Enhancing Pathways to and through Graduate School: the View from above the 49th (or being Bologna before Bologna)

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Graduate Enrolments

Canadian Context I

Similarities
PhDs look broadly similar to US doctorates
- fundamentally the same expectations
- fundamentally the same structure
- changing demographics – the student of today is not the same as 20 years ago
  - 40% in CGPSS are married:
    - 25% have children
  - 59% women in US, 46.2% in Canada
    - 2006 data for Canada
    - 19.5% in 1972
    - yet women were better represented in CGPSS (51%)
  - StatsCan does not track visible minority status
Doctoral Enrolments

Proportion of Women at the Masters and Doctoral Level

Similar Challenges

- times to completion
- attrition – currently 65% complete in 9 years (G13 data)
- placements in a time of recession
- funding amount and composition
  - what is the best way to support students – guaranteed packages?
  - length and kind of support
    - CGPSS report TA most common form (59%)
    - 56% report fed/prov scholarship
- concern over adequacy of career preparation
  - need to move away from self-reproduction mode
- global competition vs global cooperation
Canadian Context III

Contrasts between US and Canada

- Less Differentiation in Canadian Higher Ed
- Fewer revenue streams
  - universities are all public institutions
  - funding is largely provincial
  - federal research money
  - endowments play a limited role
  - big challenge in funding int’l admits
- Collective Agreements
  - often determine time in program
Three-Cycle Structure

Big Difference is the role of the Master’s degree in Canada

- historically the masters degree was intended as preparation for the PhD
  - most masters were therefore research-focused
  - 1 to 2 years; thesis or MRP
  - usually full time, often funded
  - recent growth in professional masters while still retaining research masters
Relation of the masters to the doctorate

**Bologna before Bologna**
- direct-entry PhDs are still the exception
- instead, masters and doctorates either treated as discrete degrees or articulated through internal promotion

**Intent**
- allows both partners to take a roadtest
- provides students with the chance to experience original research at reduced risk
- facilitates scholarship applications
- can be an end in themselves
  - no sense in Canada of the Masters as the failed PhD
Relation of the masters to the doctorate

**Impact**

- improved times to completion
  - 5.3 years is the G13 median
- completion rates
  - Canada 65% (G13): US 56%
    - most striking in SS&H
    - 50% in Humanities and
    - 59% in SS complete in
    - 9 years
Other Trends/Directions in Canada

Increased use of milestones

Transferable/professional skills
- CAGS Statement on Professional Skills Development
  - Stalled Tricouncil statement
- Complementary certificates/diplomas
- Internships
- Partnerships – NSERC CREATE program

But CGPSS survey of doctoral students points to the following failings:
- advice on careers outside academe
- advice on IP
CAGS

38th Statistical Report (Revised), 2009
A Profile of Master’s Degree Education in Canada, 2006
Professional Skills Development for Graduate Students, 2008
Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, 2010

Susan Pfeiffer, The Masters Degree in Canada, CAGS Annual Meeting, Seattle, 2007
(http://www.cgssnet.org/portals/0/pdf/mtg_am07Pfeiffer.pdf)