



EU-China DOC Conference & Workshop Series

中欧博士教育合作与对话国际研讨会

Workshop B:

*Quality assessment of doctoral education
in a European Context*

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Quality assessment of doctoral education in a European Context



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Agenda

- Brief Introduction to the topic
 - » European/policy level
 - » Institutional/structural level
 - » Individual/Supervisor-supervisee level
- Interactive group session on three topics
- Reporting
- Conclusions

Three levels

- I. Criteria at European level
- II. Quality assessment of European Universities (evaluation, audits, accreditation)
- III. Quality assessment of doctoral education/training

Countries and institutions are in different phases in implementing QA systems.

Furthermore, the legal framework, e.g. the level of autonomy or the way of funding, varies country by country.



European standards

Quality assurance of doctoral education in a European Context is part of the seven principles for Innovative Doctoral Training (IDTP) (2011)

- research excellence,
- attractive institutional environment,
- interdisciplinary research options,
- exposure to industry and other relevant employment sectors,
- international networking,
- transferable skills training
- **quality assurance**



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Background of the principles

Extract from "Report of Mapping Exercise on Doctoral Training in Europe " (2011)

Adopted by the ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility

Defined by experts:

- from university associations
- industry
- funding organisations



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Why QA in Doctoral Education

QA is highlighted at the Bologna Process

To assure the quality of doctoral programmes throughout Europe

To enhance the quality of the **research environment** (should be developed separately from the quality assurance in the first and second cycle)

To promote transparent and accountable procedures for topics such as:

- admission,
- supervision,
- awarding the doctorate degree
- career development.



QA Process

Seven principles for Innovative Doctoral Training:

QA is not about the quality assurance of the PhD itself rather **the process or life cycle, from recruitment to graduation**. The common approach should provide a framework of reference, whilst preserving **flexibility and autonomy for institutions and doctoral candidates**.



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QA Process

Quality Assurance in Doctoral Education – Results of the ARDE project

Accountable Research Environments for Doctoral Education (ARDE)

- two-year EC-supported project led by EUA (2011-2012).
- European survey (published February 26, 2013)



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The report is based on **quantitative** information (112 universities across Europe) as well as **qualitative** information (focus groups and a workshop)

Results of the ARDE project

The importance of training researchers

- recognised as crucial to the future of the European **knowledge society**
- the **number of doctorate (PhD) holders has risen** sharply in recent years. (see next slide)

Doctoral education is **being managed more professionally**

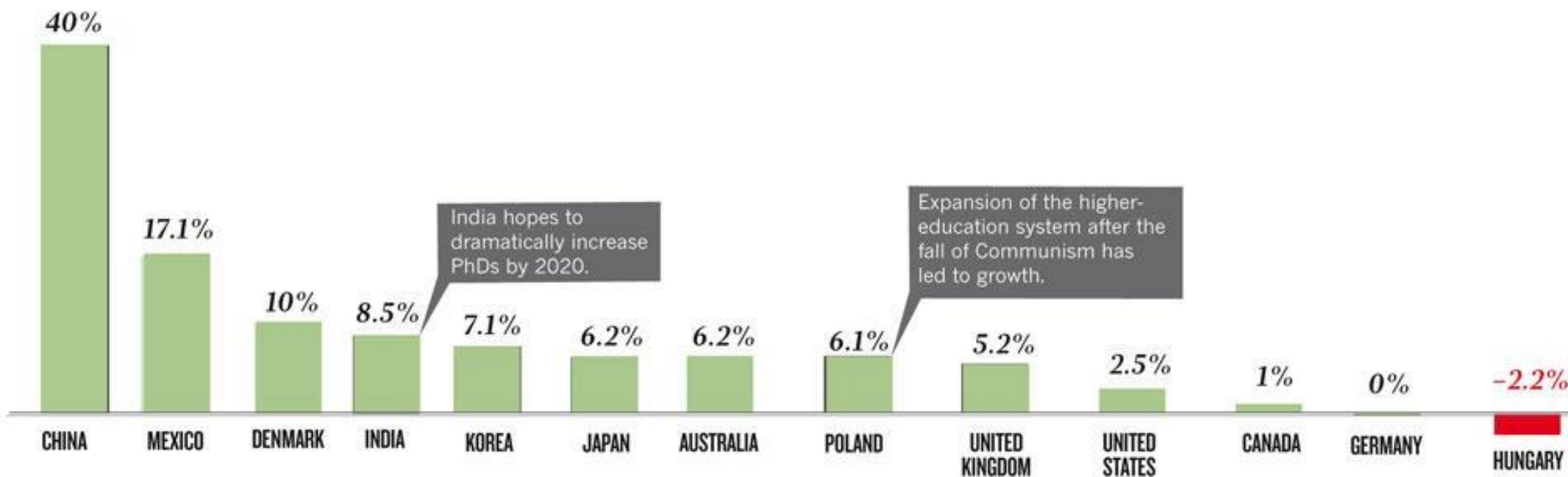
- in particular with the establishment of doctoral schools (from 30% in 2007 to 65% ,2010 and 85% in 2013)
- institutions are giving more attention to **accountability and quality enhancement.**



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The rise of doctorates

Major expansion of higher education has boosted PhD output in many countries, shown here as average annual growth of doctoral degrees across all disciplines, 1998–2006.



SOURCE: OECD/CHINESE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Results of the ARDE project: Indicators

The ARDE project highlighted that for example Universities have set up (or are setting up) internal quality processes at doctoral level:

- **time-to-degree**
- **completion rates**
- **guidelines for admission, supervision and the thesis**



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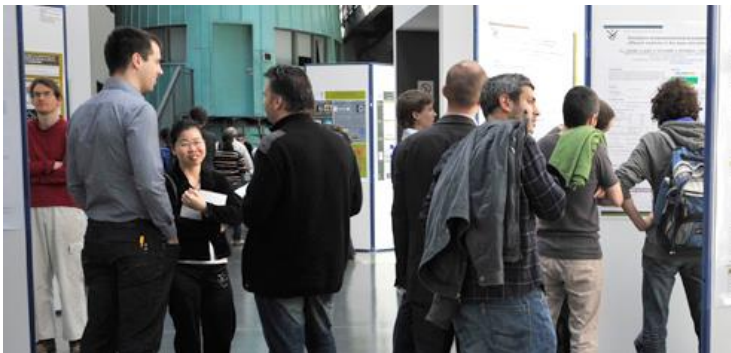
Results

- almost 90% of respondents had written procedures/regulations for admission of candidates
- **91% systematically monitored progress of candidates.**

The institutional level

Doctoral School to assure quality through:

- support for the PPD of candidates
- monitoring the candidates' performance using progress reports
- developing and reviewing rules and quality processes
- helping supervisor to professionalize
- monitoring indicators such as
 - » time-to-degree
 - » completion rates
 - » compliance to rules
 - » placement of graduates



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Individual level Supervisor-supervisee relationship

A good supervisory relationship is the essence of a successful doctoral programme. Having a supportive supervisor is crucial to the candidates chances of successfully completing a PhD.

"Mostly the system works well and poor supervision is the exception rather than the norm, but when it does break down, it can go disastrously wrong and have serious consequences." Derek S. Pugh, Open University



Responsibilities of the
Supervisors
Collegiality
Academic advice
Professional support



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The supervisor should:

- provide a collaborative research environment and access to research infrastructure
- stay in contact and hold regular formal supervision meetings
- provide regularly honest and informative feedback to the candidate on work in progress
- ensure that the candidate never neglects planning
- stay up to date on issues and literature relating to the candidate's research project
- provide reliable and well-informed guidance in all matters of sound research practice 14

Responsibilities of the
Supervisors
Collegiality
Academic advice
Professional support

The supervisor should:

- encourage the candidate to become an active member of the professional international and local community
- encourage the candidate to attend relevant conferences and offer guidance in the preparation of conference presentations or scientific publication and dissemination
- give time and encourage a candidate to plan a life after the PhD
- prepare the candidate for the final examination/thesis defense



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Working groups

Topic 1 (European level): Seven European innovative principles on doctoral education/training

Topic 2 (Institutional/structural level): Yearly PhD progress report (example from VUB), training the supervisor

Topic 3 (Level of doctoral education/training): supervisor-supervisee interaction, profile of the good promoter

Leading questions:

- What can we learn from the European model?
- What can we learn from the Chinese model?



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Questions for Working groups

Topic 1: Discuss the 7 principles and compare them with existing Chinese policies: what are existing barriers hindering an uptake of these principles and discuss potential strategies to overcome them.

Topic 2: How can structures on institutional level support quality assurance in doctoral education. What are the major tasks in this respect (why on this level), what are existing barriers and discuss potential strategies to overcome them.

Topic 3: What are the major quality assurance tasks of supervisors. What kind of actions are needed? Discuss the major roles of supervisors, difficulties they might face and potential strategies to overcome them.