Defining and Achieving Excellence in Postgraduate Training

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Outline

• Quality as a concept (input and exit criteria)
• Changing purposes of doctoral education and training
• Reconsideration of Doctoral models
• Innovation in a changing context
What Is Quality?

• Contextual and relative

• Definitions of quality shift as purpose changes

• International dimension

• Contested and different interests
Changing Significance of Doctoral Training

• Evolution of research as a defining feature of universities – doctorate as entry level criterion for academics

• Industrialization to the Knowledge Economy

• Increasing professionalization
21st Century

• Doctorate as the entry level to academia
• High positive correlation between % of doctorates and university research
• Doctorate as an driver of economic growth
African Universities

• Growing demand for access from an increasingly diverse student population
• Government expectations
• Internationalization of higher education
• Concentration of research networks
• No real increase in funding and non-financial resources
• Growing mobility of staff
Defining Features of a Doctorate

• Advanced conceptualization and application of method
• Originality or new knowledge
• Thesis and/or publication
Reconsidering the Defining Features

• Changing nature and demands of the academic job
• Changing nature of research
• Changing labour market demands
• African universities in the context of internationalization of higher education
Reconsideration of Doctoral models: Some Tensions

• Different curriculum pathways – formative and professional - yet there is an undifferentiated notion of a doctorate

• Multidisciplinarity and Problem focussed research agendas – most doctoral registrations within discipline-based arrangements

• Labour Market issues including the academic job
Disaggregating assumptions

• Is high level research training different from the creation of new knowledge
• Does the doctorate as currently conceptualized adequately prepare for the academic job -
  the thesis as the basis on which a doctoral degree is awarded
• should coursework and practical requirements count towards the conferment of the degree
• should research alone continue to be the sole defining feature of a doctoral degree or should other criteria be introduced
Opportunities

• Differentiation of universities within a system
• Regional Networks within a differentiated model
• Harmonization of qualifications
• Joint programmes and degrees
• Multiple models for doctoral training
• Openness to mobility
• Professional development for academics
• Policy and regulatory changes