



# Critical Perspectives on Educational Policies and Professional Identities

Lessons from Doctoral Studies

Richard Waller  
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Timothy Clark

# **Critical Perspectives on Educational Policies and Professional Identities**

In the field of education, a bridge is often needed between research and practice. This book not only bridges the two but also provides directions for linking research on practice and educational policy. It tells us about practitioners' research in a range of professional settings – it is not fixed in one setting, and it has something to say to professionals in many settings. Whether or not you do research, this book will prompt you to engage with educational policies, navigate the dominant rhetoric and consider solutions emerging from research described in this book. This book explains how societal and political influences shape educational policy. It also suggests how policy may be challenged.

The diversity of approaches is thought-provoking, and there are plenty of ideas and implications that we can take from these chapters: a chapter about research in the primary school setting, for example, can get us thinking about other settings; chapters on the teaching of controversial topics like terrorism and counter-terrorism measures, for example, are helpful in terms of both theory and practice.

More importantly, this book offers a model of supporting doctoral students and researchers to publish their work in order to bring it to a wider audience, where it can actually be of use. Drawing on my own work on communities of writers and writing retreats, the editors decided to co-author and mentor doctoral students, so that students learnt about the publication process. This will not only help educators but will also boost careers. It also means that all this research will not just sit in university archives. Of immediate use to other researchers and Directors of Research will be the chapters where the whole process of writing this book is opened up. So often, the stage of 'writing up' research is unexplained, but this book shows the way to develop a community of writers, a practitioner research community. This is how to sustain research and impact. Writing communities and retreats will sustain practitioner researchers, for whom making time for research and writing is a huge challenge. Moreover, in light of the recent warning about the urgent need for a supportive culture for researchers in Education, from the British Educational Research Association (2023), this book shows how to create such a culture through supportive peer review and dedicated time.

Finally, this book shows how to produce real research outputs that speak for and to educational professionals. Other books may focus

on research findings or practical implications; this book does both, while opening up the process of practitioner research and writing. This will have more interest to more readers because of the many individual researcher voices that come through – they tell us how and why they did their research. I hope this will not only prompt more people to read and do practitioner research but also embed the idea of communities that bring researchers and practitioners together.

—**Rowena Murray, Formerly Professor in Education and Director of Research at University of the West of Scotland, now independent Higher Education consultant**

*Critical Perspectives* is a vibrant addition to the academic literature, echoing the spirit of Bathmaker and Harnett's influential work while carving its own distinct path. Within its pages, a chorus of practitioner–researcher and established academic voices offer a refreshing perspective on doctoral education that extends far beyond the confines of traditional school or college settings.

This book is a must-read for anyone with a stake in doctoral education, providing a rich tapestry of insights into policy and professionalism across diverse landscapes. From Higher Education to the National Health Service, Further Education and Early Years, the authors unravel the complexities with meticulous detail. What emerges is a vivid portrayal of local concerns with a resounding impact that transcends boundaries, resonating across phases, settings and sectors.

What sets this volume apart is its innovative approach to co-production, seamlessly weaving together emerging and established academic voices in each chapter. This dynamic collaboration opens a portal for the researching professional, inviting them to seamlessly transition into a professional researcher role. The book balances academic rigour with a grounded practitioner focus, effortlessly straddling theory and practice, conceptual and empirical realms, honouring the individual of voice entangled within an extensive ecology of agency.

At its core, *Critical Perspectives* will captivate academics and practitioners with a detailed exploration of the 'messiness and situatedness' inherent in the experience of being and becoming an educational professional. The authors skillfully navigate the intricate landscape of constructing, interrogating, and challenging professionalism, unveiling the limitations of a one-size-fits-all approach with poignant clarity.

This volume is more than a departure; it is a welcome revelation. It serves as a powerful reminder that doctoral training goes beyond providing the technical skills required to manage small-scale research project, urging us to embrace knowledge generation that is applied, transdisciplinary, and deeply contextualized. It serves as a catalyst for change, reminding us that engagement with policy is not restricted to interpretation and enactment but includes the invisible activism of not only inevitable but welcome disruption. *Critical Perspectives* is a vibrant affirmation of the landscape of doctoral education as a realm of endless possibilities and transformative potential.

—*Dr Carol Azumah Dennis, The Open University*

*Critical Perspectives on Researching Educational Policies and Professional Identities: Lessons from Doctoral Studies* is a wonderful and unique collection of chapters, perfectly showcasing doctoral students' work. Each chapter is cleverly crafted by a recent EdD graduate and their supervisor and makes a perfect volume of co-produced practitioner research projects, undertaken by EdD students at the University of the West of England. This will be particularly useful for other students at the thesis writing stage because the collection provides a very useful catalogue of exciting and relevant topics covered in previous EdD research. I imagine that 3 audiences will be very interested in this book: EdD students; EdD lecturers and course leaders; other HEIs who provide the EdD.

The book is organized into three core sections, each one dealing with a theme of educational practitioner research. The themes skilfully bring together doctoral research projects from EdD students at UWE, ensuring that their research gets disseminated more widely, as well as in a manageable and accessible collection. Prospective students will be able to see relevant examples of research topics and projects, possibly relating to their own sectors and research interests.

I have not seen any collections like this which relate to the professional doctorate in education. This book makes a valuable contribution to the field and an even more valuable resource for students and academics. A major strength of the book is that it represents the most up-to-date research in the field of education, bringing together relevant, current, and interesting doctoral research projects.

The EdD is fast becoming a very popular route to acquiring a doctorate, particularly for educational professionals. This collection of chapters is a much-needed resource; the research

content is varied, interesting and pertinent, and this makes it a significant and important contribution to the field of education and doctoral research.

—*Iona Burnell Reilly, University of East London*

How much doctoral research in education disappears after the viva? How much illuminating and critical research about the complex interplay of society, professional identity, policy and practice remains forever unread?

*Critical Perspectives on Researching Educational Policies and Professional Identities: Lessons from Doctoral Studies* is vitally important because it is the first book to provide a space for early career researchers in education to share key aspects of their doctoral methodologies and findings by co-producing chapters with more experienced academics and a highly credible editorial team. The result is a truly fascinating, theoretically informed practitioner-based insight into education policy and practice at all levels using a range of cutting-edge and often creative methodological approaches.

While each chapter stands alone, offering insights for doctoral researchers, early career researchers, their supervisors and more experienced academics into specific subject and age phases of education research, the chapters also resonate with one another, drawing out key themes that help define and articulate close-to-practice research in its current context. The first theme looks at different ways in which educational professionalism is shaped and contested within society; the second theme highlights different perspectives on professional identity and how professional development might be conceptualized over time; the third theme examines the impact of policy on professional identity and practice, highlighting tensions and modes of resistance.

This means that *Critical Perspectives on Researching Educational Policies and Professional Identities: Lessons from Doctoral Studies* is highly relevant and a must-read for all academics and practitioners in education who are interested in articulating their research and its value through exploring and applying theory, innovating with and adapting methodologies and experimenting with forms of representation to reach and impact on new audiences.

—*Professor Tom Dobson, York St John University, School of Education, Language and Psychology*

As someone who has been involved in doctoral research for many years, it is clear that this book will be an extremely useful resource for students and supervisors of doctoral research. The book showcases, through careful discussion, the issues of educational policy and professional identities within and through doctoral research. The included research is invaluable in informing practice. The book will therefore be extremely useful in understanding how to support researcher development as well as the broader research community and is therefore highly recommended.

—*Professor Carol Fuller, Institute of Education, University of Reading*

This novel and highly original collection speaks to a range of critical perspectives articulated in the research of a doctoral community at UWE through a rich blend of methodologies.

Each chapter is a collaboration between the doctoral graduates (now early career researchers) and experienced academics who worked as their supervisors. The result is a huge contribution to our understanding of the impact of the doctoral journey on professional identities and practices in education but also to the development of the educational doctorate field itself. This is manifested in Meg Maguire's concluding appraisal of the body of work curated here, observing how this book casts a lens on how practitioner research enabled by educational doctorates disrupts policy and in so doing is policy work in itself. This gives this collection a tactical status, moving beyond 'lessons from' to a form of activism.

This book will be reassuring, inspiring and developmental – politically, conceptually and practically – for anyone involved in an EdD, thinking about doing one or curious about them.

—*Professor Julian McDougall, Bournemouth University*

# **Critical Perspectives on Educational Policies and Professional Identities: Lessons From Doctoral Studies**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*We have decided to dedicate this book to Max Weedon, one of the authors in the collection (Chapter 14). Max was tragically killed in a car accident in Barbados on 8th January 2023, just as the process of writing the volume had begun. Max's mother, Kathy Mansfield Higgins, got in touch to tell me the awful news; she had found emails between Max and me discussing ideas for his chapter. In an amazingly brave act, Kathy, herself an academic albeit in an unrelated field, decided to step in and lead the writing of Max's chapter by way of a tribute to him, working with Ciaran Burke who had been Max's internal examiner for his doctoral viva examination in March 2021.*

*I first met Max when he applied for a place on our EdD Professional Doctorate in Education back in 2015. He was an extremely interesting and deeply passionate man, fiercely intelligent, highly politicized and with a clear sense of social justice. I became Max's Director of Studies for his research, and, most unusually, co-opted two academic colleagues from our Sociology team (Andy Mathers and Sean Creaven) to act as joint supervisors since I felt Max's deep knowledge of social theory was likely to push the boundaries of my own theoretical understanding and test me fully, meaning I wanted some 'back-up', intellectually speaking; I was right to do so.*

*During his studies Max made theoretical breakthroughs and had insights that seasoned academics would be proud of, as his chapter in this collection demonstrates. Max also wrote for publication during his studies, appearing twice in the British Sociological Association's Discover Society online journal, once writing about his doctoral research into the impact of the Prevent strategy, and once offering his reflections on the outcome of the 2019 UK general election.*

*Max was also an incredibly modest man, and probably had a wider breadth of experience in the UK education system than anyone else I have worked with on the EdD. He had taught in the primary, secondary, further and higher education sectors, designed further and higher education curricula and been a university governor. But Max had many interests outside of education. We shared a love for football, though we supported rival teams – Liverpool for Max and Spurs for me – a source of much banter and good natured ribbing. I only discovered after his death that Max had co-founded an African charity for HIV orphans. From our conversations over the years I knew that Max loved scuba diving, although I didn't know just how good he was at it, and certainly not that he was a highly qualified instructor (hence his trips to the Caribbean).*

*I also knew Max had a professional background in music, but didn't know until reading his obituaries just how passionate he was about it, how successful a musician he had been and how important he was to developing the careers of numerous others, largely through the establishment of the BAI record label whilst teaching music at Bath College. In addition to running a record label, Max had also run a music publishing company, and been both a band manager and a sound engineer.*

*Having been born in Botswana, Max's own musical journey began as a young passenger on journeys into the African bush where he was exposed to the captivating sounds of legendary bands from the 1960s and 1970s on the Toyota Hilux tape deck. Classical guitar lullabies at bedtime added to his early musical influences. Upon moving from his*

*country of birth to England, Max was an early adopter of the Sony Walkman, which became his constant companion, filling his ears with melodies day in, day out.*

*During Max's teenage years, the Stone Roses track 'Fools Gold' ignited a passion for drumming, leading him to form a band called SHC. Their journey saw them supporting renowned acts like Blur and Spiritualized in the early 1990s. However, his musical evolution didn't stop there. He later transitioned to playing the guitar and, along with his band embarked on a new chapter in Brighton, ultimately becoming known as The Just.*

*Over time Max's commitment to music only grew stronger, culminating in a formal education that included a degree in music production and not one, but two master's degrees in music and songwriting. This extensive knowledge and experience paved the way for him to inspire and nurture the next generation of musicians through teaching and tutoring, ensuring that his passion for music continues to resonate with and through others. He had been instrumental in launching the careers of numerous musicians including chart topping singer songwriter Gabrielle Alpin, X-Factor star singer Lascel Wood, and Radio 1 DJ and music producer Julio Bashmore.*

*Max's approach to teaching young musicians was to insist they create and produce their own music rather than simply cover the popular music of established acts, and Max took this approach of 'following your passion and forging your own path' into his academic work. Max was a unique individual, and I genuinely feel proud to have known and worked with him during his doctoral studies. He is remembered with great fondness by all who knew and worked or studied with him, and his sudden and premature death a big loss to the academic community.*

*A charitable organisation, Max Weedon Music (charity no. 1206950) has recently been set up by Max's family in his memory to promote the work of young musicians [[www.maxweedonmusic.org](http://www.maxweedonmusic.org)]. The charity will make modest awards to help disadvantaged young people in need of a financial helping hand to buy an instrument, or pay for studio time, some coaching, training in mastering and mixing and so on. The charity Trustees are currently working to establish its principles and operating procedures. It is planned to offer the first Awards in the autumn of 2024. Some of the proceeds from the sales of this book will go to support the charity and help continue the good work Max was so passionate about.*

*For further details please contact: [info@maxweedonmusic.org](mailto:info@maxweedonmusic.org)*

*Richard  
[Prof Richard Waller]*

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## About the Editors

**Richard Waller** is Professor of Education and Social Justice at UWE Bristol. He has taught in further and higher education for nearly 30 years. Richard co-leads UWE's EdD Professional Doctorate in Education and Education PhD programmes. His own research interests cover education, inequality and identity/ies, and he has published widely on these topics.

**Jane Andrews** is Professor of Education at UWE Bristol. Her research interests focus on multilingualism and learning. Jane teaches on the undergraduate programmes BA (Hons) Early Childhood and BA (Hons) Education. Jane supervises doctoral students and jointly leads the UWE EdD programme. Jane's current research explores integrating creative arts practices into learning and teaching.

**Timothy Clark**'s research focuses on researcher development, including the role of doctoral pedagogy in supporting and influencing methodological decision-making. Following a career as a leader in early years education, he completed an EdD before joining UWE in 2019. He is currently the Director of Research and Enterprise for the School of Education and Childhood at UWE.

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## About the Contributors

**Shamsudin Abikar** is a Doctor of Education and for 19 years has been working in mainstream educational settings (primary and secondary) in Bristol in different roles. In 2012, he won the Primary Language Classroom Award for his contribution of how English is taught to primary pupils who learn it as an additional language (EAL learners). Shamsudin presented his research outcomes in and outside of the United Kingdom. His research interests include languages and education, multilingualism, identity and learning. He has published many articles including *Addressing English Reading Comprehension Difficulties by Somali Origin Pupils in England Primary Schools*.

**Jake Bacon** is a Senior Lecturer in Education at UWE and is the digital lead for the BA Education programme. Jake worked in further education (FE) for 15 years firstly as a sports lecturer, and later as a teacher training coordinator. Jake's EdD, completed in 2017, was titled 'FE Sports Lecturer Professionalism': 'Freedom to Play', or 'Do as I Say?'. Jake's research interests relate to teacher professionalism, working contexts of teachers and digital pedagogy. Outside of work Jake is a volunteer lifeboat Helm at Portishead RNLI, which he has been doing for the last 12 years.

**Helen Bovill's** research interests focus on identity, in particular non-traditional identity. Helen's recent research is situated in the field of relationships, sex and health education, and prevention and response to violence against women and girls. Helen has taught at UWE for nearly 20 years and currently teaches and supervises postgraduates.

**Nicola Bowden-Clissold's** primary research interest is in exploring young children's experiences in educational settings, adopting participatory action-based research methodologies. Being passionate about early childhood education, Nicola teaches and supervises in areas of early years, childhood, children's rights and voices and teacher and practitioner provision.

**Ciaran Burke** is an Associate Professor of Higher Education; his research focuses on social inequalities in higher education and the graduate labour market through a Bourdieusian theoretical lens. His recent work has focused on conceptualizing 'resilience' within a Sociological framework.

**Juliet Edmonds'** current research interests are engineering education in primary schools, using science literary materials with children, the development of

expertise in science teaching and language in science. Her doctoral research explored the ways teachers develop their science teaching and identity in school. She has worked at UWE, educating teachers, for over 20 years. She started her career as a primary teacher in London schools and as an advisory teacher for science.

**Georgie Ford** has been a figure in the mental health and educational field for over 15 years. Georgie has worked within the NHS and acute settings before moving to education where she has lectured from GCSE to HE level and is a senior fellow of the HEA and SET. Georgie's doctoral research focuses on changing the narrative of mental health in FE. This was presented at the London International Conference of Education and is published in the International Journal for Cross Disciplinary Subjects in Education. Georgie writes for TES and developed an emotional recovery framework for education. Georgie is a Mental Health First Aid and Suicide First Aid instructor and has achieved the Gold Carnegie Award in mental health for her work.

**Nicholas Garrick**, as a teacher, school leader and consultant, is committed to exploring how people think about learning, teaching and research. As an EYFS and primary school teacher and leader for 23 years, he has led and supported a range of schools locally to organizations and governments in post-conflict and post-disaster countries. As a school leader and consultant, he enables others to seek solutions, and considers creativity, curiosity and enquiry as essential to both leading and learning. As a researcher, Grounded Theory and clean language drive everything he seeks to understand.

**Andy Goldhawk's** doctoral research explores perceptions of ongoing professional learning for mid-career lecturers in the further education (FE) sector in England. Previously an FE lecturer for 15 years, Andy now works in higher education. Andy's interest in professional learning has since led to the publication of his first book, 'The Super Quick Guide to Learning Theories and Teaching Approaches', by SAGE in May 2023. He has also published in the journal Research in Post-Compulsory Education.

**Neil Harrison** is an Associate Professor in Education and Social Justice in the School of Education at the University of Exeter. His research interests focus on educational inequalities and marginalization, with a particular theme around young people's decision-making. He enjoys supervising doctoral students across a range of topics, theories and methodologies.

**Verity Jones** has worked with organizations such as Friends of the Earth, Fashion Revolution, the BBC and Barnardo's to explore themes such as climate and sustainable education, anti-racism and impacts on mental health and wellbeing. Social and environmental justice is a consistent thread through Verity's research and educational practice.

**Ben Knight** is a Senior Lecturer in Education and former teacher and school leader. He lectures on Initial Teacher Education (ITE), postgraduate, masters and doctoral programmes at UWE, Bristol. His research interests include

investigating teaching and learning from a complex systems perspective and applications of complexity theory to education, e.g. exploring ways learning emerges within classroom collectives. He also researches and writes about the importance and development of teacher judgement. Ben is Pedagogy Strand co-leader for UWE's Education & Childhood Research Group and founder and Director of Project Zulu, an international education partnership between UWE and school districts in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Ben's first book titled 'Nurturing Professional Judgement' published by Critical Publishing was published in October 2023.

**Meg Maguire** is a Professor of Sociology of Education in the School of Education, Communication and Society at King's College London. Her research is in the sociology of education, social justice and policy. Currently she is part of a team working on a five year project investigating how England's vocational education and training (VET) system can better support the school-to-work transitions of the 50% of young people who don't go to university.

**Laura Manison's** research is centred on class, gender and the perceived choices people make as a result. Her doctoral research explored choice in terms of young working and middle-class women becoming primary school teachers. She works on postgraduate courses in UWE's School of Education and Childhood looking chiefly at learning theory in HE. Before that Laura worked as a primary school teacher, school leader and then led the PGCE in Primary and Early Years Education at UWE. Laura's methodological interest is grounded in narrative inquiry and as her academic work has evolved she has embraced poetic representation and autoethnography to present her own and her participants' narratives.

**Kathy Mansfield Higgins** is Max's mother. She started her career teaching geography in Botswana and subsequently worked in several African countries in various state-building and governance assignments. Max was born in Botswana and maintained a deep attachment to southern Africa. Kathy now writes short stories and teaches creative writing.

**Alexandra Morfaki's** research interests lie in the area of inclusion in the early years for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Her doctoral thesis focused on early years educators' interpretation of inclusion in practice and explored interprofessional partnerships for inclusion and their influence on the formation of the role and identities of early years educators. Alexandra currently works as a Lecturer in early years at Norland College. She initially trained as a reception class teacher and worked in a range of early years settings in the capacity of teacher and manager prior to completing her Doctorate.

**Sally Moyle's** research interest is in the arena of professional identity, and supporting health practitioners move into new and expanding roles. A nurse by professional background, Sally worked as an Emergency Nurse Practitioner and has been in Higher Education for over 20 years developing new programmes and initiatives to support role expansion across all levels and more specifically

Advanced Practice. She is currently the Pro Vice Chancellor for Health and Science at the University of Worcester.

**Tessa Podpadec's** research interests include teacher professionalism, educational environments, sustainable futures in education and using creative approaches as research method and pedagogical practice. Most recently she has worked on projects exploring climate change, fast fashion and sustainable education and impacts of racism on mental health and wellbeing.

**Catherine Rosenberg's** professional interests have included the varying development of students and academics. Her work in academic management and teaching is now focused at postgraduate level on a range of professional development programmes. She supervises postgraduate students on various pedagogical and methodological areas, particularly in relation to narrative inquiry.

**Julie Smith's** doctoral research investigates the beliefs and practices of high expectation teachers. Julie has taught in secondary schools for nearly 30 years and is currently the Vice-Principal at a school in Gloucestershire, with responsibility for teaching and learning. She has also written for various publications including the Times Educational Supplement, the BERA blog and the Chartered College of Teaching. Julie's educational philosophy is underpinned by a belief in social justice, and as such she is a passionate advocate for non-selective state education, and for the professional learning and development needs of teachers to advance a transformative vision of education.

**Karan Vickers-Hulse's** research interests focus on the impact of policy and identity. Karan's doctoral research explored the complexities of professional identity formation for trainees on a postgraduate teacher education programme. Karan is a teacher educator and researcher; although much of her work focuses on student teachers, she is passionate about supporting all educators to continue learning in a constantly shifting landscape of policy and practice in education. Karan started her career as a primary school teacher and worked in senior leadership roles in schools in England and Wales before moving to UWE Bristol in 2013. Karan is now the Associate Director of Education in the School of Education and Childhood.

**Sarah Whitehouse's** research interests are focused on the teaching of sensitive and controversial issues that teachers may face in the classroom. Her doctoral research considered how the history curriculum can cause tensions for teachers when they engage in topics that can be sensitive and or controversial. Sarah's recent research is situated in the field of anti-racist education and issues of social justice. Sarah started her career as a primary school teacher and has worked in higher education supporting trainee teachers for the last 13 years. She is an active and passionate member of the history and geography education community, locally, nationally and internationally.

**Marcus Witt** began teaching in South India and rural Kentucky before returning to the United Kingdom to complete his PGCE work in primary schools. He now works in initial teacher education. He has a long-standing interest in psychology;

from the cognitive and emotional processes in mathematical learning to the role of personality in children's classroom interactions.

**Max Weedon** was a passionate and highly gifted teacher and academic. His main love was music in all genres, and he worked with young musicians in the United Kingdom, the Caribbean and Zimbabwe. Another passion was scuba diving, and he was Padi qualified Master Diver and Instructor. It was while diving in Barbados that he died in a car accident in early 2023. As a committed teacher in the United Kingdom, faced with implementing the Government's controversial Prevent policy, Max researched the societal and political motives behind the policy, and its effects on teachers' pedagogic and welfare responsibilities towards their students.

*How to access the original doctoral studies*

Any of the 14 theses upon which these chapters are based can be found in the UWE research repository using this address, and typing the author's name into the search box: <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/study/library/browse-resources-a-z/theses>

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# Acknowledgements

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*Richard, Jane and Timothy*

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## Chapter 1

# Educational Policies and Professional Identities: Showcasing Lessons From Doctoral Practitioner Research

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### The Background to the Collection

The inspiration for this collection can be traced to an earlier book, [Bathmaker and Harnett's \(2010\)](#) edited Routledge volume 'Exploring Learning, Identity and Power through Life History and Narrative Research'. That collection contained 12 chapters, many sole-authored by staff of the University of the West of England (UWE), and most of which focused upon doctoral studies employing qualitative approaches to educational research. Contributors included Richard Waller (RW) and Jane Andrews (JA), two of this collection's editors. RW and JA have co-led UWE's Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) since 2014, having redeveloped the programme upon appointment to the role.

Unlike the previous collection, this volume only showcases doctoral work, much of which was influenced by UWE's EdD's Researching Educational Policy and Professional Identities (REPPi) module. REPPi explores the interplay between education policy (whether at national, regional or local level) and the professional identities of those working within the education system. These topics are frequently investigated by candidates in the EdD's research phase, and occasionally by our PhD students too (many of whom are practitioner-researchers themselves, including Georgie Ford, the sole PhD graduate whose work features here). That was the case before the REPPi module was developed and introduced in 2014, and has remained so in the decade since. REPPi explores issues, across all education sectors, including the tensions between professional autonomy, personal values and 'performativity', and how they are facilitated or constrained by policy diktats, whether on a macro, meso or micro level, and that is what the chapters here consider.

The notion of pairing early career researchers (ECRs), all of whom were recent doctoral graduates (as lead authors), with a supervisor or other senior colleague

with greater experience of academic writing as a co-author, significantly assists the ECR's journeys into publication and aids their development as researchers in the postdoctoral phase of their careers. Anecdotally from our experience as programme leaders, and discussions with those in similar roles elsewhere, we knew that the academic activity of recent graduates from practice-based doctorates such as the EdD often stalled as the demands of their personal lives and professional roles returned to the fore after completing their studies. Curating and developing collections such as this helps strengthen the education research community within and between the university and its partner organisations, offering clear routes into publication for the co-authors. The process of how this happened is outlined later within this chapter.

While there have been several recent books focusing on EdD study (e.g. Emerald's excellent 2020 collection edited by Iona Burnell Reilly and Jodi Roffey-Barentsen), none actually exclusively feature the work of doctoral students themselves. Our book acts as an example of practitioner-researcher doctoral study within various professional settings and emphasises the impact and transferability of the findings across a range of educational sectors. It also highlights lessons that other practitioner-researchers, including those on professional doctorates, can benefit from learning about the process of doctoral research; as such it offers a unique contribution to the literature on doctoral study.

The book concludes with a chapter from a leading academic in the field, Prof Meg Maguire of Kings College, London, who reviews the contribution of the collection in furthering our understanding of educational policies and professional identities, and reflects upon the role doctoral studies can play in exploring such topics.

## **Setting the Scene: Researcher Development**

There is a continuing focus on researchers' development during and after their doctoral studies both nationally, in the United Kingdom, and internationally. In 2023, the British Educational Research Association (BERA) published a review document entitled 'The State of the Discipline' which made the following warning: 'future career trajectories after completion of doctorates are too uncertain', BERA (2023, p. 2). This warning was further qualified with the observation that the career uncertainty was worse for researchers from minoritised backgrounds. The Researcher Concordat (VITAE, 2019) had raised a similar concern, as expressed in its foreword:

there is still much to do to create the healthy and supportive culture needed to ensure our researchers are given every opportunity to thrive and realise their potential.

Both of these sources signal the need for the routine provision of developmental opportunities to scaffold doctoral graduates between being postgraduate students and the next stage of their research careers. We planned this book project

with the goal of generating a supportive culture for postdoctoral students from our institution to work together, turning an aspect of their thesis into a book chapter.

The Researcher Concordat further recommended that in the postdoctoral phase, researchers need time and opportunities to develop their academic identities, reflecting the move from being a supervised doctoral student to being an independent researcher. Attention to how the needs of the researchers of the future can be met was explored in 2019 by an international group of research leaders gathered in Germany. The outcome of that meeting was published as the Hannover Recommendations for Doctoral Education, all of which coincide with our own commitment to continuing support for graduates and, in particular, to equity in doctoral students' experiences.

A distinctive feature of the studies explored in chapters 2 to 15 in this collection is their focus on exploring educational policy, practice and professional identities through research across a range of educational sectors in England. The perspectives of practitioner researchers in education have been highlighted and discussed recently within the work of BERA in their delineation of 'close to practice' research, which is defined as follows:

Close-to-practice research focusses on issues defined by practitioners as relevant to their practice, and involves collaboration between people whose main expertise is research, practice, or both. (Wyse et al., 2018, p. 34)

We believe that the practitioner-researchers in our collection have identified issues relevant to their practice and are contributing to improving and understanding those practices better. We would also go further, however, in suggesting that the studies offer insights into the policies shaping the practices documented in the specific contexts where the studies were located. These are studies that are close-to-policy as well as close-to-practice and are enhanced through being generated by insider researchers.

In the UK context, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) is used as an accountability tool for reporting on the quality of research outputs, the impact of research and the research environment associated with research-active institutions, usually universities. In a post-REF report (2021) relating to the discipline of education, particular mention was made of the crucial contribution of post-graduate research students to 'the vitality and intellectual life of research units'. We believe that this collection is reflective of that vitality.

## **Rationale**

This text brings together a collection of chapters highlighting lessons relating to educational policy and professional identities arising from the doctoral studies of 14 practitioner-researchers, 13 of whom were EdD graduates and one a PhD

graduate. The lessons the studies offer, therefore, come directly from ‘researching professionals’ (Butcher & Sieminski, 2006) whose research is entangled with, and informed by, their professional roles and expertise (Boud & Lee, 2009). As a result, their contributions prioritise learning within, for and about professional contexts (Fink, 2006), and thus the lessons, and the type of knowledge they generate, have a strong tendency to be applied, transdisciplinary and highly contextualised. The chapters illustrate aspects of the researchers’ journeys in navigating the relationships between their workplaces and the academy as sites of learning and knowledge production (Tennant, 2004), but also sites of responsibility and expectation. The nature of these relationships has the potential to create challenges in relation to realising the potential for wider value and impact from professional doctoral research, including through publication (Boud et al., 2021). While models for supporting doctoral practitioner researchers typically prioritise the need for intellectual rigour (Wildy et al., 2015) for busy professionals who may be primarily located outside of the academy, accessing time and support and developing understanding of some of the ‘hidden’ rules involved in academic production has the potential to present challenges and barriers to traditional forms of academic activity during and postdoctoral study.

In editing this collection, we therefore had two key objectives: First, we sought to bring together a range of high-quality examples of practitioner doctoral research studies which offer valuable, contextualised, insider, perspectives on issues relating to educational policy and professional identity. We believe that these illustrate the often unrealised potential of this form of research and will have value for a range of audiences, including doctoral students, academic colleagues, and education practitioners across a diverse range of contexts. Second, we aimed to utilise the development of this collection as an opportunity to build our practitioner research community, supporting doctoral graduates to share their research findings, to write for publication and to think about their next steps as ECRs. It is worth noting that in the majority of cases, the chapters included here represent the ECR authors’ first recognised academic publication of this nature. The following sections will briefly outline how these two central objectives informed the structure of the book and the approach we took to working with the authors during its production.

## **Structure**

The collection is organised into three sections: ‘Constructions of the Professional and Society’, ‘Interrogating Approaches to Being, Becoming and Developing as Education Professionals’ and ‘Challenging Educational Policy and Practice’. These sections each include chapters addressing topics relating to educational policy and professional identity in a diverse range of contexts, from early years education through to higher and professional education. The structure of the book aims to embrace this contextual diversity, while prioritising a focus on the nature of the contributions and lessons these examples of doctoral studies offer in relation to the collection’s substantive focus. We hope that this will encourage

readers to reflect on their potential to offer critical perspectives across educational contexts.

### ***Constructions of the Professional and Society***

The four chapters in this first section offer insights into the variety of contexts and the various different career points where professionals learn and develop. The contexts represented are early years settings, further education, higher education and the National Health Service (NHS) in England. The studies provide explorations of how professionals negotiate their changing identities, at different career stages and in response to existing or changing policies and practices. The authors use their doctoral studies to expose and explore enduring issues such as power imbalances between professionals, gendered professional identities and two alternative perspectives on hybrid professional identities.

### ***Interrogating Approaches to Being, Becoming and Developing as Education Professionals***

The book's middle section contains five chapters set in a range of educational contexts. Two are based in primary schools, one in a further education college and two on teacher education programmes. One primary school focused chapter explores how learning happens in a specific classroom, the other examines the influence of teachers' science backgrounds for those leading the teaching and learning of that subject in their school. The further education focused chapter explores the nature of continuing professional development in the sector, arguing persuasively for a more bespoke approach to provision than currently exists for lecturing staff. The two teacher education chapters centre on different routes into the profession, and how the teacher education programmes pursued impact the process of becoming education professionals.

### ***Challenging Educational Policy and Practice***

In the book's final section, the five chapters feature studies seeking to challenge, and illuminate the implications of, a selection of key contemporary educational policies in England. Addressing a range of educational contexts, including primary, secondary, further and higher education, the chapters explore the complexity of policy enactment and the impact this may have on range of stakeholders. As practitioner-researchers, the authors provide important, grounded contributions relating to a range of issues embedded in their own practice and lived experiences and shaped by educational policy in England. These encompass areas including the teaching of sensitive and controversial issues, the enactment of counter-terrorism policy and support for students' mental and emotional health.

## Process

The process for developing the collection took place over a period of approximately 18 months and had a pre-planned structure designed to focus on researcher development and building a practitioner-researcher community. The project was allocated some internal funding by the University to support these aspects, and as part of this expressions of interest were invited for an ECR to gain experience as a co-editor, through working with RW and JA as more experienced authors (this role was taken on by Timothy Clark (TC)). A call for abstracts was then issued to recent doctoral graduates from the Department, which resulted in a high level of interest – over 20 were received – and subsequently a selection process to identify the final 14 chapters, which was the maximum number as editors we felt we could accommodate given the collection’s word limit. All doctoral graduates were encouraged, but not required, to consider working with a member of their doctorate’s supervision team or another colleague with greater experience of academic writing, who could act as a second author and help guide the chapter’s development. Two chapters were sole authored by the doctoral graduate alone, 10 by the ECR and one other writer, and two in collaboration with a couple of co-authors. Once the chapters’ writing teams were identified, we ran an initial briefing session, at which we provided detailed guidance to all authors, and also facilitated introductions and invited overviews of each proposed contribution. Given the various professional commitments of the authors, this took place as a hybrid session in the evening.

The project then included a number of aspects intended to support our objectives relating to individual researcher development and the strengthening of our wider research community. Firstly, each author was invited to work with their co-author to determine the most constructive approach to their individual roles, and levels of input, into the writing process. Alongside this, they were also paired with the author of another chapter and encouraged to share and discuss their writing, and their challenges, as the work developed, and to provide feedback on each other’s drafts as ‘critical friends’. Each section of the book also had a lead editor (RW, JA or TC) who acted as a primary point of contact for discussing questions, ideas and requirements throughout the process. At the beginning of the project, a detailed timeline was provided, and this included a series of writing retreat sessions for the authors, providing designated time for writing and promoting further opportunities for connections between contributors. These sessions utilised a format developed by Rowena Murray (Murray, 2012; Murray & Newton, 2009), consisting of designated writing time alongside opportunities to discuss writing objectives and any individual challenges. Authors attending these sessions frequently commented on the significant value they offered in progressing their work. The final key source of support for authors was the production of guidance in response to emerging queries as we progressed. For example, authors were provided with recorded video guidance about getting started on planning their chapters after some had highlighted the potentially overwhelming nature of trying to move from a lengthy doctoral thesis to a distinct chapter which captured key lessons for other postgraduate researchers.

The editing and review process took a similarly supportive approach, with each chapter going through at least three cycles of review and feedback including responses from each of the editors. We developed a feedback template to ensure consistency of editorial approach and that the guidance was clearly structured, enhancing its utility. We ‘moderated’ our feedback to one sample chapter before the editing and feedback process began in earnest. This aimed to highlight both the strengths of the chapters and areas for potential development, and to adopt a supportive and constructive tone throughout. Regular communications were provided to contributing writers to explain the editing process and authors were encouraged to discuss feedback and revisions with their co-authors.

In addition to these structured aspects for supporting the writing process, we also utilised this collection’s development to create additional opportunities for the doctoral graduates to share their work including through conference presentations and other events. Papers arising from this collection were presented at the 2023 BERA and Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) conferences, and presentations were given to our university’s Education and Childhood Research Group and at postgraduate research seminars. All of these opportunities featured selected authors involved in this book and again in some cases this was the authors’ first experience of presenting their work in such fora.

Alongside the valuable contributions, these chapters offer individually, we hope that the collection as a whole, and the editorial process detailed above, will provoke reflections on opportunities for supporting doctoral graduates’ and other ECRs’ next steps. We also hope to highlight the significant potential of the wealth of knowledge and expertise contained within postgraduate practitioner research of this nature.

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