The PhD Graduand – the hidden talents that lie within

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Why should we turn our attention to hidden talents?
The Changing PhD
Discussion paper
March 2014

The PhD bubble: when production outstrips demand

Modern economies need high-level research scientists, but there are difficulties when it comes to proposing job openings to the PhDs. We have reached a point now where questions have become: what is the real value attached to a doctoral degree, both for society as a whole and for those who register for demanding studies at this level? Might we be faced with a glut of PhDs? The issue is on the table and when we refine it, it opens up a new perspective.

What are the key (and priority) skills and strategies needed to ensure a country’s competitiveness? The answer to this question varies as the development needs of the countries. In major reconstruction phases, our economy mostly needs managers, engineers and technical support staff. In today’s post-industrial era, the most advanced countries are now aiming at attaining so-called knowledge-based economies (KBE), where research and innovation are prime gateways to creation of wealth. Countries can count among their own power resources those who have gained a PhD, i.e., the top 5% alumni of university education and training, who then become decisive factors for success in world markets, this being largely true for those who chose competitive specialties for their doctorate.
These recent reports provide some very interesting facts

Some general salient points:

• The number of doctorates being obtained worldwide is rapidly increasing
• The huge increase in doctoral candidates means there is now a much more diverse PhD graduate population than in even the recent past
• Globally, at least in some disciplines, universities are producing too many PhD graduates

• PhD graduate jobs may not meet candidates expectations
• In some cases people having a PhD are seen as over-qualified or as being likely to be deficient in some of the generic attributes necessary for a good employee
• In the UK, almost 80 percent of people achieving PhDs in science will eventually find careers outside science
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Some salient points appertaining to China:

- China is the world leader in producing PhDs.
- Each qualified Chinese professor has to supervise 5.77 doctorate candidates, much higher than the average ratio internationally.
- Unemployment in China among new postgraduates has been rising for the past seven or so years and was higher than for undergraduates in the three years to 2012.

Graduation Day
Graduation Day + 1
The reality of finding a job sets in.
Computing Skills

Communication Skills

"I have no particular talent, just insatiable curiosity." — Albert Einstein
..... but doctoral graduands have so much more to offer

....... but do they all realise?
Deciding Factor

Employment Market

Research Career Requires
- Tenacity
- High Competence

Non-Research Career Requires
- Broader Vision
- Adaptability
Research Training assumes a prominence

Training for a Research Career

Hidden Skills assume a prominence

Training for a Broader Rôle

Taught or acquired through self development?

Supervisor or graduate school led?
TENSIONS

Supervisor 🌟 Graduate School

OUTER CIRCLE

INNER CIRCLE

EU-CHINA DOC Conference, Brussels 8-9 May 2014 27

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Communication Skills

Computer Skills

Core Practical Skills

Reading & Speed Reading
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Self Skills
- Critical Thinking
- Independent Working

Self Skills
- Self-confidence
- Self-drive

Reasoning Skills
- Analysing
- Innovation

Reasoning Skills
- Problem Solving
- Synthesising
Developing these complex interactive and intellectual skills I would argue is the key goal in producing highly marketable non-research orientated graduands who will play important rôles in society at large.