



Original Contribution

ABOUT THE ABSTRACTS (SUMMARIES) OF DISSERTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The paper will give readers a reasonable idea of how the abstracts of the dissertations are unnecessary today in the presence of scientific juries. The personal opinion of the author is expressed here on the subject of the abstracts of doctoral degree dissertations – for a doctor (Dr., PhD) and for a doctor of science (DSc.).

Methods: Several scientific methods were used in the creation of this article: obtaining information on the topic through different search methods; experience and knowledge.

Results: The history, essence, idea and goals of the dissertation abstract are briefly presented. The main elements of the structure of the abstract, as well as the practice of its printing today, are constructively critically examined.

Conclusions: If there is a scientific jury, there is no need for an abstract. By giving up writing abstracts, it will save us a lot of energy and time, and therefore increase our standard of living.

Key words: dissertation (or PhD thesis) abstract (or summary/synopsis), PhD thesis, aim of the abstract, history of the abstract, Higher Attestation Commission, scientific juries, doctor (PhD), doctor of science (DSc)

INTRODUCTION

Bulgarian education (higher and postgraduate) is brought into line with the requirements of the Bologna process and is available to foreign students from any corner of the world. Here we will focus on one of the elements of the Bulgarian postgraduate education system (making a dissertation / thesis for doctoral degrees), namely dissertation abstracts (summaries). The motivation for this report was received a long time ago (and the idea goes back to 2010) and is the result of: conversations with researchers both from Bulgaria and from many other countries; the laws and regulations for the awarding of scientific degrees, both by bodies such as HAC

(Higher Attestation Commission) and by scientific juries. HAC (1) is a Bulgarian state institution subordinate to the Council of Ministers and existed until 2010. Its main function was to award scientific degrees and titles, used mainly by university professors, researchers from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), etc. It was established on March 14, 1949, according to the Soviet model, with the aim of strengthening state control in the educational and scientific sphere. Similar bodies exist in other countries, for example, in the countries of the former Soviet Union, as well as in the Russian Federation, Romania, Hungary, etc. The commission was closed by the law on the development of academic personnel in the Republic of Bulgaria, adopted in May 2010.

The purpose of the article is to provide brief and useful information about the benefits that people in Bulgaria would have if they did not have to

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write dissertation abstracts. With a sense of responsibility and readiness to take blows, I affirm that abstracts of dissertations are completely unnecessary and even harmful when dissertations are defended before a scientific jury, as is now customary in Bulgaria. The article does not contain new information on the topic under consideration. I wanted and needed to share with people involved in science a point of view that is different from the generally accepted one now. I wrote the article as a gift to others, with full conviction and no doubt that my opinion on this issue will be shared.

In the creation of this article, several scientific methods were used: obtaining information on the topic through literature search, analysis, creativity, logic, literary synthesis and personal contacts; the accumulated personal experience and knowledge served as the basis for the creation of the proposed conclusions.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT - WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT NEEDED

The abstract is one of the mandatory attributes that a doctor (or DSc) student must prepare and submit before the upcoming defense of a dissertation (both before 2010 and after). The abstract of the dissertation is a brief statement (summary) of the text of the dissertation (for a doctor or doctor of science), presented in the form of a brochure and designed in accordance with certain requirements: - of the HAC and state standards - until 2010; - of the regulations of the universities or institutes of the BAS, after 2010. The abstract is written after the completion of work on the main text of the dissertation. Therefore, the name of this type of work should contain the element "auto-", i.e. it would be more correct to call it "autoabstract", and not just abstract. It is a brief informative retelling of the original multi-page scientific work prepared by the author of the study. The length of an abstract for a Dr. dissertation is on average (approx. 40,000 characters with spaces) about 24 pages, and for a DSc dissertation it is about 48 pages. In the humanities and social sciences, abstracts of a slightly larger length (1.5 times) are allowed. But this is not respected, and when I have done research in recent years, I found that there is no single established standard for the exact number of pages, that most abstracts have half the number of pages as dissertations. That is, if the

dissertation is 100 pages, then the abstract is about 50 pages.

ABSTRACT - AT HIGHER ATTESTATION COMMISSION

The relatively small length of the abstract and its availability (compared to the full text of the dissertation) allows more people to get acquainted with the materials provided for defense, as well as, above all, with the results of scientific research. This is the purpose of abstracts for laws with a HAC available. A properly prepared and formatted dissertation abstract will allow all those present at the defense to familiarize them with the work itself in the shortest possible time, which, of course, would be impossible for all members of specialized scientific council of the Higher Attestation Commission, since for them the original multi-page dissertation is not available. Usually, the dissertation is defended in front of a specialized scientific council of the Higher Attestation Commission, which includes about 30 people - prominent scientists in the field of dissertation. After the Dr. or DSc degree candidate's presentation of his/her own scientific results and achievements, two or three reviewers respectively present their reviews to the audience. By law, reviewers are required to read and study both the dissertation and the abstract. All reviewers clearly emphasize the relevance of the development, research methods and results, as well as an assessment of how original the results obtained in the dissertation are and to what extent they are the candidate's personal work. The abstract is intended to serve the members of the specialized scientific council of the HAC to get acquainted with the results obtained and ask questions (if any), referring to graphs, tables, formulas, etc. by looking at the abstract before and during the dissertation defense. Initially, but now, as far as I know, this is not the case, the abstract contained only the results and contributions, and a list of publications on which the dissertation was written. The relevance, methods and literature used are reported by the reviewers.

Naturally, it would be better if each member of the specialized scientific council of the HAC received a book of dissertation in order to get acquainted with the obtained results and be ready for their discussion on the day of the defense. But

human nature is such that very few people would do anything if they were not obligated or personally strongly interested and motivated (for example, they work precisely on this particular topic, this method or material, this model). So, the majority of members of the specialized scientific council of the HAC even the abstracts do not read in advance, what are left to read or review the dissertation until the moment of defense. It turns out that besides the fact that it is very expensive to give books of dissertations, there is no point, and the dissertation is replaced by an abstract.

ABSTRACT - WITHOUT HAC, WITH A SCIENTIFIC JURY

According to the current law, since 2010, on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (2), the defense of a dissertation takes place before a scientific jury. The scientific jury for a doctor consists of five members, and for a doctor of science – of seven members. Each member of the scientific jury receives a dissertation and an abstract. Each member of the scientific jury is obliged to become familiar with both the content of the dissertation and that of the abstract. He also has to give them an assessment.

If the dissertation is good, it doesn't matter what the abstract is. In the abstract, essential things may be missing, or they may be in excess. It can consist of 1/3, or even 2/3 only from literary sources. For example, here are two nice dissertations based on several articles with an impact factor (3, 4). As I already said, the abstract does not matter here: abstract (3) lacks the list of publications on which the dissertation was written; and in abstract (4), which is 60 pages in total, the list of references occupies 10 pages.

A sufficient number of books and guides for writing dissertations and abstracts, published before and after 2010, have been published in Bulgaria. Surprisingly, in all of them, the abstract is considered as a short copy of the dissertation and its quintessence. For example, nowhere does it say that the bibliography has no place in the abstract. At least that is my opinion. Here the reference book (5) from 2014 also emphasizes the special importance of the evaluation of the scientific jury and the establishment of the correspondence of the abstract with the text of the

dissertation. And not a single law or regulation says that the evaluation of an abstract by a scientific jury has any significance. The text of the abstract, regardless of whether it is good or bad, is published on the website of the relevant institute or university a month before the defense of the dissertation and remains there unchanged for at least 5 years, see Art. 4, par. 13 of the law (2).

Each member of the scientific jury has the text of the dissertation, which is great. But then why is there an abstract? Isn't it redundant! Isn't it an anachronism from before 2010, when there was HAC, and the abstract was really necessary then? I don't understand why we need it today when there is a scientific jury!

When talking to foreign researchers from countries where dissertations are defended before a scientific jury, it is quite difficult to explain to them what an abstract is, and even more difficult - what is the purpose of writing an abstract. Indeed, these foreign researchers need an explanation, because at the very mention of the word abstract, they confuse it with the Dissertation Summary, which is one to four pages long. Each dissertation should have a short summary, which is most often 2 to 4 pages. In this connection, I will give only one example. The dissertation (6) of the colleague, Assist. Prof. Dr. Rusislava Stefanova Zaharieva-Georgieva, defended in an American university before a scientific jury, is freely available on the website of this university. There is no abstract, because it is not necessary in the presence of a scientific jury. This is true for both the USA and Mexico, for the EU countries like Belgium, Germany, France, etc.

The doctoral student, who has already written a dissertation, takes the time to write an abstract as well.

The abstract of the dissertation is printed separately in ten hard copies, in order to give these copies to the members of the scientific jury, to evaluate it. After the defense, the dissertation and the abstract are uploaded to the NACID (National Centre for Information and Documentation) website (7) and are publicly available.

DISCUSSION

Let's imagine that there are no abstracts of dissertations, since we do not need them. What would it give us?

- Saving energy and time for writing them;
- Saving energy and time for reading and evaluating them by the scientific jury;
- Saving time, paper, and toner to print them;
- Saving energy for their transportation.

In addition, global paper production focuses on the consumption of fresh water, wood and energy for production purposes. About 20% of the world's wood harvest is used to make paper. That is, saving paper will be part of a comprehensive effort to develop a "green" economy, a contribution to creating a cleaner and more environmentally friendly environment.

And in addition, we will share and adopt the useful experience of countries, where dissertations have been defended before scientific juries for years (such as the USA, Canada, Mexico, Germany, France, Belgium, etc.) and there are no abstracts of dissertations.

The point of view presented here about abstracts of dissertations is an extremely interesting and relevant topic. This year, for the first time, I participated with an oral report on the topic discussed here at a conference (8). To my pleasant surprise, after the presentation of the report, all participants in the conference section not only spoke on the topic but also gave me new ideas. One of them was about the work of scientific juries, which I will share. Without abstracts, the work of the scientific juries (on dissertation defenses) in Bulgaria will be easier and will become better. Then we will be sure that every member of the jury has read the dissertation and not just the abstract.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, in the presence of the Higher Attestation Commission, the abstract is the most important part of the defense of any dissertation. This is evidenced by the experience of Bulgaria, as well as the countries of the former Soviet Union.

In the presence of a scientific jury and the absence of the Higher Attestation Commission, the abstract is unnecessary and complicates the procedure for defending each dissertation. Even the lack of dissertation abstracts in countries with long experience in defending dissertations before scientific juries prove it.

We would do well to dispense with abstracts, that ersatz of dissertations. And to publish on the organization sites only the dissertations. Then everyone wins, it will be easier to check for plagiarism, National Centre for Information and Documentation will save space on its servers, etc.

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