The PhD in the global knowledge economy: Hypothesising beyond employability

Rachael Pitt

The University of Queensland, QLD, Australia

Debate concerning the fitness for purpose of the PhD is increasing within the current climate of a global knowledge economy and discourses surrounding employability and lifelong learning. This paper outlines how these two discourses place the burden for skill or attribute development onto individuals, generally neglecting the notion that these pursuits are socially constructed. The paper then highlights that employability may, in the future, be operationalised differently at the postgraduate and undergraduate levels, with notions of research leadership being of potentially greater relevance than employability discourses when considering PhD graduate outcomes. The aims and methodology of an ARC Linkage Project currently underway are then outlined to illustrate how employability may be examined in terms of the PhD and how this information may impact upon our ideas of what purpose the PhD should fill and how to accomplish this.