

Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology (AJEDP)

Volume 4 2004

Qualities and characteristics in the written reports of doctoral thesis examiners

Allyson Holbrook
School of Education
The University of Newcastle, Australia

Sid Bourke
School of Education
The University of Newcastle, Australia

Terence Lovat
Faculty of Education & Arts
The University of Newcastle, Australia

Kerry Dally
School of Education
The University of Newcastle, Australia

Abstract

This paper outlines the procedures used in the textual analysis of examiner reports for 101 PhD candidates across disciplines in one Australian University. The method involves the use of QSR software. Three levels of findings are outlined. The first level is the coding categories that emerged out of reading the report text. There are five broad categories of codes that capture: the structure of the reports, the ways in which examiners communicate, the subject matter of the thesis, the characteristics of examiners' evaluative comment and their comments on their role and the examination process. The second level of findings concerns the frequency of different categories of comment and the prevalence of comment on the analysis and interpretation of the candidate's results. The third extends beyond the individual categories to what we can learn about the utilization of the report. One key finding is that the examiners took on specific roles: mentor-colleague, supervisor-instructor and assessor-arbiter. It was also found that the examiner tends to "enter the examination" at a point beyond the proposal, that is they comment primarily on elements that they feel they can influence, and this influence was evident in the preponderance of the formative instruction provided.

[Link to full text paper pdf \(421KB\)](#)

Uploaded: 12 November 2004
