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Issues and propositions on the improvement of doctoral education

Summary

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Armenia and Belarus have been conducted doctoral and postgraduate programs since Soviet Union times. In both countries consisted of two successive scientific (research) degrees: Candidate of Sciences and Doctor of Sciences.

The main purpose of research education has been the creation of new investigation; moreover, it gave bigger importance to the results of scholarship rather than formation of scholars with specific knowledge, capacities, and skills, including teaching skills for higher education, dealing with modern technologies, and so on. In contemporary post-industrial societies, knowledge becomes outdated very quickly, making the training of versatile, innovative doctoral candidates a high priority. Their future career and employment opportunities are not limited to scholarly endeavors or teaching activities in traditional academic environment.

The new generation of researchers should be competent not only in their professional area, but also have general broad preparedness, including communication, management and entrepreneurial skills.

Our article also offers a mixed-method perspective on the investigation of determinants of effectiveness in quality assurance at higher education institutions.

Keywords: educational formation, social processes, research ethics, education quality assurance, doctoral and postgraduate education.

Introduction

The results show that support by higher education institutions' higher management and cooperation with other education institutions are relevant perception of quality assurance as another administrative burden reveal negative correlations preconditions for larger perceived degrees of quality assurance effectiveness. Moreover, quality managers' role as promoters of quality assurance exhibits significant correlations with perceived effectiveness (Anderson, 2006).

A Doctor of Philosophy is the highest university degree that is conferred after a course of study by universities in most countries. As an earned research degree, those studying for a PhD are usually required to produce original research that expands the boundaries of knowledge, normally in the form of a thesis or dissertation, and defend their work against experts in the field. The completion of a PhD is often a requirement for employment as a professor, researcher, or scientist in many fields).

At present, education is a strategically important resource for the development of any society, as a result of which the changes affecting it and the changes occurring in it affect all spheres of public life without exception.

We collected survey data from different countries higher education institutions to analyse the degree to which quality managers perceive their approaches to quality assurance as effective. Based on this data, we develop an ordinary least squares regression model which explains perceived effectiveness through structural variables and certain quality assurance-related activities of quality managers.

1. Quality Assurance of Education

Quality of teaching and learning has become a major strategic issue in tertiary education systems across the globe over the past decades (Harvey, Williams, 2010; Enders, Westerheijden, 2014). In Europe, the Bologna process, as well as other concurrent developments, has hastened the introduction and elaboration of institutionalized quality assurance (QA) and quality management (QM) mechanisms. Most importantly, under the new public management paradigm, (standardized) comparison of educational outcomes, rankings, and a higher degree of university autonomy and accountability have become an integral part of university managers' day-to-day work (Broucker, De Wit, 2015; van Vught, de Boer, 2015).

The role of the quality manager does, of course, change in such an approach to QM: he or she is acting rather as a consultant to those who are involved in the teaching and learning process and to those who are in charge of taking action whenever needed. This consultation can address individual teachers (in order to support concrete teaching practice), teams of teachers (in order to implement curricular reforms), and top-level managers (e.g. in order to reflect the institution's

teaching practice and outcomes against its mission statement). In particular, the latter perspective is of increasing relevance since universities are developing more and more in the direction of self-regulating and managerially administered institutions under the previously mentioned new public management approach to university governance (Anderson, 2006).

Needs of PhD Students

— Earn at least 15 semester hours credit (in Armenia).
— Earn at least 60 semester hours credit and follow the specific course requirements as is in the Program of Study (in Armenia).
— Fulfill degree requirement with no more than one-half non-traditional credits.
— Transfer no more than 15 semester hours of credit earned at other institutions after the last semester of residence.
— Maintain an overall minimum grade-point average of at least a "C" (2.00) average in all courses. For the Associate of Applied Sciences degree, the candidate must have at least a "C" (2.00) average in the required specialization (in Armenia).
— Submit an application for the associate degree by the published deadline.

Skills of PhD Students

As a basis let's assume the factors such as:
— Needs assessment and situational analysis of the doctoral education.
— Current trends in European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA).
— The new generation of researchers should be competent not only in their professional area, but also have communication, management and other skills. With its emphasis on narrow professional research, the traditional model of doctoral education did not foster the formation of such knowledge, skills, and capacities. Thus, it was necessary to introduce more structured, formal doctoral programs alongside and in contrast to the traditional, informal "mentor-student" model.

Organization of Doctoral Education

Improving the quality of education is especially important in the context of globalization.

DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The doctoral program's ambitions are in concord with the institution's research strategy, forms part of institutional planning and resource allocation, is designed to meet new challenges and needs of global labour market.

— Doctoral program provides training in core discipline areas and transferable skills and ensures an active involvement of doctoral candidates in research activities.
— There are set mechanisms and procedures in place to ensure development, approval, monitoring and periodic review of doctoral program with an active involvement of internal and external stakeholders.

ADMISSION POLICY

HEI's admission policy on doctoral program is transparent, is in line with doctoral program's ambitions.

— HEI has set mechanisms for promoting equitable recruitment, selection and admission procedures.
— HEI periodically analyses the effectiveness of applicants' assessment system.

SUPERVISOR

HEI provides highly qualified supervisors/well-structured supervisory team to achieve doctoral program's ambitions.

RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

HEI promotes the quality research provisions by creating an environment conducive to research.

— HEI ensures that all doctoral candidates receive useful and regular information and advice to promote research and to have opportunity to work in research teams and different research environments.

DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

Doctoral candidates are recognized as professionals with commensurate rights.

INTERNATIONALIZATION

Internationalization is coherent with institution's research strategy and the individual needs of the doctoral candidates.

— The mobility of doctoral candidates is driven by the candidates' research projects.

PHD AWARDING

HEI has clear mechanisms for monitoring and assessment of the research results (*applicable to the institutions having Specialized Councils*).

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

HEI has an internal quality assurance system, which promotes continual improvement of all the processes of doctoral education.

2. Problems and Suggestions of Solutions

— Scarce research funding is a major drawback. This will increase the transparency, visibility, of doctoral education.
— The technical level of the infrastructure and the databases available for research are also critical factors. Although the situation has been changing for the better recent years, many universities and research organizations offering doctoral programs are still having problems such as limited access to the electronic databases of scientific literature and information, lack of contemporary research laboratories and research equipment etc. (Christensen, 2005).

The providers of doctoral education is currently striving to find the answers to the following issues:

— Is there possibility to predict rapid changes in the globalized world?
— Who are the stakeholders of doctoral education?
— Are we still relevant to our stakeholders?
— Are the outcomes of doctoral education recognized by the stakeholders?
— Is there strict separation between doctoral candidate in fundamental research and applied research?
— What master's degree education can do to make doctoral education more efficient?

3. Proposition for improvement

— Jointly organize inter-institutional courses to develop doctoral candidate's transferable skills & competences.
— Develop an individual research plan for doctoral candidates including components of multidisciplinary research.
— Plan the admission should according to the labour market needs and priorities (Lipai, Tchanturia, Goderdzishvili, 2019).
— Define the market field and market needs for conducting research in design, fine arts and applied arts.
— To renovate the list of the scientific specialties by including the ones which are more demanded by the labor market outside of the academia, establish professional doctorates in some professional fields. There is a need for creating strong research environments and mechanisms for enhancing quality of research training (Lipai, Volkova, Babenko, 2017).

— An institutional regulation on terms and obligations of doctoral candidates, supervisors and the institution should be introduced by universities, which should be fixed in a signed contract (agreement) between the three parties.
— Set mechanisms for supervisors' professional development (having necessary procedures to train supervisors both methodology-wide and regulation-wide).
— Develop and adopt a national regulation on international mobility supportive approach for doctoral candidates
— Give doctoral candidates teaching or research assistantship positions with employment contracts and all social rights providing doctoral candidates with decent salary.
— Increase motivation of doctoral candidates to be engaged in institution's governance.
— Erasmus+ helps organise doctoral candidate exchanges within Erasmus+ Programme countries and to and from Partner countries. By studying abroad with Erasmus+, doctoral candidates can improve communication, language and inter-cultural skills and gain soft skills highly valued by future employers (Lipai, Gevorgyan, 2014).

Conclusion

Research Proposal vs Specialisation examination during the admissions to Cycle 3 programmes.

The government decision on Procedures for Admissions and Study in Doctoral Programmes (*Aspirantura*) *places more attention to the admission examinations than to the research skills* (*Christensen, 2005*).

According to the Salzburg Principles: "…the core element of all doctoral programmes is, and should remain, training by doing research. Only training by research can provide doctoral candidates with core skills such as problem solving; innovative, creative and critical thinking; analysing and synthethising knowledge; and developing strategies. Doctoral candidates are young professionals who are trained through research and make an important contribution to the creation of new knowledge, products, methods and systems, and to knowledge transfer. Training by research is the main element that differentiates doctoral cycle from the first and second cycles in the Bologna Process and "…Doctoral candidates should be considered as early stage researchers and research partners and treated as professionals who make an important contribution to the creation of new knowledge. It was noted in the European Charter for Researchers: "Early stage researchers are professionals who are trained through research in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, and methods, & in the management of the projects concerned"[1].

[1] Christensen, K. (2005). General rapporteur's report. Paper presented at Bologna seminar on doctoral programmes for the European Knowledge Society, February 3–5, in Salzburg, Austriahttps://eua.eu/component/attachments/attachments.html?task=attachment&id=1881/

Currently, as it was mentioned above, most of the Armenian and Belarusian HEIs offer structured scientific-educational programs. The curriculum design is implemented according to internal document specific for each HEI, which regulates the structure and content of the doctoral programs at the given university.

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Problemy i propozycje związane z podniesieniem jakości kształcenia doktorantów

Streszczenie

Instytucje szkolnictwa wyższego w Armenii i na Białorusi prowadzą studia doktoranckie i podyplomowe już od czasów Związku Radzieckiego. W obu krajach system kształcenia obejmuje dwa następujące po sobie stopnie naukowe: kandydat nauk i doktor nauk. Głównym celem kształcenia badawczego było tworzenie nowych badań. Ten rodzaj kształcenia przypisywał większe znaczenie wynikom naukowym niż potrzebie tworzenia badaczy posiadających konkretną wiedzę, zdolności i umiejętności, również w zakresie nauczania w szkolnictwie wyższym, posługiwania się nowoczesnymi technologiami, itd. We współczesnych społeczeństwach postindustrialnych wiedza bardzo szybko się dezaktualizuje, co sprawia, że wszechstronne kształcenie innowacyjnych doktorantów staje się priorytetem. Ich przyszła kariera i możliwości zawodowe nie ograniczają się do przedsięwzięć naukowych czy działalności dydaktycznej w tradycyjnym środowisku akademickim. Nowe pokolenie badaczy powinno posiadać nie tylko kompetencje w swojej dziedzinie zawodowej, ale także ogólne umiejętności w zakresie komunikacji, zarządzania i przedsiębiorczości. Nasz artykuł przedstawia również mieszane spojrzenie na badanie czynników warunkujących skuteczność zapewniania wysokiej jakości kształcenia w instytucjach szkolnictwa wyższego.

Słowa kluczowe: formacja edukacyjna, procesy społeczne, etyka badań, zapewnienie jakości kształcenia, kształcenie doktoranckie i podyplomowe.