

Doctoral Programmes in Europe

Nice 7/9 december 2006



WG6: Professional doctorates: A growing trend?

I. Topic

The topic of this WG is threefold:

- reach a better understanding of the demand for and the emergence in some countries of professional doctorates
- discuss the characteristics of industrial doctorates that are also being introduced in some countries in the engineering and technical sciences
- consider the future development of both phenomena given labour market demands for highly-trained skilled professionals and the increasing importance of lifelong learning at a highly skilled level

II. Starting Point

The development of these new forms of doctorates are linked to the changing career patterns of doctoral graduates, changing labour market needs and, as far as professional doctorates are concerned, a growing interest from professionals in a number of fields to update their expertise and further their own knowledge by acquiring a doctoral degree in their own professional field, for example in law or education. There is also the specific situation of medicine and other health professions that needs to be considered in this context.

III. Issues for Discussion

Professional doctorates were initially developed in North America in the field of education with the purpose of enabling teachers to further their professional career. They emerged recently also in the UK, but do not exist in many other European countries, and thus, while there is considerable interest in this topic, the development and practice of professional doctorates is not well understood. Professional doctorates can be found mainly in the fields of education, health sciences, law, business, psychology, humanities, design and architecture. The development of professional doctorates is linked to the pressures of more professionally relevant programmes and changes in the labour market.

As far as the industrial doctorate is concerned, while also not systematically developed across Europe, this type of university–industry cooperation is regarded by universities as a variant of traditional doctoral education but with the specific feature of including a structured link to industry where doctoral candidates carry out part of their research project.

At present professional and industrial doctorates can be found in particular in the UK, Ireland and the Nordic countries as far as Europe is concerned. However, a similar debate on the nature and requirements for professional doctorates is also taking place outside Europe in the US, Australia and New Zealand).

IV. Workshop Outcomes

- **Areas of consensus**
- **Areas for further discussion**