

PhD Studentship in Urban Education: Development and research with the New Charter Academy

Applications are sought for a doctoral studentship in the field of urban education. The successful candidate will join a team of senior researchers working on an innovative development and research initiative with the New Charter Academy in Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside. Working under the supervision of Professor Alan Dyson and other colleagues, s/he will contribute to the initiative as a whole and will define a strand of research on which to base a doctoral thesis.

The studentship is to the value of £17,000 for each of three years, beginning no later than September 2008.

The New Charter Academy

The Government's academies programme (<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/academies/>) is an attempt to tackle the entrenched problems of urban education. Academies are publicly-funded independent schools, often located in areas of disadvantage and replacing schools facing challenging circumstances. They are all-ability schools established by sponsors from business, faith or other groups working in highly innovative partnerships with central Government and local education partners. The New Charter Academy (<http://www.newcharteracademy.org.uk/>) will open in September 2008, replacing two existing secondary schools. In due course, the Academy will move into new buildings, where it will be co-located with a special school.

In its earliest form, the emphasis of the Academies programme was on securing the independence of these new schools from local authority control. Recently, however, Government policy has tended to focus on combining the advantages of autonomy and access to expertise from beyond the education sector with a partnership approach to relations between Academies, local authorities and other education providers. With this in mind, the Ashton Academy is sponsored by the New Charter Housing Trust Group, one of the largest Registered Social Landlords in the UK, and a major provider of social housing in the area. Committed to working in the wider public interest, New Charter has worked in partnership with the local authority and other education providers in developing the Academy proposals. Moreover, its sponsorship creates the potential for bringing together initiatives in social housing and schooling in a way that is unusual – and very probably unique – in this country.

The Academy-University partnership

The New Charter Academy has established a long-term development and research (D&R) partnership with the University of Manchester. This aims to inform development of the Academy by research evidence and by critical

friendship provided by the University. With this in mind, an over-arching D&R programme is being formulated which will allow for a diverse range of activities within a coherent framework. A team of senior university researchers from the School of Education will undertake research in the Academy and its environment, and will feed their findings back into the strategic thinking of the Academy's leadership and governance. This team currently includes Dr Chris Chapman and Professor Mel West, who are specialists in education leadership, and Professor Daniel Muijs who is a specialist in school effectiveness and improvement. The work will be coordinated by the Centre for Equity in Education, directed by Professors Mel Ainscow and Alan Dyson. The Centre is committed to undertaking research that makes a difference to policy and practice, and has developed D&R methodologies in a series of projects with schools, collaboratives and local authorities. Other researchers in the School of Education are likely to become involved over time, particularly the members of its thriving research group on education in urban contexts.

The studentship now on offer will constitute an important vehicle for the realisation of this partnership. Whilst most doctoral students work as lone researchers, the successful candidate will have an exciting opportunity to work as a member of an experienced research team and to contribute to the D&R programme as a whole. In the usual way, s/he will undertake a doctoral study that reflects her/his own interests and is the result of her/his own efforts. However, she will do so in close collaboration with senior members of the University team and the Academy leadership, and the study will be carefully aligned with the emerging research strands of the programme. As a key member of the University team, the successful candidate will be expected to contribute to all aspects of its work as needed, but in return, she will have access to the wider findings of the team, and to the intellectual resources of leading researchers in urban education.

The successful candidate

Applications are invited from education and social science researchers who wish to become involved in this innovative project. The successful candidate will need to be prepared to work as part of a team, to support the programme as a whole, and to negotiate the focus of their own study with their fellow researchers and with the leadership of the Academy. In return, s/he will have an unusual and exciting opportunity to undertake doctoral research as part of a senior, highly-regarded team, to work closely with senior education practitioners and leaders, and to undertake research that will make a real difference to policy and practice.

The School of Education has a thriving doctoral programme, with students working both for PhDs and EdDs, including EdDs in urban education and in educational leadership. The programme is supported by an MSc in education research. The successful candidate will be a full member of the doctoral programme and will be expected to satisfy the usual criteria for admission and progression. In particular s/he will be expected to have completed a master's degree in educational or social science research methods, or to have undertaken some research training which can be 'topped up' in the first year of doctoral studies. Experience of working in schools, local authorities or other

education settings, especially in England, will be an advantage, but is not essential.

The Academy project offers exciting opportunities for research into urban education policy, educational disadvantage, educational leadership and change, and the relationship between issues in schooling and housing. However, applications are welcomed from researchers with an interest in any aspect of the field of urban education, broadly defined, and with any methodological specialism relevant to this field. The personal and intellectual qualities of the successful candidate will be more important than his/her field of interest. In this respect, the ability to work as part of a team, to operate flexibly, and to relate to senior practitioners and policy makers will be particularly significant.

Applications must include the following:

- A full CV
- A piece of published or unpublished academic writing (preferably single authored)
- Two academic references

Applicants are strongly urged to discuss their application with Professor Dyson in advance of submission. Professor Dyson's contact details are:

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Applications should be sent to Shelley Darlington either by email:
shelley.darlington@manchester.ac.uk

or by post to:

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Deadline for receipt of applications is Friday 23rd May 2008. Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed on Friday 6th June 2008