



**THE DOCTORAL STUDIES AT THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND THE
FACULTY OF LAW OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA**

Discussion Paper

November, 2017

This publication is a part of the Project “The Avalanche in the Higher Education: The Doctoral Studies in Social and Humanistic Sciences at the University of Prishtina,” which is realized with the support of the Project The Democratic Society Promotion (DSP), financed by the Swiss Cooperation Office in Kosovo (SCO-K), and the International Development Cooperation (DANIDA) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, and managed by the Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF).



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CONTENT

1. Introduction	4.
2. Accreditation	8.
2.1 The Faculty of Economics	8.
2.2 The Faculty of Law	10.
2.3 Aspects of accreditation of doctoral studies at the UP.....	11.
2.3.1 General assessment of the accreditation process of doctoral studies	12.
2.3.2 The accreditation of professors for teaching and mentoring at doctoral studies ...	14.
3. Legal aspects of the administration of doctoral studies	17.
3.1 The registration in the doctoral studies	18.
3.2 The duration and the phases of the doctoral studies	19.
3.3 The procedures for the submission, evaluation, and the acceptance of the project of the doctorate, and for the assessment of the defense of the doctoral thesis	20.
4. Aspects of administration, quality, and of research resources in doctoral studies	22.
4.1 The lack of long-term administrative coherence in the administration of doctoral Studies.....	22.
4.2 The criteria for admission in doctoral studies and the criteria for the development of these studies	23.
4.3 The research and mentoring in doctoral studies	26.
5. Conclusions for discussion	33.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Project *The Avalanche in the Higher Education: Doctoral Studies in Social and Humanistic Sciences at the University of Prishtina*, which is being carried out jointly by the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development – KIPRED, and the Centre for Political Courage – CPC, and is supported by the Democratic Society Promotion Programme (DSP), financed by the Swiss Cooperation Office in Kosovo (SCO-K) and the International Development Cooperation (DANIDA) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, and managed by the Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF), has the objective to research the doctoral studies in four faculties of the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” in which the social and humanistic sciences are studied: in the Faculty of Economics, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Philosophy.

This project will be developed in three phases. The first phase will analyze the doctoral studies in the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law. At the end of this phase, the products of this part of the project will be delivered: 1) the Discussion Paper, which will introduce the findings of this part of the research and will provide their initial analysis; 2) the Discussion Table in which these findings and their initial analysis will be presented before the guest-participants, professors and doctoral students of these two faculties, and will be discussed with them, and; 3) the presentation to, and the promotion in, the public opinion, of the findings and the initial analysis, as well as of the conclusions of the Discussion Table. In the second phase the doctoral studies in the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Philosophy will be analyzed. At its end, this phase will deliver, for the respective faculties, the same products as the first one. And, the third phase will summarize the findings, the initial analyses, and the conclusions of the previous two Discussion Tables. This third phase will be finalized with the policy paper which will provide the results of the research from the pointview of the two Discussion Tables, as well as the respective recommendations for the advancement of doctoral studies at the University of Prishtina and for the increase of their quality.

The activities and the methods that will be applied in the first two phases for achieving the goals of the research are several. Firstly, the legal and administrative documents dealing with doctoral studies in the respective faculties will be analyzed. Here, we will analyze the laws that regulate the higher education, the research and scientific activity, the Statute, and the respective regulations of the University of Prishtina, the reports of the expert teams that have carried out the evaluations for the accreditation of the respective doctoral programs, and the other relevant legal/administrative documentation, as well as other researches that discuss this field. Also, we will conduct several dozens of comprehensive interviews with the professors who teach at the doctoral level, with doctoral students, with officials of the University of Prishtina, of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and of the Accreditation Agency of Kosovo. The analysis of the legal/administrative documentation and the interviews will be combined with each-other – the analysis of the legal/administrative documentation will be made from the point-view of the findings from the interviews, and the interviews will be conducted from the point-view of the findings of the analysis of the legal/administrative documentation.

At the end, in the third phase, all the activities undertaken, and the results acquired, in the first two phases will be summarized, and this summary, as mentioned, will have the form of a policy paper in which the overall conclusions of the research will be presented, and which will provide the respective recommendations.

This Discussion Paper is one from the final products of the first phase. It presents the findings and the initial analysis of the data and findings acquired during the research of the condition of doctoral studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law.

The Paper consists of three sections. The first one discusses the accreditation process of the doctoral programs at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law. Firstly, the details regarding the accreditation of each particular doctoral program in both faculties are analyzed. Where necessary, the developments that led to these accreditations were mentioned. Here the strengths and weaknesses of every doctoral program were stressed, as these were provided by the groups of international experts who have conducted the evaluation of the programs applying for accreditation. Then, an initial analysis regarding several aspects of accreditation in

general was conducted, which provides some initial findings on the accreditation process itself. This part was based in a large measure on the interviews conducted during our research. It provides the objections on the deficiencies that were identified regarding the accreditation process, as well as some tentative proposals for the improvement of this process. Also, at the end of this part, an analysis of the idea for the accreditation of professors for teaching in doctoral studies is provided, as an idea that would eliminate several serious deficiencies of doctoral studies which present severe obstacles for the improvement of the quality of these studies.

The second section provides a brief description and an initial analysis of the legal-normative documents which regulate the administration of doctoral studies at the University of Prishtina. The major focus in this section is on the Statute of the University of Prishtina, and on the Regulation on the Doctoral Studies at the University of Prishtina, and the features of doctoral studies discussed include the registration criteria, the duration and the phases of doctoral studies, the procedures for submission, evaluation and approval of the doctoral project, as well as those for the evaluation of its defense.

The third section discusses different aspects of the administration, quality, and of the research resources for the doctoral studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law. This section is based on the analysis that was carried out of the condition of doctoral studies in these two faculties, as well as on the interviews conducted with their professors and doctoral students. Here we have identified a range of issues that have to do with the administration, quality, and the research in doctoral studies in these two faculties, and we have provided a brief initial analysis of these issues. The issues that have to do with these three fields of doctoral studies, namely, with administration, quality, and research, are treated as combined with one-another, in order to enable their comprehensive and successful evaluation by the participants of the Discussion Table.

At the end we would like to mention the participants in the interviews, and to thank them for their contribution in this research: the Associated Professor Dr. Driton Qehaja, the Associated Professor Dr. Besnik Krasniqi, the Associated Professor Dr. Gazmend Qorraj, and the Assistant Professor and the Dean Dr. But Dedaj, from the Faculty of Economics; The Regular Professor Dr.

Enver Hasani, the Associated Professor Dr. Gjyljeta Mushkolaj, the Assistant Professor Dr. Qerim Qerimi, and the Assistant Professor Dr. Remzije Istrefi, from the Faculty of Law, as well as to doctoral students Mr. Gentrit Berisha, Mr. Simeana Beshi, Mr. Ruzhdi Morina, and an anonymous doctoral student who did not want to be identified.

2. THE ACCREDITATION

This section will provide key data and findings on the accreditation of the doctoral programs at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law, and will also discuss several important aspects of the accreditation process that were mentioned in the interviews conducted with professors and doctoral students of these two faculties.

2.1 The Faculty of Economics

According to the Decision that the State Council of Quality of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency took on August 26th, 2015, four doctoral programs at the Faculty of Economics were accredited for the three-year period. Three from these four programs were: Banks, Finances, and Accounting; Management and Informatics; and, Marketing, and these were accredited for the period from October 1st, 2016, until September 30th, 2019. Also, with the same Decision, the fourth doctoral program in Economics, that will be delivered in English language, was accredited for a three-year period, from October 1st, 2015, until September 30th, 2018. Otherwise, this program was planned and is being carried out within the TEMPUS Program of the European Commission.¹

These accreditations came after the release of two Final Reports of the international expert teams, in the months of July and August of the year 2015.² These two Reports provide general evaluations, recommendations, as well as proposals for the accreditation of these programs. The doctoral program in Economics had received high evaluation by the Team of Experts. Thus, for this program, the *Final Report* appraises that:

¹ The Kosovo Accreditation Agency, Decision from the 36th Meeting of the Agency, which took place on August 26th, 2015.

² Public University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", Faculty of Economics, Programme Accreditation Report, July 2015, *Final Report, Site Visit 2015, July 5th-6th*; and, *Final Report, Site Visit 2015, August 2nd-3rd*.

The program's quality, range, and academic aims are appropriate to the academic degree; The academic degree corresponds to international standards; The structure of the program gives sufficient opportunity for independent study, reflection and analysis; The allocation of ECTS credits is appropriate and justified; The workload required for the academic program is manageable for students; The teaching methods and content of teaching units are sufficient for the successful achievement of the program's goals and outcomes (competences and qualifications, knowledge and skills); The overlap of academic content between the various parts of the curriculum is comprehensible and transparent; The admission criteria and the admission procedures follow the national rules which are comparable to international standards; The ratio of academic staff to students is appropriate for the delivery of high quality program; The institutions' programs are assessed regularly according to national procedures, which are in accordance with international standards.³

The objections made have to do with insufficient number of researches and publications of the staff, and the Faculty of Economics is recommended to support its staff for overcoming these difficulties.⁴

Quite a positive assessment is given as well for the doctoral program Banks, Finances, and Accounting. The additional objections and recommendations for the Faculty include the improvement of the didactic concept, close supervision of the workload of students, the increased utilization of international contacts, and the improvement of infrastructure.⁵

The doctoral program Management and Informatics gets more objections, and these are related to: the need for putting emphasis on the research in general, not only in Economics; the improvement of the Vision and its translation in English; the fact that the syllabuses are too similar with one-another; the more detailed description of the teaching methods; the large number of students in seminars (this number is 35, and the request is made that it should be reduced under 20); the need for allocating ECTS for internships/practicums, and; the Faculty is

³ *Final Report, Site Visit 2015, August 2nd–3rd*, pg. 25-8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 28-9.

⁵ *Final Report, Site Visit 2015, July 5th–6th*, pg. 66-9.

advised to make the distribution of responsibilities among its staff more transparent.⁶ Also, as far as the research is concerned, it is stressed that this part is really weak, and it is highlighted that, at the time when the professors complain that they have no time for research, they use each and every opportunity to go and work in other universities. It is also recommended that the students should have foreign supervisors, that the number of works that should be prepared for foreign publication should increase from one to three, and that the University should frame the strategy and the budget for the research institute.⁷

The doctoral program in Marketing is recommended to continue with the delivery of several courses in English language, to further strengthen this practice, to invite more foreign professors for lecturing, to increase the full-time staff, to improve the quantity and quality of international cooperation, and to increase the involvement of doctoral students in researches outside of their doctoral topics.

2.2 The Faculty of Law

The accreditation of actual doctoral programs at the Faculty of Law has undergone a process that was more prolonged and difficult than that through which have passed the programs at the Faculty of Economics. Thus, based on the Decision of April 14th, 2016, of the State Council of Quality, the accreditation periods of the five doctoral programs of the Faculty of Law – The Penal Law; The Civil Law; The Constitutional Administrative Law; The Financial Law, and; The International Law – were extended for a one year period, from October 1st, 2016, until September 30th, 2017.⁸ Afterwards, on May 12th, 2016, the Faculty of Law had submitted a request for the extension of this accreditation period from one to three years, but this request was declined by the State Council of Quality on May 31st, 2017.⁹ The argument for the rejection of this request was based on the Final Report delivered by international experts for the accreditation of doctoral programs of the Faculty of Law, and this argument mentions several

⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 70-2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 72-4.

⁸ Decision of the State Council of Quality, taken in its 41st Meeting of April 14th, 2016.

⁹ Decision of the State Council of Quality, taken in its 42nd Meeting of May 31st, 2016.

key issues: 1) poor quality of the Self-Evaluation Report and absence of information; 2) the identical content of the description of different programs for evaluation; 3) the reduplication of curricula in studying programs at different studying levels; 4) a very high disproportion between the number of students registered in studying programs, in relation to the number of academic staff, and; 5) the non-fulfillment of basic criteria for the number of students registered, as far as the facilities of the Faculty of Law are considered.¹⁰

Only on its 51st Meeting of June 23rd, 2017, the State Council of Quality took the Decision to accredit for a five-year period, from October 1st, 2017, until September 30th, 2022, two doctoral programs at the Faculty of Law: The International Law, and; The Constitutional and Administrative Law, with the permission to register the maximum of ten students per year per program. Meanwhile, in its Final Report, the Expert Team gives the following recommendations: 1) to increase the scientific research, when possible with the inclusion of doctoral students; 2) to further develop international connections and cooperation in order to increase the international research; 3) to implement the structure for assuring the quality for specific needs of doctoral programs, and; 4) to develop an internship program for doctoral students.

2.3 Aspects of accreditation of doctoral studies at the UP

This section will provide a general assessment of the accreditation process of doctoral programs, and it will also discuss the idea for accreditation of professors for teaching and mentoring in doctoral studies, which are outcomes of our research and of the interviews conducted with professors and doctoral students of the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Otherwise, these issues, as well as many others, can be seen in the Final Report of the team of international experts. See: External Experts Team, *Final Evaluation Report: Faculty of Law, University of Prishtina*, 2015.

2.3.1 General assessment of the accreditation process of doctoral studies

The most important objections made, and the issues identified, during the interviews conducted with professors and doctoral candidates regarding their evaluation of doctoral programs at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law are the following ones:

- The conditions and criteria of KAA for the accreditation of doctoral programs are too formal, administrative, and minimalist, and they do not focus sufficiently on the substantial aspects of doctoral studies, and this, consequently, results with recommendations of the same type by the teams of experts;
- The need for carrying out the accreditation of doctoral programs separately from the accreditation of the Bachelor and Master programs;
- The absence of institutional mechanisms for controlling if the implementation of actual doctoral programs is ongoing in accordance with the conditions under which these programs were accredited, and;
- The need for the KAA to focus on the insufficient resources that the UP is allocating for the mobility of doctoral students.

Regarding the conditions and criteria of KAA, Prof. Dr. Enver Hasani, the Faculty of Law, has emphasized that the conditions of Accreditation Agency are only administrative, and, according to him, the focus is only on the form, for instance, three professors who are doctors of science per program, without focusing on the issues that are substantial for the quality of these programs, such as, for instance, the academic credentials of professors, and the content of doctoral programs.¹¹

A similar assessment was provided by Prof. Dr. Qerim Qerimi, the Faculty of Law, who stressed that, until now, the KAA has served much more as a mechanism for formal verification of the fulfillment of the conditions for doctoral studies, without focusing too much on substantial dimensions, such as the quality of academic personnel and of curricula. Qerimi did put forward the issue of the necessity for changing the process of evaluation of doctoral studies by external

¹¹ Interview, Enver Hasani, Prishtina, July 26th, 2017.

experts, through the establishment of a special commission composed by external experts who have a proven experience in doctoral studies, and who would deal with accreditation only at the level of doctoral studies.¹²

Prof. Dr. But Dedaj, from the Faculty of Economics, did put forward the issue of the limited control of the implementation of recommendations of KAA for the ongoing doctoral programs. According to him, the recommendations must be given in conjunction with a detailed plan of actions that are to be carried out within a determined time framework, and this should be combined with the designation of the mechanisms for controlling their execution. Thus, in the cases where the doctoral studies are not being implemented in accordance with the conditions under which they were accredited, the accreditation should be withdrawn.¹³

The issue of the deficiency of criteria for the mobility of doctoral students during the accreditation of doctoral programs was identified by the doctoral student, Mr. Ruzhdi Morina. He stressed that for qualitative preparation of doctoral theses, students should be provided with the opportunity to have professional journeys in institutes and faculties abroad, which would last from several-weeks up to several-months, in order to increase their knowledge and the skills for independent research.¹⁴ It should be stressed, however, that the opportunities for the mobility of doctoral students are provided by the – for instance – the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions scholarship program of the Horizon 2020 program of Erasmus Plus for Kosovo.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the issue on how much did the students of doctoral programs at UP make use of these possibilities so far, and on how much assistance they got from the faculties of the UP for utilizing them, is one which deserves to be discussed.

¹² Interview, Qerim Qerimi, Prishtina, August 17th, 2017.

¹³ Interview, But Dedaj, Prishtina, August 28th, 2017.

¹⁴ Interview, Ruzhdi Morina, Prishtina, September 14th, 2017.

¹⁵ <http://www.erasmuspluskosovo.org/scholarships>

2.3.2 The accreditation of professors for teaching and mentoring at doctoral studies

One from the most discussed issues in the interviews conducted was the one of the very formal nature of evaluation by the KAA, of the competences of professors for teaching and mentoring in doctoral studies. The objections that were made most often were the ones regarding the evaluation of the competences of professors and mentors in English, or in other major foreign languages, as well as of their competences for scientific research.

On this issue, Hasani has highlighted that some from the requirements that are made to doctoral students are not fulfilled by many from their professors, by adding that only some 30 percent of professors at the Faculty of Law stand well in their knowledge of English language. Meanwhile, the others are not capable to follow, or, at least, not without serious difficulties, the literature in English language. Thus, according to Hasani, a paradoxical situation emerges, in which a request is made to doctoral students to publish in international scientific journals in which some from their professors are not capable even to read.¹⁶

A similar situation is exposed as well by the Professor at the Faculty of Economics, Dr. Driton Qehaja, who ascertains that the number of professors who are capable to follow the literature in English language does not reach the number twenty. Furthermore, he adds that even this estimation might be too optimistic. ("For the moment," he continued in the interview, "I can recall only about ten of them.")¹⁷

Regarding the competences in the field of scientific research, Hasani has stressed that some from the professors who became regular professors, in all of their life did not publish – and that they will not publish, simply, because they are not capable to do that – any scientific work, at the same time when they request from their doctoral students to do exactly this.¹⁸ The Prorector for scientific research at the UP, Prof. Dr. Faton Berisha does not agree with these ascertainties, and, according to him, this number is not even close to be accurate. Furthermore, he does not consider the critiques that are being made for the academic

¹⁶ Interview, Enver Hasani, Prishtina, July 26th, 2017.

¹⁷ Interview, Driton Qehaja, Prishtina, August 3rd, 2017.

¹⁸ Interview, Enver Hasani, Prishtina, July 26th, 2017.

advancement of professors as normal, by stressing that with the advancement of science there is an increase of the criteria which did not exist at the time when these professors have advanced.¹⁹ However, on this occasion, Prorector Berisha did not provide any close figures on the percentage of professors who know foreign languages at the level that is adequate for the functions they hold. This issue requires necessarily a further discussion at the UP, and this discussion should include the evaluation of the knowledge of English and other major languages by the professors who teach at the doctoral level.

In a similar vein, Professor at the Faculty of Economics, Dr. Besnik Krasniqi, exposes the fact that some professors that have completed their education in the previous educational systems, do lack adequate training for research methodologies [...] and that this presents a serious problem, particularly when we have to deal with the mentoring of doctoral students.²⁰

A brief analysis of this problem exposes that one from its major sources is in the way in which the legal aspects of higher education in Kosovo have developed through time. Thus, the criteria for mentoring in the Regulation for Doctoral Studies of the UP determine that mentors should hold the title of Regular or of Associated Professor.²¹ On the other hand, according to the Law on Higher Education, the titles of Regular and Associated Professors can be given only to professors who have publications with international peer-reviews in foreign countries.²² This means that the fulfillment of the conditions for the titles of Regular or Associated Professor, *implies legally* that the professors have competences in English language (or in some other major foreign language), as well as competences in scientific research. Afterwards, the KAA takes this *legal implication* to be legally valid. However, as it can be seen by our research, this is not valid in each and every case, given the fact that some from the professors did acquire these titles before September 2011, when the Law on Higher Education entered in power.

¹⁹ The discussion of the Prorector Dr. Faton Berisha in the Discussion Table on the Doctoral Studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law of the UP, organized by KIPRED and CPC on November 27th, 2017, Prishtina.

²⁰ Interview, Besnik Krasniqi, Prishtina, September 4th, 2017.

²¹ The Regulation for Doctoral Studies of the UP, Article 9, (1) 1. According to the point (1) 2 of this Article, the right to direct a doctoral candidate has also an Assistant Professor who has works published in journals with international review.

²² Article 26, The Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo, Nr. 04/L-037, August 2011.

Consequently, the above mentioned criteria could not have been imposed retroactively for these professors, and this is a fact that causes severe damage to the quality of doctoral studies.

Being fully aware on this situation, we did put forward in our research the idea for accreditation of the professors for doctoral studies. On this issue, Krasniqi has stressed that this would improve the quality of mentoring, given that the criteria that the professor should be regular one implies that he has experience in research activities, but there are many regular professors who do not fulfill this condition, and this impedes seriously the quality of doctoral studies.²³ Meanwhile, Hasani thinks that if the separation of the criteria of accreditation from the criteria for professorial titles takes place, this will be a great victory, given that in this case the professors would be evaluated according to their research, that is, according to their scientific work and results, and not according to their professorial titles, which quite often do not correspond with their competences. Thus, according to Hasani, professors who have more than five scientific works that are comparable and competitive in international quality, can be included in doctoral studies, their academic titles notwithstanding.²⁴ The accreditation of professors would increase the quality of doctoral studies by strengthening the criteria of scientific research, which would simultaneously eliminate the problem of the lack of knowledge in English language, and the inability to follow the scientific literature in this, or in other major world languages, of a considerable number of professors at the UP.

²³ Interview, Besnik Krasniqi, Prishtina, September 4th, 2017.

²⁴ Interview, Enver Hasani, Prishtina, July 26th, 2017.

3. LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF DOCTORAL STUDIES AT THE UP

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”.²⁵

The major bodies which take decisions relevant for the development of doctoral studies at the UP are the Central Council of 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 of 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.²⁶

The doctoral studies are governed by the Council for Doctoral Studies at the respective academic unit – the Faculty,²⁷ and this Council consists of 5 or 7 members from the professors of each department of the academic unit.²⁸

²⁵ Ligji për Ar simin 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 2nd, 2016. The last two documents are at the disposal at: <http://www.uni-pr.edu/>.

²⁶ The Regulation for Doctoral Studies, Article 2.2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 3 (3).

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 representatives of students selected by the council of the students of the faculty.²⁹

And, finally, the Senate of the University is the highest academic body of the University,³⁰ 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.

3.1 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 knowledge of one from the major world languages (English, German, French, or any other major world language).³¹

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.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Article 2.1.

²⁹ The Statute of the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”, Article 73.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Article 42.

³¹ 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.

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).³² The research-scientific activity is evaluated with up to 35 points, and what gets points here are the articles published during the last five 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.³³ And, finally, the knowledge of English, or of any other major language is evaluated with up to 20 points.³⁴

Also, the number of students to be registered is proposed by the academic unit – the faculty, this number is treated and discussed by the Central Council of Doctoral Studies, and it is approved by the Senate.³⁵

3.2 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

³² *Ibid.*, Article 7 (4) 1. and 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, Article 7 (4) 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Article 7 (4) 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Article 7 (2). **Remark:** Probably as a consequence 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.

presentations in scientific meetings, from which one must be an international meeting (10 ECTS), and for public defense of the doctorate (60 ECTS).³⁶

3.3 The procedures for the submission, evaluation, and the acceptance of the project of doctorate, and for the assessment of the defense of doctoral thesis

The doctoral candidate makes the proposal of the mentor and of the topic of the doctorate during the first year, and in this case he presents the title of the topic and the mentor proposed, the expectation of 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 assessment for the scientific contribution of the topic proposed. Then, 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 has to be defended before the Faculty Council for Doctoral Studies. At the end, the Council of the Faculty, after the proposal of the Council of Doctoral Studies, proposes the topic and the mentor to the Senate of the University for approval.³⁷

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 of Doctoral Studies, the Council of the Faculty will nominate a three- or a five-member Commission for the 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 doctoral work, and this evaluation can be the acceptance of the doctoral work, the request to complement it, or its refusal, which should

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Article 8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 15.

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.³⁸

The defense of the doctoral work can be done once after the Council of the Faculty approves the positive assessment 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 of Doctoral Studies. 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 Within a one month period from the day of the ratification in the Senate.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Article 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Article 17.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Article 19.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Article 20.

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

This section will discuss the problems of administrative coherence of doctoral studies, then, those of the criteria for the admission of students in these studies and of the criteria for their development, as well as the issues related to research and mentoring, as major determinants of the quality of doctoral studies. These discussions are result of our research and of the interviews conducted with the professors and doctoral students at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law.

4.1 The lack of long-term administrative coherence in the administration of doctoral studies

One from the most important problems identified, which is related to the administration of doctoral studies, is the one of the lack of long-term administrative coherence, and of the consequences with which the students of doctoral studies are faced in the cases of the changes of governing structures of the University.

In the interviews conducted, Qerimi has exposed the fact that the Regulation on Doctoral Studies was changed four times over the last ten years, and that each from these changes has modified the structure of doctoral studies.⁴² Meanwhile, Qorraaj has stressed that in the cases when the governing structures of the UP are changed, the doctoral students spend more time in coping with administrative aspects of their studies, then in doing science or research. In the cases when the rector is changed, for instance, the new rules are imposed, and there is no sustainable platform, and, thus, the students quite often do not know what is expected from them and what they should do. Therefore, according to Qorraaj, this administrative unsustainability has been one from the factors that have caused the most severe difficulties in the successful implementation of the doctoral studies so far.⁴³

As an illustration of this, the assistant and the doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Economics, Mr. Gentrit Berisha told us that he began his doctoral studies in 2013, and that these started to

⁴² Interview, Qerim Qerimi, Prishtina, August 17th, 2017.

⁴³ Interview, Gazmend Qorraaj, Prishtina, September 6th, 2017.

be delivered with about a half year delay. Then, he, with some from the colleagues of his generation passed the three exams of the first semester, and they also worked the three seminars of the second semester. After this, he and his colleagues delivered the proposals for their doctoral topics, and – as a consequence of the change of the rector that occurred in that time – the approval of those topics was made after a one and a half year delay. Thus, during a three year period –which is the time foreseen for the full completion of doctoral studies – Berisha and each from his colleagues in doctoral studies lost two years as a consequence of administrative negligence and lack of administrative consistence.⁴⁴

4.2 The criteria for admission in doctoral studies and the criteria for development of these studies

The issue of the criteria for the admission in, and the development of, doctoral studies, was mentioned as problematic in several from the interviews conducted. Thus, Qerimi stresses that one from the problematic issues in the previous doctoral studies was the one of an interview conducted by the admission committees with the candidates applying for doctoral studies. These interviews had resulted with numerous complaints by the candidates who considered that they were penalized in the selection process exactly because of their interviews. He considers that it is quite debatable if a ten- or fifteen-minutes interview can be more objective, more accurate, and more credible criteria than a number of other factors which show the results and capabilities of the candidates. In the meanwhile, this has changed, and the actual Regulation foresees the possibility for interviewing the candidates, but these interviews do not carry any points in themselves.⁴⁵ However, keeping the possibility to conduct interviews, at the same time when these do not carry any points does not make any sense, given that in such a situation the function of these interviews in the selection process is not clear.

However, according to Qerimi, in the last competition, a new model for admission was applied, which included an organization of a written exam for the candidates, which exam carried with

⁴⁴ Interview, Gentri Berisha, Prishtina, August 18th, 2017.

⁴⁵ Interview, Qerim Qerimi, Prishtina, August 17th, 2017.

itself a total number of points which was larger than the total amount of points carried by all the other criteria together, such as proficiency in foreign language, different publications in international review, etc. Thus, according to Qerimi, it should be emphasized and debated if it is convenient and necessary to organize admission exams for candidates for doctoral studies, and which should be the value of this exam in relation to other criteria for the admission of doctoral students.⁴⁶

One from the most problematic criteria in the development of doctoral studies is the issue of the demand for foreign publications which is made to doctoral students. Thus, this issue is analyzed in depth in one from the Final Reports prepared by the team of experts which has assessed one from the applications for accreditation of the Faculty of Law. We are talking here about the Final Report of the year 2015, in which, among other, the Team of Experts writes:

The second [aspect] concerns the requirement that a considerable part of the prospective Doctor's PhD dissertation is published "in a scientific, internationally peer-reviewed, impact-factor journal from the relevant field".

Given the rather reduced scenario of legal journals in Albanian language, the highly competitive scenario of international journals, and the usually lengthy process of manuscript review carried out by these, which may take from six months to a year, if not more, having "a considerable part of his/her thesis" published seems an excessively demanding requisite, suitable to block the student's progress in the pursuit of his/her PhD.

In fact, taking into consideration that none of the five PhD Programmes submitted to our consideration has been capable of producing a single Doctor in the last three years (2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2014/2015), and – more ominously – most of the students enrolled are not even making progress at the "adequate" pace, the Expert Team cannot avoid the impression that their configuration is unsuitable for their purpose and incompatible with the actual situation of the UP Faculty of Law.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Final Evaluation Report, 2015, pg. 34.*

Otherwise, this demand for foreign publications is not one which is made only to doctoral students of the Faculty of Law – this is a demand that is posited to all the doctoral students at the UP, through the Regulation for Doctoral Studies.⁴⁸ This demand was also mentioned as quite problematic by several from the interviewed professors. Regarding to this, it was mentioned that some from the demands posited to students regarding English language, research and publications, are not met even by some from their professors. However, the Prorektor Berisha does not agree with this ascertainment, and he emphasized that publication of a scientific work in the indexed journals, that is, in the SCOPUS Database, before the defense of the doctoral thesis, inevitably assures the research and scientific originality of the doctoral works of doctoral candidates. According to Berisha, such a criteria provides a particular value to the doctoral studies at the UP.⁴⁹

Krasniqi puts forward the issue of quite a large disproportion between the number of doctoral students (at the Faculty of Economics, around 100 students) and the mentoring capacities. He further estimates that, as far as the admission criteria are concerned, it can happen to admit students that doesn't have any potential for conducting research in the future, and particularly because of their lack of knowledge of English language. There were cases in the past in which the students were admitted even though they didn't have any knowledge of English language, and this has caused an insistence that a necessary and eliminating criteria for admission of the candidates in the future should be the passing of the TOEFL test.⁵⁰ Furthermore, according to Krasniqi, even the criterion of an average grade is quite devalued, and it doesn't have to be taken as basic, given that there are very large differences among the universities in Kosovo, that is, between the University of Prishtina and, for instance, the other public universities that are established in the other cities in Kosovo. In addition, Krasniqi emphasizes the paradoxical fact that the system of doctoral studies at the UP, as well as the UP in general, are sometimes quite

⁴⁸ Regulation for Doctoral Studies at the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", Article 8 (The Phases of Doctoral Studies), in the point 4 says:

"4. In the remaining three semesters, the student accumulates 90 ECTS by: At least one scientific publication of a part of the results of the doctorate in an indexed, internationally peer-reviewed journal (see the journals given by the academic unit) from the respective field) (20 ECTS); ..."

⁴⁹ The discussion of the Prorektor Dr. Faton Berisha in the Discussion Table on the Doctoral Studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law of the UP, organized by KIPRED and CPC on November 27th, 2017, Prishtina.

⁵⁰ Interview, Besnik Krasniqi, Prishtina, September 4th, 2017.

exclusive towards the candidates that have finished their master studies in the Western countries.⁵¹ Nevertheless, according to Krasniqi, fundamental challenge remains in inadequate capacities of the professors to train students for research in the future, given that their number is very far away from something that might be an optimum for mentoring around one hundred and ten or fifteen students that are active in the doctoral studies at the Faculty of Economics.⁵²

4.3 The research and mentoring in doctoral studies

According to *The White Document*⁵³ on the sustainable financing of public institutions of higher education in Kosovo, as far as the administration of teaching and researching activities is concerned, for the category of the regular professors is recommended that the ratio between teaching and research should lean towards intensive research, with 10% of time dedicated to teaching, 70% to research, and 20% to other services. Meanwhile, for the category of associated professors, it is recommended that this ratio should be 20% to teaching, 60% to research, and 20% to other services. There is no doubt that the creation of such a ratio between teaching and research would enable the increase of the quality of doctoral studies, given that mentor professors would expand their expertise in qualitative directing of doctorates of doctoral students.

However, for better understanding of the actual condition in this field, we have to stress the data that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) has presented in 2016 on the number of scientific publications (indexed in the two most prestigious databases, SCOPUS and the Web of Science), according to which the number of those who have published such researches during the last ten years is around 100.⁵⁴ Prorektor Berisha did not agree with this ascertainment, given that, according to him, the number of indexed works in SCOPUS,

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Dokumenti i Bardhë: Modeli financiar për Sistemin e Arsimit të Lartë Publik në Kosovë [The White Document: A Financial Model for the System of Public High Education in Kosovo]* (FAITH: Rritja e autonomisë financiare dhe e llogaridhënies së institucioneve publike të arsimit të lartë në Kosovë), 544142-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-AT-TEMPUS-SMGR.

⁵⁴ *Kosova larg rajonit me hulumtime shkencore [Kosovo, far away from the region in scientific research]*, Koha Ditore, Monday, November 6th, 2017, pg. 5.

published by the academic personnel at the UP, already got close to 100 per year.⁵⁵ At any rate, for not leaving any place for any doubts, the UP should publish at the beginning of each year a fully detailed list of all the works published during the previous year by its own academic staff, and this will ensure a systematic evidence of the scientific contribution of the academic personnel of the UP.

However, even in the cases of the professors whose activities are oriented towards research and international publishing, there is no institutional inclination to discharge them from their teaching obligations, and particularly at the lower levels of studies, in order to give them more time to focus on their research-publishing activities. Thus, these activities of theirs remain fruit of their individual enthusiasm, rather than a result of the internal researches that are conducted within and with the support of the UP,⁵⁶ given that the amount of the UP's budget that is allocated for scientific research is less than 0.1%.⁵⁷ This fact was confirmed by the Prorector for the Budget at the UP, Prof. Dr. Myrvete Badivuku, who highlighted that the amount allocated for publications in scientific journals per year is around 70,000€. ⁵⁸ On the other hand, the practice has shown that a number of professors, while they complain that they have no time for conducting research, run after additional courses and hours, that is, after overpayments, at the UP or elsewhere.

The change of ratio between teaching and scientific research seems illusory if the research is not going to be stimulated financially, and this can be, then, accompanied with the prohibition made to the professors of the UP to engage in other universities in Kosovo. However, Prorector Berisha has stressed that it is hard to believe that the UP will start in any near future to pay

⁵⁵ The discussion of the Prorector Dr. Faton Berisha in the Discussion Table on the Doctoral Studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law of the UP, organized by KIPRED and CPC on November 27th, 2017, Prishtina.

⁵⁶ Interview, Besnik Krasniqi, Prishtina, September 4th, 2017.

⁵⁷ Interview, But Dedaj, Prishtina, August 28th, 2017.

⁵⁸ The discussion of the Prorector for budget at the UP, Dr. Myrvete Badivuku, in the Discussion Table on Doctoral Studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law of the UP, organized by KIPRED and CPC on November 27th, 2017, Prishtina.

professors who would deal with doctoral studies and research only, as a consequence of the lack of staff and of financial means for their payment.⁵⁹

Except for the very small number of the researches, we have to take into the consideration the fact that the ratio between the research and teaching, recommended by the *White Document* cannot be achieved in a near future. One from the major reasons for this is also the very large number of students at the bachelor and master level, which hinders the engagement of regular and associated professors in the doctoral studies. Therefore, there is a need for finding alternative solutions for ensuring the quality of doctoral studies. One from the possibilities for overcoming this difficulty would be the co-mentoring with the professors of foreign universities as co-mentors, something that is already under implementation within the doctoral program of TEMPUS in Economics.⁶⁰ However, the co-mentoring alone can be at best only a partial solution, if the individual capabilities of the professors for mentoring are not enhanced and improved. On this issue Krasniqi gave the idea on the adequate training of professors for mentoring, that is, through training by experts of particular fields on the styles of mentoring, as well as on the certification of mentors, by passing the exam on mentoring, as is the practice in the universities in Great Britain.⁶¹

Another option for increasing the level of research, and for the inclusion of doctoral students in it, would be the one of functionalization and the development of the scientific institutes within the faculties of the UP, which exist only in letter.⁶² According to the professor at the Faculty of Law, Dr. Gjyljeta Mushkolaj, the development of science at the UP, together with the inclusion of doctoral candidates in scientific projects, cannot be expected without the development of scientific institutes.⁶³ However, the doctoral students quite often lack any previous training and experience, in the design and the preparation of the research projects that they might want to

⁵⁹ The discussion of the Prorector Dr. Faton Berisha in the Discussion Table on the Doctoral Studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law of the UP, organized by KIPRED and CPC on November 27th, 2017, Prishtina.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* We are talking here about three European universities with which the doctoral program of TEMPUS is being implemented: the University of Lintz, the University of Pescara, and the University of Nice.

⁶¹ Interview, Besnik Krasniqi, Prishtina, September 4th, 2017.

⁶² Interview, Gjyljeta Mushkolaj, Prishtina, September 14th, 2017.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

propose.⁶⁴ Furthermore, training of doctoral students in this field, during their doctoral studies, would enable their effective inclusion in the research projects of the scientific institutes.

However, for the functionalization of these institutes the necessary infrastructure should be provided, with the inclusion of particular bank-accounts of their own, given that this would enable them to receive donations from abroad, or to generate income by conducting research for other sectors. In the developed world, the institutes of the universities have the possibilities to generate income, and they have the possibilities to cooperate with other, domestic or foreign institutes.⁶⁵

Yet another option for alleviating the problem of the lack of research by regular and associated professors, and which is directly related to doctoral studies, is the option of interdisciplinary doctoral studies, the possibility of which is already foreseen by the Regulation on Doctoral Studies at the UP.⁶⁶ In actual conditions, the interdisciplinarity can be offered only through the cooperation between the faculties of the UP. However, according to Qerimi, the fact that only UP has accredited doctoral programs, limits to a certain extent the possibilities for exploring the alternative ideas for the creation of any alternative school or program for interdisciplinary doctoral studies.⁶⁷ According to Mushkolaj, this limitation can be overcome through the joint organization of these studies with the universities from abroad,⁶⁸ and particularly with those from the region.⁶⁹

Another vital deficiency for securing the quality of research at the UP is the absence of transparency, that is, the inability to approach the doctoral works, as well as the absence of combating the plagiarism. According to Qerimi, the issue of plagiarism has remained in the responsibility of the candidate, of the candidate's supervisor, and of the commission which evaluates his/her doctoral work. Before their public defense, the doctoral works are announced publicly at the web-page of the UP, and several hard-copies are given to the administration

⁶⁴ Interview, Remzije Istrefi, Prishtina, September 7th, 2017.

⁶⁵ Interview, Gjyljeta Mushkolaj, Prishtina, September 14th, 2017.

⁶⁶ Article 6, Point 3, The Regulation for Doctoral Studies at the University of Prishtina, September 2nd, 2016.

⁶⁷ Interview, Qerim Qerimi, Prishtina, August 17th, 2017.

⁶⁸ Interview, Gjyljeta Mushkolaj, Prishtina, September 14th, 2017.

⁶⁹ Interview, Enver Hasani, Prishtina, July 26th, 2017.

offices of the doctoral studies. However, these procedures cannot replace the anti-plagiarist software, given that, notwithstanding the fact that the doctoral work can be announced publicly in the web-page for several weeks or months, there is always the possibility that no one will read it, or that those who might read it will not be able to notice the plagiarism if it exists.⁷⁰

However, on this issue Prorektor Berisha has a different opinion. According to him, the control of the quality and of plagiarism is transferred to the process of peer-reviewing in international journals, where the doctoral students are obliged to publish at least one scientific work related to his/her doctoral work, before its public defense.⁷¹ Nevertheless, there is no way in which this criteria might guarantee the elimination of plagiarism in doctoral theses, given that these are works of significantly greater volume than the volume of the works that are published in scientific journals, and, on the other hand, plagiarism is a phenomenon that is related to academic ethics of the non-use of any thought or fact generated by someone else without citing the author, rather than to scientific results as such.

Furthermore, it is incomprehensible why the announced doctoral theses are removed from the web-page of the UP once after they are defended, a fact that degrades the transparency and terminates the possibility for both, the public use of the knowledge generated, and the detection of plagiarism by the third parties. The absence of the doctoral works in the web-site of the UP was justified by Prorektor Berisha with the fact that web-page is under reconstruction.⁷² However, the posting and the permanent presence of doctoral works in the web-page should necessarily be made normatively binding. After all, the doctoral theses which do not pass the anti-plagiarism test with respective software programs, put in doubt the overall quality of the doctoral studies at the UP.

Given that in most of the cases the doctoral works at the UP are written in Albanian language, and only sporadically in English, the issue of the use of anti-plagiarism software is complicated further, given that these are used predominantly for works in English language. For advancing the doctoral studies, as well as the inclusion in the international scientific community, it is

⁷⁰ Interview, Qerim Qerimi, Prishtina, August 17th, 2017.

⁷¹ The discussion of the Prorektor Dr. Faton Berisha in the Discussion Table on the Doctoral Studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law of the UP, organized by KIPRED and CPC on November 27th, 2017, Prishtina.

⁷² *Ibid.*

necessary that at least the doctoral works should be written in English language, and this, except for making these works testable for the software for investigation of the plagiarism, would enable simultaneously the application of successful co-mentoring with international professors.⁷³

Along with the issue of plagiarism, another serious problem that impedes the development of research at the UP, together with the preparation of qualitative doctoral works, is the lack of electronic libraries, that is, the access to international scientific journals. UP has had in the past an access to some from the electronic libraries, which was sponsored by a donation of the American Embassy in Kosovo. Nevertheless, latter, this access was terminated, given that, according to Krasniqi, the number of downloads from the University of Prishtina was too small for justifying the payment of quite a large fee that was being paid for this access.⁷⁴ However, according to Prorector Berisha this problem is already addressed by the UP, which is allocating 48,000€ each year for the access to international electronic libraries.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, despite of this statement by Prorector Berisha, it can be noticed in all of the interviews conducted that none from the respondents and doctoral candidates did say that they have access to electronic libraries offered by the UP, or, at least, that they have any accurate information that such access exists.

Otherwise, this fact on the access to electronic libraries is extremely indicative, given that it engenders doubt if the following of the international scientific works is required altogether by both, professors and mentors, as well as doctoral candidates themselves. Alwo, another issue that might emerge from a fact like this, is the issue of the type of literature that is utilized for making qualitative doctoral works, which, if they are based exclusively on books, can have as a consequence the detachment of doctoral students from the most recent international scientific achievements, which can be found almost exclusively in scientific journals. And these articles are exactly that type of literature on which every person who does serious research for a

⁷³ Interview, But Dedaj, Prishtina, August 28th, 2017.

⁷⁴ Interview, Besnik Krasniqi, Prishtina, September 4th, 2017.

⁷⁵ The discussion of the Prorector Dr. Faton Berisha in the Discussion Table on the Doctoral Studies at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law of the UP, organized by KIPRED and CPC on November 27th, 2017, Prishtina.

doctorate should focus, given that these imply the achievement of new scientific results which were not evidenced before.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Interview, Gazmend Qorraj, Prishtina, September 6th, 2017.

5. CONCLUSIONS FOR DISCUSSION

A) So far, the Kosovar Agency for Accreditation has served much more as a mechanism for formal verification of the fulfillment of the conditions for doctoral studies, without focusing on substantial dimensions, such as the quality of the academic personnel and of the curricula. The major objections that were put forward in the interviews have to do with the competences of professors and mentors in doctoral studies regarding the knowledge of English, or of other major world languages, as well as regarding their competences in scientific research.

Discussion Issues:

The change of the evaluation process by foreign experts for doctoral studies, through the creation of a separate commission consisting of foreign experts with a proven experience in the delivery of doctoral studies, and who would deal with the accreditation for only this, doctoral, level of study.

The separation of the criteria of accreditation of doctoral studies from the titles of university professors, through the accreditation of professors themselves for teaching and mentoring at the doctoral level, in which case they would be evaluated based on research, that is, scientific works, rather than based on professorial titles which quite often do not correspond with the competences of their holders.

Co-mentoring, as a partial solution, is not sufficient when not accompanied with the increase of individual capacities of professors for mentoring, as well as with their adequate training for this. Training from experts in respective fields on the styles of mentoring, and the certification of mentors, which is achieved by passing the exam on mentoring.

For advancing the doctoral studies, and for the integration in the international scientific community, the possibility for the doctoral theses to be written in English should be discussed. This will not only make these theses testable in the software for detection of plagiarism, but it will also enable the successful application of the co-mentoring with international professors.

B) The competition for the admission in doctoral programs includes a written examination for candidates, which carries in itself a larger total amount of points than the total amount of points carried by all the other admission criteria together, such as the knowledge of foreign language, different publications with international peer-review, etc. Also, the number of doctoral students is in a pronounced disproportion with the mentoring capacities of the professors, and this hinders to a considerable extent the quality of doctoral studies and research. Furthermore, there were instances in the past when the students were admitted without having any knowledge of English, which is a fundamental impediment for the development of scientific research and of adequate quality of doctoral works.

Discussion Issues:

The need for organization of admission exams for the candidates for doctoral studies, and what should be the value of this exam when compared with other criteria for their admission.

Obtaining and assuring the proportionality between the number of doctoral students and the number of potential mentors.

The need that the necessary and eliminative criteria for admission of candidates in the future should be the passing of the TOEFL test.

C) The previous changes of the governing structures of the UP, that is, of the rector, were often accompanied with the changes of the respective regulation on doctoral studies. The resulting lack of administrative consistency was one from the major factors in causing severe difficulties in the implementation of doctoral studies so far.

Discussion Issues:

The necessity for administrative consistence in doctoral studies in the cases of changes of managing structures of the University.

- D) The demand that a considerable portion of the doctoral dissertation should be published in an international scientific journal from the respective field, which is internationally peer-reviewed and has an international impact factor.

Discussion Issues:

Having in mind the competition for publication in international journals with impact-factor, as well as the quite prolonged process of the peer-reviewing of the manuscripts for publication in these journals, it is very likely that this demand will block the progress of students in their efforts to finish their doctoral studies, but, on the other hand, it ensures in a large measure the scientific quality and originality of the doctoral works.

- E) The creation of a ratio between research and teaching in which research dominates, would enable the increase of the quality of doctoral studies, given that mentor professors would deepen their expertise for qualitative direction of the preparations of the themes of doctoral students. At the UP there is no institutional propensity to release professors who are inclined towards research from their teaching obligations, and particularly from those obligations at the lower levels of studies, in order to enable them to have more time to focus on their research and publishing activities. Scientific research is a result of individual work of individual professors, rather than a result of research projects that are implemented within and with the support of the University of Prishtina, given that the amount of the budget of the UP that is allocated for research is smaller than 0.1% of its total value.

Discussion Issues:

The shifting of the ratio between teaching and research towards research seems illusory if the research is not stimulated financially, by simultaneously prohibiting the engagement of the professors of the University of Prishtina in other universities in Kosovo.

For the preparation of qualitative doctoral works, it is necessary to provide access to electronic libraries, that is, the access to international scientific journals, an issue which, according to the actual management, was already addressed by the UP.

At the beginning of each year, the UP should publish the list with full data on all the scientific works that were published during the previous year by its academic staff, which would enable the verification of the scientific contribution of the academic personnel of the UP.

The increase of the quality of the reseach and the inclusion of the doctoral students in the research, through the functionalization of the research institutes within the faculties of the UP, which, for the moment, exist only on paper.

The exploration of the ideas for the creation of some school, or of some alternative program, for interdisciplinary doctoral studies, by organizing these studies with the universities from abroad, and particularly with those from the region.



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**Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC**

This publication is supported by the Project The Democratic Society Promotion (DSP), financed by the Swiss Cooperation Office in Kosovo (SCO-K), and the International Development Cooperation (DANIDA) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, and managed by the Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF).