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## About the (Ph.D.) (Philosophiae Doctor): The 'Viva Voce' and Variants of the Academic Doctorate in a National and International Context

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### ABSTRACT

The term “Ph.D.” (Philosophiae Doctor) is substantiated by a historical-evolutionary meaning and sense, insofar as it examines some emblematic aspects of the History of Universities. In these terms, an understanding of its non-static bias can be acquired, for example, when we consider certain social rituals incorporated, over centuries, by the university. Thus, in the present work, a secular notion or tradition incorporated by medieval universities called “Viva voce” (soutenance de these) is discussed, which, in a prosaic way, involved an oral assessment of candidates (or university professors) at the time of presentation of a “dissertation” or “thesis”. Thus, in the course of an appreciation of his evolutionary process of the notion of “Ph.D.” (Philosophiae Doctor), there was a shift in emphasis on teaching and that, during the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a greater emphasis on research, according to a modern university paradigm. Furthermore, it is possible to identify, more recently, a discussion around the notion of a professional doctorate, which constitutes a new variant of the academic doctorate. Finally, given a recent scenario of the experience of professional doctorates in the area of EDUCATION - 46 in Brazil, the work marks a current and necessary discussion about the role of “Viva voce” that cannot appear as an indefectible ritual for both academic doctorates, as well as for the case of professional doctorates in recent evolution.

### KEYWORDS

Philosophiae Doctor. Viva voce. Doctoral variants. Professional doctorate. Teaching area.

## Sobre o (Ph.D.) (Philosophiae Doctor): O ‘Viva voce’ e Variantes do Doutorado Acadêmico em um Cenário Nacional e Internacional

### RESUMO

O termo “Ph.D.” (Philosophiae Doctor) se consubstancia por um significado e sentido histórico-evolutivo, na medida em que, examinamos alguns emblemáticos aspectos sobre a História das Universidades. Nesses termos, uma compreensão do seu viés não estático pode ser adquirida, por exemplo, quando consideramos determinados rituais sociais incorporados, ao longo de séculos, pela universidade. Dessa forma, no presente trabalho, se discute uma noção ou tradição secular incorporada pelas universidades medievais denominado “Viva voce” (soutenance de these) que, de forma prosaica, envolvia um exame oral de avaliação dos candidatos (ou professores universitários) no momento de apresentação de uma “dissertation” ou “thesis”. Por conseguinte, ao decurso de uma apreciação do seu processo evolutivo da noção de “Ph.D.” (Philosophiae Doctor), se observa uma passagem de ênfase no ensino e que, durante os séculos XIX e XX, ocorreu uma maior ênfase para a pesquisa, de acordo com um paradigma moderno de universidade. Ademais, é possível identificar, mais recentemente, uma discussão em torno da noção de doutorado profissional, que se constitui como uma nova variante do doutorado acadêmico. Por fim, diante de um cenário recente da experiência de doutorados profissionais na área de ENSINO – 46 no Brasil, o trabalho assinala uma discussão atual e necessária sobre o papel do “Viva voce” que não pode figurar como um ritual indefectível tanto para doutorados acadêmicos, bem como para o caso dos doutorados profissionais em recente evolução.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Philosophiae Doctor. Viva voce. Variantes de doutorado. Doutorado profissional. Área de ensino.

## Sobre el (Ph.D.) (Philosophiae Doctor): El ‘Viva voce’ y Variantes del Doctorado Académico en un Escenario Nacional e Internacional

El término “Ph.D.” (Philosophiae Doctor) se fundamenta en un significado y sentido histórico-evolutivo, en la medida en que examina algunos aspectos emblemáticos de la Historia de las Universidades. En estos términos, se puede adquirir una comprensión de su sesgo no estático, por ejemplo, cuando consideramos ciertos rituales sociales incorporados, a lo largo de los siglos, por la universidad. Así, en el presente trabajo se discute una noción o tradición secular incorporada por las universidades medievales denominada “Viva voce” (soutenance de estos), que, de manera prosaica, suponía una evaluación oral de los candidatos (o profesores universitarios) de la época. de presentación de una “disertación” o “tesis”. Así, en el curso de una apreciación de su proceso evolutivo de la noción de “Ph.D.” (Philosophiae Doctor), hubo un cambio en el énfasis en la enseñanza y que, durante los siglos XIX y XX, hubo un mayor énfasis en la investigación, de acuerdo con un paradigma universitario moderno. Además, es posible identificar, más recientemente, una discusión en torno a la noción de doctorado profesional, que constituye una nueva variante del doctorado académico. Finalmente, dado un escenario reciente de la experiencia de doctorados profesionales en el área de EDUCACIÓN - 46 en Brasil, el trabajo marca una discusión actual y necesaria sobre el papel de “Viva voce” que no puede aparecer como un ritual indefectible tanto para académicos doctorados, así como para el caso de doctorados profesionales en evolución reciente.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Doctor Philosophiae. Viva voce. Variantes doctorales. Doctorado profesional. Área de enseñanza.

## 1 Introduction

A substantial and appropriate understanding of an evolutionary, markedly historical and social process related to the emblematic term "Ph. (*Philosophiae Doctor*), not to mention that the notion or terminology "Ph.D.", the doctoral dissertation/thesis and its corresponding presentation "*Viva voce*" are considered the epitome of higher education institutions that, upon success, grant the respective title in the so-called third cycle (*troisième cycle*) (VAN DER WENDE, 2000), if we consider a European tradition and Francophone academic culture (LEMERLE, 2004).

Traditionally, when we consult Oxford Dictionary, we find that it distinguishes and differentiates between the English terms "dissertation" and "thesis". In this context, a "dissertation" and/or "thesis", depending on the academic cultural reference and the country of reference, accompanied by its presentation, according to the influence of an ancient medieval style called '*Viva voce*', which in French-speaking countries is called *soutenance de thèse* (DARDY; DUCARD & MAINGUENEAU, 2002) preserve, since its origins in the past, an indication of the candidate's development, as well as its ritualistic bias and even of an acrimonious intellectual dispute.

Rüegg (2004) reveals below some of the characteristics and academic ritual around the "Ph. (*Philosophiae Doctor*) and its corresponding value and contribution in terms of scientific originality, by means of a modern university design, by commenting that:

From the beginning of universities, the doctorate attested that the holder had mastered his academic discipline to such an extent that he was qualified to teach it at the university level. In the late 18th century, the examination consisted of the presentation and discussion of a thesis that developed a topic without scientific originality and value over several printed pages. From 1830 on, the theses defended before the faculties of Arts and Sciences in Paris began to give way to more extensive research and were often distinguished by having scientific value. (RÜEGG, 2004, p. 8)

Hodiernally, when we consider the interests and practices of the university involving the attainment of a "Ph.D.", we can observe that many of the traditions, especially European ones, whose historical heritage, and etymological meaning can be understood from ancient Greek and Latin, constituted social practices that were gradually incorporated by the university. In these terms, Dobson (2018) reveals, in terms, a reality and the modern-day meaning of the term "Ph.D." in universities in Norway, when she mentions that:

In Norwegian doctoral disputes, although the candidate may well feel questioned in public, he or she is not so existentially exposed to formal failure. The candidate already knows that the dissertation has been approved by the examining board before the public contest is allowed to take place. I don't recall ever hearing of a candidate failing the disputations. In that respect, the Norwegian PhD '*Viva*' is a low-risk event. On the other hand, you are judged in front of your peers and failing publicly when questioned by experts in your field is remembered and high risk in a

less 'formalized' way. [...] My personal narrative was successful and had social consequences; it was instrumental in moving towards stability. Not all narratives have such a happy ending. A few years ago, I interviewed a doctoral candidate in England who had failed his viva test and experienced an examiner throwing his dissertation on the table in anger. (DOBSON, 2018, p. xii).

In Europe, an understanding of universities is closely linked to the Middle Ages, when universities first appeared between the 12th and 13th centuries. (ALEMU, 2018; FINDIKLI, 2021). The university supposedly built in 1088 and located in the Italian city of Bologna is often considered the oldest university in the West. (See figure 1). Authors such as Verger (1992) and Rothblatt (2006) confirm that the Western European University is arguably an original institution and considered the source/model that spread throughout Europe and then to the world.

**Figure 1.** Medieval University of Bologna built in 1088.



Source: Alemu (2018)

On the other hand, a current verification of an evolutionary process of the notion of "Ph.D." (*Philosophiae Doctor*), which can be confirmed by the evolution and a corresponding expansion and/or emergence of doctoral modalities (new variants), and which some authors call new variants of the academic doctorate (HUISMAN & NAIDOO, 2006; MAXWELL, 2003; MAXWELL & ROMANCZUK, 2009; LEE, 2009). For example, in the case of the professional doctorate, we find that certain elements are configured as invariants, whose antecedents can be identified in the past, as exemplified by Dobson (2018) through a historical bias, with roots in ancient Greek and Latin and involving a scenario of heated discussion and debate of ideas in *Disputare* or Disputation (COBBAN, 1975) involving a tenacious dialectical game of ideas.

Dobson (2018) explains the tone of a formal academic discussion as follows.

The modern Greek term for dispute, developed from the ancient Greek term is *episimi akadimaiki sizitisi*. This means 'official academic discussion' or 'formal academic discussion'. For the actual term dispute as we know it, the Latin root is the source. The Latin verb *disputare* means the action of debating or addressing a

controversial argument in public. *Disputare* is a compound verb, constructed from *dis*, meaning separately, and *putare*, meaning to consider or think. In classical Latin, the discussion to which it refers did not give rise to heated emotions. This changed in late Latin; in the Vulgate, for example, it gained an association with acrimony, along with argument. (DOBSON, 2018, p. xv).

However, when we consider the earliest medieval universities, it is evident that the production of new knowledge did not acquire an eminently compulsory bias, given the overriding authority of the Bible (CROSSOUARD, 2011). Instead, university education developed appropriate performances that reflected canonical arguments and desired by papal authority. This meant that disputation (*Disputare or Disputation*) was an innately conservative process, in which questioning was conducted as a form of training within an accepted and agreed-upon intellectual framework. Therefore, according to one meaning of the ancient and medieval classical expedient "it was about internalizing and reproducing authorized forms of expression and conduct, in essays of established canons of knowledge." (CROSSOUARD, 2011, p. 2).

The English researcher expresses as follows the emergence of a new style of university in Germany and the UK, with greater interest in original research, disciplinary progress, and the genesis of new areas of research and inquiry.

In contrast, when the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD or DPhil) emerged in UK universities in the early twentieth century as a form of research training, based on the model that evolved in German universities, it was associated with the conduct of original research and the contribution of new knowledge to a field of inquiry. The history of the doctorate in modern times is therefore strongly associated with the emergence of disciplinary fields of scientific knowledge in the course of the 19th century (CROSSOUARD, 2011, p. 2).

From the previous excerpt, we will try to point out a structuring argument for the present work, which aims at emphasizing a greater understanding of the term "Ph. (*Philosophiae Doctor*) by way of a non-static and evolving process and, correspondingly, an emblematic academic rite of passage that inextricably carries a traditional and standard view that conditions the need for the creation of new knowledge as the *raison d'être* of a Ph.D. program (STOREY & REARDON, 2017).

For example, oral assessment modes provide additional evidence, such as the candidate's performance on '*Viva voce*', through an inescapable functional connection to the thesis. Likewise, a necessary understanding of an integrated assessment about judgments, social consequences, and corresponding scientific validation, as well as the role of social relations between participants in the process. On the other hand, an evolutionary examination needs to consider, more recently, new modalities of doctoral studies and, in a special way, the professional doctorate that, in Brazil, still corresponds to an incipient scenario of studies and practices when we examine the area of TEACHING.

In this way, we propose the following questioning, given the interest for a better understanding of the term "Ph.D. (*Philosophiae Doctor*), with the necessary emphasis on the

ritual of "*Viva voce*<sup>1</sup>": What historical, evolutionary, and social aspects provide a better understanding and meaning of the term "Ph.D."?

With support of the previous questioning, we will indicate the following objectives of interest that should allow and/or outline an itinerary of answers to the previous questioning, namely:

(i) Identify historical aspects originating in the History of universities concur to the corresponding change in the meaning of the term "Ph.D; (ii) Understand the evolution, the function of *Viva voce* as an element intrinsically linked to the process of obtaining the doctoral degree, through a modern sense of university and emphasis on research; (iii) Understand the role of *Viva voce* and its meaning in the face of new emerging variants of the academic doctorate (the professional doctorate), in an international and national context.

In view of the above, in the subsequent section, we will seek to present some elements that contribute to an understanding of the historical and evolutionary process of the notion of "Ph. (*Philosophiae Doctor*) in tune with a corresponding modification and incorporation of new scientific paradigms by the university.

## 2 (Ph.D.) (*Philosophiae Doctor*) and some History of Universities

When we consult some specialized compendiums on the history of universities (COBBAN, 2001; COMPAYRÉ, 1902; MOORE, 2019; PEDERSEN, 1997; RASHDAL, 1936; RÜEGG, 2004; WENER, 2013), we understand that the university, in any era, has always reflected and sought to respond, not always synchronously, to the interests and needs of society, besides being configured as a space for the exercise of free thought, as we infer from the considerations of Perkin (2007).

All advanced civilizations needed higher education to train their ruling, priestly, military, and other service elites, but only in medieval Europe did an institution recognizable as a university emerge: a school of higher learning combining teaching and scholarship and characterized by its corporate autonomy and academic freedom. (PERKIN, 2007, p. 159).

A little further on, Perkin (2007, p. 159) explains that only Europe, from the 12th century onward, presented an autonomous, permanent system, a corporate institution of higher education that emerged and has survived time, in varying forms, to the present day. Furthermore, the author accentuates that "the university was the accidental product of a

<sup>1</sup> The authors Pezzi & Steil (2009) recall that, in Brazil, the degree exam is the process that evaluates the master's and doctoral degrees and is configured in the final judgment of the years of effort invested by the student in conducting and recording the research developed. The degree exam comprises a set of actions composed of two moments: a) the preliminary reading of the written work; and b) the oral exam or public defense. Although they are two distinct moments, the oral exam is the moment when the examiners listen to the candidates, make their arguments and express their considerations about the written work and its corresponding presentation.

uniquely fragmented process and decentralized civilization." Next, Perkin (2007) records the influences received, after some time, for the establishment of the ancient medieval universities, namely, the medieval universities of Salerno, Bologna, Paris, Oxford, and the university of Cambridge (COBBAN, 1975).

The same can be said for the monastic schools of early medieval Europe that kept biblical studies and classical learning alive in the Dark Ages between the fall of Rome and the Renaissance of the 12th century. The athenaeums and lyceums of ancient Greece had some of the characteristics of the medieval European university, free speculative thought, and defiance of authority and, similarly, the fragmentation of authority and the possibility of the dissenting philosopher's escape to another city. (PERKIN, 2007, p. 159).

The terminology concerning medieval universities and the problems of a contemporary definition still figure among the most intractable issues surrounding the origins of universities (COBBAN, 1975). For example, "the word 'university' has nothing to do with the universality of learning, and it was by chance that the Latin term *universitas* gave rise to the established nomenclature." (COBBAN, 1975, p. 22). A little further on, the same author explains the phenomenon of the university expressed by an essentially European model.

The medieval university was essentially an endogenous product of Western Europe. Classical civilization produced no equivalent of these privileged corporate associations of masters and students, with their statutes, seals and administrative machinery, their fixed curricula, and graded procedures. [...] But collectively the distinctiveness and characteristics of the medieval universities were nowhere reproduced in the earlier institutional form; and there seems to be no organic continuity between the universities that developed in the late twelfth century and the Greek, Greco-Roman, Byzantine, or Arabic schools. (COBBAN, 1975, p. 21 - 22).

In Europe, the understanding about universities is linked to the Middle Ages, when universities first emerged between the 12th and 13th centuries. (ALEMU, 2018). The university supposedly built in 1088 and located in the Italian city of Bologna is often considered the oldest university in the West. After some time, as a consequence of numerous factors, one of them of an economic nature, the agglutinating centers of academic life were constituted in other countries, such as, in the case of Germany and France. For example, Rüegg (2004) explains a relatively current scenario, however, with historical roots in the evolution of the professor's career.

The French model, based on scientific merit within a closed and centralized body, gave as much power and prestige to the teacher as the German model, based on competition and freedom. He was entrusted with public office by the state, his importance for the common good continued to grow, and he gained increased power through his monopoly on the granting of diplomas and degrees that allowed access to the professions. On the other hand, his personal prestige depended increasingly on the collective prestige of his professional or scientific specialization. (RÜEGG, 2004, p. 8 - 9)

The classical academic degrees remained in most of Europe. The sequence for each of the degrees was bachelor's, master's or bachelor's degree, and doctorate, nevertheless, Moore (2019) recalls that obtaining a degree remained expensive and of restricted social access and for the few. Indeed, Moore (2019, p. 38) further points out that "the fees for

doctoral degrees at advanced colleges (which sometimes represented no further study beyond the degree at those colleges) were especially high, probably intended to keep the professions free of much competition."

The holder of a doctoral degree acquired a certain social distinction, and in these terms, Moore (2019, p. 40) notes that most graduates had little need for a doctorate to practice their professions, but there were definite advantages to holding a degree. For example, "for medical school graduates in particular, the doctorate gave important social prestige. It also became common for doctoral students, especially in law, to claim the status of nobility." Moore (2019) explains a process of genesis and primitive constitution of a university community, in addition to an archaic system of university administration, episode that contributed to the granting of some organization for the faculty, without disregarding a transitional period of increasing decrease of papal authority and the Church, in view of a greater interest in Science and free production of knowledge and freedom of ideas originating from *homo academicus* (BOURDIEU, 1984). In fact, Moore (2019) comments on the process of genesis, organization and the consolidation of social practices linked to the medieval university model, as a primitive expedient of publication and necessity of the circulation of scientific ideas, by commenting that:

The continuity was evolutionary, as universities made modifications to the medieval model. From the 13th century on, the liberal arts faculty was already becoming the "faculty of philosophy", with greater emphasis on natural philosophy (Science), ethics and Metaphysics. New professorships or "chairs" emerged in universities for subjects not normally part of the university curriculum. At first, chairs were established in disciplines such as Hebrew, Greek, Arabic and Chaldean, disciplines considered useful for Biblical studies and missionary efforts. [In Paris and English universities, the university system offered opportunities for discussion and less formal instruction, a practice often imitated elsewhere. Indeed, by the end of this period, the arts faculty of the University of Paris provided almost all of its instruction through the faculties. From the beginning of universities, faculty comments might be published and might even gain a place as a basic authority for future teachers. (MOORE, 2019, p. 39).

Moreover, Moore (2019, p. 40) unveils a broad scenario of changes that the university went through when we examine the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, the French Revolution, the "Berlin model" of universities as research institutions, the Industrial Revolution, and finally the new Imperialism. All of these events had a dramatic impact on the development and expansion of universities in the 19th century. As well, in the subsequent century that began with two world wars, separated by the Great Depression. Nevertheless, the importance of universities continued to grow. Then, the Cold War between the Soviet Bloc and the West, the reversal of the Western empires, and the constant expansion and importance of Science and Technology set the tone. (MOORE, 2019).

Again, Moore (2019) clarifies a scenario of change and a replacement of paradigms, with heritage in great thinkers from medieval times. In these terms, a "new Science" should stand on new ideas and specialized methods, as well as rejecting certain obsolete expedients used until then, as the historian states below.



Building on the ideas and methods of their medieval predecessors and stimulated by new understandings of ancient texts, the scientists and philosophers of the early modern era began to reject many of the traditional methods of scientific learning. Four of the best-known individuals of this revolution - Copernicus, Vesalius, Galileo, Newton - were shaped in the university system, but their ideas and methods soon went beyond. And generally, these new scientists and philosophers, like the Italian humanists, tended to disdain the stale learning available in universities, where they themselves had often studied and taught. The new Science required the rejection of Aristotle's authority in many subjects. In Medicine, the authority of Galen and Avicenna was also to be rejected. This "Revolution" was just beginning to take effect around 1600; by 1750, it was prevalent in most universities, including the integration of Medicine, Surgery, and Pharmacy. (MOORE, 2019, p. 52).

Again, Moore (2019) clarifies a scenario of change, replacement, and the incorporation of new academic paradigms, with undeniable heritage from the tradition and thought of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). Indeed, Moore (2019) explains that:

The income of the professor was augmented by public lectures and the evaluation of oral examinations and enjoyed great autonomy. The fact that German-speaking Europe before 1870 was composed of many separate states gave prestigious teachers considerable mobility and allowed them to negotiate maximum income and freedom. This was especially true in the German-speaking states, but also in places near and far, such as Switzerland and Turkey, which imitated the German model and sought out German professors for their faculties. (MOORE, 2019, p. 68).

Regarding the emblematic figure of Wilhelm von Humboldt, his writings were unknown, and his ideas were not widely disseminated in Germany. It was the reform of the universities of Halle and Göttingen, rather than that of Berlin that formed the reference points for the application of his assumptions. But at the turn of the 20th century, W. Humboldt was suddenly discovered. Thus, "Humboldt's principles legitimized trends in the academic/scientific community, in particular the increasing importance given to research for decades in Germany." (ÖSTLING, 2018, p. 12). Östling (2018) explains the relevance of his thinking and the spread of university conceptions to other countries.

One of the most important of these 'guiding conceptions', at least today, is the one associated with Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). This is true not only in Germany, but also in many countries that were influenced by the German academic model. In the 21st century, the main characteristics of Humboldtian university programs are often summarized through a set of concepts or slogans: the combination of research and teaching; academic freedom (often expressed as *Lehr- and Lernfreiheit*); education rather than training; the idea of the unity of science and scholarship; and the community of students and teachers. (ÖSTLING, 2018, p. 11).

Before we end the section with an interest in certain historical aspects about universities, let us note that the non-static (historical, social, academic) meaning of the term "Ph.D." (*Philosophiae Doctor*) is unveiled from the constitution of the métier of the university professor that, since the Middle Ages and in past centuries acquired its own characteristics and others that can be understood, above all, nowadays. Indeed, once again, Moore (2019) mentions the role of oral examinations for teacher evaluation, in the 13th century, and the distinction in mastery in a given disciplinary field, whose value in the academic locus is shown to be preserved today.

The development of universities tended to follow the patterns established at the end of the 13th century. At that time, universities had systems of oral examinations that allowed students to obtain a certificate or diploma which certified that they were qualified to teach liberal arts or one of the advanced disciplines. Holders of the license to teach anywhere in Christendom (*licentia docendi ubique*) could be called masters or doctors, although the doctorate came to be required to teach in graduate school and colleges. (MOORE, 2019, p. 30).

From the previous excerpt, we point out a traditional component that was incorporated into the ritual of oral evaluation of candidates and, in a way, of evaluation of candidates interested in the "*licentia docendi ubique*", whose license granted the prerogative to teach in universities, besides incorporating and allowing greater mobility to the bearer of the license/permit for university teaching (COBBAN, 2001; RÜEGG, 2004).

In the present section we indicate some historical elements that contribute to our understanding of an evolutionary process of the university, according to a larger European tradition and a special examination of the term "Ph. (*Philosophiae Doctor*). Following this, in an attempt to answer our initial questioning, we will examine some elements related to the rite of passage and the exercise of the "*Viva voce*" as an evaluative factor, oral defense, through the indication of certain examples, not always fruitful, originated in countries with an accumulated tradition, through a modern bias of university.

### 3 '*Viva voce*': an academic rite of passage and some international examples

"In most European countries, North America, and New Zealand, an oral examination (oral examination of the candidate) is a mandatory component of the doctoral examination process." (BERSTEIN et al., 2014, p. 20). But there is considerable variation in how the '*Viva voce*' is conducted (DELAMONT; ATKINSON & PARRY, 1997). Procedures may include a public seminar presentation (followed by a closed session with the candidate's thesis committee) or a public oral defense of the thesis. In Australia, it is increasingly common for a university to require a research doctoral candidate to present an exit or pre-completion seminar before submitting the thesis for examination. (BERSTEIN, et al., 2014).

*Viva voce* is almost always a mandatory element of the British PhD examination. It is evidenced conducted behind closed doors, has been variously described as 'an anachronism', 'mysterious', the 'backbone of the system', 'something secret and inaccessible', as an 'academic blind spot' (CARTER & WHITTAKER, 2009; JOUGHIN, 1998; KELLY, 2010; MULLINS & KILEY, 2002; KILEY & MULLINS, 2004; PARK, 2003; POOLE, 2015). To exemplify, when we examine the case of the UK, some authors find that, interestingly, although the PhD has transformed in recent years, with the introduction of the Professional Doctorate, Doctorate by Publication, the British PhD examination process has arguably changed little in the last 30-50 years or so (CARTER & WHITTAKER, 2009). Slightly further, Carter & Whittaker (2009) explain the dialectic of operation of the pre '*Viva voce*' by commenting that:

Reaching a common understanding about what we intend to achieve together within *Viva voce* is an important starting point that can help ensure a clear path to the questions that will be asked, the intent, emphasis and importance of those questions and their answers. For example, in a pre-*Viva voce* meeting, a co-examiner wanted to check how the candidate withstood a rapid-fire questioning under pressure (CARTER & WHITTAKER, 2009, p. 171).

In Germany<sup>2</sup>, for example, "until the mid-1960s, the oral examination was advocated as giving students the opportunity to show their strengths and provide examiners with as clear and complete an impression as possible of the candidates' knowledge and abilities." (KHEM, 2001, p. 27). The oral examinations served to complement the other parts of the degree examination. Moreover, "the thesis and written tests did not always provide sufficient assurance that the candidate had solved the task independently and without outside help or refrained from cheating." (KHEM, 2001, p. 27).

However, oral examinations were also seen as having some disadvantages in German education, in particular, the opportunities they may offer for an examiner to indulge in prejudice, antipathy, or a hasty component of disapproval of a candidate. The fact is that extensive historical roots of the oral assessment ritual occur in German universities. For example, "in the 1970s was also a time of rapid expansion of West German Education, many research-derived recommendations were not put into practice." (KHEM, 2001, p. 27).

Still on the reality of universities in Germany, "during the 1990s, the quality of teaching at universities was strongly criticized and staff development programs were expanded to include efforts to improve skills in both teaching and examining" (KHEM, 2001, p. 27). The trend of these changes involved assessments of the level and range of knowledge that should be conducted in written form, while oral examinations should be used to provide evidence of a candidate's capacity for critical and reflective thinking. (KHEM, 2001).

Khem (2001) comments on research developed by Stary (1997, p. 5), who developed an approximate typology of oral examinations as they are more recently conducted in Germany. The basic form is either an individual assessment or a group assessment, although the latter is less commonly used. The examination can proceed by one of three modes: (i) the candidate elaborates on a prepared topic, after which the examiner asks questions on the topic; (ii) a handout is prepared by the candidate and discussed with the examiner; (iii) the examiner asks questions on an agreed topic and the candidate answers. As a rule, examiners are advised to help the candidate as much as possible to overcome nervousness and to provide encouragement and space for the candidate to develop his or her own thoughts on a given topic. The stated aim is to allow the candidate to show his strengths rather than to detect and

<sup>2</sup> Authors Kehm; Freeman & Locke (2018) explain that the PhD by Published Work model has existed in Germany since the 19th century, where it is called the "cumulative dissertation." From there it spread to other parts of the world, mainly to the United States, but also to Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden. At a second glance, the British model of a doctorate by published work differs to some extent from the German model of a "cumulative dissertation". Both models are basically characterized by combining several articles that have appeared in 'peer-reviewed' academic or scientific journals into a book and providing them with a coherent structure.

expose weaknesses.

Today we find that many historical elements, incorporated into the repertoire of academic customs and tradition, are preserved within universities and in many countries, according to the modern view of the university. In this scenario, with emphasis above all on research and a greater interest in a contribution to the systematic advancement of scientific knowledge, provided in a doctoral thesis, Dobson (2018) points out elements incorporated by university institutions on the European continent.

If the *Viva voce* is an integral element of a PhD exam, it seems important to consider what criteria candidates must meet on the Viva to pass the exam. Most of the institutions we surveyed offered specific criteria for assessment on the Viva and/or provided more general goals for the thesis and the Viva in combination. However, some institutions in our sample identified goals and objectives only for the thesis and provided no indication of what should be assessed in the oral exam. Institutions that provide specific criteria for the Viva-voice usually state that the candidate should be able to locate their doctoral research in a broader context and present knowledge of their thesis. (DOBSON, 2018, p. 12).

British researcher Croussouard (2011) discusses an international context (UK and Australia) of *Viva voce*. In the UK, however, orality has genuine assessment implications, so that the candidate's responses to the examiners can lead to the candidate's failure (CROSSOUARD, 2011, p. 2). In particular, the researcher explains its way of functioning in Australia that:

[...] despite this considerable level of change, the dominant concerns have been the nature and purpose of the doctorate. Less attention has been paid to doctoral assessment. Practices vary in different national contexts, but in many cases involve the candidate writing a lengthy thesis, which is then subject to an oral examination (or *Viva*). The function of the *Viva* seems especially variable in different national contexts. It is used only exceptionally in Australia, while in many European contexts it is conducted in public, with an audience that may include family and friends. While it is still a potentially contested event, it can sometimes be primarily symbolic and celebratory (CROSSOUARD, 2011, p. 2).

The traditional oral examination lacks objectivity and a corresponding holistic approach. Thus, assessment through traditional *Viva* sometimes carries essentially subjective content and requires a structured approach. Assessment through traditional *Viva voce* can also involve examiner bias and a comprehensive evaluation of all topics to be examined in the related work. A little further on, the British researcher Croussouard (2011), points out its character of inquiry and examination of the truth and accuracy of the candidate's claims, although she preserves a critical tenor to the respective ritual developed in the UK, by noting that:

*Viva* is therefore founded on an interesting junction between different paradigms of Education, on the one hand within an elite tradition where practice rather than knowledge was privileged but becoming entangled with more modern understandings of assessment as an 'objective' process, and at doctoral level questioning the 'truth' of a candidate's claims to have produced new knowledge. However, research evidence on UK *Viva* is sparse, partly due to the 'behind closed doors' nature of its conduct and the confidentiality of examiners' reports. (CROSSOUARD, 2011, p. 4).

According to the tradition developed in professional doctorates in the UK, "examiners typically have introductory questions, asking for an overview of your professional background and reasons for choosing your study." (LEE, 2009, p. 162). Early-stage examiners will usually outline the areas they wish to discuss, for example, one might focus on the research methods employed, and another might focus on the literature review and others devote more attention to other elements. (LEE, 2009).

Below, Lee (2009) describes some aspects related as ritual of assessment in a professional doctorate, including with the participation of independent members (from other institutions) for the assessment exercise and at another extreme, the supervisor himself does not directly contribute or influence the process.

The *Viva voce* constitutes a verbal examination of research work, and the term is derived from Latin. In the UK, the Viva is a private process between the student and the examiners. One examiner will be identified in the department of the university where the professional doctorate was studied. The second examiner or external examiner will be appointed from another university, based on their experience in the thesis area. The supervisor may be present at the viva, but usually does not contribute to the process. In addition, some universities appoint an internal independent academic to function as chair, especially if a staff member is doing Viva. (LEE, 2009, p. 169).

On the other hand, an examination of the role of *Viva voce* becomes pressing, as far as we cannot expect an indefectible functioning of the corresponding ritual, whether employed in academic doctorates and professional doctorates. Indeed, the professional doctorate requires the direct assessment of practice (ALVES, 2021), with part of the doctoral candidates' admission being a corresponding professional practice, specific guidelines will relate to the assessment process. (LEE, 2009, p. 164). In fact, the author describes a training itinerary envisaged by professional doctorates, with a clear influence from the tradition of academic doctorates, adding an increasingly important and so-called portfolio notion, when explaining that:

Although most professional doctoral programs follow doctoral convention and require the submission of a thesis, professional portfolios are increasingly used in professional doctoral programs. They can be used to demonstrate the impact of research on professional practice and to illuminate any minor projects undertaken. They may include professional reports, other evidence related to professional practice, or publications in journals. In some cases, a critical reflective commentary will be used within the portfolio to integrate the resulting knowledge and experience with professional practice. (LEE, 2009, p. 163 - 164).

A little further on, Lee (2009) indicates certain structuring elements in the development of a professional doctorate that confer, irrevocably, a differentiated bias and no longer entirely congruent with the ritual of a *Viva voce* coming from, for example, an academic doctorate and, by tradition, more entrenched in our universities. Lee (2009) sheds light on a training scenario at the University of Essex, England, as far as it highlights the importance of the production of a portfolio:

The University of Essex's professional doctoral portfolio requirements are described, where the portfolio work should illuminate the students' experience of professional practice while demonstrating the outcomes of the professional doctoral program. Within the accompanying critical commentary, there is specific emphasis on linking the processes of research and study with the proportionate development of professional practice, acknowledging, and confirming the development of the student's experience in practice. This portfolio clearly goes beyond the theoretical interpretation of literature to reflect on how the literature may have informed practice and to incorporate strategies that the student used directly within professional practice. (LEE, 2009, p. 164).

A little further on, Lee (2009) notes that from the thesis and portfolio development to the preparation for *Viva voce* there is an academic discussion of specialization to successfully complete the professional doctorate, there are also measures such as presentation at conferences and the pursuit of publication in journals (specialized periodicals) to reach a larger audience and professional repercussion.

Lee (2009) uncovers an aspect of interest in the professional doctorate closely directed with the interest in the expectation of qualification and the relentless search for employment in the world of work, when he comments that:

Few students look beyond the professional doctorate completion, and the *Viva voce* if there is one. It is unreasonable to suggest that for many students the completion of the professional doctorate professional doctorate is the end in itself. In reality, however, this is far from the truth and the new doctoral graduate may find that the expectations of employers and the academic community is that there is an immediate priority for them to consolidate and improve their position in the professional and academic domains. (LEE, 2009, p. 188).

While one might expect institutional policies to provide common and clear standards regarding the purpose and content of the PhD's *Viva voce*, in practice, institutional policies or government actions are often vague on these points. Although the *Viva* is a compulsory element of the PhD examination in the UK, the requirements for passing the *Viva* are often not explicit in institutional policy documentation.

Some institutions do not provide guidance on what should be assessed in the *Viva voce*. (THINKLER & JACKSON, 2002). Indeed, researchers Thinkler & Jackson (2002) emphasize an importance in discussions about the quality of the doctoral student experience in two main ways: for a minority, the *Viva* is a place of decision making; for most, the *Viva* experience has important effects on the academic self in assessment. Thinkler & Jackson (2002) provide important indicators below.

The "skills" component of *Viva* results largely from the structural requirements of the oral examination and receives little or no explicit attention in the university policies examined in our research. However, numerous skills are implicit in the success criteria in the *Viva* established in (some) university policies. As the name implies, the *Viva* is an oral examination. The candidate's verbal skills are therefore explicitly or implicitly crucial to the examiners' evaluation of the candidate. The centrality of verbal skills is evident in the frequent reference to the candidate being able to "defend" his thesis and "clarify" aspects of his work. (THINKLER & JACKSON, 2002, p. 88 - 89).

Certainly, an intrinsically subjective nature of the process and evaluation involves, however, a 'shallow' and incipient component of understanding on the part of the student. In fact, the experience factor will determine the candidate's horizon of understanding of *Viva voce* and, in these terms, we cannot expect a broad capacity for foresight, a comprehension of totality and globality, on the part of the candidate, of the identification of accessory elements of the thesis, with less potential for scientific impact, as well as, of a total comprehension of the fundamental elements of the thesis and its impact in future terms.

For example, one need only examine some of the criticisms and weaknesses in the process indicated by Thinkler & Jackson (2002), when they point out that:

Unfortunately, the doctoral examination, especially the *Viva*, is feared and often misunderstood by many students, and is a source of concern and confusion for many supervisors and examiners. These feelings and confusion are caused by three main factors. First, doctoral examination procedures are highly variable - they vary between institutions, between disciplines, and between examiners. Second, there are no clearly articulated common criteria or standards for awarding a doctorate. Third, doctoral *Viva* is generally a relatively private affair that takes place "behind closed doors"; there are only a few institutions in the UK that operate "public" *Vivas*, and even at these universities access is restricted to members of specific academic groups communities. As such, *Viva* processes are rarely transparent or open to scrutiny; therefore, it is understandable that, for many students and academics, the doctoral examination process, and *Viva* in particular, is shrouded in mystery. (THINKLER & JACKSON, 2004, p. 2).

Before concluding the current section, we consulted Dobson's (2018) work with the scope of gaining a brief genealogical understanding regarding *Viva voce* (see Table 1). In fact, with the realization of the slow disappearance of *Viva voce* in Greco-Roman times, it was suddenly transformed with the arrival of the Middle Ages (DOBSON, 2018). Socio-cultural, political, and economic conditions concurred to make this possible. This means that the type of history examined proposed is not evolutionary, if by this is meant the slow development of the phenomenon in an uninterrupted form and linear model. Therefore, allowing for periods of growth and other periods of decline is important in the sense that *Viva voce* is always under threat of extinction as other forms of evaluation gain popularity for various reasons.

For example, a common argument made against *Viva voce* is that it is considered more expensive per candidate than paper and pen and/or ordinary exams. (DOBSON, 2018). In Table 1 we bring information that allows a genealogy regarding *Viva voce*.

**Table 1.** A genealogy of the different forms of Viva voce (by living voice) or soutenance de thèse (DARDY et al. 2002)

Period	<i>Viva voce</i> features	Sociocultural, political, economic conditions
<b>Classical Greek</b>	In Greek schools of thought: dialectical forms of argumentation (syllogism) seeking certain knowledge.	Reserved for philosophers, sons of the rich. Sophists rising in social importance.
<b>Greco-Roman</b>	Rhetorical use of <i>Viva voce</i> through intelligent and convincing argument.	Dispute skills ( <i>disputare</i> ) are taught and practiced in political, legal, and public arenas.
<b>End of the Roman era</b>	Extinction of <i>Viva voce</i> : less open use of persuasive speaking. Written sources also gain importance as a sign of authenticity.	Rise of the culture of Christianity. <i>Viva voce</i> is considered a source of agitation and political incitement
<b>Middle Ages</b>	Return of <i>Viva voce</i> , e.g., logical disputes in public.	In formal, institutionalized educational settings.
<b>Modern Era</b>	<i>Viva voce</i> faces criticism for low level of standardization, low level of transparency, but it measures verbal reasoning (e.g., inductive) and communicative competence not easily measured by other forms of assessment (e.g., written assessment). It can probe why and how something is understood, not just what.	With industrialization, increased student numbers, expensive for administration compared to written exams; but <i>Viva voce</i> is valued for its sociocultural rite of passage function.
<b>Postmodern</b>	<i>Viva voce</i> defense: as a new narrative movement.	Expensive form of evaluation that is sensitive to local conditions.

Source: Dobson (2018, p. 3).

In order to illustrate some of the results of Algaddafi & Hasan's (2017) work, we indicate a summarized script of questions ordinarily present in oral presentation exams at the University of Birmingham, England. For example, Algaddafi & Hasan (2017) discuss and apply a proposal developed by Joughin (1998), according to which, there are six major elements of oral exam evaluation, such as: the goal, the interaction, the simulation, the structure, and the tasks. Prosaically, the ten points or questions below help you to decide about *Viva voce* be of the form: 'no correction', with 'minor correction', with 'major correction' or resubmit a thesis and so on. The following are some of the questions identified in the oral examination at the University of Birmingham in England, as follows:

Has the nature and purpose of the research been made clear? Has this been substantially achieved? To what extent does the thesis demonstrate and knowledge of the literature?

Has the candidate chosen the appropriate methodology for the study? Is the methodology used effectively? Are the results validly interpreted (rigor and replicability of the model)?



Is there coverage of recent and relevant literature in the study area that presents a critical evaluation and original synthesis?

What evidence exists of independent critical and analytical skills?

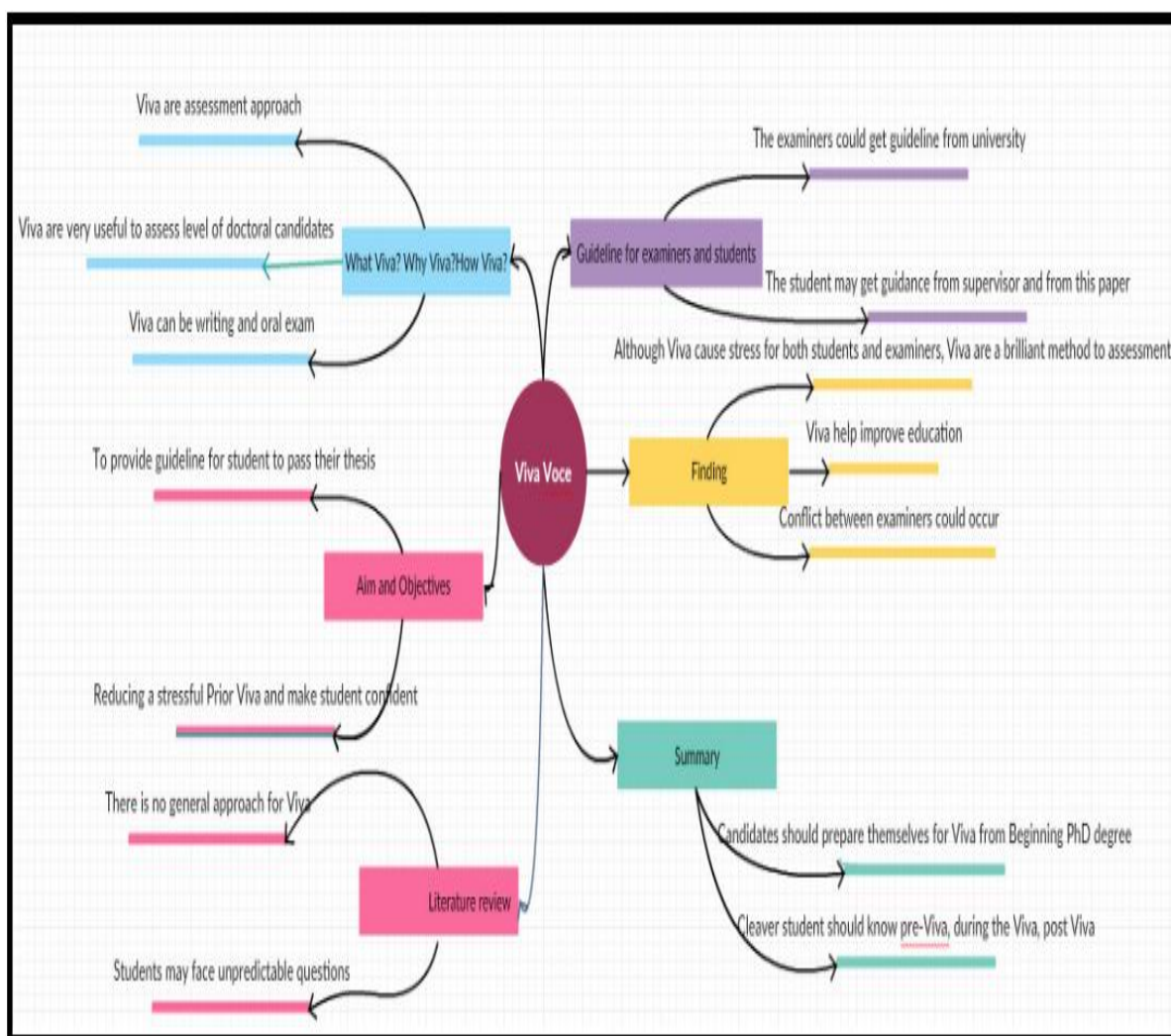
Is there an understanding of the theoretical field associated with the study?

Does the connection and balance between practical research and theory satisfy?

Is the thesis clearly written and is the presented structure of the thesis satisfactory?  
Are the style and arguments presented appropriately and coherently?

To what extent does the thesis evidence originality and contribute to knowledge? Does it contain material suitable for publication in whole or in part in a scientific journal or equivalent? Is the synopsis an adequate summary of the work presented? What is your opinion of the overall quality of the research described in the thesis?

**Chart 1.** Algaddafi & Hasan (2017) discuss the use of Mind Map software.



Source: ALGADDAFI & HASAN (2017)

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of *Viva voce* is to evaluate the student according to the paradigms established by the University, according to the criteria of a certain academic community that operates and a research niche (KHEM, 2001). *Viva voce* helps evaluators to know if students work independently or not.

Moreover, from the extensive study, we found that *Viva voce* is a good way to test students' knowledge and, without disregarding, in a metaphorical sense employed by researchers Algaddafi & Hasan (2017), *Viva voce* is similar to a job interview and, under these conditions, the candidate must submit to the evaluation scrutiny for eventual success (or not) to reach a new job position (ALVES, 2021). In Figure 2 we can identify the flowchart suggested by Algaddafi & Hasan (2017).

As we have already commented *en passant* in the predecessor paragraphs, in the face of the emergence of variant forms of "Ph.D." (*Philosophiae Doctor*), we cannot develop an expedient of automatic replication of the non-trivial ritual of *Viva voce*, similarly, both for the case of the academic doctorate and in the case of the professional doctorate (CHARITY, 2010; EVA, 1999; JOHNSON, 2005; LUNDGREN-RESENTERRA, 2017), since, among other elements, a doctoral thesis represents the *Magnum opus* that embodies a whole extensive intellectual effort of the candidate and puts under scrutiny a distinguished "piece of research". That said, in the subsequent section we will seek to indicate a scenario that still requires greater vilification and a corresponding systematic treatment for the professional doctorate.

#### 4 '*Viva voce*' and its role in professional doctoral programs

Park (2005) points out that many authors introduce a prosaic question called "what is a PhD?", seeking to emphasize that their corresponding inquiry does not involve elements of trivial and immediate answer or solution. One need only look at examples from countries such as Great Britain<sup>3</sup> where, in recent years, the PhD has been reconceptualized as a training period for future researchers (RUGG & PETRE, 2004), rather than as work that substantially changes the course of human knowledge (LEE, 2009).

To rescue a more classical meaning, we can observe a sense attributed to the Latin term '*Magnum opus*' or *chef-d'œuvre* (masterpiece<sup>4</sup>), which would represent a work or "piece" of outstanding intellectual content, which would configure the best and highest-level work of an author. For example, The *Lusiads* by Luis de Camões (1524 - 1580) constitutes his

<sup>3</sup> Researchers Kehm; Freeman & Locke (2018, p. 114) recall that in the UK, "professional doctorates are typically taken up by people who are pursuing a professional career and are employed. Therefore, professional doctorates are often offered as part-time programs and usually require several years of professional experience."

<sup>4</sup> Rugg & Petre (2004, p. 161) provide an understanding about the notion of perfection corresponding to a doctoral thesis when they mention that "doctoral theses do not need to be perfect. They just need to be good enough, where 'good enough' means that you have demonstrated a satisfactory mastery of the skills necessary for a professional researcher in your discipline. The level of 'good enough' will be high, but that is different from perfection."

masterpiece (Magnum opus) of wide recognition in the cultural and academic world. In the classical sense of a doctoral thesis, Park (2005) clarifies that:

The traditional notion of the Magnum opus - a piece of research that could have a lasting impact on a discipline - has over the past decade or more been replaced by a more pragmatic notion of a manageable work, of a scope and size that a student can reasonably expect to complete within three years. Scale is important in two ways: in terms of the amount of time the student works on the research and the size of the thesis that describes that research. Scope is becoming more important than in the past and is increasingly codified in institutional regulations. A doctoral thesis at York University, for example, is defined as work that an able, well-qualified, and diligent student who is properly supported and supervised can complete in three years. (PARK, 2005, p. 198).

On the other hand, it is essential to consider an experience accumulated from other countries for decades, which provides an important frame of reference and guidance for our academic practices developed here in Brazil. In effect, Lee (2009) highlights an inseparable component of the research characteristic of a professional doctorate that, unlike traditional academic training that places greater emphasis on the production of knowledge and the relentless pursuit of originality and scientific impact, she establishes great relevance in the component of professional practice, when she observes that

As such, the students' professional doctoral program is explicitly linked to their professional practice. They need to demonstrate specific professional skills in subsequent written work. [...] throughout there is an emphasis on critical reflection; knowledge of organizational change; the personal ability to manage learning; and the professional ability to practice at the boundaries of current professional knowledge and experience. (LEE, 2009, p. 164).

Another factor that deserves attention and that distinguishes a professional doctoral thesis, when we consult the experience of other countries with an Anglo-Saxon tradition, concerns, for example, the notion of 'portfolio' (from Latin *'portafoglio'*) (LAM, 2018). To exemplify, Cobia et al. (2011) describes an itinerary of designing, producing, and adjusting a 'portfolio' associated with a professional doctoral thesis developed at Auburn University in the USA. Cobia et al. (2011) explains the following formative process.

Students begin the development of the doctoral portfolio during the professional issues course, which they complete in the first registration period. The doctoral portfolio is submitted for a total of three reviews. Two are considered formative reviews - one at the beginning of the second year of enrollment (first-year review) and a second at the beginning of the third year of enrollment (second-year review). The timing of the third, or summative, review varies, depending on the individual student's readiness. Because the portfolio is viewed as an evolving process, there is no expectation that students' doctoral portfolios will demonstrate competence in all seven areas during the first or second review. The goal is for students to submit a portfolio that reflects the ongoing development of their skills, knowledge, and the competencies within and across areas, with additional competency demonstrated with each successive application. (COBIA et al., 2011, p. 247).

Nevertheless, as we have briefly mentioned in previous paragraphs, it is worth considering an incipient experience in Brazil. Indeed, in Brazil, originally, the constitution of universities followed strong European and American influence, especially, seeking grounding

in the French model regarding the organization of professors in professorships (CALDERÓN *et al.*, 2019). We recall, for example, that "with the 1968 reform, Postgraduation in Brazil was restructured, with the North American model as a reference." (CALDERÓN *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, for a robust and global understanding of the process of implementation of the professional doctorate in Brazil, we cannot disregard its evolutionary historical itinerary in the area of TEACHING - 46 and, similarly, we add the case of the area of EDUCATION - 38 - CAPES.

The Area of Education - 46 was created through CAPES Ordinance No. 83/2011, on June 6, 2011, being constituted, at that time, by 60 *stricto sensu* courses, distributed in nine Academic Master's courses, 19 Doctoral courses and 30 Professional Master's courses. Thus, it was constituted according to the Document of the Teaching Area (2019), from the nucleation of the programs of the former Area of Science and Mathematics Teaching, created in 2000, with only seven programs (RIZATI *et al.*, 2020).

Representing an indication of growth in the area, we can examine the evolution of postgraduate programs in the professional modality (professional master's degree). Thus, we point out some elements that signal a warning from the researcher Barata (2006), when mentioning a certain characteristic of professional masters:

Another characteristic peculiar to the professional master's degree concerns the faculty and the evaluation of the final product. Most of its teaching staff has the same characteristics as those dedicated to academic masters; however, professionals with recognized experience may be incorporated, even if they do not hold academic degrees, in order to complement the training through sharing and reflections induced by the accumulation of experience. In the same way, the evaluation of the final product can count on the participation of professionals with recognized expertise in the subject studied, regardless of whether they have academic degrees or not. (BARATA, 2006, p. 270).

We cannot fail to register an interesting expedient of criticism and stimulus to the reflexive exercise of a not immediate acceptance of programs in the professional modality in our country (RIBEIRO, 2005; 2006; 2007). Ribeiro (2007) reveals a scenario of post-graduation development that, during the 1990s, started to involve a demand of interest for professionalization. Although Ribeiro (2007) explains an evolving scenario, the researcher does not miss the opportunity to point out a component of 'resistance' and 'incredibility' of the academic community to the phenomenon of the emergence of the professional doctorate, as we infer from his reflections in the educational area.

Currently we have only one doctoral qualification, the equivalent of a Ph.D. Professional master's degrees was introduced in the mid-1990s, but all doctorates are academic. However, at least a third of Ph.D. graduates are not active in academia. This characteristic can be understood in the sense that many doctors, especially in professional areas such as law and dentistry, graduated with the aim of furthering their personal careers; however, as some areas of academia are strongly opposed to professional masters, the creation of professional doctorates is not on our agenda. (RIBEIRO, 2007, p. 147).

In the case of Brazil, we can identify an immediate correlation or similarity of the notion of Educational Product, in greater or lesser substance with the Anglo-Saxon notion of portfolio (MAXWELL, 2003; MAXWELL & SHANANAN, 2009; MAXWELL & ROMANCZUK, 2009). From a historical point of view, we point out the emergence of educational products primarily for the area of Science and Mathematics Teaching, as indicated by Moreira & Nardi (2009). Although we can see that, in an international context, the notion of portfolio acquired substantial evolution and shows itself identified with several other fields of specialized training, accompanied by the very evolution or genesis of a second generation or even a third generation of professional doctorates (MAXWELL, 2003), supported by the collage of a broad scenario of professional activities (KOT & HENDEL, 2012; ROBERT, 2013).

In the case of Brazil, however, we notice that Barata (2006) indicates an obstacle that, to a greater or lesser extent, can be generalized to countless areas of knowledge and, in particular, we aim here at the area of TEACHING - 46. In a way, although *Viva voce* does not have the same cultural significance that we discuss in other countries, Barata (2006) comments on the final and formal evaluation of professional master's degrees that, similarly, also involve an 'oral defense', but, in this case, we would say with less demanding content (TINKLER & JACKSON, 2002; 2004).

Barata (2006) points out some dilemmas, hindrances, and other judgment criteria and that, in view of the recent phenomenon of the professional doctorate in our country, we deduce that her critique, in general, is quite up-to-date and largely applicable to the academic context in the area of TEACHING - 46.

The courses have also encountered difficulties in the moments of formal evaluation: the qualifying exam and the judgment of the final product. Most of the professors that may sit on the boards are not used to the new formats provided by the professional master's degree, and there are no clear and established criteria for the examinations in these situations. Perhaps it would be interesting to have as a criterion for the composition of these panels the mandatory participation of a professional from the field in question, regardless of academic qualifications. The potentially diversified nature of the final products makes it necessary for those who will judge them to accumulate experience. Most teachers are used to evaluating theses and dissertations or scientific articles but have no experience in evaluating more instrumental materials used by services, or some products such as videos and software (BARATA, 2006, p. 278).

We can observe, from the previous excerpt, that the researcher Barata (2006) points out a scenario essentially linked to the context of professional master's degrees that, although we can recognize an accumulated experience in Brazil, with almost two decades, in the area of Education, we cannot disregard some criticism developed by scholars (BOMFIM; VIEIRA; DECCACHE-MAIA, 2018; RIBEIRO, 2005; 2006; 2007) and that regain their vigor, in face of a current scenario of the first graduates of professional doctorates in the area of TEACHING in our country (CURI *et al.*, 2021).

Below, once again, Barata (2006) emphasizes a concern with an extremely contemporary content, inasmuch as the constitution of a repertoire of evaluation criteria for professional doctorates should preserve a particular identity when compared to the evaluation criteria of academic doctorates, with a broad and long tradition in our country, when the researcher indicates that

Finally, there are a number of inquiries about the relations of the professional master's degree with Capes. The structure and evaluation criteria used by Capes were elaborated for the judgment of academic programs, and there is insufficient accumulated experience to allow the elaboration of criteria for the professional masters. Although it is clear that the professionalizing courses should be evaluated by peers from the area of knowledge in which they are inserted, specific criteria should be developed for the judgment of these courses. The criteria currently adopted for the evaluation of academic courses do not seem to consider the specificities of the professional masters (BARATA, 2006, p. 278).

We confirm a concern that focuses on the guiding and evaluative documents of each modality (academic and professional) and, similarly to the thought of Barata (2006), we can see that Rizatti et al (2020) warn about the resilience of a certain 'cloudy zone' that invariably affects the evaluation processes of dissertations and theses. Moreover, as we have tried to insist in the course of the previous sections, when we examine the notion of "Ph. (*Philosophiae Doctor*), it is urgent to consider and distinguish the training pretensions of a researcher profile coming out of the academic modality and, in the other case, a researcher coming out of the professional modality.

The warning provided by Rizatti et al. (2020) provides a necessary expedient of vigilance for the case of professional doctorates, regarding the component of the future of post-graduation *stricto sensu* in Brazil and, especially, in the area of TEACHING - 46.

Although the concept has been constructed throughout the years of existence of the area of Teaching, as we can see in the guiding documents and in the Memory of the Area, it has not always been completely assimilated by the researchers linked to this modality. We assume as hypotheses for these misunderstandings the fact that the majority of the faculty of the PPGs were trained in academic courses, together with the lack of knowledge of the guiding documents by teachers and students of the programs. (RIZATTI et al., 2020, p. 3).

In view of the preceding arguments and recovering the interest in the historical, evolutionary, and social aspects related to the term "Ph.D.", we believe that the role of *Viva voce* and its meaning requires an exercise of greater attention from the academic community, in the face of new emerging variants of the academic doctorate. In this way, at least provisionally, we have answered and/or provided important indicators that contribute to an understanding of our initial inquiry. Further, whether in the case of the academic or professional mode, a common interest in the doctorate involves a marked concern that all continue to require "the primary focus of candidates on working to demonstrate an original contribution to knowledge in their subject, field, or profession, through original research or the original application of knowledge or understanding." (GIBBS, p. 159).

## 5 Final Considerations

In the predecessor sections we have sought to discuss certain elements and factors of a historical, evolutionary, and social nature, in the interest of providing a greater understanding of the term "Ph.D." (*Philosophiae Doctor*). To this end, we have found that historical aspects originating in the history of universities have contributed to a corresponding change in the meaning of the term "Ph.D.", especially when we refer to a new model of university, with an expressive emphasis on academic research and a clear inheritance of the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). Moreover, in an inseparable way, we verify that in terms of its evolution (DOBSON, 2018), the function of the *Viva voce* (See Table I) as a historical element and intrinsically linked to the process of obtaining the doctoral title, configures a structuring and inescapable factor of the process of evaluation and granting of the doctoral title in several countries and, likewise in Brazil.

The emergence of variants of the "Ph.D." (*Philosophiae Doctor*) in several countries of Anglo-Saxon culture acquired a greater and current significance, as we noticed, especially at the end of the 1980s, a progressive accumulation of knowledge and systematic discussion of some worrying elements. From a close examination of several papers, in a prosaic way, we can state that the (academic) research doctorate is often the first step towards an academic career, while prioritizing the character of unitedness in a certain classical disciplinary field. In the case of the professional doctorate, we encounter a greater interest focused on research-based analysis of emerging and relevant problems in professional practice and would often be configured as a qualification for experienced professionals outside universities who wish to expand their options in a particular metier (ALVES, 2021).

From the point of view of the training itinerary, we assume a position in agreement with Barata (2006) and Curi *et al.* (2021), insofar as the qualification exam, including the corresponding Viva and the judgment of the final product (and the Educational Products) require a consideration of the nature and modality of training (professional or academic). Moreover, by means of a verification that the Professional Doctorates are still being implemented in Brazil, not to mention a historical movement of its not immediate acceptance by the academic community (RIBEIRO, 2007), more discussions and reflections about its role and characteristics are necessary (CURI *et al.*, 2021), under penalty of continuing to encounter obstacles (both at the master's and doctoral levels) and recurrent misunderstandings of the university faculty itself.

From an international scenario, we cannot remain unaware of a process of simplification or shortening of the training itinerary of new doctors, based on an examination of a global trend. As an example, Monteiro & Sá (2019, p. 203) recall that in Portugal "the time required for the preparation and completion of doctoral theses has been reduced to a maximum of four years, whereas previously a maximum period of eight years was the legal rule." Furthermore, it is essential to understand the fact that, historically, universities have always sought to respond to the interests and needs of a knowledge society. Therefore, the

university's due answers, in the face of a knowledge society, cannot disregard or abdicate a corresponding quality in the education of its doctoral degree holders.

Regarding the '*Viva voce*' component, with a substantially evaluative and progressing role for the candidate, on the condition that no possibility of defense failure occurs, an understanding of the importance of the candidate being able to talk about his interests for future research, his plans for publication, his ideas for funding further research, and so on is urgently needed. Therefore, "on such occasions, the external examiner can prove to be a genuine advisor, and often help can be promised for the future." (DELAMONT; ATKINSON & PARRY, 1997, p. 148).

And in this context, the occasion of the oral examination becomes a two-way exchange of scientific views and ideas. When the doctoral thesis is solid and not perfect, we note that the external examiner is the person technically prepared for the analysis, the 'oral examination' ('*Viva voce*') becomes something altogether more egalitarian and less confrontational than that term usually conveys. Also, since the work involves new discoveries, there will always be a component of uncertainty, and no certain answer will be absolute. A thesis will be based on previous work and established techniques; all of these are ultimately derived from approximations, assumptions, and consensus in the field, rather than absolute God-given truths.

On the other hand, in the face of a new model of university, an understanding of advanced scientific research centers based on competition between nations and a worldwide race for scientific leadership is urgently needed. Research located at the center of the scientific community is in every respect superior to research in peripheral regions. Countries in the periphery are countries that have lost the race, albeit only temporarily (VANPAEMEL, 2015, p. 214). From this understanding, we infer, therefore, that contemporary research developed in Brazil and, in particular, research in the area of Teaching - 46, whose intrinsic nature is interested in fundamental processes of teaching and learning, will not grant opportunity for criticism and distrust of its canonical instruments for the development and production of new knowledge and, consequently, vigilance is required to ensure its non-peripheral position in stimulating and attracting resources and strategic funding in our country, with a view to better investment in our teachers.

Finally, the defense of a "dissertation" and "thesis", depending on the tradition of the academic culture of the country in question, represents the epitome of higher education institutions, which grant the title of "Ph.D." (*Philosophiae Doctor*), through the detailed evaluation of a 'research piece' which, at that moment, as already mentioned, represents the *Magnum opus* (the greatest work) and an insignificant contribution of the candidate. In this scenario, an adequate and systematic understanding of the role and functioning of *Viva voce* or, according to our academic culture, the oral exam (PEZZI & STEIL, 2009), observing criteria defined for each training modality, may work to provide conditions for the candidate, in a metaphorical way, to 'overLive' *Viva voce* (MURRAY, 2009).



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