

REFORMS OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

EMERGENCE OF A NEW TYPE OF DOCTORATE; PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

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Abstract.

Increasing number of students enrolled in doctoral programmes and the emergence of the new types of doctoral programmes across the world's universities as a response to various demands from a wide range of professional context has shown that professional doctorate has become a new challenge and opened new horizons in higher education. This article examines the road of the professional doctorate from beginning to current status and possible trends. The professional doctorate is examined in its relationship with the so-called traditional scientific doctorate. The paper focuses on some of the aspects that gives identity and legitimacy to this type of doctorate: programme aims, structure, content, duration, recruitment and admissions, students' motivation to enroll professional doctorate, status, financial support, standards, and thesis contributions. It also presents the status of the professional doctorate in Romania and some ideas as a basis for further examination of the professional doctorate.

Key words: professional doctorate, scientific doctorate, research-based practice, quality.

1. Early stages in development of professional doctorate

1.1. Diversification of doctoral programmes and increasing interest in the professional doctorate

Among the challenges posed by the knowledge-based economy and society, the doctorate – the highest level of qualification – holds a privileged position. Thus, starting in the 1990s and still going strong during this decade, the European and trans-European area has witnessed the shaping of an academic

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movement favouring a re-consideration of the classical PhD and the initiation of new doctoral options or alternatives. The movement focusing on PhD reform gained more strength and clarity after 2000, becoming integrated in the Bologna thinking. The conferences in Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005), in line with the Bologna strategy, launched and strengthened the idea of PhD as the third cycle of university studies. Specialised institutions of the Council of Europe, the European Union, UNESCO, OECD, the European University Association, and various national bodies developed the idea, voiced certain short comings of the traditional PhD, and suggested corrective principles and measures. It is surprising that many of the efforts invested in reforming the European PhD focused almost exclusively on the classic 'traditional' PhD, without raising awareness on or debating other types or reference frameworks. Gradually, but more and more vigorously the diversity of PhD types and the legitimacy of the professional doctorate gained recognition; there was an increasing interest in clarifying the identity of this PhD type and in promoting it in the doctoral system of various countries.

Currently, we may identify five types of PhD in the international doctoral scene:

1. *The traditional PhD* – research doctorate finalised with a thesis bringing a significant and original contribution to the development of the academic knowledge in the reference field.
2. *The PhD by publication* – doctorate awarded based on scientific contributions already elaborated and recognised by the national and international academic community.
3. *Taught doctorate* – a type of PhD where the 'taught' component plays an important role. To a certain extent, this type of PhD may be assimilated into the current PhD system with its two components: advanced study and research.
4. *The work-based or practice-based doctorate* – in the fields of arts and sports.
5. *The professional doctorate* – focused on professional disciplines and applied research. (Huisman and Naidoo, 2006)

While the first three types of PhD have a dominant academic focus, the other two adopt a stronger professional approach. Among them, we recognise the professional PhD as a new and promising approach on doctoral studies. Among the first ones, there is mention of professional PhD in education in Canada, in 1894 and in USA in 1921. Quite late, but with sufficient consistency, the American model inspired doctoral programmes in different continents: South America, Australia, Asia, Europe.

The professional doctorate in Europe does not enjoy a recognised tradition, similar to the scientific PhD. A recent paper published under the UNESCO-CEPES in 2004, defines the professional doctorate as a 'new trend'

illustrated by pioneer initiatives of universities in England, Austria and the Netherlands (Sadlak, 2004).

Currently, the vocational or professional doctorate is undergoing a metamorphosis and valorisation placing it in a dynamic, evolutionary area. The scope of initiatives and developments is emphasized by *various evidence* such as the following:

1. Higher education systems from different continents - Europe, North America, Australia, Asia – and countries - England, Austria, France, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, Netherlands, USA, Canada, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Romania etc. – set up and implement professional doctorate programmes.
2. Professional doctorate covers a very wide spectrum of professional fields:
 - *Major fields:* engineering, medicine, psychology, education, administration and business, biological sciences, social sciences, foreign languages, law, arts, architecture, physical culture and sports. From the frequency perspective, it is apparent that the first three ranks belong to education, engineering and psychology.
 - *Disciplinary ramifications* – a division of doctoral specialisations within a field:
e.g.: *Public Health:* public health – infectious and tropical diseases; epidemiology and public health, public health and policies;
Psychology: clinical psychology; educational psychology; psychological counselling.
3. Interdisciplinary doctoral programmes were developed: biomedical sciences, biological process engineering, public health.
4. Professional doctorates were created in fields with no scientific doctorate precedent: nursing, physiotherapy.
5. The number of professional doctorates increased (UK Council for Graduate Education identified 109 programmes in 1998, 120 programmes in 1999 and 153 programmes in 2000. Another survey mentions 192 programmes in 2005; in Austria, between 1990 – 1996, the number of programmes increased from 1 to 48, and in 2001 it reached 131) and the number of students enrolled in these programmes raised by 20%.
6. Renowned universities, recognised as leaders in scientific research set up professional doctorate programmes (in UK 28 out of 34 such higher education institutions provide professional doctorate programmes), and newer universities were keen to be involved in this doctoral area, aiming to win new research and training markets.

7. Specialised committees or work groups were created to study the opportunities of developing professional doctorates or to analyse their development (USA, Netherlands, Ireland etc.).

1.2. Factors in the development of the professional doctorate

A wide variety of convergent and complementary factors, with high impact potential, supports the scope and consistency of concerns for the development of the professional doctorate. Here are some answers to questions such as: 'Why a professional doctorate?', 'What are the benefits?':

- a. It meets directly the needs of contemporary society which views knowledge and continuing professional training as the basis for economic, technological and social development.
- b. It meets the requirements of the labour market, of economic competitiveness, of the development needs of public and private organisations.
- c. It is more suitable for governmental policies on research funding and on university ranking, which demand a re-consideration of the applied research, and transition from long-term to short-term research.
- d. It is of interest to companies and professional associations that find the professional doctorate as a resource for recruiting a highly qualified and specialised work force, as well as of capitalising on their own research potential.
- e. It is a promising alternative to the classical PhD and its shortcoming: excessively theoretical nature and limitative focus on the academic universe and career.
- f. It is a profitable investment; it provides sustainability and increases the university financial resources (higher tuition fees than the classical PhD, companies and professional associations willing to pay education costs).
- g. It meets differentiated specialisation and professional development needs; it matches better the work place specificity. It is more attractive for those not interested in academic careers, but willing to gain recognition for prestigious professional achievements.
 - It provides new opportunities for advanced scientific professional training: part-time or distance-learning allow learners to maintain their jobs; for some fields, professional doctorate is the only advanced professionalisation pathway at PhD level (physiotherapy, clinical psychology)
- h. It increases opportunities of holding management positions in a wide range of institutions and organisations.

2. The concept of professional doctorate; identity, differentiations and similarities with the scientific doctorate

2.1. Conceptual delimitations

Conceptualising the professional doctorate is not easy as:

- There is wide variety of types, structures and contents, with differences not only between fields, but within the same fields as well:
 - The concept and practices related to the same type of doctorate vary from one country to another, from one university to another in the same country, and even within the same university. Example: there are two doctorate models in the Business Administration area: one is an advanced master in business administration and the second consists of taught courses and major research – a thesis.
 - Some doctoral programmes develop the research component and claim parity with the research doctorate (PhD); others allocate it limited weight; some doctorates maintain the thesis as fundamental evidence of doctoral competence, others favour the portfolio as a tool to measure scientific professional progress.
- The titles and abbreviations of professional doctorate are not sufficiently homogeneous, which leads to confusion: the general term 'ProfD or 'Dr of Professional Studies' is used and it is considered sufficient to indicate the specificity of this type of doctorate, but also the specialisation is included in the very title of the doctorate – professional doctorate in Education Psychology, professional doctorate in Public Health, in Engineering etc.

Two abbreviations are used for the same type of doctorate: e.g. for the engineering field: EngD or DEng; for the education field: DEd or EdD.

- Comparison with the scientific PhD is not always conclusive enough. At least lately, the classical PhD has gone beyond the traditional structures, and has witnessed changes and innovations that bring it closer to some aspects of the professional doctorate. The impact of the professional component on the scientific PhD is so strong that some countries (Sweden, Denmark) felt it was needed to adopt the syntagm *Industrial PhD*. On the other hand, we notice a tendency to reinforce the scientific component of the professional doctorate. Consequently, the boundaries between the scientific doctorate and the professional doctorate are not very obvious or easy to delineate.

Nevertheless, despite those described above or maybe due to it, it is actually necessary, purposive and eventually possible to present also the "invariables" of the professional doctorate. We cannot overlook understanding a

growing phenomenon, even if the range of its manifestations is relatively abundant. The sections following attempt to demonstrate, without giving up the doctoral programmes flexibility, that the elements of consistency are stronger and more relevant than the variations embedded in particular programmes. There is a certain emergence of unity in the diversity of professional doctorates.

The nature and overall profile of the professional doctorate may be derived from official documents belonging to institutions from countries with commendable initiatives in organising such doctoral studies.

Such documents include at least 3 features:

- i. The professional doctorate (PD) is a distinct type of doctoral studies, with its own goals and pathways, different from the PhD. Its ultimate goal is development and innovation of professional practices.
- ii. The PD includes two components: specialised training and a research-focused component.
- iii. Research is focused on practical knowledge and on arguing practical intervention strategies.

Following the same spirit, but with useful explanations and additional details, Scott et al (2004) identify the following peculiarities of the PD: focus on professional activity; focus on individual development related to the professional context; a significant training element; indication of learning outcomes; group learning methodologies; the thesis is less extensive than for the PhD but it maintains the same requirements on originality; link to the practice development and the possibility to be accredited by a professional body, as a new professional qualification; reference to a certain profession is mentioned in the doctorate title.

2.2. Criteria for the analysis and taxonomy of the professional doctorate

From our viewpoint, a comprehensive, analytic and systematic approach on the identity of the professional doctorate (PD) involved a set of analyses related to the following criteria/levels:

1. Purpose, functions, competences

The following synthetic characteristics define the essence of the professional doctorate in terms of its nature and goals:

- PD has a dominant vocational focus, aiming at professional rather than academic careers.
- PD is correlated to the applied branches of science, technology and culture.
- PD focuses on identifying new possibilities to integrate scientific knowledge with professional knowledge.

- PD develops cognitive, methodological and practical competences which are transferable to a variety of professional and applied research situations.
- PD develops high-level research-based scientific and professional expertise able to initiate and accomplish professional and organisational research-development and innovation projects.
- PD enables recognition and progress in the professional and management career at individual level, as well as institutional and organisational development opportunities for the company/department where the doctoral student is employed.

A critical issue is to *determine the key competences* that are specific to the professional doctorate. A good example is the training objectives proposed by the Nottingham Trent University, such as: providing students with opportunities to explore the complex links between knowledge, theory and practice and the intricate bonds of understanding and changing the world; development of students' skills to design and implement research projects aiming at the intersection of knowledge fields within their professional area; development of students' communication and analysis skills, of their capacity to assume risks and to tackle the complexity of change and uncertainty in organisations.

2. Entry requirements

While the vast majority of scientific PhD programmes require a Master's degree, professional doctorate programmes oscillate between preserving and abandoning this requirement; but many such programmes do not require a master's degree. Instead, all professional doctorates require that applicants have professional experience ranging from 3/5 to 10 years.

3. Learning modes

The professional doctorate is organised in three options: full time; part time; distance learning. Currently, the most frequent and specific mode is part-time learning.

4. Study duration

The programme duration depends on the nature of the field and on the learning mode – full time/part-time- varying within the limits of 3 – 4 / 5 – 7 years. Usually, for part-time programmes, which are the most common option, the duration exceeds the full time mode by at least one year.

This is preferred as it allows the candidates to maintain their job but it has the disadvantage of longer duration. Sometimes the part-time option is supported by distance-learning specific resources as well.

5. Organisation and structure of doctoral programmes

Generally, professional doctorate programmes include two main components:

1. Advanced study programme, as first stage, sometimes linked with the practical training. The PhD curriculum includes field-specific

synthesis disciplines, with well defined applied functions and modules related to the research methodology. There are attempts to integrate inter-disciplinary courses.

2. Research programme, as the second stage. All professional doctorates require an original research component but its nature and functions differ from the scientific PhD. The PD does not focus on fundamental research but it fosters other types of research: action-research action, development-research – development, innovation-research.

The PD is interested in producing know-how, strategic or procedure-related knowledge and in the creative use of such knowledge to design, implement and evaluate activities, processes or products. The research contribution occurs at the two above-mentioned levels.

The importance allocated to research varies from one programme to another – some programmes are recognised as research doctorates as well, others are not.

Generally, the doctoral programme tends to be organised based on a two-fold philosophy:

1. Practitioner-researcher; reflexive practitioner
2. Research-based practice.

The former involves development of research competences in practitioners while the latter focuses on innovating and enhancing practice based on one's own research and research in the field. The research programme focuses on one or several projects relevant for the thesis or final portfolio. Passing from the first stage of advanced study to the research stage involves meeting academic standards correlated with the planned disciplines and training activities.

Some programmes are designed so that after the first stage, usually two-year duration, the graduate is awarded the Master's degree and upon completion of the thesis, the PhD degree. The concept of the Master's as pre-doctoral cycle integrated within the doctoral programme is worthy of consideration. There are at least two obvious advantages: it ensures continuity of training and research within the same field for at least four years; candidates who do not wish to enter the second stage of doctoral studies, or who do not defend their thesis regardless their reasons, may obtain the Master's degree, hence recognition of their efforts and competence.

The research and training programme is undertaken partly within the university and partly within enterprises, companies or institutions where the doctoral students are employed.

The student is supervised and assisted by one or two university professors and sometimes a practical training supervisor from the beneficiary institution.

6. Assessment and certification / completion of doctorate

The assessment system is built based on the specificity of the two doctoral programme stages. The assessment criteria and methods adapt accordingly. Thus, in the first stage, assessment is centred on the learning objectives of the study disciplines and progress is measured and appraised by various assessment tools: written tests, case studies, performance tests, technical reports etc. Assessment within the second stage is focused on the research-development projects and it appraises the quality and innovation of proposed solution. Generally, the assessment methods are more varied than in the classical PhD system.

The research project involves real work situations, most often from one's own organisation. Personal contribution is expected not only to the development of knowledge, but also to the development of professional practice in the student's field of activity.

Instead of one thesis or monograph, a portfolio including micro-research projects, technical reports, essays, interpretations, creative papers and outputs is preferred.

In some programmes, representatives of the beneficiary company or institution management may be engaged in the assessment of the thesis.

In the fields of Arts and Architecture, the thesis may be replaced by significant creative work recognised as such by specialists in the field.

Currently there are three options for the completion and certification of such doctoral studies:

- i. Public defended thesis;
- ii. Portfolio – package of learning, research and creation outcomes;
- iii. Portfolio plus dissertation but not as extensive as the scientific doctorate thesis.

The dominant tendency is to use a portfolio including research projects.

7. Funding

The funding system is to some extent similar to the scientific doctorate. The specificity is rendered by the financial support (scholarships, tuition fees) granted by big companies to students enrolled in training and research programmes in exchange for professional-scientific contributions they will bring to the funding organisations.

We may notice that the professional doctorate has its own distinct particularities against all seven analysis criteria. These indicate the specific 'invariants', *what the professional doctorate is*. Obviously we would be interested in highlighting *what it is not*, namely what defines the scientific PhD, but not the professional doctorate. The table below is informative to this purpose.

Table 1. *Scientific doctorate vs. professional doctorate*

Characteristics	<i>Scientific doctorate (PhD)</i>	<i>Professional doctorate</i>
Definition	Research programme enabling candidates to make a significant original contribution to scientific knowledge.	Research and advanced study programme enabling candidates to make a significant contribution to the knowledge and practice in their professional context.
Entry requirements	Master of Business, Master of Arts/Master of Science, Mres	Usually there is no specific requirement of a Master's degree; flexible admission based on explicit qualification
Learning mode	Usually full-time.	Usually part-time.
Students	Future researchers, mostly younger students.	Professionals, mostly mature students.
Degree	PhD (sometimes DPhil)	D + profession code (DBA, EdD, MD etc.)
Required professional background	No	Yes, in specific fields (usually 2 or more years).
Taught	Usually not	Both professional disciplines and research methods
Learning process	Mostly individual, focus on individual research skills	In groups, focus on individual tasks and group work, professional skills
Use of credits	In USA, not in UK	Yes.
Thesis length	Not specified, on more extensive than for PD on average	Not specified but on average not as extensive as for PhD
Assessment	Thesis	Thesis + assignments, course activities, portfolio
Disciplines	Mostly academic	Mostly professional
Requirements for access to professional routes	Yes, requirement for access to academic positions.	Only for some professions.
Assessment focus	Significant contributions to research in the study field.	Significant contributions to research in the professional/study field and/or significant contributions to the development of professional practices.
Supervision	Academic expert in the study discipline	Sometimes additional supervision by professional expert.

Adapted after Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (1998).

3. Critical issues, alternative approaches

3.1. PD status. *Quality of standards*

On the topic of status and quality of professional doctorate, views are not only different, but quite opposed, as illustrated below:

- It is a 'revolutionary alternative to classical PhD programmes'
- It raises doubts on the legitimacy of professional doctorate and the right to award doctoral degrees
- Lower rank, second hand doctorate.
- Different status, but same level with the scientific doctorate.

Comments:

1. The professional doctorate is a doctorate *with an identity of its own, quite different* from the scientific doctorate. The table above indicates different characteristics according to profiles. Thus, comparison between the two types of doctorate from the viewpoint of their importance is at least debatable.
2. The PD does not conflict with, or try to substitute for, the scientific doctorate, it has *different meaning and legitimacy*.
3. The scientific doctorate model, though important, is not a universal standard for any other doctoral alternative. In EQF terms, both scientific and professional doctorates *are professional qualifications level 8; the difference is not in their level, but in their nature*.
4. Strangely and paradoxically, in some education systems the two categories of doctoral studies are on the same level of higher education (e.g., in Ireland, level 10) but a hierarchical difference is accepted in favour of the scientific doctorate. According to the reports available, doctoral schools in Romania in the Arts field do not accept a ranking of the two types of doctorates.

A specialist in the field proposed the following interpretation which we find most appropriate:

"The so-called professional doctorates are doctorates which focus on embedding research in a reflexive manner in practical activities. They should meet the same essential standards as the traditional PhD to ensure the same level of quality. Use of different degrees to differentiate between professional doctorate and PhD seems appropriate."

(Taylor, 2008).

We notice the important idea of *common standards* which should be part of the recognition of any type of doctorate. Such standards have not been developed yet. Those discussed so far focus on the scientific doctorate. Which could become common and which would remain specific for the scientific



doctorate? Could the Dublin descriptors for qualifications level 8 (PhD) or the 10 principles of the EUA Salzburg seminar be good inspiration sources?

3.2. Nature and scope of the research component

Generally, there is no disagreement about the existence of a research and research-training component in any professional doctorate programme. There are, however, different views on the nature, quality and importance of the research. Sometimes it is indicated that research has low representativeness and does not meet the methodological rigour of the scientific doctorate.

Comment in response:

1. The PD involves original research based on quantitative and qualitative methods, but research in this area follows a different paradigm than the scientific doctorate, have pragmatic goals, produce knowledge, and use it to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of various social and economic systems enabling the social functions.
2. Though the research activities have different importance from one programme to another, the tendency is to allocate equal importance to research and training. In case of programmes leading to license to practice in liberal professions, there is a tendency to focus increasingly on the professional training.
3. When exploring the knowledge society, some authors "support a transition of knowledge from mode 1 to mode 2, which means that research practices operating in applicative (not discovery) context become cross-disciplinary instead of non- or multi-disciplinary, heterogeneous, non-hierarchical, non-linear and non-institutionalised in university structures." The PD, conclude the authors, is best suited for the training requirements of those who will be working in knowledge mode 2 (Huisman & Naidoo, 2006, pp 7-8).

3.3. Autonomy or co-existence of professional and scientific doctorates

Another matter of interest is whether the professional doctorate is more suitable for certain fields and irrelevant for others, and whether professional and scientific doctorate may co-exist within the same field, or if there is mutual rejection.

Comments:

1. The answers based on experience are different: in England, the only PhD awarded in Clinical Psychology is the professional doctorate; in USA both professional doctorates and PhD are recognised within

certain professional areas (e.g. education); in many European countries, the scientific doctorate knows no 'rival'.

2. The PD is likely to be more representative for applied fields of sciences, technology and arts. At the same time, one may recognise the legitimacy of having the two types of doctorate in place in the same field, as long as the respective field requires both fundamental theoretical research *and* applied research.

3.4. Proliferation of professional doctorates – advantage or disadvantage

We mentioned previously the variety of fields hosting professional doctorates and their multiplication within the same field. For example, in the fields of *Health and Social Care* and *Health Sciences* the doctorate provision covers thirteen types. In Psychology, a survey of UK CGE from 2002 identified more than ten doctoral degrees. It seems that the proliferation model is "contaminating" more and more fields. Is this process natural and beneficial, or does it lead to an atomisation of the professional doctorate?

Comments:

1. Obviously, 'mincing' the professional doctorate, excessive specialisations are not desirable. The doctorate always involves a broad knowledge horizon and scientific and professional expertise.
2. If we compare three categories of doctoral degrees, Doctor of Psychology and Doctor of Education Psychology or Doctor of Forensic Psychology or Doctor of Psychotherapy, we will probably indicate the second category as more relevant and valuable in the market. The indication of specialisation in the doctoral degree is important both for the student and for the employer.
3. The professional doctorate is expected to continue to adjust according to the major professional developments within a field.

3.5. Quality assured professional doctorate – in status nascendi

Official documents, national and international reports, including statistics do not systematically refer to the professional doctorate, mix data from the two categories of doctorate – scientific and professional; control and accreditation mechanisms are insufficiently developed.

Comments:

1. There is a gap between the reality of the professional doctorate and its recognition in various official documents.
2. Although the professional doctorate is a growing reality subject to many studies and of interest to various institutions and professionals, references to this type of doctorate within the policy papers of higher education and research are rather more accidental than systematic.
3. Description of professional standards is still a major topic of debate.
4. We do not identify differentiations between the two types of doctorate, not even at the level of institutions in charge with quality assurance in higher education, not to mention professional doctorate assessment procedures. There is a need for consistent recognition of the specificity of the PD in the official documents and for the initiation of adequate assessment and accreditation procedures.

4. Professional doctorate in Romania – present and perspective

4.1. Legal basis of professional doctorate in Romania

In Romania, the PD is regulated by the PhD Law - Government Decision no 567/2005 (OJ no 540 of 24/06/2005) which mentions *organisation of this type of doctorate for the fields of arts and physical culture and sports*.

Purpose of the PD: “research – scientific analysis of artistic or sports professional performance of the candidate, accomplished at least at national level”.

5 capacities and categories of learning outcomes – knowledge, skills, competences acquired through doctorate are indicated.

Admission is based on competition organised by the institution administering doctoral studies which consists of specific tests and language proficiency tests. **Compulsory entry requirements** include Master’s degree for Bologna cycles graduates and own professional performance in the arts or sports field, at least at national level.

The PD has the same **structure** as the scientific doctorate, namely two components: 1) a training programme based on advanced university studies; 2) a scientific research programme – research on own performance in the arts or sports field.

Development and presentation of the thesis: the same procedures as for the scientific doctorate. Specific requirements for the professional doctorate: the thesis must include scientific analysis of own performance in the arts or sports field, at least at national level; it should emphasise the elements of

originality specific to the respective field and the analysis and value recognition instruments.

Learning mode: - full-time and part-time.

Certification: - degree specific to the type of doctorate (professional) and to the field. The professional doctorate degree grants the same rights as the PhD.

EQF qualification level: level 8, the same as for the scientific doctorate.

Institutions administering studies: IOSUD – the same as for the scientific doctorate.

Continuing assessment system: the same as for the scientific doctorate.

It is worth noticing that – for the first time in an official document – the professional doctorate legitimacy is recognised and there are statements on its characteristics. This document also initiates doctoral programmes for two fields which had not benefited from doctoral level until 2005.

At the same time, the specific elements of the professional doctorate in Romania might raise critical remarks, such as the following:

1. The indication of the purpose is ambiguous: it does not clearly state the major goal of the programme;
2. The five capacities mentioned at article 3 for professional doctorate reproduce with slight changes the capacities aimed at by the scientific doctorate. This relative identity of capacities envisaged by the two types of doctorate might suggest existence of common standards; the differentiating elements are still open for debate.
3. We may notice that the structure of a professional doctorate programmes includes the same stages, the same components, the same ratios and an assessment system which is very similar to the one for the scientific doctorate. We might conclude that the specificity of the professional doctorate, at least as resulting from official documents, is not sufficiently defined.
4. The limitation of the PD to the fields of arts and physical culture and sports is not compatible with the European tendencies indicated above, illustrating a widening range of professional doctorates in various fields such as economics, technology, medicine, education, social services, administration and business.

4.2. Experiences and perceptions on the professional doctorate in Romania

The reports of field-specific commissions and the focus-groups debates indicated the following categories of answers for the item scientific doctorate vs. professional doctorate:

1. Only scientific doctorate was mentioned, with no comments on the professional doctorate. Should we believe that the professional doctorate is of no interest for the respective professional area? ("Only the scientific doctorate is organised in the field of exact sciences.")
2. There were clear views against professional doctorate ("Professional doctorate diminishes the concept of Sc.D.")
3. The concept of profession-focused doctorate (actually professional doctorate) was accepted, but not the change of title ("Industrial/professional doctorate is more credible... but there is no need for additional regulations... as it has the same scientific value as the scientific doctorate.")
4. The possibility to organise professional doctorate was recognised only for certain specialisations within a field ("Professional doctorate as well may be organised in the field of forestry.")
5. The professional doctorate is in place and supported, but additional clarifications are necessary.
6. There are no antagonistic relationships, moreover, they may be complementary; this last idea leads to the conclusion that both types of doctorate may be promoted within the same field.

Comments:

- Generally, many of the reports mentioned directly or indirectly indicate a mindset of the Romanian academic environment which is not generally in favour of the professional doctorate.
- More detailed and generally supporting opinions are specified by representatives of institutions administering doctoral study programmes in the fields of arts, physical education and sports. Universities administering professional doctorate programmes in Romania are in the fields of Architecture and Urban Planning, Visual Arts, Physical Education and Sports, Theatre-Cinematography-Media and Music. The research indicated that from the thirteen institutions entitled to provide professional doctorates, only four in the field of Arts currently develop such doctoral programmes.

5. Instead of conclusions

Reconsideration of the doctorate vocation is doubtless one of the priorities of higher education and scientific research. We take into consideration two major levels:

1. Development and strengthening of primary vocation, expressed by the scientific doctorate:

- a. Transfer, assimilation and participation in the development of advanced knowledge;
 - b. Training of elite researchers able to initiate and undertake original research
 - c. Access to a position in the academic environment and/or research institutes.
2. Discovery and development of the second vocation – professional doctorate – openness of doctoral studies to non-traditional sectors: industry, commerce, business, public services, arts etc.

We may appreciate that professional doctorate is legitimate, viable, and has the right to exist in the doctoral system in Romania. It could operate in a more extensive manner than currently, covering more fields than those officially accepted at the moment – arts, physical culture and sports. Thus, the principle of correlating Romanian education with the advanced European education might achieve new support.

The following topics may represent food for thought and action lines for the future of professional doctorate in Romania:

- Development of a set of doctoral standards including three categories:
 - i. Generic standards and descriptors for the scientific doctorate;
 - ii. Generic standards and descriptors for the professional doctorate;
 - iii. Common standards for the two types of doctorate.
- Exploring good practice and experience of the national professional doctorate and of the scientific doctorate functioning according to principles that are close to those of the professional doctorate to build the Romanian concept of the professional doctorate.
- Development of the professional doctorate according to the EQF-LLL, HE-EHEA and the National Qualifications Framework.
- Study of legitimacy and opportunity of setting up professional doctorates in fields where currently there are no legal provisions to this purpose. Delimitation of priority professional areas based on internal needs and representative developments in the European doctoral systems.
- Review of the structure of doctoral programmes (stages, components, contents) to adapt them to the specificity of professional and scientific training, of the reflexive and innovative practitioner.
- Development of an appropriate assessment system to measure and appraise the professional doctorate competences and performance.
- Study of the potential and relevance of the portfolio as assessment instrument.

- Development of part-time doctoral programmes which would provide equal opportunities for those who are employed and have the necessary professional background.
- Analysis of relationships between Master's degree and professional doctorate; is a professional master's degree necessary? Is the master's degree a prerequisite or part of the professional doctorate?
- Engage other partners in the design, implementation and assessment of professional doctorate programmes, as well as in their financial support: professional organisations, business environment, organisations, institutions etc.

Unfortunately, the new Education Law (1/2011) has not made any references to the Professional Doctorate in the context presented above, according to international trends and current practices. Although the new Doctoral Studies Code has kept among the doctoral programmes the professional doctorate in arts and physical education and sport, this has not been extended, in specific forms, for other fields of studies or domains. This is despite all positive inputs from the academics, during the public consultation time dedicated to analyse and discuss opportunity of this doctorate.

Acknowledgments. This study was developed under the project *Doctoral studies in Romania – Organisation of Doctoral Schools* -SOPHRD/5/1.5/S/1, during 1.02.2009-30.04.2009.

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