

A Leadership Strategy to Enhance Quality of Research in a Doctoral School

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Abstract:

Quality of research at a doctoral school is measured by the standard of resulting publications from students and faculty members. A pipeline of good Masters's degree student students is beneficial to sustain high quality throughput.

There is a lack of guidance aimed at doctoral school managers to improve the quality of publications. Quality should be considered on different levels, including improving the impact of projects, quality of publications and reputation based on external evaluation of doctoral outputs. Often students and supervisors are unsure of the implications of the different requirements of PhD versus Master's degrees. Guidance is also required in deciding between journals and academic conference when results of post graduate students are published. Although governance structures often guide these decisions, the implication of specific regulations creates uncertainty.

In this paper, we propose the use of a framework to present a research project in terms of its specific contributions. From a philosophy of science perspective, it is accepted that research practice is guided by methodologies, which in turn is grounded in meta-physical assumptions of frameworks of understanding or theories. The proposed framework is an extension on the framework of presented by Peter Checkland in 1989 to structure a research project. Checkland discusses the framework from two perspectives, initially as a structure for a research project and secondly and later as a guide for an Action Research project.

In this paper we add two additional perspectives to the application area of the framework. We show how the framework can be used to distinguish between PhD and Master's studies as well as how the framework can be used to guide the selection of appropriate publications to disseminate research findings. Our position is that when this framework is used explicitly to structure projects and plan outputs, the quality of outputs will increase.

Using the framework as guiding tool for quality will empower managers of doctoral schools to enhance the quality of projects through structured dialogue with students and supervisors. The paper provides a demonstration of such a dialogue for a specific project in Information Systems Education Research.