



## PhD training through Latin American intercollegiate PhD programs

### *La formación de doctores en Odontología a través de Programas de Doctorado Interuniversitarios Hispanoamericanos*

Alberto Rodríguez Archilla\*

The need to advance and expand Latin-American cooperation was reflected at the 2005 Latin American summit of Heads of State and Government. The commitment of that summit was to advance towards the creation of a Latin-American Knowledge Area (LAKA) (Espacio Iberoamericano del Conocimiento) (EIC in Spanish language acronym). This LAKA along with the Higher Education European Space (HEES) focus on the development of academic performance in priority areas such as higher education research, development and innovation.

Academic performance is fundamentally based upon four main trends:

- Students, teachers and researchers' mobility within Latin American geographical area, at undergraduate, graduate and PhD levels.
- Degree accreditation and title recognition as well as periods of training among Latin American universities. This requires acquired training recognition mechanisms.
- Identification of common priorities within research, development and innovation frameworks (R+D+I). Priority research areas must be established offering competitive alternatives within the scope of a Latin American context.
- Promoting networking activity. The networking concept is present in many specific initiatives of inter-collegiate and inter-institutional collaboration, as well as in links among universities and their socio-economic environments.

Before the establishment of the Higher Education European Space, the University of Granada (Spain) developed actions aimed at international cooperation and exchange, especially with Latin American countries. In fact, since 2000, the University of Granada has underwritten a total of 59 PhD-related agreements with several Latin American and Caribbean Universities, including universities of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. Specifically in the Dentistry field, PhD programs were signed with universities in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico (*Table I*).

Cooperation between the School of Dentistry of the University of Granada (Spain) and different Mexican Autonomous Universities started in 2002. In that year, agreements were signed with the Autonomous University of Chihuahua (Chihuahua) and the Autonomous Uni-

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\* Dean, School of Dentistry, University of Granada (Spain).

versity of Baja California. The number of these agreements increased in the following years with the incorporation of new universities. In that same year, the inter-university doctoral program was developed. This program was called «Investigación Odontológica en el Tercer Milenio» (Dental Research in the Third Millennium). This program was dependent upon the University of Granada. The program was initiated in both universities under the coordination of Professor Alejandro Ceballos Salobreña.

At a later date, this same doctoral program was developed in other Mexican universities: Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez (Benito Juárez Autonomous University) (Oaxaca) Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa (Autonomous University of Sinaloa) (Cuicuilán), Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon (Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon) (Monterrey).

This initiative targeted the improvement of faculty's academic qualifications in Mexican Dental Schools, as well as fostering all research activity developed in these inter-university doctoral programs. Moreover, dental schools of participating Mexican universities could in the future have the possibility of offering and developing their own dental doctoral programs.

From 2004 until this date, the Stomatological Studies Department of the University of Granada has received 105 Doctoral Theses. 44 (41.9%) were encompassed within inter-university doctoral programs developed between the University of Granada and Mexican universities (Figure 1).

The first Doctorate Theses were read and sustained in 2004-2005. There were a total of 4 theses, 3 belonging to Doctoral Degree of the University of Baja California, and 1 from the University of Chihuahua.

In 2005-2006 another 4 PhD Theses were sustained, all of them from participants from the University of de Baja California.

In 2006-2007 6 theses were sustained, 4 from participants from the Autonomous University of Baja California, and 2 from Autonomous University of Chihuahua.

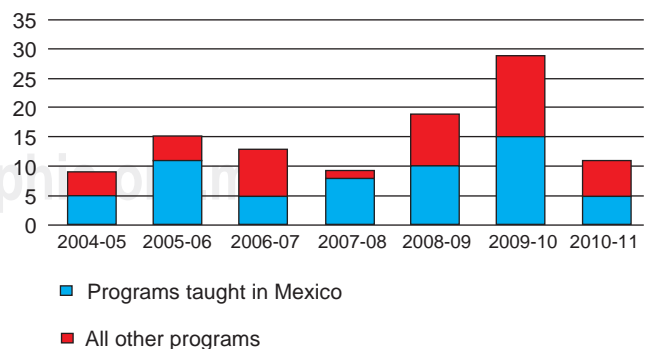
In 2007-2008 only one thesis was sustained from a participant coming from the Autonomous University of Baja California.

In 2008-2009 9 PhD theses were sustained: 3 from the University of Sinaloa, 4 from the University of Nuevo Leon, 1 from the University of Baja California, and 1 from the University Benito Juárez, Oaxaca.

In 2009-2010 14 theses were sustained. 4 from the University of Sinaloa, 8 from the University of Nuevo Leon, 1 from the University of Baja California and 1 from the University of Chihuahua.

**Table I.** PhD agreements underwritten by the University of Granada with Latin American Universities.

Country	General agreements	Agreements in dental fields
Argentina	4	0
Brazil	3	1
Chile	9	0
Colombia	4	0
Cuba	11	0
Ecuador	1	0
El Salvador	1	0
Mexico	20	5
Peru	3	0
Venezuela	3	0
Total	59	6



**Figure 1.** Number of theses sustained at the School of Dentistry of the University of Granada from school year 2004-2005, including theses sustained in programs taught in Mexico and theses sustained in all other programs.

In the present school year, 2010-2011, 6 PhD theses have been sustained: 3 from the University of Nuevo Leon, 1 from the University of Baja California, 1 from the University Benito Juárez Oaxaca, and 1 from the University of Sinaloa.

Assessment of results obtained in Spanish-Mexican cooperative Doctoral programs are very encouraging. 44 new PhD doctors have emerged from them. This represents a little over 40% of total number of doctors attached to the different programs of the University of Granada Stomatological Sciences Department, since the 2004-2005 academic year. This fact has placed the Stomatological Sciences Department in the first place of all other Spanish universities, and it holds fifth position in the ranking of sustained theses of all other Departments of the University of Granada Departments.

This pioneer proposal has enabled the development of statistics exchange programs and the establishment of Latin-American research nets which yield clearly positive results for all involved university institutions.

This type of university exchange initiatives need to be supported, not only at graduate level, (Masters, PhD) but also at undergraduate level, to contribute to the European Higher Education Area, which represents the cornerstone for the development and progress of our countries in a globalized environment.