

TRENDS IN ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INFLUENCING ITS QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to characterize the trends in higher education in Romania after the fall of communist rule and the measures to be taken to improve its quality. Firstly, are observed and analyzed five major trends in higher education related to the quality in education: the growth in an explosive manner of the number of higher education institutions, the break of state monopoly by setting up of many private higher education institutions, the decreasing budget for higher education, the increasing institutional autonomy, the increase of international mobility of students and teaching staff. Secondly, are evoked some measures to control the effects of these trends in order to improve the quality in education, including academic assessment, improvement of the management of higher institutions for all its functions, like, for example: planning, organizing, staffing, controlling.

1. INTRODUCTION

After the fall of communist rule, the Romanian universities have undergone a profound transformation and adaptation process in order to comply with international trends in higher education. The didactically and financially decisional autonomy drove the universities to adopt a differentiated management taking in view the specific goals, resources and experience. The paper aims to characterize the trends in higher education in Romania after December 1989 and the measures to be taken to improve its quality.

2. MAJOR TRENDS IN ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Since December 1989, Romania continues to register progress to a functional market economy and the perspectives to realize of this goal are improved. According to the European Union report for 2002, in Romania were observed important results on the line of macroeconomic stabilization, like the decrease of inflation, the resume of economic growth. In parallel, the quality of higher education was an increasing concern, taking in view the new trends appeared immediately after the fall of communism. The major trends in higher education related to the quality in education observed in this paper are as follows: the growth

in an explosive manner of the number of higher education institutions, the break of state monopoly by setting up of many private higher education institutions, the decreasing budget for higher education, the increasing institutional autonomy, the increase of international mobility of students and teaching staff.

The phenomenon of the growth in an explosive manner of the number of higher education institutions was necessary, responding to a very strong social demand. Old universities split up in several higher education institutions or, merely appeared many new higher education institutions. This growth was random and often without a minimum start-up conditions.

The break of state monopoly by setting up of many private higher education institutions was a normal trend, taking in view the free initiative legalized by the Law 31 from 1990 of commercial societies. Only in the period of 1990-1993 were established over 70 private higher institutions. With few exceptions, the new private higher institutions worked in inadequate conditions for tuition and research. Inadequate curricula and shortage of academic staff were common problems.

The decreasing budget for higher education is a general trend for almost all branches of activities. But in higher education the explosion of number of universities have needed a larger share of public allocation, which was not possible in almost cases. As a result, financial, human and physical resources have not been able to keep pace with growing enrolments, conducting to a suffering of the quality of higher education.

The increasing institutional autonomy just after the communist fall made impossible for the central bureaucracy to monitor the quality of universities. Thus, the minimum of quality was not always guaranteed as during the time of centralized higher education.

The increase of international mobility of students and teaching staff comparing with communist era is a normal aspect in the conditions, on one hand, of liberalization of passports and, on another hand, of economy globalization. This trend offers many opportunities to obtain transnational dimensions for the quality of higher education.

3. SOME MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

To control these trends which affect the quality of higher education in Romania is necessary to take some measures, including academic assessment, improvement of the management of higher institutions for all its functions, like, for example: planning, organizing, staffing, controlling.

Academic assessment was introduced not only in Romania, but in all Central and Eastern European countries. Therefore, the academic assessment in Romania is assured by the Law 88 / 1993 on Higher Education Institution of Accreditation and Diploma Recognition, which set up the National Council of Academic Assessment and Accreditation (CNEAA). The National Council of Academic Assessment and Accreditation comprises 19-21 members and is appointed by Parliament for a four years term. This council elects its president and secretary on the basis of proposals made by minister of the branch. The National Council of Academic Assessment and Accreditation set up 13 expert committees as follows: Committee of Basic Sciences (I and II), Committee of Engineering Sciences (I and II), Committee of Medicine, Committee of Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine and Forestry, Committee of Human Sciences, Committee of Social Sciences, Committee of Law, Committee of Economic

Sciences, Committee of Arts, Committee of Sport, Committee of Journalism and Political Sciences. The National Council of Academic Assessment and Accreditation employs a 30 full-time staff and other outside consultants on temporary basis. This council provides a legal foundation for the official recognition of the degrees and certificates granted by public and private institutions. Also, it proposes to the Government to create new faculties and departments and to Parliament to establish new universities by law, but, proposes to close down faculties and departments to Government, respectively, to Parliament. Another main goal of this council is to make the quality assessment of higher education compatible with that of developed countries. The assessment procedure includes some stages: provisional licensing, accreditation and five years periodic assessment. It is to be mentioned that the National Council of Academic Assessment and Accreditation cooperates with the National Higher Education Founding Council (CNFIS) and the National University Research Council (CNCSU). Due to the activity of the National Council of Academic Assessment and Accreditation, only 14 private universities were provisional licensed or accredited.

Another measure to increase the quality of higher education is the improvement of the management of higher institutions for all its functions, like, for example: planning, organizing, staffing, controlling. This measure is linked with the self-evaluation report, which includes elements of management. For the function of planning is necessary to elaborate mission, objectives, strategies. In the case of organizing function is necessary allocate resources, to determine the appropriate departments, to precise the responsibilities of rector, deans etc. To fulfil the function of staffing it must to determine how to select, to hire, to perfect and to adjust the teaching staff and the human resources involved in academic research. The function of controlling consists mainly by the monitoring of results and comparing them with the standards of performance. Therefore, the whole activity is analyzed periodically and submitted to the approval of the senate of each higher education institution. To improve the management, in all higher education institutions were introduced the job of executive director at the level of university and at the level of faculties or departments.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The quality in higher education is linked firstly to the results obtained in tuition and scientific research. After the fall of communist rule in Romania were observed many aspects which affected the quality of higher education. The main aspects mentioned in this paper are as follows: the growth in an explosive manner of the number of higher education institutions, the break of state monopoly by setting up of many private higher education institutions, the decreasing budget for higher education, the increasing institutional autonomy, the increase of international mobility of students and teaching staff.

In order to face this new aspects, which affect in wrong way the quality of higher education in Romania, it was necessary to take several measures. One important measure was to assure an academic assessment by the Law 88 / 1993 on Higher Education Institution of Accreditation and Diploma Recognition, which set up the National Council of Academic Assessment and Accreditation (CNEAA).

The improvement of the management of higher institutions for all its functions, like, for example: planning, organizing, staffing, controlling is assured mainly by the new jobs as executive director of university and administrator of faculty or department.

5. REFERENCES

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