

Authority and voice: Setting up a debate

Education

Source: Maxwell, Judy (2009). Contesting the culture of the doctoral degree: candidates' experiences of three doctoral degrees in the School of Education, RMIT University. Education, RMIT University.

Maxwell explains:



I needed to argue that despite the expectations for standardised values in research degrees, this is not supported. I construct the argument and counter-argument in the style of a debate turn. (Note that the paragraph is separated into sentences here for the purposes of identifying elements in the debate).

1. Note how she refers to expectations to establish the debate.
2. Maxwell's voice is seen in the way in which she has set up the debate and ordered the discussion.
3. Both Brown and Evans are useful to her argument. While Brown provides support for her own opinions, Evans gives an alternative that is quite easy to counter.

<p>The value of research degrees in terms of their relative standards is an issue not widely researched.</p> <p>With Doctorates and Masters by research degrees seen in virtually all universities around the world and the substantial movement of academics between universities (with the prerequisite of a research degree), we would expect some sort of universal currency.</p> <p>Brown (1999), however, in discussing the possible application of benchmarking to postgraduate study, believes this not to be the case, citing the difficulty in being accepted to study for the PhD in some universities relative to others.</p> <p>Although Evans (1998), from within the context of developing professional doctorates, attempts to benchmark the doctorate in order to prevent erosion by arguing that 'all doctorates should consist substantially of research training and practice and be founded on three years of full-time equivalent study after an appropriate Honours or Masters degree' (p.288), this is obviously too broad to be of use in identifying or upholding any idea of value of the PhD.</p> <p>Brown (1999), in fact, points to the reason for the relative lack of rigour in defining and applying assessment frameworks for higher degrees compared to undergraduate level. In discussing the impossibility of comparing, for example, a doctorate in electrochemistry with one in education, she alludes to the intransigent belief of some that 'hard' science is more difficult (and therefore inherently more valuable) than 'soft' disciplines (or vice versa).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Topic sentence 2. The debate issue – expect universal standards 3. Cite 1 (Brown) challenges these expectations 4. Cite 2 (Evans) Maxwell argues that Evans' benchmark is too general to be used as a 'standard'. 5. Cite 3 (Brown again) Explains lack of standards in terms of cross disciplinary 'conflict'
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