WHY PHD STUDENTS AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY THAILAND DELAY COMPLETING THEIR DOCTORAL DISSERTATION OR DROP OUT

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Abstract: *As a faculty member at a private university in Thailand, it is noticeable that the majority of doctoral students substantially delay writing their dissertation or drop out. It is to be emphasized that the program under discussion is a part-time program for students who work full-time with completion of their doctoral program scheduled over 3 to 5 years (i.e. semesters 6 to 10). Discussions with colleagues and friends from other doctoral programs both in Thailand and abroad, reveal that it is common for such programs to have slow or a low completion rate .(Mournier and Tangchuang,2010). A review of the literature confirms that low completion rates (30%) are also common locally and internationally. (Dunn, 2014, Marshall and Green 2007, Phillips and Pugh, 2000, Atkinson and Parry, 1997). The purpose of this study is to identify (through a review of the literature and through anecdotal evidence) the nature of the problem; the impacts on the several parties involved and to propose an educational management solution to the problems of drop-out or delay completion of a PhD.*

Key words*: Completion of PhD dissertations.*

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The Scope of the Problem:

Many doctoral programs involve students studying full-time however, such is not the case under discussion here; where students work full-time and study their PhD on a part-time basis.

All doctoral students undertake substantial research over a significant portion of their lives ultimately for the benefit of the country and many to teach Master's students the process of research. (Mournier and Tangchuang, 2010).

When money is invested in doctoral students and the many delay completing or drop-out; there is an additional cost to society i.e. they will likely cease to contribute to research and to teach aspiring Master's level researchers. (Marshall and Green 2007, Phillips and Pugh, 2000, Atkinson and Parry, 1997)

A secondary additional cost, occurs when students either delay completion or drop-out, because the time spent by teachers and supervisors, will also have been wasted and cannot be recovered. (Mournier and Tangchuang, 2010, Thomas and Brubaker,2001)

A study in 2014 conducted by The Council of Graduate Studies in the UK found that of 9,000 PhD students enrolled in PhD programs between 1990 to 2014, 57% took up to 10 years to complete and 30% dropped out within 2 years of commencing. Of those continuing with the program 80% said that financial support was a major contributor; 65% said that mentoring and advising was key, whilst 57% said family support was critical to their continuing with the program. (Allum and Okahana,2014)

It is estimated by this author based on involvement in five yearly intakes with a combined total of 36 students that 70% of the investment is lost i.e.

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