




Success, Failure, and Innovative Ideas for University

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Objectives of the presentation

- To report findings from a three-year study of doctoral students from six universities, an auto-ethnographic exercise, and policy analysis of programs.
- To discuss cross-cultural similarities and differences.
- To offer innovative program ideas, including international cooperation, fuller use of web-based initiatives, and more humanistic advisement.

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Contributions to Higher Education Pedagogy

- Investigations of the meaning structures of doctoral students are central.
- Awareness of contextual issues in universities is also central.
- But understanding the interplay between the two is essential.
- In this study, deeper awareness of one stimulated deeper awareness of the other.

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Guiding Questions

- What are the inhibitors and the enablers for doctoral completion?
- Can doctoral studies be strengthened in terms of quality of research effort and also graduate completion rate?
- What are the value of programmatic and curricular initiatives such as online resource building, tracked and well-placed research courses, collaborative efforts, aggressive writing and publication programs?
- What are some of the ways in which funding might be improved?
- What are the imperatives for international, cross-cultural, exchange?

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4

The Terrifying Context of Doctoral Studies

- Recognition of various models.
- Prestigious places and goals.
- Self-certifying elitism.
- Fifty percent completion rate.
- Questionable quality of dissertations.
- Uneasy power relationships- worthiness at issue.
- Health, family, discrimination of age, race, and gender issues.
- Funding issues.
- Cultural similarities and differences.

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Auto-ethnographical Revelations

- Evolutions of thinking.
- Competing loyalties.
- Humanistic vs. structuralist stance taking.
- Changing missions.
- Triangulation of investigation.
- Finnish and Estonian experiences.
- Engagement with online classes and resources.

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Contextual considerations of faculty members

- Individualistic reward structures.
- Emphasis on publishing, not teaching.
- Old habits of interaction with students seem to perpetuate.
- Social distance is the norm and the default.
- Curricula are sometimes coordinated but often are not.
- System difficult to change.

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Learning research competence

- Transitions from student to scholar.
- Self-appraisal fails us.
- Acceptance of mission of research.
- Finding one's voice.
- Breaking away from linear models of instruction.
- Finding congruence of purpose and coordination of service.
- Understanding contextual constraints of faculty.

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Understanding objects of commitment of doctoral students

- Career
- Mission
- Publishing
- Personal, family goals
- Economic

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Deeper understanding of doctoral student mission

- Whose values do you serve?
- Over what issues would you quit your job?
- What brand of service do you believe in?
- How do your ethics shape your research?
- What literature do you consider garbage and what literature is inspiring?
- How does your research serve your purposes?
- As an intellectual leader, who do you want to lead?

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Groupings, Nodes, Themes

- Humanists
- Structural-functionalists
- Activists
- Radicals

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Mission guided doc students

- Dissertation is a means, not an end.
- Personal view is taken into account.
- More self-reliance, less obedience.
- Recognition of cumulative purposes.
- Evolution of ideals.

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Inhibitors to success

- Time
- Funding
- Department culture
- Inadequate advisement
- Poor skill in writing and research

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High Impact Improvement #1

- Cohort programming. Form cohort teams and trust in the collaborative process. Research indicates that students learn research through collaboration. Structures for cohort learning can boost effectiveness of courses, especially when groups solve problems, travel, and publish together. Give them a group challenge and determine how they manage it. The analysis of the effort will be as important as the task itself.

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High Impact Improvement #2

- Online resources. Learn the limits of effective use of online resources and instruction.
- Many online resources are available for researchers, maybe thousands. Some, of them are important, even critical, for writing improvement, literature acquisition and building stronger global professions. The large European and North American research and professional societies provide online resources, communication and action. There are podcasts, special interest groups and wikis for learning research, English, writing, locating resources quickly, and for asking and receiving advice. The computer is not to replace face-to-face contact. But it permits a sense of global citizenship and a flow of important new ideas.

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15

High Impact Improvement #3

- Cross-cultural collaboration. Build support structures for student participation in international conferences, publishing and exchange. Building professional involvement, along side excellent course work, benefits us all. The involvement permits the expansion of social and professional networks that are so necessary for support. It takes a lot of money and time, but the effort is worth it. Short and long-term study programs, professorial exchanges, and building international agreements all serve as means toward the larger goal of global collaboration. As well, such initiatives are fundable through grant projects, especially when they are based on scholarly missions.

High Impact Improvement #4

- Research and writing laboratories, apart from our research groups. Create a laboratory for effective scientific English writing and publication and research.
- People learn new languages through practice. Writing scientific articles in English requires a great deal of reading of journals from elsewhere and tutoring for language and writing skill attainment. The creation of a student-friendly writing center may be very helpful in promoting improved use of the English language and promote success in publishing. Such a center can serve both faculty and students as we move forward toward world recognition of a person's or an institution's research efforts.

High Impact Improvement #5

- Partnerships with other universities
Every country benefits from international cooperation. Partnerships that stress mutual, two-way projects of scholarship are important throughout Asia, Europe and North America. Some partnerships are specific to a field of study, while others may benefit an entire faculty. There are important considerations though. First, the bridge goes both ways. Second, joint degrees are possible. Third, the funding may require third party or entrepreneurial means and ways.
