The Making of a Good PhD Program: The case of Doctorate School of Literature, Humanities and Social Sciences-Lebanese University

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Outline

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Research Objectives
- ▶ Literature Review
- ▶ Methodology
  - ▶ Design
  - ▶ Population & Sample
  - ▶ Measurement
  - ▶ Data collection
- ▶ Results
  - ▶ Program's requirements
  - ▶ Supervisor

- ▶ PhD courses
- ▶ Satisfaction with the program
- ▶ Analysis
- ▶ Limitations
- ▶ Recommendations
- ▶ Question

▶ 2   1/11/2013

Introduction

- ▸ PhD is the highest degree in academia
  - ▸ Pursuing a PhD is demanding
  - ▸ Only 1 % of the population acquires a PhD
- ▸ PhD programs are important
  - ▸ Provide the market with the needed specialized personnel
- ▸ Deciding on a program, important factors
  - ▸ Acceptance rates
  - ▸ Students' GPA
  - ▸ Research skills
  - ▸ Adequate faculty

▸ 3
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Introduction (cont'd)

- ▸ Program assessment and evaluation is essential for improving graduate programs
- ▸ Periodical assessment is needed to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of any PhD program
  - ▸ This leads to improvement
- ▸ Some program assessments revealed common problems:
  - ▸ Inadequate facilities
  - ▸ Lack of qualified faculty
  - ▸ Inability to prepare researchers

▸ 4
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Research Objectives

- Purpose of the study
    - Evaluate the status of the post graduate program at the DSLHSS at LU, as revealed by the candidates' attitudes
- The study will investigate the following questions:
    - What is the status of the PhD in Education at the DSLHSS from the perspective of the candidates? That is, what are the attitudes of the graduate students towards the DSLHSS?
    - Is there a difference in attitudes towards DSLHS between the genders?
    - Are the PhD requirements clearly stated at the DSLHSS? Do the candidates have knowledge of these criteria?
    - Does the DSLHSS possess the criteria of a good PhD program?

5   1/11/2013

Literature Review

- Admission criteria of major ivy league universities
    - Time required for earning the degree;
    - Percentage of women doctorate students in the program;
    - Average number of publications per candidate;
    - Cooperation between faculty and candidates in supporting research and scholarship for continued betterment of society;
    - Courses designed specifically for PhD students/researcher preparing them for their dissertation;
    - Comprehensive exam after completing the courses;
    - Submission of a PhD proposal;
    - Facilities and research methods provided for the candidates;
    - Good research skills;
    - Clear admission criteria
        - GPA: ≥3.5 in MA
        - Source of MA degree
        - Research and Publications

6   1/11/2013

Methodology

- ▶ Design
  - ▶ Non-experimental approach
  - ▶ Descriptive method of analyzing data
  - ▶ Tools: questionnaire & informal group interview
- ▶ Population and sample
  - ▶ 30 doctorate students
    - ▶ 27 % (8) males & 73% (22) females
    - ▶ 16 LU; 4 AUB; 1 LAU
    - ▶ 63% GPA≥3.5; 27%; GPA 3.0-3.5; 7% no answer
    - ▶ 53% first year; 40% second year; 7% more
    - ▶ 70% unpublished

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Methodology (cont'd)

- ▶ Measurement
  - ▶ Questionnaire:
  - ▶ Developed & piloted & adapted
  - ▶ 22 items
  - ▶ Likert scale" 1=disagree, 2=unsure/neutral, 3=agree
  - ▶ Casual interviews
- ▶ Data collection and analysis
  - ▶ Questionnaire distributed during doctorate days
  - ▶ 2 sets: English & Arabic
  - ▶ Collected data analyzed using SPSS
  - ▶ Notes taken during interviews

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Results

▸ Number of publications by university

Previous University	0	1-2	3-4	> 4	Total
AUB	3	0	1	0	4
LAU	0	0	0	1	1
LU	13	2	1	0	16
Other	6	1	2	0	9
Total	22	3	4	1	30

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Results

▸ Program's requirements

▸ Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Students' Knowledge of the Program's Requirements in %

	DA	US	A	N A
I knew what the requirements for graduation were	26.7	43.3	30.0	-
I knew what the credit requirements were	26.7	40.0	30.0	3.3
I knew what the evaluation processes were	30.0	40.0	26.7	3.3
I knew how much time it takes to earn the degree	10.0	33.3	53.3	3.3
I knew what the exit criteria were	36.7	46.7	13.3	3.3

▸ 10   1/11/2013

Results

▶ Supervisor
  ▶ Descriptive statistics of students' attitudes towards their supervisors in %

	DA	UN	A	NA
My supervisor is cooperative	13.3	3.3	80.0	3.3
My supervisor supports me in doing research	3.3	13.3	80.0	3.3
My supervisor supports me in continuing the betterment of society	6.7	16.7	73.3	3.3
My supervisor is well-published	3.3	10.7	83.3	3.3
My supervisor is updated with the latest research	3.3	16.7	76.7	3.3
My supervisor prepares me for my dissertation	10.0	33.3	50.0	6.7

▶ 11   1/11/2013

Results

▶ PhD Courses
  ▶ Core required courses equip students with research skills

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Disagree	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
Neutral	11	36.7	36.7	73.3
Agree	7	23.3	23.3	96.7
No answer	1	3.3	3.3	100

▶ 12   1/11/2013

Results

▸ Satisfaction with the program

	male	female	1st year	2nd year	> 2 years	AUB	LAU	LU	Other uni
Dissatisfied	2	8	5	4	1	2	0	7	1
neutral	4	7	5	6	0	1	0	6	4
satisfied	2	7	6	2	1	1	1	3	4

▸ 13   1/11/2013

Analysis

▸ Clear Criteria
  ▸ Literature reveals the importance of having admission & exit criteria clearly stated
    ▸ Issa and Abo Alma'ty (2011) & Al-Nadi (2009) concluded that it is important to have clear and transparent admission criteria
      □ The accepted students should have a minimum average of 80/100.
    ▸ The DSLHSS does follow this criterion
  ▸ Issa and Abo Alma'ty (2011) argue that for a graduate program to meet international standards, it has to clearly articulate its objectives
  ▸ DSLHSS does not have clear objectives

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Analysis

- Supervisor
  - The data reveals that the majority of students are satisfied with their supervisors.
    - This concurs with previous studies
  - Although some of these supervisors are famous in the academic life, they are easily available for the students (Guirriero, 2002; Heck Jr., 2011)
  - Do not prepare candidates for their dissertation
    - Good program should (Al-Deek, 2009)
    - Problems of some Arab universities (Haddad, 1999 as cited by Al-Sharif, 2011 & Al-Nadi, 2009; Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011

15   1/11/2013

Analysis

- Evaluation Criteria:
  - Most students have no knowledge of the evaluation criteria and process (Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011, Audi, 2009; Al-Deek, 2009; Al-Sharif, 2011)
- Courses:
  - Data concurs with previous research: courses do not prepare candidates for research(Haddad, 1999 as cited by Al-Sharif, 2011 & Al-Nadi, 2009; Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011)

16   1/11/2013

Analysis

▶ Advantages & Strengths

  ▶ The program produces needed graduates and "satisfies the demands of public accountability" (Biggs, 2001 as cited by Bornman, 2004).

  ▶ This fact renders the program as having achieved one of the criteria for quality assurance (Bornman, 2004)

  ▶ Another factor for quality assurance is the graduate program's placement record (Heck Jr., 2011) -DSLHSS satisfies

  ▶ Graduates enjoy career enhancement opportunities (Fox & Byers, 2011)

  ▶ Graduates are usually offered positions in the educational sector for their degree is classified as first level

▶ 17   1/11/2013

Limitations

▶ Several limitations:

  ▶ Most important: need more than one source of data for evaluation to avoid bias (Bromley, 2008; Walsh et al., 2010)

    ▶ Findings cannot be generalized for it is built on one source

  ▶ Due to time constraints, the study did not investigate:

    ▶ The faculty's attitude towards the program;

    ▶ The feedback from administrators/decision makers of the program;

    ▶ The background of the uncooperative supervisors;

    ▶ If the reasons for dissatisfaction are the same among the candidates who come from different universities;

    ▶ Why there are more female students: is it because male candidates are pursuing it elsewhere?

    ▶ The availability of research facilities for students

▶ 18   1/11/2013

Recommendation

▸ The program should:
- ▸ Apply the international quality assurance system (Agha et al, 2011)
- ▸ Revise the program's objectives to investigate (Metwali, 2012; Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011; Belboush, 2011)
- ▸ Revise the curriculum and offered courses (Agha et al., 2011; Issa& Abo Alma'ty 2011; Belboush, 2011; metwaly, 2012)
- ▸ Support and emphasize more research instead of evaluating students' performance through summative tests (Issa& Abo Alma'ty, 2011)
- ▸ Unifying requirements of graduating among the different majors in the program, (Audi, 2009)

▸ 19　　　　1/11/2013

Questions

▸ 20　　　　1/11/2013

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