

Event report:

The Doctorate in the Arts

Lausanne, Switzerland

28 November 2014

On 28 November, a selected number of leaders from arts academies and universities met at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland to discuss the doctorate in the arts. The event included keynote presentations from the ORPHEUS Institute in Ghent, Belgium, and from the Conservatoire of Music Vincenzo Bellini Palermo, Italy, but was mostly based on interactive discussions concerning the principles and practices of doctoral education in the arts.

One of the main topics of the workshop was artistic research, if it is different from scientific research, and what the implications for doctoral education are? According to the researchers in the fine arts, it is different from other research traditionally found at universities as it is based on reflecting upon practice; research that unravels the process of producing art and looks at the articulation of art practice. It combines artistic practice with articulation and reflection about this practice.

It seems that most workshop participants agreed that doctoral education in the arts should be based on artistic research as described above. Some participants expressed the view that the doctorate in the arts could be based only on artistic practice. However, the majority insisted on a written reflection on the practice in addition.

It is important to take into account the diversity of institutions that offer or would like to offer the doctorate in the arts:

- classical comprehensive universities with faculties of arts;
- arts academies that have an equal status as any other universities;
- arts academies and conservatoires that offer Bachelor and Master studies;
- universities of applied sciences and Fachhochschulen.

All these institutions follow different regulations and legislations which makes it more difficult to harmonise, however, it is clear that there is a strong tendency within all four types of institutions to offer the doctorate, either by themselves or in collaboration with universities.

The doctorates in the arts differ also in their names: in addition to PhD in the arts there are other doctorates offered, such as Art.D., D.Arts. or professional doctorates in the arts. It is not always easy to understand the differences between each of these doctorates. Some participants were adamant that it was necessary to give the PhD degree in order to underline rigour and reflection equal to that of other research; others would argue that a separate doctoral degree for the fine arts would safeguard the equal treatment of artistic research.

The point was also made that it is better to find a common ground/area of dialogue instead of trying to force the doctorate in the arts into the typical culture of universities. The field can be enlarged instead of trying to force artistic research in. The arts academies have successfully entered the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) but when it comes to European Research Area (ERA) it was noted that the border is to a large extent drawn with literature, philosophy and the like. Participants in the workshop wished to make ERA representative of all the researchers in Europe. Artistic research has inherently been a significant aspect of European culture and so the integration would be logical.

Among the other challenges discussed at the workshop were the following:

- recognition of artistic doctoral research (within each institution or within the scope of other disciplines). This was a strong undercurrent of much of the discussion, as many researchers from other fields often doubt the research nature of investigations through art. The channels of communication between scientists and the arts need to be improved.
- documenting outcomes of doctoral education and research in the arts, particularly challenges raised by bibliometric requirements.
- quality assessment (procedures; composition of jury/doctoral committees – balance between artists and researchers; peer review is the most important way of assessing the outcomes).
- supervision (best practice is co-supervision that includes an artist and a researcher)
- the lack of critical mass: not enough senior artist-researchers who can be supervisors, lack of experience in many countries, and the fact that many arts schools and academies are too small to offer a critical mass of research on their own.
- more collaboration at national and international levels is needed among various artistic disciplines, but also with other disciplines; however, the first step is to discuss the doctorate in the arts within each discipline.
- revision of the Frascati Manual to explicitly include artistic research.
- precision of the nature of the doctorate in the arts requiring excellence in the artistic practice as well as in academic reflection.

The discussions between representatives from different countries and institutions was seen as an important step in the dialogue particularly between universities and art academies; they demonstrated a high level of sophistication in the ideas and procedures regarding artistic research as well as showing good practices in the concrete organisation of doctoral education in the arts.

The event was organised by The European University Association (EUA), the Conférence Universitaire de Suisse Occidentale (CUSO) and The University of Lausanne, with the help of the Association Européenne des Conservatoires and the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA)

Brussels, December 2014