

The evolution of marketing and management in higher education in Albania

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Abstract

The development of Albanian evolution of Marketing and Management in higher education, includes economic, technological, scientific and other reforms requires further adaptation of education to social needs and the establishment and development of educational policies. The state government regulates and provides the goals and guidelines for the development of economy, science and technology, as well as the conditions for the realization of citizens' rights and common interests in the field of education, the development of the educational sphere is an integral part. To understand that educational institutions in modern economic conditions have become equal subjects of market relations (Wu & Naidoo, 2016). It also requires the introduction of innovative management, a part of which is strategic marketing, which allows studying the relationships between external factors and internal resources and the university's capabilities. Innovative management based on strategic planning can ensure the progressive development of the university, its active behavior in the market of educational services and competitiveness.

Keywords: education, Albanian, management, marketing, strategy

Jel Codes:

1. Introduction /Education System in Albania

Reforms in the educational system that took place in Albania between 1992 and 1999 included some innovations in curriculum, new solutions in the field of foreign language learning, school management, the evaluation of teachers' work, and others were introduced and defined (Vickers, 2011). With regard to post-secondary and university education, the application of new laws led to the creation of several local universities in the main cities of Albania. By adopting the law on the school after graduating from high school in Albania, the segment of non-university higher education was regulated (Rexhepi, 2013).

The general principles and objectives of education in Albania are based on international standards. Thus, they include equal rights to education for all citizens who receive the secondary and vocational education. The second standard of education is the creation of conditions for the full development of the individual, and the provision of educational opportunities that must meet modern requirements of the youth development. Moreover, educational programs in Albania are focused on the promotion and modernization of educational content in accordance with modern social requirements, including scientific achievements and information technologies in teaching (Rexhepi, 2013). Educational systems should also have a development path in common with the social, labor and production spheres in Albania. Despite state problems, the country's leadership focuses on providing conditions for continuing education and also improving the quality and effectiveness of education (Balili, 2013).

1.1 Management In Higher Education

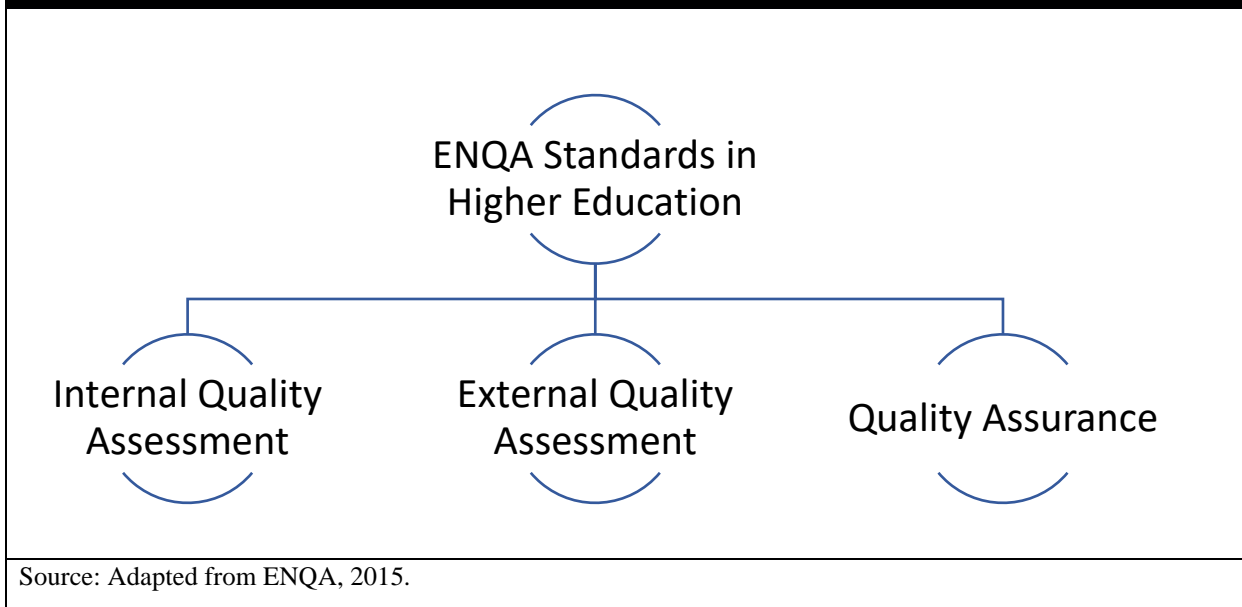
The development of the overall standards of higher education in Albania must also consider the role of management in higher education. In that regard, the higher educational institutions of Albania need to make changes in educational approaches to increase the opportunity for cooperating with and adopting the experience of foreign HEIs. Such a reform must be executed in connection with the ongoing processes of globalization, integration, and Albania's accession to the (Hatakenaka & Thompson, 2006).

One of the declared goals of this is to ensure the improvement of the quality of education. The main objectives of the ENQA are: (a) the dissemination of new ideas and best practices in the field of quality assurance among members of the organization and stakeholders; (b) preparation of a Memorandum of Quality Assurance and Transparency Instruments for the Bologna Process Coordination Group (BFUG); and (c) conducting expert

reviews of the activities of member agencies, cooperation with foreign (non-European) organizations and associations (ENQA, 2015). The ENQA works in close cooperation with the European Union of Students, the European Association of Universities, the European Association of Institutions of Higher Professional Education, Network of information centers ENIC-NARIC, association Business Europe, International Educational Organization Education International and the European Commission. In order to increase transparency and efficiency of quality assurance procedures the ENQA has started the formation of a European register of quality assurance agencies, which includes 26 agencies that have undergone an external examination of activities. For ENQA to help universities and national education authorities, a document was prepared that includes a list of recommended standards and guidance for their application in the implementation of the evaluation of quality of education within the framework of the European Higher Education Area. The standards are presented in three parts and concern internal quality assessment of HEIs, external quality assessment of higher education and quality assurance agencies, as outlined in Figure 1 (ENQA, 2015).

FIGURE
ENQA Standards in Higher Education

1



Source: Adapted from ENQA, 2015.

Based on the above standards, the main procedures and recommendations for quality assurance are systematized. For successful scientific and educational activities of universities, partnership and interaction with industry, society as a whole and other educational structures are necessary (Hatakenaka & Thompson, 2006).

1.2 The Evolution of Management and Scientific Research

Educational institution is the producer of educational programs that it offers in the market of educational services, and with which it enters the labor market, indirectly, through its graduates. It all causes the formation of marketing in the field of education. Therefore, it is the marketing department that can accelerate the reform of higher education solve problems that prevent universities from acting as the equal subjects of market activity and help improve the quality of educational services (Purnendu, 2013). In the context of adaptation of universities to developing market relations, they need to analyze their activities, the market of educational services, the labor market and their position in these markets. Moreover, in order to ensure the competitiveness and effectiveness of the University, its continuous innovation development is of an immense importance, one of the most essential elements of which should be literate marketing, which is an innovation in the management of the university.

The creation of marketing services in HEIs is now dictated to a greater extent by the intuitively realized need for the work of such units. However, many managers still do not have a clear idea of what functions these services should perform, the specifics of their activities, how they should interact with other institutions at the university

and what the evaluation of the work of the specialists involved should be (Wu & Naidoo, 2016). Those questions must be taken into consideration for any educational reform to result in the development of a high-quality and competitive HEIs.

First of all, it is necessary to understand that educational institutions in modern economic conditions have become equal subjects of market relations (Wu & Naidoo, 2016). It also requires the introduction of innovative management, a part of which is strategic marketing, which allows studying the relationships between external factors and internal resources and the university's capabilities. Innovative management based on strategic planning can ensure the progressive development of the university, its active behavior in the market of educational services and competitiveness.

Additionally, universities and research institutions that deal mainly with scientific research and have sufficient human resources capacity need to set up academic research groups that act as the basic platform from which the institutions can conduct research operations within their respective departments or faculties. Supporting the establishment of a Regional Development Centre is particularly important in public schools, which have the more limited capacity for research. Such facilities would allow researchers from different faculties and departments to collaborate on various projects in order to carry out important studies for the region. Regarding the higher education strategy, the establishment of these centers should be supported by a primary promotional fund. These centers, agencies, and institutes are not only structures of the central government, depending on the ministries overseeing them, but also private enterprises. They deal with scientific research, innovation, and technology, as well as the transfer of knowledge in their fields.

2. The Evolution of Marketing in Higher Education Institutions

It appears that Albanian educational institutions still do not have enough quality of education to be competitive in the world market of educational institutions. However, according to (Purnendu 2013), the education services industry is booming, and the demand for this type of service is consistently high, so educational institutions need to competently operate in the conditions of fierce competition. To achieve success in the competitive world market, the educational services of higher educational institutions should be of a high quality, and competent marketing policy should help to reveal and announce it to a wide range of potential consumers (Purnendu, 2013; Wu & Naidoo, 2016).

The market power of educational institutions in recent years is justified by the criterion of the effectiveness of the activity of universities, based on the assessment of the quality of education. Moreover, universities strengthened their market power, were recognized as effective, and inefficient educational institutions disbanded. The market power of consumers is conditioned by the freedom of choice of an educational institution, but the threat of invasion of new participants is associated with the massivization of higher education, which can lead to the emergence of new non-state commercial universities (Purnendu, 2013). In addition, the threat of the emergence of substitute services exists, but its significance is not so huge. As a substitute service, educational courses, trainings, seminars and educational master classes become the part of the educational sphere. It is explained by the attractiveness of the industry. However, the requirement of employers for applicants for a diploma of higher education reduces the likelihood of replacing higher education with educational courses (Purnendu, 2013). Indeed, schools and universities pay great attention to social and political education. According to the Constitution of Albania, adopted in 1998, the independence of educational institutions and the freedom of scientific and educational activities are guaranteed by law. Therefore, to limit anyone in obtaining higher education is possible only by the criteria of the person's abilities and talents (Balili, 2013).

Moreover, higher education in Albania has been oriented towards the development of institutional governance in higher education by providing technical assistance for the development and implementation of the Higher Education Strategy for 2013–2017. Additionally, the key reforms in higher education financing and standards for HEIs have been used to introduce an initiative to determine the rankings of higher education programs. All universities in Albania now have strategic plans and external governing councils.

Within Albania, any direct comparison between the university sphere and the business world would have been unimaginable up until a few decades ago. Many HEIs have implemented business models from successful companies and have found ways to improve financial management and to efficiently manage human resources. Over the last decade, the vocabulary of marketing, particularly concepts such as market research, market segmentation and strategic planning, has been applied to the field of education. Marketing in higher education has extended its scope to include new dimensions, such as attracting financial investment and enhancing the

institution's image, again with the ultimate aim of attracting new students (Wu & Naidoo, 2016). Knowledge in this area, and of implementing marketing plans in the non-profit sector, poses challenges for strategic operations in many HEIs, especially in Albania.

Wu and Naidoo (2016) stated that fierce competition has become the dynamic of the last decades in all spheres of life, and the market for educational services has not been an exception. The level of competition in this industry depends on such factors as the market share of the university, the market power of consumers, as well as the threat of new entrants. The branch of educational services develops dynamically. Therefore, it is necessary for higher educational institutions to build a competent marketing policy in the conditions of strong competition (Wu & Naidoo, 2016). Of a particular importance are marketing communications, communication tools, and communication channels. It is crucial due to the need for dialogue with consumers of educational services. However, the dialogue does not take place only on the initiative of the entrants and the university should conduct active information activities throughout the year in order to warm up the interest of the potential students. However, before choosing one or another method of marketing activity, before choosing marketing tools and forming communication channels, it is necessary to assess the level of competitiveness of a higher education institution. In addition, universities also should inform the individualized educational trajectory of each student from the moment of enrollment to placement in the specialty.

3. Research Methodology

Data for the research study will be based on secondary and primary sources. A various number of research techniques will be used in the collection of the data from the identified sources. The primary data sources include questionnaires established on education professionals in the universities and colleges (Johnson, 2008). Primary data can be gathered from the application of focus group discussions. Such discussion groups are required to develop concern on the educational progress reports and develop logical explanations for the current education fluctuations occurring across the world (Kuoppala, 2005). The research study calls for quantitative data focusing on the qualitative frameworks where data collected from focus groups is provided through comprehensive information and other effects on the academic fluctuations (Kettunen, 2008). The research study will use random-based selection for the educational analysts taking part in the overall study (Soltis, 2009). The elements of moderation for each focus group will be achieved through the application of structured questionnaires geared towards analyzing the current quality situation in higher education institutions. These surveys will concentrate on the appreciation of the interviewees and their current educational experiences and fluctuations occurring in the educational bodies.

All the questionnaires will be based on various attributes that respondent should articulate and portray in the learning environments. Therefore, it is important to identify desired skills from different managers and questionnaire will be 100% original (Lockett, 2010). The Likert scaling method will be used as it will require respondents to rate their responses and other critical elements for success in the learning environment. The reason for engaging the scaling method is based on the ease within which data is analyzed through SPSS. The stated questions will be included on the questionnaire while ensuring sufficiency in the conclusion of data collected as both valid and reliable (Hermans, 2007).

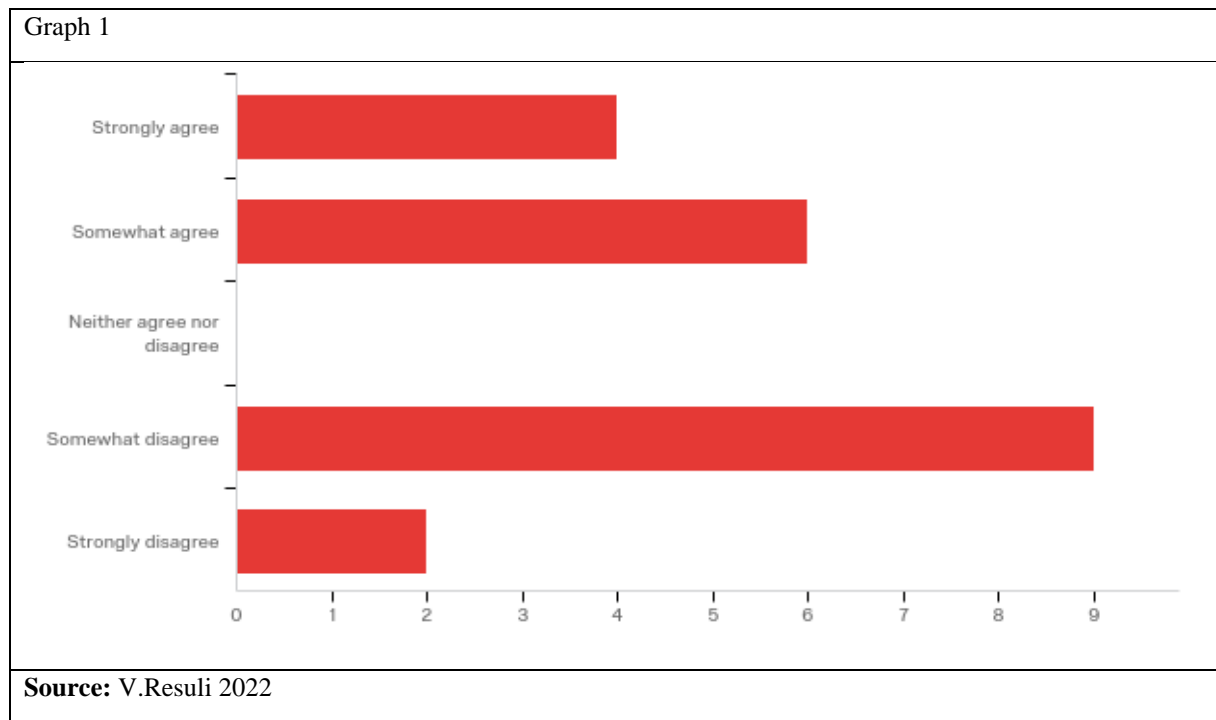
4. Data Analysis

When entering an educational institution, every student has a set of expectations regarding a number of aspects, starting from accommodation facilities and safety regulations and finishing with the range of courses offered and cultural activities provided. Therefore, the following questionnaire is a way of collecting information from the students regarding how they perceive the modern university with regard to the recent changes and advancements in curricula, facilities, regulations, and other relevant components that play a role throughout their studies. It will help to analyze the level of satisfaction of the students to see the general trend and find some weak points in the modern university system to work on eliminating them.

Results gathered from the respondents included demographic questions of gender, age, education, and field of study. A majority of the respondents were female, at 51.85%, which represented only a single participant difference between the groups. Age was a write-in question resulting in responses between the ages of 19 and 46 years of age. Average age was 23.78, and only 3 respondents were over the age of 30. All respondents indicated education level using the write-in responses, where science master and Masters of Science were considered to be the same response. Similarly, student and university were combined as a single response type. The majority of respondents

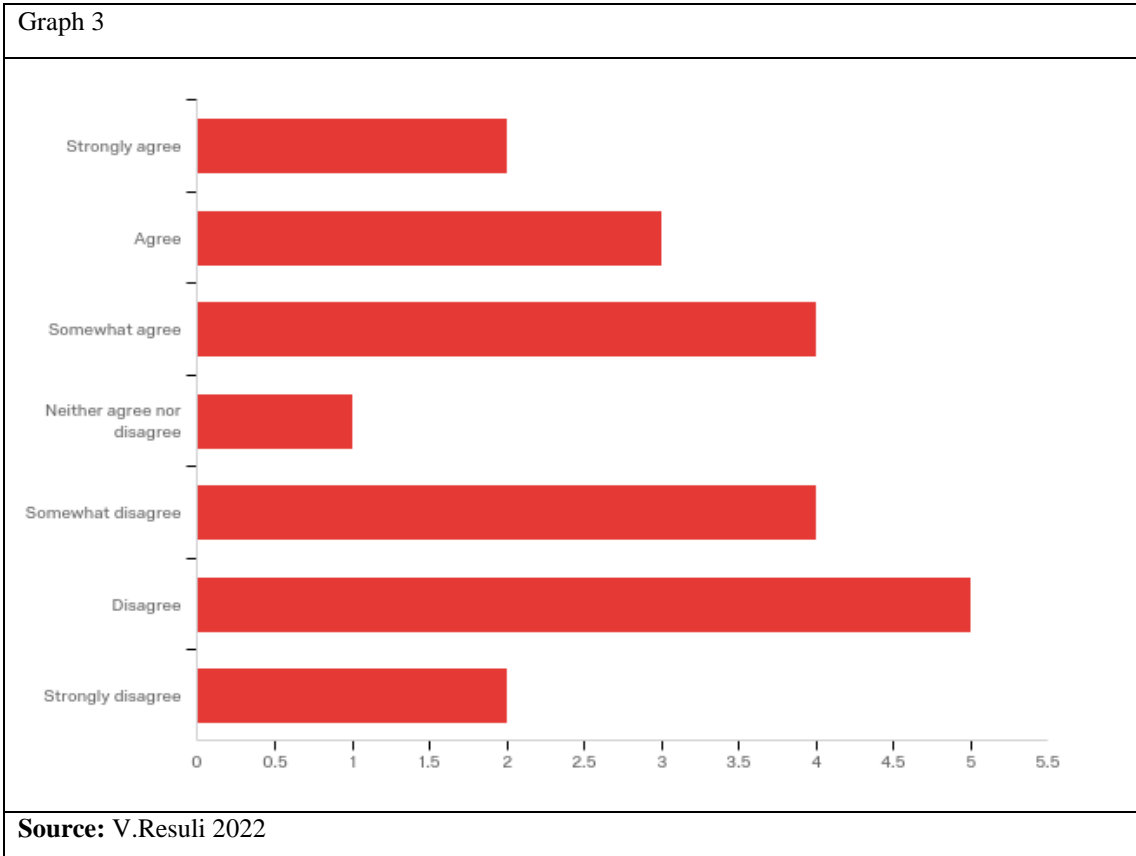
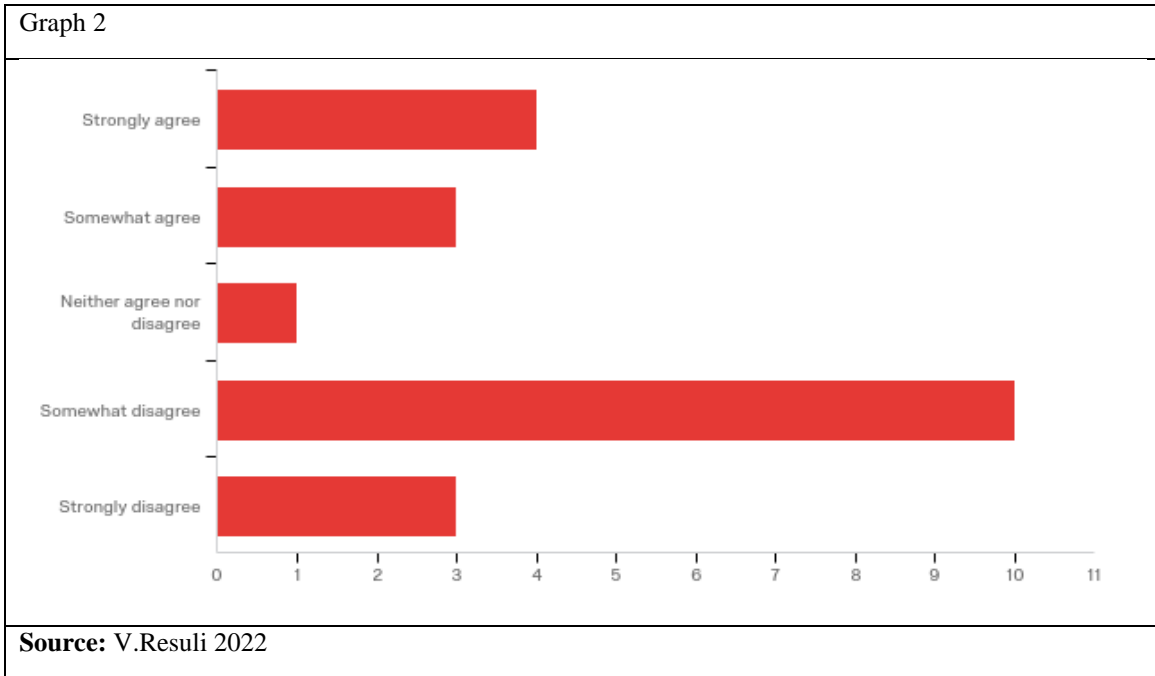
indicated they had only completed high school, 9 respondents. Following these responses were 4 students, 5 Masters of Science, 5 Bachelors, and 3 Masters. The final demographic finding, from the results were that the majority of respondents answered they were in the field of finance, but most indicated fields related to business. Other findings were university, high school, jurisprudence, justice, management/economy, business, medical studies, administration and social policy, public health, economics, IT, marketing and management, and business administration. Demographic findings of the questionnaire indicated that the population was distributed well in gender, typical average age of respondents and fields, with a stronger population in business courses for fields of study.

Respondents were asked how much they agree with the different questions presented, which included satisfaction, and found that somewhat agree was selected most often for questions 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 14. These questions did not provide “agree”, options were either strongly or somewhat agree. Results indicated that the majority of respondents were not completely satisfied with the curriculum, diversity, professors, level of expertise, fee regulations compared to quality of instruction, and facilities and offerings. Each of these questions did have a majority selecting agree. For questions 11 and 14, agree was in the majority, but included higher percentages of neither agree nor disagree, 19.23% and 22.22% respectively. Question 11 stated research opportunities had improved and question 14 was regarding the cultural life of the university and opportunities for social engagement. Lastly, Question 19, the availability of networking training from the university was in the majority for agrees, where the total was 51.84%, with 22.22% in agree.



Largest responses rates for somewhat disagree answers were found in questions 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, and 18. While somewhat disagree had the largest percentages, in questions 9 and 10 respondents in the majority were in agreement that information was available, and registration was easy, both at over 50%. In question 13, results for agree were in the lowest percentage; however, neither agree nor disagree was 23.08% for availability of extra-curricular activities. Question 16, assistance with work environment, was nearly equal between agree and disagree, with disagree responses of somewhat and strongly disagreeing totaling 46.15% and agrees at 42.30%. This was similar in question 17, asking if the university partners with organizations and resulting in strongly agree and agree totaling 40.74% and disagrees at 51.85%. Responses to the university offering internships for companies or the government was largely in somewhat and strongly agree at 48.15%; however, 40.74% selected either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree. Overall study results indicated that respondents generally had an opinion of disagree or agree with the statements, with none of the questions having the largest percentage in this area. Questions 5, 11,

13, and 14 had higher than 15% responses rates for no opinion, which were also substantial amounts for the questions.



5. Conclusion

The aspect of the higher education system in Albania is still in its early stages of development. Albanian researchers are hindered by serious deficiencies in methodological training and by their isolation from international debates on the production and development of knowledge. They also face obstacles due to the lack of management cooperation and their lack of integration within the infrastructure of scientific research in the country, as well as an unwillingness of institutions to facilitate such cooperation. However, the development trend is considered a positive one. There are some similar existing private institutes or NGOs with a clear profile of the competencies required in their field of research, particularly in the field of economic and social analysis.

Lower standards in higher education, particularly in terms of scientific research, seem to be due to the prioritization of quantity over quality in education and the limited focus on scientific research. Such problems require a mutual and widespread mobilization of resources, as well as careful identification of the necessary protocols building research capacities, in order to respond to various market needs. Addressing capacity development in research across Albania must account for the major differences in terms of population size and quality of life in communities throughout the country. Furthermore, discrepancies in terms of financial resources available should be considered, and funds in education and scientific research should be allocated and implemented according to such specifications. The main objectives of increasing research capacities include facilitating learning and knowledge exchange experiences in the region, coordinating research and scientific policies in the region and intervening in particular cases. Management of quality in HEIs is one of the challenging tasks due to the absence of a consensus on the definition of quality within the different aspects of stakeholder involvement. The higher education products take complicated elements and various authors have identified such ambiguity within definitions of higher education quality and the essence of having quality assurance. This has allowed them to bridge fundamental gaps within the quality model adaptation. Research interprets quality for higher education within Input-Process-Output schemes (Kuoppala, 2005). Input, in this case, is based on the entry requirements while Process refers to the learning and teaching techniques. The employability and academic outputs inform the policy standings. Research also agrees that quality of education takes many faces that are of different quality concepts.

Quality could be perceived as exceptional while perfection and consistency are fitness for purpose. In other aspects, the quality deemed to be value for money. The benefit features are based on the addition of value and overall transformation. The concerns are within HEIs role for societies to provide larger proportions of populations with wider knowledge (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). This facilitative process allows for better capability in learning new things based on university studies and absolute owing to extensive knowledge development. This is developed through right value and HEI elements that are fundamentally allowable in spreading the education benefits.

The traditional systems have extensive phases of educational programs with unique inclusions of the under-skilled students or workers advancing on the dual system and the individual needs of education. This is combined with work and technological development to achieve varieties of mentioned professions (Clarke & Patrickson, 2008). The existing curriculum focuses on unique skills, views and expertise of particular occupations. Vocational education does not adequately adapt to the economy changes and the requirements of small and medium-sized firms. Higher education institutions lack autonomy in terms of employment and funding decisions and hence are widely controlled by the government (Cheng, 2009). University programs are insufficiently open to needs of labor markets. Higher Education Institution needs the career center, effective internships to increase the employment in private or public companies.

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