

2022 European Quality Assurance Forum

Shaping or sharing? QA in a value-driven EHEA

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Call for contributions: Paper submission form

Deadline 22 July 2022

Please note that all fields are obligatory. For a detailed description of the submission requirements and Frequently Asked Questions please consult the Call for Contributions.

Author(s)

Name: CONSTANTIN-MARIUS ARĂDAN

Position: PhD student

Organisation: West University of Timisoara

Country: Romania

E-mail address: aradan.constantin@yahoo.com

Short bio (150 words max):

I, the undersigned, Arădan Constantin-Marius, member of ESU's Quality Assurance Student Experts' Pool and also, PhD student at the Doctoral School of Law, West University of Timisoara from Romania, in the third year. My thesis is entitled *The presumption of innocence*, and is supervised by Professor Ioan Vida, former President of Romanian Constitutional Court. Also, I am passionate in researching about the role of quality assurance in the formation, protection and promotion of common values in higher education. Until now, I have involved until now in two academics evaluations on based programme assessment procedures at the most prestigious universities from Romania.

I am keen to further develop my skills and knowledge on quality assurance in higher education and to work with practitioners, students and researchers from all over the world.

If there are several authors, please copy and fill in the fields for each author and indicate who is the corresponding author and who will be responsible for presenting the paper at the Forum.

IMPORTANT: If you are submitting a proposal, please do not register for the event until the results of the selection process have been announced. Papers selected for EQAF 2022 will benefit from one reduced fee per contribution, which will be applied through a special registration process.

During the Forum, the full text of all papers presented at the Forum as well as the associated Powerpoint presentations will be published on the Forum website. If you do not wish your paper to be published, please indicate so here. This has no consequences on the selection of the papers. Please however note that all Powerpoint presentations will be published, regardless of whether the full paper is published.

Proposal

Title: SHARING ACADEMIC VALUES IN QA THROUGH SHAPING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COLLABORATION IN HE

Abstract (150 words max):

In the era of globalization, ‘new’ policy issues appear in the process of Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions such as public confidence, the way of sharing academic values (institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equity and inclusion), international cooperation and involvement of students in governance of Higher Education Institutions. The QA agencies are increasingly expected to respond to these ‘new’ challenges, together with policy makers, in order to promote, protect and consolidate these values.

This article focuses on the solutions of building a strong public confidence in Higher Education Institutions as autonomous scientific institutions that promote academic freedom, integrity and reliable evidence. On the other hand, we are concentrated on the role of QA to build an international quality culture, through shaping, safeguarding and promoting shared values.

Key words: Higher Education Institutions, public confidence, academic values, international cooperation in HE, student participation.

The corresponding sub-topic of the proposal: Public confidence in higher education institutions as autonomous, scientific institutions

Has this paper previously been published/presented elsewhere? If yes, give details.

No

Text of paper (3000 words max):

In an increasingly competitive world, more and more organizations see the need to adopt quality systems to ensure their position in the industry and its viability towards the future. With the easy access to information brought about by technology, people can make comparisons of offers and select for themselves those which meet quality standards, foremost among other concerns like price and availability. Higher educational institutions, particularly private schools, confront such scrutiny from the public as education comes at a price, unlike public colleges and universities.

Educational institutions contend with many external factors to require quality assurance. With many options available to tertiary students, both actual and potential clients of the educational institution, the school has to ensure it stands out as the best option to obtain baccalaureate degrees. Quality is recognized as a competitive variable that influences customers’ choices. Another external factor is regulation. The government has mandated

installing quality assurance systems as the country aspires to build a quality nation, ensuring human development, productivity, and global competitiveness.

Ensuring quality in an organization begins with considering the perceptions of the quality of the organizational members. The study of Reeves and Bednar (1994) supports an inconsistent definition for quality. Over the years, despite numerous studies about the quality, the concept has remained inconstantly described. Research indicates that the concept of quality can be viewed subjectively as well as objectively. With subjectivity, people create judgments of what quality is or should be. And based on these judgments, people fulfill their roles in the organization in addressing the perceived qualities required in a given situation.

As such, public confidence about quality may vary with the organization. And assuring quality in the organization becomes confusing. The various stakeholders' perceptions of quality assurance in the organization, including its management, employees, and customers, were obtained and evaluated. A common mindset on quality was identified as a consistent quality-focus that brings about an organization's competitive strength and advantage and forms an organizational culture.

Thru the determination of public perceptions, best practices and gaps were identified. The views on quality assurance practices reflect the quality of the school's constituents' efforts towards quality assurance. In effect, their views become evaluative tools. In the opposite direction, the practices in themselves shape the perceptions of the organization's members. In effect, their perceptions are offshoots of the quality assurance efforts.

The Case of Romania

The management of ethics in the university of Romania is different and directly related to educational system. This represents a new branch of management of an educational institution. It must also be distinguished from "academic ethics" in the broad sense, that is, from the traditional analysis of ethical issues in universities to provide normative clarifications and moral guidance, using various ethical theories and analytical tools provided by the philosophy of morality.



In opinion of Ronald Jeurissen's opinion, ethics management in the university environment aims to improve decision-making processes, procedures and academic structures, so that academic activities are as much as possible linked to ethical principles. The tools used are ethical codes, ethical audit, and other strategies to lead a university on the path of morality. According to Donald Menzel, ethics management in the academic environment does not consist of controlling and penalizing the behavior of academic staff

or reflecting on the ethics of the academic workplace. It is rather the set of actions taken by deans or vicerectors to stimulate the formation of a moral conscience and an ethical sensitivity capable of impregnating all aspects of university activity. This type of ethics management in the university environment is to promote and maintain a strong ethical culture in the workplace in the academic environment.¹

Romania achieved a grade of "Excellence" eight out of the twelve indicators measuring the degree of implementation of the Bologna Process. The eight indicators refer to: the degree of implementation of the first and the second university cycles; the 56 Higher Education in Romania degree of student participation in the two-tiered higher education system; the degree in which an external quality assurance system had been developed; the degree of access to the second cycle of academic studies; the degree of student participation in the quality assurance process; the degree of implementation of the Diploma Supplement; the degree of national implementation of the European standards of quality, corresponding to EHEA; Also, Romania made significant progress as regards the degree of international participation in quality assurance and ECTS implementation.

The positive quality indicators were those referring to quality assurance in Romanian higher education. Law no. 87/2006 on quality assurance in education regulates the

- ¹Elena Gurgu, Rocsana Bucea-Manea-Tonis, Ethical Universities of Integrity and Ethics Management in the Romanian University Environment, Journal of Economic Development Environment and People, December 2008.

institutional and methodological aspects of quality assurance in full compliance with the ESG issued by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA, 2005) and adopted by the ministers of education at the Bergen Conference in 2005. ARACIS started to operate in late 2006. For one academic year (2007/2008), ARACIS piloted universities in their self-evaluation efforts, at both institution and programme levels. Upon completion of the first external evaluations according to the newly established methodologies (including student involvement and participation of foreign experts), ARACIS invited the European University Association (EUA) and the European Student Union (ESU) to conduct an audit of its activities and the new internal and external evaluation methodology.

The event took place during the 2007/2008 academic year, based on a self-evaluation exercise, conducted at the end of 2007, and an independent evaluation of the Agency itself, developed by an independent group of Romanian academic experts in university management. The positive audit results helped the Romanian agency to attain full ENQA membership. Of particular consequence was ARACIS gaining membership of the exclusive European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). Likewise, due to the same positive impact of ARACIS' external evaluation, the National Council for Higher Education Financing decided to increase the quota of quality indicators in the funding formula, from 20 percent in 2006, to 30 percent in 2009, the remaining 70 percent depending on the number of equivalent students.

One reported weakness was the delay in the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education. In 2005, ACPART became the national authority for the design and administration of the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education. The Agency devised its own methodology for the qualifications awarded in each of the three cycles and completed the pilot stage on the applicability and appropriateness of the specific and transversal descriptors. The self certification is an on-going process: the Council of Europe proposed through CDESR (Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research), that the deadline for approval (self-certification) of the National Qualifications Framework be extended until 2012, in most of the 47 countries participating in the Bologna Process. As a result of the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009), the following higher education priorities were established for the coming decade: lifelong learning, employability, funding, equitable access and completion, student-centred learning, mobility, education, research and innovation, the teaching mission of higher education, international openness, data collection and multidimensional transparency tools.

Against this international context, the challenges facing Romanian higher education, from a national and, especially, European perspective, include: the completion of the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education; the external evaluation of all higher education institutions, in keeping with European quality standards; improved access to education for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups (poor, rural, Roma); increased European competitiveness of Romanian universities and better intake of international students.

Ethics Management in the Romanian Academic Environment



The ethical academic compliance standard satisfies this requirement for effective ethical commitment to universities. The third stage in the evolution of ethics management in academia means consciously engaging universities in monitoring and managing their ethical

performance.

The stage of ethical academic integrity is the one that assures an internalization of ethical values and standards in the academic environment. Instead of pursuing their imposition from the outside, the subjective commitment of staff is pursued in relation to a multitude of values that are specific to the educational institution and define it (academic ethics "integrity"). Along with this, it enters the special field -which requires a special managerial competence -of "value training and value engagement" in a university.

The goal of ethics management in the university environment is to strengthen academic morals as an essential part of the university's culture and purpose. The University will also create a specific managerial position (a director with ethical issues) and an ethics committee, but its specificity is that all university management must play a role in this process, and this means that it must integrate ethics into the structure of their own academic management. Managerial accountability for university ethics is no longer limited to a special

ethical function (an office), but dispersed throughout the university and at all its managerial levels (rector, dean, departmental directors).

The Academic Romanian Learning System As A State Of Fact

At the same time, ethical criteria are not part of the promotion grid. The majority impression is that there is an ethical organizational culture, but lack of ethical training, moral complaints, ethical discussion, or ethics insertion into university management makes this answer problematic. One good thing is that a plurality of ethical visions, not just the Christian one, is becoming aware and accepted.

According to G. Rossouw and L. van Vuuren present an interesting evolutionary point of view, which starts from the finding by several experts that "universities are experiencing a process of evolution in order to increase their sophistication in terms of ethical performance management." The two authors identify five stages of this process, five stages of academic ethics management evolution, each representing the preferred strategy of universities to think about the management of their ethical lives, starting with the total ignorance of this dimension and going as far as that in which it is fully integrated into all academic activities.

1. The first stage of ethics management in the university environment is the state of immorality (the immoral), the total ignorance of the ethical dimension of a university's life. At this stage, universities are usually immoral and believe ethics is something that does not concern them. All these "immoral" universities are at a precarious level of integrating ethical values.

2. A higher stage of ethics management in the academic environment is the reactive academic stage. At this stage, university management (rector, vice-rectors, university senate, deans or department managers)realizes that something must be done to avoid the risk of unethical behavior.

3. The ethical academic compliance standard satisfies this requirement for effective ethical commitment to universities. The third stage in the evolution of ethics management in academia means consciously engaging universities in monitoring and managing their ethical performance.

4. The stage of ethical academic integrity is the one that assures an internalization of ethical values and standards in the academic environment. Instead of pursuing their imposition from the outside, the subjective commitment of staff is pursued in relation to a multitude of values that are specific to the educational institution and define it (academic ethics "integrity").

5. In time, there is a profound transformation in academic culture - an "ethics management in the transformational academic environment". The stage of total alignment is characterized by the integration of ethics into the purpose, mission and goals of the university. Ethics is no longer seen as one of the aspects of academic life that must also be led, but it is an integral part of the university without which it cannot fulfill its purpose and mission.

In conclusion, we consider some examples of priority ethical themes for Romanian universities, so for the ethical training, which can take place there. Here is the examples: living and taking bribe at exams; sexual harassment; private use or appropriation of goods from the university's patrimony; drinking alcohol during the program; plagiarism; conflict of interest; influence traffic (promotions etc.); verbal aggressiveness in some professors and students; arrogant treatment of students; nepotism in employment and students' grades; misogyny; violation of the right to confidentiality; student stigmatization to provide material advantages.

Also, as I mentioned, in the era of globalization and with global competition for students, staff, and funding, internationalization of higher education has moved up the policy agenda of both national authorities and HEIs. Consequently, the QA of inter-nationalization has also moved into the foreground. New approaches to QA have evolved in response to this new priority area of institutional development.

Discussion questions for the session:

1. **Could high standards of ethics and integrity to rise public confidence?**
2. **Is the international cooperation in higher education a new policy priority?**

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Please submit your proposal by sending this form, in Word format, by 22 July 2022 to eqaf@eua.eu. The file should be named using the last names of the authors, e.g. Smith_Jones.doc. Please do not send a hard copy or a PDF file.