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## The Impact of Doctoral Studies on Personal and Professional Lives

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### Abstract

*This research explores the impact of studying for the Doctorate of Education, (EdD) on the professional and personal lives of people undertaking this level of study. It builds on previous research in this area that identified tensions in the impact of professional doctorates (Burgess et al., 2011, Wellington and Sikes, 2006). A small case study approach was taken, using questionnaires and detailed semi-structured interviews to ascertain the views of the doctoral students. A unique approach to data analysis was taken using a modified version of Guskey's model for teacher development, which provided a lens through which to focus the data. Findings indicate a significant impact on both professional and personal lives of the participants, evidenced in a variety of ways, and that the boundaries between professional and personal impact are often blurred. The findings contribute to a largely under-developed area of research, and indicate that further work is required to better prepare students for study at this level.*

### Introduction

This research investigates the impact on professional and personal lives of participants undertaking a doctorate in education (EdD). It builds on earlier research in this area which identifies tension in the purpose and impact of professional doctorates (Burgess et al., 2011, Wellington and Sikes, 2006) and looks at ways in which we might address this for future participants at this level. Using an adapted form of Guskey's model for teacher development and change, (2002) as a lens through which to analyse the impact of studying at this level, the paper focusses on the deep learning experience of participants, and explores how their personal and professional lives have been affected by their decision to undertake doctoral level study.

This study focusses on the opinions and perspectives of the participants on the EdD at a university in the north of England, and explores their thoughts and ideas concerning the benefits and issues of studying at this level. Building on research previously conducted in this field on the nature of doctorates and the impact they have, (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016, Wellington, 2013) I have adapted Guskey's model of teacher development and change, to create a lens through which to focus the data (Guskey, 2002). See Figure 1.

Evidence is presented that shows how the EdD has impacted the participants in terms of their professional practice, affecting them both as teachers and as learners. Evidence is also presented which illustrates how the EdD has impacted their personal lives in terms of changes to their own beliefs and attitudes, and shows how there is some blurring of the boundaries of the impact between the professional and the personal. The paper also suggests ways forward for this type of research if we are to better prepare students for this level of study.

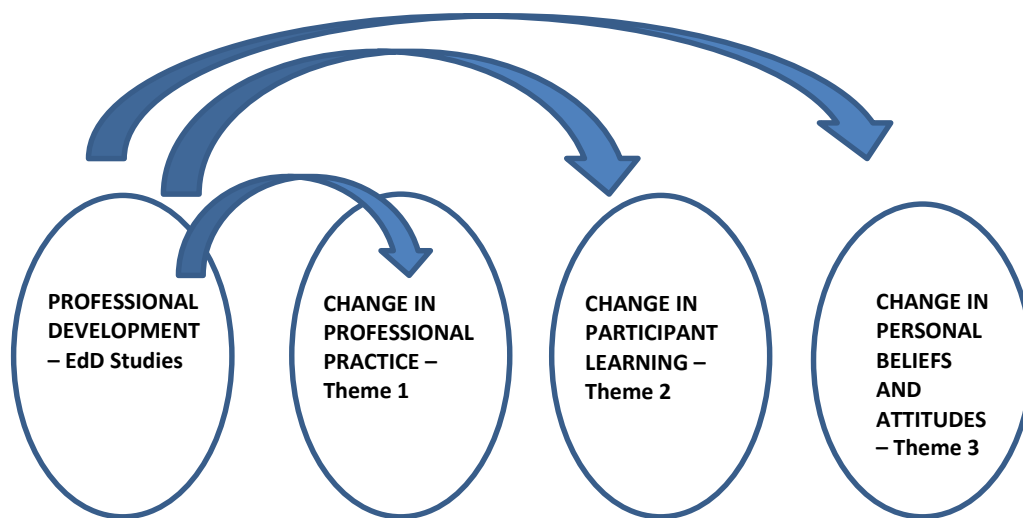
### **Theoretical Framework**

Three main themes emerged from the findings of Burgess and Wellington (2010), when they explored the impact of doctorates with students. There was an impact on professional careers, an impact on personal lives which was divided into the way students themselves developed as learners, and also in the way they were viewed by their colleagues, and thirdly, an impact on discourse (Wellington, 2013). For many doctoral students, their personal development was one of the major impacts of their doctoral journey (Burgess et al., 2011) and this is something that is echoed in the findings from this research.

In his research on teacher development, Guskey outlined three major goals of professional development for teachers as being those of change in classroom practice, change in attitude and beliefs, and change in student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2002). In the adapted model used here, change in student learning outcomes were replaced with change in participant learning. This is not simply a case of semantics. In terms of this research, Guskey's original model has its limitations because it focusses on the relationship between teaching and pupil impact that results in change in student learning outcomes. Arguably, the adapted model used in this study, which focusses on the impact on the participant through a process of deep learning at doctoral level, has more applicability to the research here. The impact here is not only on professional practice and on personal beliefs and attitudes, but also on how the participants themselves learned from studying at this level. Guskey's adapted model (Figure 1) provides a useful way to explore the boundaries between the themes and, as the findings will show, it helps us to appreciate how these boundaries can be blurred.

As a result of combining a consideration of the initial findings of Burgess and Wellington (2010) with Guskey's ideas for teacher development, the adapted model was constructed to

provide a different overarching framework against which to analyse the data for this study (Figure 1). This provides a lens through which to focus data analysis. In it, the following three themes for participant development are proposed; change in professional practice, (how participants change the way they go about their professional roles) change in participant learning (how they themselves change as students) and change in attitude and beliefs (how participants change on a personal level).



**Figure 1: An adapted model for teacher change**

Thus, this adapted model provides a useful tool with which to focus the findings exploring the impact of the EdD. Unlike Guskey's model, however, which arguably presupposes a linear movement from left to right in terms of impact, it is contended that these changes are not in fact sequential or linear, and can occur at different rates for different participants, as the data will show. The changes are also closely interwoven, and not always clearly distinct, as described by Burgess and Wellington (2010). This blurring particularly applies to themes two and three, (Wellington, 2013) and is explored further in the findings.

### **Context**

In his work on scholarship, Boyer identified a paradigm for it that comprised four interlocking parts, that of discovery, integration, application and teaching (Boyer, 1992). The scholarship of teaching is defined as the ability to inspire future scholars in the classroom. The discovery of knowledge is only the beginning of the process, from here it has to be

applied and integrated, and finally to be presented to others, that is, to be taught. Research on doctoral education in America, specifically focussing on the role of graduate education in preparing future institutional members for engagement in such scholarship, has highlighted the desire of students to have an impact on the students they themselves teach (Austin and McDaniels, 2006). Their research determined that to develop a scholarly identity, doctoral students must learn the criteria associated with each domain of scholarship, and have a passion for their research to give it meaning throughout their career. More recent enquiry in this area has used the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) to identify the characteristics of researchers (Vitae, 2011) locating them within four scholarship domains encompassing knowledge and intellectual abilities, personal effectiveness, research governance and organisation and engagement and influence and impact (Bray and Boon, 2011).

Earlier research on the impact of the EdD in the UK has found that the doctorate has had influence and impact (albeit sometimes obliquely) on the professional attitude, disposition and confidence on the students undertaking it (Scott et al., 2004). This is indeed borne out by the findings of this study, which indicate that there may even be a blurring of the boundaries between impact on the professional and personal lives of the participants. As identified by Wellington, (2013) there is a need for further research in this area, very few studies having been conducted on the impact and influence of the doctorate on the people who undertake this level of study. In a recent report for the Higher Education Funding Council for the UK, (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016) it was identified that there is little robust evidence of impact on professional practice and changes in the workplace, and that more research could be done to explore these impacts. Other recent research examined how information is used both by prospective higher education (HE) students and in more general terms, when making decisions about study at this level. Such decisions were deemed to be post-hoc rationalisations, because, without sufficient self-reflection, the individuals themselves may not be very reliable informants about why they adopted certain information search behaviours or made certain choices (Diamond et al., 2014). This study aims to build on this body of knowledge, albeit, with a small-scale study, to determine how we might proceed to use the findings to expand our understanding of the experience of doctoral students.

Relatively few studies have explored the role of the doctorate in forming active researchers with the skills and knowledge, and indeed the motivation, to continue with their research on completion of their doctorate (Sinclair et al., 2014). The research conducted here attempts to address this in part by exploring participants' perceptions of themselves as researchers, as is drawn out in the findings. For many, the identity of 'researcher' will be a passing one only, a part of what they do, but not who they are (Golde and Walker, 2006). This resonates clearly with the findings here, which determined that for the participants in this study, being a researcher was not something that they identified with in a specific way – in terms of a change of their perceived role within their institution, rather, it was something that they did for the purpose of the EdD.

Doctoral education in the UK embraces both independent self-directed study and collective shared learning. EdD students differ from the more traditional PhD students in Education in their choice of method for study. The latter choosing to study more as an individual, under the guidance of one, possibly two tutors, attending some initial research methods training with others, but mostly studying alone. The extent to which they integrate or remain isolated depends on the character of the individual, and the nature of the doctorate itself, that is, how it is delivered. EdD students in the UK, make a positive choice to study in a cohort for the first two years of the course, and only then follow the more traditional PhD type route as outlined here. Recent research showed that ties between students served multiple purposes. Generally students were connected to others studying in the same mode and who entered at the same time (Pilbeam and Denyer, 2009).

A further issue for professional doctoral students in education, such as EdDs, is that there is no common core of knowledge upon entry to the programme, cohorts being varied in experience and qualifications, and motivated by various reasons. This also applies to the more traditional Education PhDs and to some management PhDs. For research students like these, many do not specifically want to be researchers, but may see the doctorate as a necessary qualification for further advancement of their careers – research being personally important but not their prime orientation (Light et al., 2009). For such students, blending practical knowledge with both implicit and grand theories helps them to develop their understanding of their own contexts, and the actions they need to ensure student learning, teacher efficacy and organisational development (Zambo, 2014).

In America and the UK, EdD candidates have often worked as teachers before pursuing the doctorate and so the period of study often comes in mid-career, and students are thus older than in other fields (Golde and Walker, 2006). In both countries, students also tend to continue to work while studying, something that can impact their ability to cope with the demands of the course. This was borne out in this study, where work/life balance (WLB) was an issue and a tension for many.

Research has also shown that the teaching profession, workplace and university are feebly linked in relation to the development of the EdD. This is possibly due to the epistemological fragmentation of the EdD, which ranges from technical rationality as the preferred mode of knowledge to more dispositional and critical forms of knowledge (Scott et al., 2009). As this study will show, the main reason for studying at this level among the cohort was more for individual personal and intellectual development than for reshaping the workplace. The benefits of the EdD are thus being seen as of more advantage to the individual than their organisation. Thus the EdD is limited in the claims it can make in respect of institutional and professional change (Scott et al., 2009).

The aim of this research then, is to use an innovative method for data analysis to explore how far the EdD affects the professional and personal lives of students. The original contribution of the research lies in the unique method of data analysis used as a lens through which to examine the findings. It also seeks to contribute to a growing body of knowledge in this area that explores our understanding of the impact of study at this level on the people who undertake it.

## **Methodology and Methods**

### ***Methodology***

This research uses a multi-method, (Gorard, 2004) mainly qualitative, small case study, approach. The case study approach was particularly suitable because of the specificity of the contexts, (Hammerness and Matsko, 2013). Analysis of the data in this research adapted a constructivist grounded theory approach which treats grounded theoretical approaches with flexibility (Charmaz, 2011). Grounded theory is a 'systematic method of analysing and collecting data to develop middle-range theories...a comparative, iterative and interactive method' (Charmaz, 2012, p2). In this study, the grounded theory approach was used so that

a more flexible, constructivist dimension could be utilised to collect and analyse the data. It also provided an initial analysis, a stepping board from which the adapted Guskey model could then be used as a lens to further examine the data.

Scott et al (2004) showed that depending on where a student is at any one time in their life, there is a different effect on what the doctorate means to them. Hence the need to sample from a range of participants in this study to give a range of experiences, depending on the time on the course and where they were in their lives as they embarked on it. The participants in this research were selected on the basis of opportunity (Robson, 1993) by virtue of enrolling on the EdD. As an opportunity sample, there is only limited scope to generalise from this study, although the insights it offers are useful in a wider context for participants at this level. The author knew of the participants but was not in a tutor/participant relationship with them. The need to retain an impartial role was observed, to avoid influencing participants in their responses (Burgess et al., 2011). The relatively small sample size meant that in-depth context rich data could be obtained.

### ***Methods***

Qualitative (and some limited quantitative) data were collected through the survey conducted with the participants. Data from the surveys was analysed as they came in, to provide sensitising concepts (van den Hoonaard, 1997) that could be used in the subsequent interviews, in line with the recommended methodology provided by constructivist grounded theory approaches (Charmaz, 2012). Coding the data was a seamless continuous, iterative, process by which the researcher interacted with the data to determine emerging patterns and progress the investigation in a logical manner (Holton, 2007) through analysing the data in a more abstract way, eventually arriving at the word (label) that best described what the data revealed (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). A sensitising concept is a construct derived from analysis of the participant's perspective, guiding the researcher to further avenues of investigation (van den Hoonaard, 1997). Data from the survey served as a foundation for the collection of data in subsequent interviews (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In this study, the author was thus able to narrow the focus of the exploration for subsequent data collection via interviews, and pursue other avenues of enquiry as appropriate to address the original research questions more fully.



The survey consisted of an initial section to determine the name, subject area, gender, professional role and time on the course of each participant. In addition, participants were able to put their email address on the form if they were happy to participate in subsequent interviews. The survey was divided into two parts, the first asked a series of open questions relating to the participants' experience on the EdD as a professional, exploring how it had impacted on their role, what they have implemented at work because of it, and how it has impacted on their students. In part two, there was a series of open questions relating to the participants' experience on the EdD as a person, investigating how the EdD had impacted on their personal life, their work/life balance (WLB) and if they felt it was worth it, and if they would do it again.

A detailed survey was conducted with 18 participants, focussing on the professional and personal impact of their studies at doctoral level. Of the 18 participants, three were male, aged between 47 and 56, and 15 were female, aged between 28 and 57, from a variety of subject areas within the university, including education, marketing and business, health and social sciences and the built environment (see Table 1).

Participant	Age	Gender	Time on Course	Role
1	38	Female	2 years	Senior Lecturer Education
2	48	Female	4 months	E-learning co-ordinator
3	40	Female	4 months	Therapist Autism
4	50	Female	4 months	Course Leader Health Studies
5	57	Female	4 months	Head of Area Built Environment
6	50	Female	4 months	Course Leader Psychology
7	46	Female	2 years	Senior Lecturer Education
8	51	Female	4 years	Principal Lecturer Education
9	50	Female	4 years	Principal Lecturer Health Studies
10	45	Female	2 years	Senior Lecturer Business
11	55	Male	4 years	Principal Lecturer Business
12	36	Female	4 months	Therapist Autism
13	56	Male	4 months	Senior Lecturer Built Environment
14	47	Male	4 months	Group Leader Built Environment
15	51	Female	4 months	Academic Manager Nursing
16	28	Female	4 months	Lecturer Education
17	45	Female	4 months	Senior Lecturer Health Studies
18	51	Female	4 months	Lecturer Education

**Table 1: Participant Data**

Following coding of this data to derive sensitising concepts from which to inform the subsequent data collection, a number of telephone interviews were conducted with a range of participants who had indicated that they would be open to telephone interviews

arranged at a negotiated date and time. Participants were made aware that they could stop the interview at any time, or withdraw from the process if they wished to do so. However, as other studies have found, (Burgess and Wellington, 2010) participants may have found the interview process cathartic – an opportunity to air their feelings about the course and their experiences of it.

All participants were informed at the start of the study about the nature of the research, and all gave informed consent for the research. Participant names have been changed to codes (where P = participant followed by a number) to protect their identity. Throughout the research, the author was mindful of possible ethical issues arising from the dual role as moderator/researcher and ensured that participants knew they had a right to withdraw from the research as it progressed.

Interviews were conducted with three participants who had been on the course for between several months and several years, to investigate some of the issues brought to light in the surveys. Three semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted for this research, each lasting between 30-40 minutes, and each included the opportunity for informed consent and withdrawal from the process if required. Interview questions arising from coding of the survey data, centred on issues of impact on different types of colleagues, and support in the workplace, and also how they might be sharing any changes made therein. Participants were asked about changes they might make to the programme, and whether or not they wanted to add to their previous comments, and how the EdD had affected their personal lives.

Every effort was made to remain impartial in asking the questions to enable the participants to respond from their own experiences, and although the author was not a personal tutor for any of the participants, there was the potential for agency to have affected the results. As such, the author was very careful to remain distant from the participants so as to keep the relationship on a researcher level rather than as a known tutor who might be involved in their work. Participants were enthusiastic in telling their stories and may indeed have found it a liberating experience, as other studies have shown, (Burgess and Wellington, 2010) one that enabled them to reflect on the impact of their doctoral studies to date.

## **Analysis**

Analysis of the survey data was undertaken using the model illustrated in Figure 1 as a lens through which to derive codes (sensitising concepts) that were then used to focus the interview questions as described earlier. The adapted model was then used to analyse the data further, and this is presented in terms of the themes of the model; theme one: changes in professional practice, theme two: changes in participant learning, and theme three: change in personal beliefs and attitudes. These themes are also linked, where possible, to the key variables of the participant cohort in terms of age, gender, and time on the course. Using this adapted model as a basis for analysis and interpretation, the findings of the study are presented in terms of the evidence from the participants with respect to these themes, and the blurring of the boundaries between them.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Evidence from this study indicates that the adapted model for teacher change was useful as a framework for the analysis of the issues and tensions of the impact of the EdD on the personal and professional lives of participants. Data suggests that participants did indeed experience an impact on their own practice, which in turn impacted on their own learning and teaching. Findings also indicated that the EdD had a significant effect on their personal lives, the way they thought about themselves, their attitudes and beliefs, and on the way it changed them as learners. This is examined in detail in the following sections using the participants' own voices to illustrate the points being made.

### **Impact on Professional Life: Changes in Professional Practice**

The impact on professional life for participants in this study was evidenced in a number of different ways. Some participants reported an impact on their own students, though for many this was too early to tell, as they had only been on the course for a few months (around two thirds of participants had been on the course for four months - see Table 1). Of the ones who had only been on the course for a short time, several reported, however, about how the EdD had impacted on their colleagues in terms of sharing ideas and experiences:

*'I am lucky, in the office I have 2 colleagues who are also on the EdD. We have lots of chats about it through the time of the taught sessions. [...] We use each other as a sounding board. [...] It has changed the conversations we have in the office'.*

(Interviewee 3)

Around a third of participants who had been on the course for two to four years also described a change to themselves as teachers, by better adapting to students' needs. They talked about a change to the way others viewed them, because of their studies - facilitating discussions in the work place. As Guskey found, teacher development includes changes to professional practice as was indicated here. This resonates with themes one and two of the adapted model (Figure 1) with changes to their own learning that has impacted on their professional practice, enabling them to engage in professional discussions that they might otherwise not have done. For example, from the survey data:

*'I suspect my judgement with regard to Master's level work is now given more credence by the team I work with' (P7)*

A number of participants who had been on the course for only a few months, said that they felt that this type of impact would be more applicable in the future, as they passed on their newly acquired knowledge and skills, and continued to do so within their respective departments. They commented that they would grow and develop a lot more over the next few years as they continued their studies. The changes in the way participants developed as teachers, as described above, also echoes the work of Austin and McDaniels (2006) who determined that doctoral students had a desire to have an impact on the students they themselves taught.

Around a fifth of the participants who had been on the course for more than two years, felt that their own increase in self-confidence was being transmitted to their participants as they themselves had developed a stronger academic voice. This links to theme three of the model, reflecting, as it does, changes in personal attitude through an increase in self-confidence – as Scott et al (2004) also determined in their research. As one participant who had been on the course for four years said in the survey:

*'I've read a lot more, more books and articles and philosophy and sociology, and I've brought this to tutorials (with my own participants) and I hope it has had an effect on my participants'* (Interviewee 2)

This resonates with Zambo's research (2014) on educational doctorate students in America, showing that students engage with theory, reading for their subject, indeed, using the wisdom of their field to help them progress. It also relates to the work on scholarship as purported by Austin and McDaniels (2006) and indicates that through their studies at this level, participants are developing as scholars, that can then pass their knowledge on to their own students. This demonstrates how participants develop as learners through the doctoral journey by engaging more closely with their field (theme two) and disseminating their new found knowledge to their own students through development of their professional practice as purported by Guskey (2002). Again, the boundaries are arguably blurred, with their personal development as learners also impacting their professional development as teachers.

While Butcher and Sieminski (2007) argue for there to be an impact at departmental and institutional level, the data in this study does not support this. Comments from participants on why this might be the case, centre on the short time they had been on the course, and a lack of formal support for change within their areas of work. While some providers feel that it is possible to identify a body of specialised knowledge which can then be used to reshape the workplace (Scott et al., 2009), this was not borne out in this study, with participants feeling that it was too early to tell, or feeling that there was little impact in terms of reshaping the workplace as the findings show. As other research has shown, this study also illustrates that there has not been enough in-depth examination of the impact of the EdD on stakeholders or on the wider context to which participants move after its completion (Wellington, 2013).

### **Impact on Professional Life: Motivations and Identity Formation**

The findings also support the work of previous researchers who found that while students see the doctorate as a necessary qualification for further advancement of their careers – research being personally important but not their prime orientation, they do not necessarily want to be identified as researchers alone (Light et al., 2009). The identity of 'researcher'

was a passing one only, fluid, almost, a part of what they do while they are on the EdD, but not who they are (Golde and Walker, 2006). In terms of the model used, this might indicate that participants did not actually change their personal beliefs and attitudes (theme three) when it came to their self-identity as researchers – the latter being something that they did while on the course, not something that changed into being, as it were.

In terms of a change of their perceived role within their institution, the findings indicate that for these participants at least, the EdD was a way of doing research, not a way of becoming a permanent researcher. This is an area for further study, as identified by Sinclair et al (2014) who determined that active researchers are more likely to succeed and flourish within an active research economy if their doctoral experience is conducive to this.

In terms of the impact on their role as it feeds into the wider professional and academic community, over two-thirds of participants (regardless of time spent on the course) said that they had had an impact, but also reported conflict in terms of the balance between professional and personal lives. As one who had been on the course for over two years said:

*'[...] I love it on days when I have time on it but not when I haven't time and I know I have to do it. I feel pulled by family pressures. It's increasingly difficult to juggle things'. (Interviewee 3)*

This is discussed in more detail in the next section.

A number of participants (a third all of who had been on the course for two to four years) reported a change in their responsibilities within the organisation to reflect their developing knowledge acquired through their EdD studies. More than three-quarters of those who had been on the course for four months reported a change in their role rather than their responsibilities, commenting on how it had positively affected the way they approached their practice. This is arguably a reflection of theme one of the model, as identified by Guskey (2002) in his research, (Figure 1) whereby the impact of the EdD leads to changes in professional practice, as a result of a change in role. For one participant, for example, this meant that they were now responsible for giving presentations at research conferences which reflected their studies and work on the EdD. In some cases, this can also include changes to roles within the organisation, and not just how they change as teachers as

described above. This is also borne out in other studies where the impact on professional lives has been a positive one, often leading to career progression (Wellington, 2013, Wellington and Sikes, 2006).

In terms of professional practice, for many, independent of their time on the course, the wider community was perceived to be the one involving their own students rather than institutional colleagues. They commented on the impact they felt the EdD was having with them, particularly with respect to improved research skills that supported their own teaching. This relates to theme two, the adapted (unique) part of the model that enables an exploration of how participants own learning has changed because of their doctoral studies. Some, non-UK participants who had been on the course for more than two years, also reported that they had been encouraged to set up specialist groups (SIGs) by their institutions, for their area of work:

*'It is at this SIG that we have discussed postmodernism and marketing. I have agreed with colleagues that we need to spend more time discussing the underpinning philosophies of some of the areas that we teach and we hope to use the SIG as a forum for this' (P10)*

This kind of practice, that works well in other countries, as Kennedy (2014) points out, is something that is useful to be aware of, as long as we are mindful that one size does not fit all, as it were. There is thus evidence to support the notion that the EdD does indeed have an impact on the professional lives of its participants, albeit in varying ways and to varying degrees.

### **Impact on Personal Life: Changes in Participant Learning and Attitudes and Beliefs**

Findings indicated that participants had experienced a significant impact on their personal lives through studying at this level, and this was evidenced in a variety of ways. A third of participants from across the range of time on the course said that they had gained empathy with their participants having become a student themselves again. They felt that they had a deeper understanding and empathy with their own students, and better able to adapt to their needs through being a student again, and that this had made them think more about learner identity, and reconsider the experiences of their own students. This links with the

first and third themes in the model (as identified by Guskey (2002) in his research) concerning changes in personal beliefs and attitudes, illustrating how a deeper understanding of themselves as learners also impacted on themselves as teachers. It also illustrates how the lines between the themes in the model are indeed blurred, and are interwoven rather than existing as separate entities.

A major concern that spoke volumes from the data was that of work life balance (WLB). Time emerged as a very common code within the data, as did the negative impact the EdD had had on their family and WLB overall. This came from a range of participants, including over three quarters of those who had only been on the course for four months, and all of those who had been on the course for both two and four years. These numbers included all the males in the study, and both the younger and older participants. Thus it was not, as might be expected, something that only affected the female participants who had families to look after, but was something that affected nearly all those on the course – independent of their age, gender or time on it. Given that most of the sample used in this research are women, one might expect different findings to emerge if the sample been mostly men. Gender analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, but it does, however, provide a potential avenue for further research in this area.

Many participants found this aspect very difficult to cope with – something borne out in the later responses to questions about their enjoyment with respect to undertaking the EdD. While most enjoyed the EdD, (3/4) far fewer said they would do it again, (1/3) citing WLB and the effects on family as the reasons for this. This dichotomy was distinctly echoed in a number of responses from the participants, who commented on the ‘double-edged’ nature of the course, caught between their interest and achievements, and feelings of guilt and pressure from the workload – the latter as also determined by Wellington in his research on doctorates (2013).

Attrition rates are a problem for doctoral level study, with some as high as 50% for some programmes, (McAlpine and Norton, 2006). This can partly be explained by the variety of students that come onto these programmes, and by the time of their lives at which they start this period of study. Many, by the time they enter an EdD, are older than traditional PhD students are, and have families of their own, and sometimes with aging parents also (as



is reflected in this study). They also have worries about these competing demands, and the effects it has on their families, and may have worries about their careers and where the EdD will take them. The EdD then, becomes something they have to juggle with in their lives, as participants – male and female, young and old(er) - indicated in terms of their WLB in the comments above from the majority of the cohort. It is arguably the accumulation of these diverse anxieties and issues, rather than one overall triggering event that results in the often unplanned outcome of attrition (McAlpine and Norton, 2006).

WLB was also an issue brought to light in other similar research in the UK, (Burgess and Wellington, 2010, Wellington and Sikes, 2006) with participants taking time to sort it out after completing their studies. This is something that would be interesting to explore further with the participants in this study by re-interviewing them after completion of their studies.

When asked about what they had taken back to work from the EdD, what impact they felt they had had on their wider professional and academic community, the common issues arising from the data reflect a more personal than professional change (linking to theme two and three rather than theme one) as supported in similar research (Wellington, 2013). Participants from across the range of time on the course reported a variety of impacts reflecting changes to them personally, rather than to them as professionals, such as them having different perspectives on education, or revisiting what it means to be a student, or becoming more questioning themselves. Data showed an increase in reflection and thinking in participants, and a greater confidence in themselves:

*[...]I feel I approach things differently, especially at Masters level. I feel more confident with the terminology. The EdD makes you think in a different way'.*

(Interviewee 3)

This links with theme three illustrating, as it does, a change in personal belief and attitude, and resonates with other similar research, showing that the doctorate resulted in participants taking a more reflective approach to their work (Wellington and Sikes, 2006). Thus, the impact on the wider roles is actually seen as a more personal one for many participants – a blurring of the boundaries possibly here as indicated in other research (Burgess and Wellington, 2010). The EdD participants involved in this study, (many of whom were studying from a distance, and only attended the university for formal study weekends)

became more confident as professionals in their own fields, something that was also borne out in other research where participants complete their studies from a distance, (Butcher and Sieminski, 2007)

Previous research also indicates that students focussed more on their own personal development than improvements to their profession as a whole (Burgess and Wellington, 2010). Many (all those who had been on the course for two and four years, and a third of those who had been on it for four months) also answered that they had improved their knowledge and reading when asked about this wider impact aspect. Rather than locating it within a sphere of professional development within their workplace, they located it as being a more personal issue, relating to with the changes indicated in the adapted model by theme two and three. This arguably correlates well with the findings of Wellington (2013) who describes how interwoven the impact of the EdD can be on the personal and professional lives of students.

A number of participants felt that their increase in self-confidence and wider reading had made them better teachers at Master's level – this is in line with theme one and two of the adapted model reflecting changes to the way participants felt about their own teaching and learning. As one participant said:

*'The impact has been on supervising my MA participants. I am able to allow them to be more creative, and have a stronger understanding of methodology, and this is through an increase in confidence in me. It benefits them and me, a win win situation. There is no evidence really but I know that 2 of my participants are able to do different things because I know more. '(Interviewee 2)*

Comments like this were common across the data, and comparable research has indicated that participants' perceptions of themselves and their self-esteem (theme three of the adapted model) increases as a direct result of their doctoral studies (Burgess and Wellington, 2010). The findings indicate that the EdD did impact on the participant's personal lives and how they feel about themselves as teachers. Such impacts could arguably also be located in domains A and B of the RDF, (Vitae, 2011) which focus on the knowledge base and self-confidence of researchers, and increase in the former leading to an increase in the latter. The RDF, with its concern for individual aspirations, with meaning derived from

their own perspective, not from an external frame of reference, (Bray and Boon, 2011) could be said to have been echoed in this research, wherein participants indicated that the impact of the EdD on themselves as individuals outweighed any impact on their institutions.

## **Conclusions**

This study has shown that using this adapted form of Guskey's model for teacher development and change as a unique lens through which to analyse the impact of studying at this level, enables the deep learning experience of participants to be explored, taking the research in this area forward. This distinctive overarching framework has shown that the EdD impacts not only on the professional practice, personal beliefs and attitudes of participants, *but* also on how the participants themselves learned from studying at this level. The adapted model (Figure 1) arguably provides a useful way to explore the boundaries between the themes and, taking previous work in this area further, as the findings illustrated, it helps us to appreciate how these boundaries can be blurred.

There is thus much evidence here that indicates changes to professional practice and to personal learning and attitudes, occurred as a result of participants' studying for the EdD. The data also show that these changes are neither simple nor clearly defined – the boundaries between the two being blurred for many participants in the study.

This research shows that there is indeed a profound impact on both the professional and personal lives of those who undertake this level of study – something which is echoed in similar research as being a complex web of tensions, and which contributes to an understanding of doctoral identity (Burgess and Wellington, 2010). For many of the participants, one of the major impacts of their doctoral journey was how the EdD had affected their own personal development. This arguably raises the question of whether or not it is possible (or even necessary) to separate impact on personal from impact on professional lives, accepting, as we may have to, that the one is intrinsically bound to the other.

It is not possible, in the space of this paper, to explore fully the implications of the data, and the work of others that it builds on, for the future of doctorates in education. However, there are clear messages for three areas: how such doctorates impact on the W/LB of

participants; how the impact on professional and personal lives is inextricably bound in a symbiotic relationship that could be marketed better to potential students; and how the work of participants could be better appreciated/valued within their own workplaces. While the data from this study are clearly not of an order from which generalisations can be made, they have enabled an insight into the doctoral experiences of participants on the EdD course, and these insights are of themselves valuable in what issues they expose. As one participant said about doing it all again:

*'I would, it's given me the pathway to an academic club – at a price'. (P8)*

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