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Legislative Bases for Quality Assurance in Romanian Higher Education

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Abstract

Any systematic monitoring and evaluation process, meant to ensure that standards of quality are being met in higher education, has to be founded on legal bases. In other words, the quality assurance program for all Romanian universities is a legislative matter. The purpose of our study is to present the Romanian legislative bases for quality assurance in higher education, to analyze the fundamental fields in higher education quality assurance, to describe the quality demands of the activities of an higher education and to draw some conclusions and to make some recommendations about reforming the quality assurance process in Romanian universities.

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1. Problem Statement

Since 1990 to present days, Romania suffered multiple radical changes in higher education. First of all, the number of universities, faculties and new study programmes rapidly increased. Many private universities were constituted in Romania – some traditional and specialized and some pluridisciplinary, raising the matter of quality evaluation. Besides from this, the diversification of study programmes led to a clear change in the institutional field of traditional universities in the past few year. Finally, foreign universities are offering now in Romania trans-national or borderless study programmes, contributing to the new configuration of the Romanian higher education.

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All the above mentioned transformation factors put us in the situation to (re)evaluating our national system for quality assurance in higher education.

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “quality assurance” is a program for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service, or facility to ensure that standards of quality are being met.

Any systematic monitoring and evaluation process, meant to ensure that standards of quality are being met in higher education, has to be founded on legal bases. In other words, the quality assurance program for all Romanian universities, private or public, is a legislative matter.

Furthermore, the assurance of academic quality represents one of the main objectives of Bologna Process, and Romania became member of this process by signing the Bologna Declaration in 1999.

2. Purpose and methods of study

Following this line of logic, the purpose of our study is to present the Romanian legislative bases for quality assurance in higher education, by analyzing the three fundamental fields in higher education quality assurance: institutional capacity, educational efficiency and quality management, all in the light of the present Romanian legislation and following its way of speaking. At the end of this process we should be able to draw some conclusions and to make some recommendations about reforming the quality assurance process in Romanian universities.

To achieve the above goals, we have to conduct a critical analysis of the Romanian legislation in the field of educational quality assurance. The most general legal provision on this matter is to be found in the Romanian National Education Law, no. 1 of 2011. Our legislative system also contains specific provisions concerning the education quality assurance: the Government’s Emergency Decree no. 75/2005, approved with modifications through Law no. 87/2006 with the subsequent modifications. In this study, we aim to focus on the Resolution no. 1418, concerning the approval of the External evaluation methodology, standards, reference standards and the list of performance indicators, enacted in 2006 by the unique Romanian agency for quality assurance: RAQAHE (the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).

3. Findings and Results

The performance of our national system for quality assurance depends on the correspondences established between the directions of the academic quality and the transformations taking place in the higher education, in Romania and all over the world.

As above mentioned, after the signing in 1999 of Bologna Declaration, Romania became member of the “Bologna Process”. The assurance of academic quality represents one of the main objectives of this process.

At the moment, there are three fields in quality assurance established by the Romanian legislation:

- (1) The institutional capacity;
- (2) The educational efficiency and
- (3) The quality management.

3.1. Institutional capacity

“Institutional capacity” is legally defined as the university’s ability to dispose of a coherent organization and of an adequate system of managing and administration, presents material basis and the financial resources needed for a stable short and medium term functioning, as well as the human resources which they can rely on in order to fulfill the task and the assumed proposed objectives.

3.2. Educational efficiency

The “educational efficiency” refers to the organization of teaching, learning and research processes in respect to content, methods and techniques, resources, selection of students and teaching and research staff as to obtain those results in learning or in research that it had in view by its clearly formulated task.

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