

Trends in the Transformation of Doctoral Training from the Perspective of the European Higher Education Area

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Paper received 15.05.22; Accepted for publication 29.05.22.

<https://doi.org/10.31174/SEND-PP2022-265X103-02>

Abstract. The article focuses on trends in the transformation of doctoral training from the perspective of the European Higher Education Area. The three “needs” for the transformation and modification of doctoral training have been specified. The main stages of the transformation of doctoral training have been specified and described. The key developments and challenges in the context of reforming PhD training have been identified. The outcomes of the surveys on the state of doctoral education in Europe have been analyzed from the perspective of the Salzburg Principles and Recommendations and principles for innovative doctoral training developed by the European Commission.

Keywords: *doctoral training, doctoral education, reforming, transformation, PhD graduate.*

Introduction. Doctoral education is a continually changing field, in which major challenges of research and higher education get to close quarters. Doctoral training undergoes substantial alterations in order to meet the challenges of the diversified labor market on a global scale by increasing employment opportunities beyond academia, progress in science and technology, new demands and expectations of PhD graduates, etc. One of the drivers of competitiveness in the innovative knowledge economy is the availability and increase in the number of researchers and researcher careers across industries. Therefore, the transformation of doctoral training, the main goal of which is to improve the quality of postgraduate education, is aimed at making a key contribution to the creation of new knowledge.

Short review of the publications on the subject. Nowadays, both Ukrainian and foreign scientists consider the problem of reforming PhD training to be worth highlighting. A. Sbrueva and M. Boichenko analyzed the characteristics of regulatory, organizational and procedural bases of reforming doctoral training in EHEA. Zh. Talanova made the analysis of the state and trends of the organization and development of doctoral training in individual regions, countries, and leading world-class universities, and developed recommendations on the modernization of doctoral training in Ukraine in the process of European integration. G. E. Walker, C. M. Golde, L. Jones, A. Conklin Bueschel and P. Hutchings focused on the rethinking of doctoral education for the twenty-first century and the formation of “brand-new” scholars. A. Lee and S. Danby examined the new doctorate environment and the challenges it faced in the process of reshaping doctoral education. L. Borrell-Damian, R. Morais and J. H. Smith focused on research projects in the framework of doctoral education. But despite a great deal of studies on doctoral education the issue on transformation of the doctoral training to increase the quality of the professional training of PhD students is still inadequately treated.

The goal of the article is to clarify the trends in the transformation of the doctoral training from the perspective of the European Higher Education Area.

Materials and methods. The general scientific methods such as analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization and systematization were used to achieve the goal of the article.

Presenting the main material. In recent years, doctoral training as a component of the university education and research system has attracted controversy of its being retarded in the context of the global changes in the educational sector within the European Higher Education and Research Areas. A heavily-modified competitive and diversified global job market, calling for more flexibility, adaptability, and availability of subject specific skills and abilities, as well as transdisciplinarity, clearly necessitates the need for reforming doctoral programs in order to cope with new challenges. First and foremost, the higher education and research system has to be changed in order to reflect the goals of the Lisbon Strategy providing for the EU transformation into “the most competitive economy and knowledge-based economy in the world” [6]. The above transformation and modification are caused by the three “needs”: the need for providing doctoral graduates with high level skills essential for them to compete successfully for job outside the academy, the need for a “brand-new” model of the structured doctoral programs which implies a full-fledged balanced system of educational and research activities, and the need for making doctoral education capable of dealing with a multitude of priorities, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Doctoral training has taken on value in the context of the Bologna Process since the Berlin Communiqué (2003) included doctoral studies as the third cycle in a three-cycle higher education system with the aim to create stronger synergy between the EHEA and the ERA, and to attach great importance to research as an integral part of the European higher education system. “The decade since the foundation of the EUA Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE) has seen remarkable change in the scale and nature of doctoral education. The direction of travel was clearly signposted in 2005 by the formative Salzburg principles” [1, 6].

Since then the EUA-CDE Steering Committee has launched some surveys which enable to give the most up-to-date picture of institutional approaches to PhD training in Europe, reveal the trends in the reforming of doctoral education. The survey reports give higher educational institutions the opportunity to bring their own practices and policies in line with best practices taking into consideration the practices and policies of peer institutions.

In 2003, in order to present the overall perspective of doctoral education in Europe, the European University Association initiated the project “Doctoral Programs for the European Knowledge Society” with the participation of 48 universities from 22 countries. This project focused on the diversity of doctoral training on the national and institutional levels, its organizational structure and mode of financing, upward mobility of PhD graduates and transversal skill development. The outcomes of this project were presented in 2005 as the Salzburg Principles for doctoral education in Europe. The above principles cover the issues regarding: the knowledge improvement while focusing on original research and the training of PhD candidates as “early career researchers”; the need for diversified doctoral programs and increase in the number of doctoral candidates; proper supervision and assessment; a three- and four-year period of training; and the introduction of innovative structures [4].

In this regard, it is higher educational institutions that are held liable for ensuring a transparent academic environment for PhD candidates. The diversity of doctoral programs is deemed to be a competitive edge of doctoral education in Europe. The further trend involves the introduction and innovative development of structured doctoral programs, the development of doctoral schools and innovative models of doctoral research management and leadership of doctoral education. Doctoral training has become more diversified in terms of its mode and content. The London Communiqué (2007) emphasized the need to ensure diversified doctoral programs in order to assert research and its status at the institutional level, to develop PhD candidates’ careers. The Leuven Communiqué (2009) underlines the urgent need to focus on transversal skills and competences to overcome new challenges.

Trends in the transformation of doctoral training from the perspective of the European Higher Education Area are expedient to be revealed in the context of the seven principles for innovative doctoral training developed by the European Commission.

1. Research excellence

Research excellence initiatives and fostering research of the highest quality are the key aspects in the process of implementing doctoral programs. The new academic generation should be trained to become creative, critical and autonomous intellectual risk takers.

2. Attractive institutional environment

PhD candidates should be provided with proper working conditions to enable them to act as independent researchers and assume responsibility at an early stage for the scope, direction and progress of their research.

3. Interdisciplinary research options

Doctoral training should be entrenched in an open research environment and culture to ensure that any appropriate opportunities for mutual enrichment of disciplines can foster the required breadth and interdisciplinary approach.

4. Exposure to industry and other relevant employment sectors

This can include placements during research training; shared funding; involvement of non-academics from relevant industry in informing/delivering teaching and supervision; promoting financial contribution of the relevant industry to doctoral programs; fostering alumni net-

works that can support the candidate and the programs, and a wide array of people/technology/knowledge transfer activities.

5. International networking

Doctoral training should provide opportunities for international networking, i.e. through collaborative research, dual and joint degrees, mobility, etc.

6. Transferable skills training

It is essential to ensure that enough researchers have the skills demanded by the knowledge based economy.

7. Quality assurance

The goal of quality assurance in doctoral education should be to enhance the quality of the research environment and ensure transparent and accountable procedures for admission, supervision, awarding the doctorate degree and career development [5].

It is expedient from the perspective of our research to focus on the recent survey of A. Hasgall and A.-M. Peneoasu “Doctoral Education in Europe: Current Developments and Trends” issued in 2022 based on the responses ensured by the 138 universities participating in the 2021 EUA CDE survey on current trends in doctoral training. This report is served as a follow-up to the EUA-CDE investigation conducted in 2017-2018 on a grand scale (with the involvement of 311 universities) “Doctoral Education in Europe Today: Approaches and Institutional Structures” that covered the issues on postdoctoral researchers at European higher education and research institutions (their number, the average duration of employment and the nature of work, training activities for postdoctoral researchers), current priorities of European universities and the impact of the COVID pandemic on doctoral training as a whole. The survey focused on the institutional “structuration”, in particular, from admission procedure to career tracking and monitoring after their graduation, current strategic priorities of universities in the area. The goal of this survey was to provide an up-to-date picture of institutional approaches to doctoral education in Europe [1; 2].

With the global nature of research, universities try to attract doctoral candidates from overseas, making their doctoral programs more diversified and increase their number. Based on the survey report, one of the identified trends is the internationalization of doctoral training that enables PhD candidates to gain international experience, cooperation with other universities, and for universities to recruit doctoral candidates from overseas. Research ethics and integrity are of central importance for universities which are providers of educational services and conduct research. “Research integrity is a central issue to address as part of doctoral education, given that early-stage researchers are likely to take the skills and practices they develop with them throughout the rest of their careers.” [3]. One of the issues in question is the quality of doctoral education, which provides for the academic path of PhD candidates, completion rate, staff proficiency, and the share of international doctoral candidates.

The outcomes of the 2022 survey confirm the fact that current doctoral education in Europe actually adheres to the principles and follows recommendations developed in the Salzburg Principles and Recommendations, particularly regarding the role of doctoral education in European research, and assuming additional responsibilities by the

higher educational institutions [4]. Furthermore, the sharing of findings and best practices and dissemination of knowledge at the institutional level enable to develop a standard approach to doctoral training that takes into consideration the ins and outs of each institution.

Considering the trends in the development of doctoral reforms it should be mentioned that the Ukrainian scientists S. Sbrueva and M. Boichenko have divided the transformation of doctoral training into the six stages as follows:

- the first stage (2003 – 2005) involves the definition of goals and the development of principles for the transformation of doctoral training into the third cycle of higher education;

- the second stage (2005 – 2007) provides for structural changes in the organization of doctoral training in higher educational institutions;

- the third stage (2008 – 2009) involves the institutionalization of international cooperation in the field of doctoral training within the European Higher Education Area;

- the fourth stage (2010 – 2015) involves the deepening of reform initiatives and their political support for the EC and the Council of Europe;

- the fifth stage (2016 – 2019) comprises the development of research ethics and integrity and quality of supervision;

- the sixth stage (2020 – present) provides for digitalization of doctoral education and academic inclusion [6].

In view of the aforesaid and take all these points together, the trends in transformation of doctoral training from the perspective of the European Higher Education Area are observed within each stage and include the struc-

tural changes in the organization of doctoral training in higher educational institutions, diversification of doctoral programs, the deepening of reform initiatives, the development of research ethics and integrity, improvement in quality of doctoral training, digitalization of doctoral education and academic inclusion [7].

Conclusions and prospects for further scientific research. The transformation and modification of doctoral training are caused by the three “needs”: the need for providing doctoral graduates with high level skills essential for them to compete successfully for job outside the academy, the need for a “brand-new” model of the structured doctoral programs which implies a full-fledged balanced system of educational and research activities, and the need for making doctoral education capable of dealing with a multitude of priorities, including the COVID-19 pandemic. The identified trends are structural changes in the organization of doctoral training, responsibilities of institutions, mutual co-operation, and level of professionalization. The internationalization of doctoral training enables PhD candidates to gain international experience, cooperation with other universities, and for universities to recruit doctoral candidates from overseas. Universities try to be better equipped to assure the quality of the doctoral programs. Research ethics and integrity are of central importance for universities which are providers of educational services and conduct research. One of the key priorities for institutions is to ensure the career perspectives for doctoral candidates to be competitive at the diversified global job market. Digitalization of doctoral education and academic inclusion in order to face new challenges requires further in-depth study.

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