

IMPROVING QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN CROSS-BORDER ROMANIAN AND HUNGARIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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REZUMAT. Studiul analizează dezvoltarea învățământului superior privat. Analiza concentrată inițial la nivel mondial, cu scopul de a sublinia principalele puncte-cheie, influențează factorii și orientările generale privind strategiile de dezvoltare pe termen lung. Evoluția acestui sector privat, incluzând paralela cu cel public, este esențială în realizarea unei imagini de ansamblu la nivel național.

Cuvinte cheie: dezvoltare tranfrontaliera economica, învățământ superior, sisteme universitare calitative.

ABSTRACT. The present study analyzes the development of private higher education. The analysis focused initially at global level, in order to underline main key points, influence factors and general guidelines on long term development strategies. The evolution of this private sector, including the parallel to the public one, is essential in achieving a general view at national level(s).

Keywords: cross-border economic development, higher education, qualitative higher education systems

1. INTRODUCTION

From financial and material points of view, the higher education systems benefit of non-refundable financial resources, especially for the creation of a cooperation and convergence connection at public-private institutional level. This connection is extremely necessary in terms in which there is a less healthy competition in this framework, fact which affects the quality of the services provided, damaging the socio-economic environment.

Another side of the analysis of the positive influence of these European funding programs is represented by the varied range of existent financiations, fields which aim the higher education system as well as its connection to the business environment, by extension the labor market. Given the fact that higher education system provides human resources, the quality of these lasts is given also by the establishment of a strong connection between the training offered by these institutions and the continuously changing demands of the labor market. In this matter, the study made reveals financial and material gains at private higher education level as well as the contribution level of the private-public partnership in the targeted socio-economic environment.

Also, the second correlation is the higher education-research. This relation aims especially at the sustainable development principles, and by extension to the establishment of a connection between higher education institutions, which represent added value at scientific level, and the research fields.

2. THEORETICAL ASPECTS REGARDING HIGHER EDUCATION AT GLOBAL LEVEL

The major change from a higher to a lower number of enrollment in the private higher education has increased in the emerging economies of countries. The only clear case of a developed country with mostly private enrollment is Japan, although The Korean Republic could also be considered. If we would analyze the global status at national levels we couldn't observe perfectly developed nations with private enrollment between 35% and 60%, the majority being states under 10%. In opposition, less developed states remain under 10% and more over 60%.

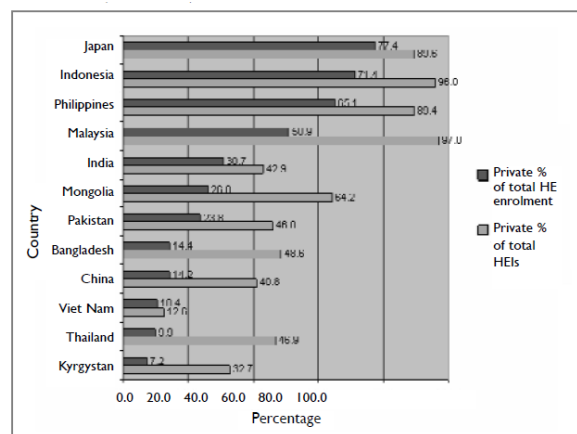


Figure 1 The structure of higher education

Source: (Eurostat, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/structural_indicators consulted on 14.12.2009)

The quality standards and guidelines in the higher education are elaborated within „The declaration from July 2003 from Graz” of the European University Association in which it was stated that the aim of a European dimension of quality assurance is the promotion of mutual trust and the transparency improvement by respecting the diversity of national contexts and their implementation areas. In agreement with the Graz Declaration, the standards and guidelines of this report recognize the primary position of the national higher education systems, the importance of institutional and agency autonomies of these national systems and the requirements imposed by the different academic activity areas. Moreover, the standards and guidelines owe to the experience gained during the pilot-project coordinated by the European Network for Quality Assurance, ”The transnational European Evaluation Project”, which analyzed for three subjects the operational implications of a European transnational process of quality evaluation. These standards and guidelines are also considered within the Study for Quality Convergence published by ENQA in March 2005, where the causes of various national approaches for external quality assurance and the obstacles in the convergence way have been observed.

3. CASE STUDY

The educational system ought to be a flexible one, which would allow adaptations to the target socio-economic environment, at vocational trainers level as well as the methodological, structural one, followed by the responsibility in creating quality and innovation. This last matter is especially for achieving a higher trainee frequency degree. Statistics show a higher number of people with a minimum and medium educational level in the Romanian-Serbian cross-border area. The human resource use need to be featured by a series of competencies and skills which would correspond to the theoretical and empirical level of final requirements of employers from the main active economic sectors.

The main aim of the project analyzed, once with its elaboration by the partners, is the higher education quality increase at the level of partner institutions and effect multiplication. The project aims at the development of an improved qualitative system from the point of view of the correlation between the higher education and present labor market. More specifically, this last concerns the common requirements of the economic environment with the engineering ones.

The general objective of the project is the educational quality increase at private-public partnership level of institutions through the best practice exchange, materialized in the introduction of new methodologies and methods within existent programs.

Target groups are students, academics, researchers, but also through multiplying effects, the neighbourhood population in the cross-border geographical area.

The project itself implies a series of imaterial benefits for the involved institutions at cooperation level. These are materialized through continuous meetings for the elaboration of working strategies, methodology optimization for requirements imposed by the project and its promotion, at eligible target areas as well as European level.

The imaterial benefits obtained at project level aim at an increase of the qualitative level of best practices where the public-private partnership takes place between a Member State and a future Member state. This partnership brings together two different educational systems of institutions but also a higher level of added value for their socio-economic environment.

The material benefits of the partners are obtained during project implementation and are proportional to the imaterial ones. These are underlined by the budgetary lines of the financial project proposal. This issue has been estimated in balanced percentages with the necessity of resources for project implementation. The structure of the project itself has been balanced in the following way:

Nr. crt.	Budgetary lines	% of distributed sum into the total eligible sum
1	Preparation costs	2.88%
2	Human resources costs	46.88%
3	Per diems	17.68%
4	Outsourced costs	14.88%
5	Equipment purchase costs	12.55%
6	Financial costs	0.66%
7	Management costs	4.47%
	TOTAL	100%

Figure 2 The structure of project budget on main budgetary lines

Source: Own elaboration after the analyzed project budget

Main costs of the project targeted the staff required due to a need of 4 persons for the creation of project management team. This team supervises the good implementation of planned activities for achieving the specific output and result indicators established in the project, as close to the initially planned ones as possible. Also, this team has the role of elaborating periodically (every three months) intermediate reports over the implemented activities. These reports represent the guarantee of a good implementation for spending reimbursement up to the reporting period.

Besides the management team, planned activities targeted a need of 8 experts of which 3 experts and 5 academic experts. These have the purpose of elaborating the studies required for the dissemination of good practices and their materialization in qualitative results.

A second significant cost category is the per diem one. Regarding the fact that a joint development of activities is required, the meetings between partners as well as achieving positive results within these meetings represent one of the key issues of the project.

The outsourced costs category are on the third place as a percentage in the total eligible sum. These not only target the dissemination, visibility, information transparency and publicity parts of the project but also reflect the importance of the external financial audits, a positive and objective evaluation being proved. In the end this last action reports the quality of the expenses reported to the implemented activities, and most important, the added value brought by the socio-economic environment through high quality results.

Last but not least, IT equipment and not only within the project, represents a material gain at institutional level, in the end, achieving the purposes of European policies regarding the accessibility of less developed state sat sustainable technologies.

In the end, the balance between material and imaterial gains and the added value brought at socio-economic level is achieved. Also, through project implementation we can sum up the results achieved through indicators:

- increase of public-private cooperation level in higher education;
- qualitative increase of services and endowments at public and private level;
- job increase, regarding the number of hired experts during project development and their contract prolongation after project end;
- accessibility increase of students to sustainable technologies;
- the development of the cross-border socio-economic environment;
- job increase in cross-border area through creation of adequate human resources in correlation to cross-border labor market requirements by the universities involved in the project and those from the indirect target groups.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Presently, the private higher education is oftenly considered a business, fact which causes a less favorable vision over the targeted institutions. Also, in less developed states these have sometimes a lower quality level. In opposition, strong economies have

most of the times private higher education institutions more developed than the public ones. However, despite prejudices, these institutions respond to a continuously increasing demand, contributing in a higher or lower manner to the creation of qualitative and adequate future human resources (from labor market perspective).

In order to increase quality in higher education, both public and private level, EU used quality standards in European policies which target the educational system.

European policies regarding education support an interdisciplinary approach which establishes a strong empirical connection between the triangle's elements: education – business environment – research. The balance between theoretical and empirical creates a cohesion between the various activity fields of the society where we live in.

Also, the European funding represents a support element of the three fields at regional level which increases the innovation and financial resource efficiency levels. The different objectives suggested through the European programs create possibilities for the public and private sectors of higher education.

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