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## 'Ways of Knowing' in doctoral examination: how examiners position themselves in relation to the doctoral candidate

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### Abstract

This paper discusses ways in which examiners position themselves in relation to doctoral students' knowledge. The epistemological thesis of Habermas is utilized and its well-established connections with the world of formal learning re-stated. Against this conceptual framework, the examiner reports are appraised with a view to identifying the ways of knowing being employed by the examiners. Of direct relevance to the PhD study is that each of the three ways of knowing identified in the Habermasian thesis implies a different positioning of the examiner against the doctoral candidate. These three positions could be described as 'expert', 'partner' and 'listener', with each of them implying both a different relationship with the candidate and a different appreciation of the work under examination. It is concluded that the relative dominance of one way of knowing, its allied positioning and typical textual form suggests that the doctoral examination report may constitute a virtual literary genre not necessarily conveying easily the worth of the work under examination.

[Link to full text paper pdf \(170KB\)](#)

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