

# EVALUATION REPORT

**University of Prishtina  
“Hasan Prishtina”  
Faculty of Education**

## **Accreditation of Doctoral Degree (PhD) Programme in Educational Sciences**

**July 2015**

### **Introduction**

This is an evaluation report produced in accordance with the requirements and guidelines of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), and the international accreditation standards for higher education established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European University Association (EUA), among others.

The expert team (Dr Duart and Dr Eisenschmidt) compiled this report using documents facilitated by the Faculty of Education (FEdu), especially the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and other documents that the expert team collected during the site visit from the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015, as well as information from the interviews and meetings with the Dean, Vice-Deans, academic staff and experts from the University of Ljubljana.

Along with the self-evaluation report (hereafter – SER) and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the University of Prishtina during and after the site-visit: the Concept Paper for Discussion – Developing Research Strategy for Teacher Education and Education Sciences, the Regulation for Doctoral Studies at the University of Prishtina, the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Prishtina and the University of Ljubljana, the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Prishtina and the University of Tirana.

The expert team greatly appreciated the support offered by the Dean and other members of the Dean’s office. We would like to acknowledge the excellent work done for the Self-Evaluation Report, as the information in it was of utmost use for the expert team.

The recommendations expressed in this report are addressed to the Dean and other members of the Dean’s office of the FEdu and they endeavour to suggest challenges and opportunities for the future development of the institution as well as for the role that the institution should play in the present and future education in Kosovo.

### **1. Academic Programme and Students’ Management**

During previous accreditations it has been mentioned that research and the potential of innovation have not been ostensible in the institutional Mission and it has been recommended that the FEdu should introduce innovation and research perspectives as a basic part of the future of Kosovan teacher training. Adopted *Faculty of Education Development Plan 2014-2018* states that the mission of the FEdu is: *to provide quality study programmes for initial*

*and continuous training of teachers and other specialists in the area of education, as well as to develop scientific-research activity, for the purpose of improvement of the Education System in Kosovo.*

According to the *Faculty of Education Development Plan 2014-2018* two strategic objectives are connected with the evaluated doctoral programme. One of the measures under the objective is *to develop and provide programmes in line with needs of the education system*: to develop new bachelor, master and **doctoral** programmes; also measures to improve scientific research activity in the Faculty have been highlighted in the development plan.

So far Kosovo has obtained their doctors of education outside of the country from various European and American universities. However, as it is mentioned in SER (p.11), there is a great need to launch PhD in Education programmes to strengthen research capacity and sustainability of educational research and guarantee new generations of academic staff members in Kosovan universities in the field of education. Therefore, the doctoral programme corresponds to the FEdu Mission Statement and helps to achieve the aims of the faculty.

The doctoral programme, *PhD in Educational Sciences*, is compiled according to *The Regulation for Doctoral Studies at the University of Prishtina*. This document regulates the responsibilities, organization and implementation of doctoral studies in forms and duration;, criteria for registration,; ways of realization of studies, teaching and research; procedure of submission, evaluation and defence of doctoral theses; rights and obligations both of the doctoral students' and mentors; quality assurance methods, and other matters related to the doctoral studies.

The general goal of *PhD in Educational Sciences* is to educate experts, teacher educators and researchers who are able to support the development of the educational system and schooling as well as foster innovative ideas in the field of educational sciences. The full time studies last for 3 years (total 180 ECTS): 6 semesters, each up to 30 ECTS. The programme consists of obligatory modules, study orientation modules, electives and dissertation; altogether 60 ECTS are taught and assessed as subjects. The study orientation module consists mostly of courses of didactics.

The expert team considers the above-mentioned PhD programme be more like a professional doctorate programme implemented widely in the UK since the early 1990's. Most of these professional doctorate programmes include large taught or directed study components, which are formally assessed; these components frequently include both teaching of research methods and also components related to broadening or deepening the students' understanding of the disciplines in which they are researching or providing them with appropriate transferable skills (cf. <http://www.findaprofessionaldoctorate.com/advice/>). The aim of these professional doctorate programmes is to produce a qualification which, whilst being equivalent in status and challenge to a PhD, is more appropriate for those pursuing professional rather than academic careers. This is not a weakness of the programme and may be even more proper for the Kosovan educational context where the competence of educational research is still limited and the PhD programme is foreseen to establish a new wave of researchers.

In general, the above-mentioned PhD degree programme corresponds to international standards, although in future developments the expert team recommends to follow the EUA recommendations and other international guidelines (cf. Salzburg Conclusions: *Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society* in planning future developments of the

programme

([http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salzburg\\_Conclusions.1108990538850.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salzburg_Conclusions.1108990538850.pdf))

The FEdu states that the programme has been developed in close consultation with the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Education during the TEMPUS project, also the University of Tirana has been involved; both universities participate in the programme implementation and the memorandums of understanding have been signed between the universities. During the site visit Dr Krek and Dr Vogrinc from the University of Ljubljana confirmed their readiness to contribute to the implementation of the programme, whereas there is good cooperation between universities on master programmes and some Kosovan citizens are also doctoral students at the University of Ljubljana. Dr Krek also mentioned that they have not compiled a joint PhD programme due to different legislation in the corresponding countries that would lead to very time consuming activities. However, the expert team considers this cooperation very fruitful as there is evidently atmosphere of trust between the partners, although the main concern is how this cooperation is manageable in the frame of limited resources after the end of TEMPUS project.

Strong leadership and good management are essential for effective implementation of the cooperative programme between two universities from abroad. During the site visit the expert team got the expression that Dr Krek and dr Vogrinc from the University of Ljubljana have a strong leading role in this PhD programme, which creates good basis for future cooperation; however, there is a need to develop leadership in the FEdu in the University of Prishtina. During the meeting with the academic staff expert team also noticed that there is a younger generation of researchers who have recently defended their PhD degrees abroad and who are enthusiastic, committed and feel their responsibility to develop PhD studies in FEdu (e.g. Dr Berisha, Dr Saqipi).

The admission criteria, clearly described and based on *The Regulation for doctoral studies at the University of Prishtina*, meet international standards, an example of which is a requirement for the English language proficiency on B2 level. During the site visit the academic staff members mentioned that the programme would be run in English, which is obvious because of cooperation with the University of Ljubljana. The expert team considers the PhD candidates' English language skills especially important and suggests strongly to pursue this demand. It is mentioned in the university regulation that a dissertation should be written in Albanian, although in certain cases it may be written in another language, but necessarily a translation should be presented in Albanian (Art 14 Dissertation).

The support process of the doctoral studies is well planned and clearly described. Conditions for progressing through the programme give a good frame for students to make their individual plans for studies. The students have to work with their research project throughout the studies and should link all individual tasks given in different courses with personal research projects. The expert team considered *Doctoral seminars* where students can meet and cooperate a very valuable part of the support system for PhD students. The tutoring quality of these seminars is crucial and competent researchers of the field to give most positive impact on doctoral students' discussions should undertake the task.

SER states (p 16) that for completing the programme candidates should complete the studies and the research work, also one scientific paper/article should be published in a relevant peer reviewed journal. *The Regulation for doctoral studies at the University of Prishtina* (Art 8

stages of doctoral studies) states: in the three remaining semesters, the student accumulates 90 ECTS through:

- At least one scientific publication of the parts of results of a doctoral in an international peer reviewed indexed journal (see assigned magazines from academic units) in the relevant field (20 ECTS);
- At least two presentations at scientific meetings (conferences, congresses, etc.), of which one with an international character (10 ECTS);
- Completion and public defence of the doctoral thesis (60 ECTS).
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The expert team welcomes these specified details, for example doctoral students' responsibilities to participate in international conferences and publishing in international indexed journals.

During the site visit peer-teaching and peer-mentoring were also discussed. The academic staff members mentioned that this was a learning process where mentoring skills and culture should be developed and in peer-teaching innovative teaching approaches would be implemented and adopted. The SER states that mentoring agreement is used to guarantee an effective mentoring process, inter alia *the Regulation for doctoral studies at the University of Prishtina* (art 9 Mentoring) states: *a mentor can take mentoring of candidate, and in special cases, on proposal of the Doctoral Council of the Academic unit and with the approval of the academic unit, up to two candidates admitted in an academic year, but no more than four candidates simultaneously.* According to the regulation offered by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency *Criteria and procedures for the accreditation of programmes leading to the award of Doctoral degrees* institutional regulation should also specify the arrangement for ensuring that the supervisor's workload is adjusted to allow enough time for supervision of doctoral candidates.

However, the expert team did not find any evidence of supervisors' workload being regulated. Furthermore, as there are 15 study places planned to be opened annually, it could be problematic to find enough mentors in the field of educational studies who would meet the criteria mentioned in the university regulation.

The university regulation of doctoral studies also states (art 9 Mentoring): *before taking mentor duty for the first time, and then when the university deems necessary, each mentor must pass a mentoring workshop, which is organized by the University.* The expert team considered the mentoring competences highly important.

In order to improve the PhD programme and doctoral students' study process, the expert team makes the following recommendations:

- formulating research themes based on the research capacity of the faculty and informing prospective applicants of the doctoral studies of these themes. To help integrate doctoral students into research group and avoid their isolation and loneliness, candidates should apply for the announced themes.
- appointing responsible academic staff members (like scientific board of the programme) who take care of the management of the programme and allocating adequate resources for that;

- using e-learning possibilities, create virtual learning environments and good possibilities for videoconferencing to support cooperation between three universities involved in the programme (Prishtina, Ljubljana and Tirana);
- including the course “University pedagogy” into elective course because one aim of the programme is to develop teacher educators as future university academic staff members;
- analysing possible mentors’ workload and based on that plan the number of study places (it seems that 15 places per year is not realistic to be supervised with present academic staff).

## **2. Staff**

A PhD programme in Educational Sciences is an important challenge for the FEdu and a great step ahead for both the Kosovan educational system and teachers. To start implementing a programme with good quality and evade the lack of experience about this programme at FEdu, the expert team considers the agreement established with the University of Ljubljana really appropriate, as this university has a similar programme, accredited in its country and they can offer their experience and knowledge while developing a PhD programme in Prishtina. For similar reasons, the expert team considers the participation of the University of Tirana in this Doctoral Degree very important. However, we must take into account that at the end this will be a Doctoral Degree of the Faculty of Education at University of Prishtina, not a joint degree with other foreign universities. The FEdu has enough academic staff members with PhD in the field of Educational Sciences or in some complementary disciplinary fields to open a programme of the Doctoral Degree on Educational Sciences. This will be the first PhD programme of FEdu, the academic staff has no previous experience working with Doctoral students, although FEdu is offering Master Programmes in this field and has some experience supervising small scale research work.

During the site visit the Dean of the faculty also acknowledged that to guarantee the sufficient academic staff for the programme is one of the main challenges, therefore it is very important to increase the number of competent academic staff in FEdu in the University of Prishtina during coming years.

FEdu has the requirements related to the staff members to start the accreditation process for this programme. The academic staff has the required qualification and a sufficient number of papers published in international journals, as the expert team noticed in the list of CVs accessed. It is also important to note that the FEdu has some young staff members with PhD involved in this programme. The new generation of staff members has good command of the English language and they already have experience with working in international research teams, this creates good basis for mutual international collaboration established for this doctoral programme.

In order to improve the research ability and the didactic level of the academic staff involved in this doctoral degree on Educational Sciences, the expert team makes the following recommendations:

- organizing in partnership with the University of Ljubljana, or other experienced universities in doctoral degrees in educational field, compulsory training courses for mentors (PhD supervisors) to develop their mentoring skills. The role of mentor

during the PhD process is very important for PhD students to guarantee a successful research process and good quality of the final dissertations. We also recommend taking into account the possibility to enable the FEdu mentors have experienced academic co-mentoring partners from other universities;

- organizing an internal annual research conference for the doctoral degree participants (both mentors and PhD students) where they can share experiences, methodological approaches, papers presented in international conferences or journals, research results, etc., in order to learn from each other and improve the mentors' ability and didactical skills.

### **3. Research and International Co-operation**

The master degree offered by the FEdu at the University of Prishtina has given them a little experience on research focused on the disciplinary didactics and leadership and innovation.. The expert team analysed this experience both reading some previous evaluation reports of master degree programmes and also site visiting.

Research is a basic pillar to build a good quality of any doctoral degree programme. We observed based on published papers in the international journals that there is evidence of academic staff's research interest. However, the research founded is more based on disciplinary fields such as mathematics, nature sciences, linguistics, etc., more than in didactics of this particular fields or educational sciences in general. Consequently, it seems that their research is based on the disciplines rather than didactics. To have enough staff members able to supervise the research in the field of education is a challenge for the FEdu and its' Doctoral Degree on Educational Sciences.

The FEdu has no extensive experience in organizing and maintaining research groups. This could also be a problem for the doctoral degree programme because PhD candidates need research groups for sharing and debating their research ideas and proposals.

The expert team have noticed that one of the most important the mission of the Faculty of Education at University of Prishtina is to improve the educational system in Kosovo through the teacher training process. To achieve this important goal to have the support of strong research groups at FEdu focused on teaching and learning process (didactics) more than disciplinary fields could be of great help. This kind of research groups and research approach could be more sensitive to schools and could work and analyse authentic research problems in the teaching and learning process. These research groups can also stimulate productive collaboration and co-operation with primary and secondary schools in Kosovo. This should be an opportunity to explore and analyse the authentic research problems that the national educational system has today.

International co-operation is a great opportunity to improve research groups and to have more visibility and impact in a scientific community. The co-operation with the University of Ljubljana and other international universities should also be an opportunity to organize interdisciplinary research groups focused on applied research on the teaching and learning process.

According to the regulation by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, *Criteria and procedures for the accreditation of programmes leading to the award of Doctoral degrees*, an institution must provide a research plan for the doctoral studies programme which expands at least one year beyond the planned duration of doctoral studies in the area. This plan must be supported by a financial plan. During the site visit the expert team got the research plan draft that draws out 3 research priorities: developing teacher education and teachers; teacher education in schools; education and society. According to the aim of the doctoral programme and the needs of the Kosovan society there is missing research on pedagogical psychology - students' leaning and child development (e.g. how to develop the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of the students, learning motivation etc).

In order to improve the multidisciplinary research ability in teaching and learning process and to increase the international co-operation for this doctoral degree on Educational Sciences, the expert team makes the following recommendations:

- elaborating the concept paper for discussions to work out a research plan on the field of education to define research priorities of the faculty which will be also research topics for research groups and doctoral students;
- creating the basis for the organization of different research groups focused on the teaching and learning process (didactics) in general and the teaching and learning process in particularly fields (Maths, Biology, Linguistics, etc.) specifically. Each team should have a recognized and experienced research leader and involve both academic staff of the faculty and doctoral students. It is also important to have international researchers in the teams to apply for international project grants with other universities. We recommend having these groups organized before starting the first semester of the doctoral programme on Educational Sciences;
- launching an Institute for Research and Development in Education, which will promote the FEdu research strategy and be a platform for international relations and international co-operation in research. This institute will focus on research based on the analyses of the teaching and learning process (didactics) and organizational education and leadership; it should also be a platform for the relations and co-operation with Kosovan primary and secondary schools where PhD candidates and school teachers can share proposals, develop projects and analyse items related to the educational process and its improvement.

#### **4. Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment**

The expert team realized that the financial policies and budget remains under the competences of the Rectorate of the University of Prishtina, not under the Dean of the Faculty of Education. We recognize the efforts for the improvement of infrastructures and space that the FEdu are currently implementing.

Concerning the space and equipment, FEdu seems to be well served, with an adequate building and infrastructure. However, while starting with a PhD programme more finances need to be allocated on the PhD students' and mentors' support and their access to resources and opportunities to develop good quality research projects rather than buildings or facilities.

At the moment there is no literature for the doctoral programme in the library of FEdu. Hence, it is of paramount importance to order the literature mentioned in course descriptions (at least 5 copies per item).

In order to facilitate the development of the students' and mentors' research activities in relation with the doctoral degree programme on Educational Sciences, and knowing that the fees for this programme will never be enough to make this programme sustainable, the expert team makes the following recommendations:

- exploring the national and international opportunities for research grants and research co-operation grants and applying for them whenever possible. In order to be more efficient achieving these grants we also recommend some staff members focusing only to this goal. Being effective in achieving grants usually needs managerial skills to implement the forms and requirements from the international agencies and the faculty staff usually does not have these skills. That is why it is crucial that the managerial staff should collaborate with the faculty staff in order to organize and prepare the grant proposals.
- creating a grant system for doctoral students to offer them possibilities for short-term mobility including participation in international conferences;
- investing enough economic resources to facilitate the PhD candidates, mentors and faculty staff involved in this programme necessary resources to implement the research projects proposed. In this sense our proposal is to facilitate the access to the students and professors, from the Library or the Virtual Library, to the research resources (statistical software, qualitative research software, etc.) and to the research results (international journals, databases, etc.). We recommend using the Open Educational and Research Resources in the Internet under the Open Access platforms or the Creative Commons licence as well as Open Source research software that is usually free of charge. There are sufficient resources particularly in the field of Educational Sciences.

## **5. Quality Management**

The previous evaluation reports recommended taking specific steps towards building an internal quality assurance systems and implementing feedback systems. Since 2014 the *Faculty of Education Development Plan 2014-2018* has accomplished the strategic view of the FEdu with concrete actions. The student questionnaire is used at the end of the semester to evaluate every single course. Several regulations have been worked out for quality assurance procedures (e.g General Study Regulation etc) as well. Previous evaluation reports are analysed and certain measures have been taken.

*The Regulation for doctoral studies at the University of Prishtina* (art 21 Ways of ensuring quality of doctoral studies) also defines the measures for maintaining quality of the studies. For example: *The Doctoral Studies Council based on mentors' and PhD candidates' annual reports makes self assessment for each separately, and notifies the Faculty Council, while the latter notifies the Central Doctoral Studies Council and the University Senate.*



In order to develop a culture of quality, the expert team makes the following recommendations:

- forming the Doctoral Studies Service mentioned in the university regulation to maintain doctoral programmes and doctoral students' study process;
- implementing a feedback system for the academic staff and doctoral students which includes questions about their workload, research environment including access to databases/literature, and possibilities for international cooperation and mobility;
- establishing an action plan for the implementation of the doctoral programme providing goals and expected outcomes and monitoring the evaluation of this plan every academic year;
- implementing mentors' self- and peer-evaluation system to develop the mentoring culture.

## **Conclusion**

Considering that FEdu in the University of Prishtina has done remarkable work preparing the doctoral programme in educational sciences the expert team welcomes this initiative and recommends opening the programme. However, we also recommend compiling the Research Plan for the field of educational sciences with a concrete action plan that should be co-ordinated with the Kosovo Accreditation Agency prior to opening the doctoral studies. We recommend accrediting the programme for three years.

14 July 2015  
Dr Dr Duart  
Dr Eisenschmidt

## **Final comments**

On July 21th the expert team receive the comments from Faculty of Education at University of Prishtina related to the first draft evaluation report about the accreditation of Doctoral Degree (PhD) Programme in Educational Sciences. We have read carefully the comments and we really appreciate Faculty of Education understanding and their proposals.

We, as expert team, accept this comments and also accept the new criteria added proposal related to writing the dissertation and completing required coursework for the Doctoral programme.

With the acceptance of this comments and proposals we, as expert team, assume that the evaluation report for the doctoral programme in Educational Sciences at Faculty of Education at University of Prishtina is finished and ready for an accreditation decision.