



UK Council for
Graduate Education



ROYAL
HOLLOWAY
UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON

THE 2022 SIR ROBERT BURGESS MEMORIAL LECTURE

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WHO WAS BOB BURGESS? WHAT DID HE DO AND WHY DID IT MATTER?

- He was a sociologist of education who spent all of his career in two universities :
- Warwick became a lecturer in 1974 and left in 1999 as Senior Deputy-Vice Chancellor
- Leicester where he was Vice Chancellor from 1999 – 2014.
- As a teacher and researcher he helped hundreds of students from undergraduate to doctoral level & assisted the careers of many academics
- He also inspired many researchers' methods with his pathbreaking work on qualitative sociology, including ethnography, fieldwork and case study
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Bob on the day of his Investiture at Buckingham Palace
(June 2nd 2010)

BOB BURGESS, OUR FOUNDER

- Unusually for the 1980s and early 1990s, Bob had a strong interest in postgraduate education
- He ran many events and summer schools and this gradually led to the formation of UKCGE.
- He was the first Director of Warwick Graduate School.
- Even as a busy VC, he always had time for people and was extremely sociable and accessible
- If you want to know more, the Leicester obituary is at <https://le.ac.uk/about/history/obituaries/2022/sir-bob-burgess>

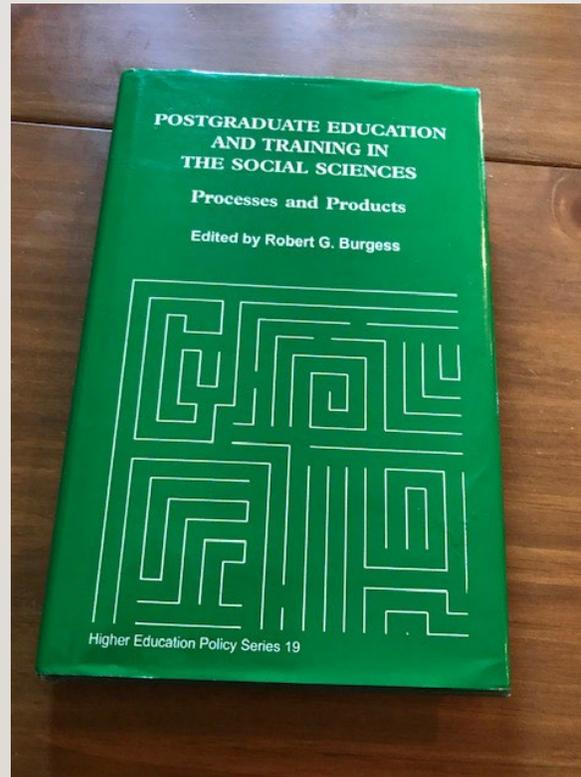
WHY WAS CREATING UKCGE A SMART MOVE IN 1994?

- There was no organization in the early 1990s that catered for staff who were engaged in postgraduate education and Bob's vision in creating UKCGE was a remarkable step
- Other organisations like UKGRAD (2003, later VITAE) and SRHE's Postgraduate Interest Network (1995), soon came along too
- The 1990s showed growth in PG education particularly in doctoral education but also in Masters education, as the sector began to expand. Concerns about completion rates and more emphasis on research training were amongst the developments

UKCGE'S EARLY HISTORY

- UKCGE was self sustaining from the start through university membership and event fees
- Thus it was independent in its operation – ‘run by the sector for the sector’
- Later in the 1990s we saw the growth of graduate schools (starting with Warwick where Bob was its first Chair) where UKCGE’s events and resources were invaluable to those running or part of graduate schools, as this was a new and largely unexplored field

A TIMELY BOOK IN 1994



POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION & TRAINING IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

ED R.G BURGESS (1994) JESSICA KINGSLEY

- This book's publication in UKCGE's inaugural year highlighted Bob's capacity to write and edit books & papers on important topics related to PG study
- The 1994 text reported on a series of ESRC Training Board funded projects on doctoral training, which was a first in the UK, as most such work previously had been from the USA
- It was an edited book which is something we tend not to value any more but that you can still get a copy today suggests it has more than stood the test of time
- It covered the supervision process, issues of quality in the doctorate (e.g experience of supervision and development of writing skills) and completion of theses and employment – all topics still highly relevant today

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1994 (DEEM & DENICOLO 2019)

- The Bologna process kicked off in Europe from 1999 which put a spotlight on postgraduate education
- This was followed by the development of the European University Association, established in 2001, and its Council for Doctoral Education, established in 2008.
- The EU Dublin Descriptors and Salzburg Principles 2005 (enriched in 2010) provided a common framework upon which individual universities could build their own interpretation of good doctoral education practice and develop appropriate Codes of Practice
- In the UK, the Harris report 1996 emphasised the importance of rethinking postgraduate education and developing more structured research methods at both Masters and doctoral education

MORE DEVELOPMENTS

- In 2002 the Roberts Report recommended and for some years funded transversal skills for doctoral researchers and postdocs in the UK
- The independent Spittle Report on postgraduate education in 2012 said it was time for PG education to catch up with the rest of HE
- The regular Postgraduate Experience surveys showed that the research culture of PG education was not keeping pace with other developments (Deem & Brehony 2000) and even today this remains an issue
- Both Doctorateness (Denicolo and Park 2010) and Mastersness (Scottish QAA 2013) became the subject of discussion and identification of key elements of each form of degree

UNEXPECTED EFFECTS OF UKCGE ACTIVITIES – THE 2017 PORTO CONFERENCE

- The decision to hold the 2017 annual conference in Porto was controversial
- Some said it was pointless because of the Brexit referendum in 2016
- Others said it was just an exotic & expensive location (it's neither)
- Those who went enjoyed the event; for Portuguese academics such a conference was a novelty
- The poster competition for doctoral researchers involved all 18 Porto University faculties
- Since 2017 there is much more activity around doctoral education in Portugal – some conferences, some workshops and edited books as well as one or two doctoral schools and more publications - of course the EUA CDE has also had a hand in this
- Conclusion - you can't always predict in advance the effects of things UKCGE does

THE 2019 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF UKCGE – AN INTERVIEW WITH BOB BURGESS

- Bob noted that the 1990s saw UKCGE help raise profile of PG education at all levels and assisted institutions with their processes and policies
- The immediate response to UKCGE events showed good demand in the 1990s and there is Bob noted, always a turnover with new people, as others move on
- Recalls clashes over controversial issues like doctorates by publication, which UKCGE was able to show had comparable outcomes to other PhDs, as did professional doctorates
- UKCGE was also able to provide support on training and to help build communities of PG students and staff

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO UKCGE SINCE 2019?

- Covid 19 was challenging but the Council was able to organise online meetings
- These enabled issues arising from the pandemic to be discussed in a confidential setting
- A UKCGE discussion paper on the impact of Covid 19's impact on research degree assessment (Houston and Halliday 2021) was much more helpful than a similar paper by QAA (QAA 2021)
- It remains to be seen what aspects of Covid adaptations will be kept by institutions—already a worrying trend to start insisting on f2f vivas only
- Large scale funding for student mental health/wellbeing and also on improving access to and success in the doctorate for people of colour and other disadvantaged groups

WHAT ARE THE LIKELY FUTURE DEBATES?

- Funding – who pays what to whom for how long?
- Mental health issues and issues of access for disadvantaged groups remain at the top of the agenda
- Supervision – UKCGE has already done a lot but there is almost certainly more to do
- Structures – already a new UKCGE report on this and structures will remain a key issue
- Dealing with the legacy of the pandemic
- Engagement with role of PG graduates as citizens as well as in diverse forms of employment
- Being aware that there are already issues of food and fuel poverty amongst PG students

WORKING WITH OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

- Sad that some UK universities have left the EUA Council for Doctoral Education since 2016
- We cannot afford to abandon the wisdom of our European neighbours nor they ours
- We need to continue networking, collaboration & sharing ideas
- We could work on greater consistency and equivalent support for doctoral research
- We could also focus on equivalent but diverse standards and outcomes across countries & disciplines in Europe and on ensuring that full time doctoral candidates are properly funded, for 4 years, not 3
- See Osterlind, Denicolo and Apelgren (eds) (forthcoming) *Doctoral Education as if people matter*, Leiden, Brill & Georghiou, L., & Hasgall, A. (2022). *Building the Foundations of Research: A vision for the future of Doctoral Education*. https://eua-cde.org/downloads/publications/web_cde_position%20paper_june%202022_fin2.pdf