

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: COMMERCIAL ASPECTS OF RELEVANT LEGISLATION IN CONFRONT TO INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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Abstract

The paper brings into focus the theory and practice of Quality Assurance in the public and nonpublic Higher Education Institutions in Albania. It offers a scientific perspective of the nuances of legislation and good practices in higher education, analyzing these in two parallel dimensions: the academic and the managerial one. In the academic dimension the paper analyzes broadly the law, different regulations, and the national quality standards set for the HEIs as well. The analysis is enriched through international practices on quality assurance and improvement systems in higher education institutions internationally wellknown. Fundamental issues are raised and analysed in particular, like: academic and research staff recruitment, involvement of students in the scientific activities, as well as the cooperation of the HEI in comprehensive research projects. The findings of a study, through questionnaires filled out by academic staff of different HEI-s in the country, indicate that there is still a gap between the meaning (misunderstanding) they give to the Quality Assurance as it was a rigid process, in confront to the systematic flexibility and personalized solutions that the best practices offer. In the managerial dimension, it is analyzed the quality of management within HEI-s through arguments on how it affects directly the quality of academic processes such as the teaching and scientific research. The paper explains different legal problematics between the higher education legislation and the commercial laws, as well as the role and nature of leading authorities, such as: the administrator of the company in the nonpublic HEIs, the chancellor as an administrative position, the rector, and the supporting units, on their managing functions, in many cases contradictory or overlapping ones, viewed under the perspective of different financing schemes, as an unavoidable aspect for a qualitative higher education system. The study confronts other forms of certification in quality and standards management, in analogy to the accreditation process and the possibilities of their reflection in the academic sphere and economic management of HEIs. The paper represents innovation because of the multidisciplinary approach and the raise in a scientific debate level of acute current problematics in the albanian higher education dealing with the quality of teaching and learning processes, which is estimated to be an emergency of the future decades. The paper proposes concrete legal solutions, as well as new approaches for obtaining, implementing and controlling of better practices for quality assurance in the higher education institutions.

Keywords: *higher education, quality assurance, commercial legislation, HEI's authorities, higher education management*