

## Excellence in Public Governance: the Role and Development of Doctoral Studies Programme in Public Administration

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*The excellence in public governance and education and training are very closely interconnected. A special role plays the preparation of new doctors in public administration and management – their qualification promotes excellence. The aim of this article is to show how excellence could appear in public administration and management and to analyse the Doctoral Studies Programme in Administration and Management at the University of Latvia and to show the directions of its development. The article includes main principles of the European Good Administrative Practice Code, which could be regarded as a background of excellence in public administration, goals of doctoral studies in the field of administration and management at the University of Latvia, general framework of the studies programme, contents of programme and its organisation, as well as proposals for its further development.*

**Raktažodžiai:** *meistriškumas, viešasis administravimas, vadyba, daktarantūra, studijų programa.*

**Keywords:** *excellence, public administration, management, doctoral studies, study programme.*

### Introduction

Every professional and institution seeks excellence – would like to be excellent in area of its activities. According to the *Funk & Wagnalds Standard Dictionary* excellent means: “Being of the very best quality, exceptionally good” [6, p. 268]. According to *The American Heritage Dictionary* describe excellence as the quality or condition of excelling, superiority [3, p. 295].

Morton R. Davis stresses that excellence reflects the dominant values of society, or the priorities of the government of the day in the field of public management, and emphasize that “there can be no single transferable package that can be exported from one country to another that will guarantee the achievement of excellence” [7, p. 121]. But in any case we need to investigate good practice examples throughout the Europe and world and implement their success stories with necessary modification.

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Excellence in public governance is difficult to achieve without excellence in academician area and among students. Present students will be persons who will implement excellence in the future.

The aim of the article is to show how excellence could appear in public administration and management and to analyse the Doctoral Studies Programme in Administration and Management at the University of Latvia and show the directions of its development.

### 1. Excellence in public governance

Traditional public administration besides many positive characteristics in many cases is too bureaucratic, too hierarchical, inflexible, inefficient and ineffective, outdated, more focusing on processes rather than outcomes.

Ensuring excellence is very actual in public governance. Criteria of excellence to a bigger extent depend from political and administrative culture which differs from country to country. Despite that, there are some main criteria which are important in every country.

All democratic countries have the experience of ethics of civil servants. Obviously, the criteria of excellence are wider than codes of ethics and compliance with principles of codes of ethics does not

mean that criteria of excellence are achieved. The demands of the latter ones are higher. Despite that codes of ethics and especially the *European Good Administrative Practice Code* [5] could serve as a background for excellence in public governance. *European Code* has been approved by the European Parliament and its main principles are the following:

- civil servant acts according to the law;
- civil servant considers the principle of equal opportunities;
- civil servant avoids from unfounded discrimination members of society;
- civil servant is non-interested and independent;
- civil servant avoids from interest conflict;
- civil servant making decision takes into consideration the specific and importance of the issue;
- civil servant is hard-working, correct, polite, accessible and helpful;
- civil servant ensures, that furnished information is clear and understandable;
- civil servant ensures, that decision on addressed to the institution request or complain, is made in reasonable term [5].

One of the principles of *Code of eEthics* adopted by the American Society for Public Administration Society is to “strive for professional excellence” [4, p. 201].

Excellence in public governance is strongly connected with ensuring of high qualified specialists. Therefore very actual is development of doctoral studies programme in administration and management.

## **2. Implementation of Doctoral Studies Programme in Public Administration at the University of Latvia**

### ***2.1. Objectives of doctoral studies in the field of administration and management***

Administration and management as a transdisciplinary research field received recognition in Latvia as a new one a ten years ago.

*The Programme of Doctoral Studies in the Field of Administration and Management* (hereinafter *PA/BA Programme*) at the University of Latvia (UL) has been accredited for six years by the Ministry of Education and Science on 14 November 2001 the first time and on 4 July 2007 – the second time. Before accreditation *Interim Self-Study Report* has been prepared in compli-

ance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 370, 28-11-1995 *On the Accreditation of Higher Education* [1].

Doctoral studies programme in the field of administration and management is offered in two areas - public administration and business administration. Doctoral studies programme in educational management may be considered as good neighbourhood with considerable specifics.

The main objective of *The Programme of Doctoral Studies in the Field of Administration and Management* is to offer for students an opportunity to obtain at the University of Latvia an internationally recognised management competencies and internationally compatible doctoral degree.

Committed to the goal, doctoral student during the study process has to study, master and apply:

- advanced research methods of social sciences;
- use the potential of data processing, presentation and modern information technologies.

He/she also has to:

- pass exams in the required and elective courses;
- get basic experience in R&D and Project Management;
- do an independent research with the aim to obtain original and verified results in the chosen sub-branch;
- participate with reports at international seminars, conferences, and schools;
- prepare independent research results for presentation and their submission for publication in research editions.

The largest part of students starts their independent research in the first course.

### ***2.2. Framework of the studies programme***

As a rule, applicants for doctoral studies in the field of administration and management should have a Master's degree in Public Administration (MPA) or a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) degree. Nevertheless, a person holding master degree or its equivalent in other field, and having considerable experience and theoretical background in PA or BA, may also apply. Applicants are admitted by way of competition. A professional discussion, organised by the Doctoral Studies Council, can serve as an admission test.

Enrolment criteria in doctoral studies programme at the University of Latvia are shown in *table 1*. Doctoral studies process is going on in the departments of the Faculty of Economics and Management.

**Table 1: Enrolment criteria in doctoral studies programme at the University of Latvia**

<i>Group of criteria</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Points</i>
Studies	Average mark in master's programme studies	Till 7.9	0
		8.0 – 8.9	1
9.0 and more		2	
Previous work	Evaluation of master's thesis	8 and lower	0
		9	1
		10	2
	Significant contribution in science		3
Presentation at international conference	No	0	
	Yes	1	
Participation in projects	No	0	
	Yes	1	
Experience	Length of service	0	0
		1 year and more	1
Internship abroad	0	0	
	2 months and more	1	
Evaluation by Admission Committee	Topicality of promotion work	0	0
		Correspond partly	1
		Correspond completely	2
	Academic adviser works at the theme of promotion work	Partly	1
		Completely	2
		Weak	0
		Medium	1
	Quality of research application	Good	3
Very good		5	
Weak		0	
Medium		1	
Results of negotiations, motivation of applicant	Good	3	
	Very good	5	

Duration of doctoral studies differs for full-time and part-time students. Full-time students have to study 3 years, 48 weeks a year, 40 hours in a week, with 4-week vacation. Total credits points - 144. Part-time studies are planned for 4 years, 36 weeks a year, 40 hours in a week. Total credits points - the same as for full-time studies - 144.

The study programme consists of studying theory-focused disciplines, and management skills training courses (44 credit points), and the promotion work upon completion of doctoral studies (100 credit points).

Full-time doctoral students may have budget funding for 3 years. Part-time doctoral students may have institutional or private financing.

The decision about scholarship fee for doctoral studies is passed by the University's Senate. The scholarship fee in 2007/2008 academic year is 1250 LVL (1780 EUR) and in 2008/2009 academic year it is 1500 LVL (2134 EUR). Total number of doctoral students in field of administration and management were 91 at the end of 2007/2008 academic year, from which 38 are students in public administration track. Only 11 students or 12% have budget funding.

To receive a doctoral degree, one should complete and defend the promotion work - an independent research, with original and verified results, thus significantly adding to the management knowledge-base. The possible forms of promotion work are as follows: dissertation, package of focused scientific publications within the research topic, or monograph. Recommended size of dissertation is approximately 120-150 printout pages. Presenting for the defence the results of promotional research project as a package of focused scientific publications, it should contain not less than 90 pages. Size of monograph is at least 150 pages.

### **2.3. Contents and organisation of PA/BA Programme**

The contents of *PA/BA programme* are shown in *table 2*.

The doctoral student after consultations with the academic adviser outlines an individual studies plan. The studies process in the field of administration and management is supervised by the Doctoral Studies Council. The Chairman of the Council is the Director of the Doctoral Studies Programme in the field of administration and management. PA/BA Doctoral Studies Council monitors academic progress, via the academic adviser. The student reports about the results of his/her studies and research participating once a year in PA/BA Doctorate Studies Council.

Upon completion of doctoral studies, in the meeting specially organised by the PA/BA Doctoral Studies Council together with corresponding department (Department of Public Administration or Department of Management Science)

the results of studies and research are discussed and assessed and a decision is made either to promote the work for presentation or to work on

its improvement. The defence of promotion work is organised by Promotion Council of Management Science and Demography.

*Table 2: Distribution of credit points according to academic components:*

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Credit points</i>
<b>Part A:</b> mandatory for all (8 credits needed in theoretical background and 100 credits for promotional work)	
1. Required courses:	
1.1. Latest Research Methods in Management and Economics	2
1.2. Using the Potential of Data Processing, Presentation and Modern Information Technologies	2
1.3. Actual Problems of Human Resources Management	2
1.4. Issues of Project Management	2
2. Promotional work	100
<b>Part B:</b> disciplinary PA/BA electives (6 credits needed) – promotion exam	6
1. Reform of State Administration and Local Governments (Doctoral workshop, PA track) – Promotion exams in speciality (4 credits points) and foreign language (2 credit points)	
2. Issues in Business Management (Doctoral workshop, BA track) – Promotion exam in speciality (4 credits points) and foreign language (2 credit points)	
<b>Part C:</b> free choice (30 credits needed)	
1. Attending Doctor's level free choice elective (64 hours) in UL or another university	4
2. Teaching Practice (Lecturing, 32 hours course)	12
3. Directing Seminars and Practical Training (32 hours)	8
4. Supervising Bachelor's Thesis	2
5. Reviewing the Bachelor's Thesis (2 Thesis)	1
6. Supervising Term Paper, for two students	1
7. Project Manager	16
8. Project Team Member	8

Prior to the defence of promotion work, doctoral student has to pass two promotional exams in the speciality, as well as in foreign language, should prepare and publish articles and must report about results of promotion work at least in two international conferences. Examining Board, exercising the promotional examination, should be set up by the PA/BA Doctoral Studies Council and approved by decree of the Vice Rector. The examination board consists of 3-5 PA/BA experts, at least one member of PA/BA Doctoral Studies Council. The courses which are included in the studies programme are delivered by qualified doctors or habilitated doctors. Active teaching methods are widely envisaged - group work, case analyses, discussions, and students' reports.

In mandatory courses (part A) and free electives (part C) doctoral students should pass graded examination (qualification examination). Each faculty member determines the number of different activities of doctoral students in seminars, delivering reports marks of the tests, etc., and how much graded examinations influence the final mark.

There is positive experience in co-operation with doctoral studies programmes in other universities. Accordingly Agreement between the Faculty of Economics and Management, University of Latvia, the Faculty of Economics, Latvia University of Agriculture, the Faculty of Engineering Economics, Riga Technical University on Co-operation and Co-ordination in the Implementation of Doctoral Studies

Programmes, signed on March 27, 2001, three universities agreed on the following steps in cooperation in the implementation of doctoral studies in Economics, Management and Demography:

1. To cooperate in composition and implementation of mutually approximated doctoral studies programmes advancing similar requirements for the elaboration, preliminary evaluation and defence of dissertations.
2. To allow all doctoral students of the aforesaid faculties to attend all doctoral studies courses free of charge. Exams passed in the faculties are valid in each of them as part of realisation of doctoral studies programmes.
3. To exchange information about the themes of doctoral studies carried out in the universities, to facilitate co-operation between the doctoral students with related research fields, and the coordination of research programmes.
4. To provide opportunities to the doctoral students of committed sides to deliver pa-

pers and research reports at academic conferences of the universities, to ensure according publication of their contributions free of charge.

5. To allow professors of the committed sides to be academic advisers of promotional research works, experts, and reviewers in all the faculties.
6. To consider benevolently other proposals for co-operation in the implementation of the doctoral studies programmes.

The above Agreement envisages also to maintaining independent doctoral studies programmes in all the three faculties. The Agreement has been worked out jointly with the Council of Higher Education.

Every year a self-evaluation of the Doctoral Studies Programme is organised. It includes the analysis of study process, the surveys of doctoral programme students and their employers. In *table 3* fragments of SWOT analysis of doctoral studies programme made in the last self-evaluation is enclosed.

**Table3: Fragments of SWOT Analysis of doctoral studies programme in the field of administration and management of the University of Latvia**

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualified professors</li> <li>• Many doctoral students</li> <li>• Possibilities of publishing in the collections of articles of the University of Latvia</li> <li>• Possibilities of getting credit points not only by passing exams, but also by delivering lectures, leading and participating in projects</li> <li>• Actual themes of promotion work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of text-books in Latvian</li> <li>• Insufficient participation at international conferences abroad and at internships in foreign universities</li> <li>• Different background and level of qualification of doctoral students</li> <li>• Difficulties of foreign doctoral students to hear lectures in Latvian</li> </ul>
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To quicken preparing and publishing the text-books in Latvian</li> <li>• Rising interest in society on doctoral studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hardships to connect work and doctoral studies and finish the studies early (in good time)</li> <li>• Unconformable financing of doctoral studies programmes</li> </ul>

The promotion work themes are relevant. They are often connected with problems in work places of doctoral students. Some examples of the themes:

- reforms of local government and regional development;
- the impact of social risk to administrative territorial reform;
- problems of relations between central government and local authorities;

- citizens involvement in action and decision-making process of local governments;
- management of multiprojects in public administration;
- the improvement of local government financial system in Latvia;
- working out and implementation quality management systems in health care institutions;
- the development of information systems in public administration;

- the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity on division of competences in the Latvian public administration;
- competitiveness of telecommunication enterprises in Latvia;
- improvement of competitive advantage of public radio channels in Latvia;
- the audit of local government finances;
- problems of development of local government performance;
- the development of institutional system of regional development in Latvia;
- the possibilities of development of human resources in Latvia;
- the improvement of civil service system in Latvia;
- the analysis of management in organisations of culture.

The surveys of doctoral students show that they generally are satisfied with the programme. Especially they like active learning methods and possibilities to deliver reports in classes. Some doctoral students consider that there are too many compulsory (A part) courses in the programme.

The results of self-evaluation of doctoral studies programme are used for working out and implementation corresponding undertakings.

Doctoral studies programme is not static, it develops constantly. For example, the course “High School Pedagogies” has been excluded from part A-mandatory for all, because approximately a half of total number of doctoral students isn’t connected their carer with work at the universities and at other higher education schools. Now the course “High school pedagogies” is one of the Part C – free choice courses. Before part A – mandatory for all courses “Latest Research Methods in Management and Economics”, “Using the Potential of Data Processing, Presentation and Modern Information Technologies” and “Issues of Project Management propose 64 contact hours (4 credit points), now – 32 contact hours (2 credit points). Before doctoral student’s participation in projects as a project team member gave the student 4 credit points, now – 8 credit points. The courses of doctoral studies programme regularly are updated.

There are also essential changes in organisation of implementation of doctoral studies programme. In last two years special projects are introduced for support and motivation of doctoral students which promotion works are near to completion. They can conclude agreement with

the Vice Rector of the UL in which student promises to finish the working out of the promotion work in duration of a half or one year. As stimulus such students receive additional tuition and financing mainly from the European Social Fund. Using such system helps increase the number of promotion works, which defends in proposed time.

Our experience shows that doctoral studies programme helps for excellence in public governance, because it is oriented to updated principles and methods of governance and promotion work themes are closely connected with demands of practice.

## Conclusions

Excellence in public governance cannot be achieved without high qualified specialists including political and administrative elite. Therefore actual is implementation of doctoral studies programme in administration and management at the University of Latvia. Full time students have to study three years. Part-time studies are planned for four years. There are 11 enrolment criteria in doctoral studies programme. The study programme consists of studying theory-focused disciplines and management skills training courses (44 credit points) and the promotion work (100 credit points). The promotion work themes are relevant to practice. Every year self-evaluation of doctoral studies programme is organised. It develops constantly.

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### **Edvins Vanags**

#### **Meistriškums viešajame valdyme: viešojo administravimo doktorantūros programos plėtojimo vaidmuo**

##### Santrauka

Meistriškumas viešajame valdyme ir valstybės tarnautojų mokymas bei kvalifikacijos tobulinimas tarpusavyje susiję. Šiuo aspektu ypač svarbus viešojo administravimo ir vadybos daktarų rengimas – jų kvalifikacija sudaro prielaidas didinti viešojo valdymo meistriškumą. Šio straipsnio tikslas – pateikti viešojo valdymo meistriškumo formas, atskleisti Latvijos universiteto Viešojo administravimo ir vadybos doktorantūros programos ypatybes, parodyti jos svarbą viešojo valdymo meistriškumui didinti, pateikti jos plėtojimo kryptis. Straipsnyje teigiama, kad plėtojant Latvijos universiteto Viešojo administravimo ir vadybos doktorantūros programą galima remtis *Europos gero administravimo patirties kodu*, kuris apskritai gali tarnauti kaip meistriškumo viešajame valdyme pagrindas.

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