Constructing an HDR Curriculum

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Research degrees are an example of what Donald Schon calls ‘learning by doing’ in that one learns about research through actually undertaking research. One implication of this is that both what is learnt about research and how such learning occurs can remain implicit and unrecognized within the research process. Such learning is rarely made explicit except in those instances where something goes wrong or a deficit in knowledge becomes evident.

This paper will report on a project underway at RMIT aimed at improving research degree candidates’ understanding of what and how they are learning. The project takes the position that doing a research degree insofar as it is about learning and knowledge is to be understood as a research education. The first phase of the project involved the creation of a research curriculum aimed at providing a framework for understanding the process of learning and knowledge generation and the development of research and generic capabilities involved in undertaking a research degree. This paper will explore the paradox of attempting to construct a curriculum for research activity and discuss how this and other issues have been addressed.