise their multiple identities (Scott et al., 2004), we would argue that it is not so straightforward as this when a student's doctoral research is interlinked with their professional role. It is the relationship with professional practice, and hence with professional identity, that is a defining feature of the professional doctorate (Scott et al., 2004).

EdD students experience a significant change in their professional identity as they progress through the doctorate (Rayner et al., 2015). This can create a sense of loss as a strong professional identity is questioned (Foot et al., 2014) and as the students become leaders in their academic field and begin to question the assumptions made in their practice which may leave them feeling in a precarious position as a professional. There are moments of unravelling and moments of becoming (Fox & Allan, 2014) as students negotiate their evolving identity and reflect on existing beliefs. Yet, we argue that the critical reflection that professional doctorate students undergo is needed, now more than ever, as the educational landscape evolves.

The impact of professional doctorates on organisational change

Much published research into professional doctorates focusses on their (potential) impact on change in the organisation *in which the researcher is currently employed*. Boud et al. (2018), for example, refer to 'employee learning' and 'how (graduates') doctoral programme had changed their practice and what was the subsequent impact upon the work of their peers and workplace' (p. 916). A similarly functional approach to the evaluation of impact is noted as 'confidence to apply new knowledge to their working

practices' (Robinson, 2018, p. 98), 'capacity to promote emancipation within their work environments' (Lundgren-Resenterra & Kahn, 2019, p. 411), and 'insiders trying to look inside and make sense of their own professional workplace' (Burnard et al., 2018, p. 50). Following a systematic review of research on professional doctorates, Hawkes and Yerrabati (2018) identify a shortage of 'literature on the wider impact of professional doctorates' (p. 17). Our understanding of intellectual leadership looks beyond the limits of the organisation in which the doctoral student is employed and—if it is a different one—of the organisation that is the site of the empirical inquiry on which the doctoral project is based. We argue that the professional doctorate facilitates intellectual leadership by enabling *self-awareness*, resulting in membership of a new (and rather different) generation of scholars; *vigilance*, resulting in critical scrutiny of knowledge claims in precarious times; *trust*, resulting in credibility as a public intellectual; and *collaboration*, resulting in greater understanding of the affordances of dialogue between practice and research.

Self-awareness

The professional doctorate prioritises the notions of 'required reflection' and 'pensive professionalism' (Cunningham, 2018, p. 64), so that students' previous professional knowledge, understanding and assumptions are simultaneously an advantage and a potential hindrance. A student body that brings with it professional experience includes those with understandings and styles of educational leadership that may have been shaped by neoliberal agendas of performance measurement, corporatisation and competition. Those understandings and skills may have been effective in a market-oriented educational system, but intellectual leadership requires 'rethinking the existing social, economic and political frameworks' (Oleksiyenko & Ruan, 2019, p. 408).

Vigilance

Intellectual leadership requires thinking that goes beyond managerial competence and organisational performativity. It must recognise how power and privilege operate within organisations. This is an epistemological opportunity for the professional–doctoral researcher. Knowledge can only be generated by the acute observation and attention to detail that are required in order to conduct a robust and ethically sound empirical project (see, for example, Boyce, 2012; Costley & Armsby, 2007; Taysum, 2006). Only trustworthy research can draw attention to organisations and whole systems that are dysfunctional, ethically compromised or struggling to survive.

Trust

In a programme that places value on new empirical research, the doctoral researcher begins by identifying a situation within their domain of practice that requires investigation. For the research to have validity as a doctoral project, it must not only persuade a university supervisor that it will contribute to academic knowledge, it must also address an issue that is 'of pressing concern for peers in their professional field' (Boud et al., 2018, p. 920). Therefore, the professional doctorate challenges the assumption (see, for example, Malfroy, 2004) that 'the university remains the central pivot for knowledge production and dissemination, whereas the profession and the workplace are perceived as mere

vehicles for such actions' (Lundgren-Resenterra & Kahn, 2019, p. 408). The knowledge resulting from a professional doctorate must have credibility for the profession as well as for the academy.

Collaboration

The professional doctorate requires the individual to work in four spaces: the profession, the workplace, the university and the personal (Pratt et al., 2015). The resulting transdisciplinary work promotes dialogue between those who inhabit those spaces: the researcher, the research participants, other professionals, the university tutors and supervisors. Most importantly, it subjects discourses and assumptions established in those spaces to scrutiny, recognising consensus while exposing tensions and misunderstandings. Intellectual leadership may not be a solitary activity, but may be 'formed by collaborative influence-makers' who can 'synergise ideas and resources across institutions to solve problems or reshape societies' (Oleksiyenko & Ruan, 2019, p. 407).

Critical reflexivity as a leader negotiating the roles of practitioner and researcher

The professional doctorate is a lengthy and expensive academic programme, undertaken while participants are simultaneously working in professional contexts involving significant leadership and/or teaching commitments. Individuals are predominantly motivated by their own development and, either directly or indirectly, that of their practice (Fox & Slade, 2014). They renegotiate their identity within the ever-changing and precarious context of education. Their reflections and reflexivity enable insights into the development of intellectual leadership.

There are a myriad of tasks, habits and routines associated with leadership; leaders must possess the skills that enable them to operate in a complex system (Eddy & Rao, 2009): a system further complicated by engagement in research, for example when engaging in doctoral-level academic work. For researchers, reflexivity can be problematic as by its very nature it causes individuals to challenge existing taken-for-granted assumptions, which may result in feelings of inadequacy and discomfort (Finlay, 2002). As well as working in the liminal spaces which are inevitable as doctoral students develop their contributions to knowledge, leaders additionally need to critically reflect on their practice and the practice within the educational setting within which their practice is situated. If the reflexive work of the professional doctorate causes them to critically reflect in a way which is not aligned with that of their educational context there will be resulting tensions. As both practitioner and researcher, and perhaps with little integration between these two identities, the leader must learn how to negotiate these tensions. The critical reflexivity that the leader undertakes as part of the doctoral research process might cause that leader to break, or wish to break, from the habits and routines that are associated with their leadership; this can be a risk for the leader and potentially too for the educational setting.

Intellectual leaders must implement new policies and practice and be at the cutting edge of new developments in education; research is one tool that can support this. Research can help leaders to overcome challenges faced in schools but research alone is not enough (Akiva et al., 2017). There is therefore a risk in how leaders negotiate their research and translate this into their practice.

Possession of a doctorate may be an asset, distinguishing the graduate among competitors for leadership positions; in the USA, it is historically seen as preparation for educational leadership (Eddy & Rao, 2009). Whilst there is research on professional doctorates and research on educational leadership, there is a gap on the interplay between the professional doctorate and leadership. This is an area that we explore in the next section through the use of vignettes.

Professional doctorate experiences: A series of vignettes

Truly understanding the experiences of professionals who have engaged with the challenges, tensions and vulnerabilities of completing a Doctorate in Education while working in education is suggestive of an approach that is phenomenological, contextualised and open-ended. Rather than sharing snippets of experiences from interviews or research diaries as EdD students, we wanted to ‘convey the authority, wisdom, and perspective of the subjects’ (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 6) and therefore what follows is a series of vignettes. The vignettes are stories written by ourselves, as four EdD graduates that ‘ask readers to relive the experience through the writer’s... eyes’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 905). These vignettes are important in that they are written by us, professionals who have successfully completed an EdD. We were professional practitioners in education when embarking on our EdD and have continued to hold positions in education after graduation. However, our professional leadership roles before and after the EdD are very different in nature, setting, demands and—most importantly—opportunities to make intellectual contributions. We therefore use the vignettes to document the complexities, challenges, locations and practices of intellectual leadership as experienced by us.

In constructing these vignettes, narrative portraiture was used to frame the experiences, using detailed description and a rich narrative to reveal the identity and experiences of the EdD graduates (Smyth & McInerney, 2013). By using portraiture, ‘the portraitist seeks to document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience... hoping that the audience will see themselves reflected in it’ (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 13). The complexity and detail of the EdD experience as professionals is explored from a range of perspectives, examining the challenge of balancing multiple roles, the shifts in identity, the cruciality of critical reflexivity and the challenges of affecting organisational change. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the vignettes to maintain the anonymity of settings, supervisors and colleagues.

Vignette one (Sam): Balancing the roles of practitioner and researcher

I started my professional doctorate (EdD) in 2011 and completed it in 2017. I studied for the EdD part time whilst working as a full-time teacher. I had been teaching since 2006 and I had been in my current role since 2010. As a practitioner, I felt comfortable and confident in what I was doing; I was a good teacher. I saw my research as a way to build on this and further improve it. As a researcher, I was not at all confident in what I was doing. I looked to my supervisor as an all-knowing person, very much the ‘teacher’ in our supervisory relationship. Something I can reflect on now is the power relationship between myself and my supervisor. I hasten to add that my supervisor would not necessarily have seen

himself as being the teacher or holding power, but I certainly viewed the relationship in this way, perhaps due to my own professional background.

One element of my professional role was to teach lessons which aimed to prepare students for application to, and study at, elite universities. For my doctoral research, I decided to examine how these lessons met their aims. As part of my doctoral research, I used reflexivity as an insider researcher. This process of reflexivity was essential to understanding the phenomena I was investigating, but it also led to an uncomfortable tension for me as a practitioner–researcher. My research enabled me to realise that I was using my social and cultural capital to train my students to perform in admissions interviews for elite universities; this was uncomfortable for me as a practitioner, and a part of me would still try to misrecognise that I was doing this and argue that in fact I was simply developing my students into better scholars. The conversations that I had with my supervisor helped me to negotiate this tension and to come to terms with the role I was playing in reproducing social inequality. I had come into the EdD feeling confident in my practitioner role, but the more I engaged with research and the intellectual leadership of my supervisor the more challenged and threatened I felt as a practitioner. It was one thing starting the EdD and feeling unsure of myself in a research setting, as I was new to being a researcher, but the EdD thinking and supervisory meetings caused me to feel unsure of myself in my professional setting and to question the professionalism I had developed over years. As I started to become an ‘expert’, and I still use the word very reluctantly, in my research area, and thus an intellectual leader, I was very aware of the risks associated with this in my practitioner role. There was a danger that my research would undermine what I was doing through my teaching practice. There was a complex interplay between how I negotiated my practitioner role and my researcher role. I left my teaching role in 2018, a year after completing my doctorate, to take up a position in a university so that I could engage more with research activity.

Vignette two (Jo): Shifting student identity

I was a full-time primary school teacher and subject leader when I started my part-time Doctorate in Education. I had always wanted to be a teacher and aspired to move up the leadership ladder through senior leadership and into headship. However, my Masters in Education had sparked my interest in closely analysing my practice and challenging my thinking. I decided to embark on a Doctorate in Education to further my career as well as to continue engaging in learning. The headteacher of my school was supportive of my decision and, as well as writing a reference, arranged for my non-contact time to be on Fridays to ensure I could attend the six taught weekends in each of the first two years.

When I arrived at the first EdD weekend, I found myself surrounded by educational professionals in leadership roles: headteachers, Ofsted inspectors, Local-Authority Advisers as examples. As a middle leader in my school, I was daunted and somewhat intimidated by my colleagues. I wondered if I did not have enough leadership experience to engage, let alone succeed, at this level. I found the sessions challenging as they led me to question my everyday practice, my values and my assumptions about education. I was actively encouraged to trouble who I was and what I was on a regular basis. Returning

to school after the EdD weekends, it was difficult to fall back into the same teaching and subject leadership when I so often questioned my very foundations.

Fellow teachers in school also seemed to struggle with my EdD work. Some questioned why I would spend my weekend doing extra work, others voiced their opinions about the limited value of 'academic work' and one even asked why I wanted to be a doctor when I didn't deal with blood well! As a result, I kept my identity as a teacher and as an EdD student quite separate in the beginning: in the week, I would be a teacher, at the weekends, I would read, write and think like a student. This became more challenging as time moved on. The more interwoven my research became with my practice, the harder it was to keep them separate. Sometimes the language of my research crept into conversations as a practitioner in school and these were not always in alignment with the senior leadership team. In addition, the multiplicity of roles adopted meant that my identity was conflicted and continually negotiated. I was a teacher, a leader, an 'expert' in school but also a learner, a student, a novice researcher, a writer, amongst others.

Two years into my EdD, a position as a Professional Tutor at a university was advertised in English, my specialist subject. I applied and was successful in securing the post. When I told my headteacher about the job offer, she said that she was very surprised and that I was a 'dark horse'. This perhaps highlights how hard I had worked to make sure that my EdD work was not interrupting my teaching practice or disrupting the status quo. My decision to move into higher education meant that I felt I could discuss my research more openly with both members of the school staff and within my new role. It also meant that I could locate myself solely as a research student when returning to the school to collect data.

Vignette three (Chris): Learning intellectual leadership through the EdD

I started the EdD in 2011, following a thirty-year career in education in England. I had been a teacher in secondary schools and had held posts at middle- and senior-leadership level. I had also worked for a local authority as a School Improvement Partner and had been a member of national educational bodies. When I began my EdD studies, I had no aspirations to work in higher education: the EdD was a personal challenge for me as I approached—so I thought—the end of a career in education. I studied part time while an independent consultant to schools, colleges, governing bodies, local authorities and academy trusts. Although I would not have used the phrase at that time, I must have been drawing on my professional experience to provide some sort of intellectual leadership—mostly on a performative, school improvement agenda—to the professionals who engaged my services. For example, I advised school governing bodies on the performance management of head teachers, observed lessons and provided feedback on teaching, analysed pupil performance data and schools' plans to raise attainment and improve progress.

From the start of the EdD, it quickly became clear that some of the taken-for-granted concepts that underpinned my professional work—*school effectiveness, impact, progress data, attainment gaps, performance and standards, quality assurance*—were problematic and not to be taken for granted at

all. The immediate immersion into critical scholarship showed me the intellectual limitations attached to the functional quest for what works (or not) in schools. I began to question my assumptions about leadership and my understanding of equity and social justice. Within weeks of starting the EdD, I had begun to think and act differently in my work with schools. I relished the difference and felt that it strengthened my relationship with the teachers with whom I worked. On the other hand, colleagues in similar roles—I was doing commissioned school-improvement work as part of a local-authority team—appeared sceptical about the value of doctoral study. Nevertheless, I was proud to be continually learning and convinced that it was of both professional and personal benefit.

The EdD gave me the opportunity to develop a critical study of systemic reform: to problematise the system in which I had thrived as a professional and that had provided me with a living. Blair's 'Education, Education, Education' speech (Blair, 2001) had led to the launch of several high-cost policy initiatives in England, including Excellence in Cities, Education Action Zones, the Leading-Edge Partnership programme, Specialist Schools, City Challenge, and the Academies Programme. I had held leading roles with all of them; now I had the opportunity to study and critique their intellectual foundation.

I welcomed that opportunity and wasn't too surprised that the EdD changed me as a person; after all, the EdD tutors warned us to expect that. What took me completely by surprise was my late-career move to employment in higher education in a 'teaching and scholarship' capacity, in which I continue to be involved in research projects, but also have teaching and management responsibilities. The combination of professional and academic experience fostered by the EdD enables me, I believe, to provide intellectual leadership to students at undergraduate and postgraduate level—also, to colleagues at an earlier stage in their academic careers.

Vignette four (Alex): Identity and action

As a professional educator, senior leader and teacher educator, I pretty much knew the what and how of my day job, but I often had an unclear—or no—understanding of the why. Although I'd worked in Higher Education for many years, I'd never for a second thought that I would ever be 'Dr Alex'. I didn't want to be; at that time it seemed to me that a doctorate would be irrelevant; all the people I knew who were academic doctors had PhDs; they were experts in obscure and opaque areas, and much cleverer than me, well-read, with quicksilver minds. In 2011 I hadn't heard of a 'professional doctorate', but as I was looking for ways to develop my career further, I came across the notion of a 'profdoc', a qualification that was at doctoral level but with a focus on a particular professional context and set of personal professional interests. For me, that was an EdD, a Doctorate in Education. At the time I was working for myself as an educational consultant and as an associate lecturer at a number of universities; in my spare time I was examining and contributing to textbooks. It was a varied portfolio, and I was increasingly aware that I needed to develop my educational leadership in a coherent way that was rooted in theory. So the EdD sounded perfect and I signed up.

I'd always been focussed on social justice as a guiding principle for my work; that was born out of my upbringing in a liberal household where my parents had brought me up to 'do any job, as long as it's socially useful'. That's really why I was a teacher. I wanted to do more thinking about social justice and education. I was thrilled that in the first year of the EdD I met Mike Apple, John Bascom Professor of Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. I listened to him talking about social justice and about some of the key challenges facing education, including social and economic inequality, political instability, and other existential threats like climate change (and now, of course, the impact of a global pandemic). And I heard Mike say this 'A position on the balcony may provide a comfortable seat to watch the fray, but answers can best be found by joining in the creative and determined efforts of building a counter-public. There is educational work to be done' (2013, p. 166).

Mike changed my professional thinking and so my professional life; I was able to connect the how and what of my professional beings and doings to the why, and to engage in thinking about critical pedagogy for the first time. Since then, I have tried not to sit on the balcony, but to develop my intellectual leadership in ways that mean I engage with the 'why' as well as the 'how' and the 'what'. The thinking I have engaged with as a result of my EdD has been the catalyst for a big change in my professional life; I am now a reader in education at a large UK university, and I hope I encourage other educators to join me in the important educational work that needs doing.

Discussion

In these vignettes, we have illustrated the complexity, challenges, location and practices of professional intellectual leadership, illuminated by the learning from our studies and our interactions with supervisors and peers during the EdD programme. While each of our stories provides individual insights into the perspectives and precarity that we continue to experience, there are some commonalities between our experiences that we examine by employing the principles of a theory-driven, deductive thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Hayes, 1997). We view those experiences through the three lenses identified earlier: the development of professional-doctoral student identities, the impact of professional doctorates on organisational change, and the imperative of critical reflexivity as a leader negotiating the roles of practitioner and researcher. This approach provides 'a detailed analysis of some aspect of the data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84) and enables us to hone in on particular themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012) that are pertinent to professional intellectual leadership. We will consider each of the themes in turn and discuss how the data in the vignettes illuminate and speak to the theoretical ideas presented earlier.

The development of professional doctorate identities

All four of us have undergone a shift towards being an intellectual leader in our research area, realised through a mixture of research and teaching activities. This brings with it a risk of 'challenging accepted practices', a theme that is common to all of us. Sam and Jo became uncomfortable in their professional roles, sensing a danger that their research might undermine their day-to-day professional

responsibilities or their relationships with work colleagues. Alex expresses this rather differently, metaphorically moving from a comfortable position 'on the balcony' to a closer, yet critical, relationship with practice and practitioners. Similarly, Chris found that the process of doctoral study, far from distancing him from the realities of practice, provided the intellectual tools to question certain concepts that had been taken for granted in his previous professional work. We all valued the support of our peers, not only for coping with the demands of assignment deadlines and workload, but also as we managed the challenges of questioning the status quo and understanding our intellectual transformation. Peer support provided empathy that exceeded anything that our work colleagues, family or friends could offer.

Impact on organisational change

Our impact on change in our own organisations included: questioning matters of privilege and organisational culture (Sam); requiring professional colleagues to rethink their assumptions about the value of 'academic work' (Jo); raising doubts about national policy rationales and discourses (Chris); developing a stronger theoretical grounding for social-justice activism (Alex); and being a role model of the practitioner-as-student (all of us). We have argued in this chapter that such impacts constitute intellectual leadership, where the academic qualification of a doctorate is considerably enhanced by our credibility as professionals whose experience and expertise bring us close to the site of our empirical work. Being able to establish a trusting relationship, both with the leaders of our organisations and with our research participants, enabled us to generate richer data than might have been possible for researchers on a more conventional doctoral programme. We have been able to use the data generated in our four projects to create new knowledge embedded in practice, and to pose critical questions about the ambivalences and contradictions in an educational world that is troubled by ideological, political and operational tensions.

Critical reflexivity as a leader

Here, we ask ourselves how we 'have come to think and write and practise in a particular way, at that time and in that space' (Gunter, 2002, p. 7). It may be a coincidence that, for all of us, 'that space' is higher education in England, where we are all now employed in universities, whereas at the start of the EdD, three of us worked in or with the school sector. Working with experienced professionals and scholars, treating and addressing each other as colleagues, reflecting on practice and emerging theories, has demonstrated to us that our projects would not have developed as they did, nor had the impact that they had, were they not planned and realised within the ethos and framework of a professional doctorate. We remain professional practitioners with particular responsibility for the leadership of teaching and learning; at the same time, we are researching professionals who seek to understand and problematise the educational worlds in which we work.

The production of the vignettes for this paper shows in itself that we are critical thinkers, aware of our own positionality and of our own development as leaders throughout the process of achieving doctorates. Mackay and Tymon (2013) describe critical reflexivity as the 'conscious review of an

individual's subjective position in their research' (p. 644). It is clear that this reviewing process is something that all four of us undertook, both formally through the process of engaging with the formative assessments and work of the professional doctorate, but also more informally in our private thinking. Our practice of engaging in critical reflexivity allowed for valuable reflection on areas where we had past experiences that led to having well-entrenched and 'taken for granted' assumptions, and to begin to question hegemonic thinking and practices. Nonetheless, critically examining our practices and thinking was precarious and uncomfortable; and it required effort and perseverance. For example, Sam talks about the tension she experienced as a practitioner-researcher, as she negotiated the process of 'train[ing] my students to perform in admissions interviews for elite universities'. The use of this language by Sam as she discusses her discomfort is not accidental; it reflects the hegemonic discourses of performativity that are embedded in aspects of our education system (Ball, 2003). Jo too talks about how she found the taught EdD sessions 'troubling' in terms of her thinking about education and emphasises the dissonance between her developing thinking about leadership and the lived realities of enactment of her leadership back in school 'when she often questioned her very foundations'. Alex explains how the doctorate has enabled her to engage with thinking critically about the 'why' as well as the 'how' and the 'what'.

It is interesting that the critical reflexivity in which all of us engaged appears to be significant in leading us to move into roles as academics and intellectual leaders in the university system in England and away from roles in schools and colleges. Chris in particular explicitly refers to the importance of the EdD in facilitating him being able to provide intellectual leadership to his students, who are also often education practitioners in schools, as well as to early career academics. Interestingly, each of us found a professional space in higher education, moving away from schools and from advisory work as we completed our doctorates. Perhaps that reflected a move from being a 'researching professional' to that of being, at least in part a 'professional researcher'. The precarious leadership roles and work that we were engaging in in our previous careers was something we were perhaps ready to leave behind for the more secure spaces of HE where we could engage in critical debate and intellectual leadership without encountering the hostility and scepticism we had done previously. The imperative of critical reflexivity in negotiating the roles of practitioner and researcher, and the spaces which the lived realities of those roles occupy, in what are precarious times both for individuals and for the education system, are fundamental to the development of intellectual leadership; but this is a risky and uncomfortable process.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored the contribution of the professional doctorate, and more specifically the EdD, to professional intellectual leadership. Through our examination of recent empirical research, our vignettes and our discussions, we have highlighted the complexity, precarity and opportunities of operating in the spaces between professional practitioner and researcher. The vignettes have provided a real insight into the ways in which professional intellectual leadership is questioned, challenged and developed. These are precarious times, both for individuals and for the education system, in which

critical reflexivity is imperative for negotiating the interconnected roles of practitioner and researcher. However, the concept of precarity is a complex one. The term is often used in a functional sense that is negative: people are in a precarious position in education because of the risk of losing their job as a consequence of management decisions made to satisfy the market, for example by short-term contracts or reactions to performance data. However, the EdD deliberately causes *intellectual and emotional* precarity, and this is a positive thing, because it leads to the sort of critical scholarship that we have evidenced in our doctoral projects and our vignettes in this chapter. The value of the EdD in providing a supportive, reflective and collegial environment in which to explore such precarities is, we argue, significant to the development of professional intellectual leaders and is important if we are to affect change more widely in education.

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