CHAPTER N

THREE AGENDAS FOR RESEARCHING PROFESSIONALS:

CHALLENGING AND DEVELOPING YOUR THINKING ABOUT YOUR DOCTORAL JOURNEY

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INTRODUCTION

Aims

This chapter considers the 'positioning' of professional doctoral students who are funded by the organisation to which they belong and which they are researching, as I am. Griffiths (1998, p133) suggests that all researchers need to engage in reflexive examination of their own socio-political positions and interests because "bias comes not from having ethical and political positions – that is inevitable – but from not acknowledging them." Reflexive self-examination has helped me to understand that my struggle with my own positioning is due in part to the multiple identities in tension with each other that I have come to occupy. Drawing on the methodological and empirical literatures, and on my experiences as both a professional and a doctoral student, I suggest three critical Agendas through which to consider reflexive practice and positioning. My proposed Agendas address: (1) students' positioning as simultaneous 'insider' and 'outsider'; (2) the kinds of knowledge that they can produce; and (3) ethical challenges that they face in being funded. These sets of issues will resonate with all doctoral students whose journey is funded, not only with those undertaking professional doctorates.

Background

Universities have become part of the globalised knowledge economy (Loxley and Seery, 2012; Taylor, 2007). This has produced an increasing emphasis on context-specific and problem-oriented knowledge creation (Lang *et al*., 2012). Several U.K. universities have responded to these imperatives by adding new doctoral education formats to their 'traditional' PhD-by-thesis, including practice-based or 'professional doctorates', 'new route' PhDs, and doctorates by publication (Wildy, Peden and Chan, 2014). 'Professional doctorates' are research degrees designed for practitioners which combine research training via a taught programme and research in the workplace, and have the aims of making

a difference to the profession and directly influencing the working lives of the practitioners (Taylor, 2007). In England, professional doctoral students most commonly self-fund their courses, but may be funded in whole or in part by employers (Mellors-Bourne, Robinson and Metcalfe, 2016), or possibly by other sponsors such as a research council (McCay, 2010). I took up the opportunity to study for a professional doctorate in education (EdD) because my headteacher (principal) believed that the school, the wider profession, and I personally would all benefit. He agreed to fund my course if I focused my research on the specific context of my school's work in leading a new multi-school collaborative improvement initiative. A critical question that this arrangement has raised for me is to what extent it exemplifies the practice-oriented purpose and research focus that professional doctorate programmes have been designed to produce (Mellors-Bourne, Robinson and Metcalfe, 2016), and at the same time to what extent it places my doctoral journey under methodological and ethical pressures. It is these pressures that my reflexive Agendas are intended to address.

Three Agendas for professional doctoral researchers

In this chapter, I propose three 'Agendas' through which professional doctoral researchers can challenge and develop their own thinking about their doctoral journeys:

One: Being simultaneously an 'insider' (a working member of the organisation being studied, or 'emic') and an 'outsider' (a researcher seeking to uncover detailed information about the organisation, or 'etic') (Morris, Leung, Ames and Lickel, 1999), professional doctoral students seem to occupy positions which threaten to undermine the validity of their research in both ethical and practical terms.

Two: The knowledge that professional doctoral students seek to produce, and the contribution to practice that they might make, can be thought of as being influenced by the various and sometimes conflicting purposes of undertaking their research (Taylor, 2007).

Three: An additional layer of ethical challenges faces researchers whose work is funded by the organisation that they are studying (Anderson *et al.*, 2012; Miller, Moore and Strang, 2006). I suggest that funded doctoral students are challenged ethically in four dimensions:
– **obligation** - the pressure to produce particular outcomes which is generated by the expectations of the funder;
– **power** relationships with the research participants;
– consequent problems in securing the **authenticity** of the participants' voices;
– the student's own disposition and assumptions as a member of the organisation being studied, leading to **predictive** thinking.

Reflexivity

The literature of doctoral practice predominantly offers reflexivity as a fundamental element in developing oneself as a researcher. Kamler and Thomson (2014, p.75) define "a reflexive scholar [as] one who applies to their own work the same critical stance, the same interrogative questions, and the same refusal to take things for granted as they do with their research data". In this chapter, I apply the idea of the 'reflexive scholar' to practitioners who

research their own organisations. In this context, being a reflexive scholar means that professional doctoral researchers need to recognise and interrogate their fluid positioning as they move between the communities of the academy and the workplace (Drake with Heath, 2011; Mercer, 2007). I suggest that a key reflexive step is to analyse critically one's own subjective points of view (that is, experiences of and insights into the subject of study that are personal to the researcher, and which may be tacit rather than explicit), so as to identify and acknowledge the perhaps unresolvable tensions between research and professional priorities. It follows that a key product of these tensions is the 'situatedness' of ethics for professionals who research their own workplaces. The fair and faithful representation of the research subject, which is also the researcher's own professional community, must inevitably be influenced by the various positions that the researcher occupies. Thus, given that the professional doctoral researcher, as with the ethnographer or anthropologist, "in part creates the facts that he or she then records" (Gobo, 2008, p.73), reflexive consideration of how and why the resulting picture is being produced by the researcher is a vital part of the representation process. By means of the following Agendas, I would like to offer some transformative critical practices which could help professional doctoral students to interrogate their own positioning, thereby "think[ing] and act[ing] critically about the principles and practice of research" (Taylor, 2007, p.160).

AGENDA ONE – POSITIONING YOURSELF AS A PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL RESEARCHER

My first Agenda deals with three items: (1) professional doctoral researchers' membership identity; (2) the difficulty of maintaining a 'critical distance' when researching one's own workplace; and (3) dealing with the intimate knowledge that is accessible to an insider researcher.

I am an embodiment of my first Agenda: a full-time practitioner (a school teacher) and also a part-time professional doctoral student researching the influence of a collaborative group of schools on their staffs' professional development. Professional doctoral students are in a uniquely privileged position as members of the organisation, or participants in the process, that they are studying. Such an 'insider researcher' "possesses intimate knowledge" of "the community and its members" (Hellawell, 2006, p.483) that form the subject of enquiry, in ways that are denied to external researchers. This intimacy is clearly an advantage in terms of access to and cultural understanding of the subject organisation. But at the same time, there are significant "hidden ethical and methodological dimensions of insiderness" (Labaree, 2002, p.109) which demand that a professional doctoral researcher be especially reflexive. I therefore formulated critical questions to interrogate the ways in which my positions and identities could distort or prejudice what I looked for, how I looked for it, and my representation of what I might find.

Item 1. Membership identity

The first item on this Agenda is the 'membership identity' of professional doctoral researchers. Their position is both *emic* (as a professional member of the organisation being studied) and also *etic* (as a doctoral researcher seeking to draw generally applicable conclusions from the particular culture being studied) (Morris, Leung, Ames and Lickel, 1999). They are thus located in at least two communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), their workplace and their doctoral

course at university, and these communities may have different values, assumptions and priorities. In the case of education, I have detected tension between the two communities in that many school teachers do not regard the work of educational researchers as relevant on a day-to-day basis to their own practice. This dichotomy has been entrenched by recent changes to initial teacher education (ITE) in England which position teaching as a technical craft, place it in a marketised and performative context, and see ITE as largely a matter of practice acquisition (Brown, Rowley and Smith, 2016). A gap in perceptions of the value of research activity has been found in a range of professions including education, social work and medicine (Hammersley, 2001; Bellamy *et al.*, 2013; Greenhalgh, Howick and Maskrey, 2014). Thus, critical questions to ask here were whether I valued my research activity more highly than did my workplace colleagues, on whose co-operation I depended to conduct my research; and what effect that difference would have on my project.

Insider researchers may find it easier to recruit participants for their research because they can make a request through established and trusted channels that are not open to an external researcher. But the research relationship is complicated by the fluid or 'dynamic' position that the researcher occupies in the workplace, a blend of involvement and detachment which may vary in time and space (Mullings, 1999). For example, someone who has formal authority at work over people who agree to participate in the project faces a substantial challenge when moving into the position of researcher. Could responses to the project, including agreement to take part at all, be said, with confidence, to be free of the influence of the workplace relationship? It has been argued that insider research must therefore be regarded as socially shaped (Loxley and Seery, 2008), but clearly there are dangers in using a research framework in which concepts and culture are shared by the researcher and all members of the project sample. Due to practical and ethical concerns uncovered by reflexive questioning, I decided not to include my own school in my sample, and I did not have any previous direct relationship with the schools that I did include. In this way, I attempted to develop and maintain a 'critical distance' between my simultaneous *emic* and *etic* positions (that is, to put aside prior assumptions and tacit understandings which were based on my own professional experience) (Appleby, 2013). The issue of 'critical distance' is considered under the second item on this Agenda, which I discuss in the next section.

Item 2. Difficulty of maintaining a 'critical distance'

A question raised about research conducted by professional doctoral researchers is whether they can achieve sufficient 'critical distance' from their workplace and colleagues to produce valid and reliable evidence about them (Drake with Heath, 2011; Sikes and Potts, 2008). Conversely, the ethnographic and anthropological research traditions favour the observer's 'participation' in the target culture on a spectrum of degrees of immersion (Spradley, 1980; Delamont, 2004). In some professional settings that are not comparable to those commonly studied by ethnographers and anthropologists, a limited 'negotiated interactive observer' position may be more acceptable to participants than full or partial immersion (Wind, 2008).

Although 'critical distance' might be achieved at the moment when analysis is carried out, it does not appear possible for professional doctoral researchers, who are always members of their organisations, to occupy permanently a non-participatory position. It may therefore be helpful to think of position in relative terms, as on a continuum. Some people are 'relative insiders', and some are

'relative outsiders', depending on their and on others' perceptions of their membership identity (Griffiths, 1998). Thus a professional who maintains effective relationships with work colleagues while also accessing their (possibly shared) experiences for research purposes could be thought of as a 'relative insider'. A professional whose research activity is regarded with some suspicion by colleagues, possibly because they believe it to be a form of management snooping, could be seen as a 'relative outsider'. But no position is comfortable for the professional doctoral researcher. Relative insiders may face the charge of being too distanced from the workplace community of which they are part: they have found a voice for themselves, but it may not be the voice of others in the community. They may be accused of selling out to the norms of university-based academic research. Relative outsiders may face charges of exploiting the workplace community, of hijacking the voices of its members, or of strengthening stereotypes (Griffiths, 1998). Critical questions to ask under this item include interrogating how events, conceptual categories, and assumptions on the part of both the participants and the researcher, might have been produced by particular institutional practices, values and cultures.

Professional doctoral students could perhaps take solace from the view that it is the task of insider research to identify such socio-political and historical factors which influence practice; to open up issues of values; to integrate the professional with the personal (both for the researcher and for the subjects of research); and to be educative for all participants (Reed and Proctor, 1995). From this perspective, the professional doctoral student's position may be seen as productive rather than limiting, in that these research aims cannot readily be achieved by someone entering the field from the outside: being part of the organisation and its processes is essential to understanding the case. 'Intimate knowledge' gained in this way is the third item on this Agenda, which I deal with in the next section.

Item 3. Intimate knowledge

It has been argued that a researcher's lack of knowledge of the history and culture of the particular organisation under study should be made part of the critique of external research more often than it is (Smyth and Holian, 2008). Concerns over the practical and ethical tensions of insider research can be balanced with the unusually privileged access that the researcher has as a member of the workplace community. There may be difficulties in negotiating exactly which parts of the organisation (people, operations, information) may be investigated, but insiders are in a position to use knowledge that they already have, such as awareness of organisational priorities and existing channels of communication, to pursue these negotiations (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007).

But the professional burden of 'insiderness', in this respect, is 'guilty knowledge' (Williams, 2010). This term means any knowledge that a researcher has that may do another person harm. If the researcher recognises that harm may arise, then an appropriate ethical assessment can be made, leading to a decision about confidentiality. A more complex instance could arise if the researcher acquires knowledge which has significance that the participant and the researcher are unaware of. Examples might include self-compromised anonymity, where participants unintentionally render their identities detectable; and courting professional risk when participants voice their own concerns which the researcher does not recognise as detrimental to their standing in the organisation. Potential damage caused by such 'guilty knowledge' can be revealed through critical reflection on the part of the researcher, possibly using

intimate knowledge of the community to weigh professional judgements against research judgements (Dobson, 2009), and in some instances allowing the former to trump the latter. Key questions that might help to address and balance these two lenses include: 'In whose interests am I asking this question?', 'Who might be damaged by this information and how?' and 'How can I represent work colleagues' experiences and views both accurately and without detriment to them?'

I have shown these three items under Agenda One in Figure 1 below:
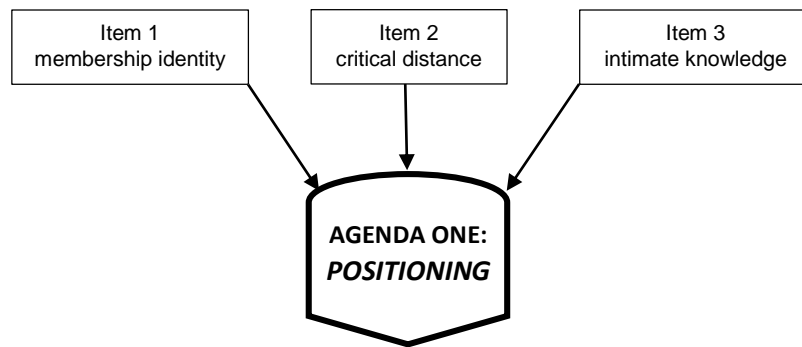
Figure 1. Agenda One: the professional doctoral researcher's positioning

The three items in boxes are used to suggest that the positioning of professional doctoral researchers is influenced by their membership identity (of at least two communities of practice); by the difficulty of maintaining 'critical distance' between their work as researchers and their subjects of study (which are their professional workplaces); and by the intimate knowledge of their organisations that being an 'insider' entails.

The types of knowledge that professional doctoral researchers have, acquire or create by virtue of their multiple positions need to be subjected to reflexive scrutiny. This challenge is addressed in Agenda Two, which is discussed next.

AGENDA TWO – PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE FOR VARIOUS PURPOSES

The focus of a professional doctorate is usually on a problem or activity, customer base or community with which the student is already familiar through working in or with it, with the aims of understanding it better (that is, to create knowledge), and of effecting improvement to how it works (that is, to contribute positively to practice) (Taylor, 2007). The kinds of knowledge that are valued for these purposes are considered in the following items under Agenda Two.

Item 1. Modes of knowledge generation

Professional doctoral students may have assumptions and ideas about what they expect to find out based on their experience as practitioners (Drake with Heath, 2011). This approach to enquiry influences the type or 'mode' of knowledge that they can produce. While Mode One knowledge is seen traditionally to reside in discrete disciplines focused in universities, Mode Two knowledge is seen to be

trans-disciplinary and generated through practice or experience (Gibbons *et al*., 1994). The knowledge that researching professionals may produce, founded on or responding to what they already know about their workplace, is thus more closely aligned to the 'new', practice-oriented Mode Two than the 'traditional', university-oriented Mode One. But as doctoral *students*, professional doctoral researchers face the problem of also satisfying the particular demands of the academy in how they formulate and present the knowledge that they produce, so as to qualify for doctoral status. They must "transform their existing models of professional knowledge and replace them with a critical and analytic reflection" (Drake with Heath, 2011, p18).

This key academic demand could be approached by paying attention to further modes of knowledge which the professional doctoral researcher is producing, but which might otherwise remain unspoken or even unconscious. Scott *et al.* (2004) have proposed that 'professional doctorates' suggest four modes of knowledge in all: in addition to Modes One and Two, they identify Mode Three, centred on conscious deliberation and reflection about the topic of study by the individual student, which is non-teachable; and Mode Four, centred on the development of the individual through the critical, self-interrogative practice of reflexivity. Mode Four chimes with the personal development, general intellectual interest and career advancement identified as reasons for undertaking a doctorate (Leonard, Becker and Coate, 2005; Gill and Hoppe, 2009). It thus appears that professional doctoral researchers are likely to value knowledge about themselves as a key element of the knowledge that their projects create. If this self-investigation is framed reflexively and foregrounded in the project's outcomes, then it could be used to satisfy the common academic requirement for critical reflection in professional doctorates (Boud and Walker, 1998; Lucas, 2012). Critical questions to use here might include: 'Which assumptions and positions deriving from my professional experience have led me to ask certain questions and not others?', 'How has my framing of my analysis influenced the knowledge that I have produced?' and 'What are the possible misunderstandings of my data that my own assumptions and positions might cause?' The positioning of individual professional doctoral researchers seems to be key to the knowledge that they can produce. I discuss the connected issue of how their research projects are oriented under the following item.

Item 2. Orientations of research outcomes

For the theoretical perspectives on knowledge production considered under Item 1 to be transformative to the doctoral researcher who is juggling professional and academic careers, they need to be seen in the light of each individual student's situation. For example, in reflecting on the modes of knowledge that my own research project might create, I had to consider the different 'orientations' of my project (Noffke, 1997; Rearick and Feldman, 1999).

Firstly, it was *situation-oriented* in that my focus was on a specific case, and one aim of the project was to make recommendations for action to the case organisation's leaders. The knowledge that would be valued for this purpose had a strongly local and instrumental bias towards the 'real world' in 'real time' (Costley, 2013). Dissemination was in the form of relatively brief reports delivered exclusively to the organisation's leaders, headed by an executive summary with a small number of targeted recommendations, and including a brief discussion of my survey findings. The leaders then chose to act or not act on my recommendations in the light of local priorities.

Secondly, my project was *policy-oriented* because I undertook a critique of a national-level school improvement policy, basing my judgements on one instance of the policy in action. It was possible, if only remotely, that policy changes might ensue from the dissemination of my research. In this orientation, dissemination was publicly in print and online; by presentation at conferences and other meetings of education professionals; and in non-specialist form such as industry magazines and social media platforms. My contribution to knowledge in this orientation was to a widely-distributed, opinion-based debate that might influence policy-making (Lomas, 1997; Alexander, 2014).

Thirdly, my project was *theory-oriented* in that a major requirement of my doctorate was to generate knowledge that could be expressed as theory, not merely to report the empirical observations from which that theory was drawn. I had therefore to relate my specific case to the wider academic literature and to other examples of the case. The theory orientation is primarily academic, and so the means of dissemination in this instance was by doctoral thesis (Bourner, Bowden and Laing, 2001). I did not expect the readership of the full-length work to be wide; for the theory generated by my research to have significant impact, it needed to be extracted from the thesis, slimmed down, and published in other, more widely accessible formats (Kamler, 2008) including some of those listed under my discussion above of policy-oriented outcomes.

To summarise Agenda Two, I suggest that professional doctoral researchers should ask critical questions about the types of knowledge that their research can produce. Questions might include: 'How is knowledge production being influenced in both content and dissemination practices by the various orientations or purposes that my research has?' and 'What unexpected or under-valued modes of knowledge could I develop?'

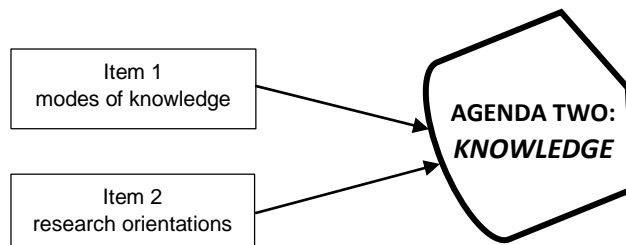I have shown the items discussed under Agenda Two in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2. Agenda Two: knowledge produced by a professional doctoral researcher

The two items in boxes are used to suggest that the knowledge content that professional doctoral researchers can produce is influenced by the modes that are open to them, including knowledge which responds to or is founded on an individual's professional experiences. The formats in which knowledge is conveyed and the means of its dissemination into the 'real world' are influenced by the orientations that the research project might have.

The knowledge that funded professional doctoral students can produce is also influenced by a layer of ethical challenge, which I discuss in the following section under Agenda Three.

AGENDA THREE – ETHICAL CHALLENGES TO THE FUNDED
PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL RESEARCHER

My own position as a professional doctoral student is ethically complex in that my doctoral course has been funded by the organisation to which I belong, and which is the subject of my research project. Based on interviews with higher education researchers, Williams (2010, p257) warns that "advice to resort to criteria for well-designed research methodology … fails to offer protection from ethical complexity … Not far beneath the surface of such advice lies a reef of instrumentalist risk-benefit ethics". In reflecting on the ethical pitfalls of insider research in my own context, I identified four dimensions where bias or distortion could occur if I was insufficiently reflexive in my approach. What follows is a discussion of my experience in each of these dimensions, where I foreground my own dilemmas and detail the responses that I made. I do not claim to have found definitive solutions to these challenges, but I suggest that funded doctoral students may find that my experience chimes with theirs, and that reflexive attention to these issues is an essential element in navigating the 'ethical reef' that Williams identifies.

Item 1. The obligation dimension

I am a senior teacher in the school which leads the organisation (a voluntary, collaborative, multi-school improvement group) that was the subject of my doctoral project. I had the support of my headteacher, who also formally heads the organisation. With the agreement of the 'steering group' of senior leaders which directs the organisation, he had authority to pay my doctoral course fees from the organisation's funds because my project was seen as a key element of the organisation's self-evaluation process. I was expected to research the effectiveness of the organisation and to report back periodically to the steering group, and was accountable to that body, so there was a sense in which I was bound to and by its leadership. I am indeed grateful for the opportunity to do a doctoral degree which I would not otherwise be able to undertake.

These pressures might be conceptualised as an obligation dimension to my research. I could be criticised for apparently producing findings which aligned with what the organisation's leaders think needs to be said about the organisation's work – in effect, to tell them what they want to hear (Rossman and Rallis, 2012, p58) – because I felt obliged to them for funding my project. In discussions with my headteacher before enrolling on the doctoral course, he assured me that he did not expect an endorsement of the organisation's work, but would prefer an unvarnished, 'warts and all' account because it would be more genuinely and usefully evaluative for the leadership group's purposes. However, 'evaluation' was not *my* primary aim in designing my project: my aim was to produce valid research leading to the award of my EdD degree. This is an instance of the potential clash of perspectives created by different reasons for codifying and disseminating knowledge: the organisation's leaders saw me as an 'individual expert' whose research could be appropriated to their particular purposes (Lam, 1997). The question of knowledge ownership is thus closely implicated in my first item on obligation. Critical questions to ask here might include 'Who expects what of my project's outcomes?' and 'Who owns the knowledge that I am producing?'

The second item on this Agenda addresses the power that a researcher may appear to have by virtue of being funded, which I discuss in the following section.

Item 2. The power dimension

Research in relation to practice may be compromised by significant power relations. The 'authorised' nature of my project, meaning that it had organisational approval and permission, raised the question of whether participants in my research would feel that they needed to respond in particular ways, or even that they were compelled to take part at all, because I might be taken to represent the organisation's leadership – a power dimension (Berger, 2013).

Reflexivity is a necessary counter to this threat because it "also means interrogating how we might be perpetuating particular kinds of power relationships, be advancing particular ways of naming and discussing people, experiences and events" (Kamler and Thomson, 2014, p75). I suggest that professional doctoral researchers need to be on constant alert for both overt and covert manifestations of power, and particularly so when funded by the organisation they are studying. Critical questions to use here might include 'What is the participant's professional relationship to me?', 'How does power circulate in that relationship?' and 'In what ways could power relationships affect what participants choose to say?' This approach to reflexivity is indeed uncomfortable, or 'dangerous', because it demands attention to the participants themselves and to the issues that are important to them, not just to methodology and processes (Pillow, 2010).

The issue of securing participants' authentic voices is considered under the third item on this Agenda, which I discuss next.

Item 3. The authenticity dimension

In designing my project, I was highly conscious of the need to secure responses as free as possible from bias and distortion caused by power relationships or other positional threats (Kvale, 2006), thus following the well-understood ethical path of vigilance to ensure the authenticity of participants' voices (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). However, given the unknowable threat of 'guilty knowledge' discussed above under Agenda One item 3, could commonly-employed ethical precautions to secure participants' informed consent, to avoid detriment and to ensure privacy (BERA, 2011) be sufficient?

In connection with the ethical dimension of power relationships discussed under item 2 above, the issue of deception would arise if, in attempting to reduce the influence of power, I did not fully identify myself and my position(s) to my participants (Griffiths, 1998). Concerned about this problem, and also in order to foster a collaborative atmosphere where openness was likely to thrive (Anderson and Anuka, 2003), I took the decision during the course of the interview phase to reveal a little more about myself (such as my workplace and job title, and my reasons for undertaking the project) than I had originally intended. This did not seem to alarm any interviewee, but led in most cases to an extended discussion of the topics at hand (James and Busher, 2006). I judged that a more open atmosphere was in tune with the values underpinning my research approach, a 'situated' ethical judgement that I believed I could justify because it promoted the authenticity of participants' voices.

A fourth dimension of ethical challenge to the professional doctoral researcher, that of falling prey to assumptions and preconceptions about the workplace situation, is dealt with in the following section.

Item 4. The prediction dimension

Given that I was researching in a familiar setting, I faced the threat of a possibly unacknowledged theoretical stance at the start of the project (Drake with Heath, 2011). This could be conceptualised as a predictive dimension – I could find what I was tacitly looking for or expected to see (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004).

My own disposition as a middle-level leader is towards the distributed and collaborative end of the leadership style spectrum. After more than 20 years in teaching, I am rather sceptical of centralised or top-down, 'hierarchical' initiatives for educational improvement (Fullan, 2001; Fielding *et al.*, 2005). How would these values that I have as a practitioner shape or bias my approach as a researcher, even if they contradicted the obligation that I might feel to the organisation's leaders who agreed to fund my course (as discussed above under item 1 in this Agenda)? My sceptical stance, or pre-disposition to be disappointed, might have appeared to be a sufficiently critical position to adopt: I would not automatically assume that because something is new, it must be better than what has gone before. However, was there a danger in going too far in the opposite direction and expecting an innovation to fail? Remaining neutral in the prediction dimension was probably impossible to achieve.

Kamler and Thomson (2014) propose that an acceptable response to the threat posed by predictive thinking is actively to use the first person to locate the researcher in the research. The various theoretical and dispositional influences on the researcher's stance, which might otherwise remain hidden, can thus be voiced. For example, I needed to state explicitly that "I favour a collaborative perspective in my own professional life": I could then acknowledge that this disposition would influence my understanding of the data that I collected. Further, such a practice would make the researcher's contribution to knowledge original, because the particular angle that an individual takes on a research problem constitutes the locus of originality (Dunleavy, 2003). This appears to be a transformative practice of particular utility to professional doctoral researchers: the tensions caused by the multiplicity of positions, purposes and ethical challenges that they face can be foregrounded and acknowledged, even if they cannot ultimately be resolved.

Agenda Three raises a layer of ethical challenges for professional doctoral researchers who are funded by the organisations that they are studying. I have shown these four ethical dimensions in the diagram below:
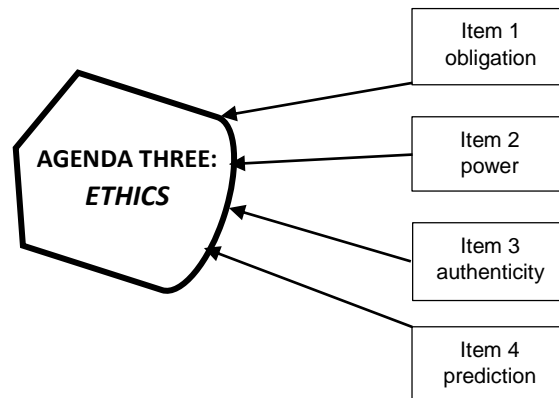
Figure 3. Agenda Three: ethical challenges to funded professional doctoral researchers

The four items in boxes are used to suggest that professional doctoral researchers face several dimensions of ethical challenge, particularly if they are funded by the organisation that they are studying. There are significant problems to deal with in the dimensions of obligation to funders, power relationships with research participants, securing the participants' authentic voices, and being reflexively aware of the assumptions and preconceptions that influence their thinking.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS: TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICES FOR GRANT- OR ORGANISATIONALLY-FUNDED PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

The complex challenges faced by professional doctoral researchers mean that they need to incorporate constant reflexive checking into their doctoral practice as a means of transforming their research design and outcomes. I offer the following checklist, based both on the methodological and empirical literatures and on my own experience as a professional doctoral researcher whose course is funded by the organisation that I am studying:

Agenda One. Positioning yourself as a professional doctoral researcher

1.1 Which communities of practice do you belong to? What tensions and conflicts could be felt as you move between your communities?
1.2 How far can you, and should you, maintain a critical distance between you and your subject of study?
1.3 How can you, and should you, use your intimate knowledge of the organisation to weigh professional judgements against research judgements?

Agenda Two. Producing knowledge for various purposes

2.1 What different modes of knowledge are you able, or do you want, to produce, and who values which outputs?

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2.2 What are the dissemination orientations of your research project? What tensions could arise between them?

Agenda Three. Navigating ethical challenges to the funded professional doctoral researcher

3.1 Do you face an obligation to your funder? What expectations are there?
3.2 Are there power relationships with your research participants to navigate?
3.3 How can you secure your participants' authentic voices in your research?
3.4 What are your theoretical and dispositional assumptions that might cause you to engage in predictive thinking?

These Agendas are brought together, with the professional doctoral researcher ('PDR') at the centre, in the composite diagram shown below in Figure 4:
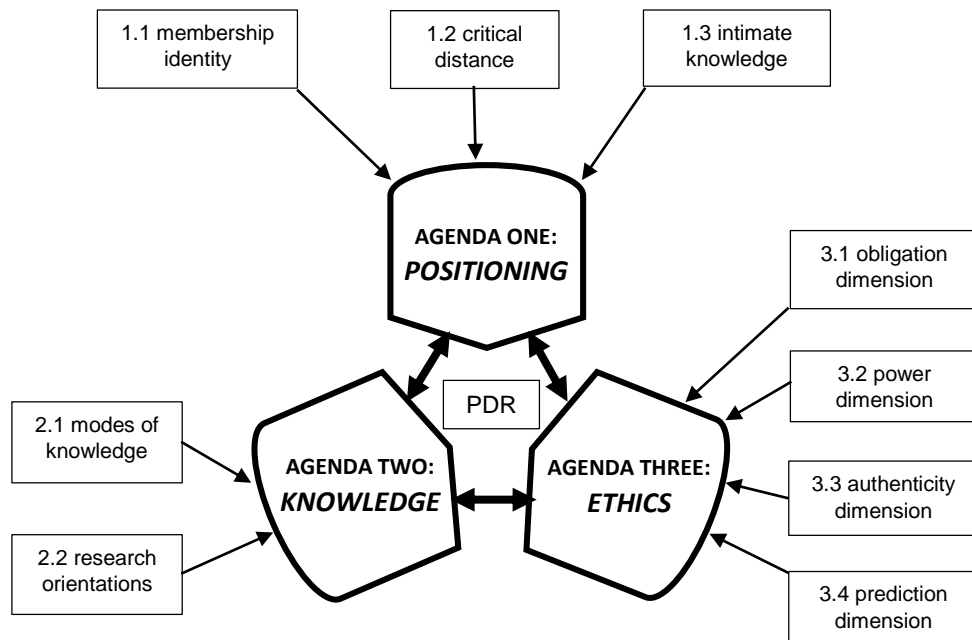
Figure 4. Three Agendas for funded professional doctoral researchers

This diagram uses the ideas and practices discussed in this chapter to suggest that professional doctoral researchers may find themselves surrounded by a number of threats to or pressures on their research work. They can transform their doctoral research practice by paying constant reflexive attention to: (1) their fluid and possibly conflicting positioning in their communities; (2) the types of knowledge that they can produce and the reasons why different types may be valued; and (3) the ethical challenges that they face as 'insider' researchers who may be funded by the organisation that they are studying. For example, I struggled with the issue of how much to reveal to participants about my membership identities in relation to my research on the multi-school group

that funded my course. I decided to be open about the authorisation of my project because that seemed more honest, even if the revelation of a power relationship might produce distortion in participants' responses. The outcomes of reflexive self-interrogation may be uncomfortable both personally and methodologically, but that is all the more reason to engage in the practice. A professional doctoral student in education has claimed that, "Through constant practices of surfacing and questioning hitherto underlying and taken for granted … assumptions, … concepts which I had hitherto considered stable, unitary and certain were made permeable, fragmented and less predictable" (Forbes, 2008, p.457). I suggest that this is a positive state for doctoral researchers to reach, and I hope that my proposed Agendas can assist the journey towards it.

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