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## From Quality Management to Managing Quality

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### Abstract

In recent times, quality has become a fashionable subject in the higher education system: many university, faculty or department leaders offer this subject a greater importance than they previously did. People attend courses and seminars on Quality Management Systems looking for a recipe which can be applied to higher education. In reality, quality is a serious, complex and difficult matter which is now part of the university management system. This paper tackles the subject of quality management in the educational system as a cybernetic system and proposes a model of quality within the development cycle of university products. It has been shown that the competitiveness of universities in the condition of their globalization and gradation depends more and more on the quality of university management.

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### 1. Introduction

The quality of education is an ensemble of characteristics of a study program and of its supplier through which the customers' expectations and requirements of quality standards are fulfilled. The products of higher education have an impact on the quality of trade companies and of public organizations.

The economic and political (legislative) forces exert pressure on the higher education system in order to adapt to the new social and economic environment. If the hypothesis that we live in a consumption society of superior

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education is accepted, many of the traditional concepts concerning the university quality will have to be changed.

The use of concepts of quality in the higher education was promoted by the success of implementing some quality strategies in the industry and services and by the need of promoting a "revolutionary thinking" in university management (Popescu, S et al. 2004).

## **2. The systemic approach of quality management in universities**

The socio-economic environment (GSEE), in which the education institutions carry out their activity, is a global one, and the universities from the entire world are ranked, according to the quality performance of each. This environment influences the quality management systems in Higher Education (QMSHE) at the level of each university (see Figure 1) (Rusu, C. 2002).

The result is that universities should also focus on the client/user/society's needs (N), and the specifications of university product to base on - C (competences, knowledge, value, attitude). Some educational experts contested the terms "Client" and "market" in higher education and argued for their use only in the commercial environments.

We consider our clients not only the students but also their users, the society or their families, the providers, the co-shareholders and the products being also the raw material. The students have a special status because they contribute to their own education. The socio-economic environment differs from one university to the other according to the initial resources and the informational, human, financial, material suppliers (R). The system exit, competencies and knowledge values differ according to the quality of educational and training processes, within the supply performing system or the constant evaluation system.

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