This document contains slides presented at the conference Academic Demarcations: Disciplines and Interdisciplinarity, 13-14 September 2012 at the University of Oslo, and may only be quoted after informing the authors:

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At the crossroads between “scientific excellence” and “practice-relevant science”:
Epistemic tensions in the Doctoral School
Oslo, 2012-09-14
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Why study PhD Education?
• It is an interesting site for studying academic demarcations and ways of organising curriculum knowledge into education and research activities
• It takes part of a performative turn with strong internal and external demands of relevance and result-oriented performativity
• A heavy policy activity and coordination trans-nationally and across faculties challenges the institutional base of disciplines

Understanding higher education governance – the European and transnational outlook
Increased transnational governance and ideals of transparency, comparability and progression – maintained by the universities themselves, e.g:
• By the integration of PhD Education in the 3-cycle system (of bachelor-master-doctorate), as a flagship and bridge between EHEA and ERA (Berlin communiqué, 2003), for opening PhD Education for public scrutiny, different forms of performative measures
• Made visible in university strategic work and strivings for excellence (manifested in funding instruments, rankings of publications etc) and to include postgraduate studies and their performances
• Expressed as a concern and matter of public interest to take notion of the doctoral student experience and learning

Understanding higher education governance – cont
• Convergence in the knowledge production through standards of quality, learning outcomes, bench-marking projects and other managerial instruments in PhD Education
  • The European University Association’s Doctoral Council
• Doctoral schools as a means to reform higher education and the University
  • Within, or between higher education institutions, in the creation of new centers of excellence, labs, and clusters, in collaboration with local and global instances, etc
Questions raised

How are the dynamics of disciplinarity at play and translated into the curriculum of PhD Education?
In particular,
• what is the significance of the Doctoral School in this regard and
• how is this played out in a weak disciplinary field – like Educational Science?
• Are new power relations between disciplinary fields, politics and society appearing?

Research focus

The epistemic characteristics of PhD Education within the Educational Sciences (with subdisciplines like pedagogy, didactics and pedagogical work) and its relations to external pressures of social and scientific relevance.

Research on PhD Education and disciplinarity, I

Socialisation via a ‘master-apprentice’ relation of supervision is seen as fundamental;
• Shared inquiry constitutes disciplinary socialisation, which explains differences between social and natural sciences (Becher, Henkel & Kogan, 1994)
• To learn the discipline is to develop an academic identity (Henkel, 2000)
• ...and is thereby recommended as a part of PhD Education and training of future researchers (Parry, 2007)

Research on PhD Education and disciplinarity, II

Conceptualisations of external–internal demands of relevance:
• Professional career changes for PhDs (Enders, 2004), beyond the academic institution
• The PhD diploma is not stable or equivalent (Parry, 2007)
• PhDs oriented towards professional and industrial fields are devaluated (Thelin, 2009; Thune, 2010)
• The safety of traditional disciplinary norms dominate over transdisciplinary ones (Felt et al, 2011)
The case of Educational Science

- Multidisciplinary
- ‘Fragmented adhocracy’ in publication and communication behaviour
- Shaped by its close relation to teaching professions and practices, teacher education and school politics
- Pre-academic history, connecting to the present academization
- Characterized by theory/practice conceptualisations – debated but important for disciplinary self-understanding

Disciplinary orientations in PhD Ed

Three certain ways to categorise different orientations of PhD Education within the Educational sciences;

- Disciplinary (traditional epistemic terrain)
- Professional (pragmatically and competence-oriented)
- Trans/multidisciplinary (intellectual or social boundary crossing)

1) Disciplinary, 2) professional and 3) trans/multidisciplinary orientations within one educational department

a) Works as rhetorical and competing devices (reputation around quality, relevance in thematics and partnerships etc) in the construction of Doctoral Schools

b) Generic and ‘trans-scientific fields’ are created

c) Positionality; 1 and 3 more often internationally oriented, 2 locally oriented

a) Separation – isolation?

b) Adaptation to production performativity – weakened ties to discipline?

b) De-coupling the discipline from the institution (nation)?