

COMPARATIVE RESEARCH TO AMELIORATE CONDITIONS OF THE TERTIARY EDUCATION (PH.D.) IN AZERBAIJAN

Abstract: The research was conducted as a conference paper for the ADA University 4th International Education Conference in 2019. The aim of this study is to analyze the position of Ph.D. level in Azerbaijan, its drawbacks and the ways how to enhance and place it fittingly in the world. The data collection methods were document analysis, survey, interviews, and their quantitative content analysis. The results of the analysis show that the Azerbaijani researchers are willing to integrate to the world science, however, there are a lot of difficulties, pitfalls and general procedure do not respond to the standards of world science strategy. It was found out that, researchers get support much more from their advisors rather than universities. Ph.D. candidates are pushed to do research work without any instructions, method, and resources. Considering the low scholarship and high education fee, almost all researchers work which make the process more complicated and life-long lasted. Although the government has already implemented various programs and reforms, still there are many aspects to work on. The current research recommends different European universities' experience and strategy in this field.

Keywords: Doctorate, Ph.D., tertiary education, research work, thesis

Figures in the document may contain minor inaccuracies due to the fact that the Education System of the Azerbaijan Republic is still under extensive reform.

Introduction: There are three steps in Azerbaijan education system for higher education: Bachelor Studies, Master Studies, and Ph.D. Studies. Azerbaijan, like Russia and former USSR republics, has two steps of academic degree: Doctor of Philosophy (in a certain field) and Doctor of Sciences degrees. "There is no equivalent of this "doctor of sciences" degree in US academic

system. It is roughly equivalent to Habilitation in Germany, France, Austria, and some other European countries.” (Academic degree) Among all universities, only Khazar University implements a Ph.D. as the highest degree. “A doctorate is the highest level of higher education and provides preparation of scientific and scientific-pedagogical personnel and ensures raising the qualifications and scientific degrees. Rules for the establishment of Doctoral Candidacy and admission to Doctoral Candidacy were approved by decision №129 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated July 01, 2010.” (Decision no. 129)

The Ministry of Education and the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences are the main bodies responsible for doctoral programs. The Supreme Attestation Commission is responsible for delivering the doctoral diplomas. Higher education in Azerbaijan is provided at universities/institutes/academies/conservatoires.

“Azerbaijan’s education system is growing rapidly through integrative networks, especially since September 2005 when the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed a membership agreement with European Higher Education Area in Norway.” (BSU, Khazar University, 2017, p.22). “Azerbaijan enjoyed a consistent economic growth; by 2013 the GDP of Azerbaijan increased 5 times compared to its 1995 level. In GDP the share of education expenditure is 3.2%, while the share of expenditure on higher education is 0.25%. Azerbaijani GDP (PPP) per capita was about 6,115 U\$D in 2015.” (Overview of the Higher Education System, Azerbaijan, p.8) After 5 years, the numbers are still the same, according to State Statistics: **State budgetary financing of science**

	2013	2017
expenditures for science from the state budget, million manat	117,0	109,8
in percent to GDP	0,2	0,2
in percent to state budget expenditures budget expenditures	0,6	0,6

According to the world bank, in 2016 Azerbaijan spent 17,083% government expenditure on tertiary education which is higher than in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan. (World Bank)

According to the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan Republic during ten years (2007-2017) in all indicators (the number of institutions carrying out Ph.D. program, graduates of Ph.D. and those who defended the dissertation) numbers almost double times increased. However, the difference between the graduated (529) and defended (74) is still seven times less in 2017.

1.9.1 Main indicators of Ph.D. (source: State Statistic Committee)

	2007	2017
Number of institutions carrying out Ph.D. program	96	117
Number of persons studying by the Ph.D. program, person	1681	2168
including women	565	1215
Admission to the Ph.D. program, person	452	455
Graduates of the Ph.D. program, person	431	529
including those defended a dissertation	31	74

Theory/Context:

Admission for the Ph.D. level is implemented by each organization, institution or universities on 24 science fields (135 professional doctorate studies programs). As soon as a candidate is accepted for this level s/he should find an adviser, select topic and start a three-years (part-time -four-years) challenge. In further procedures, an organization takes the least support and all responsibilities lay on the candidate and his/ her instructor.

Since 2010, a number of measures have been taken by the government in order to integrate Azerbaijani science into the international scientific community:

1. “Azerbaijan 2020: Vision of the Future” and the “National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan”;
2. Elimination of postgraduate course (aspirantura) since 2010;
3. Establishment of Azerbaijan Young Scientists, Post-Graduates and Masters Union (AYSPMU) (2003), the Science Development Foundation (2009), Republican

Competition “Scientists of Tomorrow” (2011), The Knowledge Foundation (2014), Youth Foundation (2011);

4. “State Program on Education of Azerbaijani Youth Abroad in 2007-2015” exchange program (3558 students), as well as Mevlana, Erasmus, Tempus, Horizon 2020, State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan Republic within the framework of the State Program;
5. “State Program for increasing international competitiveness of the higher education system of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2019-2023” between the Ministry of Education and Clarivate Analytics (“Web of Science®”)
6. Increasing the duty salaries for academic degrees (2017) and scholarships/ stipends (2019) for Ph.D. candidates;
7. Azerbaijan National Academy of Science supports young Ph.D. (under 35) with discounted apartments as well as government;

From the table below, it is obvious that all aforementioned reforms are giving its results, the number of Azerbaijani scientists’ papers published in indexed journals has increased 74 percent and science in Azerbaijan is getting younger. 1.9.12. Students studying a Ph.D. program in 2017 by age groups:

	including by age			
	under 30 years old	30-34	35-39	40 years and over
Total, person	1067	512	289	300
including attached to:				
Ministry of Education	668	216	162	187
National Academy of Sciences	197	125	46	49

Literature review: All universities give detailed information about the admission for Ph.D. on their website. That information is taken from the website of both Ministry of Education and Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan. That is why they all contain the same information of general rules.

Various decisions, bulletins, statistical tables, laws by the government, ministry, committees are used in this research paper which can be considered quite reliable and valid. Several news portals wrote about Ph.D. admission, education fees and just slightly its problems and nothing about future reforms.

Great and comprehensive research was done in English by the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan, Baku State University and Khazar University in 2017. They touched fields like doctoral education structure, doctoral candidates, thesis submission and research excellence. It can be accepted as a detailed report with all laws and reforms. Still, it lacks detailed implications and Ph.Ds.' point of view to the problems. Professor and founder of Khazar University Hamlet Isakhanli gave some solid current problems of Azerbaijani Higher Education like endemic corruption and bribery, lack of academic freedom, no autonomy, absence of rector conferences, etc. in his article "Strengths and Weaknesses of Private Universities in a Transition Economy: a View from Azerbaijan" which can be useful, yet outdated.

All in all, none of the articles published till now, mentioned the problems of modern tertiary education, the reasons for its pitfalls and ways of solution.

Methodology: Why do almost more than half of the Ph.D. candidates cannot defend their thesis in time? Why some researchers drop out their research in the middle of their education? What are the bounders and pitfalls that lead to low outcomes of tertiary education? The research hypothesis is that although there were some reforms in higher education institutions and scientific organizations by Cabinet of Ministers in 2010, this sphere is still whirling between the old Soviet education system and Bologna system ("Plan of activities on implementation of the

requirements of Bologna Declaration in the higher education system of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2006-2010” was adopted in 2005).

This paper examines the ways how to enhance the quality of the research thesis and what to do to help Ph.Ds. candidates successfully craft, defend and present their work not only locally but also internationally. The focus of this research is to present some comparative suggestions in order to uplift the status of national Ph.D. among European countries and eliminate certain drawbacks. The data collection methods were comparison the local defense procedure with European Universities and conducting a survey among Ph.D. candidates, interview with advisors, heads of the Office of Doctoral Studies.

A twenty questions survey was designed to gather information about whether Ph.D. candidates were satisfied with the procedures, did they get enough preparation, planning, critical thinking, and dedication, their thought, and ideas about that level of education in Azerbaijan, etc. To this purpose, the survey included multiple questions on their admission, advisors, institutions and their thesis. The survey questions were both closed, employing 5-point Likert-type scales, and open-ended question prompting free text responses. The survey was written in Azerbaijani using Google Form and participants answered the questions online. It was launched during March 2019 and the number of volunteers was sixty-five. All respondents volunteered to participate; they were given a written information sheet about the research. None of the personal questions were asked and anonymity was ensured.

Three workers of Doctoral Studies in various fields were interviews with the following questions:

1. How do you evaluate nowadays highest education level in Azerbaijan?
2. What are the main obstacles and barriers that only small amount of researchers can defeat their thesis?
3. What are the relevant solutions to enhance research works?

All three promised to talk sincerely if their anonymity would be kept. According to them, unfortunately, the main obstacle is active corruption and bribery in this field. People who need higher status but do not have time, pay for research and order its writing. Experts in this field implement order as their position salary is very low. The best solution is to make it more electronic and increase duty salaries.

Personal interview with several advisors, professors and instructors shed some light on this field from the different angles. So that, according to two professors the persistent, hardworking and really deserved candidates are able to enter, study, conduct valuable researches and defend their thesis, even present it in the world. The main indicator is a competent researcher, not the government, organizations, or advisors.

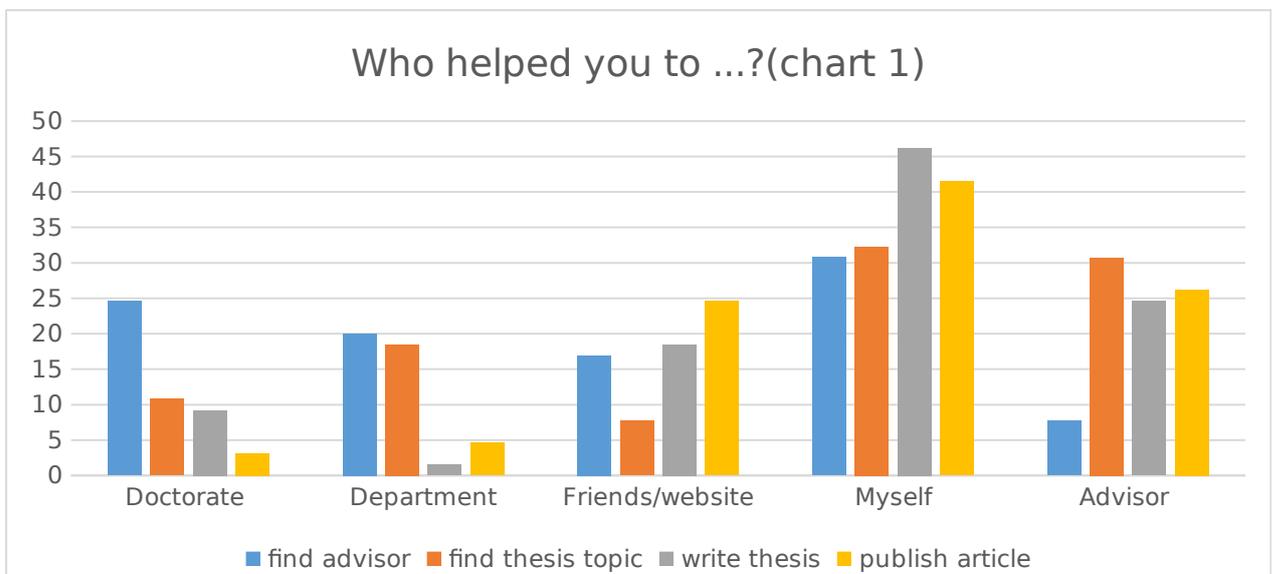
The limitations are: the findings are not suitable for generalization since this investigation concerns only one education level and due to the limited time, it was possible to contact several experts and advisors. Online survey respondents were also limited and cannot reflect an attitude of a broader segment of Azerbaijani researchers who are not regular users of the Internet or are not followers of social media. That is why the results cannot be determined for the whole Ph.D. contingency.

Findings: The units of analysis in this research paper is Ph.D. candidates. Thus, a survey questionnaire has been administered to collect original data for describing researchers' point of view and basic needs in this sphere. Conducted nonprobability sampling was sufficient vehicle for measuring support and aid from advisors and universities for this specific group. The questions were not mandatory, so there are variations in response numbers, as shown in the tables.

Most of the respondents were researchers who graduated their education period but could not defend their thesis (46%). Others are still continuing their research (20%), whereas 4,6% dropped out. The main reasons that forced them to drop out their education were difficulties in

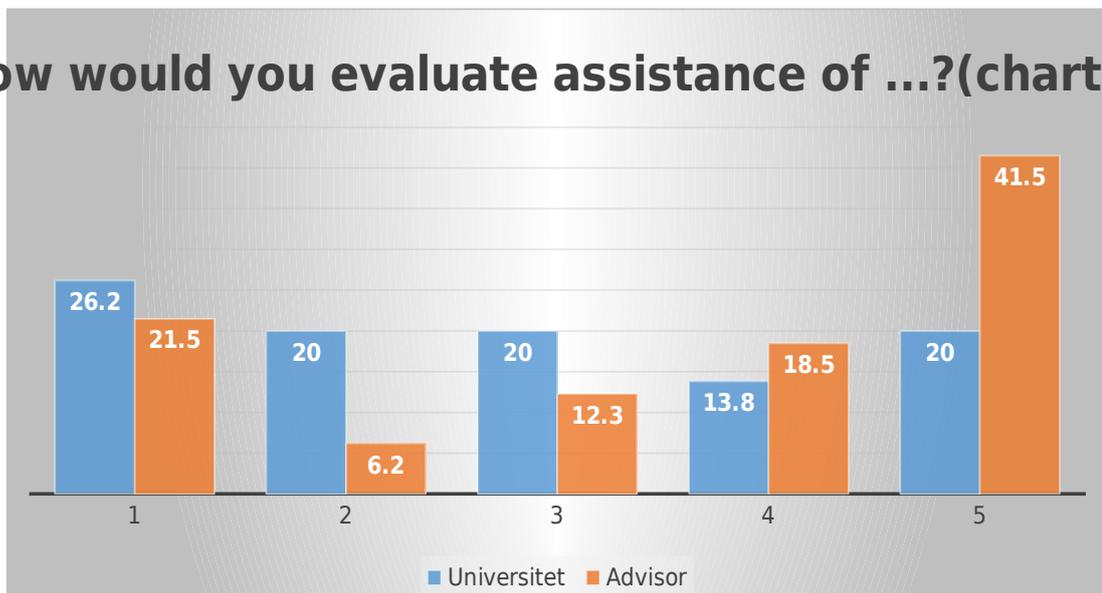
combining work with research and the complicated, long and tiring procedure of defense both with 26% correspondingly. Only 19 out of 65 respondents defeated their thesis and it took almost 6-7 years. Answers were almost positive to the question of whether they think Ph.D. admission was fair (48%).

In the given chart 1, the numbers show that researchers themselves mainly take an active part in the selection of the advisor, thesis topic, obtaining writing style, the publication of abroad article and participation in foreign conferences, which can be considered positively and in a self-reliant state.



The interesting part was researchers' answers concerning the level of advisors' and universities' help. Respondents think that advisors help much more rather than universities. Unfortunately, none of the respondents said that got teaching position (a part-time position) in higher education institutions or academic organizations with the approval of supervisors/advisors.

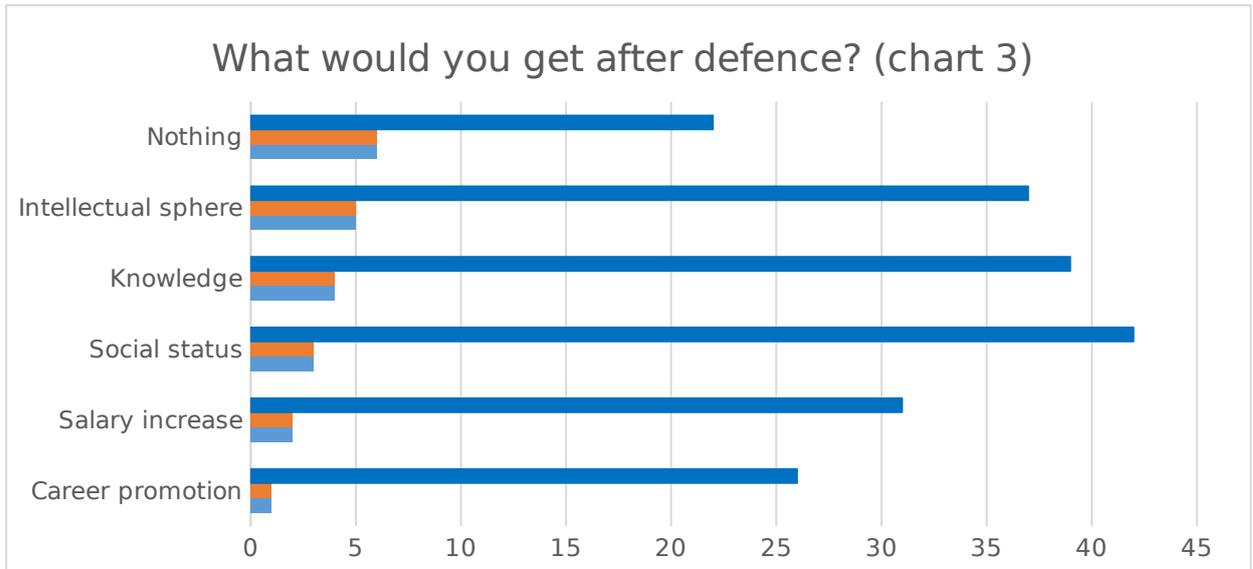
How would you evaluate assistance of ...?(chart 2)



Researchers expressed willingness in expanding exchange programs (63%), applying compulsory “academic writing” and “research methodology” classes (59%) and eliminating minimal exams (39%). Linking to that info, it would be right to mention there are several mandatory courses like 1. Philosophy (for independent Dissertation Researchers only), 2. Informatics (Computer Science), 3. English language, 4. Azerbaijani language (for foreigners only), 5. Major, 6. Compliance exam (or a Complimentary Subject). It would be sincere to admit that most of them are not implemented or financed (both course and exam) by the universities. Exchange programs remain a dubious and insufficient issue as Azerbaijan universities compared to European universities do not have the same resource for implementing joint degrees or exchange programs. While observing almost always university workers take part in those limited exchange programs and outsider PhDs are out of reach.

Also, respondents use already published articles and papers (71%) and mainly online library resources (70%) in English (77%) and Russian (59%) languages. They conduct book analysis (63%), translation (60%) and experiments (39%). 22 respondents out of 65 were disappointed for studying Ph.D. in Azerbaijan. Only 9 Ph.D. candidate think that their research would be useful for world knowledge.

Chart 3 illustrates the main reasons for the candidates to implement their research until the end. The main factor is “Social status” as can be seen (42%).



There was one open-ended question in the survey, where accumulated engrossing answers. Qualitative analysis of coding and categorizing can give the following table:

Question- What would be your advice in order to advance this field?						
Focus group- PhD graduates, Ph.D. candidates, and Ph.D. dropouts		Number (almost 40 responses)	Online questions- Google Form	Location- Azerbaijan	Date- March 10-30, 2019	No personal questions; Anonymity was ensured
By	Ways to improve	Fields to add		Fields to eliminate	Financing	
University	Admission must be fair Second foreign adviser; Support from the university for field and practical research; Selection of valuable themes in the world; Strong control over adviser's work; Defense proses should be much easier;	One-year practical education (academic writing and social research methods); Compulsory teaching hours;		Final exams; English is not important for all PhDs (like Azerbaijan language and literature);	Elimination of education fee; Free of charge article publication; Finance of IELTS exams;	
Government	Up-to-date materials in local libraries; The living condition should be raised; Simplifying of documentation procedures;	Access to the world databases; Concession for researches; At least one-semester exchange program (joint doctoral programs);		Artificial barriers; Abolish of Supreme Attestation Commission;	Monthly scholarship (up to 1000 AZN); Support for PhDs from the regions (like accommodation; Payment for international conferences;	
Pessimism		In Azerbaijan, nothing will be changed (7 replies)				

By the help of our countrymen, Azerbaijani Network of Academics, ANA were established recently for the support of Azerbaijani scholars in America. “ANA fulfills a special mission to streamline academic work on Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis in America to serve both the community and the US society in general serving as an intellectual focal point for the community’s development, promoting Azerbaijan/is related research and acting as a platform to strengthen scientific bridge with academia in Azerbaijan.” (ANA) The ANA will organize its first academic symposium on June 17-18, 2019 at the George Washington University where US-based Azerbaijani researchers are highly appreciated.

Ex-minister Mikayil Jabbarov found the main problem in the field of Master and Ph.D. degrees the financing issues. In the XXI Republican Scientific Conference of doctoral students and young researchers, Jabbarov said: “Currently, the main problem with doctoral and master's studies in Azerbaijan is that preparation of academic staff in the universities is not carried out at the expense of the state, but at the expense of higher education institutions themselves”. According to him, this approach creates a basis for some negative phenomena observed in recent years and does not fully reflect the priorities of state policy. (Report.az, 2017) In practice, higher education systems are mostly financed by the state budget, and by tuition fees.

Current Minister of Education Jeyhun Bayramov drew attention to the fact that there are no Doctors of Science under 30 in universities, instead of doctors of science over 63 predominate. “At the moment, the Ministry of Education is working to improve the education process in doctoral studies, its structure in accordance with the requirements of European education standards,” said Mr. Bayramov. (Azerbaijan vision, 2019)

Statesmen like Member of the Milli Majlis Committee on Science and Education Sona Aliyeva, AYSPMU chairman Ilgar Orujov, ANAS Ph.D. department chief Omar Gulalov strongly praise current situation of researchers and talk about positive sites of Azerbaijan science development.

There is a big issue regarding tuition fees. Ph.D. education fees vary between 2,400 up to 4,000 AZN/year. Regarding the scholarship, doctoral candidates studying full-time and benefitting from free of charge positions receive a state allowance of 120 AZN/month. As an example, at Baku State University, 90% of all doctoral candidates are charged the full tuition fees and only 10% of candidates benefit from free tuition. “No other research allowance/grants are available. The majority of doctoral candidates work in order to cover their living/research expenses (i.e. at least 50% of doctoral candidates). It is widely recognized that doctoral programs tend to be self-funded.” (BSU, Khazar University, 2016). Dire economic prospects after graduation: the level of wages for doctoral graduates is a significant issue (only 30 AZN extra because of gained degree). Salaries for supervisors and teaching staff are also low (40 AZN/month for one Ph.D. candidate).

Discussion: The collected data from the survey and interviews strongly indicate that nowadays there are plenty of young people who would like to conduct various researches and contribute to world sciences. Although admission can be considered fair and impartial, studying at the Ph.D. level and especially the documentation and defense are complicated and dubious. Almost every researcher complains against bureaucracy. In order to apply for the first discussion of the thesis at the institution where it is fulfilled, the Ph.D. candidate must collect twelve various sealed, signed and confirmed (at ASAN services) documents. (Bulletin, p.56) It strongly slows science-education-enterprise off, assessing and evaluating information, critical thinking and mobility skills of the researchers, making them constantly busy with documentation.

The second and utmost problem can be considered the low income and expensive commitments: publications of various articles, participation in abroad conferences, exams, purchase of books, different experiments and data collections, edition and printing of thesis. All these and many more scare the young and financially dependent researchers off. No wonder that some respondents offered up to 1000 AZN monthly scholarship for Ph.D. in the survey.

It appeared that there are limited institutions that support and assist their researchers with access to online databases. Some universities organize conferences and give an opportunity for free of charge participation for their researchers and that is all. “According to the Accreditation Committee laws, if there is penalty criminal offense, plagiarism of higher education documents, discrimination, bribery or broken the professional code of ethics rules, then advisors and researchers are punished and dismissed from their position or dissolves the decisions of the dissertation councils.” (Bulletin, p. 18) As a result, the universities never get a penalty and they do not work much on the enhancement of the true researches.

The analysis of survey and interviews one more time confirms that there is a lot of room for improvement and development some novel reforms in the Ph.D. level of Azerbaijan Republic. Although compared with some neighborhood countries Azerbaijan has advanced in this sphere a lot, still government should keep it under constant control.

Conclusion/ Implications: The present study strongly supports the concept that the government and the Ministry of Education work on uplifting the resources and conditions of the researchers. Unfortunately, it is hard to say the same about universities. During five years, universities applied antiplagiarism program which can be considered the only new step towards research ethics, fraud, and plagiarism in research. According to the European experience in this field, government, ministry and organizations (institutions) should support their researchers with the followings:

- There are almost the same requirements in all institutions for Ph.D. admission in Azerbaijan: master degree, at least two articles, an exam from philosophy, English and the major subject. After that, the commission can either interview the future researcher or blindly select. In order to eliminate prejudice and favoritism or any biases, it would be advised to implement admission through State Examination Center of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

- In order to eliminate long and tiring documentation procedures, it would positively affect to do them all through ASAN services and the long line for the defense would be electronically and transparent.
- All procedure should be implemented through a unified electronic information system and every Ph.D. candidate should have personal credentials for blackboard link. That will help them to learn about any announcements, tasks, grades, courses, participate in discussions, upload assignments, etc.
- Most of the Ph.D. students get confused with the methodology of writing. Institutions should allocate half-semester courses on social research methods and academic writings either in the universities or doctorate schools (which should be created by the government). It will teach how to structure, define, and present their research idea in writing and how to manage a project. As an example, Granada University in Spain opened its school of Doctorates for this purpose.
- In Azerbaijan, it is extremely rare to encounter any researcher with two advisers which are quite regular in Europe. Organizations should support and present any foreign advisers from partner universities to the Ph.D. candidates. With double support, it would be much easier to conduct and implement the theory and methodology of the thesis.
- Most of the universities should help with the topic selection and have a database of relevant research topics. It will prevent chaotic theme clashes and encourage researchers to work on novel topics. Only limited organizations like Institute of Literature named after Nizami Ganjavi presents online the approved and already taken topics.
- Almost all universities do not provide access to the world database of articles and resources like SCOPUS, JSTOR, EBSCO, etc. which reduces the quality and integration of local dissertations. Not having access to international journals and lacking online skills using a variety of search engines and tools create difficulties for PhDs to benchmark their

research. At the same time, local scientific journals should increase their quality level and intervene in the world market.

- During three years, the Ph.D. candidate should publish at least five articles and participate in three conferences with his/her thesis and take the doctoral examination in three subjects. Along with that, it would be profitable to add compulsory teaching hours during the third year by the university in order to improve their didactic skills. If universities in Azerbaijan cooperate and exchange their Ph.D. students for teaching purposes, definitely they would comprehensively benefit and develop.
- Some concrete steps should be taken in order to integrate into the world science sphere. Even in writing style, the requirements should be changed. Citations should be used as in APA or Chicago style, research statement with objectives and sub-questions, literature review, an abstract, data collection strategies, sampling, instruments, fieldwork and contingency planning should be added as well.
- Finally, the accepted programs must have a comprehensive and modernized evaluation system as in European Doctoral Programs Association. “There is an urgent need for Azerbaijan universities to revise the rules and content of organizing doctoral studies... especially in ensuring science and research provisions in relevance with EU standards, to fulfill the students' mobility - one of the basic provisions of Bologna process.” (Khazar University, 2017, p.4)

On December 10, 2018, “Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on additional measures to improve the attestation of scientific and scientific-pedagogical personnel in the Republic of Azerbaijan” was given, which gives a lot of expectations. Within two months, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences will prepare and submit the proposal for improving the scientific research. It is hopeful,

that some abovementioned suggestions will be taken into consideration, although for further detailed proposals, a group of Ph.D. candidates should be surveyed.

Overall, this data suggests that there are a lot of innovations and reforms should be applied to the abovementioned level as soon as possible. Only after that Azerbaijan science can join to the world education and take its worthy place.

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Comparative Research to Ameliorate Conditions of the Tertiary Education (Ph.D.) in Azerbaijan

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Outline:

- Introduction;
- Problems;
- Data collection methods;
- Limitations;
- Findings;
- Discussions;
- Conclusion;
- Implications;



Introduction:

There are three steps in Azerbaijan education system for higher education:



Azerbaijan, like Russia and former USSR republics, has two steps of academic degree: Doctor of Philosophy (in a certain field) and Doctor of Sciences degrees.



General info:

Ministry of
Education/
ANAS

117
Scientific/
Higher
educational
institutions

The
Supreme
Attestation
Commission

Three year
(part-time
four year)

24 Science
fields (135
programs)

Source: MoE



Since 2010, a number of measures have been taken by the government in order to integrate Azerbaijani science into the international scientific community:

1. (AYSPMU) (2003), the Science Development Foundation (2009), Republican Competition “Scientists of Tomorrow” (2011), The Knowledge Foundation (2014), Youth Foundation (2011);
2. “State Program on Education of Azerbaijani Youth Abroad in 2007-2015”;
3. Increasing the duty salaries for academic degrees (2017) and scholarships/ stipends (2019) for Ph.D. candidates;
4. Azerbaijan National Academy of Science supports young Ph.D. (under 35) with discounted apartments as well as government;

Source: MoE



The number of Azerbaijani scientists' papers published in indexed journals has increased 74 percent.

However, the difference between the graduated (529) and defended (74) is still seven times less in 2017.

Source: *state.gov.az*

	2007	2017
Number of institutions carrying out Ph.D. program	96	117
Number of persons studying by the Ph.D. program, person	1681	2168
including women	565	1215
Admission to the Ph.D. program, person	452	455
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including those defended a dissertation	31	74



Comparison

- Graduates of the Ph.D. program/including those defended a dissertation
- **In 2007 – $431/31=7.2\%$**
- **In 2017- $529/74=14\%$**

The Council of Graduate Schools produced a study on the PhD completion and attrition. The study looked at 49,000 students attending 30 institutions in 54 disciplines comprising 330 programs.

The completion rate ten years after students begin their doctoral program remains low at **56.6%**.

Source: StatisticsSolutions



Questions/hypothesis:

- Why do almost more than half of the Ph.D. candidates cannot defend their thesis in time?
- Why some researchers drop out their research in the middle of their education?
- What are the bounders and pitfalls that lead to low outcomes of tertiary education?

The **research hypothesis** is that this sphere is still whirling between the old Soviet education system and Bologna system.



Data collection methods are

SURVEY

65 respondents

OBSERVATION

Some European and West
Asian Universities

INTERVIEWS

Two advisors/two heats of
Doctoral Studies



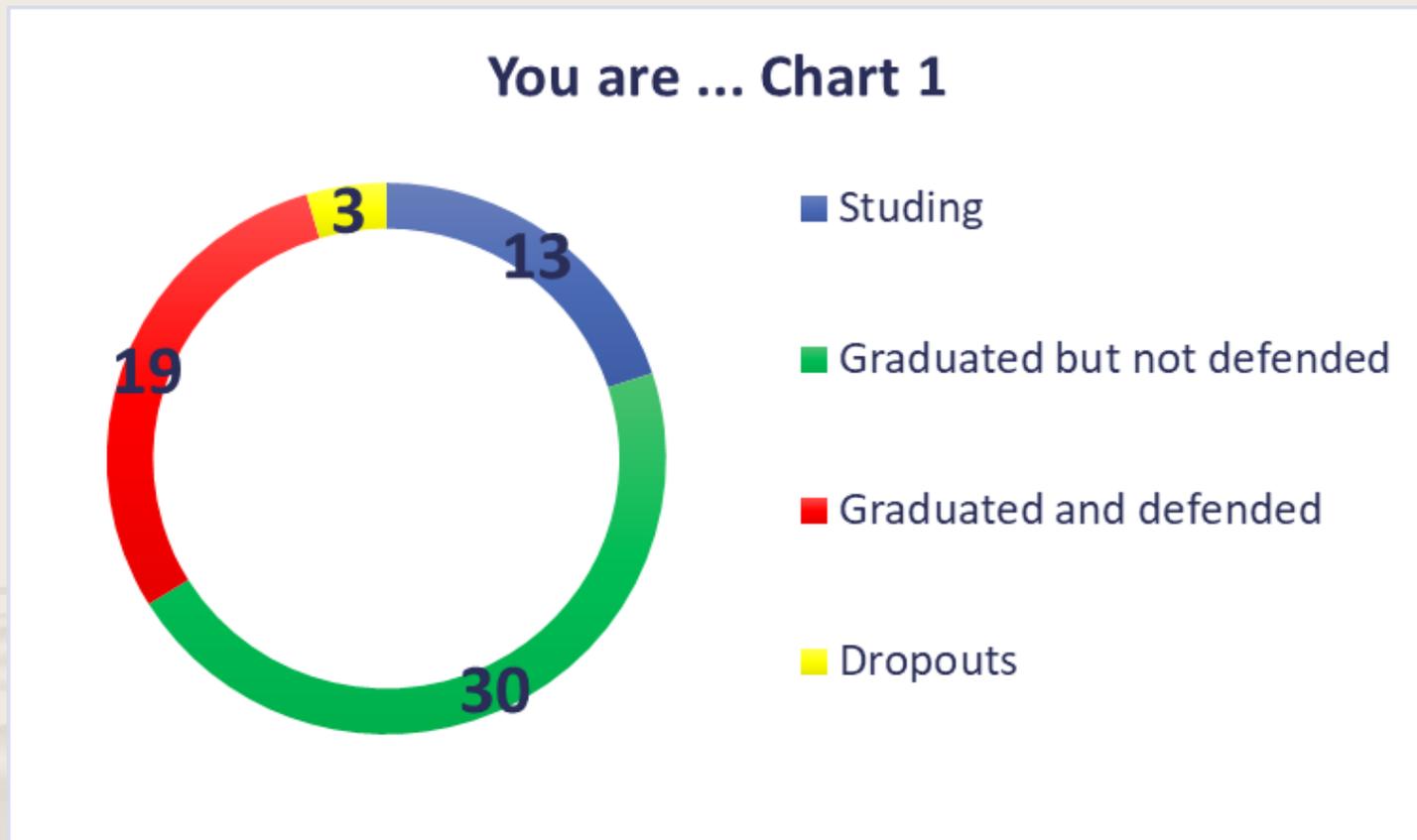
Limitations:

The findings are not suitable for generalization since this investigation concerns only one education level and due to the limited time, it was possible to contact several experts and advisors. Online survey respondents were also limited and cannot reflect an attitude of a broader segment of Azerbaijani researchers who are not regular users of the Internet or are not followers of social media. That is why the results cannot be determined for the whole Ph.D. contingency.



Findings:

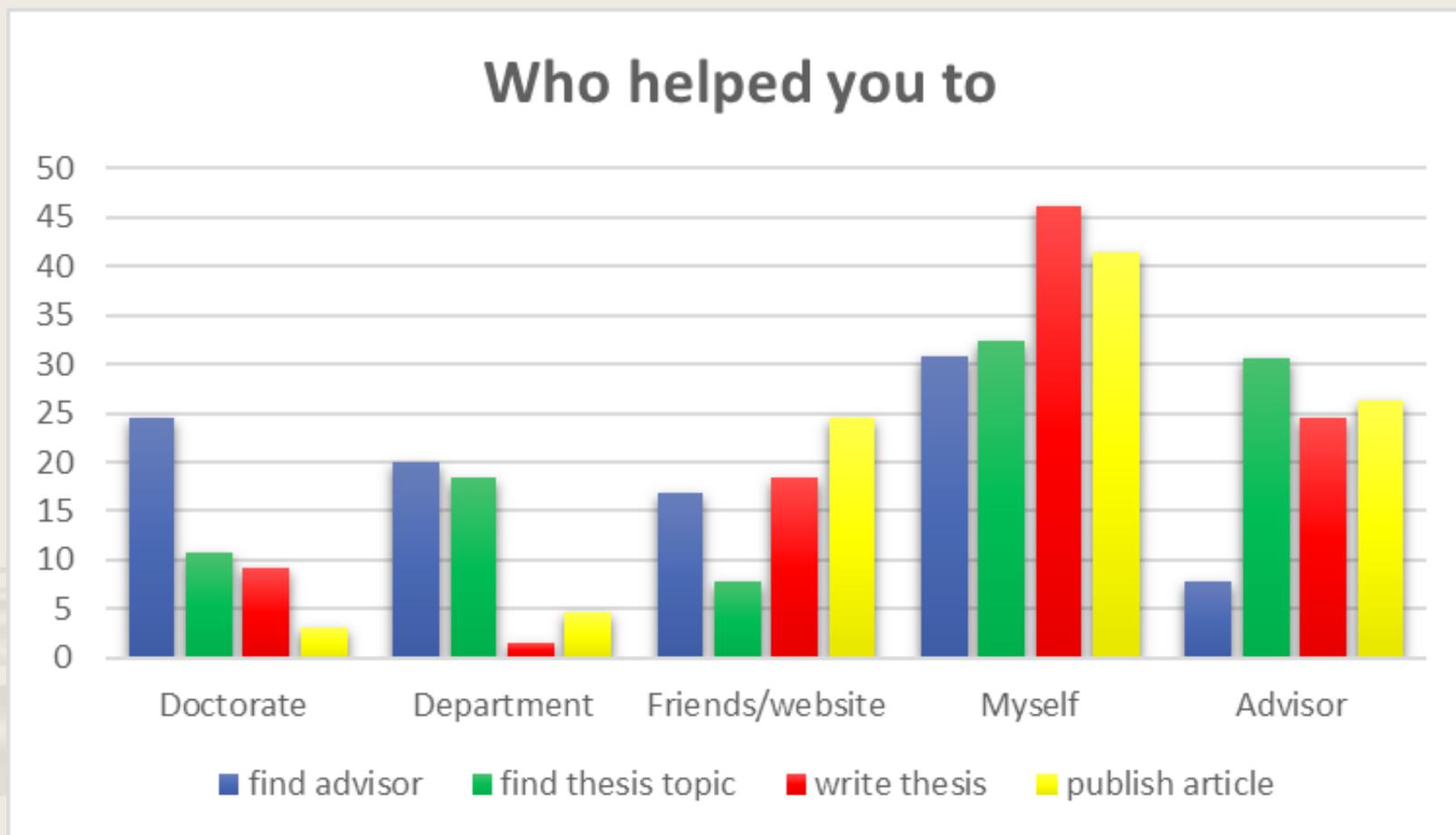
The units of analysis in this research paper is Ph.D. candidates. The questions were not mandatory, so there are variations in response numbers, as shown in the tables.



Most of the respondents were researchers who graduated their education period but could not defend their thesis (46%). Others are still continuing their research (20%), whereas 4,6% dropped out. The main reasons that forced them to drop out their education were difficulties in combining work with research and the complicated, long and tiring procedure of defense both with 26% correspondingly. Only 19 out of 65 respondents defended their thesis and it took almost 6-7 years. Answers were almost positive to the question of whether they think Ph.D. admission was fair (48%).

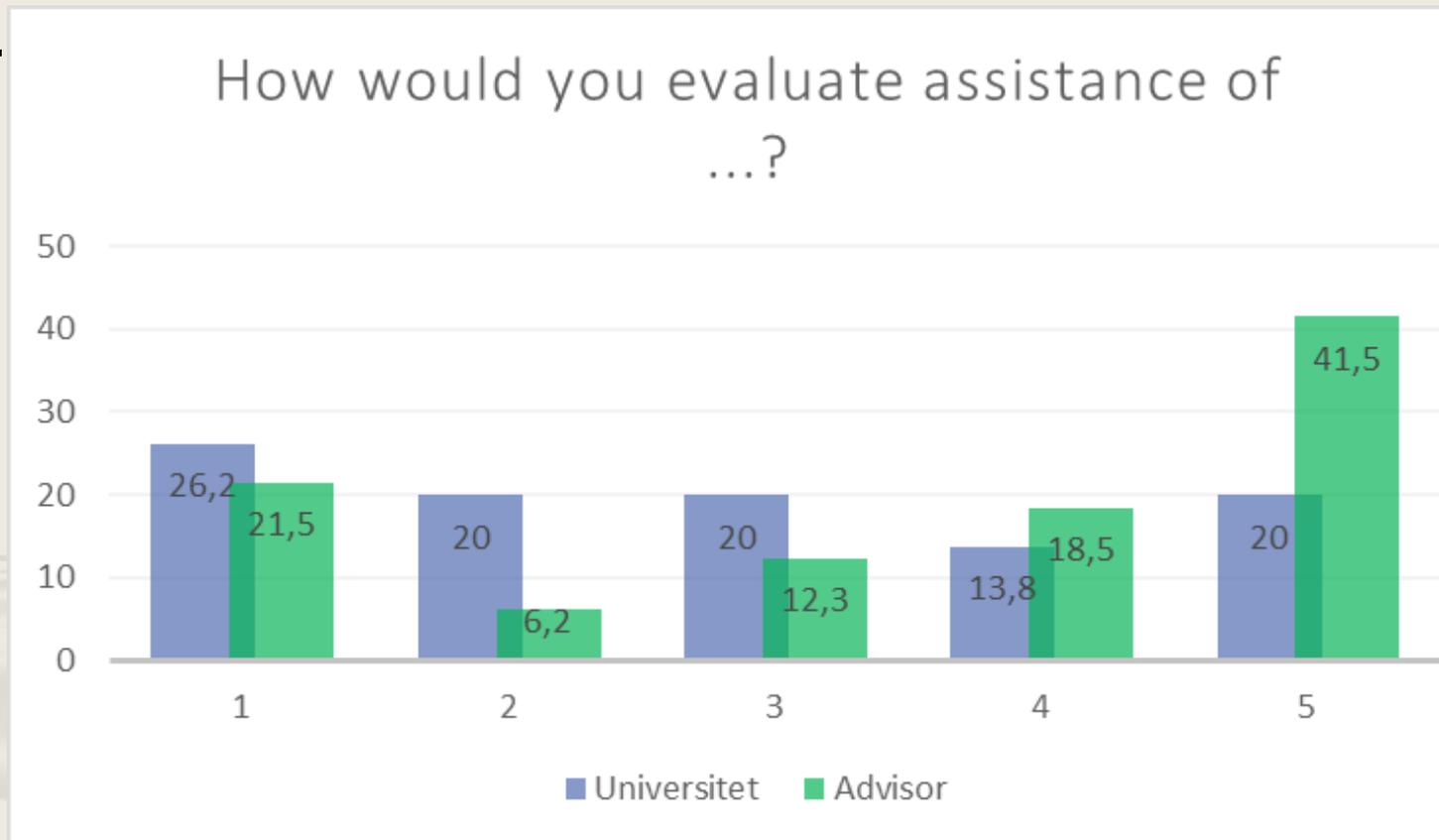


In the given chart 2, the numbers show that researchers themselves mainly take an active part in the selection of the advisor, thesis topic, obtaining writing style, the publication of abroad article and participation in foreign conferences, which can be considered positively and in a self-reliant state.



Researchers expressed willingness in expanding exchange programs (63%), applying compulsory “academic writing” and “research methodology” classes (59%) and eliminating minimal exams (39%).

While observing almost always university workers take part in those limited exchange programs and outsider PhDs are out of reach.

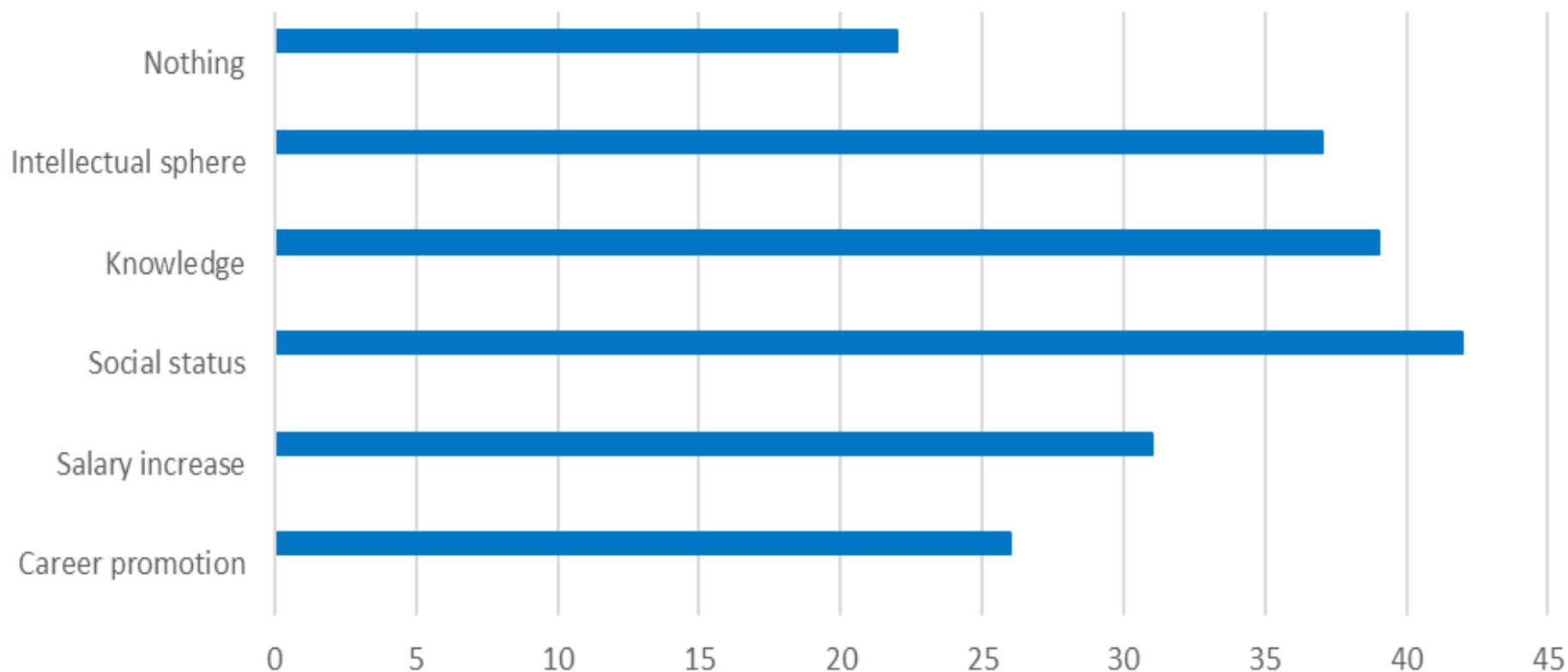


Also, respondents use already published articles and papers (71%) and mainly online library resources (70%) in English (77%) and Russian (59%) languages. They conduct book analysis (63%), translation (60%) and experiments (39%). 22 respondents out of 65 were disappointed for studying Ph.D. in Azerbaijan. Only 9 Ph.D. candidates think that their research would be useful for world knowledge.



Chart 3 illustrates the main reasons for the candidates to implement their research until the end. The main factor is “Social status” as can be seen (42%).

What would you get after defence? (chart 3)



There was one open-ended question in the survey, where accumulated engrossing answers. Qualitative analysis of coding and categorizing can give the following table:

Question- What would be your advice in order to advance this field?						
Focus group-PhD graduates, Ph.D. candidates, and Ph.D. dropouts		Number (almost 40 responses)	Online questions- Google Form	Location- Azerbaijan	Date-March 10-30, 2019	No personal questions; Anonymity was ensured
By	Ways to improve	Fields to add	Fields to eliminate	Financing		
University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Admission must be fair ➤ Second foreign adviser; ➤ Support from the university for field and practical research; ➤ Selection of valuable themes in the world; ➤ Strong control over adviser's work; ➤ Defense proses should be much easier; 	One-year practical education (academic writing and social research methods); Compulsory teaching hours;	Final exams; English is not important for all PhDs (like Azerbaijan language and literature);	Elimination of education fee; Free of charge article publication; Finance of IELTS exams;		
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Up-to-date materials in local libraries; ➤ The living condition should be raised; ➤ Simplifying of documentation procedures; 	Access to the world databases; Concession for researches; At least one-semester exchange program (joint doctoral programs);	Artificial barriers; Abolishment of Supreme Attestation Commission;	Monthly scholarship (up to 1000 AZN) 😊 Support for PhDs from the regions (like accommodation; Payment for international conferences;		
Pessimism		In Azerbaijan, nothing will be changed (7 replies)				

Expenses:

Ph.D. education fee
(2400-4000
AZN/year)

Stipend of 180 AZN/
month

Only 30 AZN extra because
of gained degree



Discussions:

- Financial difficulties;
- Bureaucracy;
- Exchange programs;
- Advisor/ institutions;
- Drafting and writing the thesis;
- Defense procedure;



Implications:

1. Admission through State Examination Center of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
2. Documentation procedures should be done through ASAN services and the long line for the defense would be electronically and transparent;
3. Two advisers (foreign instructor from partner university);
4. World database of articles and resources;
5. Database of relevant research topics;
6. All procedure should be implemented through a unified electronic information system;
7. Half-semester courses on social research methods and academic writings;



Conclusion:

The present study strongly supports the concept that the government and the Ministry of Education should work on uplifting the resources and conditions of the researchers profoundly.



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Thank you!

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