FACULTY OF EDUCATION

ORAL EXAMINATION
BARB EDWARDS

FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
EdD

Wednesday, March 18, 2009
SFU Harbour Centre (Room 2200) at 9:30 AM

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chair: Dr. Geoff Madoc-Jones
Senior Supervisor: Dr. Cheryl Amundsen
Member: Dr. Mark Wexler
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IT TAKES A VILLAGE: PERCEPTIONS OF THE SFU EDUCATION RESEARCH ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores the perceptions of the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Education research assistant (RA) experience. The purpose of this investigation was to understand what RAs do in their research assistantship. The case study involved seventeen RAs; data consisted of seventeen questionnaires and three interviews. To structure the investigation, activity theory was used to frame the research questions, the data collection instruments and parts of the analysis. The activity theory analysis suggests that RAs are motivated to support themselves financially while interacting with other faculty to learn research skills, possibly for research productivity. These RAs use various intellectual resources, a computer and skills to manage their time and the project. They work on various RA tasks, depending on the length of time they have been a RA. The reported outcomes include intellectual growth, valuable interaction with the community, research productivity, various influences on their PhD and networking outside of the RA activity system’s community.

Based on this activity system view of the RA experience, it seems the presumption that the RA-ship is mostly about money, research and a dyadic relationship is questionable. Viewing the RA experience in a new light leads to the understanding that it is the village that contributes to the RAs’ growth and socialization instead of one or two individuals. Notwithstanding the many environmental constraints of the Canadian post-secondary system and at SFU that limit financially funding RA-ships, it is suggested to build on the finding that RAs report the broad community as critical to their intellectual development. Various workshops might enhance the PhD experience and other steps taken to enrich the research assistantship by intentionally integrating the other aspects of the RA’s lifeworld (work experience, PhD career) into the research assistantship.

Academic Record

1987 – Chartered Accountant designation, Ontario.


Professional Experience

1993 – Present Senior Lecturer, Segal Graduate School of Business, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, BC.

2008 – Present Faculty, School of Business, Camosun College, Victoria, BC.

2007 – Present Instructor, Executive CMA program, SFU Learning Strategies Group, Vancouver. BC.


