



**DOCTORAL STUDIES AT THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
AND THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA**

**Discussion Paper**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The research *The Avalanche in the Higher Education: Doctoral Studies in Social and Humanistic Studies at the University of Prishtina* is being realized jointly by the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development – KIPRED, and the Centre for Political Courage – CPC, and is supported by the Project the Promotion of Democratic Society financed by the Swiss Cooperation Office in Kosovo (SCO – K), and DANIDA, The International Cooperation for Development, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, and is managed by the Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF). Otherwise, the goal of this project is the research of doctoral studies in four Faculties of the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” at which the social and humanistic studies are taught: the Faculty of Economics, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Philosophy.

As we have mentioned in the First Discussion Paper, *The Doctoral Studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law of the University of Prishtina* (November 2017), the research is being developed in three phases. The first phase analyzes the doctoral studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law. Now, in the second phase, the doctoral studies at the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Philosophy are analyzed. Otherwise, this Discussion Paper is one from the final products of the second phase, and it provides the preliminary findings of this phase of the research. Similarly as in the first phase, the other two products of this phase are the Discussion Table, in which these preliminary findings will be presented before, and discussed with, the parties relevant to the topic, as well as their presentation and promotion in the public opinion. Meanwhile, in the third phase the summary of the previous findings and analyses will be realized, as well as of the conclusions of the previous two discussion tables, which will enable the provision of the final findings of the research as well as of the respective recommendations for the advancement and the increase of quality of doctoral studies at the University of Prishtina. Thus, in this third phase a summary analysis of all the previous findings in the first two phases will be provided, and these will have the form of the Policy Paper with respective recommendations.

Otherwise, this Discussion Paper consists of five sections in total, where this Introduction is the first among them. The second section provides a brief description and a preliminary analysis of the legal/normative documents that regulate the development of doctoral studies at the University of Prishtina. Given that legal/normative aspects are similar for all the faculties, and all the doctoral programs, we have decided to keep this section almost unchanged as in the First Discussion Paper. The only change is the inclusion of the *Regulation on the Elective Procedures regarding the Nomination, Renomination and the Advancement of the Academic Personnel at the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina"*, which was adopted by the Senate of the UP in the meanwhile, on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. The third section analyzes the process of accreditation of doctoral programs at the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Philosophy. Initially the details on the accreditation of each faculty and program are analyzed separately. Here, the strong and the weak sides of each program are stressed separately, as these were given by the teams of international experts which have evaluated them for accreditation. The focus is above all on the recommendations which were given by these groups of experts. Then, several different accreditation aspects of the doctoral studies at the UP will be discussed, and the focus here is on the general evaluation of the process of accreditation of doctoral studies, as well as on the description and the analysis that the respondents have provided regarding the idea for the accreditation of professors for teaching and mentoring at the doctoral studies. The fourth section treats the aspects of administration, quality and the research resources for doctoral studies. This section is in a large measure based on the answers provided by respondents during the interviews. The emphasis is on the administration of doctoral studies, and on the issue of resources for these studies, and this then continues with the criteria for the admission in the doctoral studies, as well as on the aspects of their quality. After this, the aspects of doctoral studies related to the research are discussed, by focusing on the issues of international publications, of libraries, of literature, as well as on the issues of institutes and publications in scientific journals. The fifth section gives conclusions and the topics for discussion.

At the end we will mention the participants in the interviews that were conducted for our research. From the Faculty of Education these are: Professor Dr. Blerim Saqipi, Professor Dr. Demë Hoti, Professor Dr. Eda Vula, Professor Dr. Majlinda Gjelaj, as well as the doctoral students Mr. Ismet Potera, Mr. Rajmonda Kurshumlia, and Mr. Shqipe Gashi. Meanwhile, from the Faculty of Philosophy, these are: Professor Dr. Agim Hyseni, Professor, Dr. Arben Hajdari, Professor Dr. Bujar Dugolli, the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Dr. Muhamet Mala, Assistant Dr. Linda Gusia, as well as the doctoral student Mr. Albert Mecini (Sociology), together with two other doctoral students who agreed for their opinions to be used for this research, but who wanted to remain anonymous. In the work we would refer to them as Doctorant 1 and Doctorant 2. KIPRED and CPC would like to express gratitude to all of them for the contribution they have provided for this research.

## 2. LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF DOCTORAL STUDIES AT THE UP<sup>1</sup>

Doctoral studies at the UP are regulated by, and administered according to, the following laws and legal documents: the Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo; the Law on Research-Scientific Activity; the Statute of the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”; and, the Regulation on Doctoral Studies at the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”.<sup>2</sup>

The major bodies which make the decisions relevant for the development of doctoral studies at the UP are the Central Council for the Doctoral Studies, as a permanent council of the Senate of the UP, the Council for Doctoral Studies at the Academic Unit – the Faculty, as a permanent council of the Council of the Faculty, then, the Council of the Faculty, and the Senate of the UP, as a body for final approval of the decisions proposed by the above mentioned bodies.

The Central Council for the Doctoral Studies consists of 14 members: the Rector, the Prorector for scientific research, the Prorector for teaching, one representative of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo, and ten regular or associated professors from the following fields: the field of social sciences, the field of humanistic studies, the field of technical studies, the field of arts, the field of mathematical-natural sciences, the field of medicine, the field of agricultural studies and veterinary medicine, the field of law, the field of economics, and the field of physical education and sports. The Director of the Office for Academic Development is also a member of this Council, but it is without the right of vote.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As mentioned in the Introduction, this chapter is completely taken, and is identical, with the respective chapter in the First Discussion Paper of November 2017. The only two changes are the addition of this footnote, and the addition of the last section in this chapter, named: 2.3 Nomination, renomination and the advancement of the academic personnel at the UP, which was added as a consequence of the approval in the meantime (March 3d, 2018) of the Regulation on the selective procedures related to the nomination, renomination and advancement of the academic personnel at the UP.

<sup>2</sup> Ligji për Arsimin e Lartë në Republikën e Kosovës, 04/L-037, August 29 2011, <http://kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/Ligji%20per%20arsimin%20e%20larte.pdf> ; Ligji për Veprimtari Kërkimore-Shkencore, 04/L-135, March 28 2013, <http://kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/Ligji%20per%20veprimtari%20kerkimore%20shkencorel.pdf> ; Statuti i Universitetit të Prishtinës “Hasan Prishtina”; and, Rregullore për Studimet e Doktoratës e Universitetit të Prishtinës “Hasan Prishtina”, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. The last two documents are at the disposal at: <http://www.uni-pr.edu/>.

<sup>3</sup> The Regulation for Doctoral Studies, Article 2.2.

The doctoral studies are lead by the Council for Doctoral Studies at the respective academic unit – the Faculty,<sup>4</sup> and this Council consists of 5 or 7 members from the professors of each department of the academic unit.<sup>5</sup>

Also, each academic unit – faculty, has its own Council of the Faculty, members of which are the dean of the faculty, vice-dean(s), the secretary of the faculty, up to thirty members selected from the professors of the faculty, up to eight members selected from the assistants of the faculty, one member selected from the non-academic staff of the faculty, and two representative of the students selected by the council of the students of the faculty.<sup>6</sup>

And, finally, the Senate of the University is the highest academic body of the University,<sup>7</sup> which has this composition: the rector, the prorectors, the deans of all the academic units – the faculties, one member from the academic staff of each academic unit, seven members from the parliament of students, and two members from the non-academic staff. The Secretary of the University is a permanent member of the Senate without the right of vote.

## **2.1 The registration in the doctoral studies**

According to the Regulation on Doctoral Studies, the registration in these studies is made with public competition which is proclaimed at least one month before the beginning of the academic year. The persons who have the right to participate in this competition are those who have the scientific magisterium, the title scientific master, the graduates who have accumulated at least 300 ECTS credits, the candidates with average grade which is not below 8.00 in each from the previous levels of studies, and the candidates who have evidence for the

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 3 (3).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 2.1.

<sup>6</sup> The Statute of the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”, Article 73.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 42.



knowledge of one from the major world languages (English, German, French, or any other major world language).<sup>8</sup>

The criteria for registration include the success in previous studies, the interest for scientific research, the works published, and the recommendations from two professors in the respective field. The criteria for determining priority in the selective alignment are the average grade, the scientific-research activity, and the knowledge of English or any other major world language. The average grade in Bachelor and Master studies is evaluated with the maximum of 40 points (average grade 8–8.50, 5 points; 8.51–9.00, 10 points; 9.01–9.50, 15 points, and; 9.51–10, 20 points. In this context, the scientific magisterium or the specialization is evaluated with 5 points).<sup>9</sup> The research-scientific activity is evaluated with up to 35 points, and what gets points here are the articles published during the five last years indexed in *Current Contents*, the articles published during the last five years in other international indexed journals, the articles published during the last five years in academic domestic journals (UP, the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo, the Institute of Albanology, and the Institute of History), the university textbooks published during the last five years, oral presentations of works during the last five years in international indexed scientific meetings, and oral presentations in domestic scientific meetings.<sup>10</sup> And, finally, the knowledge of English, or of any other major language is evaluated with up to 20 points.<sup>11</sup>

Also, the number of students to be registered is proposed by the academic unit – the faculty, this number is then discussed by the Central Council of Doctoral Studies, and it is approved by the Senate.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Regulation on Doctoral Studies, Article 7 (2). In the way in which it is put forward here, the criteria of evidence of knowledge of one from the major foreign languages, gives the right for competing for registration in doctoral studies, and is not a condition for registering in them.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 7 (4) 1. and 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 7 (4) 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 7 (4) 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 7 (2). **Remark:** Probably because of some technical mistake, the point (2) of the Article 7 in this Regulation is repeated twice, and with different contents. Here we are talking about the second point (2) of the Article 7.

## **2.2 The duration and the phases of the doctoral studies**

The duration of doctoral studies at the UP is six semesters, and during these semesters the students will acquire: 30 ECTS during the first semester, for passing the exams in the courses of this semester; 30 ECTS during the second semester, for seminars prepared in this semester; 30 ECTS for positive assessment and the approval of the project-proposal of the doctorate in the third semester; 90 ECTS during the last three semesters, and these are acquired for at least one scientific publication of the results of the doctorate in an indexed journal (20 ECTS), at least two presentations in scientific meetings, from which one must be an international meeting (10 ECTS), and for public defense of the doctorate (60 ECTS).<sup>13</sup>

## **2.3 The procedures for the submission, evaluation, and the acceptance of the doctoral project, and for the assessment of the defense of the doctoral thesis**

The doctoral candidate makes the proposal of the mentor and of the doctoral topic during the first year, and in doing this (s)he presents the title of the topic and the mentor proposed, the expectation of the scientific contribution of the research, as well as the evaluation of the expenses of the research. After this, the Council of the Faculty, upon the proposal of the Council for Doctoral Studies, nominates within a one month period a three- or five-member commission for evaluation of the theme, which eventually approves the proposal of the topic and of the mentor. Within a one month period, this Commission provides the assesment for the scientific contribution of the topic proposed. The proposal of this Commission should be discussed by the Council for Doctoral Studies during the third semester, and 30 days after the delivery of the report of the Commission the project proposal is defended before the Faculty Council for Doctoral Studies. At the end, the Council of the Faculty, after the proposal by the

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 8.

Council for Doctoral Studies, proposes the topic and the mentor to the Senate of the University for the approval.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the candidate will deliver officially the doctoral work in a written form, as a hard copy and in electronic form, at the faculty or at the university. Upon the proposal of the Council for Doctoral Studies, the Council of the Faculty will nominate a three- or a five-member Commission for evaluation of the doctoral work. Simultaneously with the nomination of this Commission, the University will post in its web-site the title and the resume of the work in Albanian and English. The evaluating commission is obliged to compile within a one month period the written report on evaluation of the doctoral work, and this evaluation can be the acceptance of the doctoral work, the request to complement it, or its refusal, which should contain the argumentation of the decision. Finally, in its following session, the Council of the Faculty, upon the proposal of the Commission, proposes to the Senate the nomination of the Commission for public defense of the doctoral work.<sup>15</sup>

The defense of the doctoral work can be done once after the Council of the Faculty approves the positive assesment of the evaluating Commission, which has to be ratified by the Senate within a two-month period from the date of the delivery at the Central Commission for Doctoral Studies. Within a one month period from the day of the ratification at the Senate, in agreement with the dean and the Commission for the defense of the doctoral work, the doctoral candidate should make a public defense of the doctoral work.<sup>16</sup> After the defense of the doctoral work, this work will be published within a one month period in the Internet web-page of the University.<sup>17</sup> The doctoral candidate acquires the right of the doctor from the day of the successful defense of the doctoral work, and all the rights of the academic title after the promotion.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 19.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 20.

## 2.4 Nomination, re-nomination and the advancement of the academic personnel at the UP

During the time period from the First Discussion Table until the issuance of this Discussion Paper, the Senate of the UP has adopted the Regulation on the nomination, re-nomination and advancement of the academic personnel at the UP,<sup>19</sup> which, among other things, determines the criteria regarding the recognition of publications in international scientific journals which can be used for the selection of the academic staff. Thus, the criteria for the selection of the Regular Professor is that (s)he should have at least 5 publications in international journals,<sup>20</sup> the criteria for the selection of the Associated Professor is that (s)he should have at least 3 publications in international journals,<sup>21</sup> and the criteria for the selection of the Assistant Professor is that (s)he should have at least 1 publication in international journals.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> “Rregullore për Procedurat Përzgjedhëse Lidhur me Emërimin, Riemërimin dhe Avancimin e Personelit Akademik në Universitetin e Prishtinës “Hasan Prishtina”” adopted on March 2nd, 2018 by the Senate of the University of Prishtina.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, Article 4, Paragraph 1.2.1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 5, Paragraph 1.2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 6, Paragraph 1.2.

### 3. THE ACCREDITATION

In this chapter we will present the most important data and facts related to the accreditation process of doctoral programs at the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Philosophy, and we will also discuss some ideas related to accreditation which were provided in the interviews conducted with the professors and the doctoral students of these two faculties.

#### 3.1 The Accreditation of the Doctoral Program at the Faculty of Education

The Doctoral Program *Education, PhD (180 ECTS)* of the Faculty of Education was accredited with the Decision of the State Council of Quality of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015). According to this Decision, the Faculty of Education is also obliged to compile the Improved Plan, based on the recommendations provided by the Team of Experts, which had to be delivered to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) until October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – an obligation that has been fulfilled in the meantime.<sup>23</sup>

Otherwise, the accreditation was made, among others, based on the Evaluation Report<sup>24</sup> compiled by the group of international experts after their visit to the Faculty of Education on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015. This doctoral program was prepared within the framework of the TEMPUS program of the European Commission. It is based on the doctoral program of the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana, and is prepared in cooperation with the personnel of this Faculty. The program is highly appraised by the team of evaluating experts. The aspects which are appreciated most have to do with the management of the program and of the students, with the personnel, research and international cooperation, finance and infrastructure, as well as with quality management.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the Evaluation Reports

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<sup>23</sup> Kosovo Accreditation Agency, Decision from the 36th Meeting of the Agency that took place on August 26th, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> *Evaluation Report, Accreditation of Doctoral Degree (PhD) Programme in Educational Sciences, July 2015.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

highly appraises the fact that the teaching will be carried out in English language, that the program is developed in international cooperation with the respective Universities of Ljubljana and of Tirana, that the admission criteria are commensurate with the best international practices, and that the program as a whole is oriented towards research and international publications.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, in addition to this high evaluation of the doctoral program, the Report provides a number of objections, and these have to do, not so much with the structure of the designed program, as with the possibilities for its implementation within the existing context in the Faculty of Education and the UP. In other words, while the Evaluation Report gives a high evaluation for the program, it also expresses quite serious reservations on the possibilities for this program to be implemented in given circumstances and with given resources. Thus, the Report provides a number of recommendations for surpassing the difficulties with which the Faculty of Education can be confronted during the implementation of the program. Some from the major recommendations that are made to the Faculty of Education regarding this program are:

- 1) Formulating research themes based on the research capacity of the faculty and informing prospective applicants of the doctoral studies of these themes;
- 2) Using e-learning possibilities, create virtual learning environments and good possibilities for videoconferencing to support cooperation between three universities involved in the programme (Prishtina, Ljubljana and Tirana);
- 3) Analyzing possible mentors' workload and based on that plan the number of study places (given that it seems that 15 places per year is not realistic to be supervised with present academic staff);
- 4) Organizing in partnership with the University of Ljubljana, or other experienced universities in doctoral degrees in educational field, compulsory training courses for mentors (PhD supervisors) to develop their mentoring skills;
- 5) Organizing an internal annual research conference for the doctoral degree participants (both mentors and PhD students) where they can share experiences;
- 6) Elaborating the concept paper for discussions to work out a research plan on the field of education to define research priorities of the faculty which will be also research topics for research groups and doctoral students;
- 7) Launching an

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Institute for Research and Development in Education, which will promote the Faculty of Education's research strategy and be a platform for international relations and international co-operation in research; 8) Exploring the national and international opportunities for research grants and research co-operation grants and applying for them whenever possible. In order to be more efficient achieving these grants we also recommend some staff members focusing only to this goal; 9) Creating a grant system for doctoral students to offer them possibilities for short- term mobility including participation in international conferences; 10) Investing enough economic resources to facilitate the PhD candidates, mentors and faculty staff involved in this programme necessary resources to implement the research projects proposed. In this sense our proposal is to facilitate the access to the students and professors, from the Library or the Virtual Library, to the research resources (statistical software, qualitative research software, etc.) and to the research results (international journals, databases, etc.); 11) Forming the Doctoral Studies Service mentioned in the university regulation to maintain doctoral programmes and doctoral students' study process; 12) Establishing an action plan for the implementation of the doctoral programme providing goals and expected outcomes and monitoring the evaluation of this plan every academic year.<sup>27</sup>

### **3.2 The Accreditation of the Doctoral Programs of the Faculty of Philosophy**

There are two doctoral programs that were accredited and that are ongoing at the Faculty of Philosophy, the doctoral program at the Department of History, and the Doctoral Program at the Department of Sociology.

The accreditation period of the Doctoral Program *History, PhD (180 ECTS)*, of the Faculty of Philosophy, was extended for one year, from October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, until September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016, with a Decision of the State Council on Quality of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency.<sup>28</sup> After that, this program was re-accredited for a five year period, from October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, until

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Otherwise, these recommendations are given in the pages: 4-5, 5-6, 7, 8, dhe 9.

<sup>28</sup> The Kosovo Agency for Accreditation, Decision from the 33d Meeting of the Agency, that took place on July 7th, 2015.

September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, with the Decision of the State Council on Quality of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, the Doctoral Program *Sociology, PhD (180 ECTS)*, of the Faculty of Philosophy is accredited for a three year period, from October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014, until September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017, with the Decision of the State Council of Quality of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014).<sup>30</sup>

### **3.2.1 The Accreditation of the Doctoral Program at the Department of History**

The accreditation of the doctoral program of History was made based on the Evaluation Report that the team of international experts delivered on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, after their on-site visit at the Faculty of Philosophy, on July 25-26, 2015.<sup>31</sup>

The Report mentions that ECTS allocation in the PhD programme seems to be fully in accordance with international practice and is to be welcomed.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, despite of the fact that the Report does not put any doubt on the rationale for, and the necessity of this program, it also emphasizes that it is not easy to judge the quality of this Program which has started three years ago, since there are not yet any successful students that have actually completed this study. In theory, there should be some, since the Program is arranged as a three year program. On the other hand, it is quite understandable that no student has been able to finish his/her dissertation, since – even though the development and writing of the thesis is given the focus of the four last semesters of the program – two years may well be not enough to really see any of the students finishing the entire process.<sup>33</sup>

Regarding the international cooperation, it is said that it does not seem that the departments have established international research or teaching contacts with scientific communities abroad, beyond possible individual and spontaneous interactions that in most cases apply to

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<sup>29</sup> The Kosovo Accreditation Agency, Decision from the 36th Meeting of the Agency that took place on August 26th, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> The Kosovo Accreditation Agency, Decision from the 31st Meeting of the Agency that took place on July 1st, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> *Evaluation Report, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina*, Site Visit 25-26 June 2015, 14 July 2015. pg. 31-36. This part refers also to *ibid.*, pg. 21-3, 24-5, 26-7, 28-9.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 32.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 31.



colleagues and institutions in Albania and Macedonia. It is recommended that the cooperation should be institutionalized, and that the more experienced senior teaching staff at the Department could also use its existing language skills to intensify cooperation with non-Albanian colleagues from countries such as Montenegro, Croatia, or Slovenia, in order to better prepare the Department for prospective European project applications which always demand cooperation from different countries (and often do require EU-membership of the countries of some from the institutions involved).<sup>34</sup>

One from the issues raised in this Report is the one of the language skills of staff and students, which should be supported by a deliberate strategy as part of the overall strategy of the Department and of the Faculty. This could serve to facilitate approach to foreign language research literature (and sources) and to international conferences and closer research and teaching cooperation.<sup>35</sup>

Also, the Report emphasizes that the allocation of ECTS in the doctoral program is in accordance with international practice, and that this is to be welcomed.<sup>36</sup>

At the end, the Final Recommendation is that the PhD Program in History, as discussed during the meetings and in the examination of the documents, still justifies the positive assessment of the program. The proposed recommendations of the external expert team should be used to improve the program. The PhD program in History is recommended for continued approval for three years.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pg. 26.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pg. 22 Regarding this, we should stress that by analyzing the curricula provided in the web-page of the Department of History, we can notice that English Language does not exist as a course in all the curricula of all three studying levels in this Department. This lack of English Language as a course, at the same time when the Regulation on Doctoral Studies at the UP requires from doctoral students to publish the works in the international indexed journals, creates an extreme obstacle in the fulfillment of the criteria put before the students, and puts into doubt the commitment of the Department for qualitative studies, and particularly at the doctoral level.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pg. 32.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pg. 32-3.

### 3.2.2 The Accreditation of the Doctoral Program in Sociology

The Doctoral Program in Sociology, *Social Transformations, Integrations and Values*, is accredited based on the Final Report of June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014, of the team of international experts.<sup>38</sup>

At the beginning, the Report praises the focus on social transformations, and, particularly, on the cultural dimensions of the transformations, which means on values and identity. Regarding the admission criteria, the expert team praises the request for certified knowledge of foreign language, for instance, TOEFL. Nevertheless, regarding this issue, the reservations are expressed on the possibility to register students in doctoral studies only with their promise that they will pass the TOEFL latter. For this reason, it is recommended to accept only the students with certified knowledge of foreign language, that is with TOEFL. Also, regarding the target groups of candidates, the Report recommends only the admission of sociologists with Masters degree. The courses of the first semester, which are not determined by the Department, but by the University, the Report evaluates as a loss of precious time of students. It is stressed that among the courses of the studying program it can be noticed a lack of quantitative and qualitative research methods, and that there is a lack of courses that are associated with the writing of the doctoral thesis.<sup>39</sup>

While the Report mentions that the personnel of the Department is educated abroad, it gives an objection on its limited experience in teaching at the doctoral level, by stressing that they have taught in less than five doctoral thesis.<sup>40</sup>

As far as the research is concerned, it is emphasized that the lack of sufficient national programs for research, and of funds at the university level, are among the major obstacles for the development of a functional scientific system in Kosovo. A University without research, as it is said, is just a school that pretends, but which was mistakenly named by another name. The

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<sup>38</sup> *Vizita e AKA në Universitet, 25-26 maj 2014, Procedura e ri-akreditimit të Fakultetit Filozofik*, pg. 8-12, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 8-9.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 10.

Report notes that one way for avoidance of this problem, which would strengthen the research potentials, is the doctoral program.<sup>41</sup>

As far as the finances and infrastructure are concerned, the Report evaluates the available space as sufficient, despite of objections it has for the fact that the computer rooms are not being used for learning the computer programs for statistical research, such as SPSS. Furthermore, the Report makes serious objections for the poorness of the libraries available, by stressing that these libraries have very few books. The access to computers and to electronic libraries at the faculty does not exist. The Report emphasizes that at the center of contemporary science is independent reading of written scientific communications and publications, and recommends to establish as soon as possible a functional library.<sup>42</sup>

The Report also stresses the absence of quality management, by noting that in the Self-Evaluation Report of the Department there is no document which registers the reactions of doctoral students to their teachers. It is recommended that the Department should develop such a form of quality control.<sup>43</sup>

At the end, the Report gives final recommendations according to which, the presentation of the Doctoral Program in Sociology, the infrastructure seen during the on-site visit, and the impression created during the analysis of the documentation delivered, justifies the accreditation of this program, but with fulfillment of several additional conditions. These conditions are: the necessity of a project plan, as well as of a certified knowledge of a foreign language for admission; Presentation of a mandatory colloquium, and; The obligation of a guiding contract during the first studying year, including teaching engaged from outside of Kosovo. It is recommended that with the fulfillment of these conditions, the program should be approved for a three-year period.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pg. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pg. 11-12.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pg. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pg. 12.

### **3.3 Aspects of Accreditation of doctoral studies at the UP**

We will now provide a general assessment of accreditation process, as it was expressed by the respondents in the interviews we have conducted within this research, as well as some from the objections made, and ideas given, by these respondents, which are related to this process.

#### **3.3.1 General Assessment of the Accreditation Process of Doctoral Programs**

Overall, the respondents have assessed quite well the accreditation process. Nevertheless, in the interviews conducted there were several objections that were made related to this process and to the fulfillment of its aims, and, also, there were several ideas given on the further work of KAA. The major objections and issues identified are these: The additional criteria that should be included in the accreditation process for enabling efficient fighting of plagiarism; The idea that the process of accreditation should include the evaluation of the quality of previous doctoral researches and works; The necessity to include in the doctoral studying programs the module on the preparation and writing of the doctoral thesis, and; The idea on accreditation for mentoring of professors in doctoral studies.

The possibility to use the accreditation process for facilitating a more effective fighting of plagiarism was raised as an issue by Hyseni, Department of Sociology. According to him, one from the huge problems is a widespread plagiarism, which goes even beyond levels of higher education. Therefore, he stresses the need that the accreditation process should include a mandatory requirement for the Faculty and the University, for a long-term preservation of all the materials that candidates use during their preparation of the doctoral dissertation, as well as of the works they prepare during these studies, particularly of doctoral thesis. If there are misuses and plagiarism by the candidates, according to Hyseni, this will create possibility for

legal institutions to discover and use them in each period of active life at work of the candidate, a practice that he has noticed in the educational system of the USA.<sup>45</sup>

Plagiarism is one from the most difficult problems of the system of higher education in Kosovo. Thus, the Doctorant 1 notes that students start to use plagiarism given that there is no mechanism which increases their ethics on the manner in which the scientific works should be written. Thus, as a consequence of this lack of consciousness, plagiarism did become an ingredient of the entire educational system in Kosovo, and particularly at the level of high education.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the idea provided by Hyseni for fighting plagiarism, among others, through accreditation process, is one that will affirm the original work, and will hamper the spread of plagiarism in the system of higher education.

According to Saqipi, the Faculty of Education, in general, the accreditation criteria are appropriate. However, in the future it is necessary for the accreditation to focus and analyze the quality of the final product, that is, the research projects and the dissertations of doctoral students. Saqipi thinks that in the conditions of a genuine accreditation, there would be very few doctoral programs that could have been accredited. Therefore, according to him, the period until the re-accreditation should be a period of transition, which has to be used for fast finding of solutions to the emerging problems. And this, he thinks, can be done, by supporting professors during this transitional period, for the works published abroad, by releasing them from their obligations in the Bachelor and Master studies, and with other similar measures. Furthermore, in his answers, Saqipi also mentioned the recommendations given by the KAA, that the doctoral program should involve also the module for the preparation and writing of the doctoral thesis. Otherwise, the same recommendation of the KAA was made to the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy. This idea, of the inclusion of the course on the methods for the preparation of dissertation into the curricula of doctoral studies, is one that should become a mandatory obligation in doctoral studies throughout the faculties and departments of the UP, given that it will improve considerably the quality of doctoral works.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Interview, Agim Hyseni, Prishtina, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Interview, Doctorant1, Prishtina, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>47</sup> Interview, Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

### 3.3.2 Accreditation of Professors for Teaching and Mentoring in Doctoral Studies

Similarly as in the first Discussion Paper, on the doctoral studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law, during the treatment of doctoral studies at the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Philosophy, one from the most important identified issues is the need to accredit professors for teaching and mentoring in doctoral studies. An idea for such an accreditation, in one form or another, was supported by almost all the respondents in the interviews conducted. A small number of respondents have expressed their reserves on whether this has to take exactly the form of accreditation, but even they have emphasized that a certain form of licensing of professors for mentoring in doctoral studies is necessary.

Thus, for instance, Hajdari, Department of History, has remarked that this idea was expoused and discussed, but the goal can be achieved not only by accreditation of professors, but also by respecting the existing criteria for their advancement. Furthermore, according to Hajdari, if we go with accreditation of professors, this can open many difficulties with professors who have acquired their titles in a legal manner before more than 20 years, by respecting the criteria of that time.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, Saqipi considers that the criteria for mentoring should be more demanding, but he adds that it is better to do this by putting the criteria at the level of the University and the Faculty, not through KAA. It is difficult, says Saqipi, for an agency like KAA, to decide for each and every professor, if (s)he has had three, or five necessary publications. Otherwise, Saqipi adds that the criteria of publications in the SCOPUS platform is fully appropriate, given that we are talking about qualitative journals – if one professor is not capable to publish in them, Saqipi stresses, (s)he has nothing to tell doctoral students. Nevertheless, concludes Saqipi, if the criteria is good, an obstacle is in bureaucracy, that is, to have this being imposed from outside, by KAA.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Interview, Arben Hajdari, Prishtina, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Interview, Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Meanwhile, Hyseni stresses that what can advance the issue of accreditation, is the accreditation of professors who can mentor the doctoral students – according to him, only the formal title of the professor cannot be a sufficient criteria for mentoring.<sup>50</sup> In a similar manner, Hoti, the Faculty of Education, stresses that, according to normative regulations, the accreditation is made through the Statute, which determines the competences of professors. Therefore, according to him, the accreditation of professors is not required, but, if it was required, it would have certainly contributed to the quality. Meanwhile, the Assistant in the Department of Sociology, Gusia says that a genuine and qualitative mentoring exceedingly depends on the research experience, and therefore, the number of researches conducted should be the major determinant for the selection of the mentors.

Similarly with most from the respondents, Vula, the Faculty of Education, states that the title should not be the only criterion for allowing the mentoring of doctoral students. Furthermore, she adds, there are associated professors who have no publications whatsoever in the fields in which they have to mentor candidates. Thus, the idea for accreditation of professors for mentoring, according to her, is to be supported. Therefore, according to Vula, the accreditation of professors should be the last step that should be undertaken in the reforms of the doctoral studies, given that only the titles of the professors are not sufficient.<sup>51</sup>

Mala, from the Department of History, is also a supporter for the accreditation of professors, but he adds that this should be done gradually. At the same time when the criteria is becoming more demanding, there is a need to organize particular courses for the professors, regarding the advanced methodologies for research, the methodology of mentoring, and for the advancement of their skills in foreign languages. Furthermore, continues Mala, the accreditation of professors in such a case would be their licensing for mentoring, and, then, this should be taken as a condition for their advancement as professors – if one professor pretends to become a regular one, (s)he should not be able to achieve this without having this type of licence, that is, without also guiding and mentoring doctoral candidates.<sup>52</sup> Gjelij, the Faculty of

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<sup>50</sup> Interview, Agim Hyseni, Prishtina, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> Interview, Eda Vula, Prishtina, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Interview, Muhamet Mala, Prishtina, Januar 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Education, also states that the accreditation of professors for mentoring should take place. According to her, if this is not done at the level of KAA, it should happen in some other form at the level of the faculties, so that the Doctoral Councils should do the licencing of professors for mentoring.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Dugolli, says that sometimes happens that professors acquire the title, but quite often they don't continue with publications and researches. Thus, professors who have published their last work decades ago, can get involved in mentoring, which is very problematic for the quality of doctoral studies. Therefore, according to Dugolli, the State Council of Quality of KAA should conduct the accreditation of professors for mentoring, in addition to the accreditation of doctoral programs. A professor cannot mentor *a priori*, only because (s)he has a certain title. Instead, it should be checked how active was (s)he recently with researches and publications.<sup>54</sup>

Otherwise, here we should stress that one from the major issues discussed during the preparation of the doctoral program at the Faculty of Education, in cooperation with the professors of the University of Ljubljana, was exactly the issue of the criteria for mentoring. On this occasion, the professors from Slovenia have insisted that the only criterion for mentoring should be the one of researches and publications during the last five years. This criterion, according to them, should be applied apart from the title of the professor, even in the cases of regular professors.

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<sup>53</sup> Interview, Majlinda Gjelaj, Prishtina, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Interview, Bujar Dugolli, Prishtina, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018.



## **4. ASPECTS OF ADMINISTRATION, QUALITY AND RESEARCH RESOURCES IN DOCTORAL STUDIES**

In this chapter we will discuss the major problems identified in the interviews, which characterize administration, quality and research in the doctoral studies at the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Philosophy.

### **4.1 The Administration of Doctoral Studies and the Issue of the Resources for these Studies**

One from the most important issues identified during the interviews regarding administration of doctoral studies is the one of insufficient and insignificant resources that are allocated for these studies. Also, related to this problem is the one of bureaucratic obstacles during the use of these already slight resources. Regarding these obstacles, in some from the interviews the respondents mentioned the idea of decentralization of a number of functions for which the decision-making competences for the moment rest in the Rectorate of the UP.

For the payments they make, the doctoral students receive, more or less, only the regular lectures; meanwhile, as far as other opportunities are concerned, they are either inexistent, or very small.<sup>55</sup> Thus, for instance, doctoral candidate, Ismet Potera stresses that within the framework of cooperation with TEMPUS, the payment for the access to the electronic library was made by the UP; however, this payment was made very late, so, as a consequence, the access was enabled only with about a year delay.<sup>56</sup> This access was mentioned as well by the doctoral candidate Shqipe Gashi, but, according to her, this is not sufficient, and, on the other hand, the procedures of the access are too complicated. Gashi has also mentioned the creation of a cabinet for doctoral students within the Faculty of Education.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Interview, Albert Mecini, Prishtina, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Interview, Ismet Potera, Prishtina, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>57</sup> Interview, Shqipe Gashi, Prishtina, November 24<sup>th</sup>, nëntor.

While discussing the resources allocated by the UP for doctoral studies, Vula, Faculty of Education, mentions that the visits of the professors from Slovenia and Albania, during the second year of the doctoral program, are being paid by the UP.<sup>58</sup> Dugolli, Faculty of Philosophy, also notes that there were visiting professors for the courses on information technology, and that some from them were even from other universities. Nevertheless, he adds that the number of doctoral students is very small, and, consequently, the Rectorate quite often hesitates and refuses to engage one visiting professor for, let us say, three or four students.<sup>59</sup>

Despite all this, there is an overall assessment that the resources allocated are small and insignificant when compared with the needs. The Rectorate cannot confront the cost of doctoral studies, and, as a consequence, the faculties and the students are left to find solutions for themselves.<sup>60</sup> According to Saqipi, the lack of resources is the problem that should be criticized mostly. The University should start to look at the doctoral studies, not as an addition or an attachment, but as an integral part of its mission. The planning should be done per program. Actually, the financing is being done in a way in which each faculty receives a certain budget, and, then, the engagement of the staff is centralized. Eventually, it ends with an additional contract, or with over-payment. This creates a situation in which people do not feel like working at the doctoral program, and this causes huge problems. For the moment, the professors see the engagement in a doctoral program as an addition to their regular job. That is, the rationale is, when I have time, I'll do it, says Saqipi.<sup>61</sup>

There is also the problem of bureaucratic obstacles in the distribution of these already small resources. Saqipi mentions that professors can apply at the Managing Council of the University for funds for professional travels and conferences, but, he adds, this is very bureaucratic, because it is absurd to see that the Managing Council of the University is deciding which professors should go to which conferences, and which ones not.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, Mala

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<sup>58</sup> Interview, Eda Vula, Prishtina, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Interview, Bujar Dugolli, Prishtina, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Interview, Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

mentions that the Department of History has MOU with the University of Tirana, but there are bureaucratic obstacles caused by the centralization of the administration. The issue is related to the payments for visiting professors, which are executed in an exceedingly bureaucratized and centralized manner, and which are consequently associated with numerous difficulties and with large delays in time. Thus, it is difficult for the Department to establish cooperation with faculties of other universities, given that important particular aspects of this cooperation depend on, and are decided by, the Rectorate. For covering the travelling expenses of visiting professors, continues Mala, solutions might be found in support by programs like ERASMUS. But even this is very problematic, he says, given that sometimes you acquire ERASMUS, but sometimes you don't.<sup>63</sup> Related to this, Gusia, Department of Sociology, notices that the Faculty of Education has recorded recently a significant increase in research, but, she adds, they have had a grant from *Transformational Leadership*, and this has brought immediate results. Nevertheless, we might add gain, like in the case of ERASMUS, sometimes you get a grant from *Transformational Leadership*, but sometimes you don't.

Bureaucratic obstacles that emerge in the administration of doctoral studies made some from the respondents to propose more radical solutions. For instance, Hoti, the Faculty of Education, mentions difficulties in the procedures for payment of visiting professors, and he says that the simplification of these procedures is a necessity for more qualitative studies. It is necessary, he says, to have funds that are assigned for doctoral studies and for activities related to them, as it was a practice earlier, with the Science Community.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, Hyseni, Department of Sociology, states that the resources for doctoral studies should be very much larger, and that these should be delegated from the Rectorate to the faculties, and, then, from the faculties to departments. Without this transfer of the resources, the bureaucratic obstacles to both, supporting doctoral studies, and implementing the support, will be huge. With the Draft-Law on the Higher Education, the funds for doctoral studies should be decentralized. According to him, this decentralization would facilitate the growth of both, the inclusion, and active participation in doctoral studies. In addition, this will enable a more efficient oversight, given that it is

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<sup>63</sup> Interview, Muhamet Mala, Prishtina, Januar 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>64</sup> Interview, Demë Hoti, Prishtina, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

considerably easier to oversee the expenditures of the department by the faculty, and those of the faculty by the Rectorate, than to oversee the expenditures of the Rectorate.<sup>65</sup>

#### **4.2 The Criteria for the Admission at the Doctoral Studies**

The issue of the criteria for the admission of candidates at the doctoral studies is closely related with the issue of the administration of these studies. As far as these criteria are concerned, in the following section we will focus on several issues identified during the interviews, such as: the possibilities for manipulation during the selection of candidates; the importance that the testified competence in research should have in these admission criteria; the importance that the criterion of success in the previous studying levels should have when compared to other criteria; the criterion of the knowledge of English Language.

The possibilities for manipulation for violation of the rules were mentioned by two from the respondents. Gusia, Department of Sociology, stated that, despite of the fact that she was not directly involved in the selection of candidates, she has heard that there were serious doubts that a section of the exam, the one in English Language, was manipulated.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, Hyseni raises the question if there are cases when the candidates are favored according to their connections, cooperations, affiliations, or nepotism. If there are serious and grounded doubts in the faculty, he adds, that certain candidates could have received before the exam the questionnaire-tests for the admission-exam in foreign language, then, the meaning of this is that the competition between the applicants was not equal. This necessarily requires that the knowledge of foreign languages should be tested only with the TOEFL criteria.<sup>67</sup> The issue of the possibilities for manipulations in the admission-exams is surely an exceedingly grave difficulty of studies at all levels in general, and of the doctoral ones in particular, and, while the mandatory passing of TOEFL would solve this problem for the admission-exam in English

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<sup>65</sup> Interview, Agim Hyseni, Prishtina, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>66</sup> Interview, Linda Gusia, Prishtina, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>67</sup> Interview, Agim Hyseni, Prishtina, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Language, for other admission-exams there is certainly an urgent need to create robust mechanisms for their supervision and transparency.

Also, in several from the interviews, the respondents have stressed that during the selection of candidates, the researches that those candidates plan to conduct during their doctoral studies should receive a considerably higher importance in the admission criteria. Thus, Gusia says that her colleague professors in the Department of Sociology have insisted ever since 2014 that the candidates should apply with a motivation letter, in which they would describe the research they were planning to conduct as well as its utility. However, she continues, this was refused with the justification that this criterion cannot be quantified. Meanwhile, the admission exam, she adds, was a pure impromptu, which had a form of the admission exam for master studies. Thus, the selection was made according to how fresh is the candidates' knowledge on the things they have learned earlier, rather than according to what the candidates were offering in and for research.<sup>68</sup> Hajdari, Department of History, has also stressed the same problem. The doctoral students, he remarked, should provide their research proposals at the very outset, and they should be selected based on those research proposals. Thus, the points should go to students who have good research proposals, and not to proceed with tests with multiple-answer questions that sometimes are similar to those in exams in driving schools. This can't do for the doctorate, concludes Hajdari, there is a need to have a good research project.<sup>69</sup>

Saqipi also says that the research potential should be the major criterion in the selection of the candidates. The tendency within the UP was to move towards more objective criteria, average grade, and similar, but the projects that the students deliver on the doctoral researches they are planning is not evaluated highly. This shows that there is no research strategy, the fields of research that we want to treat. The research strategy is that based on what we should evaluate the research projects delivered by students, and, in its absence, these projects are treated only formally. Thus, we quite often come in a situation in which we admit students who have

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<sup>68</sup> Interview, Linda Gusia, Prishtina, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>69</sup> Interview, Arben Hajdari, Prishtina, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

research projects for which we have no mentors – meanwhile, the admission criteria should assess whether we have mentors before we admit students, concludes Saqipi.<sup>70</sup>

Giving an increased importance to the doctoral research in the set of criteria for admission of candidates is a fundamental precondition for a thrift and increase of quality of doctoral studies. The condition is illustrated by Dugolli, who says that from 100 possible points, up to 40 can be acquired from the success in the previous studies; meanwhile, other 60 points are divided in three equal parts, 20 points for each of them: for admission exam, for English Language, and for the research project.<sup>71</sup> Thus, according to this approach, two the most fundamental, and most necessary criteria for qualitative doctoral study, the research project and the knowledge of English Language, can bring the candidate the maximum of 20 points each. Meanwhile, the knowledge from previous levels of studies brings up to 60 points alone – 40 for success in previous levels, plus 20 for admission exam, which is also a test of previous knowledge.

Here we would propose for discussion the following structure of the weight of four major criteria – the first two criteria are eliminatory, and the next two are selective: 1) The criterion of English Language, which should be testified by the proof of passing the TOEFL test, and which should be eliminatory criterion; 2) The criterion of minimal average grade during Bachelor and Master studies – in its actual value, 8.00 – which should also be eliminatory criterion; 3) The criterion of research, in which the candidate is evaluated based on the research project, and previous researches, which should be selective criterion that can bring up to 50 points, and; 4) The criterion of previous knowledge, which will evaluate the value of the average grade of the candidate, and the results from the admission exams, which should also be a selective criterion that could bring up to 50 points. Only the knowledge of English Language as a necessary condition for application, together with emphasized leaning towards research during the evaluation, can create necessary preconditions for qualitative doctoral studies.

In the interviews conducted all the respondents were thinking that the passing of TOEFL should be a precondition for admission in the doctoral studies. In the answers given there were some

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<sup>70</sup> Interview, Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Interview, Bujar Dugolli, Prishtina, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. The very same data were also provided by professor Muhamet Mala, in the interview given on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

variations: for instance, some from the respondents were asking for graduality in the establishment of this criterion, and some others were seeking to also admitt students who were very near to passing the TOEFL, under the condition that they must pass it in the meantime in order to acquire the right to submit the request for defending the doctoral thesis. At any rate, the creation of the conscience on the necessity of knowledge of English Language at a satisfactory level can be interpreted as a very promising fact. Therefore, it is important that passing of TOEFL should become a universally known standard precondition for application in doctoral studies at the UP.

### **4.3 The Quality of Doctoral Studies**

In this section we will discuss some from the aspects of doctoral studies that have to do with their quality, and these are related to the numbers of students registered at all the studying levels, the lack of standards and of realistic evaluation of the quality of previous doctoral studies, the lack of mechanisms for genuine quality control, as well as the issue of the lack of the course of English Language in the programs delivered by the Department of History.

One from the major problems that impedes the increase of quality of doctoral studies is caused by the very large numbers of students that are being registered at all the levels of studies, a fact that creates heavy workloads for academic personnel, and, in turn, doesn't leave them any opportunities for some larger engagement in research and doctoral studies. This problem was noticed by Hyseni, who stresses as a possible solution the interdisciplinary studies: When the number of professors is small in comparision to the number of students, he says, the interdisciplinarity of doctoral studies is a solution for the challenges with which the UP is confronted. Unfortunately, however, there are no advanced approaches towards interdisciplinarity, and, consequently, the doctoral studies are taking place at the level of faculties, and, usually, even at the level of departments.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Interview, Agim Hyseni, Prishtina, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Closely related to this, it was mentioned that recently a considerable increase in the number of researches conducted at the Faculty of Education was recorded. As we have said, one from the respondents connected this with the grant that this Faculty has received from *Transformational Leadership* – and it is very likely that this grant must have had a considerable impact in this growth of research.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, we should add here that, according to Hoti, recently there was a large decrease in the number of registered students, from 800-900 per year, per program, into 120 per program, and, consequently, the number of students in all the faculty did fall in total of 380.<sup>74</sup> It is to be believed that this decrease in the number of students, with the resulting decrease of the engagement of professors in teaching activities at the bachelor level, has also had an impact in the recorded growth of research at the Faculty of Education. Therefore, a very good way for achieving higher quality at all the levels of study, and particularly at the doctoral one is the transition from quantity to quality.

One from the most difficult problems regarding quality Saqipi sees in the lack of standards and assessments of the quality of previous doctoral studies. The major challenge of UP regarding quality of doctoral studies, according to him, is in the determination of adequate standards, which will enable students to do a genuine scientific work, rather than to continue the trend of superficial researches without any impact at the level of society, or even at the practical level of the profession for which they are being prepared. I do not have any information, says Saqipi, that anyone at the University has conducted any internal evaluation of the quality of researches conducted at the level of dissertations. Thus, in UP there is no internal debate with the aim of finding if the work being done at the doctoral level is a genuine scientific work. Saqipi also focuses at the mechanisms for quality assurance, which, as he says, University has in letter, but they are not functional. Standards for qualitative doctoral studies, the assessment of the fulfillment of these standards, that is, the evaluation of the quality of doctorates produced, as well as functional mechanisms for quality assurance, in a large measure do not exist in UP.<sup>75</sup> Despite of the fact that their creation is one among the major challenges for UP, it is also a necessity for having a qualitative doctoral studies.

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<sup>73</sup> Interview, Linda Gusia, Prishtina, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>74</sup> Interview, Demë Hoti, Prishtina, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>75</sup> Interview, Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017.



As far as mentoring is concerned, we will focus on the issue of co-mentoring. According to Hoti, in the doctoral program at the Faculty of Education, which is ongoing within TEMPUS project, the co-mentoring is mandatory, one mentor being from Slovenia, and another from Kosovo. The co-mentoring is certainly increasing the quality of doctorates.<sup>76</sup> The doctorant Ismet Potera shows this very well when he says that, given that the doctoral program is being developed by more universities, an increased competition can be noticed among the professors of different universities. This, according to Potera, is noticed particularly in the performance of the professors of the UP, who work much more then under the condition when the program belongs only to UP. According to the assessment of Potera, professors from Ljubljana are more pragmatic and practical than the others, those from Tirana make attempts to connect the theories they lecture with the doctoral topics of particular students, and professors from Prishtina are considerably more theoretically oriented.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, the co-mentoring with professors from Kosovo and Slovenia creates a good link between theory and practice, and, thus increases in a large measure the quality of study. Unfortunately, in other doctoral and master programs at the UP, co-mentoring is very rare, despite of the fact that the Statute enables it. Co-mentoring at the UP takes place more often only in doctoral programs that are organized with foreign universities.<sup>78</sup> With the goal of increasing the quality of doctoral studies, the UP should undertake measures aiming at increasing the frequency of the practice of co-mentoring, and the engagement of visiting professors is only one from numerous possibilities in this direction.

Finally, in the chapter on accreditation we have mentioned that, according to data in the website of the Department of History,<sup>79</sup> the course of English Language does not figure in any from

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<sup>76</sup> Interview, Demë Hoti, Prishtina, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>77</sup> Interview, Ismet Potera, Prishtina, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Interview, Demë Hoti, Prishtina, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>79</sup> <http://filozofiku.uni-pr.edu/Departamentet/Departamenti02.aspx>, and, <http://filozofiku.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/Departamentet/Departamenti02/Pasqyre-e-programit-PhD-HISTORI.pdf.aspx>. Here we should stress that in the list of the courses for the Master program in Archival Studies, in the address: <http://filozofiku.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/Departamentet/Departamenti02/Arkivistike-MA.pdf.aspx> of the Department of History, the course of English Language (French, German, Italian) exists, but in the Timetable of lectures for this program, which is given in the address: <http://filozofiku.uni-pr.edu/Departamentet/Departamenti02.aspx>, this course does not exist again. We consider that it is worth stressing that the List of Courses for the Master Program in New Age (centuries 19-20) (<http://filozofiku.uni-pr.edu/Departamentet/Departamenti02.aspx>)

the studying levels of this Department. All the other departments of both faculties investigated, in all the studying levels have at least one course in English Language, and quite often they have two. In a situation in which the Department of History organizes doctoral studies, and at a time when one from the major requests in doctoral studies is the one for foreign publications, the absence of the course of English Language in the studies organized by this department is a deficiency that seriously threatens the quality of doctoral studies, and of its studies in general, in this department, and, consequently, this deficiency should be eliminated urgently.

#### **4.4 Research and the Research-Related Issues of Doctoral Studies**

The research, according to Hyseni, is the weakest and the most critical point of the higher education in general. There is a lack of sufficient motivation for empirical research in particular, as well as for research, in general. Quite often, foreign scholars do more research on numerous fields of our social life than domestic ones. Therefore, according to Hyseni, it is necessary to reorganize this field, starting from the forms of motivation, and going up to the percentage of the funds allocated at the level of the MEST for the UP and for research.<sup>80</sup> This is summarized briefly by Saqipi: The state does not see science as something important, given the fact that it does not finance it. According to him, scientific and research work is the most underdeveloped form of work at the UP. There is no research agenda, no research program, and the research is not – except verbally – part of the mission of UP. The research is for free time, if there is any. The development of research requires institutional commitment, time, resources, accountability, and, above all, it requires that all these should be coordinated and developed together.<sup>81</sup>

Saqipi points out one from the major problems which is related to the research: the University, according to him, does not have any research agenda, it doesn't have any research strategy,

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[pr.edu/getattachment/Departamentet/Departamenti02/Programi-KOHA-E-RE-shek--XIX-XX-\(MA\)-\(1\).pdf.aspx](http://pr.edu/getattachment/Departamentet/Departamenti02/Programi-KOHA-E-RE-shek--XIX-XX-(MA)-(1).pdf.aspx), at the same time when it doesn't include English Language, it includes the Ottoman Language.

<sup>80</sup> Interview, Agim Hyseni, Prishtina, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>81</sup> Interview, Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

and these are necessary not only for the University, but also for each and all the faculties and departments. In other words, the fields of research that will be treated are not determined, and, thus, there is no possibility to evaluate doctoral projects of doctoral students according to research focuses of the department. Therefore, these projects are assessed in a very formal manner, and only after they are accepted, the department looks if there are mentors for their mentoring.<sup>82</sup> Otherwise, this issue is mentioned indirectly by Gusia as well, who focuses on the experience of the Psychology Department at the Master studies. Master in Psychology, Gusia says, is very focused, because it has fewer students, and their masters theses are linked with a project that comes from the department. Department makes a decision, in this semester these topics will be covered, and then the students join with their master researches.<sup>83</sup> It is clear that in research, as in all the other activities, proper planning is necessary for achieving success. Therefore, the determination of the research strategies and agendas, that is, the determination of priorities in the research, is a precondition for the research to be successful. Consequently, the design and compilation of these strategies and agendas should be an urgent goal for all the faculties and departments, and particularly for those that organize doctoral studies.

In the first Discussion Paper, from November 2017, we have mentioned the *White Document*, which provides several European norms and standards regarding the workload of regular and associated professors. We have said that for the category of regular professors the ratio between teaching and research should lean towards intensive research, with the percentages: 10% in teaching, 70% in research, and 20% for other services. Meanwhile, for the category of associated professors, the ratio is recommended to be 20% in teaching, 60% in research and 20% for other services.<sup>84</sup> Professors at UP are not even close to achieve anything like these European ratios between teaching and research. According to Hoti, each professor has at least 6 hours per week, and the assistant has at least 10, and this leaves very little possibilities for

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Interviews, Linda Gusia, Prishtina, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>84</sup> *Dokumenti i bardhë: Modeli financiar për Sistemin e Arsimit të Lartë Publik në Kosovë* (FAITH: Rritja e autonomisë financiare dhe llogaridhënies së institucioneve publike të arsimit të lartë në Kosovë), 544142-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-AT-TEMPUS-SMGR. Cited from, *Studimet Doktorale në Fakultetin Ekonomik dhe atë Juridik të Universitetit të Prishtinës*, Discussion Paper, KIPRED, CPC; November 2017.

research.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, Gusia stresses that the real workload is even bigger, by adding that she, herself, has 17 hours of lectures per week. The problem is on the exceedingly large number of students to whom the professors should deliver lectures. According to her, if a single professor withdraws from the lectures, there is a danger that the entire system of teaching might collapse, given that there are no sufficient professors to replace them and their lectures.<sup>86</sup> The issue of unburdening the professors from their teaching obligations, so that they could deal more with research, is certainly one from the most difficult problems which the UP must confront.

Regarding the request for foreign publications for doctoral students, in a way in which it is put forward by the UP, namely, in the foreign indexed journals, respondents have expressed different opinions, which sometimes were even opposed. Here we should emphasize that during this research, we have noticed the same trend that we have seen during the preparation of the first Discussion Paper, the one on Doctoral Studies in the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law. In that first research, the Doctoral Program at the Faculty of Economics was organized jointly with TEMPUS, and the Faculty of Law did not have any such cooperation. We have noticed that the support for foreign publications was considerably higher at the Faculty of Economics, that is, at the faculty which had a cooperation with TEMPUS. Again, in this research, the Faculty of Education has a doctoral program organized with TEMPUS, and the Faculty of Philosophy not. And, again, the support for foreign publications was considerably higher among the respondents from the Faculty of Education, which has cooperation with TEMPUS, than among the respondents from the Faculty of Philosophy, which has not any such cooperation. It seems that the reason is on the fact that the cooperation with TEMPUS, and, consequently, the mentoring by the professors from the European universities (in this case, of professors from Slovenia) helps the students to increase their skills for preparation of works for foreign publication, and, therefore, these students do not have any significant propensity to look at the request for this type of publications as something highly problematic.

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<sup>85</sup> Interview, Demë Hoti, Prishtina, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>86</sup> Interview, Linda Gusia, Prishtina, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

The reservations and objections towards the criterion of foreign publications, as it is determined in the Regulation for Doctoral Studies at the UP, were expressed particularly by the respondents from the Department of History. During the interviews conducted with them, they have mentioned, for instance, the fact that a number of previous doctoral candidates are blocked in the process, given that the Central Council of Doctoral Studies has not recognized their works as international publications.<sup>87</sup> Also, some have argued that it is difficult to publish in international journals in the fields that have to do with Albanian culture, such as Language, History or Ethnology.<sup>88</sup> Among others, it was stressed that the major journals for these fields that are being published in Prishtina and Tirana, and which are the major journals towards which are oriented the scholars in these fields, are not recognized by the UP as research contributions.<sup>89</sup>

According to Vula, the request for at least one foreign publication during the doctoral studies is not only a request of UP, given that it exists among all the serious universities in the region.<sup>90</sup> Gjelaj also thinks that the request for one publication in the international journals with impact-factor is not difficult. This, on the other hand, prepares the student for a qualitative work of the doctoral thesis. The goal, adds Gjelaj, is not to increase the number of people with doctorates – regardless of the fact how important and welcomed this might be – but to have doctors who fulfill some basic, elementary and necessary criteria for being scientists. The needs for staff at the UP are exceedingly high, but these are needs for qualitative staff, Gjelaj says, not merely for staff as a number.<sup>91</sup>

At the very core, the problems that have to do with foreign publications are problems that are caused by non-adequate mentoring. Doctoral students who have Slovenian co-mentors, do not look at the issue of foreign publications as a problematic one, given that the mentoring of Slovenian, or, in general, European, professors, is qualitative, and it enables them to fulfill this

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<sup>87</sup> Interview, Arben Hajdari, Prishtina, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Also, Interview, Muhamet Mala, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>88</sup> Interview, Muhamet Mala, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Interview, Bujar Dugolli, Prishtina, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. Also, Interview, Muhamet Mala, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Interview, Eda Vula, Prishtina, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>91</sup> Interview, Majlinda Gjelij, Prishtina, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

criteria easily. This is noticed very well by Saqipi, who says that the request for foreign publications should remain, but it has to be complemented with the request that if the mentoring professor has not published anything abroad, (s)he has to be withdrawn from the mentoring, and should be replaced by someone else who fulfills this request. Professor who has published abroad, stresses Saqipi, will help you, (s)he will know in advance the nature of the comments on the students work by international peer-reviewers.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, as far as domestic journals are concerned, these, according to Saqipi, should be welcomed, but it is very difficult to make them to fulfill international standards. According to him, the best that can be done is to continue with the criterion of the SCOPUS platform for professors, and then, with the increase of the number of professors who publish internationally, better circumstances will be created for starting the publication of domestic journals that are genuinely qualitative. The fact that the UP does not have good journals, concludes Saqipi, is not a concerning problem, for as long as UP works for the creation of circumstances in which the good journals can be created. The initiatives for publication of scientific journals in Kosovo, according to him, should be supported by the UP, but we should escape from the rationale, I'll publish an article to you, and you'll publish an article to me.<sup>93</sup>

This line of reasoning can probably be applied, and it should be applied, for yet another problem related to scientific research at the UP, the problem of non-functional scientific institutes of the faculties of the UP and of their departments. The lack of functioning of these institutes was noticed and stressed by most of the respondents in the interviews conducted, as one from the major problems and difficulties related to research at the UP.<sup>94</sup> However, at the time when the UP is laying out its first steps in the institution of a serious research which would fulfill basic Western scientific criteria, the priority should be on the creation of a category of Kosovar researchers who would fulfill these criteria. Meanwhile, the functionalization of the institutes could, and should, be done after the initial creation and strengthening of this category of researchers.

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<sup>92</sup> Interview, Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Interviews: Agim Hyseni, Prishtina, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Arben Hajdari, Prishtina, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Eda Vula, Prishtina, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018; Muhamet Mala, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018; Majlinda Gjelaj, Prishtina, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018; Bujar Dugolli, Prishtina, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018.

Nevertheless, this by no means justifies some other problems related to research, such as the one of missing or very limited access into the electronic libraries, or the one of the very poor condition of physical libraries, and the one of exceedingly scarce literature which is used in doctoral studies, as well as the very problematic manner in which this literature is used. According to respondents, the means that the UP allocates for physical libraries are very small, and, thus, the supply with books and literature remains in a large measure dependent upon donations.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, the teachers at the UP virtually do not do any weekly supervisions of how much are their students following the literature, despite of the fact that this is a regular practice of the Slovenian professors in their lectures in the Faculty of Education.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile, an exceedingly difficult condition of doctoral students regarding their access to the electronic libraries, and the problems which which these students are confronted as a consequence of this, were emphasized by almost all of the respondents.<sup>97</sup> Here we can only conclude that the failure of UP to provide the doctoral students with access to the journals in which UP requires those students to publish, brings these students in a paradoxical situation in which they are required to participate in scientific processes which they have no possibility to follow.

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<sup>95</sup> Interview, Demë Hoti, Prishtina, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>96</sup> Interview, Majlinda Gjelaj, Prishtina, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>97</sup> Interviews with professors: Demë Hoti, Prishtina, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Agim Hyseni, Prishtina, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Arben Hajdari, Prishtina, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Linda Gusia, Prishtina, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Eda Vula, Prishtina, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018; Majlinda Gjelaj, Prishtina, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018; Bujar Dugolli, Prishtina, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. Also, the interviews with doctoral students: Shqipe Gashi, Prishtina, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Ismet Potera, Prishtina, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Albert Mecini, Prishtina, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017; Doktorant 1, Prishtina, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS FOR DISCUSSION

A) Until now, the Kosovar Agency for Accreditation has served much more as a mechanism for formal verification of the fulfillment of conditions for doctoral studies, without focusing too much on the dimensions of content of these studies:

Issues for discussion:

- The process of the re-accreditation of doctoral studies should incorporate the criterion of evaluation of the quality of previous doctoral works and researches;
- With the goal of fighting the plagiarism, the accreditation process should include the mandatory demand for the faculty and the university for long-term preservation of all the materials that doctoral candidates use during the preparation of their doctorates, as well as of the works that they do during these studies, with particular focus on the doctoral thesis;
- The inclusion in the doctoral studying programs of the module on the preparation of writing the doctorate, given that this module will help the substantial improvement of the quality of doctoral works;
- The accreditation of professors for mentoring in doctoral studies – the formal academic title result as a necessary, but not also as a sufficient criterion for this. The experience in research and the number of researches published in credible scientific journals during the last five years should be the major determinant for accreditation of professors for mentoring in doctoral studies.

B) Very low resources that are allocated for doctoral studies, and the related bureaucratic obstacles during their use, lowers in a very large measure the quality and the progress of these studies. Quite often, the regular lectures are the only thing that is offered to doctoral students, meanwhile, the other possibilities that are necessary for successful doctorates are exceedingly limited. Therefore, the University should start to look at doctoral studies, not as something additional to its work, but as an integral part of its mission and of its studies.



Issues for discussion:

- The payments by UP for the access in the electronic libraries should be made without delays, in order to enable the professors and students to have that access at their disposal from the beginning and continuously;
- The increase of decentralization in decision-making, from the Rectorate to the faculties and departments;
- The increase of the budget, and the transfer to the faculties of the decision-making competences regarding the participation in scientific conferences and visiting professors, given that the grants like those of ERASMUS, Transformational Leadership, etc., despite of their great contribution, are neither sufficient, nor certain.

C) The actual criteria for admission in doctoral studies are inadequate, and they provide opportunities for non-objective evaluation of applicants, which has a direct impact in the quality and in the progres of doctoral studies.

Issues for discussion:

- For admission into the doctoral studies, the knowledge of English Language should be eliminative, rather than evaluative criterion. The knowledge of English Language should be documentet with the results from TOEFL test, and for its organization the support of international presence in Kosovo can be utilized;
- The average grade above eight in the bachelor **and** master studies should also be eliminative criterion for admission in doctoral studies;
- The previous knowledge and the research capabilities, including the research project, should be evaluated equally, in order to have a credible criterion which will enable quality in doctoral studies and in the preparation of doctoral research.

D) The major challenge of UP regarding the quality of doctoral studies is in determining the adequate standards, which will enable students to realize genuine scientific research. This will prevent in a large measure the trend of superficial research without any genuine scientific results, or even without results at the practical level of the profession for which the candidates are being prepared.

Issues for discussion:

- The UP should build internal mechanisms for quality control which would do the annual evaluation of the quality of researches at the level of dissertations, in order to acquire assessments on whether the work which is being done at the level of doctoral dissertations is a genuinely scientific work;
- Mandatory financing and application of co-mentoring with professors from foreign universities;
- The inclusion of the course of English Language in the bachelor and master programs of the Department of History.

E) The research is the weakest and the most critical point of Kosovar higher education. Science is not seen as something important for the state, based on the very fact that the state does not finance it at all. The scientific and research work is the most underdeveloped part of the work at the UP.

Issues for discussion:

- Both, the UP, and its faculties and departments, should formulate and apply their respective research strategies and agendas, and for this purpose, the UP and the MESTK should secure the necessary financing. This should be associated with the functionalization of the existing institutes, and the creation of the new ones;
- Determination of the research fields and strategies by the faculties and the departments would enable the adequate evaluation of the doctoral projects that come from doctoral students, and, this, in turn, would enable the avoidance of formal assessments of their doctoral projects, and will also avoid the usual problems caused by the lack of adequate mentors;

- Professors and mentors in doctoral studies should gradually be unburdened from their teaching obligations, in order to engage much more in research, as is recommended in the White Document: The Financial Model for the System of Public High Education in Kosovo;
- The criterion for foreign publications for doctoral students is necessary, but it should be associated with the request that if the mentoring professors have not published at least three publications during the last five years, they should be removed from mentoring, and replaced with other professors who fulfill this criterion;
- The publication of scientific journals should be supported by the UP, but this should be a gradual process which should ensure the quality of these journals, firstly by increasing substantially the number of publications of professors in credible journals, as well as by acquiring international editing boards and ensuring the anonymous peer reviewing. This is the way in which, in a medium time-framework, the listing of the journals of UP in credible and qualitative scientific platforms can be acquired.



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