

The Importance of Matching Research Questions and Methodology to the Reality of Researchers' Lives

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One focus of the Discussion Group is the training of students studying for a doctorate in Mathematics Education, their expectations and their needs. The doctorate is the highest academic qualification we offer. But the nature of the preparation doctoral students receive raises several questions: Is it an adequate preparation for a lifetime of research, supervision of students and leading a University department? Should we consider what use the student is likely to make of the research degree? What courses or readings do we think essential for any person studying for this higher degree? What level of mathematics should we require before a student is accepted, or should we provide tuition in mathematics as part of the degree course?

Another issue has to do with the nature of the thesis. Typically, the student submits a thesis, which is examined by external moderators. Does the supervisor have a responsibility to advise his or her students on a choice of subject that reflects the work they will probably do when they have graduated? If the future occupation is likely to be dealing with teachers should the student work on topics that are likely to appeal to teachers? On what criteria should the submitted thesis be judged?

These questions form the basis of our debate.