Approaches to Acquiring ‘Doctorateness’ in the Creative Industries: an Australian perspective

Cheryl Stock
Faculty of Creative Industries
Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane, Australia

c.stock@qut.edu.au

Abstract
Over the last two decades, particularly in Australia and the UK, the doctoral landscape has changed considerably with increasingly hybridised approaches to methodologies and research strategies as well as greater choice of examinable outputs. This paper provides an overview of doctoral practices that are emerging in the context of the creative industries, with a focus on practice-led approaches within the Doctor of Philosophy and recent developments in professional doctorates, from a predominantly Australian perspective. In interrogating what constitutes ‘doctorateness’ in this context, the paper examines some of the diverse theoretical principles which foreground the practitioner/researcher, methodological approaches that incorporate tacit knowledge and reflective practice together with qualitative strategies, blended learning delivery modes, and flexible doctoral outputs; and how these are shaping this shifting environment. The paper concludes with a study of the Doctor of Creative Industries at Queensland University of Technology as one model of an interdisciplinary professional research doctorate.

Key words: doctorateness; creative industries, practice-led research; professional doctorates

I. THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES CONTEXT IN AUSTRALASIA

Over the last two decades, particularly in Australia and the UK, a niche but increasingly accepted new paradigm for investigation has altered the doctoral landscape. This paper provides an overview of some of the thinking behind practice-led and professional doctoral approaches that have emerged in the context of the creative industries, with a specific focus on the Australian experience. It concludes with a brief study of the Doctor of Creative Industries at Queensland University of Technology as one model of an interdisciplinary professional research doctorate.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to undertake an in-depth investigation of the nature of the creative industries, it is helpful to make some observations on the disciplines and fields it represents. A commonly used definition lists creative industries as including ‘Advertising, Architecture, Art and antiques markets, Computer and video games, Crafts, Design, Designer fashion, Film and video, Music, Performing arts, Publishing, Software, Television and radio’ (www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/creative_industries/). Most definitions of the creative industries find a commonality in the linking of arts, design, media, digital content and communication technologies, and the increase of human capital through creativity and innovation, within a global economic and cultural context [1-5]. Although originating in the UK, with Australia close behind, the nomenclature, the rhetoric and the cluster of activities it encompasses are being increasingly adopted in the Asian region through government policy and learning institutions [6-7].

In relation to the higher education sector as well as in government policy, creative industries rhetoric has been peppered by ‘buzz’ words such as ‘innovation, creativity, life-
long learning and the knowledge economy’ [8] resulting in research being increasingly linked
with economic benefits and commercialisation. The alignment of these goals in relation to
doctoral studies brings into question the traditional purpose of the doctorate as an original
contribution to knowledge, mostly understood through a scholarly and largely theoretical
enquiry. Laing and Brabazon [8] discuss how changes brought about by foregrounding the
knowledge economy with its basis in professional practice, have altered thinking about the
relationship between work, university, scholarship and creativity. They further posit whether
this shift promotes ‘real world’ knowledge and expertise over ‘theoretical or research-based
empirical knowledge’.

II. DOCTORATES IN INDUSTRY AND PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS

In the broad context of the ‘knowledge economy’ in higher education, one of the most
significant changes is the increasing number of workplace-embedded or industry-based
doctorates [8]. Tom Maxwell who has undertaken research into doctoral education over
almost two decades, recently cited 93 professional doctorates in Australia, most of which are
specialised with a tightly focussed disciplinary basis. However, he also notes the current
trend to offer more generic professional doctorates which attract students from a range of
disciplines and are also often interdisciplinary in the nature of the enquiry (personal
interview, March 2011). This he calls the second generation professional doctorate [9] in
which ‘specialisation and abstraction’ is replaced (or integrated with) a focus on ‘new
knowledge and understanding of professional practice’ through models that provide more
flexibility than the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

A problem identified with professional doctorates is their perceived lack of academic
rigor and scholarly enquiry compared with a traditional PhD model, partly due one suspects,
to the applied nature of the enquiry as well as its embeddedness in the workplace. Whilst
there is probably agreement that ‘the exclusive, immediate goal of all research is, and must
remain, the production of knowledge’ [10], disagreement still arises around what constitutes
‘validity’ or ‘rigour’ in the forms that production of knowledge may take and the methods
employed. Laing and Brabazon [8] remark, in their study into professional doctorates, that
‘the imperatives of work-based case studies and problem-solving can be awkwardly tethered
to scholarship’. This lack of a comfortable ‘fit’ with traditional academic doctoral study or
even well-worn models of ‘named’ professional doctorates, is something still being worked
through, with tensions that arise being methodological, situational and relational.

This paper argues that partnering doctoral study with industry or professional settings
goes beyond imperatives for commercialisation or professional development to an ongoing
fundamental shift in opening up alternative modes of knowledge and discovery for academic
research, including methodological approaches; a shift which can potentially contribute to
expanding and enriching the 21st century doctoral landscape, rather than watering it down.
Furthermore, it is not only professional doctorates that are interrogating the nature and form
of doctoral knowledge claims and outputs. Practice-led doctorates that sit within Doctor of
Philosophy (PhD) programs are increasingly being taken up in the creative arts, design and
media fields in order to provide alternative forms and methods as more appropriate fits for
the purpose of their studies.

III. EMERGENCE AND RISE OF PRACTICE-LED DOCTORATES: THESIS =
CREATIVE WORK WITH EXEGESIS

Over the last decade, particularly in a creative industries context, modes of knowledge
production in doctoral settings have been challenged and expanded through the acceptance of
creative and design products as examinable outputs in tandem with a parallel acceptance of
the ‘translation’ of tacit knowledge and professional expertise as scholarly endeavours as well
as the centrality of the researcher inside the research. This in turn has impacted on design
strategies that seek to engage in new ways with increasingly hybridised approaches within
qualitative research. Variations and combinations of action research, ethnography, biography,
narrative enquiry, case studies, reflexive and creative practice are being interrogated and re-
combining quantitative and qualitative data and approaches is becoming more common,
partly due to the sheer volume of on-line data available along with increasingly sophisticated
software tools of analysis. However, such changes are not merely functional or
methodological. Researchers, especially for those whose investigations are in the production
of scholarly texts or experimental hard data, are further being challenged by what Berry [12]
refers to as the ‘computational turn’ in terms of how ‘medial changes produce epistemic
ones’. In this approach, methods like data visualisation are no longer associated
predominantly with quantitative research but also as tools for producing qualitative meanings
and values of the kind that were formerly the domain of cultural and social studies.

Indeed, it may be argued that the very nature of ontology and epistemology in doctoral
research is being questioned through developments such as the ‘computational turn’ in
humanities and social sciences and the ‘performative’ in creative arts and design research. In
these developments the propositional is replaced with the emergent where findings may
encompass paradox, ambiguity and uncertainty. In this setting research outcomes are
expressed in the symbolic forms of the practice itself with metaphor, allusion and affect a
translating strategy to accompany the materiality of the practice.

Such a flux of forms, methods and outcomes informs the backdrop to this interrogation of
a contemporary concept of doctorateness. In addition to the plethora of ‘named’ professional
doctorates mentioned earlier are a number of practice-led approaches that sit within PhD
programs where what constitutes scholarly enquiry is being questioned. These approaches are
variously known as practice-led, practice-based, creative practice as research, performative or
multi-modal research. A helpful summary of these and similar terms can be found at
www.dancingbetweendiversity.com under ‘Research Inquiry through Creative Practice:
Some Terms and Definitions’, whilst a useful tracking of the trajectory of these related
approaches can be found in Angela Piccini’s ‘A Historiographic Perspective on Practice as
Research’ www.bris.ac.uk/parip/artexts.htm. Whatever terminology is adopted, this research
framework is characterised by an examinable output of a creative artwork or design
prototype/product accompanied by a written exegesis that interprets, contextualises and
illuminates the practice.

In its early history in the mid 1990s, practice-led research borrowed from a range of
extant methodological approaches (action research, forms of ethnography, grounded theory)
to validate and explicate its creative or design work as bona fide doctoral research. Since
then, practice-led research has increasingly moved to a position of claiming an alternative
paradigm with its own ontological and epistemological understandings [13-18], supported by
a toolbox of methods formed out of the processes of practice, and articulated through the
materiality and symbolic languages of that practice. Whilst criticism continues in
conservative quarters of subjectivity and a lack of verifiable standards, and unresolved
tensions and challenges remain, nevertheless, it would seem by the growth of such research
that it is becoming increasingly viable within doctoral studies in creative industries and
cultural studies environments.

In this model the ‘thesis’ comprises two interdependent examinable components: the
creative or design output and the exegesis. The latter is usually in written form but can also
be presented through visual, aural and other forms of rich media documentation and
contextualisation. The changing nature and role of the practice/exegetical relationship and these dual modes of knowing in relation to different disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts have been examined in the work of Barrett & Bolt [13], Candlin [14], Krauth [19], Malins and Gray [20], Stapleton [21] and Vella [22]. The philosophical underpinnings of the two inextricably linked components have been described succinctly by Daniel Mafe [23] as ‘emergence and criticality’. Rather than beginning with a research question, problem or hypothesis, practice-led research undertakes a series of investigations through practice during which the research questions, problems and findings emerge over time. This type of investigation involves intuition, fluidity, ambiguity and even serendipity as part of its method. At the same time (or in parallel) the researcher is critically engaged through ongoing self and peer evaluation and analysis, and in placing him/herself within his/her field of practice. The critical and the creative are in constant dialogue, with one informing the other.

It has been argued that unless immersion in the experiential process and practice lead the researcher, the historic binary split between practice and theory will be perpetuated. Vella [22] points out the necessity for ‘an understanding of the artist’s creative process’, which embraces the ‘idiosyncrasies of the practice’, identifying ‘salient features’ as well as ‘hidden strengths, patterns and weaknesses’ in tandem with ‘addressing technical issues’ in the context of previous works. This, he believes guides the research journey through an ongoing series of interrogations that arise from the practice itself with analysis taking place in iterative cycles of the creative work. These and similar approaches encourage self-reflexivity in the researcher as well as engagement through informed critical evaluation.

Practice-led researchers often struggle to locate an appropriate scholarly language with which to ‘translate’ the findings of their practice, since they are predominantly embedded within the symbolic manifestations of the work itself. Experimenting with allusion, metaphor and the poetics of language to capture what is often ineffable and unnameable, these researchers strive to find effective written means of communicating the deep tacit knowledge in which findings reside. Such ‘findings’ are likely to be open-ended; evoking experiences, insights and challenging us with new ways of seeing the world, which often seem to resist textual interpretation. A two-year study of doctoral candidates, supervisors and examiners by Phillips, Stock and Vincs [24] note that ‘supervisors and candidates believe that there could be more flexibility in matching written language with conceptual thought expressed in practice’. Grappling with an appropriate textual mode is a challenge, but it can also provide an opportunity to articulate and innovate through what designer and scholar Jill Franz [25] calls ‘the potentiality of constraints’. Employing the processes of practice as methodological tools, and the reflective and iterative yet emergent nature of practice-led research is creating an alternative doctoral setting, especially for creative artists (predominately the performing and visual arts, creative writing and film).

It is not clear that there is always such a good fit with design, journalism, architecture, creative advertising and other ‘non-arts’ fields of practice in the Creative Industries. Whilst doctoral studies in these fields undoubtedly engage in innovative and creative practices and employ both reflective and practice-led strategies, unlike the arts sector, their research often has a more functional outcome. Marshall and Newton [26] refer to a ‘process of artifacture’ in design, which is ‘a contextual and situated engagement with practice’ and ‘a means of grounding research in practice’. He further suggests (ibid.): ‘The validity of this engagement is not embodied in the rigour with which a particular method is applied, but rather the agency the enacted propositions carry with them for practice: the facility of the research work to reframe or provoke further action’.

This idea is not dissimilar from the sense of a creative work always being in process where the creative outcome examined in doctoral work does not represent closure (even though a ‘product’ is presented for examination) but marks a particular point in a continuum
of exploratory and processual research in the act of ‘becoming’. However, there are differences in design-led practice from arts-led practice. A useful distinction is to look at how practice-based rather than practice-led approaches might serve the design sector. In this model practice remains at the centre of the research and is integral to it, revealing insights through the practice which lead to theory building and new knowledge about practice. These two related approaches have sometimes been differentiated by the practice-led ‘product’ constituting an examinable output whilst the practice-based product is viewed as a methodological tool rather than an examinable outcome in itself.

This somewhat pragmatic explanation does not take into account more fundamental differences in relation to intention, context, the nature of production and the role of the ‘artefact’ as outlined by Hamilton and Jaaniste [27]. Whilst retaining the practice-led nomenclature for both art and design, Hamilton and Jaaniste (ibid) suggest differentiation is characterised by a spectrum of enquiry approaches and outcomes ranging between what they describe as ‘the effective and the evocative’. With the former, which I refer to as a practice-based approach, the research is problem-based and thus more likely to engage with ‘effect’ in both process and outcome, whilst the arts are more likely to engage with ‘affect’. Nevertheless, as Hamilton and Jaaniste further point out, both deal with the intuitive and the imaginative as well as the critical and the analytical. It is the balance and application that differ. The ‘non-arts’ sectors of the creative industries, particularly design, are also more likely to employ complementary methods such as action research, case studies and user-testing in order to produce research outcomes that are generalisable, functional and repeatable. Additionally, this type of enquiry explicitly needs to address specific ‘issues of ethics and validity’ [26] and to negotiate the assignment of Intellectual Property (IP).

Whether practice-led or practice-based, these degrees are required to demonstrate doctoral level outcomes. What this constitutes can be a matter of considerable debate in fields that deal with evaluative judgements around aesthetic qualities and experiential data. In the above mentioned study by Philips, Stock and Vincs [24], which investigated assessment in postgraduate research degrees in the creative arts, examiners, supervisors and research deans were asked to articulate their understandings of doctorateness. Predictable observations such as a substantial and original contribution to knowledge, depth, breadth and scale of scholarly endeavour, innovation, critical engagement and advancing the field, underpinned their responses. However, there were particular inflections. These included advanced conceptual understanding embedded in practice and reflection, ‘discipline mastery’ as well as ‘a flawless integration of theory and practice and total engagement with the material’ (SE-nd) together with ‘methodological contextualisation’(DD). Doctoral attributes identified specific to this mode of practice included demonstrating ‘transformative imagination’ (SE-nd); embracing the unknown; nuanced and complex articulation of practice; risk-taking and courageous investigation; ‘mastery of craft plus inventiveness’ (SE-d); ‘a sustained processual perspective’(SE-d), and level of professional accomplishment. Whilst respondents in this study were articulating an ideal in doctoral outcomes for this type of enquiry, these additional descriptors are helpful in matching expectations with the specific methodologies that have been developed to achieve practice led/based doctorateness.

IV. DOCTORAL DISTINCTIVENESS

1 Please note that the interview material from the Dancing between Consistency and Diversity project is referenced by the coding system devised for the study to track individual interviews, using N-vivo software. This lettering system references quoted comments that allow identification of a particular type of interviewee without revealing their identity.
Whilst a practice-led/based approach mostly sits within the more or less conventional framework of a Doctorate of Philosophy, professional doctorates - in Australia at least - are currently evolving quite distinctive frameworks based on their need for flexibility in delivery, approaches and outcomes together with a certain confidence in asserting that distinctiveness as doctoral. Professional doctorates are not new, however. They have existed since the 1960s in the United States, with particular currency in Education and the Health Sciences. Mostly discipline-based or ‘named’ doctorates, they have always served a different purpose than the traditional PhD model, despite the fact that first generation professional doctorates in Australia often adopted what Maxwell [9] refers to as the ‘PhD plus coursework model’.

Both in the US and elsewhere professional doctorates are not the track candidates take if wishing to obtain a tenured academic position, although this is changing in some countries like Australia. One could argue that PhDs have two practical purposes: as a research training ground for entering the world of academia and/or to train professional researchers for an external environment. Professional doctorates, on the other hand, are conferred when there is demonstrated evidence of high-level expertise, innovation in, and deep knowledge of a professional field and where the site of investigation is predominantly in a professional workplace rather than an academic setting. What is arguably a common outcome to both is a publicly verifiable contribution to knowledge, ideally resulting in deep, complex and nuanced learning outcomes through a sustained enquiry of systemic investigation. Thus in terms of advancing knowledge of the field, in this instance, doctorateness may reside in the gaps identified and addressed through advanced professional reflective practice and theorised engagement in the field often employing Schon’s strategies of reflection in action and reflection on action [28].

V. PURPOSE AND MOTIVATION FOR UNDERTAKING PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES

It is therefore not surprising that the most common purpose cited for undertaking a professional doctorate, according to Maxwell’s summary of the Doctor of Technology at Deakin University in Melbourne, is to ‘broaden and deepen the leadership, creativity and innovation in advanced professional practice, resulting in new knowledge and understanding of professional practice’ [9]. An industry focus is a defining characteristic in such doctoral programs as are the requirements for students to have had substantial experience in their practice, which of course differs from the PhD where the track is often a continuation of academic training from undergraduate to Masters to a doctoral program. This difference is significant since entry in professional doctorates is aimed at mature-aged students with a high level of workplace expertise, often already in positions of leadership and more often than not working in collaborative teams; but often without recent academic training. These factors impact on the nature of the research significantly; not just the ‘what’ but equally the ‘how’ and the ‘why’. The credibility tests for doctoral capacity and potential are not as straightforward as for a PhD.

Inevitably, the motivation for professionals to seek out these doctorates aligns closely with the stated goals of various awards. In my capacity as coordinator of QUT’s Doctor of Creative Industries (DCI), I interviewed three students with successful design practices (industrial, fashion and audio/visual/media) about their motivation to undertake doctoral study. The fashion stylist (personal interview, 6 April 2011) was quite emphatic in stating: ‘My consulting practice was screaming out for some kind of authority and further direction... How can I do that with credibility and authenticity... the DCI was something that offered me an opportunity to improve both my practice and myself and perhaps there will be something beneficial coming out of it for the broader community.’
Interestingly, considering that a defining feature of the DCI is its industry and workplace focus, was her further comment that ‘.... in this environment I have a chance to re-focus as a designer without a client driving the project... and I really yearn for that coherency again within my practice that is self-driven rather than client driven’. The industrial designer (personal interview, 7 April 2011) put it succinctly also saying that on a personal level he wanted ‘to make statements with authority’, whilst more predictably: ‘on a selfish and commercial level it was because I wanted to grow a better business and attract a higher level of customer through that knowledge. What got me here was that quiet quest that goes on in your mind where you are not necessarily consciously focussing on something but it takes time for everything finally to align...’ Later in the interview he mused: ‘people that I speak to from the DCI are here because they are ready...it is as simple as that’. And on probing further it appears what is meant by that readiness is a willingness to take risks, to be vulnerable and to open up to new learning experiences and challenges in an academic as well as a professional setting. The third interviewee (8 April 2011) revealed his key motivation was similarly ‘the need to pin down or nail some knowledge in the area in which I have been practising’ and that the DCI provided a ‘highly motivating factor’ to ‘self-assign the task of doing that’. In summing up, these statements echo the thoughts of students in a UK Doctor of Education program who reported enjoying their experience through ‘forging a new identity’ as “researching professionals” (Wellington and Sikes in [8]).

VI. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES FOR PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES

There are many variations in professional doctorates in the amount and type of coursework, the shape of professional projects and their integration into a doctoral framework. The last part of this paper outlines some of the research approaches and delivery modes that contribute to acquiring doctorateness in these contexts. In tandem with the deep experiential learning that occurs from being embedded in one’s practice over time, many professional doctorates are scaffolded with integrated coursework that provides tools to articulate and analyse that learning and to structure their professional workplace projects into research outcomes.

In relation to the learning context, Tennant [29] suggests, rather than the acquisition of applied knowledge in the workplace, that the workplace itself constitutes ‘a site of learning, knowledge and knowledge production’. This does not replace the university as a site for learning. However, moving between the two sites (physical and/or virtual) forms a crucial part of the dynamic of the professional doctoral experience. Another differentiating feature is the emphasis on what Maxwell [9] calls ‘practitioner agency’ in which the practice of the individual through reflexivity and critical thinking contributes experiential knowledge to the research endeavour.

In relation to design, Brown [30] in his paper ‘The Representation of Practice’ similarly calls for ‘autonomy’ for designers to be able ‘to reconceive their practice’ but also points out the importance of this occurring ‘within a narrative of research that asserts the reality of institutional practice’. With reference to the work of Bourdieu [31] Brown also argues for ‘a relational rather than structural mode of thinking’ to encapsulate the unfolding of ‘localised practices’ through a ‘model of creative intentionality’.

In considering specifics of the above principles I have drawn on the current structure of the DCI which in 2010 was re-purposed into a professional research doctorate from its original 2003 version as a professional coursework doctorate (designed by Brad Haseman, at Queensland University of Technology). The latter comprised half coursework and was accompanied by three professional projects. In its current iteration the coursework comprises one third of the doctorate with two year long industry-based research projects that are either
discrete or linked, with the requirement to contextualise both projects to ascertain a level of overall doctorateness in the research component of the award.

The overarching principle for the DCI revolves around the relationship between the practitioner (the site of the individual), the site of practice (the workplace) and the field of practice (the broader context) which also equate to the three research sites. Approaches to investigating these inter-related sites are underpinned by reflection, reflexivity, tools embedded in the processes of professional practice and contextualisation of the broad field of enquiry. Coursework is designed to deepen enquiry, sharpen critical thinking and provide methodological tools to shape the project briefs into research, as well as to design analytical frameworks to elicit findings. Its methodologies foreground tacit knowledge and practitioner expertise providing strategies to deal with the indeterminacies of the more subjective areas of enquiry.

Underpinning the coursework is a sequential suite of reflective practice, critical thinking and project development units as well as public seminar presentations which privilege practitioner expertise. At the same time students undertake a Faculty-wide Creative Industries methodology unit which is taken by the PhD and DCI students who work together to fulfil the requirements of the unit. This is proving an effective strategy to build an integrated doctoral culture which emphasises commonalities and minimises a sense of hierarchy between the two types of doctorates. In addition to advanced information retrieval skills and reflective practice and practice-led strategies DCI students access these methods (depending on the projects) in combination with other approaches such as action research, ethnography, narrative enquiry, phenomenology, mixed methods etc. Finally, two university-wide postgraduate electives in either cognate or non-cognate areas offer specialist skills in relation to the research projects. This coursework thus prepares candidates to frame and design their own learning processes, methods and outcomes.

VII. DELIVERY MODES FOR PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES

As more and more doctoral study moves to fully on-line delivery, the DCI remains committed to providing a blended learning environment. This combines on-line delivery and communication via blogs, learning sites and interactive modules, with face to face intensive modules of facilitated and peer to peer learning through a student cohort who share diverse disciplines and practices in collaborative and interdisciplinary settings. This creates an environment where students can be continually challenged by their peers in reference to innate, habitual and unquestioning ways they might perceive the world and professionally act in it.

When questioned about the delivery mode of the DCI, the interviewees above identified working together as a cohort the most beneficial aspect to their learning, citing ‘social bonding’ and tapping into the ‘collaborative feeling amongst the other DCI members’ (personal interview, 6 April 2011) and ‘the the way we are working with other like–minded people’ (personal interview, 8 April 2011). The industrial designer (personal interview, 7 April 2011) believes it is ‘important to keep the cohort going next year and beyond’ and suggested that the cohort might develop ‘peer’ milestones as he feels that peer pressure would motivate him ‘to come up to the mark’. Immersed in both the workplace and the academy, the candidates are thus able to develop mutually supportive communities of practice that cross both sites, encouraging scholarly debates in parallel with industry dialogue.

In the DCI staffing support structure the course coordinator tracks overall development to ensure effective participation of candidates, designs and delivers the coursework and case manages candidates, working closely with the student and his/her two advisors. The academic supervisor takes primary responsibility for guiding the research process and the project
outcomes, while an industry mentor provides insights and guidance from an external professional viewpoint. This serves to triangulate expectations so that industry, academic and DCI requirements are met.

VIII. OUTCOMES FOR PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES

As with many professional doctorates the examinable output is more likely to be a portfolio of linked outcomes rather than a dissertation or the ‘product plus exegesis’ model of practice-led research. The forms of this output can vary greatly and include training packages which may be web-based or produced as DVDs/books, an art work either in situ or electronic, a product, a prototype, a performance, a theoretical treatise, a curatorial model, software or games development etc. Each research project is accompanied either by the project brief as well as a framing document, a research report or a contextual review which articulates the research findings. The nature of this document is contingent on the nature of the professional or industry output. The two research projects, both examined externally, are also linked by an overarching contextual document.

How professional doctorates are to be evaluated has been the subject of some debate. Laing and Brabazon [8] claim that their success ‘must be analysed... for its impact and relevance to industry or organisational performance, not disciplinary innovation or recognition by peers’. However, I would argue that the latter qualities of innovation and peer recognition are essential attributes of doctorateness although they may be differently inflected in a professional doctorate outcome.

Whilst traditional doctorates generally build on and contribute to existing theories of knowledge by establishing a gap in knowledge to which they contribute new insights, both practice-led and professional doctorates develop and build theories that are emergent and grounded in their practice. As Eisner [32] comments: the ‘shift from the supremacy of the theoretical to a growing appreciation of the practical is a fundamental one because it also suggests that practical knowledge cannot be subsumed by the theoretic; some things can only be known through the process of action.’ This engagement with theory is of a different order in its emergence from action and practice than theory that comes out of intellectual enquiry.

IX. CONCLUSION

This paper has tracked some of the models and approaches to undertaking doctorates in a creative industries context, examining theoretical, practical and methodological concerns as well as investigating what doctorateness might mean and how it can be achieved in both academic and professional / industry settings. Doctoral landscapes stand to benefit from the cross-over of hybrid design strategies which are emerging to support the increasingly complex interdisciplinary nature of empirical, critical enquiry, creative and applied research. Reflexive and practice-led methods are beginning to inform areas of more traditional research, whilst industry-based and professional doctoral study is increasingly drawing on a range of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide serviceable and more nuanced tools of enquiry in what may become a mutual influencing of research approaches.

Although it is too soon to measure the outcomes of hybrid interdisciplinary doctorates such as the DCI, it may prove, with further development, particularly suited to the design environment and other creative industries fields which encompass both applied and creative approaches. Nevertheless, these professional doctorates will most likely continue to foreground the extensive and specialised knowledge acquired through practice that Melrose calls ‘performance mastery’ [33] and ‘practitioner expertise’ [34]. Valuing expertise that goes beyond sophisticated technical skills to deep imaginative, cognitive and theoretical
engagement, in tandem with reflective practice and research-led practice arguably provides a strong foundation for innovative study which fulfils doctoral requirements.

REFERENCES


