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Review of the doctoral dissertation

mgra Mariano Martina Pereza

**pt.” One Path, Many Activities, One Pattern: Rhetorical Internationalization
Towards Understanding the Internationalization of Argentine Public
Universities”**

**written under the supervision of dr hab. Radosław Rybkowski, professor at the
Jagiellonian University**

Preliminary remarks

The review was prepared in connection with the appointment by the Scientific Council of the Discipline of Cultural and Religious Science of the Jagiellonian University to act as a reviewer in the proceedings for granting the degree of doctor in the discipline of cultural sciences and religion to Mr. Mariano Martin Perez.

I assume in my opinion that Mr. Mariano Martin Perez meets the requirements of the Act on Academic Degrees and Academic Title. The main purpose of the opinion is primarily to confirm that the requirements set out in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 19 January 2018 on the detailed procedure and conditions for carrying out activities in the doctoral dissertation, in the habilitation proceedings and in the procedure for granting the title of professor have been met, i.e. to present in detail a justified assessment of whether the doctoral dissertation meets the conditions set out in Article 13(1) of the Act.

The basis of my assessment was the reading of the doctoral thesis, literature sources used by the author and knowledge and experience resulting from my, not only scientific, involvement in the field of scientific policy and the challenges it faces.

General characteristics of the dissertation, structure and formal remarks

The structure of the dissertation is logically correct. It is also confirmed by the table of contents. The reviewed doctoral dissertation consists of an introduction preceded by a presentation of the structure of the dissertation, five chapters - the last of which is also a summary of the entire work, a list of figures and tables, a bibliography and an extensive annex. The whole has 232 pages, not counting the acknowledgments posted at the beginning, of which 147 pages are the correct text. Selected contents of the dissertation are presented in 12 drawings and in 18 tables. 70 pages of the paper is occupied by an annex consisting of 3 tables: (1) a list of international cooperation offices operating in Argentine public universities with a description of their type and description of their mission (44 pages), (2) a list of Argentine stakeholders - institutions of the scientific environment, their mission (10 pages), (3) a list of educational institutions coordinating cooperation with European partners (10 pages) and additionally, as Annex Four - a brief description of the performance analysis sheet of the internationalization process. The most extensive is the first chapter presenting theoretically the assumptions of the work, a review of the definition and the methodology of research. The discussion in this part of the work is based on well-chosen literature sources. The next two chapters, with a similar volume of about 25 pages, focus on the presentation of the Erasmus Mundus Programme and eight Argentine projects under it, and describe and analyse the changes in the internationalisation scale over a ten-year period (2005-2015) due to the participation of Argentine public universities in the EU programme. The fourth chapter, crucial for the entire dissertation, is 28 pages long (including charts and graphics) and concerns a conceptual model that allows comparison and explanation of the reasons for the lack of progress in the internationalization of Argentine universities in the years 2007 - 2014. The fifth chapter of the work (Rhetorical STAGE: Chapter V: CONCLUSIONS and Recommendations/ Summary/ Future Discussion), which should give answers to

the research questions asked, and suggesting its title also recommendations for the future and indicate the directions of further discussion, is less than 7 pages long.

The works are distinguished, but unfortunately negatively, by careless formatting (line spacing, paragraphs, page numbering) and graphic design. The actual text occupies, as already indicated, 147 pages of manuscript, but it should be pointed out that the author uses a non-standard spacing between the lines - at least double, plus additional spacing between some paragraphs, unreasonable. It can be suspected that the work of formatting in a standard way would be at least 1/4 less pages.

The work is written in English and it should be stated that the author speaks English correctly, although he has not avoided stumbles - proof reading would be recommended. It is problematic that a large part of the content in the annex is in Spanish, without translation into the language of the work. This, in view of the fact that tables constitute at least 1/4 of the work, i.e. they are an important part of it, is a serious oversight.

88 items have been listed in the list of literature, but it should be noted that the author does not distinguish books or articles by the same author separately, so about 30 titles should be added. The bibliography does not take into account the division into types of publications: monographs, scientific articles, publications from Internet sources, etc. Note that the format of the footnotes used affects the bibliography format.

Choice of dissertation topic, objectives and substantive assessment

The subject of the doctoral dissertation should be considered multidisciplinary, located mainly in the disciplines of cultural and religious sciences as well as political and administrative sciences, but also management and quality sciences.

The author's goal, as he points out, is "to prove that the actual results of the internationalization of higher education are based largely on culture, and not on the organizational framework itself." How universities are organized and managed is always deeply rooted in the culture of a given country, region.

The author also points out that "one of the main objectives of this dissertation is to appreciate the role of informal norms shaping the daily activities of a given university, also influencing its strategic decisions regarding international cooperation

and the willingness to devote the necessary resources that make internationalization work." The doctoral student states that "many of the university's decisions regarding international cooperation are made mainly because of the cultural environment that influences people's behavior, while regulations and policies (both national and institutional) play a much smaller role." It can be pointed out here that similar conclusions can be found in the considerations of m.in. M. Kwiek, who, while studying Polish and foreign universities in 2015 (11 EU countries), showed a negative correlation between attachment to tradition at Polish universities and internationalization in the area of research¹.

In the work, it is difficult to find clearly indicated research hypotheses, which is a significant shortcoming of the research procedure and awaits the public defense of their clarification. The author on page 37 of his dissertation indicates 4 hypotheses, but these are research questions (the author uses both concepts interchangeably). The doctoral student should know that the research hypothesis has the form of an answer to the question. It can be assumed that the main hypothesis of the work is based on the assumption of the cultural rooting of the models of internationalization of higher education institutions, which determines the effectiveness of the internationalization process.

Research questions (according to the author of the hypothesis):

- (1) Is it possible to copy a strategy from one university and act in another in the same way?
- (2) Is it possible that at the national level, despite the common elements and variables in the strategy, we can observe the repetition of one or more elements in the process of internationalization of the university, following only the path proposed by the national government?
- (3) Can we compare the strategies and determine whether one is more effective than the other?
- (4) Is it just about observing the ability to align the interests of national/international politics?

¹ Kwiek, M., The internationalisation of academic profession in Europe. A quantitative study of 11 nations, Educational Studies – Voprosy Obrazovania, Moscow 2015.

It is confusing that in the fifth chapter of the work (Rhetorical STAGE: Chapter V: CONCLUSIONS and Recommendations/ Summary/ Future Discussion), which is a summary of the entire dissertation, the author states that "from the very beginning in the foreground of this doctoral thesis there are five main questions and several side questions" and they are different from those contained in the first chapter (Theoretical assumptions), m.in.

- Does rhetoric fulfill its mission as part of the internationalization strategy?
- Does it accompany and foster changes as the process progresses?
- Does it allow the university to align the interests of each university stakeholder group and strengthen its international dimension?
- Is it possible to identify the existence of rhetorical internationalization on the basis of some element that all universities use?

In response to these questions, a conceptual model presented by the doctoral student in chapter four to compare and explain the reasons for the lack of progress in the internationalization of Argentine universities in the years 2007 - 2014 was helpful. The author focused mainly on the analysis of the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 program, thanks to which, as he claims, he wanted to present the mistakes of Argentine universities on the way to internationalization.

For the sake of order, it is worth noting that the second chapter of the dissertation focuses on the presentation of the Erasmus Mundus Programme and eight Argentine projects implemented under it, and the next part of the work describes and analyzes the changes in the scale of internationalization in the ten-year time frame (2005-2015) in connection with the participation of Argentine public universities in the EU program. These universities, as indicated by research conducted by a doctoral student, despite obtaining funding, enabling the mobility of researchers, staff, students and administration, gaining access to expert knowledge, international cooperation, have not achieved satisfactory results.

The process of rhetorical internationalization and the scope and significance of such rhetoric within the process can explain the level of institutionalization, the level of importance, national and international capacity for support, as well as the profile of the reactive or proactive model of internationalization. In order to assess and compare any proactive progress in the process of internationalisation of AN HEIs, rhetorical internationalisation should be assessed or at least its existence at some level should be identified. It should also be remembered that each country has its own model of

cooperation, cultural features, models of university bureaucracy, economic interests, etc. Thanks to the proposed model, it becomes possible to measure the level of rhetorical internationalization in a given national system, and thus it is possible to recognize the true approach to the process of internationalization in any country, region, continent or in the world. As the author points out, any internationalization strategy should be understood as the path along which the university passes, through a managed process, from the status of internationalization of X in time (N) to the modified actual status of increased internationalization in time (Y). At the same time, the presence and importance of rhetorical internationalization is an element constituting evidence of the managed progress of internationalization of universities.

In the fourth chapter, on page 126 of the dissertation, we find a graphical model of measurement and on the following pages its detailed description. The model is based on four axes:

- (1) the dynamics run from AD HOC to SYSTEMATIC, allows to observe progress in the degree of institutionalization within the analyzed university, which implies a reduction in the specific importance of rhetorical internationalization within the framework of institutional behavior;
- (2) the dynamics are moving from MARGINAL to CENTRAL, where an increase in the importance of internationalization in universities can be observed, which means a reduction in the specific importance of internationalization within the framework of institutional investments in favor of this process;
- (3) the dynamics go from TURBULENT to STABLE or vice versa, which allows you to observe and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of data through the prism of national systems and the possibilities of interaction in axes 1 and 2;
- (4) dynamics moves from STATIC to DYNAMIC or vice versa, which allows you to observe, describe and analyze the degree of importance of internationalization along with its advantages and disadvantages and the possibilities of interaction within axes 1 and 2

The doctoral student documented that the available information in the area of internationalization of universities is primarily in the form of: public information, financial information and statistical data. Hence, there is a research gap, both in the theoretical and utilitarian aspect, and filling this gap and a new look at the internationalization of higher education can be considered as an original contribution to the development of the discipline of cultural science and religion. This contribution is important, and the analyses and conclusions presented may be relevant for the higher education institutions themselves and their environment, which, thanks to the new perspective, will be able to identify cultural determinants and use them as a factor in possible future success.

Evaluation of research methodology

The author presents methodological issues in subsection 1.3. The research methodology adopted by the doctoral student - qualitative research - and the set of research methods determined by this choice is adequate with the set research goals. The dominant method is content analysis (research results are included in the annex and charts in the content of the work). As the author pointed out, the scarcity of data on the internationalization of Argentine universities was the main reason for the emphasis to be on qualitative research rather than quantitative analysis. And the dissertation combines research methods, which should ensure the appropriate quality of the results obtained, although the research workshop itself in a wide range, as indicated in the previous fragments of the review, requires improvement, even in the field of research hypotheses or precise definition of research questions.

Conclusion

Mariano Martin Perez's peer-reviewed doctoral dissertation entitled "One Path, Many Activities, One Pattern: Rhetorical Internationalization Towards Understanding the Internationalization of Argentine Public Universities", written under the supervision of Radosław Rybkowski, PhD, professor at the Jagiellonian University, allows for the adoption of a new perspective in research on the internationalization of higher education and fills the existing research gap. I positively appreciate the importance of a research topic from the borderline of several disciplines.

However, the dissertation has many shortcomings, requires formal, editing and research corrections, hence **it postulates taking into account the improvement of the shortcomings indicated in the review.** After their correction, in my opinion, The dissertation of Mgra Perez will sufficiently meet the requirements set for a doctoral dissertation by the Act on Academic Degrees and Academic Title and on Degrees and Title in the Field of Art. Undoubtedly, the peer-reviewed dissertation is an innovative approach to a multidisciplinary issue, important for both cultural and religious sciences, as well as political and administrative sciences, as well as management and quality sciences. Magister Mariano Martin Perez has shown that he has appropriate knowledge in the considered research area and competence in the field of conducting scientific research, which, however, is worth polishing so that his dissertation fully meets the statutory criteria for doctoral dissertations.