

PROBLEMS OF THE DOCTORIAL EDUCATION IN BAS IN THE FIELD OF THE HUMANITIES

Corr. member Anguel BALTOV

E-mail: baltov@ eagle.cu.bas.bg

1. Introduction

The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences is the biggest national scientific centre which unites 52 scientific institutes and other self-governing research units. In the field of Humanities – 11 units History, Philosophy, Psychology, Low language etc. The Law of Higher Education gives BAS the right to educate on its own students in the third graduate stage – “Ph.D.” and together with other universities in the second graduate stage “Master”.

In 2007 BAS had 708 PhD students in which about 10% are the field of the Humanity Sciences.

The complex character of BAS makes it a particularly favourable place for preparation of Ph.D. Students in Humanities. The following circumstances contribute to this:

- a great number of scientists with long years of pedagogical experience and many of them with a worldwide fame;
- active scientific life (seminars, conferences, etc.);
- excellent opportunities for doctoral thesis) with inter-disciplinary character;
- highly developed international activity, participation in the FP of EC projects, NATO projects, etc.

2. Organization of the Ph.D. education at BAS

The Ph.D. education at BAS is established on dual basis: combining the narrow specialization of the Ph.D. students in the Permanent Research Units of BAS (institutes, central laboratories and centers) and the broad academic education provided by the Ph.D. School of the Career Development Centre of BAS.

The Career Development Centre (CDC) is a structure of BAS which is responsible for organizing the training of highly qualified scientists according to the Law of BAS as one of the priorities of BAS. To help the Management of the CDC a Council is established with representatives of all scientific fields at BAS as well as with representatives of the Council of the Ph.D. students according to the Law of Higher Education. The CDC is directly subordinated to the governing bodies of BAS.

The governing bodies, the Executive Council of BAS and the CDC regularly discuss and take decisions about the issues concerning the Ph.D. training at BAS. The overall activity covering this training is subordinated to the adopted by the Executive Council of BAS “Regulations for the activity of the CDC at BAS”. The Regulations are in accordance with all the national legal documents.

3. Entrance procedure for Ph.D. students at BAS

BAS places its request with the Ministry of Education and Science about the number of the full-time and extra-mural Ph.D. students according to the Scientific Councils of the Permanent Research Units. These offers are formed as project for conducting of doctorates where the narrow scientific field is specified. These projects are in accordance with the scientific policy of the Permanent Research Unit, its strategy for scientific priorities. The suggested projects are discussed by the Council of the CDC and are approved by the Governing body of BAS in order to be submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science. In this manner the management of BAS fulfills its scientific policy in accordance with the Scientific strategy of BAS approved by the General Assembly of BAS. In this way BAS implements one of the requirements of the EC for “**integration of the Ph.D. programmes in the Institutional Strategies and Policy**”.

After the Ministry of Education and Science approves the number of the Ph.D. students and their distribution by the Council of the CDC among the Permanent Research Units, the Scientific Councils of the Permanent Research Units discuss and approve particular theses for Ph.D. programmes

according to the approved projects. The choice of a particular thesis is defined by the suggestion of the student's scientific supervisor, approved by the Scientific Council after his discussion with the Ph.D. student in harmony with his wishes and abilities. In this way there is free choice in accordance with the EC's requirement for **“avoiding the superregulation of the Ph.D. programmes”**.

An important form is the joint doctorate at BAS and another higher education establishment. This form is also actively supported by the Ph.D. School of the CDC. The policy of BAS has always been for beneficial co-operation with other higher schools resulting in many contracts for mutual activity including joint training of Ph.D. student.

The CDC also encourages realization of joint training of Ph.D. students at BAS and scientific centres abroad. The good contacts of BAS as well as the programmes of bilateral scientific cooperation and projects of the EC have been employed.

Therefore the recommendation of the EC for **“reinforcing the international character of the Ph.D. programmes”** in Europe is implemented.

BAS applies one of the other requirements of the EC — for **“expedient profile of the Ph.D. programmes within the sciences”** in accordance with the priorities and traditions of the country and those of the EC.

4. The process of the Ph.D. training at BAS

According to the legal documents a **“structures doctorate”** is realized at BAS in the sense of the EC's classification, i.e. these are doctorate which lead to obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Ph.D.” according to the Law of Higher Education. These doctorates combine educational, scientific and research programmes. The following European principle is obeyed: **“Acquiring of knowledge through original scientific research”**.

The educational programme of the Ph.D. students at BAS according to the dual principle of organization of the doctorates at BAS is performed: firstly —centrally — by the CDC which provides general academic training in language and computer skills as well as additional more general or inter-discipline courses; secondly — in the Permanent Research Units — special scientific training relative to the Ph.D. programme in progress. Each Ph.D. student has to attend five educational programmes which is the most common requirement at the higher education establishments too. The diversified character of the Ph.D. students at BAS in the 8 scientific fields requires special organization of their language training in five levels and their computer training in three levels. The additional two courses are optional as there is a long list of courses approved by the Council of the CDC. The choice is made after the suggestion of the scientific supervisor and the acceptance of the Ph.D. student himself. These courses usually have more general character concerning the relative scientific field or they present more inter-discipline topics. The inter-discipline character of the Ph.D. programmes is a priority for BAS. The structure of BAS favours this. Therefore one of the most important requirements of the EC is fulfilled — **“the inter-discipline character of the Ph.D. programmes”** as a guarantee for high quality.

We introduce the **Credit system for evaluating the work of the Ph.D. students** in accordance with European experience. The availability of such a system which is compatible with the European system, is a prerequisite for **mobility** of the Ph.D. students who stay and work for a certain period of time during their postgraduate study in an European centre.

The requirement of the EC for quality of the Ph.D. programmes through providing expedient **“ways of distribution of responsibilities and duties among the Ph.D. students, the scientific supervisor and the institution”** is fulfilled at BAS signing obligatory contracts between the full-time Ph.D. student, his scientific supervisor and the director of the Permanent Research Unit. This contract defines all the rights and obligations of the three parties.

BAS uses as a **System for evaluation of the quality for performance of the Ph.D. programmes the Criteria of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency**.

The **mobility** of the Ph.D. students is facilitated financially by the Permanent Research Units and the Central governing body of BAS according to a certain system. Annually between 50 and 100 young scientists and Ph.D. students are sponsored to take part in scientific events abroad and about 20 Ph.D. students on the average stay abroad at foreign scientific centers for different periods of

time (from several months to one year) supervisor. According to the system of joint doctorate with a Bulgarian and a foreign supervisor these visits are determined by preliminary signed agreements. In this way another of the requirements of the EC is fulfilled — **mobility of the Ph.D. students.**

Different forms are applied for ensuring the important requirement of the EC for **high quality in performing the Ph.D. programmes.** Annually BAS organizes between 80 and 100 national and international conferences for young scientists where the Ph.D. students take part actively **20%** are in the field of the Human sciences. CDC organizes monthly discussions on important issues of methodological character. Every two years, in order to stimulate high quality, the CDC together with the Expert Council of the Young Scientists at the General Assembly organize a competition for young scientists and Ph.D. students. There are prizes in two categories: according to the participants`age and according to the scientific field. 64 people have won these prizes in four competitions.

Another form of feedback about the level of training, the fulfillment of the scientific and administrative supervisors`duties, the social problems is the regular filling in of **questionnaires.** Due to the questionnaires the levels of language and computer training have been improved significantly.

BAS pays particular attention to the **individual self-education** of the Ph.D. students. The individual self education is clearly defined by the Regulations of the CDC at BAS and the numerous decisions of the Governing body of BAS and the Council of the CDC.

5. Successful Ph.D. graduation and realization of the Ph.D. students

Defending the Ph.D. theses in due time is a national issue in Bulgaria. The Regulations of BAS contain certain conditions to stimulate the defense of the doctorates on time.

There are no big problems for the realization of the Ph.D. students after their successful graduation. The investigation on 500 Ph.D. students, who graduated in the last 5 years, shows that 40% of them stay to work at the Permanent Research Units at BAS. This is a very useful tendency because BAS needs these young scientists.

Around 15% of the Ph.D. students go abroad to work or to do postgraduate specializations. This is a normal percentage. This process is in according with the EC exigence about the **mobility of the scientists in the European scientific area.**

To facilitate the realization of the Ph.D. students the Ph.D. School at the CDC has established a **Career Centre** where the necessary information is stored.

CONCLUSIONS

- (1) The doctoral education in the field of the Human sciences has important place in BAS.
- (2) The problems with the delay of the term for finishing doctoral theses in due time are in the focus of the CDC, which use different mechanisms to ameliorate this situation.
- (3) The doctoral thesis in the field of the Humanities are in accord with European and National scientific strategy and, also, with our efforts to keep our National identity.