

Opponent Review of Doctoral Dissertation

Author: Mitchell Young, M.A.

Title: New Tools of Research Governance: Cases of research policy implementation in the Czech Republic, Sweden, and the European Union

Opponent: doc. Ing. Lubor Lacina, Ph.D., Mendel universita in Brno, Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence

Topic, title, objectives

Topic is relevant and actual, as research policy is one of the oldest policies coordinated at EU level. Research policy is also one of the most potential area for further europeanization. Sharing scarce resources and experiences at EU level in research has a big potential from economic point of view. Research area has huge synergy effect in sharing experiences at supranational level especially in the field of highly expensive technologies (like thermonuclear reaction) or in area of centres' of excellent concentrating the human potential of best European and international researchers.

Title of the thesis is partly misleading as it evoke in reader that the objective of the thesis is research policy in the broad concept of understanding. In reality author concentrate first to chapter only on university based research which is just minor part of the objective and focus of research policy.

Author stated two research questions, one central hypothesis and two sub-hypothesis. Both research questions and hypothesis are relevant. Unfortunately, I did not find explicit definition of main and partial objectives of the thesis.

Structure and methodology

Author proved high standards at both theoretical and methodological level. Both chapters devoted to literature review helps author to answer research questions and prepare good conceptual framework for own research. Chapter 3 and chapter 4 are

devoted to analysis of supranational level of research policy. I strongly appreciate subchapter devoted to argument in favour of europeanization of research policy. Also relevant is the first case study which evaluates the new EU research strategy called Horizon 2020. Literature review concludes by discussing typology of policy mechanisms for the evaluation and funding of research and their benefits and drawbacks.

Approach based on country case study is correct. However I am not sure if the arguments for selection just two countries – Sweden and the Czech Republic are defensible. If the main criterion for selection those two countries are their entirely quantified system of research evaluation, I would like ask the question, why UK case was not selected? UK is not just the country which is used as the inspiration and benchmark system for highly developed system of research evolution combining quantitative measures and peer review evaluation. UK has also one of the best practice experiences with method of called New Public Management since begin of 90s. The process of selecting countries for case study more random, than based on detailed evolution of key criteria's (scoring system).

I would like stress that author did show ability combine three narratives of public management and administration – New Public Management, Network Governance, and Neo-Weberian Bureaucracy.

Findings, conclusions

I strongly appreciate that each of the case study used in empirical part of the dissertation has been previously published as a peer reviewed journal article or book chapter.

If we put aside major obligation to the methodology of selecting countries for case studies, we can conclude that each case study brings very detailed analysis of researched problem. However, each case study looks more like separated piece of research rather than complex approach to the evolution of research policy. The highest added value of the dissertation may be seen in the operationalisation of three main variants of the new institutionalist theories and creation of typology of behaviour and its rationalization that was used to test for congruence between the policy instruments and the individual's behaviour.

Author is quite critical to both national systems. It is pity, that his alternative proposals like “variable geometries between disciplines and institutions“ are not further elaborated and tested for effectiveness.

Formal standards

Reviewed thesis has high formal standard. The structure follows recommendation for doctoral thesis. All used sources are cited correctly according citation norm. The title does not correspond with content of the thesis: “cases of research policy” vers. significantly narrow point of view “university-based research policy“.

Questions on author

- New Public Management is nice theoretical concept. What are however limits of New Public Management in policy making reality.
- Problem of measuring results of academic research are twofold – administrative and qualitative. How would you differentiate system for natural (technical) and social science?
- The European system of financing research is extremely bureaucratic. Almost one third of the budget is spending on administrative costs. How to make the whole process both at supranational level and national level less bureaucratic and more result oriented?

Overall assessment

Thesis brings new insight to the problematic of evaluating results of university research. Author makes synthesis of different theoretical and methodological approaches. However we can identify several drawbacks. Selection criteria for case studies are not clear. The whole practical part is quite analytical and even the analysed systems are criticised, author provides just general proposals for change or entirely new system which will be more efficient in both institutional and economic sense.

Summary and final evaluation

Presented dissertation of Mitchell Young by its methodological approach and achieved results fulfils the elementary demands on dissertations of a doctoral study programme. It answers research questions and verify hypothesis, which have been set, and by its contents it actually does bring an innovated knowledge related to the research topic. The candidate proves an acceptable theoretical and methodological background, and ability to apply it in practical application.

As far as the presented dissertation fulfils the criteria, **I recommend** it to be defended.

In Brno, May 7th, 2015

Signature of reviewer