

# Defining and Achieving Excellence in Postgraduate Training

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# Outline

- Quality as a concept (input and exit criteria)
- Changing purposes of doctoral education and training
- Reconsideration of Doctoral models
- Innovation in a changing context

# What Is Quality?

- Contextual and relative
- Definitions of quality shift as purpose changes
- International dimension
- Contested and different interests

# Changing Significance of Doctoral Training

- Evolution of research as a defining feature of universities – doctorate as entry level criterion for academics
- Industrialization to the Knowledge Economy
- Increasing professionalization

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- Doctorate as the entry level to academia
- High positive correlation between % of doctorates and university research
- Doctorate as an driver of economic growth

# African Universities

- Growing demand for access from an increasingly diverse student population
- Government expectations
- Internationalization of higher education
- Concentration of research networks
- No real increase in funding and non-financial resources
- Growing mobility of staff

# Defining Features of a Doctorate

- Advanced conceptualization and application of method
- Originality or new knowledge
- Thesis and/or publication

# Reconsidering the Defining Features

- Changing nature and demands of the academic job
- Changing nature of research
- Changing labour market demands
- African universities in the context of internationalization of higher education



# Reconsideration of Doctoral models: Some Tensions

- Different curriculum pathways – formative and professional - yet there is an undifferentiated notion of a doctorate
- Multidisciplinarity and Problem focussed research agendas – most doctoral registrations within discipline-based arrangements
- Labour Market issues including the academic job

# Disaggregating assumptions

- Is high level research training different from the creation of new knowledge
- Does the doctorate as currently conceptualized adequately prepare for the academic job -
- the thesis as the basis on which a doctoral degree is awarded
- should coursework and practical requirements count towards the conferment of the degree
- should research alone continue to be the sole defining feature of a doctoral degree or should other criteria be introduced

# Opportunities

- Differentiation of universities within a system
- Regional Networks within a differentiated model
- Harmonization of qualifications
- Joint programmes and degrees
- Multiple models for doctoral training
- Openness to mobility
- Professional development for academics
- Policy and regulatory changes