

Call for Papers

Collective work: "You will be a Doctor - My child." African PhD students' Experiences and Research Perspectives"

A PhD is the most important criteria for entry into academic life on a university level. To meet the ever-increasing demand for this qualification in African universities, there has been movement to create new universities, as well as a formalized system to integrate standards for Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees. This raises a question: How can new staff be integrated into the university? The requirements for a PhD vary from country to country, and university to university. In **Africa?**, one must have a Master's degree, a DEA (Advanced Studies Diploma) *or* an equivalent Master's (5 years post-graduation). In addition, one must have also taken examinable course work, taught and published. In either case, one must have written a **dissertation**, supervised by an authorized professor.

Although the crises of higher education and research in Africa have been well documented, little has been written about the conditions under which African PhD students write their dissertations. Their conditions of production and their stakes in the reinvigoration of knowledge creation remain unclear. In addition, although in numerous African countries, the history of higher education and research goes back to the colonial period, whether one is discussing *Universités coloniales*, *Universités des indépendances* or *Universités du développement*¹, little attention has been given to their research structures, particularly to research in the social sciences. This examination is critical, however, as universities do not just transmit already-well-established-knowledge; they are the place, *par excellence*, for knowledge production. Especially as the recent emergence of private universities, together with the increasing number of institutions of higher education, has hidden the state of imbalance between training needs and available resources. These imbalances have only worsened with problems of political influence, economic issues and the authoritative control of the State.²

Writing a PhD dissertation for the social sciences, allows one to contribute to scientific knowledge through the formulation of a research problem, the construction of a case study and a theoretical framework, and bringing to fruition quantitative or qualitative research, self-assessment and the promotion of the results. This process brings a necessary intellectual maturity; it is essential to understanding, and flexible enough to be transferable to different sorts of problems. The completion of a PhD takes time and effort (from three to

¹ Bethuel MAKOSSO, « La crise de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique francophone: une analyse pour les cas

² Mamadou DIOUF et Mahmoud MAMDANI, *La Liberté académique en Afrique*, Dakar, Codesria, 1993, 400 p.

ten years, although the current global trend is to reduce it to a maximum of four years); it requires a suitable institutional framework, financial and material support, independence and discipline. But in concrete terms, how do we write PhD dissertations in Africa today? How do we become Doctors in social sciences in Yaoundé, in Ouagadougou, in Dakar, in Nairobi, in Tunis or in Maputo?

This project will highlight the complex process of obtaining a PhD in contemporary Africa. More broadly, it will show the various aspects of the research profession in Africa, especially for junior academics. More than descriptive, it will offer in-depth analysis knowledge production in the African context. Priority will be given to young African researchers, PhD students and post-doctoral students, and those who aspire to embrace an academic career and mentor young graduates.

Authors who wish to contribute to this work are encouraged to include concrete information in their articles (anecdotes, personal experiences, photos, interviews transcriptions etc.), as well as to propose methodological reflections pertinent to local realities. Please see suggested, although not obligatory, topics:

- The motivation to do a PhD
- Academic embedment (Subject choice, supervisor choice, institutional relations with the senior staff members and scientific activities you are engaged in)
- Institutional organization (PhD registration, Financial support)
- Career (Publications, teaching)
- Data Collection (Access to the data, authorization, self distancing)
- Family and social status
- Gender relationship
- Political context and academic freedom
- The PhD defense
- After - The thesis
- African PhD students abroad

We are looking for proposals from PhD students, who are enrolled in African universities or universities abroad. An abstract of 600 words, together with a short bibliography, must be sent by April 5, 2015 to: livre.thesards.afrique@gmail.com

The authors whose contributions have been accepted will be invited to submit their complete articles (between 7,500 and 10,000 words) by September 30, 2015.