

Doctoral Studies at the University of Oslo from 1811 to PhD

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Introduction

Academic degrees from bachelor to doctor have been part of university institutions from the Middle Ages. Norway is a young university nation compared to many other European countries. In 1811 *Universitas Regia Fredericiana* was founded in Christiania, currently Oslo, where the first doctoral degree was defended already in 1817 before the approval of the first University Act (Amundsen, 1962; Anderson, 2004; Collett, 2011a; 2011c; Cox, 2000; <http://www.muv.uio.no/uio1811-idag/merkeaar/>).

This article provides an outline of the development of the doctoral degree system in education and special needs education from the foundation of the first Norwegian university to the present day. For obvious reasons the historical presentation is intertwined with the development of the university in general and with the establishment and further development of the educational disciplines. Due to the limited article format a full contextual location has yielded to a few glimpses. The point of departure in the following discussions is the presentation of the early doctoral degree followed by the establishment of education as a university discipline and the changing financial situation for possible doctoral candidates. The initial debate on so-called structured doctoral degrees which started in the years after the Second World War marked a historical shift leading to a long-term development towards a new and systematically organised

Citation of this chapter: Johnsen, B. H. (2013). Doctoral studies at the University of Oslo from 1811 to PhD. In B. H. Johnsen (Ed.), *Research project preparation within education and special needs education* (pp. 96–116/pp. 94–114 in print edition). Cappelen Damm Akademisk. <https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.124>

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doctoral degree structure. The new discipline special needs education served to accelerate this process. Several models of structured doctoral programmes were tried out and revised, resulting in the present PhD degree system. Thus today there are two different doctoral degrees, the structured PhD and the traditional and so-called free Dr. Philos degree. The development leading to the PhD degree took place through increasing debate, legislation and establishment of organisations both domestically and internationally, such as the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) and the international Bologna Process of Higher Education.

A brief documented history of Norwegian doctoral degrees within education and special needs education

“The past is not what it once was”⁹, since its history is written and rewritten as answers to different questions at different times. The construction of a historical text evidently represents a reduction of the past, and it bears the mark of the particular perspective of the writer (Clarke, 2012; Johnsen, 2000). This text is based on a study arising from a desire to understand the historical process leading up to the current two doctoral degrees within the educational sciences; the traditional Dr. Philos with its roots in the foundation of the first Norwegian university, and the almost “brand new” and most common PhD. It is a text study of the case of Norwegian doctoral degree structures; their coming into being and further development. The main issues determining the perspective for the study are: 1) How did the qualification for the traditional Dr. Philos degree take place? 2) What characterised the development towards a doctoral programme and, eventually, the PhD degree? 3) How do the two different doctoral degrees function today? As the two research disciplines in focus, education and special needs education, achieved academic status at different times in the historical process, their foundation and development is also an important issue.

This article presents a preliminary historical review based on text studies. It is the first of three articles focusing on doctoral degree organisation within the educational sciences. The second article conveys knowledge, experience and opinions from the point of view of four selected informants, who have experi-

9. This quotation is from the title on one of the most applied study books in historical methodology in Norway: “Fortida er ikke hva den en gang var” (Kjeldstadli, 1999).

ences from the time before, during and after the shift to two doctoral degrees, both as doctoral researchers and as advisers of new generations of doctoral research fellows (Johnsen, 2013b).

The third article relates to the history of higher education and research in Europe. The initiative to this topic stems from the international project between the Western Balkan universities of Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tuzla and Zagreb and the University of Oslo representing Norwegian university traditions (WB 04/06). One main part of this project focused on information exchanges and discussions related to the Bologna process, which took place in on-going meetings twice a year throughout the project period. Thus the third article contains a brief summary of historical milestones regarding the establishment and development of the seven cooperating universities, focusing on the fields of education and special needs education, as well as the process towards the establishment of doctoral degrees (Johnsen et.al, 2013). An important reason for conducting this overview study was to exchange information about each other's academic systems and development of research opportunities.

The history of Norwegian universities and of the University of Oslo in particular has just undergone a renaissance due to the two hundred years anniversary publication of *The University of Oslo 1811–2011* in a series of nine volumes (Collett, 2011a: *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–2011*). However, while the foundation and development of doctoral degrees was mentioned here, it was not thoroughly addressed. A few additional texts have been found from the university's first century, whereas an increasing number of relevant articles, books and official documents are found describing debates and decisions from the second half of the twentieth century up until today. The first volume of the anniversary publications made references to several central sources concerning early university history, which is assumed to shed more light (or not) on debates and decisions regarding the foundation and use of early doctoral degrees. Since these documents have not yet been examined by this author, the article must be viewed as a preliminary history of the topic.

The case of Norway: Early doctoral degree

The history of Norwegian doctoral degrees is a history of many decades with reluctance, conservatism and at times even avoidance amongst academics in relation to this highest degree. In recent decades the slow moving process has been transformed to rapid and accelerating development of doctoral degrees,

accompanied by the introduction of supporting programmes and a major increase in research fellowships. This change has taken place as the number of approved universities has risen from one to eight (<http://norgesuniversitetet.no/nettverk/universitet>), and international cooperation in research and higher education has increased radically. A major task ahead concerns international coordination of doctoral degrees. This article has been developed as a contribution to this challenge from a Norwegian point of view, since history is an important prerequisite for future development.

Of the two kinds of doctoral degrees, Dr. Philos is the original, introduced in the first University Act of the newly established *Universitas Regia Fredericiana*, currently the University of Oslo (UiO). This was the first modern university in Norway, founded while the country still shared a royal government with Denmark in extremely unstable times of the Napoleonic Wars, famine in Norway, the foundation of the modern Norwegian parliament and, eventually, transfer of the royal sovereignty from Denmark to Sweden. In the new university the first doctoral dissertation was held in 1817, seven years before the first University Act was accredited. How could it happen that a doctoral degree was defended and accepted ahead of any university law? How could it be that the university was founded and had taken the first steps in its development without any basis in law? The most obvious reason is assumed to be that the preparation, foundation and early development of the university took place through a tug of war between different factions, starting with discussions between the Danish-Norwegian kings and Norwegian intellectuals throughout a long period before King Frederic VI accepted the foundation of a Norwegian university in his name. There were also internal controversies between the Norwegian intellectuals as well as struggles between them and the new Swedish-Norwegian King Carl Johan. Several drafts of a university act were presented and revised during these controversies. However, from the inception a financial basis was established, and a number of Norwegian academics, mostly educated in Copenhagen, were appointed professors and members of an academic senate that was to administer the university. Thus the university started its activities very soon after its inception with a pragmatic administration strongly influenced by the traditions of the University of Copenhagen. The first University Act was approved in 1824 by King Carl Johan. However, the relations between the new king and the university were tense, and the question of who should appraise doctoral candidates was an example of this tension. The dispute resulted in a power shift from government to university

in the next University Act of 1845, when this became a matter for the university alone (Amundsen, 1962; Collett, 2011a¹⁰; 2011b; <http://www.uv.uio.no/english/research/doctoral-degree/dr-philos/>).

In accordance with Danish tradition, doctoral degrees within medicine, theology, law and philosophy were accounted for, the last one being named Doctor Philosophiae and commonly called Dr. Philos, was confirmed in the first Act. The first doctoral dissertations were in medicine; *Doctores Medicinae*. It was not until 1847 that the first Dr. Philos was accredited. It was in natural sciences, while the first doctoral defence in the humanities took place in 1873. Helga Eng was the first Norwegian Dr. Philos in education in 1912 as well as the third female doctoral candidate (Andresen, 1962; Amundsen, 1962; Dale, 1999). However, the doctoral candidates were few in number, even after the second act was passed in 1845. There may have been several reasons for this scarcity. For example Amundsen (1962) argued that the university gave little encouragement to young researchers. In addition, as a measure to improve low wages, the Norwegian parliament (*Stortinget*) decided that all teaching positions at the university should be changed to professorships for both university lecturers and professors alike. As a consequence the financial difference between higher and lower levels of education was abolished. This was in 1866 (Collett, 2011a). In this situation some senior researchers even stated that the doctoral dissertation had in practice been eliminated. Attempts to change the situation through revisions to laws and regulations were more or less delayed and opposed until a new University Act was passed in 1905. Still the university awarded only one or very few doctoral candidates each year between 1873 and 1910, when the number started to increase (Amundsen, 1962; Collett, 2011a).

Educational disciplines at the university

One of the main tasks of the new university was to educate lecturers for new generations of students. Different epistemological theories were studied, developed and fiercely debated; starting with the renowned Norwegian Professor

10. Collett (2011a) gives a thorough presentation of preliminary debates, the foundation of *Universitas Regia Fredericana* and the further development of the university, including controversies, debates, legislation and activities. He situates the presentation in the turbulent Nordic context at that time. In conversation with the author of this article, he mentioned that an in-depth study of the history of the Norwegian doctoral degrees has not yet taken place other than on a minor scale.

Niels Treschow, who came from the University of Copenhagen as professor at the newly founded Norwegian university (Collett, 2011a; Dahl, 1965; Johnsen, 2000; Sirevåg, 1986). However, it was not until 1936 that the first Norwegian Department of Educational Research was established at the University of Oslo, with the previously mentioned Dr. Philos Helga Eng as the first professor and Head of Department (Dale, 1999; Norges Forskningsråd, 2002a).

The Department of Special Needs Education was established several decades afterwards in 1961 and developed as an independent college, and later as a university college, the Norwegian Institute for Special Education (NISE). It was merged with UiO in 1990 and took part in the establishment of the new Faculty of Educational Sciences, as one of three research departments, in 1996. Currently education and special needs education is taught in a number of universities and university colleges in Norway (Collett, 1999; <http://www.uv.uio.no/isp/om/historie/> 2011; Johnsen, 2001; Slagstad, 2006).

The development of financial support for young researchers

Looking back at the 1840s, the first generation shift of academic staff took place at *Universitas Regia Fredericiana*, as an increasing number of lecturers were required by the growing institution. Emphasis was on recruiting from the university itself. An internal arrangement involving adjunct scholarships was introduced and financed at the university in order to support young and promising talents aiming at an academic career, and the first scholarships were awarded in 1841. According to Vogt (1974) these were as good as the only possibilities for a funded research career until the second half of the twentieth century. However, a small, but increasing number of external, so-called free research grants and private science organisations also funded fellowships and publications. Study trips to other countries funded through official or private legacies were common ways of attaining new knowledge within different disciplines. Several educational and special needs educational pioneers benefited from this opportunity (Collett, 1999; Johnsen, 2000).

After the Second World War the trend in study trips and sabbaticals changed from Europe to the USA and Canada, greatly supported by the post-war Fulbright fellowships. Three large national research funds were also established shortly after the war, whereof NAVF, Norwegian Arts and Sciences Research Council (*Norges allmennvitenskapelige forskningsråd*) awarded fellowships to

researchers within educational sciences and other disciplines¹¹. In 1993 the funds, now numbering five, were merged to NFR, the Research Council of Norway (*Norges forskningsråd*), which is the current official body for the development and implementation of national research strategy outside the universities.

An increasing number of research disciplines were introduced throughout the 20th century, especially in its second half, at the same time as several professional studies were implemented within higher education. The Norwegian Institute for Special Education was assigned its first two research scholarships in 1977 in order to strengthen the local counselling skills of graduate students (Statens spesiallærerhøgskole, 1988). This also marked a beginning step towards a doctoral degree. When the University of Oslo celebrated its 200th anniversary in 2011, Norway had seven universities and a number of university colleges. During the same period the number of internally and externally financed research scholarships had increased substantially, including within educational disciplines (Collett, 1999; <http://fulbright.state.gov/history>; Skoie, 2005; Slagstad, 2006; Vogt, 1974).

Towards structured doctoral degrees – including in educational disciplines

Lack of a research policy, including a research recruitment policy, was seen as a serious problem up to the mid-20th century. The first post-war decade was thus confronted with a serious shortage of qualified researchers for vacant university positions. However, through the introduction of the above mentioned national research councils, steps were taken towards creating an explicit research policy. One of the pioneers in this development, Erling Fjellbirkeland (1982), pointed at two dilemmas regarding which main goals should govern research funding of universities, including doctoral fellowships.

11. Up until 1993, several national research funds served different disciplines. The Norwegian Council of Science and Technology Research Council (*Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Forskningsråd*, founded 1946), The Norwegian Arts and Sciences Research Council (*Norges allmennvitenskapelige forskningsråd*, founded 1949), the Agricultural Scientific Research (*Norges landbruksvitenskapelige forskningsråd*, founded 1949), the Norwegian Fisheries Research Council (*Norges fiskeriforskningsråd*, founded 1972) and the Norwegian Council for Applied Social Research (*Norges råd for anvendt samfunnsforskning*, 1987). In 1993 the five funds were merged to The Research Council of Norway (*Norges forskningsråd*). The Research Council is Norway's official body for the development and implementation of a national research strategy. The Council is responsible for enhancing Norway's knowledge base and promoting basic and applied research and innovation in order to help meet research needs within society. The Research Council also works actively to encourage international research cooperation. (http://www.forskningsradet.no/en/Vision_and_mandate/ Last updated 25. 02. 2011; Store norske leksikon. http://snl.no/Norges_forskningsrad. Last updated 28. 06. 2010).

- Should the number of students or society's needs for research determine subsequent content and funding of research?
- Should a small country like Norway do research in all fields or delimit research practices to certain selected fields?

These questions came up frequently in ensuing debates about national research priorities and triggered a renewed debate about the role, organisation and funding of the doctoral degree in the further development of higher education.

The post-war shift of attention from the continental European towards the Anglo-American research community also involved the structure of higher education. In the autumn of 1945 an article in one of the national newspapers presented arguments in favour of changing the university structure in line with British practice. The article was an early sign of change towards so-called organised doctoral structures. Unlike the conventional doctoral degrees, structured doctoral degrees were to contain a programme with relevant courses and supervision in addition to traditional research work. The first higher education institution introducing this new doctoral structure was the Norwegian Institute of Technology, currently the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), in Trondheim in 1975. As a consequence the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences was the first faculty at UiO to launch a structured doctoral degree in 1977 in order to be competitive on the job market (Collett, 1999; Høstaker, 1996; NOU 1988; Skoie, 2005; Vogt, 1973).

Other faculties at UiO were sceptical to organised doctoral degrees. A main argument was that the Anglo-American structure for higher education would lead to considerable cuts in study programmes on all levels and consequently to a lowering of academic standards. In practice, Skoie (2005) argues, doctoral studies had been of little interest, and the small number of doctoral degrees completed before the war were mainly intended for obtaining a promotion to professor status, even though one could also become a professor without having a doctoral degree. The Mag. Art degree with its focus on research was established as a forerunner for doctoral studies, and although few students chose this alternative, a slightly increased level of interest was detected in the 1960ies. However, the late sixties was a time of protest amongst students and young academics related to what has later been called the sixty-eight generation¹². The

12. In the next article of this book, Johnsen (2013b), a more detailed presentation of the sixty-eight generation and the recurring and strong resistance to the doctoral degree is presented through the voices of four concurrent senior researchers.

doctoral degree became a target of protest for a group of academics in the social sciences, who stated that the degree was an outdated symbol of a self-defined power elite (Collett, 1999; Høstaker, 1996; Johnsen, 2013b; Skoie, 2005).

Protests against doctoral degrees faded out as debate, preparations and introductions of organised doctoral studies spread to new higher education institutions. Amongst these was the Norwegian Institute for Special Education (NISE), where a model of an organised doctoral education programme was developed in 1985 and accepted by a Royal Decree of April 18, 1986. Thus NISE established the first organised doctoral programme in a Norwegian educational research discipline with the degree Dr. Scient in Special Needs Education. Why was this new and rising discipline the first of the educational disciplines to incorporate an organised doctoral degree? Perhaps it was exactly because special needs education was a young and rising discipline. Another reason may have been that the then leader of NISE, Professor Edvard Befring, was amongst the few who conducted research and received a doctoral degree as a young researcher. As rector of NISE he and his staff developed special needs education from a further education programme to a higher education institution through the implementation of the major level or second cycle degree Cand. Ped. Spec. The next step towards a research discipline was to introduce the doctoral degree.

Due to the opposition at the Faculty of Social Sciences, it took a slightly longer period of time before the Department of Educational Research participated in establishing a structured Dr. Polit degree in 1987. This became the official degree of the Faculty of Social Sciences where the department was then situated. As mentioned, NISE was later linked to the University of Oslo in 1990 as a separate section, and then, in 1996, moved into the new Helga Eng's Building at the UiO campus along with the Department of Educational Research, as they were incorporated into the newly established Faculty of Educational Sciences. At this milestone, NISE changed to its current name, Department of Special Needs Education, (Befring, 2011; Collett, 1999; Dalen, 1997; <http://www.uv.uio.no/pfi/om/historie/>; Johnsen, 2013b; Norges forskningsråd, 2002a; Norges forskningsråd, 2002b; NOU 1988; Skoie, 2005; Statens spesiallærerhøgskole, 1988).

The structured doctoral degrees – a long term development

How was the early development of the newly established structured doctoral degrees? An Official Norwegian Report on higher education and research, NOU

1988:28, which was published shortly after the breakthrough for structured doctoral degrees within social sciences, stated that programmes at the doctoral level which had managed to develop an organisational tradition had showed good results, for example in the natural sciences. However, newly established programmes had not yet managed to develop sufficient course programmes, supervisor competence and adequate levels of funding. The same report stated that educating researchers was a primary task for universities. With this evaluation as a backdrop, cooperation on a joint doctoral degree started between the departments in the newly established Faculty of Educational Sciences and a working committee was appointed. Its main task was to coordinate the two organised doctoral programmes and decide on a joint title for the degree. Arguments in favour of a joint Dr. Ed or Dr. Ped were presented. However, as this was soon after the break with the Faculty of Social Sciences, it seemed that members of the committee from the Department of Educational Research were reluctant to cut the ties with their former faculty. The majority of the committee wanted to keep the Dr. Polit degree as well as joint participation in an obligatory doctoral seminar administered by the Faculty of Social Sciences. In this way the first joint degree for the Faculty of Educational Sciences was “a borrowed degree” from another faculty, the Dr. Polit degree.

As structured doctoral degrees were established, research fellowships were attached to them, and they became the preferred doctoral degree. The requirements for a doctoral candidate in the structured study were high level grades in a relevant Major level or Master study, a high quality research plan and a research fellowship from the university or from external funds (Collett, 1999; Johnsen, 2013b; Norges forskningsråd, 2002b; NOU 1988; Skoie, 2005; <http://www.uv.uio.no/english/research/doctoral-degree/dr-philos/>).

In addition to the structured degree, the original Dr. Philos degree was kept as a free degree consisting of a research dissertation of the same quality as for the Dr. Polit, but without supervision and demands concerning participation in research courses. Currently a small number of candidates are defending their research work for the Dr. Philos degree (<http://www.uv.uio.no/english/research/doctoral-degree/dr-philos/>).

Today the PhD degree or Philosophiae Doctor, is the structured doctoral degree at the Faculty of Educational Sciences (<http://www.admin.uio.no/admhb/reglhb/forskning/drphilos/phdforskr.xml>). What has characterised the development from the first structured doctoral degrees to the establishment of the PhD? From the time when the first two structured doctoral degrees were

introduced in 1986 and 1987 till the current PhD was accepted, a series of regulations from national to faculty level have led to revisions and standardisations of the degree. Quality, controllability and transparency were three main concerns in the on-going revisions:

- Quality involved quality of supervision and quality of the 30 ECTS credit seminars, equivalent to one study semester, which contribute to support the quality of the research process and final product
- Controllability concerned the development of institutions and tools for quality evaluation of the doctoral education
- Transparency dealt with creating opportunities for comparing academic standards and research quality of organised doctoral degrees between universities and countries.

On a national level three government-appointed committees provided input to further developments of the organised doctoral degrees. The first was the so-called Hernes Committee (1987–88) which suggested increased funding to doctoral research fellowships and an increased emphasis on the development of structured doctoral degrees at all university faculties. The committee also proposed establishment of a joint “Norwegian net” for all universities and university colleges, which was established, currently as Board of the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions. An important task for the board was to formulate common regulations for structured doctoral degrees at all universities (Collett, 1999; <http://www.uhr.no/>).

The Mjøs Committee (1998–2000) suggested adapting the Bologna Declaration to the Norwegian context with its Anglo-American structural division of 3–2–3 years’ time frames for bachelor, master and PhD programmes. The committee also proposed the establishment of an independent national organ monitoring quality in higher education on all three levels, which was established as the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen, NOKUT), (<http://www.nokut.no/en/>; NOU 2000:14).

The Stjernø Committee (2006–08) focused on quality in research, proposing a funding system rewarding peer-reviewed research publications (NOU 2008:3; White paper no. 30, 2008–09). The proposal was passed, and a national interdisciplinary credit system for publications was established after fierce discussions continuing to this day.

As indicated above, national political pressure applied throughout several decades resulted in the implementation of structured doctoral degrees at all

faculties and universities. Their framework was determined through several political committees, legal texts and appointment of national organs overriding the single universities. One of these organs was the Board of the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions, whose task it is to provide a common interpretation of national frameworks for structured doctoral degrees on behalf of all universities. The other was the independent NOKUT, which has the authority to accredit study programmes and conduct quality control in higher education, including doctoral degrees (<http://www.nokut.no/no/>). In addition a third institution, the Research Council of Norway, NFR, is responsible for providing universities and other research institutions with additional external resources based on the Council's research strategy (Norges forskningsråd, 2010; <http://www.forskningsradet.no/>). The University of Oslo (UiO) developed a framework for organised doctoral degrees, which was in continuous revision in accordance with changes in the university legislation, research strategy of the above mentioned institutions and UiO's internal strategies.

As documented above, development of structured doctoral degrees was promoted through a number of decades by a national top-down strategy. However, as is also shown, opinions differed between faculties; some introduced structured degrees ahead of national prescriptions while others were sceptical and reluctant to do so. Thus the development was also initiated from bottom-up or from single higher education institutions and faculties. In this respect the Department of Special Needs Education, UiO, was a pioneer.

Development of doctoral degree in special needs education through a series of regulations

How was the development of the structured doctoral degree in special needs education in particular? The Dr. Scient programme was outlined in three documents; regulations granted by a Royal Decree in 1986, supplementary regulations approved by the regional university college council in 1990, and a study programme describing the content and structure in more details. This formalisation and description of the doctoral programme in documents on three levels; overall regulations, supplementary regulations and study programme, came to be common practice for structured doctoral studies. The first group of doctoral research fellows in special needs education was admitted to the programme in 1987. The initial study programme for Dr. Scient was equivalent to two

semesters of studies of a combination of research methodology and the most recent research in special needs education. It was, however, reduced to 2/3 of an academic year at the first programme revision (Statens spesiallærerhøgskole, 1988; 1990; Statens spesiallærerhøgskole, undated; Statens spesiallærerhøgskole, revised, undated).

In the merger with the University of Oslo in 1991, the regulations for the Dr. Scient were revised in view of overall regulations for organised doctoral programmes at UiO. Since the department at that time had status equivalent to a faculty, the regulations were approved by the Academic Senate, which was the highest authority of the university (Institutt for spesialpedagogikk, UiO, 1994/95; Institutt for spesialpedagogikk, UiO, 1995; Institutt for spesialpedagogikk, undated; Universitetet i Oslo, 1992).

The next milestone for the doctoral degree occurred with the establishment of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, UiO, in 1996. A series of regulations were made through a transition period. As mentioned, the degree's being moved from the Faculty of Social Sciences seemed to meet resistance, at least amongst some senior researchers, and may also have contributed to their resistance to developing a new joint doctoral degree and study programme for the brand new faculty. As also mentioned, the new faculty started with the Dr. Polit. degree being 'borrowed' from the Faculty of Social Sciences. The joint practice regarding the structured doctoral degree was from that point based on the same Joint Regulations (Fellesforskrift) already approved for the Dr. Scient degree (Universitetet i Oslo, 1992) with revisions (08.04.1997), but now with the supplementary regulations of the Faculty of Social Sciences. However, each department at the Faculty of Educational Sciences formulated their own study programme. Thus the Department of Special Needs Education revised their former programme in accordance with revised and new supplementary regulations (Collett, 1999; Norges forskningsråd, 2002b; Universitetet i Oslo, 1999).

Even though the study programmes were formulated on the department level, decisions regarding courses and seminars were taken jointly as much as possible. The doctoral programmes at the Faculty of Educational Sciences were steadily revised in accordance with revisions of regulations on the university and faculty level, and after a time all departments agreed on one joint organised doctoral programme for the faculty. Currently, the doctoral study programme is a common matter for the faculty and is administered on the faculty level, including representatives from every department involved (<http://www.uv.uio.no/english/research/doctoral-degree/>).

The Bologna Statement, NOKUT and PhD at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, UiO

In 1999 twenty-nine European ministers signed the so-called Bologna Declaration. In 2003 all six countries participating in the WB 04/06 cooperation project – Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia and Norway – had become signatories. ([http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/Participating countries and organisations; BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/Participating%20countries%20and%20organisations;BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf)). The intention behind the declaration was to streamline European higher education through developing comparable degrees, common quality assurance, and fair recognition of foreign degrees within the signatory countries. The same system of study credits (ECTS) and the same length of study based on three years' undergraduate- and two years' graduate cycles were important goals. Later on in the Bologna process, a third PhD cycle of three years was added.

As previously mentioned, the so-called Mjøs Committee proposed to adapt the Bologna Declaration to Norwegian higher education. Already in 2003 the independent national organ, NOKUT, was established to monitor quality in higher education on all three levels, bachelor, master and doctoral education (<http://www.nokut.no/en/>; NOU (2000:14)). NOKUT's areas of responsibility were also described in some detail in § 2 in the new Universities and Colleges Act of 1 April 2005, two years after the founding of NOKUT. As an independent organ NOKUT was an intermediary between national policy as expressed in laws and other policy documents, and the individual universities. Thus, as indicated earlier, NOKUT should support, certify and assess educational programmes on all levels, including doctoral programmes.

The Bologna declaration and following incitements from NOKUT led to fast and radical changes and cuts in the course structure of the first two cycles. The length of the organised doctoral programme was, however in accordance with the expected three years stated in the Bologna process. The PhD degree, which had occasionally appeared in Norwegian university debate since the mid-twentieth century, was now constituted as the future degree for all structured doctoral programmes, and already in 2003 UiO presented Regulations for the degree Philosophiae Doctor (Ph.D.). At the same time new similar regulations for all the organised doctoral degrees at the university were passed in a transition period.

At the Faculty of Educational Sciences research fellows were enrolled in a new PhD programme after 2002. The PhD title was a joint title for all organised doctoral programmes at UiO, and supplementary regulations were phased out, except for a certain number of practical topics. The PhD programme was now

based on the joint regulations for UiO and a common study programme for the faculty. By now the time length of study courses was, as mentioned, one semester, which was half the time decided on in the first organised doctoral study programme in special needs education. The degree was now called PhD at the University of Oslo. However, in an additional attachment to the PhD diploma followed a document announcing in which research field the candidate had obtained his or her degree. Thus researchers from the Department of Special Needs Education obtained their PhD degree in special needs education at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, UiO. Subsequently since 2003 several revisions of the joint regulations and study programmes for the organised PhD degree have been implemented in accordance with revisions on the national level.

Similarly while the free Dr. Philos degree has been through a number of revisions, it is still a relevant alternative. To illustrate, a total of twelve Dr. Philos degrees were defended at the Department of Special Needs Education between 1988, when the first doctoral degree was defended and the conclusion of 2011. During the same period sixty-two doctoral dissertations were defended for the degree of Dr. Scient, Dr. Polit or PhD in Special Needs Education (<http://www.uv.uio.no/forskning/aktuelt/arrangementer/disputaser/>).

Summary and some reflections

How were doctoral studies established and practiced at the University of Oslo? How were they introduced and developed as the two disciplines of education and special needs education were founded at the university? How do the two types of doctoral degrees co-exist? These questions contain the main issues in the historical text study presented in this article. They show a two-hundred-year-old university which started ahead of laws and regulations, but with a certain financial foundation and professor-driven administration. Early in the initial pragmatic phase the first doctoral dissertation took place. The ambitious beginning was, however, soon replaced by the harsh reality of limited resources related to funding as well as qualified lecturers. The history of the first Norwegian doctoral degrees is a history of more than a century with predominantly reluctant, conservative and at times even avoidance-oriented attitudes amongst academics towards this highest degree.

Indeed, even with Niels Treschow, renowned for his epistemological theory, as a leading professor, and with the strong emphasis on education of new generations of academics, education as a university discipline was not established until

1936. However, the possibility of obtaining a Dr. Philos degree in this discipline was present from the outset, as with other university disciplines. In the 1960s when the new Anglo-American inspired structured doctoral degrees were incorporated in the natural sciences, a new wave of scepticism rolled into the humanistic and social sciences, including educational research. At this time the scepticism was also fuelled by the left-wing so-called sixty-eight protests. However, structured doctoral degrees in the educational disciplines were established in 1986 and 1987, with the newest discipline, special needs education, as the pioneer.

This article also documents how a series of national committees, law regulations and establishment of new institutions such as NFR and NOKUT have contributed considerably to a steady increase in the quality and funding of doctoral research, as have the universities and individual research disciplines. Thus, in the case of the Department of Special Needs Education, sixty-two doctoral theses have been defended for the structured degrees, Dr. Scient, Dr. Polit or PhD by the close of 2011. In addition twelve theses have been defended for the free Dr. Philos degree in the same period. These numbers indicate that the combination of a structured degree for the majority of research candidates together with a free doctoral degree giving the opportunity for professionals working outside the universities to gain recognition for their research contributions on a doctoral level is relevant and well-functioning. This view is supported by the four senior researchers interviewed about their experience and views concerning the history and current conditions for the two doctoral degrees in the subsequent article (Johnsen, 2013b).

The rapidly accelerating facilitation of large-scale research on a doctoral level at Norwegian universities has not happened in isolation. On the contrary their participation in the European Bologna Process of Higher Education has led to profound changes in the structure of higher education on all three levels, including doctoral studies. However, we are only in the beginning stages of this process, which has potential for extensive increases in cooperation and exchange of students and researchers. All in all the process may create greater closeness between European universities and European research. This is of specific importance for the collaboration between the West Balkan and Norwegian universities, of which this project is an example (WB 04/06). The third article concerning development of educational sciences at the doctoral level following in this book (Johnsen et al, 2013) provides a brief description and discussion of this development in the universities of Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tuzla, Zagreb and Oslo.

In light of the vast opportunities for cooperation, it is important to spot errors and omissions as well as contradictions in interpretations of joint principles in the Bologna process. One example of such an omission is that Master-level studies from one university in one country are not necessarily accepted in another participating country. This raises the question of whether the same discrepancy will apply to doctoral degrees. Another serious question concerns whether the increased possibilities for international cooperation will be realised throughout the European continent, or if it will result in a widening of the gap between a small group of so-called elite universities and an increasing number of universities and countries situated in the shadow of joint research development.

In his article on Reform Policy and Change (1996:202), Bleiklie argues that in the larger picture Norwegian universities have faced a double pressure, indicating that major changes are inevitable: On one front the huge increase in student numbers is pushing, and on another front, pressure is mounting from reform policy. Since 1996 the researcher has experienced a rapid and significant increase in demands made on him or her concerning being available for students and at the same time also for producing research-based articles. Meanwhile, the financial landscape has shrunk considerably. The resulting dilemmas are symptomatic for the quickly accumulating complexity and knowledge demands in contemporary society. This retrospective article about the historical development of Norwegian research education “through the voices of historical texts” indicates that major progress has been made concerning research on the doctoral degree level. It relates the long process of ups and downs to a few contextual glimpses through the two hundred years’ existence and development of the University of Oslo, revealing several accompanying dilemmas and problems, all of which need to be seriously and extensively addressed.

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