THE PhD PROGRAM AS A CAREER PATH: Lessons learned by the PhD School in Psychology at the Catholic University of Milan

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PROJECT

REVISING THE MISSION AND THE FORMATIVE POSITIONING OF THE PhD SCHOOL IN PSYCHOLOGY, CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF MILAN (PhDSΨ -UC)

TOPICS:
1) Project aims
2) Strategic developments
3) Implementation at the training
4) … and organizational level
5) Open questions and challenges
1/A) PHDSΨ-UC: HISTORIC BACKGROUND

- Started in 2004 (XXVI cycle – 2011)
- ~ 9 students per year (~ 30 students in total)
- Length: 3 years
- “Broaden vision” of psychology:
  - multi-thematic
  - … multi-theoretical
  - … multi-methods perspective
- Twin and parallel training path:
  - COMMON 
    - Shared background
  - INDIVIDUAL
    - Specific and specialist research project

→ Historic choice: academic orientation
The PhD Program as a Career Path

1/B) PhDSΨ-UC: THE REASONS FOR CHANGE

1. **EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF THE SCHOOL’S OUTCOME**
   - Only 1/3 of the PhD candidates succeeded in an academic career evaluated as a “decent job”

2. **ECONOMIC AND REGULATORY PICTURE**
   - The University Reform in Italy (25/01/11) and the national economic situation have not improved young researchers’ career prospects

3. **SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT**
   - New demand for intangible knowledge/skills (information, communication, change, learning, empowerment, networking …)
   - New opportunities for soft/human sciences (also psychology)
2) PhDSΨ-UC’S PROJECT: STRATEGIC ASPECTS

- Widening professional outcomes

**IN THE PAST**

INSIDE the University (academic career)

**NOW/IN THE FUTURE**

INSIDE the University (academic career)

*And/or*

OUTSIDE the University (applied research professions)

The new positioning of the PhDSΨ
3) PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION: A - TRAINING LEVEL

• Three intervention lines:

1. STRENGTHENING COMMON AND SHARED COMPETENCES
   - Multi ..., fluid, versatile Ψ

2. FOCUS ON PROCESS METHODOLOGY COMPETENCES (NOT ONLY CONTENT)
   - Research projecting and processing anchored to the questions arising from the context

3. FOCUS ON CROSS COMPETENCES FOR RESEARCH PROFESSIONS
   - Proactive management of the research
4) PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION: B - ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

- NEW ATTENTION TO THE POST-DOC TRANSITION IN ORDER TO FOSTER PhD CANDIDATES’ ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE SCOPE OF APPLIED RESEARCH PROFESSIONS

- TWO LINES OF INTERVENTION
  1) STRENGTHENING RESEARCHERS’ MANAGEMENT SKILLS THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS COMPETENCES (SEE ABOVE, CHART 3)
  2) SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCUBATORS FOR APPLIED SPIN-OFFS
5) OPEN QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH LEVEL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROFESSIONS IN EXTRA-UNIVERSITY CONTEXTS

1. TO MITIGATE A CAREER REPRESENTATION ONLY FOCUSED ON ACADEMIA
   - How to convince PhD candidates (and their supervisors) that University is not the “only possible world”? …
   - … nor always the best one?

2. TO DEVELOP A VIEW OF APPLIED RESEARCH FOCUSED ON THE DEMAND ARISING FROM THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT
   - How to promote/enhance the “multi” profile of a researcher
     - Fluid, versatile
     - Able to design problem-based research?
5) OPEN QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES, follows

3) TO PROMOTE A PRO-ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH
   • How to sustain the development of the entrepreneurial-researcher?

4) TO CREATE KNOWLEDGE AND VALUE AMONG HIGH LEVEL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROFESSIONS IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT
   • How to make the context aware of applied psychological research relevance?
   • How to involve stakeholders and potential Clients in the spin-off planning?
All advice or shared experience is welcome!

Thank you for your attention!

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