

The Challenges of the Albanian universities to the European space

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Abstract

The participation of Albania in Bologna process is attended with positive development in the field of securing quality, which is reflected in the composition law and in the system of national quality of security. But, on the other hand the organization and the quality of university education is in the centre of analysis and critical discourses. The goal of this proceeding is evidencing and analyzing the challenges of Albanian universities to the European space as: a) to emphasize and analyze the challenges of Bologna process as the society sees it. b) to show some possible scenarios of education in the Centre and West Europe. c) to clearly state the aim of public and private universities to the European space and the problems they may have. The exertion of this proceeding is connected to some conclusions and recommendation that are considered as an essential part of it.

In this great time of globalization, the fragile economy of Albania, except the different reforms that are implemented during these last years, has tried hard to support even the sector of university education, according to the great values of these public utilities to the preparation of youth to run the future of our country. The university education in Albania is faced with the challenges of the new philosophy of life and the challenges of the market economy and also with the ascending demands for a qualified generation that will guarantee sustainable development, supporting the European integration of the Albanian economy and society. In a world that changes too fast, the existence of different problems is acceptable. They are considered as part of the developmental process. So the new century presents challenges and possibilities for university education in Albania.

Keywords: Scenario, transformation, challenge, globalization, Bologna Charter, higher education

Introduction

In the great wave of globalization, the fragile Albanian economy, in addition to other structural reforms undertaken in recent years has attempted to provide support even to education sector given the tremendous value of this public good in preparation of a generation, a new generation that will lead the country in the future. A very important link in education sector, with a direct impact on the establishment of expert opinion, the preparation of cadres of the future and thus the development of the country, is *higher education*. An educated work force is an essential and key to prosperity and development. Education in general and education in particular are the foundation of civilization and culture of a country.

Civilization and culture help people gain key knowledge and skills to do things by the values, beliefs and customs embedded in them. Implementation of the latter creates opportunities for increased productivity of a company, improved incomes and living standards and ultimately leads in welfare of the individual. This is the chain which guarantees the progress of any nation. It should be seen as a cycle stage, where without a doubt, education is a cornerstone.

After 90's, economic conditions, political, social, Albania, not just higher education, changed but the whole educational system in general, suffered a serious blow. Abruptly it fell prey to the abandonment of educational institutions not only by students but also the departure from the teaching process of many lecturers and professors from the best, who had invested so much and that the replacement them would require additional investments of time and material and money. It took years of investment and the growing demands of the time to restore confidence in educational institutions and their value.

Now public education and especially higher system education faces challenges of the new philosophy of life and market economy as well as

increasing requirements for a qualified generation that will ensure sustainable development, thereby supporting European integration of the Albanian economy and society. In 2000's, the trends appeared before the birth of private higher education system in Albania. Higher education system in Albania, while it is in continuous development deals with a variety of problems.

University as part of the society is and part of its crisis. Though it carries more suffrage of crisis from society but also gives it back. Furthermore, the university gives more than takes from society. Input return to its particular output values much greater. It should be understood that "the door of the university" has a multiplier, which multiplies the values that comes out of it. Opening towards the West, in the years of transition, made the educational system part of the social structure of Western society but the challenges do not end here. This was only the beginning. It should be stressed that the development of higher education faces every day new challenges such as infrastructure development, the division of responsibilities between local government levels and enabling decentralization of power that is central to the faculty, to give them more financial and institutional autonomy but doing occasionally steps back towards centralizing measures, etc. All this swirl of change and challenges for the integration of the Albanian Higher Education to the European education system, led to the acceptance and adoption of the Bologna Charter. But although the Bologna Charter is the focus of the day in university environments, we are aware that it is not perceived clearly and therefore not interpreted correctly by all levels of society. At most it is understood as an agreement that makes a difference only in changing the number of years of school and school division into two levels (3 +2) and the free movement of students between universities of different countries.

On the other hand, it is thought that the application of Bologna Charter process will serve as an incentive to provide higher education in Albania the full appearance of a primary sector of the economy. Implementing the principles contained in the Bologna Charter is a critical issue and requires maximum attention in order to consolidate higher education in Albania. Higher education in Albania has problems that still remain quite serious. We emphasize the need to

undertake a radical reform in method of teaching. World experiences world has proven that teaching will definitely be combined with participation of individual educated in order to avoid the passivity of the latter, like being interactive, bringing tangible results, as positive in terms of communication, understanding of certain issues, reducing the hierarchical distance, etc. To make it more efficient higher education as in social and economic perspective, requires reliance on an effective strategy of its own. The biggest challenge and most secure basis to ensure development is having a "strategy for higher education."

General

Education, in general and in particular, is one of the areas, which affects, facilitates and precedes the process of preparing conditions for integration. Challenges that must be overcome in the transition period, in order to adopt the functioning of socio-economic life on the basis of market mechanisms and institutions of Western democracy, requires that higher education in our country be developed, established and it follows the trend of higher education in Western countries.

Financial autonomy of universities can not be conceived as an attribute fully given and simultaneously but as an evolving process that follows its own general rhythm of change of socio-economic conditions of the country. The needs of learning, scientific and financial-oriented departments autonomy are felt seriously presently.

Under these conditions, if you take a quick look at the development of higher education in Albania in these years of transition, we see some aspects of its changes where we can mention:

1. The rapid changes and modifications in the schemes of enrollment in higher education. Change of ethics for "rules of the game in the final game"
2. The multiplication of universities by the transformation of higher institutes (in different districts of the country) in universities and by division of the University of Tirana, not by academic criteria.

3. The opening of new branches of study as well as change and continuous and intensive improvement of different subjects. Not by academic criteria but other criteria.
4. The transition from a system of appointment of governing bodies in the selection of these bodies by the staff themselves.
5. The increase in number and continuous training in Western countries of teaching staff.
6. The tendency to begin development of private higher education in addition to the public etc.

This generally positive evolution of our high school during this decade, was associated with a range of difficulties and negative trends:

1. Abandonment in many cases of auditors from a qualified staff (their migration abroad or employment in public administration or private business).
2. Partial autonomy and confusing, especially in financial aspects.
3. Stretch and quantitative expansion of universities at the expense of quality.
4. Difficulties and lack of capacity in the auditorium, modern equipment and tools of everyday mass use.
5. Display of corruption in the admissions exams.
6. Decline of the discipline of teaching and scientific work.
7. Difficulty to offer and hire as assistants to the best students because of low wages.
8. Relatively low level of research studies and weak correlation and in many individual cases with public administration and specialists of respective fields.
9. Insufficient level of support staff that wastes time of teaching staff for second level assignments.

Methodology and main objectives of the study

Information used for this study is based on multiple sources. For this purpose it is used not only experience and previous studies of the authors but also plenty of other materials and foreign authors, especially studies in this field by international institutions.

In the context of this paper a data collection was conducted via questionnaires and interviews, which aimed at gathering information on the knowledge and implementation of the education in private and public universities of Tirana. Through interviews we tried to identify some problems associated with this process and draw conclusions on the strategies needed for the future.

Interviews mainly contain structured and semi-structured questions, in order to allow the loose expression of opinions, evaluations, comments and suggestions of respondents. Interviews were addressed and distributed to leadership levels of educational institutions in different faculties of public and private universities. Collection of data from the interviews conducted is intended to compare the implementation of this process.

This study aims to put out some of the challenges that will face higher education in our country and the strategy to be devised to cope with these challenges successfully.

Basic objectives:

We note that many problems have been mentioned in the paper, where the main ones are:

- a. *Putting out and analyzing current problems of higher education in Albania*
- b. *Putting out the importance of strategic planning at this stage of development,*
- c. *Challenges that are part of the Bologna Charter of higher education specifying its elements (unlike those that society perceives)*

- d. *Presentation of several possible scenarios for the development of higher education in Western and Central Europe*
- e. *Trying private and public universities in the European are, and issues that bear*
- f. *Issuance of findings concerning the major problems facing higher education in Albania and the attempt to give some recommendations on them.*

Higher education in Albania after 90s

To better understand the evolution of Albanian higher education across the complex and its dynamics, we give a description of the development of various elements of its composition during 1990-2009.

Exactly after 90s, as social and political conditions changed, the entire educational system suffered a severe stroke, especially in educational institutions and faith in their values. MES (Ministry of Education and Science) was established in 1997 following the merger of science and technology committee (which covered institutional research activity) became the only state institution that covered research activity. By that time, these two areas were treated by different institutions having a poor management and institutional coordination across sectors. Based on government programs, which considered education and science development as a priority, over the years there have been made important interventions in the improvement of various indicators, such as:

- The whole system gradually began to be orientated to suit the country's development needs and compatibility with European systems.
- Quantitative indicators, particularly those associated with the increased capacity associated with the absorption of students at all levels, began to be gradually increased.
- Structures identified better management of their role in making and sharing of responsibilities.
- There were major changes in legislation.

- A number of projects were implemented with positive impact and increased participation in international projects and programs.
- Adaptation of a new approach to priority areas and national research programs, with three-year cycles and less priority areas.

Higher education in Albania today - organization

Higher education in the Republic of Albania is managed by MES. At higher education level, MES realizes its mission through universities, colleges and academies. Higher education *today is organized in universities, academies and high schools. According to Law no. 9741, dated 21.05.2007 "On Higher Education in the Republic of Albania*¹: its mission is:

- a. establish, develop and transmit knowledge through teaching and research, develop and advance the arts, physical education and sports;
- b. form highly educated specialists;
- c. to prepare young scientists.

Respondents in the study of the law argue that the mission lacks content. Here's how one academic staff members interviewed says: *"must have programs and strategies for their role towards the future, not hybridization, but the models to be selected and adjusted accordingly"* These changes have been and continue to be important elements to reform the education system in Albania.

Scientific Research

Reforming scientific research system and technological development will lead to a coherent scheme of research, on one hand the actors feel appreciated and in turn, society enjoys the fruits of the relevant investment, outlining a rational line of action. Questions issued on research, staff members, who manage the largest

¹ This law was amended by Law no. 9832, dated 12.11.2007 "On some amendments and additions to Law no. 9741, dated 21.05.2007 "On Higher Education in the Republic of Albania"

faculty in Albania, as it is the Economic Faculty answer, *"University in Albania currently has many challenges, but two are most important-a) quality of diploma and, b) research, are and will be a permanent challenge to survive in an open market. Universities can exist without research. University may otherwise be called scientific research, and then education.. Government takes consultation, the university sells it. Benefits remain common. Our governments have so far been dealing with "small fries" rather than planting potatoes"*. In this way, it will do that by following the above line to ensure the research in the country does:

- play a more active role in developing the country
- easily integrate into regional and European trends,
- be more efficient and help create the appropriate environment and climate of motivation for minimizing the brain drain, etc.
- be support and fund solely on the principle of cost / effectiveness, eliminating the "existing domestic protectionism."

Higher education in Albania today - challenges

Education is a key priority for the future of Albania, as a decisive factor for economic growth, establishing equality, poverty reduction and the formation of a citizen in a democratic society. Education will create an opportunity for each Albanian individual to increase its maximum potential. The challenges that today faces the higher education system in Albania are large and multidimensional ranging from: the creation of facilities to accommodate the growing number of students, equipment with modern technical and scientific literature, financial autonomy of universities, opening of private universities, private organization of private and public universities according to recent legislation in education, as a new trend towards Euro-area.

Perspective on current developments in the Albanian education, reforms in higher education, carries with it the tendency of internal development, aiming at integration of the Albanian society in the European regional developments.

According to respondents the university status level converges with the economic, cultural and social areas. *"It is typical Albanian."*

Today, educational system faces challenges of the new philosophy of life, free market economy and European integration of the country. Albania's education system should enable students at least: a) to become democratic citizens, b) to deal effectively with the labor market, c) increase the competitiveness of Albania.

The achievements of European standards, faces a delicate problem and seeking solutions relatively fast so that higher education gradually can:

- be integrated in European networks of higher education (Bologna Process)
- adapt to the demands of the labor market;
- have appropriate institutional autonomy;
- achieve high level admission;
- be diversified.

Currently it can be identified a development platform, which offers an educational system that will achieve²:

- education of society with democratic values and citizenship,
- education skills to succeed in a market economy.

In this context, our university system has entered the process of reforming the structure and content programming, on the basis of Bologna Charter, where it officially adhered since September 2003.

A characteristic of this level is reforming, its development platform is the formulation of interventions being aligned with the European higher education standards of the Bologna Charter, in a configuration system with modern diversified tertiary education, increasing the number of new graduates and branches and increased admissions.

In questions posed about the educational reforms in Albania, members of academic staff, almost agree that there has been such, *but are confusing. "There are changes so frequently, and have not reached a standard. Changes in*

² Integrated Plan 2007, MES

education should be more thoughtful, to establish a standardization in the educational system. Reforms have been incomplete, the entire university system has been in motion, but the reforms want their time to create a comprehensive framework in education. "

Challenges of our society to higher education, the Bologna Charter

Albania has entered a long and difficult process to approach European integration, where each sector has specifications and standards of its obligations to be fulfilled. Reform in higher education is part of the overall framework of reform of the Albanian government for sustainable development and is led by the Bologna process. This process consists of 8 very important steps that were determined new progressive European standards for higher education. The culmination of this process is *the Bologna Declaration* for a European Space for Higher Education (ESHE), which was signed on 19 June 1999, from 29 countries.

The Bologna Declaration is a commitment to reform higher education structure in order convergence at European level. This process is neither uniformization nor harmonization of higher education systems in Europe, but European convergence that respects the autonomy and diversity of each country. Bologna Declaration recognizes the necessity of independence and autonomy of universities while respecting the cultural diversity of language and education system. *The strategic objective of the Bologna Declaration* is to create ESHE by 2010.

The main objectives of the Bologna Declaration:

The Bologna Declaration has as its mission the creation of the European Space for Higher Education in 2010. The aims of the Bologna Declaration include:

- *Adaptation of a system that easily recognizes degrees and comparable to countries of the ESHE.*

By amending the law of *"Higher Education in the Republic of Albania"* on July of 2003, the system of postgraduate research training is divided into two phases:

first phase is to obtain a diploma of graduate in-depth study called Master and phase second, which is related to scientific careers, starts with PhD and ends with taking different academic titles.

- *The introduction of ECTS system*³

Albanian higher education system is giving priority to the introduction of the European System of Credit Transfer. This system was set up by the EU Commission in order to enable the performance of common procedures that ensure academic recognition of studies abroad. It carries out a measuring and comparing learning achievement and transferring it from one university to another.

In our country, for the first time the University of Tirana (UT) took the initiative to build the system of credits by publishing new curricula expressed in ECTS credits in the year 2002⁴.

- *Promotion of mobility for students, lecturers, etc.*

The movement of students is considered by the European Community (EC) as an important aspect of intercollegiate cooperation. What is important, is the recognition of years of study or examinations carried out for particular subjects at foreign universities by Albanian citizens (or foreigners) who come to Albania and want to continue (or end) studies in Albanian universities. Now, for the first time in the history of Albanian universities, we can say that was constructed the Credit Points System as one of the necessary steps towards recognition of UT in the European network.

- *Promotion of European cooperation*

Promotion of European cooperation is to ensure quality in higher education with a view to develop comparable criteria and methodologies between European countries.

- *Promotion of necessary European dimensions*

Promotion of necessary European dimensions in higher education, especially curriculum development, institutional cooperation, mobility schemes

³ European System of Credit Transfer

⁴ Re: guides by UT faculty, 2002

and integrated programs of study, training and research is important to development process.

○ *Introducing Diploma Supplement (Appendix)*

One of the objectives of the Bologna agreement is the recognition and equivalence of levels of study. Diploma Supplement is a new conception and practice in higher education. European policy for higher education goes towards recognition of diplomas in the EU.

Diploma Supplement is a document attached to the sign, the purpose of higher education diploma and proves 'transparency' and helps in easy recognition of academic and professional qualifications (diploma, certificates etc.).

Diploma Supplement is backed and supported in many European countries, is seen as an opportunity to study the mobility of students, from one country to another and then creating the legal and academic facilities to complement studies by providing additional examinations and equipment of anyone with a diploma supplement.

Turning back to the interpretation of interviews, regarding the implementation of the Bologna process, and our attempt to Euro-area education a major part of respondents believe that an important role plays academic staff, businesses as well as students.

- *Academic Staff:* faculty governance influences through opinions shared in the councils of the faculties, they are active players, not only as subjects of the educational system but also as key actors in scientific research and they also create opportunities for students to develop scientific research.
- *Businesses:* Through sponsorship in undergraduate, postgraduate and research cycles, practices significantly increase the knowledge and qualifications. Support for high scores also affects students in their preparation and increases the pressure for quality and standards in education.

- *Students*: participation in student bodies and in meetings organized by faculty councils to express their demands and judgments as to curriculum, teaching, etc. of the process.

Improving the quality of higher education is inseparable from the information of all stakeholders in higher education because it provides recognition to the institution's programs and activities, with their effectiveness and transparency. Also it provides data for self-evaluation, change and improve the work of the institution. Cooperation with stakeholders within the country, regional and European levels will lead to increased information and quality of work in universities thus fulfilling the need for student mobility and recognition of diplomas. "Education is one of the strategic priorities of development, which guarantees progress. Due to the importance it presents, it has become the primary issue and occupies a central place in the Albanian government programs. Its role is interconnected with all the features of a society. Education in general and higher education in particular, are without doubt one of the most important areas of the life of a nation. It has long-term sustainable impact on all aspects of activities related to people and their welfare. Actors are interested in the objectives and interests to identify the most appropriate strategy to minimize its weaknesses and threats of external environment.⁵ Considering the difficulties in this sector and the challenges set by time and country development, strategic alternatives for the reform of higher education may be: *The creation of a functional system to reach European standards by:*⁶ conscious society for the challenges of higher education, develop a suitable legal framework, create independent institutions for the evaluation of the education system to increase academic autonomy, structural, financial and administrative by providing the necessary financial and human resources.

⁵Newspaper "Shqip" (Rivjera Dedaj) "Deans and rectors conflict for power, and (Jonel Kristo) 'return to fight klasve" May 19, 2008, Tirana

⁶De Ketele Jean-Marie, President of the International Association of University Pedagogy "Higher Education in The 21st Century"

Possible scenarios for higher education

*Scenario - a complete organized way to effectively dream our future*⁷. The concept of scenario was introduced by Berger (1964) as the "perspective" and the word "scenario" was first used by Herman Kahn in 1967, and the theoretical foundations of forecasting through the scenarios developed mainly in the 70s, particularly from Godet.

"Scenarios are good tools to rank perceptions in connection to possible future alternatives, in which today's' decisions can be implemented. In practice, scenarios are a series look alike set on carefully examined schemes. While stories unfold perspectives on complex events, scenarios give meaning to these events. They are powerful planning tools because the future is unpredictable. Differently from traditional forecast or market research, scenarios display different views instead of current trends of suggestions based on the present time. They include quality perspectives and potentials to give shape cutting pieces excluded from econometric models⁸.

"Good scenarios are preferable because they have the power of removal of stereotypes and their creators assume ownership and put into effect. Use of scenarios means to prove the future. Planning through scenarios is not simply a careful picture of the future, but good hearing and an ongoing presentation of the future⁹.

The main challenge for the planning scenarios is by finding the real needs of policy makers. According to a study¹⁰ of the OECD these scenarios are designed for higher education of Western and Central European countries for a period of 20 years. These scenarios are stories that present a number of possible futures.

⁷Kume V., "Strategic planning in public organizations and non-profit.Tirana 2006.

⁸ Tait F., "Why use scenarios". 2002

⁹ Miller R., "The future of the tertiary education sector": Scenarios for a learning society, OECD,2003

¹⁰ OECD "Thematic Review of national policies on education-Albania"

¹¹Distance learning

Variables in support of scenarios are:

1. type of population that is part of higher education,
2. nature of financing (public only, mixed, private only)
3. integration of missions offered
4. international dimensions of the system
5. homogeneity of the status of faculty
6. use rate of e-learning.

Scenario 1 - Tradition. Universities will be much like today, for a relatively small part of the youth given the goals of selection in the labor market. They function for teaching and scientific research activities. Governments will continue to play a major role in financing, regulatory aspects and management of universities.

Scenario 2 - Entrepreneurial Universities. This scenario differs somewhat from the previous one as universities (private or public) may have a greater autonomy to the various sources of funding. Research is seen as a very important activity. This scenario is more market-oriented without losing the basic values of academia. *Missions* of universities under this scenario focus on three areas: *teaching* (considered as *elite*), *research activities* (very important) and *community services*. E-learning ¹¹ is very important. Being more market-oriented, university resources, salaries and academic prestige is seen on the improvement, while the connection to the local economy is very high.

Scenario 3 - The free market. The market forces prevail, citing a third private sector regulated by private companies with accreditation and with funding mostly from market mechanisms. Market forces affect educational institutions for them to specialize according to function (teaching, research), fields (business, social, etc.), audience (younger students, part-time students, distance education, lifelong education), while businesses to grant scholarships to their employees for specialized training.

Scenario 4 - Lifelong learning, open education. Universities are open to all ages and are less oriented toward research. University education is a resource for professional development that is funded by companies or individuals seeking to raise the level of knowledge and that are funded also by government. Universities take a course at the demands they are provided with, the highest level of teaching, provision of short courses, even more distance education and e-learning. Governments and accreditation bodies are responsible for ensuring quality and accreditation.¹²

Scenario 5 - Global network of institutions. Studies are consistent with the requirements of time. Two major issues in this scenario are: a) students decide themselves on subjects on the same global network of higher education and determine the type of degree that they would want to have, b) a partner of higher education becomes the industry, except business.

E-learning strongly develops; training issues become more standardized and involved in technology and media.

Scenario 6 - Diversity in recognition of education. In this scenario, higher education disappears. People are educated throughout life, at work or home, for personal or professional goal in an autodidactic manner by sharing its experience with people interested in the same area. Professional education and practice necessarily require about it¹³.

In terms of planning method through scenarios, we think that Albania could have a future in the type of scenario "entrepreneurial university", since changes must be gradual so that the results be positive.

¹² Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Area of Higher Education. (AAHE), SOROS September 2006

¹³ Wack P. "Scenarios: Uncharted waters ahead", Harvard business review, 1985

Conclusions

After an analysis of information collected, taking into account the opinions of respondents and key interest groups we concluded:

1. The problems of the current state of higher education in Albania.

Higher education in Albania suffers not only from a lack of modern teaching elements, but also from a poor physical infrastructure. It is a fact that many universities in the country still have problems with the capacity of auditors and physical spaces surrounding educational institutions. This is a problem that deserves serious attention even though it is no longer important. This compared with many other urgent problems plaguing higher education today and discussed in this paper. However, the expansion of physical facilities for students, both inside and outside educational institutions, plays a positive role in their welfare.

- *Infrastructure of the faculties*, in which immediate changes have to be made to offer the minimum in which it is possible to *develop teaching*. Here we must rely to meet those needed basis as the springboard we need to move to the implementation of conditions that placed by the Bologna declaration.

- *A concentration of power as well as policymakers* in higher stages of hierarchy and this poses a problem recognized by all of us. Debates have become about new legislation on education, as all education funding, and earmarked funds are under an invisible veil.

- *There is little or no information available about the results of learning. No institutions exists that enables the analysis of different results.*

- *Lack of knowledge and skills to help reform the governance of education.*

- *Lack of stability and continuity in education, due to political pressures.*

2. "Disease" of being pedantic old.

Unfortunately, in higher education continues to echo Albanian syndrome conducting a formal way, i.e. learning. "as to be okay." This is really a major problem. Teaching is one of the most important issues to have a high quality education.¹⁴ Main manner to make efficient way of teaching is to give the place it deserves and increase the role of teachers (in our case the instructor), appraisal of work and of course, motivation. The level of teaching quality depends on two factors: academic experiences and financial support.

3. Strategies for higher education only on paper as a master plan.

Indeed, it is loudly expressed anywhere that education in general and higher education in particular, are strategic priority sectors.¹⁵ Strategy is emergent for higher education and making it so efficient to meet the two viewpoints, like the social and economic. Since education is a strategic priority must be shown by facts and not just with the drafting of "good" strategies. Even in this regard is still much work to do.

4. Ignorance and failure to complete the content of the Bologna Declaration

The analysis of respondents over the implementation of the Bologna declaration in private and public universities, we can say that this process has begun and is being implemented in accordance with the objectives of this statement, but like any new process has its own problems and needs time to comply with all terms of this statement. This problem was treated on the issues related to the integration of the Albanian Higher Education in Europe. In fact, as we have mentioned in the paper, it reduces the years of education system attendance to 3 +2 and the 4 +1 and the creation of two levels. Due importance to the specifics of the number of enrollments and graduates in high schools in the

¹⁴ International journal for education law and policy, third edition, Netherland 2007

¹⁵ "The main directions of reform of the education system for the period 2006-2010. "Annual conference of education reform program, Durres, 26 October 2006

country is not given properly which has been increased. *But, are these students studying in the areas that labor market needs?* Unfortunately, there are still no plans from MES to consult students in the branches of education that promote efficiency. The best solution is conducting a comprehensive study to balance demand with supply. Also attention is not given to the business community in relation to consumer and there is not attention to the scientific community.

5. The use of scenarios.

It is important for universities to be encouraged to test new methods. It is time to answer these questions. An assessment of the possible future of higher education requires more effort and analysis, especially if the ambition is to trace not only opportunities but also collate research on what is desired, to turn the possible into the real. The use of scenarios is an ongoing process and while the world develops, the scenarios should be revised to adapt to situations. Planning through scenarios is not merely a prediction tool but a new way of thinking.

6. *Regarding the strategic planning process the option of creating a functional system to European standards by making society aware for the challenges of higher education, mapping an adaptable legal framework, establishing independent institutions for the evaluation of educational system, increasing academic autonomy, structure, finance and administration, securing the proper financial and human resources seems the most suitable.* This option is comprehensive and provides multidimensional solutions for all aspects related to higher education, taking into consideration the reality of Albania's education reality and goals it has set to itself.

VIII. Recommendations

Our system of higher education is making steps to implement the Bologna declaration, but is still far from the standards of this statement. There are major challenges in this regard and the main focus should be given to:

1. Consolidation of financial autonomy, structural and administrative universities, universities should be given a legal status to non-profit entity. This will enable universities the required autonomy, financial management and other operational personnel to meet new challenges. True autonomy is the key to quality, efficiency and accountability. Responsibility will grow by giving full financial autonomy to universities and placement of professional systems, transparent accounts and audit.
2. Clear definition of standards of higher education to make comparable graduation in Albania and then convert to European space
3. Qualitative assessment of the exam. European cooperation of quality assurance agencies (accreditation) would be desirable.
4. It is necessary to report the quality of degrees in order to implement their mutual recognition in the area of European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Only in this way can be realistically fulfilled the objectives of higher education in Albania.
5. Deepening the process of internal evaluation and accreditation of universities by strengthening the capacity of the structures created for this purpose.
6. The conversion of reform in higher education from an obligation of the Albanian government to the Albanian society.
7. Universities should have clear intellectual property rights and the right to open or to be associated with specific profit company to commercialize their expertise and their licenses.
8. More complete information for academic staff about the Bologna process but also for students.

9. Within limits, the universities need to have the right to set the entry fee for students. In a European system of social welfare, governments may fully or partially reimburse the student through scholarships or other forms of financial support
10. Regional authorities and companies job offers are also financial incentive for graduate students
11. Real responsibility requires separation and determination of the hierarchy of values and better internal communication.
12. The international standard for special services and academic areas is a useful tool for improving quality and efficiency. European standards would be nice to welcome.
13. Reporting based on the objectives is a useful tool for increasing commitment and institutional accountability.
14. Public universities should not unfairly commercially competeted but clear rules should be set by the MES for the operation of private and public universities.
15. Decentralization is a good way to empower departments on taking initiatives and is to be made aware of the allocation of financial resources. Strategic initiatives require a balanced approach "bottom - up and top - down."

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