

# **Continuing Professional Development: The DEdPsy course at UCL**

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University-based, continuing professional development doctorate programmes emerged in the 1990s as a response to a number of converging pressures from within and outside professions. These included- the need to adapt to a rapidly changing practice context, keep abreast of an ever-expanding Psychology knowledge and practice base, and to enhance existing qualifications to achieve higher intra- and inter-professional status.

Following consultation with a number of services in London and the Home Counties, the Continuing Professional Development doctorate programme (DEdPsy) at UCL began in January 1999. It was specifically designed for experienced Educational and Child Psychology practitioners and the overall aim was to provide a carefully designed, part-time programme which enhanced professional practice, creativity and effectiveness. The four-year, part-time course offered (and still offers) a substantial and long-term professional development research project; in-depth and specialist knowledge in specific areas of practice, and opportunities to catch up on 'leading-edge psychology research and practice'. It continues to provide course members with the chance to reflect on both their personal and

professional attitudes, beliefs and interpersonal effectiveness.

Although teaching, supervision and course member support have continued to evolve, the DEdPsy requirements remain as follows:

a) A research thesis of not less than 30,000 (and normally no more than 40,000 words) exclusive of footnotes, tables, bibliography and appendices) which makes a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and offers evidence of originality shown by the discovery of new facts and the exercise of independent critical power.

b) Four assignments of 6,500 - 7,500 words each, which illustrate an ability to apply psychological principles to professional practice in educational psychology. These topics are- psychological assessment and intervention; the profession of educational psychology and its context, and personal effectiveness in a professional context.

Nine years after DEdPsy course began, an in-depth review took place and its final comment was that the continuing challenge for the DEdPsy at UCL would be 'to provide the type of continuous professional development experiences that will make the distinctive contribution of educational and child psychologists both visible to and valued by clients, and practitioners alike' (Cameron, Frederickson, Lunt & Lang, 2008).

Today the same challenge remains, namely that educational and child psychologists would continue to generalize and adapt learning and remain motivated, self-directed learners who critique their own knowledge and practice and continue to engage in in future professional development activities throughout their careers.

*“...in today’s complex world we must educate not merely for competence but for capability (the ability to adapt, to change, generate new knowledge, and continue to improve performance)...”* (Fraser & Greenhalgh, 2001, p.799).

#### References:

Cameron, R J, Frederickson, N, Lunt, I, & Lang, J. (2008) Changing professional views of continuing professional development doctorates in educational psychology. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, **24** (3), 251-267.

Fraser, S and Greenhalgh, T. (2001) Coping with complexity: educating for capability. *British Medical Journal*, **323**, 799-803.