



**PARTNERS FOR QUALITY
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Enhancing the Employability of Graduates

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Enhancing the Employability of Graduates

Contents:

Higher Education that Matters – an introduction

Peter Forbes

Quality Cultures and Excellence in Universities

Norman Sharp

Stimulating Cooperation between Universities and Employers with a Particular Focus on Graduate Employability

Sorin Eugen Zaharia

Quality Assurance and Employability. Lessons from the University of Bucharest

Sorin-George Toma, Rodica Ianole

Quality Assurance within the Bologna Process Framework – The Babeş-Bolyai University

Sonia Pavlenko, Cristina Bojan, Eunicia Trif

Developing Employability Skills among Students through Practice and Workshops

Alina Palanici

Lifelong Learning Policies, Creative Industries and Regional Development Case Study: Romanian South-East Region, Galati County

Romeo Ionescu, Raducan Oprea

Teaching Communication Science between Theory and Good Practice Development

Delia Cristina Balaban, Mirela Abrudan

Helping Students in their Decision about a Teaching Career

Elena Seghedin

Higher Education that Matters – an introduction

Peter Forbes

Consultant, UK Council for Industry and Higher Education
Employability Works

The British Council in Romania has a goal to stimulate cooperation between universities and employers with a particular focus on graduate employability.

This initiative is centred on Romania though at the same time it is envisaged that longer term the work can be of benefit to higher education in other countries of South East Europe. The British Council is keen to facilitate cooperation amongst institutions and cross-country and cross-regional learning.

The emphasis is on encouraging local, small scale activities owned by a particular university or group of universities (often the best way to initiate change) and is in line with the global goal of the British Council to find ways to help universities be agents of change and development within their spheres of influence.

Over the last two years or so, contacts have been explored and developed with Romanian national bodies including ACPART and ARACIS as well as with the University of Bucharest, Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca and Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi.

Conference

These contacts have been fruitful and resulted in a kick off conference that took place in Sinaia in December 2007 attended by some 70 delegates from universities around Romania, along with representatives of national bodies from Romania and the UK that in different ways support engagement between higher education and the world of work.

Some of the output of the conference is to be found on this website. We hope you find it useful to explore this output and that you may be stimulated to take part in developing a dialogue to further this important agenda. Such a dialogue can take the form of blogs, emails, informal networking and occasional workshops and conferences.

The conference addressed issues involved in advancing employability skills for the knowledge economy and creative industries, with a focus on transforming higher education activities from knowledge provision to student empowerment, specifically:

- Enhancing employability skills and entrepreneurship in the curriculum
- Developing employer engagement with higher education
- Cooperation between businesses and universities to foster development of creative industries

Conference delegates were welcomed by representatives of partners involved with the project:

- Mark Crossey, Deputy Director, British Council Romania
- Prof. Dr. Henri Lucian, Pro-Rector - International Relations, Al. I. Cuza University of Iasi
- University of Cluj
- Prof. Dr. Ioan Panzaru, Rector, University of Bucharest
- Prof. Dr. Sorin Zaharia, Director, National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with Economic and Social Environment (ACPART)

Keynote addresses were made by:

- Richard Brown, Chief Executive, UK Council for Industry and Higher Education
- Liz Rhodes MBE, Director, UK National Council for Work Experience
- Norman Sharp OBE, Director Quality Assurance Agency Scotland
- Professor univ.dr.ing. Sorin Eugen Zaharia, Director ACPART
- Professor univ.dr.ing. Ioan Curtu, President ARACIS

The following sessions on specific themes took place:

Developing skills for greater employability of graduates in creative industries:

Curricular Developments in Visual Arts Higher Education

- Dr. Radu Moga, West University of Timisoara, Reader, Scientific Secretary

Lifelong learning policies, creative industries and regional development

- Prof. Dr. Romeo Ionescu, Dunarea de Jos University, Galati, University Professor, Dr. Raducan Oprea, Dunarea de Jos University, Galati University, Associate Professor

The European Master's in Interactive Multimedia (EMIM)

- Dr. Rodica Mocan, Lecturer, Babes Bolyai University of Cluj Napoca

Education in Creative Industries

- Marius Ursache, Grapefruit, Chief Creative Officer

Teaching interpersonal skills such as communication, creative thinking and leadership throughout HE curriculum:

Teaching Communication Science between Theory and Best Practice

- Delia Cristina Balaban, Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Department of Communication and PR

Communication micro-skills - a transversal training model for psychologists, educators, human resource managers, and bioethicians

- Dr. Ovidiu Gavrilovici, Al. I Cuza University of Iasi

Networking in the frame of teaching courses, seminars and workshops

- Prof. Dr. Ovidiu Pecican, Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

Asking questions and listening – the critical skills for professionals

- John Samihaian, Managing Partner, Atlas Consel Training

The following facilitated workshops took place:

Using student employability profiles to support delivery of employability skills for the knowledge economy

- Peter Forbes and Bianca Kubler, Employability Works

Creating entrepreneurship: entrepreneurship education for the creative industries

- David Clews, Manager, UK Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Art, Design and Media

Developing employability through the curriculum, student work experience and employer engagement

- Liz Rhodes MBE, Director, UK National Council for Work Experience

Case studies were presented on the following:

Employer engagement and the role of students throughout quality assurance process at institutional level:

- Dr. Sorin George Toma, University of Bucharest, Reader, QA Manager

What do employers expect from quality assurance in higher education?

- Monica Zaharie, Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj Napoca

Quality Assurance within the Bologna Process Framework: the case of the Babeş-Bolyai University:

- Eunicia Trif and Sonia Pavlenko, Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj Napoca

Students' role in quality assurance:

- Daniel Spoiala, Vice President, National Alliance of Students' Organizations in Romania

Reflections on the UK Experience

From my point of view, it is a privilege to play a small part in the valuable work of helping Romanian institutions take advantage of the UK experience of developing relationships of mutual benefit between higher education and business.

Relationships between universities and businesses have an increasing impact on each other's missions, values and priorities. The demand for higher level skills, within knowledge economies and in the face of global competition, requires a continual exploration of possibilities for cooperation.

It can be argued that the motivation for business engagement with higher education can be classified into "4 Rs": research, reputation, revenue and resourcing. Each of these motivations can contribute to fruitful activities that add value to participating organisations.

Higher education is in competition with private providers of training and it can be advocated that it is best for universities to play to their strengths: academic rigour, long haul players in student learning, leading edge in innovation and thinking.

Collaborative, or cooperative, relationships provide a strong basis for long term engagement between universities and businesses: in contrast, contractual links or agreements for one specific purpose alone may have a short shelf life.

The strongest partnerships often start small with limited objectives. Provided each partner has individuals who are passionate and willing to champion the original initiative, this can lead to organic growth in engagement over time.

Creating clusters of mutually benefiting activities supports long term engagement and can involve government, intermediary organisations, universities, businesses and individuals.

The following comprises a list of some examples of higher education/business relationships in the UK and links that should be useful for both academics and employers in Romania who are committed to designing and delivering cooperation between universities and business.

Examples of Relationships

- Imperial College, London and Constructionarium
- Airbus and North East Wales Institute of Higher Education
- Loughborough University Systems Engineering Innovation Centre and BAE Systems
- Dawnus Construction

Student Centred Education: Pedagogical Innovations

- Higher Education Academy student employability profiles
- Work related learning: STEP programme

- Imperial College, Constructionarium
- University of Westminster Psychology students
- Humanities students: self development supported by web learning

Links

- Higher Education Academy www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/employability
- Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services www.agcas.org.uk
- National Council for Work Experience www.work-experience.org/ncwe.rd/index.jsp
- Council for Industry and Higher Education www.cihe-uk.com/index.php
- Association of Graduate Recruiters AGR www.agr.org.uk

Quality Cultures and Excellence in Universities

Norman Sharp

Director

QAA Scotland

This paper¹ is a revised version of a paper I originally delivered to the Council of Europe Forum for Higher Education at its meeting in Strasbourg in September 2006. It is frequently the case in Europe that in our conferences and seminars, we spend many hours in discussion and heated debate on the detailed minutiae of the 'how' and the 'who' questions of quality assurance - how we should conduct our quality assurance processes and who should be conducting them. We get involved in important and serious discussions about the legitimate role of public authorities and institutions. We spend countless hours debating how we can devise efficient and effective, valid and reliable systems for review at subject level and at institution-wide level. We get into heated discussion about the allocation of credit points and levels to our degrees and course units. I fear that there is a serious danger that some European debate on quality is increasingly getting caught up in trivia and losing sight of the serious core of the issue: how can we all strive to improve the experience that we offer to our students and underpin the standards of the qualifications to which they aspire?

Essentially, in my address I would like to change the focus from the 'how' and 'who' questions to discuss with you the 'why' question. Why are we all devoting scarce higher education resources to matters of quality? My presentation will start by outlining a simple thesis and then go on to illustrate the implications of this thesis by discussing four key outcomes or aspects of thinking differently about the nature of quality cultures. If I am allowed to highlight one area that I think is of paramount importance, it would be the issues surrounding my outcome three below and its links to outcome four. Fundamental to our discussions about quality cultures must be, in my view, the very nature of learning and teaching in higher education. If we lose sight of this, we inevitably descend to a focus on relative trivia.

In my exposition, I will be using some illustrative examples from the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework which has been approved as meeting all the requirements of the ENQA European Standards and Guidelines and also the Guidelines of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies. In some

¹ Prepared as a paper for Coimbra Group of Universities Workshop, University of Iasi, 14-15 November 2008.

regards the Scottish system has much in common with other European frameworks (in particular, Finland and Norway); in other respects it is significantly different. Having said all that, like all quality frameworks, I am very aware that it has its relative strengths and weaknesses. I am firmly of the view that there is no ‘right’ system: different approaches have particular strengths and weaknesses in particular geographical, political and temporal contexts.

My simple thesis

My thesis is indeed simple and will be outlined only very briefly. It is in three parts. Firstly I will argue that we can only understand and deliver effectively in respect of the ‘how’ and ‘who’ questions once we have understood, in our own particular social, economic and political contexts, the ‘why’ question. Secondly, I will argue that a focus on educational excellence will, to a significant extent, meet the other imperatives behind the drive for quality assurance. Thirdly, I will argue that the impact of quality assurance processes will be maximised when the outcomes of the quality assurance systems themselves become inputs, and we move into the virtuous circle of quality enhancement.

1. Why?

Firstly then the importance of the *why?* question. I participated recently in a discussion on quality assurance with colleagues in Chile. During these discussions Professor Henrik Montenegro posed a very interesting question for all of us involved in the business of quality assurance. He asked, ‘when we look back in 10 years time, what will have changed as a result of our efforts? Will we look back and say that we have devised sophisticated processes, efficient review structures, clever audit methodologies, processes that ran increasingly smoothly? Or, will we be able say that we have contributed to a real impact on the quality of the student experience?’ It seems to me that Professor Montenegro was getting to the heart of the *why?* question. While there are clearly other issues involved, the heart of the matter must surely be the impact we have, directly and indirectly, on the quality of the student experience.

However, as Principals and Vice-Chancellors are very well aware, when you ask the *why?* question there will be many varied answers from different perspectives. The specific focus of our answer will depend on our particular frame (or frames) of reference. There are three very commonly used frames of reference which are by no means mutually exclusive:

- market failure
- public accountability
- educational excellence

In the first of these, the rationale for intervention in relation to quality assurance is based on the failure of the market. From this perspective it is argued that, in a perfect market, the free choice of well informed and frequent consumers would drive out poor quality and support the growth of efficient and effective high

quality institutions. The evidence is, of course, very clear: the higher education 'market' does not operate in this way. The market cannot be relied on to provide secure quality assurance, let alone quality enhancement arrangements. In the jargon of the economist, we have neither perfectly informed and frequent 'consumers' nor a structure of perfectly competitive 'producers'. The second line of argument is that all education, including higher education, is a public good which directly and indirectly involves significant sums of public money and these aspects bring with them a requirement for public accountability. It is argued that, because of vested interest, the institutions themselves operating freely cannot be relied on to meet the requirements of public accountability, and that we, therefore, require some form of external intervention in relation to the assurance of quality and standards. The third line of argument is based on the importance of quality assurance arrangements in supporting the delivery of educational excellence given the fundamental importance of higher education in securing individual, community and economic wellbeing and prosperity. As I indicated a moment ago, these three perspectives are not mutually exclusive and indeed in many areas are closely inter-related. Some matters of public accountability in themselves will derive from aspects of market failure, and issues of public accountability will, in general, be closely related to matters of educational excellence.

2. The pre-eminence of educational excellence

The second part of my thesis follows exactly from the above: to a significant extent, if we focus our attention appropriately on striving to achieve educational excellence, the requirements of public accountability and the problems posed by market failure will be largely addressed. An institution that seriously and effectively internalises a drive for educational excellence in the experience offered to its students will not be able to coast on a sea of inadequacy supported by its monopolistic position even if it was tempted so to do. Equally, the institution with effective quality enhancement strategies in place will be in a position to meet the requirements of public accountability by always striving in systematic ways to deliver educational excellence. I would argue in this context, that the public security that would be required should be the guarantee that there are effective quality management systems in place.

3. The virtuous circle of quality enhancement

The third and final part of my thesis is that, in general, the power of the outcomes of quality assurance is maximised when the outputs of the quality assurance systems themselves become inputs and we move into the virtuous circles of quality enhancement. That is, we manage quality, not for its own sake, but rather we explicitly manage quality in order to enhance the experience offered to the students and communities we seek to serve. It is important that our higher education institutions should reflect carefully on the evidence of past performance in order to gain insight into past performance, and audit trails of course committees, student surveys, graduation and employment rates are all helpful and important. However, this is the beginning of effective quality management, not the end point. The key question is now, 'so what?'. Is this good, bad or indifferent?

Against what national and international benchmarks are we comparing ourselves? How does this compare with emerging good practice in teaching and learning? Where does this indicate we need, either as an individual institution, or collectively as a higher education sector, to invest some development resource? What good practice can we pass from one department, faculty or school to another? In other words, the outcomes of our quality processes are providing the evidential base for prioritising improvement: the outcomes become a key input into our quality enhancement strategy. In subsequent rounds of the quality cycle, evidence is then available on the effectiveness or otherwise of change and so the process continues, and we are into the virtuous circle of quality enhancement. Essentially, this is true at the level of the individual department, faculty and institution, and, potentially, at the level of the sector. My argument, briefly, is that to be effective, a quality management system must be a double-sided coin: assurance and enhancement. Enhancement processes must be based on firm evidence of the base we are working from. Equally, experience tells us that assurance processes that are not linked to enhancement fall rapidly into neglect, game playing and/or sterile box ticking exercises.

Summary of my thesis.

In summary, my simple thesis is:

- in relation to quality management, the who? and how? questions can only be addressed meaningfully once we have answered the why? question;
- the why? question is most effectively answered from the perspective of ‘educational excellence’ which, to a significant extent, will address the challenges posed by public accountability and market failure;
- the impact of quality assurance processes will be maximised when the outcomes of the quality assurance systems themselves become inputs and we move into the virtuous circle of quality enhancement.

If colleagues are interested in pursuing these matters further, a more detailed analysis along similar lines is provided in the report published by the Scottish Executive, ‘Learning to Improve: quality approaches to lifelong learning’.²

Four key outcomes or aspects

In the sections that follow I would like to apply my thesis to four strategic macro- level outcomes or aspects of thinking differently about generating and sustaining quality cultures.

Outcome 1: a shared vision of a high quality sector (within a country or network).

Let us start with a tautology. Before we can provide any effective management of quality in relation to a particular system or country, we need to know what our target is: what is the definition of a high quality higher education sector within our system or country? As a pre-requisite to having effective quality

² *Learning to improve: quality approaches to lifelong learning*, Scottish Executive, Edinburgh 2005.

management arrangements in place, I would argue, for example, that all the 'Bologna countries' would need to be involved, in their own ways, in answering this question. It may well be that, over time, there will be more shared aspects of the definition of high quality over the Bologna countries, as to some extent is apparent in the work of ENQA outlined in the ENQA Standards and Guidelines.³ What about within the Coimbra Group? Is there a shared understanding of what is meant by high quality between participating universities? I look forward to finding out in these two days of lively discussions. In general, how the question is answered and who answers the question will of course vary widely from country to country. In some highly market oriented systems where there is little public funding in higher education it may well be that this sector-wide definition of high quality is fairly loose. In other contexts it will be a much tighter definition of quality. It is worth noting in the margins that this is not directly a function of institutional autonomy or its lack; it is perfectly possible, as in Scotland, to have highly autonomous institutions that collectively agree on a sector-wide vision of 'high quality'. Any definition is likely to change and develop over time and to result from the interplay of the range of stakeholders. Notwithstanding the complexities involved, it seems to me that, if there is to be an effective framework of national policy in relation to quality assurance and enhancement, it is vital that there is clarity in sense of purpose i.e. what kind of higher education system are we seeking to provide. My own experience would suggest that the more participatory the exercise of defining high quality, the more powerful will be the outcome. Such a sector or system-wide definition of high quality will then set a general context within which the mission and policies of each individual institution will be derived. The more explicit and shared the sector-wide vision, the more powerful the outcome: the more implicit and widely contested, the shakier the foundations for any system of quality assurance. Before moving on to provide an illustration of this outcome, let me re-state my view that, used effectively, this outcome should support both institutional diversity and institutional autonomy.

Illustration 1 below provides an illustration of one attempt at deriving a country-wide vision of high quality in Scotland: a context in which the higher educational institutions are highly autonomous.

Illustration 1: A country-wide vision of high quality.

In Scotland, over the period 1999-2001 there was a sector-wide discussion involving the twenty institutions, their students and various stakeholders on the meaning of a high quality sector. This rich and valuable debate resulted in the vision that a high quality sector was :

- a sector which is flexible, accessible and responsive to the needs of learners, the economy and society
- a sector which encourages and stimulates learners to participate in higher education and to achieve their full potential

³ *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Helsinki 2005.

- a sector where learning and teaching promote the employability of students
- a sector where learning and teaching is highly regarded and appropriately resourced
- a sector where there is a culture of continuous enhancement of quality, which is informed by and contributes to international developments.

Outcome 2: a shared vision of high quality within an institution

For brevity I will not repeat much of what I have said above which is also highly relevant in the context of deriving an internal vision of high quality within an institution. Effective management of quality requires that an institution (and its staff) understands itself and that it has a clear picture of what, in its own terms, are the characteristics of a high quality institution. Such a definition, to be effective, should clearly be derived by the institution in relation to the needs of its particular students and the needs of other populations it serves. As with outcome 1 above, the more explicit and shared this vision, the more powerful the impact of the outcome: the more implicit and contested, the shakier will be the foundations on which to build any system of quality assurance.

Illustration 2 below provides an example of the mission of one university which clearly places significant emphasis on excellence in teaching and serving its community. (I have the permission of the University to identify it as the University of the West of Scotland – previously, the University of Paisley.) It is interesting to note in passing that the immediate neighbourhood of this particular institution includes areas of very significant social and economic deprivation.

Illustration 2: An institution-wide vision of high quality.

The following example provides an interesting illustration of one institution's approach to defining and delivering high quality

- mission: to be a regional, innovative and inclusive University with strong national and international links; committed to excellence in teaching, knowledge transfer and research; and to serving the social, cultural and economic needs of the regional communities it serves

Two main drivers for delivering the mission:

- planned strategic approaches to anticipate and respond to the needs of the students it recruits
- structured process of continuous review and reflection on current practice and provision

This is delivered through an integrated organisational structure involving:

- Quality Enhancement Unit
- Senate Committee – the Learning and Teaching Board – linked to other structures throughout the University
- the Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) managing and overseeing the process

This is further supported by:

- a structured and explicit approach to student engagement
- a strong research basis on their students, their learning styles and support needs
- on-going systems evaluation to underpin further development and quality enhancement

Outcome 3: supporting students as effective, demanding lifelong learners

In many ways it seems to me that this is the most fundamental outcome of all: indeed, as argued above, the *raison d'être* of quality assurance systems. There are many different dimensions of 'high quality' which are not central to this particular presentation, and therefore I will not dwell on them. Much could be said, for example, about the importance of learning outcomes. These are indeed vital – vital for clarity of purpose: for relevance and validity of assessment instruments and pedagogical approaches, and for the recognition of prior learning. However, I would like to focus in this presentation on what is probably the most fundamental outcome of quality assurance: the function of quality assurance systems in supporting the learner, and consequently, the role of learners in these processes. In general, we are successful, to a greater or lesser extent across most European countries, in getting feedback from our students following their studies – at programme, course and institutional level. This is important, and there is a growing body of evidence now available to us on more and less effective approaches to getting and using this student feedback. This much is relatively uncontentious, well understood and documented. I would like, however, to look at a different aspect of student engagement – supporting the effective learning of students in higher education. To do this, I would like to spend just a very brief moment reflecting on the nature of learning in higher education. In this context, I am delighted to be giving this address in the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, described on its website as 'the first student-centred university in Romania'.

In this section of the presentation I will draw heavily on the work of John Biggs whom I think summarises very helpfully many of these issues in his excellent book, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*.⁴ Lets start with a very basic question: What do we mean by 'high quality teaching' in higher education? It seems to Biggs that one of the defining features of higher education is the engagement of students in the process by which knowledge is created. In other words, students, even first year students in university, should be exposed to the temporary nature of knowledge. Our understanding of the world and of our particular academic

⁴ Teaching for Quality Learning at University 3rd Edition, John Biggs, Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, Buckingham England 2007

discipline has arrived at its current state through a process of knowledge creation. This process will continue over time, and the boundaries of knowledge will continue to get pushed beyond that which we currently understand. This is true for all disciplines: only the methodology of discovery varies. It seems to me that this simple premise lies at the heart of what is sometimes referred to as research-lead teaching. This is simply an approach to learning which introduces students to the notion of discovery: how that discovery comes about, and understanding the tools of discovery. This in turn lays the foundations for students as graduates who will become lifelong learners, and effective, over their lifetimes, in the workplace and in their communities. These ideas were expressed well in a statement from the Aristotle University following the General Assembly meeting of the Coimbra Group in Jena, Germany when they indicated: “A scientist who graduates from a university must not be restricted to a speedy acquisition of training skills, but should possess the characteristics of a mature scientist who apart from knowledge in the area in which he has been trained must also possess the philosophical approach of his science and the educational perceptions of society”.

If these outcomes are to be achieved, then students must engage in what Biggs and other writers refer to as deep learning. Deep learning is contrasted with surface learning, the latter being at the other end of the spectrum from the process of knowledge creation. Biggs describes surface learning as engaging in such activities as: memorising; identifying things; naming things; paraphrasing; enumerating; and, describing. On the other hand, deep learning is characterised by activities such as: reflecting; applying to novel problems; hypothesising; relating new information to principles; arguing; and, comparing and contrasting a range of perspectives.

The question then arises, how is an institution and an individual academic going to encourage deep learning? How is a mature institution going to continually enhance the student learning experience? How are we going to approach the task of quality assurance of the teaching/learning process? The brief answer to this, according to Biggs, is that the institution must become an enhancing institution. By this he means that the institution requires to develop a reflective culture that builds-in systemic ways of reflecting, together with its students, on the effectiveness of learning experiences and how these experiences might be improved. By reflecting on what the evidence indicates, the institution, and its various sub-structures, will be led to develop further refinements, and so enter the ‘virtuous circle’ of quality enhancement referred to earlier.

The next part of the jigsaw is then to relate our analysis of learning to thinking about approaches to teaching. Biggs describes three different approaches which, he argues, might be thought of as successive steps taken by academics as they approach the task of teaching, progressing from novice to expert. The first stage he describes as focusing on the student. The caricature here is the academic preparing excellent material for lectures or tutorials. If the student fails to learn then the problem is seen to lie with the student – the students are ill-prepared, or lazy, or poorly motivated, or ‘not as bright as they used to be’ etc. In this approach, the teacher is the knowledgeable expert who expounds the information, and the students’ task is to absorb and report back accurately what they have ‘learned’ from the teacher. Teaching therefore becomes focused on the transmission of

information, and it is entirely up to the students whether they receive or don't receive this information. The role of the teacher is to transmit. The role of quality assurance, would be to quality assure the transmission.

The second approach Biggs caricatures as 'the tool box' approach. In this context staff will think carefully about the different ways in which teaching might be undertaken: choosing the right tool for the job. New lecturer induction courses will be designed to expose staff to the different tools available and how they might be deployed effectively. If there is a problem in relation to ineffective teaching, the solution is to provide better tools or more staff development to support more expert utilisation of the tools. The role of quality assurance in this context would be to assure the effectiveness and extent of the repertoire of tools deployed.

Biggs' third stage is to conceive of learning in terms of an effective partnership between the teacher and the student in the creation of the student's knowledge. It is of course not simply a relationship between the teacher and the student, but involves all of the educational resources that the institution represents, often channelled through the teacher or the individual academic. The focus here becomes a focus, not on teaching, but on learning and on what the student does in order to master learning. From this perspective, it is of course important that students are appropriately prepared, that they do have required pre-requisite knowledge and that they do have accessible means for accessing new knowledge. Equally, the teaching context remains important with the effective exercise of the teaching role and responsibilities fundamental to successful learning. But, giving 'good' lectures per se may be largely irrelevant. The key question for quality assurance is: is it supporting effective student learning? The task, according to Biggs, is to create a teaching context where deep learning can take place. If we are going to achieve this, then we need to achieve what the jargon terms as 'constructive alignment', ie where there is a clear alignment between the curriculum that we provide, the teaching/learning methods that we use, the assessment procedures adopted, the climate and context within which individual academics interact with their students and, the institutional climate within which all of this occurs.

If we are to achieve this most challenging of outcomes, what are the implications for our quality assurance systems? The first, and, in my view, the most fundamental, is the importance of the enhancement focus which I will deal with in the final section of my presentation. The second lesson relates to the very fundamental question this raises about how we conceive of high quality pedagogical practice and the kind of evidence we should be collecting from students together with the kind of processes and criteria we should be putting in place for programme/course validations, monitoring and review and other quality assurance processes. However, the implication I would like to dwell on for a moment is the need to support the active role of students in all this. The simple model of quality assuring a transmitter/receiver relationship will no longer do. Students are 'joint producers' of their knowledge and must be appropriately engaged in the quality assurance of this process of knowledge creation. Therefore, a key part of the approach to achieving this most important of all outcomes, is the effective involvement of students in our quality systems. In this regard, in my view, there is much to be learned also from the approach in Finland. From this

perspective, students should be represented on all key internal committees and engaged appropriately in internal and external quality assurance structures. Fundamentally, their engagement must not be token. Students must be prepared for, and supported, in these important roles. A key element of this would be supporting students in developing appropriate learning styles i.e. reflecting on their own learning.

Illustration 3 below provides an illustration of the ways in which students are now involved in the Quality Enhancement Framework throughout the higher education sector in Scotland.

Illustration 3: The involvement of students in quality management in the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework

Since 2003 students have played an increased role in quality management throughout Scottish Higher Education, at both institutional and sector levels. Indeed, the current chairman of the national Quality Working Group (QWG) is the President of the National Union of Students in Scotland. The QWG brings together the institutions, students, and the national bodies associated with quality to manage the overall quality framework in Scotland.

Other elements of student involvement include:

- student representation at all levels within institutions
- training and support for students in quality matters
- an independent body to support effective student involvement in quality matters (sparqs – see www.sparqs.ac.uk)
- student involvement in external quality processes including as full members of external review teams
- student involvement in national strategy and policy levels on quality matters

Outcome 4: a virtuous circle of quality enhancement

Can I start this section with an apology? I apologise for repeatedly using the term ‘enhancement’. I share many people’s hatred of jargon, and I would have to say, in particular, educational jargon. There is seldom anything more effective in turning off mainstream academics faster than reading papers or listening to presentations that are full of educational gobbledegook. However, the word enhancement is actually important in this context. It is not simply improvement. Enhancement implies a continuing process. It implies a process of making change, evaluating the outcomes of change, capturing the benefits of change and repeating the cycle of reflection and evidence gathering. Hence, I deliberately use the term ‘enhancement’.

My simple thesis contends that the main outcome of institutional quality assurance strategies should be to support enhancement of the experience available to students. Enhancement, I define in this context as ‘taking deliberate steps to bring about continuous improvement in the effectiveness of the learning

experience of students'.⁵ In order to take these deliberate steps, an institution (and its constituent departments, faculties, schools etc) will ask itself a range of questions including 'the enhancement trinity (slide):

- Where are we now? How effective is the current learning experience of our students?
- Where do we want to be in the future? What are the patterns and mechanisms of supporting learning which the institution wishes to develop in order to enhance the learning experience of its students? What appropriate benchmarks should we use in this context? What countries/universities/professions etc provide useful benchmarks for us to compare ourselves with?
- How are we going to get there? How are we as an institution going strategically to manage the process of enhancement that will allow us to move towards meeting our aspirations?

The first step in this process is therefore to have an accurate, evidence based, picture of the current position: without this, enhancement cannot begin. A key part of the function of internal quality assurance systems is to inform an institution about itself – the outcomes of course/ programme monitoring and review, student feedback, employer feedback etc. To collect this information and do nothing with it is largely a waste of valuable and scarce resources. The real value comes from the academic community – students and staff – asking the 'so what?' question: what does all this information tell us about ourselves in relation to our aspirations? In this context, institutional quality frameworks need to use a structure of benchmarks to make comparative sense of the information they have gathered in order to interpret the outcomes of their quality assurance processes. Some of these benchmarks might well be internal to the institution (eg institutional mission and other specific internal targets): others will be country-wide (participation rates of different social groups, graduate employment statistics etc). Some benchmarks will be shared throughout European countries; others will be shared with particular international groupings of universities. This process of benchmarking will enable an institution to evaluate its own position and decide on appropriate actions and quality objectives for the future.

The third question in the trilogy, 'how are we going to get there?', is equally vital. As Peter Williams has stated, 'quality improvement does not happen by accident: it is the result of intelligent effort'.⁶ The final part of this complex jigsaw is to analyse the 'intelligent effort' of the institution: how does it manage effectively the process of quality enhancement? This is likely to involve the development of the internal culture of the institution and the alignment of its internal quality systems. For example, from this perspective, course/programme reviews should not simply be backward looking at what has been happening in the past. They require to be forward looking to address the question of how we can learn from the past – and experience elsewhere – to improve the future for our students. Outcomes from such processes should identify areas for development

⁵ Handbook for enhancement-led institutional review (2- Edition) : Scotland, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester, 2008

⁶ Quote in a conference address by Peter Williams, Chief Executive QAA, President ENQA

and improvement and these require to be managed institutionally to provide the means for delivering on this improvement. For example:

- staff support and development activities need to be aligned explicitly with the outcomes of institutional quality systems and targets;
- at an institutional and/or system level, whatever resources are available should be systematically channelled into addressing areas recognised to be difficult across the institution/and or across the country or system.

Illustration 4 below provides a final example of one attempt to achieve this outcome. It outlines the main headings of the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland which, in this particular form, has been in operation since 2003. It is based on a number of key principles including:

- enhancement: the Framework is explicitly enhancement focussed: not at the cost of assurance, but building on the foundations of assurance;
- partnership: the institutions, students, funding council (with Government accountability), and Quality Assurance Agency have developed the framework in partnership and regularly review together with their effectiveness of its operation. The independence of each party remains respected and protected
- student centred: the Framework is focussed on enhancing the student learning experience – systems are a means to an end, not an end in themselves.
- evaluation: the Framework has been subject systematically to both internal and external evaluation from the outset and consequent fine-tuning of processes.

Illustration 4: The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework

The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework was introduced in 2003. It emerged following a full cycle of external subject level reviews and a complete cycle of institutional quality audits. It was the result of wide discussion and reflection on the outcomes of previous processes and evidence available on effective approaches to quality management. The key principles are outlined above. Central elements of the Quality Enhancement Framework include:

- subject level reviews conducted by the institutions themselves, but involving externals, student feedback and production of full reports which are available to the Quality Assurance Agency
- the involvement of students at all levels within higher education institutions on committees related to the quality of the student experience
- additional training and support for students in quality matters provided by an independent body (sparqs – www.sparqs@ac.uk)
- a programme of national enhancement themes on topics identified by the

sector as involving particular challenges in improving the student experience. Within the themes a wide range of development, workshop and dissemination activities are undertaken drawing on international expertise and experience. Topics covered to date include: assessment; supporting student needs; employability; flexible learning; the first year experience – supporting autonomous learners; and research teaching links – developing graduate attributes. (see www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk)

- a programme of external enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) which provides both public accountability for institutional management of quality and support for institutional management of quality enhancement. This is a peer review process with a student as a full member of each review team. This process is described fully in the published ELIR Handbook (2nd edition 2008 – copies available on request).

Conclusions

I am very conscious that I have touched very lightly on some very heavy topics. My purpose has been simply to place some of the fundamental aspects of quality processes and cultures in a significantly different context from that in which they are frequently placed. In order to think constructively about the role of different players in relation to quality and to plan and implement quality systems, it is vital, in my view, to first of all reflect on the question, why? – what is the purpose of all this? I have attempted to argue for the pre-eminence of the driving force of quality enhancement: to enhance the quality of the experience of the students our institutions serve. That is not to say that other ends are not important: they clearly are. However, the probability of achieving these other ends, I would argue, is greater to the extent we are successful in enhancing the experience of our students. In general, I have attempted to argue that the rewards of investing in quality systems will be the richer, the more these systems are forward looking and enhancement focused, rather than backward looking and focused on sterile box ticking exercises. I have tried to argue briefly that the achievement of such quality cultures will maximise the probability of supporting autonomous universities in their task of serving our countries through the generation of individuals who are effective lifelong learners; productive, dynamic and mobile participants in the economy; and, perhaps most importantly, engaged citizens of our individual countries and international communities.

Stimulating Cooperation between Universities and Employers with a Particular Focus on Graduate Employability

Sorin Eugen Zaharia

Head of the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment

Background

Currently, nations worldwide are facing the challenge of globalisation, a phenomenon perceived both as a challenge and as an opportunity generating trend. No matter its multiple definitions and interpretations, there is one point everybody agrees upon: it involves rapid changes on the labour markets, new and more complex economic, social and cultural relationships, development of new skills and competencies, adjustment to working in international environments, capitalising on information and knowledge.

To cope with the challenges posed by globalisation companies adopt new strategies, focusing more and more on cooperation and partnership. New strategic alliances and mergers are created to develop new products and markets and the concept of “coopetition” – cooperation between competitors – is more active than ever. **As competitiveness became the key factor of success, it is obvious that new competences are permanently required as those who are competitive today need to make sure they will be in the future.** Thus, the economic world requires and provides competences and develops intelligent enterprises, while the academic world has to keep pace and, on the one hand, make sure they provide the required competences, and on the other hand, adapt and change, foster the development of entrepreneurial universities. For the higher education institutions this leads to a major question: Are they ready to provide the competences required by the labour market and expected by students? And are the competences provided by universities the right ones for a 21st century career? The answers can be simple: some of them do, others less. But globalisation is not a choice, it is a fact and it occurs on all levels at the same time: economic, social, research and training, and all these levels are interactive and develop together, leaving the higher education world no other option than to adjust and react competitively.

All these factors and questions have a profound impact on the European higher education systems, on the Member States' policies and efforts to achieve the ambitious goals set by the Lisbon Growth and Jobs Strategy. At European level, the Heads of State agreed that substantial modernisation of Europe's education

and training systems was necessary, to make Europe more attractive in terms of the quality of its education and training systems. The [Bologna process](#), initiated in 1999 is essential in the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and actively contributes to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives. Its main focus was on increasing the international competitiveness of the European higher education systems, by achieving the objectives stated in the Bologna Declaration and in the conferences which followed it: adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system; adoption of the two cycle (undergraduate and graduate) system, with a degree awarded after the first cycle that is relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification; establishment of a system of credits, to promote students mobility.

Free movement of students and graduates in the EHEA and on the European labour market involves the need to harmonize qualifications acquired in a Member State higher education institution to those of other states, to give them the opportunity of continuing their studies or of finding adequate employment according to their level of training. **This can be accomplished with the development of clear and transparent Qualifications Frameworks for Higher Education to define qualifications based on learning outcomes, described in terms of knowledge, skills and competences.** These are mechanisms that enable international transparency and comparability between and across higher education institutions as well as with employers and other stakeholders; international recognition of qualifications, a key factor for enhancing employability of graduates and also competitiveness; learners and graduates mobility; recognition of formal and non-formal learning.

Romanian response: NQFHE

Romania has made major steps towards the European Higher Education Area by reorganizing the entire higher education system. A new higher education structure was adopted by Law 288/2004 on the organization of university studies, providing the legislative framework for the introduction of the three cycles, Bachelor, Masters' and Doctoral studies, according to the Bologna objectives. The law came into force in the 2005/2006 academic year and the first generation of Bachelor students will graduate in 2008 and 2009 (for engineering and law studies).

Ministerial Order No. 3617/16.03.2005 generalises the application of ECTS in Romanian universities.

In Romania, the development of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQFHE) is the responsibility of the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment (ACPART), as stipulated by Government Decision no 1357/2005. It responds to a specific need identified at national and European level regarding the access, progress, and mobility of students and graduates. At the same time NQFHE expresses a new perspective, adapted to the contemporary international context and prerequisites for a learner-centred education.

Romania welcomes the proposal of developing an overarching European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education by ensuring that its NQFHE will be compatible with the EQFHE. The process of international transparency should be carried out and supported at the level of both higher education institutions and employers and other stakeholders and the instrument that reflects it is the Diploma Supplement. The increase of the international mobility of learners and graduates can ultimately offer greater confidence to learners that the learning outcomes of the programmes of study attended abroad will contribute to a qualification requested in their own country. The development of the qualifications framework will also be of particular help in supporting the development of joint degrees from more than one country and recognition of the national diploma. **Also, the framework development is a unique opportunity to review and possibly re-design qualifications and the whole qualifications system.**

Another effect of the growing mobility of workforce is that employees in a knowledge-based economy permanently need to update their skills and acquire new competences in order to stay competitive in a more complex and varied economic and business environment. Thus, adult training becomes a huge market as lifelong learning is more and more a necessity, not just an aspiration of personal development. **As a result, the higher education provision gradually covers a wider range of courses and transparency and visibility of the university offer become crucial.**

ACPART's main objectives for the development and implementation of NQFHE are:

- To facilitate higher education institutions, employers, parents, students and graduates **to understand the results and roles pertaining to the qualifications/awards;**
- **To support compatibility and comparability of standards at international level,** to ensure competitiveness as well as **to facilitate students' and graduates' mobility;**
- **To ensure guidance to those who follow a study programme** so as to enable them to identify alternative progression routes, especially within the lifelong learning context;
- **To ensure guidance to higher education institutions,** to their external evaluators, **by offering them benchmarks** for determining and assessing the standards;
- **To avoid duplication and overlapping of qualifications,** while ensuring that all learning outcomes are covered;
- **To promote the trust of all professional categories and society** as a whole in the integrity and relevance of the national qualifications.

ACPART's strategy regarding qualifications is based on a transparent process within the universities, on programmes compatible to other similar institutions, as well as on means for harmonisation between the educational programmes of different universities and the training demand coming from the labour market (Figure 1). NQFHE aims at identifying the training needs directly linked to the labour market (employers') demand. The labour market demands for competences and qualifications (which require training) are addressed to the university, which processes them and turns them into training strategies and further on into programmes of study. All qualifications (expressed in learning

outcomes) should be transparent and legible to the economic environment. Once in the enterprise, the qualifications are moulded by specific conditions ensuring in the same time the competition and innovation. In this context, the university and the enterprise transmit information to the national qualifications authority for higher education, which synthesises and defines the formal qualifications (in terms of descriptors, mechanisms, principles). This process takes into account the opinions coming from the civil society, sectoral committees, professional associations, trade unions, students, graduates.

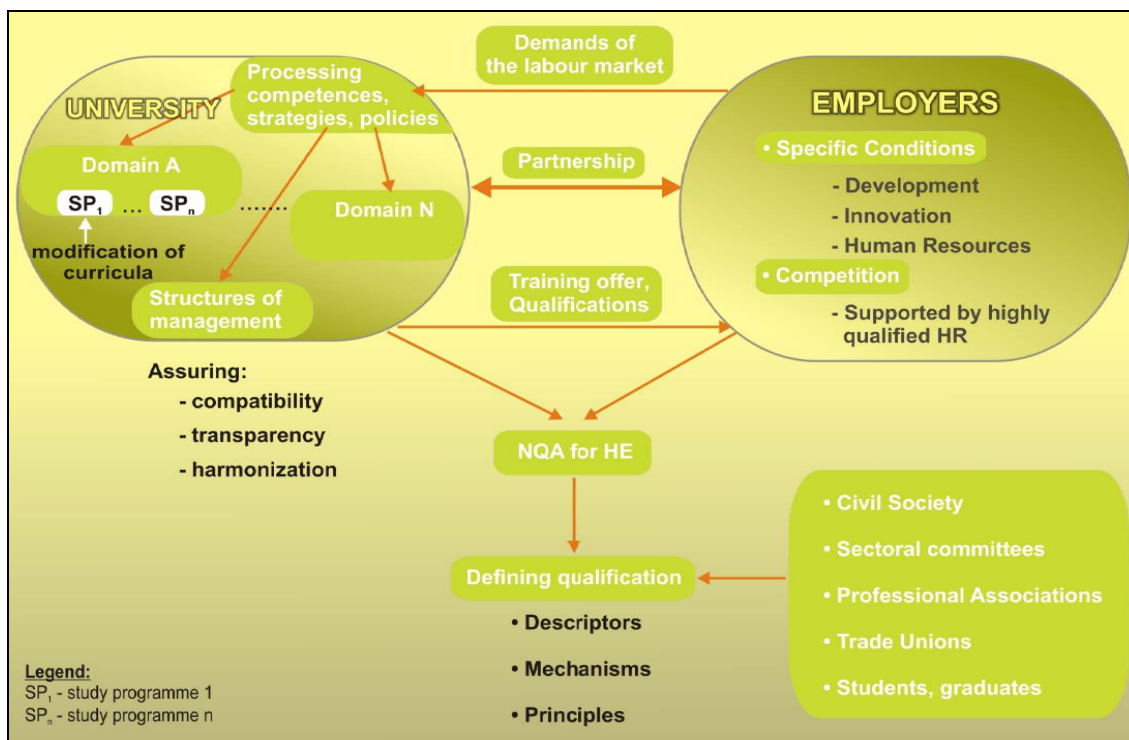


Figure 1 – Actors' Roles in Defining Qualifications

ACPART's strategy for the development of NQFHE involved activities both at national and international level. At national level, these included:

- I. The pre-development Phase, involving the establishment the Advisory Committee; clarification of terminology and concepts; analysis of compatibility between Bologna documents (EHEA Framework) and EQF European Commission papers; drafting the glossary of qualifications framework.
- II. The development phase involved the design of the NQFHE Methodology, presenting the NQF objectives, definition of the key concepts, the necessary descriptors for the national qualifications framework; the procedures an institution has to follow in order to be granted the right of certifying a qualification (the procedures for the validation of a qualification); the design of the National Qualifications Register for Higher Education.

- III. This was followed by the implementation phase – an exercise designed to pilot ten of the study programmes developed; it involved sectoral workshops with universities and others stakeholders; clarification of the framework development concept building on existing initiatives and providing opportunities for coherence; design of competence-based curricula.
- IV. Development of the National Qualifications Register for Higher Education (NQRHE) as a tool for identification, registration, permanent consultation and updating of qualifications, namely degrees and awards issued by higher education institutions. The NQRHE should be seen as a *multi-actor* and *multi-national* tool of interest. As a multi-actor tool, NQRHE represents the result of the collaboration among different stakeholders; as a multi-national tool, NQRHE will be available on-line both in Romanian and in English, in order to ensure the national and international access to information. The first experimental version was developed, bringing together all the titles/qualifications awarded by the Romanian universities. This is in public use starting with the 1st of May 2007 on the ACPART website.

The definition of qualifications is a complex process including as a prerequisite consultation with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the respective qualifications are relevant to the labour market and meet the employers' needs and expectations. An important role in this is held by labour market surveys, accurate statistical data and communication with all factors involved to ensure that higher education institutions play a more active role in regional and national development.

The process of qualifications description fosters partnership and dialogue with stakeholders and beneficiaries both at institutional and employers' level (universities, other educational sectors, National Adult Training Board, National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development; employers associations, trade unions representatives, sectoral committees, students and graduates). Their involvement is crucial not only at the development phase, but also during further stages, as their feedback is necessary to ensure that this endeavour is meaningful and relevant, not an artificial theoretical construct. The improvement of this cooperation and dialogue between higher education institutions and other training providers and their beneficiaries, learners and employers, will lead to a feeling of ownership that will stimulate their commitment to the development and implementation of NQFHE. Thus, the most important characteristics of a good and functional NQFHE should be flexibility, accessibility, visibility and applicability.

A very important component of this construct is the quality assurance and there is a synergetic relationship between ACPART and the quality assurance agencies. ACPART manages the description of the higher education professional qualifications for each study programme and validates the new qualifications, while the national agencies for quality assurance evaluate the content and the quality of the process which leads to the certification of a specific higher education programme.

Good Practice Examples: Projects and Initiatives

University-enterprise dialogue is essential for strengthening the cooperation between these two main actors and also an underpinning condition for enhancing graduates employability. Consequently, **one of the ACPART's core lines of action is to promote the opening of higher education institutions towards the socio-economic environment through cooperation actions among higher education institutions, economic operators and other organisations, aimed at developing specific partnerships, labour market research, an entrepreneurial dimension to Romanian universities, as well as knowledge transfer and also to facilitate absorption of higher education graduates into the labour market, through specific programmes and projects.**

Some examples that reflect the international cooperation activities undertaken by ACPART with a view to enhancing university-enterprise dialogue:

Partners for Excellence: a programme initiated by APART in order to promote dialogue and exchange of ideas between universities and the business community in Romania: it focuses on organising, in cooperation with universities and actors from the economic and social environment, various events where universities and enterprises will have the opportunity to meet and initiate joint projects.

Training Experts to Implement the Bachelor-Master's-Doctorate European System: the project contributes to the second Leonardo da Vinci objective namely improvement of quality and access to continuing professional training, lifelong improvement of skills and competences, as well as to the first Community priority which is also a national priority: valuing education and training.

Harmonising Training Demand and Supply by Developing the University-SME Relationship: the specific objectives of the project were to offer those responsible from universities and the technologic transfer centres the opportunity to get familiar with the experience on the university-SMEs cooperation of other similar institutions from European countries; train a number of people that, in turn should be capable of training others from the Romanian universities on organising and managing entrepreneurial organisations related to these institutions; create entrepreneurial structures that enable those already trained under the project to ensure cohesion between the academic and the economic world.

Leonardo da Vinci Project 2006-4607/001-001 LE2-707 EQF "Developing Key Methodological Units for the Implementation of EQF by Means of NQFs – EQF by NQFs". Its general objective is to develop and test modular grids of competences and key methodological units comprising principles, mechanisms and guidance tools for ensuring the transparency of processes and procedures related to the implementation of EQF by means of NQF. The project implementation period is January 1st, 2007 – December 31st, 2008.

UNiversity in SOciety – UNISO: the main objective of the summer university is to build a sustainable university-enterprise partnership for education and training in the context of a European multicultural dialogue; it is an opportunity for bringing together ideas that can lead to the development of common solutions for the common challenges of the European knowledge society, opening real cooperation opportunities through European projects and partnerships. The 2007 edition was organized in Versailles (France) - 9-12 July 2007 by ACPART in

collaboration with the University of Versailles with the support of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, University of Rouen, University Paris 6 Pierre et Marie Curie, University of Picardy "Jules Verne", Regional Council of Ile de France, General Council of Yvelines, and Romanian Association for Knowledge Transfer. Guests from 19 countries met to debate on the following topics: development of university qualifications, of professional competences, the labour market-training relationship in the EQF perspective.



Figure 2 – UNISO 2007

This year's edition has as a main theme „**Competence-based Higher Education: Challenges and Solutions**” and it will take place between the 16-20th of July 2008 in Iași. Among the subjects proposed for debate are: student-centred education – pedagogical innovations; facilitating social insertion of graduates through competence-based education; role of training demand and supply in building the university-enterprise relationship; qualifications framework: a tool for mobility, flexibility and professional insertion.

Conclusions

A possible solution to the challenges that higher education is currently facing is the development and implementation of NQF as an instrument which should function as a link between the labour market and HEIs ensuring that qualifications provided by the HE systems are relevant for employers and graduates and match the labour market demand.

1. A prerequisite for a good NQF is the improvement of the dialogue with the representatives of all higher education institutions, other stakeholders and students in order to explain and to build up together the NQFHE, as well as to receive a necessary feedback regarding the development and implementation of the NQFHE. The NQF bridges the education system and its beneficiaries, the labour market and the learners, ensuring transparency and the visibility of the higher education provision.

2. The NQF should be an opportunity for a student-centered higher education.
3. If we develop the qualifications framework, we can develop the mobility of students, graduates and labour force, improve the curricular reform, and develop a better understanding of study cycle and learning outcomes correlated to each cycle.
4. Efforts must be made towards fully implementing a national qualifications framework based on learning outcomes by 2010. The National Qualifications Framework should be related to the European Qualifications Framework by 2010 and individual certificates or diplomas should bear an EQF reference by 2012 (Recommendation on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning).
5. All stakeholders should get involved in the actions which link the development of the qualifications framework to other Bologna action lines: quality assurance, credit transfer and accumulation systems, lifelong learning, flexible learning paths and the social dimension, recognition of qualifications, particularly the Diploma Supplement and quality assurance.

Quality Assurance and Employability. Lessons from the University of Bucharest

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Abstract

Enhancing academic quality and the employability of graduates are the two most frequently mentioned driving forces behind the Bologna Process. Facing tremendous challenges in a highly competitive globalized world, today's universities have designed and implemented effective QA strategies.

Our paper aims to highlight the importance of QA and employability within the Bologna Process, and to present the experience of the University of Bucharest (UB) in linking QA and employability in its institutional strategy. The objectives of our paper were achieved by reviewing the literature, and by presenting the case of a leading Romanian university, the University of Bucharest.

Introduction

In the age of globalization, change has occurred continuously and very rapidly in all domains. As one of the oldest and most enduring institutions, the university has proved its remarkable capacity to change and adapt to serve society within its functions.

Facing tremendous challenges in the 21st century, today's universities have the opportunity to reshape themselves and play a leading role in the future of our society. Due to the significant impact of various factors such as marketisation, information technology, internationalisation and increasing competition, universities have designed, implemented and developed quality assurance (QA) systems.

It is clear that there has been a significant expansion in the student enrolments in world higher education in the last decades. The number of students worldwide increased exponentially from 13 million students in 1960 to more than 72 million in 2000. The main reasons have been the following:

- Demographic growth.
- Advances in primary and secondary education.

- Economic growth.
- Knowledge-based society.

In this context European universities attach particular importance to the establishment and development of their quality strategy. Enhancing academic quality and the employability of graduates are the two most frequently mentioned driving forces behind the Bologna Process. The heads of European universities regard the employability of their graduates to be an important or even very important concern when designing or restructuring their curricula.

I. The Bologna Process and its drivers

In the 21st century, universities are striving in a highly competitive and changing global higher education market within an increasing knowledge driven globalized economy. Exploring academia's future, specialists have identified the following major interrelated comprehensive trends (de Boer et al., 2002):

- The rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT). Nowadays, ICT provide greater accessibility of knowledge for teachers, students and researchers around the world. This is why teaching, learning and research have become faster and more international.
- The marketisation in higher education due to the massification of higher education, the increasing number of private universities, and the growing importance of the market discourse.
- Globalization, internationalisation and regionalisation. All these are expressions of the rise of a global market for higher education.
- An advancing network society/economy. Different kinds of partnerships have been established between universities (e.g. consortia) and between universities and companies (e.g. strategic alliances).
- The knowledge-based society. In the last decades, knowledge has become a valuable commodity. As a consequence, the number of knowledge providers has significantly increased.
- The socio-cultural changes. More and more, people and society require a greater social responsibility from the universities.
- The demographical changes. On the one hand, an ageing society has appeared in the developed countries. On the other hand, the rate birth in developing countries has increased.

According to the Lisbon Agenda universities are main actors in building a knowledge society and a competitive economy in Europe. In this respect, Europe needs strong universities that are autonomous, adequately funded and accountable. This is why, facing a rapidly changing environment, the European Ministers of Education signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999.

As a joint decision to coordinate policies by 29 European states, the Bologna Declaration aimed at promoting a two cycle (Bachelor-Master) structure of

higher education, in order to create transparency for employability and mobility across Europe. Also, increasing the attractiveness and the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in the age of globalization has been another fundamental objective of the Bologna Process since its inception. The accomplishment of these objectives is highly supported by quality assurance, a deliberate process of change that leads to continuous improvement in higher education.

Starting with the late 1990s, the European higher education community has broadly accepted the Bologna Process. The process is run by a voluntary coordination of national policies and is sustained through decisions taken at bi-annual ministerial meetings. Important international and supranational actors are involved in its development (e.g. UNESCO, EU Commission, EUA). This process has proved to be an effective catalyst to reform higher educational systems at national level and a main factor in creating the EHEA (Box 1).

Box 1- Main Bologna action lines

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees in order to promote employability of European citizens.
- Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles where already the first cycle graduates are employable in the European labour market.
- Creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010.
- Establishment of a system of credits (ECTS).
- Promotion of teachers and student mobility.
- Lifelong learning.
- Social dimension.
- European dimension in higher education.
- Doctoral studies as the third cycle.
- Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance (QA).

In sum, the common goal of the Bologna Process has been to create a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education. Associating now 46 countries, this pan European process includes a set of activities dedicated to employability and QA. As “high quality graduates and postgraduates are particularly vital in a high value knowledge based economy” (Brown, 2007), quality and employability have become key drivers of the Bologna Process.

II. Quality assurance and employability. The case of the University of Bucharest

Focused on the follow-up of the Bologna Declaration, the Prague Communiqué (2001) recognized the important role that QA systems plays in ensuring high quality education and called upon a stronger cooperation between European countries in QA. Stating that the quality of higher education is at the heart of the setting up of an EHEA, the Berlin Conference (2003) emphasized once

again the European quality assurance dimension of higher education. In Bergen (2005), the ministers of European countries agreed upon the adoption and implementation of a set of standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA.

QA is a multifaceted problem, further argued by the number of parties interested in it and the multitude of their respective concerns. As a result, there have been formulated many definitions of quality in higher education (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 - Defining quality in higher education (EUA, 2006)

One important aspect of QA for university degrees and study courses is that they should improve the professional qualifications of higher education graduates. The acquisition of professional skills constitutes a major criterion in assessing the quality of a course. Universities have always to demonstrate that they actually qualify people to exercise their profession. A degree that enables students to exercise a profession is one that, first, relates to professional practice and, second, provides students with the scientifically founded skills they need to reflect critically on professional practice.

On the other hand, QA contributes to boosting the international mobility of students and academics. If the professional community believes in the quality of university degrees and study diplomas held by foreign applicants, these will benefit from the same opportunities as domestic applicants.

QA in higher education has several objectives (Fig. 2). Employability represents one of the most important.

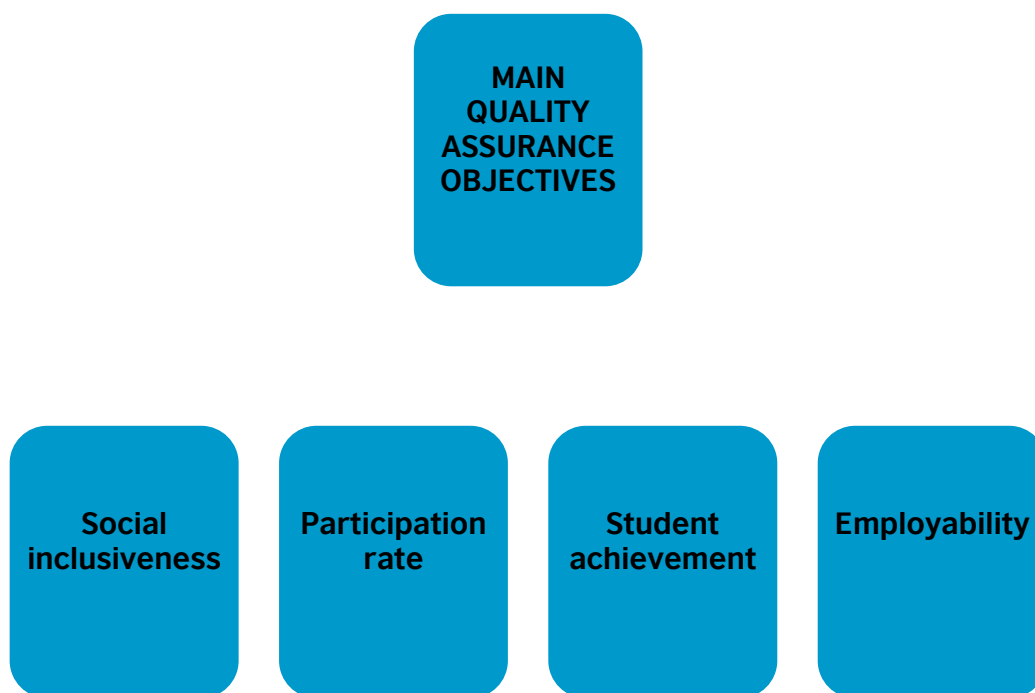


Fig. 2- Main QA objectives in higher education

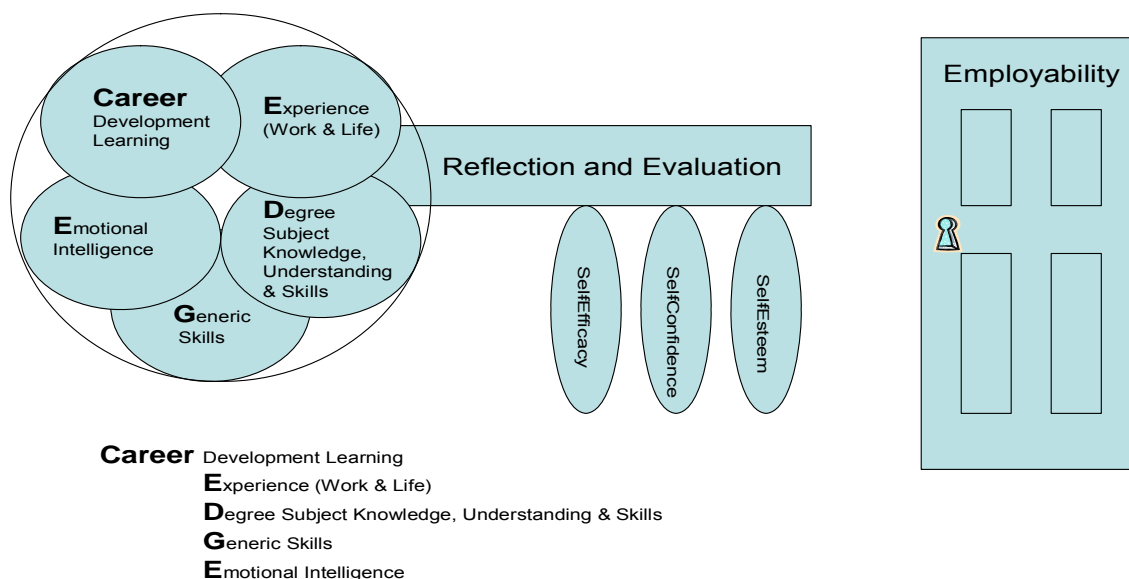
There have been many attempts in the literature to define employability and many of these confine the definition to a consideration of the skills developed by students during their time spent in the higher education system. Basically, employability is associated with possessing qualities that facilitate and enhance employment opportunities. For some, it is simply about 'getting a job' or, "in simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work" and, more comprehensively, "employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment". (Hillage, Pollard, 1998). In other words, employability is "having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful" (Dacre Pool, Sewell, 2007).

As a set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, employability is a complex concept and has become "a significant expectation that governments around the world have, to varying extents, imposed on national higher education systems" (Knight, Yorke, 2002). Developing employability within higher education is about the wider relationship the

universities have with employers and the labour market. In this respect, employability involves two elements:

- Graduate employability which is a set of achievements (skills, understanding and personal attributes) that makes an individual more likely to gain employment and be fulfilled in their chosen occupations (Fig. 3).
- Employability of graduates which involves developing the interrelationships between the University, its Schools and Services with the labour market and employers.

Fig. 3- The essential components of graduate employability (Dacre Pool, Sewell, 2007)



CareerEDGE - The Key to Employability

Cognitive skills refer to higher level intellectual or academic skills, as interpreting, analysing, researching. Key skills are personal skills and qualities which are generic to a range of both academic and employment settings (e.g. enterprise, criticality, teamwork, communication, planning and organising). Career Management skills represent skills required to manage career development, as self analysis, networking, self reliance and reflection.

In order to provide students with the maximum benefit from attending university (and highest employment figures) universities need to consider all their stakeholders (e.g., employers, government, students, academic staff, parents, trade unions etc.) when formulating both their QA strategy and employment strategy. In this respect, University of Bucharest (UB) is a good example. As professor Ioan Panzaru, the Rector of UB, stated: “Quality assurance is one of the strategic goals of the academic management. University of Bucharest is proud of its quality standards, raised through comparison with international institutions, and with the benefit of having many young staff trained in Europe and North America”.

UB is one of the leading institutions of higher education in Romania, enjoying an impressive international prestige, acquired over almost 145 years of existence. Ranked among the first 500 universities of the world, UB has more than

30,000 students, enrolled in 19 faculties and over 50 institutes, departments and research centres.

UB has started to design and develop an internal QA system since 2004. Looking confidently towards internationalisation, UB' top management has initiated the process of QA implementation. The QA strategy of UB emphasizes the following domains (Toma, 2006):

- The institutional capacity.
- The educational efficiency.
- The quality management.

Some of the main objectives of UB' QA strategy are:

- The introduction of a quality management approach.
- The development of a strong institutional quality culture.
- The enhancement of the employability of its graduates.

Starting with 2005, UB has launched the first collaborative project "Dialogues for performance" in partnership with CODECS Romania. CODECS is a non-governmental organisation, set up in 1993, with the support of the Know how Fund in Great Britain and of the Romanian Foundation for Democracy. CODECS is the only partner of the Open University in Romania, for its courses and training programmes.

The project has aimed to identify the optimal set of competences needed to a graduate for employment. CODECS has intermediated the relationships between UB and employers and organised four meetings between them, taking into account the various profiles of the faculties. The participants were:

- students;
- representatives of the employers;
- academics;
- UB' top management.

The main results of the project emphasized the need for:

- a higher flexibility of the educational offer;
- a balance between academic culture and a practical approach of curricula;
- a student oriented approach;
- a focus on the practical dimensions of learning outcomes ;
- an increasing responsibility of UB towards its stakeholders.

Also, there were identified the following needed learning outcomes of a bachelor graduate:

- generic competences;
- personal capabilities;
- career management skills;
- cognitive skills.

As a socially responsible university, UB understood that it has to offer a sound framework for students' education and training. UB has always seeking for a close dialogue with professional associations and employers in reforming its curricula. The importance of employability in the institutional strategy highly demonstrates the existence of a pro-active university at the service of the Romanian social development.

Conclusions

Higher education and the labour market are changing rapidly in the age of globalization. The economy is increasingly knowledge based and competitive, and the nature of graduates' work is being transformed and diversified.

In the light of the globalization context, the Bologna Declaration has emphasized the need to increase the international competitiveness of the European higher education system in the world market and to promote mobility within Europe both for graduates and students. This is why the role for quality assurance and employability in the Bologna Process has become essential.

Quality in higher education has to be seen as a co-production of a plurality of legitimate actors (universities, students, academic staff, employers, QA agencies, state etc.). In order to enhance the employability of their graduates, universities have the responsibility of creating, implementing and developing their internal QA systems.

In a knowledge-based society, universities should be fully attuned in their own way to societal needs and expectations over a broad front and able to provide it high calibre graduates. As a result, employability has grown in importance as a driver of change in universities. On the other hand, quality represents a value generator for universities, ensuring a higher employability for their graduates.

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Quality Assurance within the Bologna Process Framework – The Babeş-Bolyai University

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Quality Assurance and the Bologna Process

“Quality assurance (QA) is arguable the key issue for Bologna and progress in this area will largely determine the success or otherwise of the Bologna Process. The aim of putting in place a broad framework of comparable higher education qualifications in order to achieve increased mobility, employability, and competitiveness across the EHEA can only take place if it is underpinned by robust and reliable QA systems in each country.” (House of Commons, April 2007)

Quality Assurance is a major part of the Bologna process. Though it has not been named as such in the Bologna Declaration, it has been implied. And two years later, the Ministers of Education reunited at Salamanca jointly declared that

“Quality is the necessary condition for trust, pertinence, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness of higher education institutions, partners in the European Higher Education Area.” (Salamanca, 2001)

Quality Assurance has remained one of the central points of interest of the Bologna process implementation. At the latest reunion of the Ministers of Education in London in June this year (2007), it was agreed that

“Since the main responsibility for quality lies with Higher Education Institutions, they should continue to develop their systems of quality assurance.” (London Communique, 2007)

Quality assurance is generally understood as any systematic process of checking to see whether a product or service being developed is meeting specified requirements. Many universities have a separate department devoted to quality assurance. A quality assurance system in the case of a university is said to increase student confidence and the university’s credibility as a provider of quality services to improve processes and efficiency and to enable a university to better compete with others⁷.

⁷ Quality assurance was initially introduced in World War II when munitions were inspected and tested for defects after they were made. Today’s quality assurance systems emphasize catching defects before they get into the final product/output.

From Babeş-Bolyai University's point of view, the quality assurance deals with creating trust in the clients and other partners of the university in what its capacity and availability of the institution to satisfy their needs and expectations is.

The EUA has also issued a Policy Position on Quality. Starting from the premises that there is wide diversity in the higher education sector, the EUA paper states that it is difficult to come up with a one-dimensional definition of quality for the purposes of quality assurance; quality is context-bound and thus all its potential definitions must take into account the specific context (seen from various points of view) of each individual institution. However, the EUA outlines a number of principles to be used in the quality processes, both internal and external. In what the internal quality processes are concerned, these must be characterised by the following principles:

“Promote shared values and attitudes about quality rather than simply managerial processes and ensure that the internal evaluation processes develop professional attitudes and competence thus fostering creativity and innovation. Be fit for their purposes. While there is no single way to set up these processes, the cycles and scope of internal evaluations should be linked in a pragmatic and cost-effective way and attention should be paid to the global picture that emerges through the internal evaluation of the different activities.

The role of leadership consists in communicating the need for these processes framing them in consultation with the campus community – students, alumni, academic and administrative staff – and using their results in the strategic cycle.

Ensure central data collection and analysis to measure institutional performance.

Quality units are now standard in many institutions. It is important to ensure their appropriate leadership and staffing in order to avoid over-bureaucratisation.

The link between autonomy and internal quality is fundamental: the greater the institutional autonomy, the more robust are the internal quality processes.[...] “⁸

The external quality processes should furthermore:

“seek a balance between autonomy and accountability by promoting institutional audits based on an evaluation of internal quality processes;

Include a fitness for purpose approach, culturally adapted to countries and institutions

Include an improvement orientation that stresses the self-evaluation phase and confidentiality of parts of the process”⁹.

Also, in 2003 the Ministers of Education reunited at Bergen, alongside the Bergen Communiqué have adopted the European Quality Assurance Standards regarding the standards in the field of higher education. These standards are divided as well into internal and external. To mention just a few (of the total 15): development and implementation of policies and procedures for quality assurance, assessment of students, teaching staff, learning resources, use of internal quality assurance procedures alongside the development of external quality assurance processes, etc¹⁰.

⁸ www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/EUA1_documents/EUA_policy_position_quality.pdf

⁹ Idem.

¹⁰ For a complete list of the standards for quality, see www.bologna-bergen2005.no

We intend to present the main actions taken at Babeş-Bolyai University towards assuring quality at all levels and in a variety of contexts. Also, this case study might serve as a potential reference point for other Romanian universities that are looking at setting up or improving their quality assurance processes.

In the current context of increased competition and educational expansion the quality assurance of education becomes essential for every university. As a response to the need of an increased accountability of the outcomes of the universities, Babeş-Bolyai University greatly focused on the *internal assessment of the quality of the education* provided. However, we need standards in order to evaluate quality.

Quality assurance relies on a number of European and national legal premises. At European level, we could start with the *98/561 Recommendation of the European Community Council* issued in 1998. All the major papers related with the Bologna process¹¹ address as well explicitly or implicitly the quality assurance issues.

On national level, we also have a number of premises. First, there is Law No. 88/1993 regarding the authorization and accreditation of the universities alongside the Law on Education No 84 (1995, republished). Then there is also the Government's Decision No 127/2000 regarding the national reference standards of occupations and professions issued in the same year as Law No 196/2000 regarding the National Commission for Evaluation and Accreditation. The law with the biggest impact in what change is concerned within the higher education institutions is the Government Decision No 59/2000 regarding the implementation of the Bologna Declaration in Romanian universities. There is also the *Government Decision No.1257/2005* regarding the organization and functioning of the *Romanian Agency on Quality Assurance in Higher Education* and the *Government Decision No.75/2005* regarding quality in education.

It is worth mentioning that on the first day of this conference¹² a new set of laws regarding education was put forward by the Minister of Education for public debate. The final version of the laws will be decided and submitted to the Parliament for sanctioning once the public debate is over.

There are also a number of documents issued or used as guidelines by the Babeş-Bolyai University which are relevant for the Quality Assurance process.

Coming back to the core topic of this paper, we can define quality assurance according to:

- Teaching performance
- Scientific performance
- Quality of the teaching body
- Quality and qualitative progress of its students
- Efficiency of learning
- International mobility of students and teachers

¹¹ The Bologna Declaration (1999), The Prague Communiqué (2001), The Berlin Communiqué (2003), The ENQUA Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance adopted at the Ministerial Conference in Bergen in 2005 and The London Communiqué (2007).

¹² "Higher Education that Matters" organised by the British Council in Sinaia, 17-18 December 2007

- Joint degrees/international programmes
- Effective involvement in solving the problems of society (including employment related issues)
- Quality of student services

University structure and the existence of a coherent strategy supported by adequate resources

Quality Assurance is achieved through Quality Management, i.e. a set of measures that allow for the planning, measuring and proving of quality. *“The primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with every individual institution”* (Berlin Communiqué, 2003).

Among others, some of the main documents adopted by our university in this respect are as follows: *The Strategic Development Program* of the BBU, *Decisions regarding indicators and guidelines for Quality Assurance in BBU*, *Quality Assurance Program*, *Quality Manual*, etc.

The *Strategic Development Plan* is issued for every three-year period. The last two Strategic Developments Plans that explicitly included quality assurance provisions regarding quality assurance were for 2000 – 2003 and 2004-2007. Naturally, the next strategic plan is going to be issued shortly and most likely is going to include QA provisions as well.

The specific *Quality Assurance Program* is adopted every two years, with the last ones being adopted in October 2004 and November 2006.

The *Quality Manual*¹³, issued this year (2007) describes the requirements of the Quality Management System at Babeş-Bolyai University, as well as the quality assurance practices and their contents.

According to this manual, the Babeş-Bolyai University begins the process of quality assurance starting from the following contextual, long-term premises: the national and international competition among universities has become more fierce; there is a need to offer students study programmes that are appealing and of good quality at all the study levels; there is also a need to adapt the study programs according to the qualifications’ market and with what graduates are expected to know as employees; the need to be relevant and competitive through scientific research, innovation and intellectual creations; the growing internationalisation of higher education; the compatibilisation with the changes that have already taken place in other European universities as a result of the implementing of the Bologna process; the globalisation of knowledge, communication and economy.

The Quality Manual also includes the quality criteria, and we will mention them all briefly. The criteria that make the programme evaluation possible are diverse and correspond to the multiple dimensions of university life, such as legal, professional, managerial, etc. However, the manual offers an exhaustive list of these criteria, as they are seen by the Babeş-Bolyai University:

- *the legal sanctioning of the university autonomy and understanding the autonomy as an instrument for enhancing the performance and improving the competitiveness;*
- *establishing explicitly the mission of the university and the objectives of the institutions and programmes through charters, strategies and operational programmes;*

¹³ http://qa.ubbcluj.ro/documente_ro.html

- *accessibility for those with different abilities insured by a transparent and competition-based process and insurance of equal, non-discriminatory opportunities for all;*
- *curriculum quality*
- *quality of the teaching staff from the point of view of qualifications and professional competence, interactive capacity, teaching ability, intellectual culture, initiative and commitment;*
- *the existence of a continuous feedback in the relationship with the students and the availability for accepting suggestions, proposals and critics coming from the students' side;*
- *flexibility of the organisation in what the following are concerned: transfer of credits, interdisciplinarity, second chance programme, studies undertaken as part of different programmes or different universities;*
- *the quality of infrastructure in what the teaching spaces, the means of transportation and the level of endowment of the libraries, laboratories and communication are concerned;*
- *the allotted resources by the funding bodies through budgets, the capacity to raise extra-budgetary resources, the capacity to motivate the academic staff, the capacity to invest in buildings and equipments;*
- *the practice of accountability in what regards the human and material resources and systematic auditing;*
- *the presence of a feedback in the relationship with the employers and the availability to adapt the study programs according to the labour market;*
- *scientific competitiveness in comparison with the scientific research in the field and using international criteria of evaluation of the scientific production;*
- *the level of development of the mechanisms of self-evaluation of quality and of quality assurance;*
- *the pragmatic result from the point of view of technologies, techniques, public debate, democracy, as far as these are dependent of the higher education institutions; and*
- *the measure in which capacities for innovation have been generated in techniques, science, culture, art and their renewal took place.*

Taken together, these criteria form an approach that would stimulate the continuous improvement of the organisation and performances of a university.

There are also a number of structures within BBU that deal with quality assurance. The most important ones are as follows: the *Quality Council of the BBU*, the *Centre for Quality Management*, the *Commission of evaluation and QA*, QA representatives at faculty, department and service level, a Vice-Rector in charge with QA, a *Council of Scientific Research at BBU* and the *Council for Curriculum and Permanent Commission for Curriculum Assessment*. We will detail some of the aforementioned structures.

The mission of the *Quality Council* of the BBU is to set up the strategy of the QA management in BBU. It meets on a monthly basis or as often as necessary to elaborate and update the concrete procedures for evaluation and assurance of quality.

The *Centre for Quality Management* is the operative structure for the implementation of the QA strategies, evaluation and quality assurance programmes.

The role of the *Commission of evaluation and QA* is – just like its name says – to evaluate the QA programs, to suggest improvement measures in what the quality of education at our university is concerned. Also, it must elaborate the strategy and the specific requirements for the System of Quality Management in the university, as well as the methodology for its audit and evaluation. Among its many other attributions in the field of QA, the Commission has to bring its input in what the development of a culture of quality within the university is concerned, both at the teaching and administrative staff as well as at the level of the students and establish measures for its consolidation. The existence of this commission is stipulated by law.

The *Council of Scientific Research* at BBU has as its main task the development of a research strategy, as well as the evaluation of the research activity. Naturally, research-related activities are closely related to the QA processes.

Last but not least, the *Council for Curriculum and the Permanent Commission for Curriculum Assessment* has as its main role the evaluation, approval and internal accreditation of the teaching and learning plans, improvement and compatibilisation of the curriculum with the European practices and stakeholders' expectations.

The performance criteria in quality assurance in the case of Babeş-Bolyai University should be also mentioned here. These are:

1. *The quality of the education of students;*
2. *The quality of the academic staff and of the study programs;*
3. *The quality of scientific research;*
4. *The quality of the specific services provided to the community;*
5. *The quality of the resources dedicated to higher education activities*
6. *The quality of the teaching and learning;*
7. *The quality of management, leadership and financial administration*

The quality assurance process has already had a number of notable achievements. To mention just a few, there has been a continuous *internal evaluation* of the educational programs, *external evaluation* (by the EUA and the Salzburg Seminar) as well as *quality enhancement* of the *curriculum*, etc.

The EUA report from June 2001 emphasizes the steps taken towards achieving quality assurance and makes a number of recommendations that at present are already implemented and fully functional. In the words of the 2001 report:

“UBB has undertaken a very large renovation and increase in the quality of educations, which it provides and [it has] put quality assurance already high on the agenda. However, the quality assurance system, which has been implemented so far has relied on rather bureaucratic methods of control, and less on analytical methods for improvement.” The increase in the reliance on analytical methods at present is more than obvious.

In a similar manner, the report drawn by the Visiting Advisors from the Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar in 2002 speaks about quality and quality assurance. It was clearly stated that quality assurance was one of the issues of particular interest (alongside others such as administration, strategic planning, the role of the university in the emerging civil society, etc) because of its high relevance for the future development of the university. The Salzburg Seminar

Report states that “The quality of an institution depends on the creativity and dedication of its faculty. The investment in quality should be seen in this light”. And later on “In this way, UBB will continue to survive and thrive within a larger higher education environment in Romania that is increasingly calling into question traditional and monolithic definitions of quality”.

Babeş-Bolyai University was not included in the first pilot evaluations of Romanian universities carried out by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 2006, pilot evaluations which included 12 universities from across the country.

In what the internal assessment of QA is concerned, the following evaluations are done: Students’ evaluation of the teaching activity; Self-evaluation of the teaching staff; Yearly evaluation made by the Head of the Department and Teaching peer review.

There are also various types of questionnaires being administered, as well as various types of surveys, among which: Students’ satisfaction survey (which identifies the students’ satisfaction level concerning the educational programs and the services offered by BBU), Faculty members satisfaction survey (that identifies the teaching staff’s development needs and their level of work satisfaction), Employers expectations survey (i.e. the analysis of the employers’ opinions and their requirements towards the BBU graduates) and Graduates’ labor market integration survey (a questionnaire that is filled in by the former students when they pick up their diplomas, about one and a half year after graduation; this questionnaire allows the University to get an accurate picture of the way in which its graduates are integrated in the labor market).

Conclusions

Again, quoting the evaluation report of the EUA:

“The main emphasis of Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca’s mission is in three main areas:

Promoting education and research in line with the needs of a knowledge-based society

Providing an adequate framework for multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and inter-confessional contacts, with equal training opportunities in Romanian, Hungarian and German languages

Contributing to the local, regional and national development from a social, cultural and political point of view.”

And further on:

“It is likely that UBB will be called upon to play a more important pro-active role in regional development and as a gateway for the region to European integration.”

It is obvious that the university is called upon not only to improve itself from within through quality assurance, but also to play a leading role in the society it is part of, including here a clear concern regarding the employability of its students after graduation.

From a more general point of view, the implementation of quality assurance could be improved by setting up a feed-back system that would

basically answer four main questions, namely (as they are ordered in the EUA report):

*“What is the University trying to do? (“mission”)
How is the University trying to do it? (“programme”)
How does the University know that it works? (“evaluation”)
How does the University change in order to improve? (“strategic planning”)”.*

Quality assurance paves the way to realising the “World Class University” that is universally recognised as a potential “goal-model”. It is also a fundamental factor in most of the international evaluations of universities world-wide, alongside academic reputation, quality of teaching and of the academic staff, research and financing.

At institutional level, when it comes to increasing the competitiveness of our university, the following performance criteria are considered: the competitiveness of the graduates on the labour market as well as on the level of the scientific production, assurance of the European dimension in education, etc. In what the increasing of institutional performance and competitiveness are concerned, the following could be implemented, among others:

*The introduction in the institutional evaluation of performance indicators and criteria, specific for the implementation of the Bologna process (there have been already achieved evaluations of Master degrees, PhD programmes, etc);
Individualising the evaluation mechanisms at the level of chairs and departments; also defining systemic mechanisms and mixed both qualitative and quantitative strategies;
Introduction of peer-evaluation for verifying the functionality and objectivity of the evaluation mechanisms;
Designing further mechanism and instruments of qualitative evaluation;
Defining the specific of the university – its unique and distinct ‘products’, namely UBB student, UBB academic, social responsibility, active citizenship, etc.
Interpretation and dissemination of the results of the evaluations through specific channels;
Involvement of the beneficiaries and stakeholders in the process of evaluation and in the evaluation exercises undertaken at various levels, etc.*

There is still to be seen what the future holds for the universities. Quality assurance needs permanent re-visiting.

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Developing Employability Skills Among Students through Practice and Workshops

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One of the most important goals of the education is to provide students with knowledge and tools to make them adjust to the labour market requests. In order to meet this goal CIPO developed several projects designed for students and professionals. As a part of these projects, the beneficiaries got or will get in the future several skills requested by the labour market, becoming more desirable for employing companies. The projects will be presented in terms of objectives and acquired or expected skills.

A. Workshops for students from “Al.I.Cuza” University of Iasi, with the following themes:

1. Developing team work skills. The basic idea of the workshop was the observation that employing companies want candidates having, among other qualities, team work skills. Coming at this workshop students learned to play a role in a team, to collaborate with the other members to reach a common goal, to delegate tasks, to plan, to give and receive support.
2. Career management. The main objective of the workshop was to help students in their way of getting a tool to plan their future career. The basic idea was the observation that a considerable number of students chooses a faculty or specialization at random and they don't know what to do with the diploma in the future. Still, they want to take the best decision under the circumstances. After this workshop the students become aware how important is to develop their abilities, how necessary is to volunteer and practice. Also, they learn to design a career plan and to choose activities accordingly.

B. Leonardo da Vinci Programs

CIPO developed four Leonardo da Vinci programs by which the beneficiaries got the best practices through placements in institutions around Europe.

1. “Skills and employability improvement of recent graduates who will work in the counseling field, by European mobility (SECEM)” (project no RO/2003/91052/TD) took place in September-July 2004. The main objective

of the project was the improvement of skills and competencies in the counseling field of young workers and recent graduates in order to adapt to the European standards. The beneficiaries developed abilities in the field of counseling the unemployed while searching for a job, counseling students, or how to find and promote the job offers

2. “Improving the skills and competencies of the last year students in law by European Experience” (project no. RO/2006/PL97136/S) developed in February–April 2007. The beneficiaries got the chance to see how multinational companies work, to get knowledge and practice in European law.
3. “Strengthening the skills of the psychology students in the field of early education” developed in June 2006 – January 2008. The main objective of the project was, as stated in title, to improve the skills of the students at psychology in the field of early education. The basic idea of the project was to provide access of the psychology students to practical stages in early education European institution in order to increase the quality of their training, to raise their employability chances and the quality of their future work as educational psychologists in kindergartens. The beneficiaries were involved in practical stages in Early Education European institutions (kindergartens, nurseries, early education centers, etc.). The students developed abilities of working with preschool children or children with psychological problems (ADHD), of communicating with families and personnel. Coming back to Romania, they will have the chance to implement early education programs at the local level.
4. “Strengthening the skills of the counselors in the university counseling by European experience”- beginning September 2007 and ending August 2008. The project will involve counselors from other Romanian university career centers and will be designed to adapt the methods and techniques to the European standards. At the end of the program the beneficiaries will be expected to get knowledge and expertise in the field of career and educational counseling at European standards.

C. Annual researches on graduates concerning their options for further education (master programs, doctoral studies) and/or jobs. The main objective was to investigate the graduates’ points of view about the applicability of the courses from college. Another objective was to investigate their preferences for different master programs, in order to best fit their needs.

D. Meetings of the students with managers from different professional areas organised on faculties. The project is programmed to take place next year. The main objective is to enhance students with knowledge about the profiles of candidates the employers are looking for. The expected result is that students will become aware of the importance of self-development, to best fit the employers’ needs at the end of the college preparation. The meetings will be held on specialties/faculties and will facilitate the contact between students and managers of the companies/NGOs/Educational institutions, etc.

Our projects are designed in such manner in order to enhance students with employability skills, to raise their chances on the labour market. When searching for a job, at the end of the college studies, a graduate needs to have knowledge and certain qualities and skills that can be developed through a continuous search for personal and professional development.

Lifelong Learning Policies, Creative Industries and Regional Development. Case Study: Romanian South-East Region, Galati County

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As the newest member of the European Union, Romania has to support its regional development in order to reduce regional disparities. As a result, the classic European regional growth model has to be change for our country:

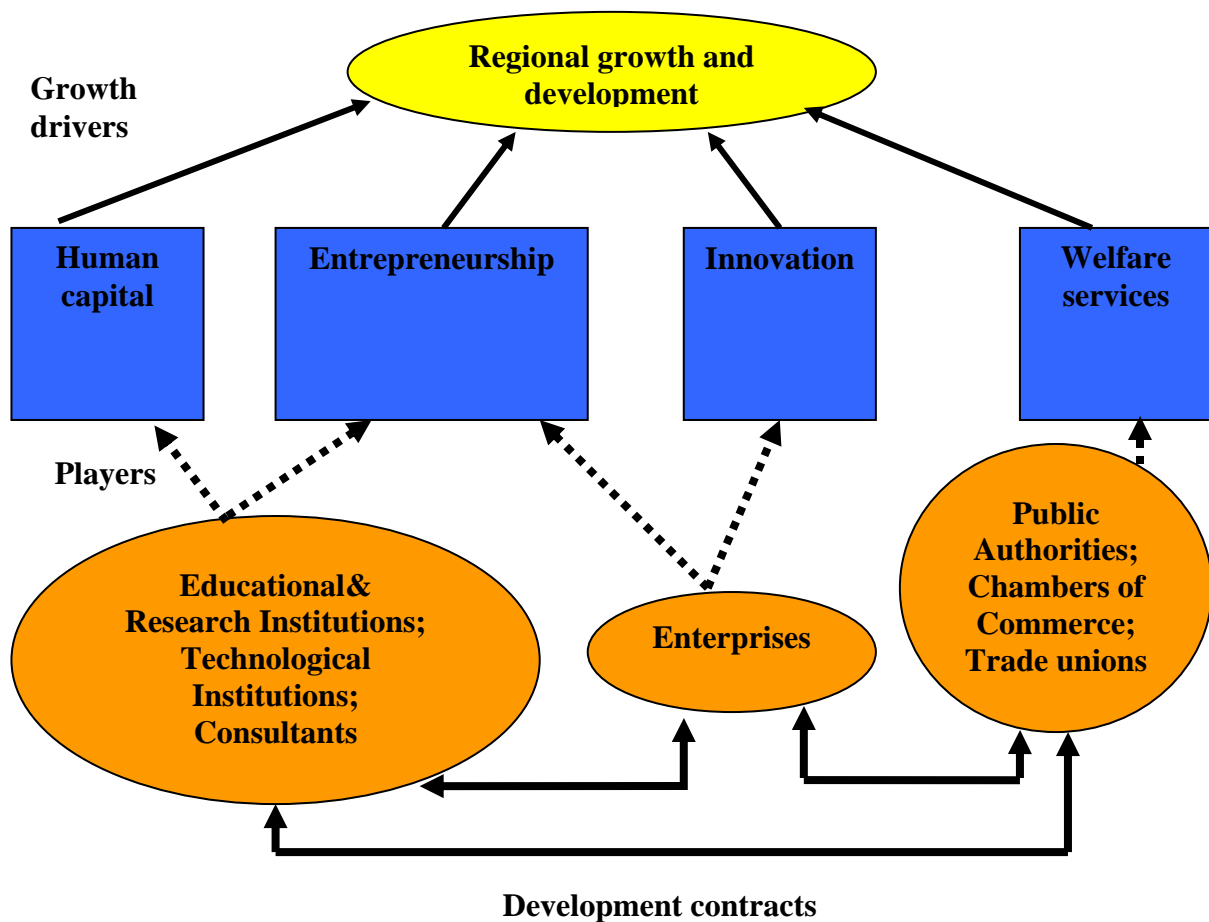


Fig.1. A new regional growth model for Romania

So, we developed a new regional growth model for Romania in which the most important players are: Educational&Research Institutions, Technological Institutions, Consultants, Enterprises, Public Authorities, Chambers of Commerce and Trade unions.

The first player supports human capital and entrepreneurship. The second player supports entrepreneurship and innovation and the third player supports welfare services. These four elements are growth drivers for regional growth and development.

As university, we support the necessity to promote a new partnership between those actors which are able to realise a real socio-economic regional development.

Nowadays, the keyword of the development not only in Romania is knowledge-based innovation policy. This policy deals with the transition process and the transformation of knowledge in inter and intra-organisational contracts. As a result, the main focus falls on diffusion of the system of knowledge within and among the supportive organisations. And we consider that the main actors in knowledge-based innovation policy are universities and business organisations. We can define the functions and the units in a Romanian system of innovation as the follows:

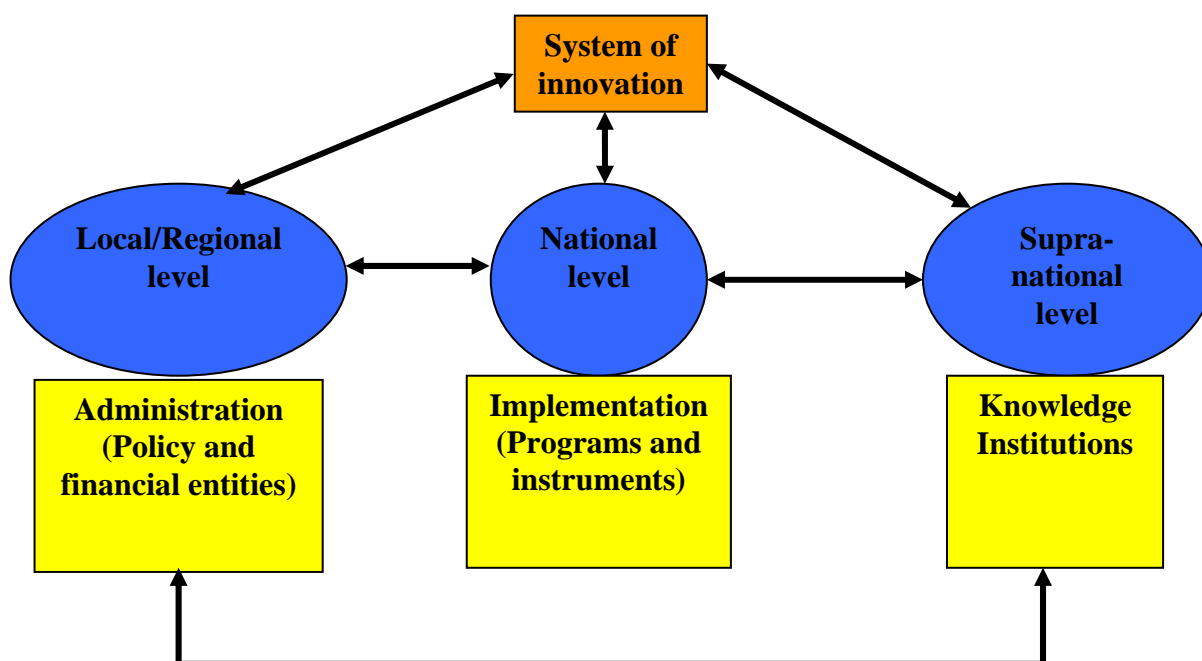


Fig.2. System of innovation

There are three levels of the system of innovation: regional level, national level and supranational level.

At regional level, are 8 NUTS II regions in Romania, which need a regional business service system in which the knowledge institutions are: universities, R&D institutes and university colleges.

At national level, ministries and governmental agencies implement innovation system programs of Education and Research Ministry and of technologic institutes. The knowledge institutions are the same universities, R&D institutes and university colleges.

We consider the European Union as a supranational level of the system of innovation. There are some European regulations and programs like 6th & 7th Framework Programs.

So, we propose a new model for a development of a partnership starting with business medium, using university system and finishing with a specialised labour according with market demands. So, our proposal is the following one:

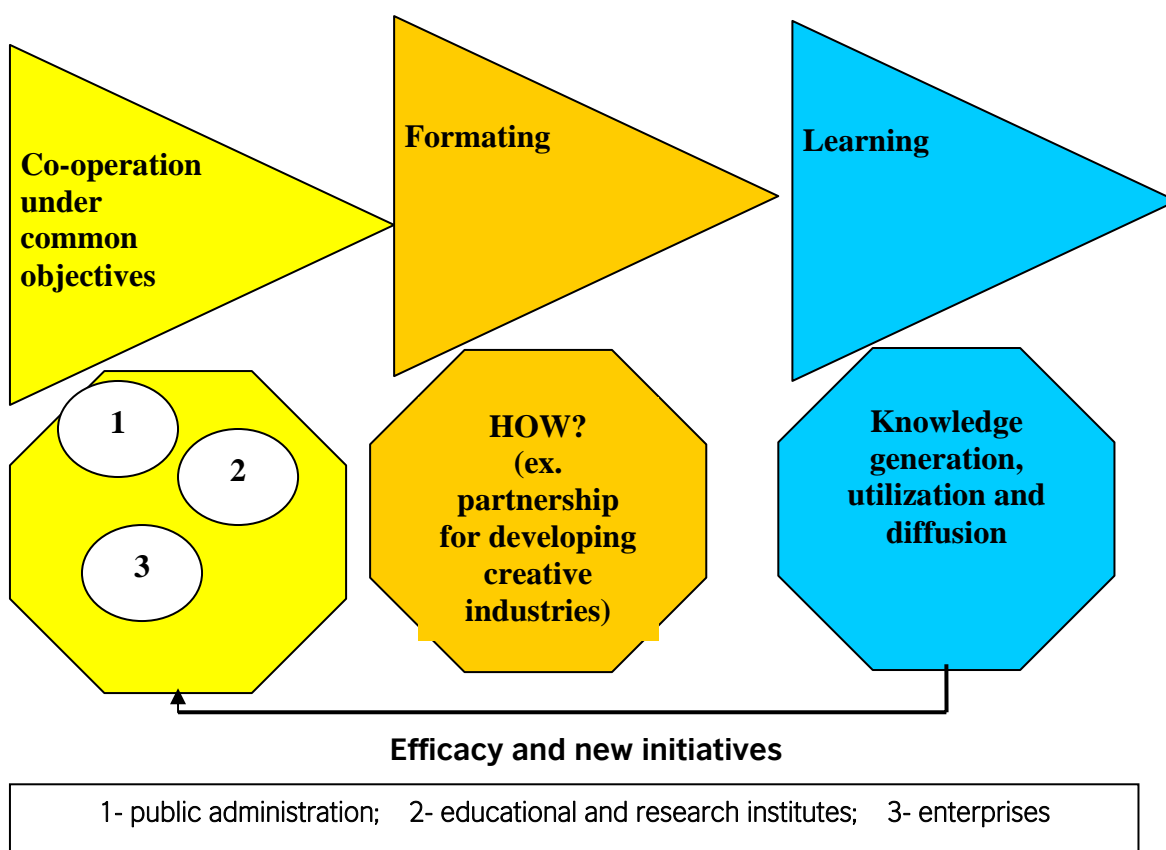


Fig.3. New model of partnership

This new model is the reverse of the classical one in which schools train labour and this labour has to face with the business medium.

The model starts with co-operation between public administration, educational and research institutes and enterprises. These three elements have to find the answers at the questions like how. For example, how to develop creative industries?

As a result, the learning process has to be based on knowledge generation, utilization and diffusion.

So, we consider that a good example for such a partnership is the development of the creative industries as alternative policy of regional development.

The concept of creative industries like it is applied in Romania can be defined using the next diagram:

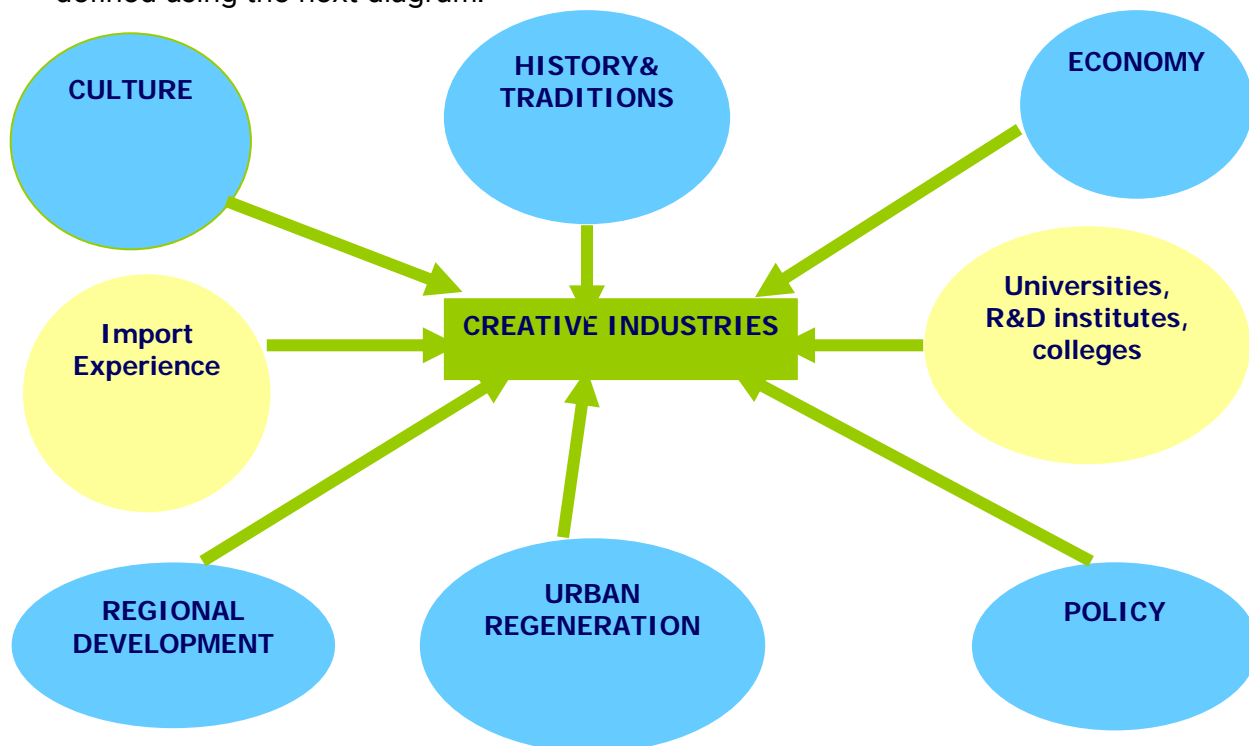


Fig.4. Concept of creative industries

We can realise that creative industries are a result of the feedback connections between culture, history, traditions, economy, regional development, urban regeneration and policy.

Import experience, universities, R&D institutes and colleges are important elements which support the development of the creative industries too.

The objectives of the implementation of creative industries in Romania consist in: to create a local and regional partnership in order to develop creative industries; to achieve a mapping study following a common methodology with other partners based; showcase success stories in creative industries in order to advocate cities as creative hubs; to raise awareness about the concept of creative industries and their role in regional development; to create a local network of creative industry professionals, politicians, business community, public institutions and NGOs; to improve economic welfare, market economy and to develop private industries; to develop a friendship relation between people in Europe; to develop cultural and religious tourism; to understand and respect other cultures and nations.

And more, we consider that creative industries will have a bigger effect than internet had and did.

Romania faces with a lot of challenges in order to create a real and efficient partnership for the development of the creative industries. A SWOT analysis allows us to recognize the real situation:

Table no.1. SWOT analysis for Romania

-	+
weak promotion;	intelligence stock;
weak information about creative industries;	great interests in creative industries;
straitened circumstances;	new approach as member of E.U.;
bushy legislation;	the initiative of the British Council for U.K.-South-East Europe Forum
absence of a real partnership between public and private universities and R&D institutes;	
absence of a real partnership between counties of each region;	
regions have no prerogatives in managing regional development (no regional government, no regional policy instruments)	

As a result of this SWOT analysis, we can see that there are a lot of problems in order to realize a partnership able to implement a lifelong learning policy in order to support the development of the creative industries.

The South-East region of Romania represents a special case. This region has almost all relief forms, Danube, a lot of rivers, Danube Delta and the Black Sea, a lot of natural and human resources, but not a developed creative industries sector.

The main causes of this situation are: weak communication, weak information, absence of a qualified assistance and absence of administration support too. On the other hand, the university curricula aren't able to train and to promote labour for creative industries. Here is the point in which we try to imply and to action, but we need support too.

So, we propose some action directions and some objectives for our region, especially for our county Galati: a catalogue of the creative firms from South-East Region of Romania;

homologation of new Romanian brands in creative industries; new cultural and tourist routes in South-East Region of Romania; new creative cities like Braila and Galati; an internet web page for creative industries in this region.

Practically, on medium term, we are interested to realise a personalized guide of South-East Region of Romania as a result of creative firms' cooperation. This guide should be a demand of assistance and cooperation with the European partners. This guide must be a signal that Romanian creative firms exist and want to growth up.

So, our university hopes that the British Council and its Romanian partners will support our activity. And more, our university wishes to become an active partner for the British Council's projects too.

We had an initiative in order to promote a successful story from our county, Galati. It is about a man who succeeded in realising a traditional household with popular Romanian masks, costumes and pots which are known in Europe, U.S.A. and Australia too.

We can conclude that only an efficient partnership will be able to support the development of lifelong learning policies in order to create the framework for the growth of the creative industries as a main element of the regional development. And this target can be achieved only with the support of those institutions which have a good experience in this field.

Our university is open to a real partnership and we consider that we are able to assume an important role in South-East Region, too.

Teaching Communication Science between Theory and Good Practice Development

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Studying Communication and Public Relations

Communication Science has a young history compared to classical sciences such as Philosophy. The object of the science of communication is human communication (both interpersonal and mass-communication) that is researched with the help of specific methods (mostly research methods used in social science). Communication science departments or chairs have been active in Romanian universities only since 1990. Journalism has also been part of academic programs since 1990. In year 2007 the Romanian scientist Cristina Coman, who is part of the team that teaches Communication and PR in Bucharest and Head of the Chair for Media at the Faculty for Journalism and Communication Science within the University of Bucharest has put together a list of 24 academic programs in Romanian universities offering degrees in the science of communication (Coman, 2008). The Babeş-Bolyai University (BBU) was one of the first academic institutions offering a degree in Communication and PR in Romania, but it was the first university in the country aside from the one in Bucharest that developed a program of this kind. The first students had been enrolled in the fall of 2000/2001, but at that time there was not yet a department in the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Studies within the BBU. The majority of alumni that started at that time are working today in PR and advertising agencies or in public institutions.

The Department of Communication and PR at the BBU was founded in October 2003 taking a part of its staff from former members of the Department of Journalism that conducted courses on the topics of PR, Advertising and Communication. The members of the team are relatively young which proved to be an advantage for the flexibility and communication with the students. Nowadays the Communication and Public Relations department within the BBU offer: three BA program on Communication and Public Relations in Romanian, German and Hungarian Language, one MA program on Advertising and one MA program on

Public Relations, both MA programs mainly in the Romanian language, but with some courses in English.

The Bologna Challenge

The Bologna Process and the related changes from a four year undergraduate study to a three year Bachelor study followed by a two year Master program was not a complicated issue for the Department of Communication and PR of the BBU. The four-year undergraduate program had only functioned for four years, so that in June 2008 there will be two generations of alumni, one that studied 4 years for a degree and the another one with only three years of study matching the Bologna criteria. Cristina Coman considers the Bologna Process for the Romanian Communication and PR programs and departments as being not such a dramatical change. Flexibility, modern attitudes towards learning methods, openness of the staff have been the advantages of the departments that implemented new structures (Coman, 2008: 94-95).

The UBB BA program in Communication and PR was redesigned for three years including especially for the first three semesters general courses such as *Introduction in the Science of Communication and PR, Introduction in Political Science, The Basics of Economics, Argumentation Theory, Semiotics, Media Theory, Public Communication*. For the second and third year the curricula includes more practical-oriented courses and seminars: *PR and Advertising-Methods and Instruments, Communication in Advertising, Political PR, Political Communication, Advertising Strategy, Promotion Techniques in Media, PR Sectors, Conflict Management, Intercultural Communication, Negotiation and Mediation* and more. Alongside with the professional skills that the programs are willing to develop for the students, soft skills, transferable skills also need to be developed. The students learn how to work with computers; they learn how to deal with interpersonal face to face communication in situations connected to their future jobs.

The first MA program of the department was the MA in Advertising, designed to match up to the needs of the regional and national market. The first students were enrolled in the fall of 2005 and some of the alumni are already working in multinational advertising agencies in Bucharest, but also in regional and local agencies. The percentage of practical courses is higher than in the BA program. Apart from theoretical courses such as *Fundamentals of Advertising, Advanced Communication Techniques* or *Public Relations* the curricula includes *Advertising in Press and outdoor, TV and Radio Advertsing, On-line Advertising*, those being practice-oriented seminars. The collaboration with the regional and national advertising industry is based on two levels. One of the most important aspects was to support the MA program with internship opportunities. The other aspect to be taken into consideration was to get practitioners to take part in the seminars and to organize extracurricular activities with their support. The Advertising Agency Vitrina, the only Agency from Cluj that has an office in Bucharest suggested a practical seminar under the title "The Vitrina Seminar" that included topics such as advertising strategy, planning, copywriting, art directing, media and PR. Vitrina Advertising Agency introduced in a very unique way of understanding the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility on the market in Cluj-Napoca. Vitrina Advertsing included the seminar as part of its CSR agenda.

The MA Program in Public Relations started 2006 with courses and seminars on Political PR, Profit and Nonprofit PR, Strategic Communication Management, Marketing Communication, Lobbying and other issues.

Quality management was since the beginning of the department's activity an important issue for all staff members. Some guidelines have been identified to work on quality of the programs. One of these guidelines is the quality of teaching, the other one is the communication with the teaching and administrative staff taking part in the program. The chair named one person to be in charge for quality maintenance. Here are some of the measures that have been decided upon in order to improve the quality of the programs: the on-line publication of syllabi for all courses, access to all course information found in paper format in the library of the faculty. Independent student evaluations conducted by the Center for Management of the BBU prove to be a highly relevant feed-back for the implemented management. Aside from these standard evaluations there were also some specific evaluations designed and applied by the management of the MA programs. The results focus on the quality of communication with the MA students. The majority of the enrolled MA students are already employed and they especially appreciate the communication through e-mail lists of relevant extracurricular activities.

Working together on curricula

In 2005 the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Science of the University of Bucharest has undertaken the initiative to invite colleagues from different communication and PR departments to discuss relevant aspects of the curriculum reform. This was only the start for a series of meetings. The second one was organized by ARRP (The Association of PR Specialists) in fall 2006. The PR *Trend* seminars organized by the Communication and PR Department of the BBU in 2006 and 2007 have also been an opportunity to facilitate knowledge exchange regarding the curricula.

A BA in Communication and Public Relations can offer the opportunity to work in different areas of the private and public sector. The official term used to describe the alumni in Communication and PR is PR specialists. Spokesman and PR Advertiser are only two of the common jobs found on the PR job market. The advertising industry uses English names for jobs such as: *copywriter, strategic planner, media analyst, account manager, account executive, creative director, art director, event manager, media planner, media broker, BTL manager*. None of those jobs are in the Romanian Official Qualification Register. International and national agencies use those names in their organizational structures and also in job advertisements found in the media. The Communication and PR Department of the BBU has published in 2006 a guide for students and alumni under the title *Minighidul joburilor in PR si publicitate (Small Guide for Jobs in PR and Advertising)*, supervised by Delia Cristina Balaban and Flaviu Calin Rus. The guide received positive comments from the industry, from colleagues in other universities as well as from the side of the students and the ARRP. In order to continue the efforts in this direction, Babes Bolyai University together with the University of Bucharest and the Art and Design University in Cluj-Napoca applied in fall 2008 for financial

support from the Education Ministry for the project *Correlating the educational system and improving the employability rate of alumni on the labor market in the field of advertising*.

Developing entrepreneurial skills and improving the employability rate of the students has been one of the relevant issues for the Communication and PR Department of the Babes-Bolyai University. Especially for the MA Programs projects were developed such as *Meet the Practitioners* where the students received the opportunity to talk to professionals and also to small company owners that developed businesses in the communication industry during the last five years. The *Students' Advertising Festival C4creativity*, that reached in 2007 its 5th edition is a concept meant to develop the employability rate by supporting the development of practical skills, experience in this field and own portfolios. The new Media Center of the University is designed to improve the employability chances of the students by offering internship opportunities.

Members of the department together with the chair developed the following SWOT analysis:

SWOT ANALYSIS –
Communication and Public Relations Dept. of the Babes-Bolyai University Cluj

Strengths

- The average age of the employees is low compared to other faculties or departments;
- The human resources are well-prepared with the majority of the employees having already taken part in exchange programs abroad;
- A strong professional leadership and a strong *corporate identity (culture, design and behavior)* designed and developed according to the rules of communication science;
- The international connections, some of the MA and BA courses are taught by professors and Ph.D.s from abroad;
- The use of modern teaching methods and instruments;
- The differentiated payment system of the Babes-Bolyai University based on results encourage qualified and also young scientists to join the academic staff of the chair;
- The faculty has modern technical equipment such as projectors installed in each room;
- Possibilities for students and teaching staff to take part in the Socrates LLP exchange program (both TS and ST) and also in other programs;
- The chair has a multicultural profile having a BA program in Romania, German and Hungarian language;
- The first alumni on the regional market;
- Working together for the development of the market. Making the economical environment aware of the need for PR;
- Scientific relevance in Romania and Germany;
- Alumni employment in the field;

- Some of the alumni developed their own business in the field and employed other alumni;
- Two distance education short programs in PR and Advertising that are designed for the people who already work in the field and want to improve their knowledge;
- The broad job perspectives found on the market matching the qualification offered to our alumni;

Weaknesses

- None of the members of the department is a professor yet, so that the coordination of Ph.Ds is not possible yet;
- The high number of students in comparison to the small teaching staff which makes the tutorial activities not very effective. The Assistant professors and lecturers are coordinating a high amount of final papers for the BA degree;
- Due to the fast development of the chair and also growth of the student numbers, there is still a lack of physical space for optimal teaching and research activities. A new and larger building is under construction;

Opportunities

- Due to the fact that communication science is a new field in Romania, our department has the chance to be among the first producers of science books and articles in the field;
- The scientific community in PR and Communication is a relatively small one in Romania, this is one of the reasons why there are strong connections among scientists (ex. Meetings on curricula, developing scientific projects between universities);
- The BBU Media Center was designed in order to offer opportunities to students enrolled in BA and MA Programs in Communication Science and Journalism to make internships and to offer a real interface to the business area.;
- New Media brings new opportunities to teach communication science, to enlarge the resource base;

Threats

- The number of the enrolled students should not be kept at the current level (about 450 students enrolled in the first semester of the academic year 2007/2008) for a long time, otherwise it could lead in the following years to an inflation of alumni on the market and the undervaluation of the diploma;
- The demographical decrease of the years to come will probably influence the number of applicants for the BA and MA programs;
- The general low preparation level of the applicants coming from high schools.

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Helping Students in Their Decision about a Teaching Career

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Introduction – Is teaching a profession?

Starting from the idea that only teachers who have a high level of engagement and commitment for their profession could become successful, we tried to design a model of teaching for student-teachers seminars (for the topics involved by the Teacher Initial Training Curricula); our foundational ideas were: a) The professional excellence depends on individuals who take responsibility for acquiring and maintaining professional competence. b) We cannot develop the professional teachers' conduct without giving them the instruments that make this kind of conduct operational.

The first meeting with the students aimed to help them to develop their answers for the questions: What are the professional competences and the efficiency standards of teaching? How we can define the teacher professionalism? And, in the end, we tried to find up together a very concrete answer for – *Is teaching a profession or it is something more?*

The central idea of courses design is to offer to all the student-teachers the chance to discover themselves the meaning of *being a teacher*; after the answer is revealed they are able to make a decision about their future career - in teaching or not.

The main principle for our experiment was developed from *The three-element professionalism Model* (for details, please, see our previous articles) and was based on A.R. Thompson (1995) words: "They have to possess the right knowledge and skills, some individual characteristics adequate to the profession, they have to be motivated and to be shown the right professional perspectives,... if they want their hopes to become true."

Our believe was and, still is, that the student-teachers are much more interested by teaching profession if their training activities are tailored to an efficient teacher competences and needs.

Since at least 1995, a number of proposals for improving the Romanian public education have included a call for professionalizing teaching, too. For ex., Cezar Brânzea tried to demonstrate that there is *a science and an art of education*. Indeed, teaching is not strictly a technical/rational or skill-driven task, thus it is very difficult to develop standards of professional practice, when a sufficient degree of autonomy and self-governance are still missing...

The reflective capacity – the main component of teacher professionalism Why *reflective ability* explicitly?

Because it was so implicit during the initial training process, that it nearly got lost among the strictly didactic purposes (the training for mastering the didactic of a specialization), even disappearing at a certain point.

The teacher pre-service/initial training is, in nowadays Romania, one of the most important responsibilities of the universities. The main goal of the university is based on the principles of vocational education, but, in fact, the professional education objectives are linked with the research objectives, because the university is, after the well-known Bourdieu's definition, a place which preserves and develops the cultural and scientific capital/treasure of the whole world. Applying *client-centered* paradigm the Teacher Training University Departments' orientation is closely related to the idea of entrepreneurial universities, which are able to develop their own economic policies; we considered this a very good answer to the needs of the community that it belongs to. But,...It is often said that *good educators select themselves*. They know well why they want to become teachers, they know what level they want to teach at, and they know what kind of students they want to have; they are careful about the decisions they make; they are informed about the opportunities and obstacles that might arise in this profession and they look forward to contribute to the professional ethos. This profession, unlike others, cannot discover for itself the professionalism hidden behind the pair *good-not so good*, precisely because of the conflicts and ethical dilemmas that inevitably develop inside the professional activity. A mistake in education can have some of the worst consequences.

Nevertheless, a trainer's responsibility is to offer each and every candidate that initially opted for this professional field (for different reasons!) a new decisional situation: *Do I or do I not want to have this socio-professional status?* The option for the didactic career is often made under external constraints and this does not bring any advantage to the professional prestige, quite the opposite.

The contents of the subject matters belonging to the courses of training the professional teachers should determine a "rising" from the strictly normative aspects of *the science and art of education* towards an interpretation, through analyses and realistic debates, and lastly towards assuming the responsibilities of the future teacher or schoolmaster. For a long time it has been considered that the simple action of the learned contents, in the form of normative with immediate application, at didactic level, would draw along building the responsibility for the professional teacher's status. However, it seems that way of shifting the accent only on the immediate executive side during the initial training (the same purpose structure recording the courses of continuous formation as well) is completely wrong.

Competence appears thanks to knowledge which became operational through transfer, mental flexibility and adaptability. E.Charlier (1996) pointed out the role of training, saying that a professional teacher creates his abilities gradually, using his own experience and the theories about the educational practice, stressing on the teacher's power to adjust. Assuming the French terminology created around *savoir-faire*, we can build the professional competence structure as follows: to know + to know how to do + to know how to be + to know how to develop yourself (see, *Learning. The Treasure within – UNESCO' report for education*,

coord. J.Delors). Only being really competent in a field can assure us the efficiency of reaching the professional responsibilities.

We will define the *professional competence* of an educator as a dynamic complex comprising a series of personality traits (that can turn into real predispositions in choosing the future career), and knowledge, ability, and habit systems which take part in creating the professional conscience and conduct.

Reflection in action and the moral component of professionalism

For Schön (1983, pg. 270), concerning the reflection in action, teachers are used to acting guided by some relatively stable reference points, four “invariables” identified as follows: languages, means and collections, used in order to describe reality and perform their experiments; value or appreciation systems, used to identify problem situations, to evaluate their researches and in reflective conversations; general understanding systems (“*overarching theories*”), which help to render meaning to the phenomena; role definitions, which formulate the tasks, and through which the institutional scenario is settled. These four elements create the ground that the practitioners use in building their reflective processes. It is not the trainers who must find these solutions; their duty is to offer practical algorithms to identify solutions and decide for...the best. The reflective ability would give teachers the possibility of working with the decision making stages, of searching their own solutions to inherent dilemmas. No firm convictions can be formed without invoking reflection, since one cannot impose an individual to comply with rules or norms, unless he previously knew them and deliberated on the importance he is willing to give them.

In our *Three-element Professionalism Model* **the reflective capability** representing the link between the other two components: *the technology of teaching* and *the ethical implications of teaching*. The main teacher’s moral-professional competence is autonomy. The *professional autonomy* refers both to the *personal ability of making operative decisions* while working, in the absence of any outer pressure or outerprofessional opinion, and to *the pertinent social responsibility* towards the results and quality of the educational practice (for extend explanations see our articles). Because of these, the Critical thinking educational paradigm (ex. the model elaborated by Luke and Freeboy, 2000) is considered to be a good answer in helping students in their decision about a teaching career. Teachers (student teachers, too) must learn to reflect, to identify problems, to define them, to find arguments for the possible solvable evolutions, to deliberate and decide over a certain solution....

Some experimental data – Preparing on Decision for the teaching career

The basic point for our experimental design was the fact that the *reflective capability* represents the mobile element, which helps the transition between the professional conscience and the professional conduct. The reflective capability helps the individual to choose. In order to meet the large variety of requirements and to shape up the behavioral offer to diverse challenges, the student teachers must be able to reflect over the meanings of their actions, to be aware of their future mission. The abilities involved on the critical thinking processes are as many

opportunities not to make professional mistakes, but it is important to take into account the fact that we cannot consider the teachers responsible of things over which they do not have any power of decision..

When the students apply for the psycho-pedagogical module (initial teacher training curricula) they know nothing or almost nothing about the teaching career, so...we must offer them another moment to decide about it when they will have a set of *know and how* related with. So, they have to learn about each component of the status, prestige and professionalism of teaching.

We try to design a coherent strategy for our pedagogy classes (during four semesters) so, we select a set of RWCT techniques and we elaborate some dilemmas for the students debates and reflection activities. (examples of are offered in our previous articles). Our hypothesis were that using the *dilemma* (like a learning method, after the model of G Lind, 2004) and the *Critical Thinking learning model*, in order to develop the reflective capability, we can help students teachers in their professional future decisions.

Without statistical details we can say only that this research contributes to both educational theory and practice. Student-teachers may experience a unique form of vulnerability to reform-related stressors. In many cases, student-teachers are expected to implement “new” or “innovative” teaching systems that they did not experience as learners and were not prepared for in their university course work. In essence they are “teaching-blind” having neither personal experience nor professional preparation for the role they are expected to undertake. From a theoretical perspective, we tried to bring together for study two critical constructs that directly influence the lives of the (potential) teachers: reflection capacity and moral component of professionalism and efficacy.

Conclusions

Unfortunately, in our initial activities – finding out the pre-requisites of our student-teachers -, the main findings were almost “grey areas”: not enough prepare in working with pedagogical texts; they know nothing or almost nothing about teaching profession; they don’t read enough, they don’t write enough, meaning that they are not reflective in their works. In the end of these very reflective and “aloud thinking” experimental activities almost all of them (324 student teachers, studying mathematics, physical education and psychology, ages between 20-32) became much more realistic about their future career. Instead conclusions we can develop some recommendations for the Centers which are responsible for the initial teacher training : an interview at the beginning – an entrance exam for the students that wants to become teachers; some changes for the curricula of the pre-service Teacher Training; to extend the Teacher training departments educational offer; an extension of the practicum activities (four semesters of real live teaching); a practical graduated exam for Teacher Certificate (live teaching; peer evaluations, self evaluation essays, final portofolio...); increasing the universities responsibility for the beginner teachers professional development (mentorship...). Our main/strongest recommendation is to integrate into the main disciplines of the Teacher Training University Department Curricula a Teacher Professional Ethics course. We think that such a course is very important to developing the commitment for the teacher profession.

The capacities that are subsumed to the analytical thinking are not just the ways that could be used for accusing an educator in case of any mistakes, but as many opportunities not to make mistakes in the professional evolution, ...after deciding to assume the “courage to educate” (Federico Savater).

How can we build the commitment to the profession if we invoke, in our educational activities, only the reproductive and executive dimension? As if we could educate convictions without determining the affective and volitional mobiles... As if we can develop the professional educator’s conduct without giving the instruments that make this kind of conduct operational... As if this profession (like any other occupation) could restrict itself only to mechanical actions learnt during attending Initial Teacher Training Curricula.

The University of Iowa, S.U.A., is one of the first American universities that “borrowed the custom” of the English universities that consist in elaborating a special educational contract like an assuming contract that concerns the training as a professional teacher. Below are some fragments from this Oath, took by a “freshmen” (1st year student) and his study colleagues, at the very beginning of the Teacher Training Courses, which can be a generous example for instituting this method of making responsible to the Romanian student teachers, too:

Today I begin the process of becoming an educator. Today I make the first step in formation, for the profession that takes care of the living foundation that the next generations rise on their lives.

This way, I declare and dedicate to the teaching process, because I am aware that without this the followers will be weaker concerning the vision and power to build in the positive way their lives.

I dedicate myself to cultivate my own character, because I know that humanity cannot develop without courage, compassion or tolerance, honesty and trust.

I dedicate myself to revolutionizing my own learning capacity and cultivating my own character, because I know that I must shape in my life this ideals that I agreed to build in others.

Being aware of this huge responsibility, I dedicate and commit myself with my whole being.

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Annexes

A. Examples of dilemmas which were used during the third semester:

Dilemma # 1 – stress resistance

At the 9th lecture of the 1st semester over 65 second year students were present. The teacher begins by reviewing sets of information gained during the previous meeting. He asks a few spot-check questions. In the middle of the debate, the loud ring of a cell phone which has not been turned off is heard, although even since the first meeting the teacher and students settled the rule of switching them off during lectures. A weak drowsy apology is heard from the right part of the room. The teacher suddenly changes his attitude, which had been rather open and good-humored up to that point, and makes towards the teacher's desk. He gathers his work materials and leaves the amphitheatre without the slightest remark...

To what extent do you agree with the teacher's behavioral response?

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4

What arguments do you find in the text in favor of the teacher's behavior?

How would you have reacted if you had been in the teacher's place?

Give reasons!

To what extent do you agree with the following possible reactions of the teacher?

- He tells the student to give him the phone and tramples on it.
- He confiscates the phone without giving the student the right to argument.
- The student with the phone being the Dean's son, the teacher pretends he doesn't hear the phone ringing.
- Although obviously disturbed, he does not react.
- He makes a joke hurrying towards his own phone
- Goes to the student and scolds him rather hazily

Dilemma # 3 – distributive justness

A common class at a secondary-school, grades V-VIII, in the town.....The history teacher brought the results of the test given in the previous class. The students, impatient, ask if the grades will be marked in the register and, thus, if they will be taken into account for the final grade. The teacher confirms and reads out of an evaluation notebook the grade each student obtained. Next, the papers are distributed to each student in order to analyze and debate over them for possible misunderstandings regarding the evaluation. The students ask questions, they receive explanations... However, when marking the grades in the register, the students have a surprise: 'Your form master asked me to add an extra point to the grade to the girls who helped with the cleaning last Saturday, before Parents' Meeting...Err! I have the list with their names right here. And I have... decided to add an extra point to those who helped today to bring in fire wood for the school's stoves... it is thanks to them that we can have classes in good, warm conditions...All right! Now let's mark all the grades in the register! '

B. In the end of the 4th semester we used three dilemmas (identical with the dilemmas which were used during the academic activities) for the process of the level of reflective capability evaluation, but these problem solving activity has another tasks for students. For example:

Dilemma # 1

At the 9th lecture of the 1st semester over 65 second year students were present. The teacher begins by reviewing sets of information gained during the previous meeting. He asks a few spot-check questions. In the middle of the debate, the loud ring of a cell phone which has not been turned off is heard, although even since the first meeting the teacher and students settled the rule of switching them off during lectures. A weak drowsy apology is heard from the right part of the room. The teacher suddenly changes his attitude, which had been rather open and good-humored up to that point, and makes towards the teacher's desk. He gathers his work materials and leaves the amphitheatre without the slightest remark...

How do you feel about the teacher's decision? Was it right or wrong? Please sign, on the scale below, the number that is closest to your opinion.

The teacher's decision was:

Wrong -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 Right

How easy or difficult was it for you to decide about the teacher's choice?

Very easy 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5 +6 Very difficult

What are the reasons for your opinion concerning the teacher's decision? Write in the following lines all the reasons that come to your mind and emphasize those which are important to you:

C. Another part of the formative assessment process – 4th semester - was an essay about the main dilemma of the student teachers - *To be or not to be a teacher in Romanian educational system?*

Student Teachers' Essays – sample

Contradictions of an option to a future career – Being a teacher? Yes/No

(made by S. L., second year student-teacher, mathematics)

Who still wants nowadays to become a teacher?

An obsolete profession

1. To correct others for an entire lifetime?!
2. I will be a needy man.
3. To fight ignorance...

And yet, the love for humans...

1. My ever young spirit
2. I would re-build thinking
3. The teacher of future teachers

The choice is all yours

Who still wants nowadays to become a teacher?!

Being a teacher today does not seem problematical for me. But, being a teacher for the rest of your life – *that* is a challenge for any young adult who lives in the beginning of the third millennium. A brief review of this profession's history brings to my mind's eye an enormous range of school characters, people who committed huge efforts and sacrifices to teaching, who planted fruitful seeds, took great care of the young plants and grafted the fragile stems so that over years, often over many years, they offer the fruit of brilliant minds and eminent people. The previous centuries stand as true testimony that the ideal of personalities being trained is that of "homo universalis", which the Medieval Age brought forth and towards which, throughout hundreds of years, the hopes of the parents and the contemporaries concerning their children took way.

But the age of sentimental ideals has long faded and the pragmatism of the last century enforced a rough impact over the educational, professional and generally human ideal. People have this propensity towards liking and talking about the obvious economical/financial, political, informational, scientific globalization and the impact of the new concept of "global village" tends to bring a new influence, even if a small one, to the other fields of human activity, such as: culture, the educational system, religion etc.

Being a teacher in a society of consumption situated in a stage of amazing changes, with value and criteria crises, and committing yourself to an innocent profession that underlines work with every individual in building or re-building the personality - this is a risky challenge of the 21st century.

"Become anything but a teacher," decidedly advised me one of my high school teachers, whom I respected, admired and nearly worshiped.

"Be a teacher," my head teacher told me as I was searching for an appropriate choice for my university studies. "Don't you dare languish with just a lousy teacher position," my uncle, a successful businessman, cautioned me and was approved by my not so cultured cousin. "You have a lot of skills to becoming a good teacher," my psycho-pedagogical teacher predicted during a career counseling course.

You can see, thus, how puzzling the choice or definite refusal of this ancient profession is – it used to be an illustrious profession; today, however, it is despised and, nevertheless, crucial in any socio-political-economical context: **the career of a teacher**.

Clearing out this issue becomes essential, and giving the necessary arguments can be more than challenging. So...

An obsolete profession

I am against the option of becoming and remaining a teacher my entire life. For a student, the choice of the future career seems to be made since finding out the success of the admission exam to a certain college. There are a lot of those who believe – and they are entitled to do so – that once they have chosen this path, nothing and no one can stand in their way. The semesters and years pass, the student begins to get in touch with the world and with life; hope or rebellion, acceptance or refusal, the lack of perspective and of fulfillment find their place into the heart of the student; he observes the ones around him, compares, re-evaluates himself from his previous evolution viewpoint and, as a result... he changes his decisions, goals, destiny.

To correct others for an entire lifetime?! It is not convenient any longer for a teenager of today's wild society and especially for a 30-40 year-long professional career, to choose to be a teacher. To study, prepare daily, hour by hour, not to lose track of the latest and most precise scientific dates, figures, notions, definitions and experiments? That would be beyond my powers, I would feel frustrated as compared to thinking of other professions in which life unwinds at its utmost capacity, and not in small slices, as I would think it with my 25-30 students whom I will recite already obsolete "news" to. I doubt I would be able to "cope" as a secondary school, high school or even university teacher my whole life, nor could I face the sometimes aggressive dynamism of the future generations. They will come up with new ideas, different life conceptions, they will invent new technologies of learning so that they are freed of all additional stress, of memorizing the information and of the unproductive use of the assimilated notions. How can I set as a goal for the rest of my professionally active life to "train" new generations of students that do not desire, or even refuse to be "trained" by a teacher standing at his desk before them, and who, despite his will, is nevertheless time, space and conscience limited? I would be needed to begin my class "when the bell rings", to act as a "robot with a human face" while passing on from one class to another, to pretend to be all-knowing, although my students can sometimes gather more information than myself. I would need a very flexible mind, a positive attitude and tenacity as my basic character trait – but unfortunately, I find all these in my personality as I grow up, gain shape and build myself.

I will be a needy man. I do not see this profession of much present interest and neither of perspective, since I will lack money. As a man, the leader of a family, intellectual and citizen of Europe, I will feel frustrated that what I earn does not come up to the level of my hard work and my future family goals. I will be the target of my colleagues', neighbours', relatives', even some of my gradulators' (former students) irony for my modest condition, which I will surely be needed to put up with. My wife and children will criticize me for the daily financial shortcomings. Will I be able to resist until retirement with the thought that I will be serving the community that pays me? It is troublesome to overtake all these issues to which with difficulty only some people can find a solution.

To fight ignorance... I do not think that my intellectual, character, and volitional structure will allow me to face throughout my entire lifetime the ignorance of others, their lack of interest towards study and hard work, towards books, reading and science in general. My own ignorance in the fields that will inevitably revolutionize as time passes will be enough. How could I ignore the pertness of some students, the lack of respect of others? That would lead to discriminating some students while wrongly judging others, to giving up life principles inherited from parents and grandparents and which I accept to adapt, but in no way to deny.

These are only a few arguments to the matter and they need deeper reflection and clearing up inside my own conscience so that I do not come to choose teaching as a career.

And yet, the love for humans...

With the same frankness that is so specific to us, young adults now and still teenagers yesterday, I must also give arguments PRO becoming a teacher, so, there they are...

My ever young spirit. In my soul, I will say “YES” to a teaching career because it is worth it to keep your spirit young and alive among children. To support them, to give them a word of advice, to sometimes replace their parents in shaping a certain personality trait, by sharing with them notions, knowledge, habits, skills and abilities of understanding the world and the phenomena that take place in a society of continual changes. I will take my students, either younger or older, on trips inside our country and through Europe; they will be like my own children, I will dedicate myself passionately to this profession, out of a highly civic sense of duty, based on the simple axiom: others “troubled themselves” with me as well, and now I am grateful to them for offering me the tools to understanding the world and sciences. For all these reasons, I consider that teachers should prevail in the future decades as well. And men, too, should embrace this noble profession because there is and always will be a great need of human models.

I would re-build thinking. I will choose, even if only for a period of my life, to be a modern teacher because I think I have the skills to build and re-build children’s thinking, I trust myself to be able to master those psycho-pedagogical persuasive techniques which will help me create new thinking structures, the assimilation of notions in science, technique and even the culture of the future.

I would love to know that I did not die in the minds and lives of some of my former students, but that I was remembered and not with the dull idea that “he was one of my teachers”, but to be able to rejoice that I had really done something for them and improved something in their lives.

I cannot help wondering: is it possible that my own part in this life could bring some good change to the progress of humans? Isn’t there a brilliant person at every desk in the classroom? Won’t I have the duty, then, to discover and help him/her grow by bringing to light his/her qualities and aptitudes?

The teacher of future teachers. I could also say “YES” to teaching as a career because I would feel prepared to face the challenges of the future. No matter how technological and full of information the society of the future – which I will fit very ill in - will be, I hope that youngsters will still need “a skilled gardener” to take care of them, and to point out the implicit value of their biological treasures. I would be proud that I discovered them and encouraged them to continue their education and take it seriously, just as the teachers of the great Romanian writers, Creanga, Sadoveanu, Preda, did when telling and insisting that their parents let them invest in education. The times changed a lot and just to look back at your own teachers remains a plain sentimental practice. One can be pragmatic within the school, as a teacher who should not only follow the “apostolate” of Mr. Trandafir. What is required, and I could meet such challenging conditions, is that another category of teachers is created, according to our times, people that can adapt to the modern techniques of working with students, and focus the didactic methods on the student and to make the student a partner in the process of learning and education; I will guide my students towards re/discovering already known truths that can be the basis of future research and knowledge; I will advise them to be open-minded and enhance the new, the knowledge and discoveries.

I would not withdraw if I was to meet opposition, hostility and indifference, but I would pull myself together in order to determine my students to create their own creed in life, a wide image of the societies of the future.

The choice is all yours

To those who, like myself, might ask themselves whether to become a teacher or not, I would not give a very clear answer, with positive or negative aspects. I would suggest them in turn to try find **PRO** and **CON** arguments and then decide for themselves. Because in a free world, making a decision is one of every individual's liberties.

Biographies

Mirela Abrudan

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Mirela Abrudan studies Journalism in the German language at the Babes-Bolyai University. She is a Ph.D. candidate writing her thesis in the field of crisis PR. She works as an assistant at the Department of Communication and Public Relations of The Faculty for Political, Administrative and Communication Science of the Babes-Bolyai University. She held seminars at the University for Applied Sciences Mittweida, Germany.

→ *Teaching Communication Science between Theory and Good Practice Development*

Delia Cristina Balaban

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Delia Cristina Balaban Ph.D. studied philosophy at the Babes-Bolyai University. She has an MA in European Studies at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt /Oder, Germany in 2002. Her Ph.D. thesis with the title On infotainment. Information and public opinion making by the Romanian Television received magna cum laude at the same German university. She made postdoctoral research at the Ludwig Maximilian University Munich. Delia Cristina Balaban is an associated professor at the Department of Communication and Public Relations of The Faculty for Political, Administrative and Communication Science of the Babes-Bolyai University and is leading the Media Center of this institution. She is responsible for the development of the Master Program for Advertising and for the studies in German language. She held courses at the University for Applied Sciences in Hannover and Mittweida, Germany.

→ *Teaching Communication Science between Theory and Good Practice Development*

Cristina Bojan

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Cristina Bojan is a PhD student in Philosophy of Education. The topic of her PhD is Conceptualisation of Education; the European Dimension in Higher Education. She is interested in philosophy of education, education policy, and history of ideas. She has held scholarships at: Paris Lodron University Salzburg, Leipzig University, Westfälische Wilhelms University Münster, and completed the 2005 International Parliamentary Internship Program, organised by the Deutscher Bundestag (Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany) in cooperation with Freie Universität Berlin, the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, the Technische Universität Berlin and Westfälische Wilhelms University Münster. She has published several articles in the field of higher education (Bologna process, Lisbon strategy, etc.), philosophy, and history of idea. She is also co-organiser of an international multi-year cultural project (Türen auf, www.tuerenauf.ch, 2004–to present).

→ *Quality Assurance within the Bologna Process Framework – The Babeş-Bolyai University*

Peter ForbesConsultant, UK Council for Industry and Higher Education
Employability Works, British Council

Peter runs Employability Works which focuses on learning and skills development projects involving higher education. Work includes 52 student employability profiles for publication by the UK Higher Education Academy and the Council for Industry and Higher Education, and a skills guide for academics at the University of Westminster. His experience includes graduate recruitment and development for Fujitsu and ICL as well as human resource management in Rolls-Royce and Pilkington. Peter is a member of the policy forum of the Council for Industry and Higher Education and has been Vice President of the Association of Graduate Recruiters.

→ *Higher Education that Matters – an introduction*

Rodica Ianole

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Rodica Ianole is teaching assistant at the Faculty of Social and Administrative Sciences, "Nicolae Titulescu" University and reviewer at the Quality Assurance Department, University of Bucharest. She has graduated from Business and Administration Faculty, University of Bucharest, with a major in Business Administration. She is master student in Quantitative Economics and Cybernetics, The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, and Human Resources Management, University of Bucharest. Also, she is an internal auditor in quality management.

→ *Quality Assurance and Employability. Lessons from the University of Bucharest*

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Doctor's degree training program within the Economic Studies Academy in Bucharest (1993-1996); Doctor's degree training programme within "Dunarea de Jos" University in Galati (1992-1994); specializing course in Economic Statistics within the National Statistics Commission Bucharest (1986-1987); computer training course (1988); specializing course entrance examination in micro and macroeconomics at Lublin University, Poland (1994); doctor in Economics of the Economic Studies Academy Bucharest (1997), visiting professor at Flensburg University (Germany, 2007). Founding member of the General Association of the Economists in Romania; founding member of the Romanian Regional Science Association; member of the European Regional Science Association-ERSA, member of the European Regional Science International, Vice-President of the Romanian Regional Science Association, member of the Greek Union in Romania, the Community of Braila. Books published: 41 titles at national and regional publishing-houses; Papers published at the local and national symposia: 100; Projects for university use: 5; Papers published in local and central magazines: 36; Papers published at international conferences: 67; Papers published in university annals: 24; Grants of scientific research: 10 Honours, Prizes, Awards, Who's Who Listings: Who's Who in Romania-2002, The Contemporary Who's Who, SUA, 2003, Chevalier Honouree Prize for Teaching in Romania-2004, Member of the Research Board of Advisors, American Biographical Institute, U.S.A., 2005, Honour Act of C.E.C.C.A.R.-2005.

→ *Lifelong Learning Policies, Creative Industries and Regional Development Case Study: Romanian South-East Region, Galati County*

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Associate University Professor, Ph. D. Răducan Oprea. From 1996- 2000- doctor degree training programme „ Labour Law” at the Faculty of Law from Bucharest University; From 1999- till present- professor at „Dunărea de Jos” University, Galati- The Faculty of Law. In 2006- elected dean at the Faculty of Law
Expert liquidator within the National Union of Insolvency Experts from Romania
Arbitrator in Arbitration Court within the Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Galati since 1997. Lector at the professional training programme of the accounts and expert accounts from Romania- 2004. Books published: 10 titles at national and regional publishing-houses; Papers published at the national and international symposia: 27. Projects for university use: 2. Papers published in local and central magazines. Papers published at international conferences: 7 Papers published in university annals: 2

→ *Lifelong Learning Policies, Creative Industries and Regional Development Case Study: Romanian South-East Region, Galati County*

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Alina Palanici works as a psychologist with the Centre for Professional Advice, Career Counselling and Placement (CIPO) at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi

CIPO is a centre for career counselling and orientation that supports students and graduates from “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University to navigate on the labour market. As a psychologist at CIPO I am responsible for career counselling the students, also helping them to develop new skills requested by the labour market through workshops and individual sessions. I am involved in the process of placing the students at companies interested in our services, guiding them through the system of evaluation and presentation (CV, letter of motivation, developing the career plan).

→ *Developing Employability Skills among Students through Practice and Workshops*

Sonia Pavlenko

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Sonia Pavlenko is a PhD student in Philosophy of Higher Education, with an interest in higher education reform in Romania. She completed in June 2007 a 9-months' Chevening Scholarship at University of Oxford, England, where she furthered her studies and research in the field of higher education; she has also studied at Paris Lodron University in Salzburg. She got involved with higher education reform from the students' perspective by being active in student associations such as AEGEE and taking an active part in shaping the students' vision in what European higher education is concerned (e.g. she was organizer for European Education Campaign's conference in Cluj-Napoca, organizer for World Youth Summit on Globalisation in Brussels – one of the tracks of the Summit was Education - , etc.). She has taken part in many international conferences and summer schools that dealt with the topic of higher education in its various aspects.

→ *Quality Assurance within the Bologna Process Framework – The Babeş-Bolyai University*

Elena Seghedin

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Lecturer on the Psychology and Educational Sciences Department, Al.I.Cuza University from Iasi, Romania. PhD in Social Sciences (Applied Ethics domain) with a Thesis on an interdisciplinary theme: The Professional Ethics of Teachers. The professional Ethics and the Teachers Training Trainer for Initial or Pre-service Education – preparing teachers on the domains of Psychology, Special Needs Education; and Kindergarten and Primary schools teachers. Trainer for in-service Teachers Education – interesting areas are: Active Learning, Experiential Learning, Mentorship for Young Teachers, Active Strategies for Non-formal Education, Theory and Practice of Learning centered on student, The Educational Partnership between school and community, school and families, Developing the students creativity during the core-curriculum; How we can make schools more attractive for students!

→ *Helping Students in their Decision about a Teaching Career*

Norman Sharp

OBE

Originally an academic economist, Norman Sharp is currently the Director of QAA Scotland in which role he has played a major part in the development and implementation of the Quality Enhancement Framework for Scottish Universities – a framework which binds quality assurance and enhancement closely together involving extensive student and international participation. The QEF attracts significant international interest and Norman has been invited to contribute to developments in Wales, England and Northern Ireland as well as internationally.

Norman has a long-standing interest in widening participation in higher education, particularly for adults, which has led to his close involvement in the development of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) – a flexible framework for all school, vocational, professional and university qualifications in Scotland. In 2007, Norman was appointed a founding Director of the SCQF Partnership Company. Norman was also a founding Director of the Clinical Standards Board for Scotland, subsequently joining, and ultimately Chairing, the Board responsible for quality and standards in the NHS in Scotland, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland.

Norman has had extensive international involvement in quality matters including work in South Africa, Ireland, Namibia, Luxembourg, Serbia, Albania and Romania. He has undertaken a range of assignments on behalf of the Council of Europe to support countries involved in the Bologna process. In 2006, Norman was elected to the Board of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), and in 2007 was appointed to the Board of the Higher Education Training and Awards Council (HETAC) of Ireland. He is a member of the International Advisory Board for the Journal, *Quality in Higher Education*.

Norman was awarded the OBE for services to higher education in the 2006 Queen's New Year's Honours List.

→ *Quality Cultures and Excellence in Universities*

Sorin-George Toma

University of Bucharest

Sorin-George Toma is currently teaching Entrepreneurship and Business with the Faculty of Administration and Business, University of Bucharest. Also, he is in charge with the Quality assurance Department within the University of Bucharest. Professor Toma got a Ph. D. in Economics (2001) with the Academy of Economic Studies Bucharest and is working for his second thesis in Sociology with the University of Bucharest. He is Master of Business Training with the Carl Duisberg Foundation Koln. He graduated from the Naval Academy, Faculty of Electromechanics (1984), the Academy of Economic Studies, Faculty of Commerce-Marketing (1995), and the University of Bucharest, faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance (2000).

→ *Quality Assurance and Employability. Lessons from the University of Bucharest*

Eunicia Trif

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Eunicia Trif is a PhD student in Philosophy of Higher Education. Her main topic of research is the concept of governance and the way it is applied in the university. Starting from 2003 she is the secretary of the Curriculum Office, member of the managing team of the Centre for Project Management, as well as secretary of the Academic Council, all bodies of the Babeş-Bolyai University. She has edited four books and written one herself in the field of higher education (reform, implementation of Bologna process, quality and competitiveness, governance) and she has taken part in many national and international conferences in the field.

→ *Quality Assurance within the Bologna Process Framework – The Babeş-Bolyai University*

Sorin Eugen Zaharia

Head of the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment

Mr. Sorin Eugen Zaharia has been working within the Romanian Ministry of Education since 2000 and from 2005 has been Head of ACPART; in this capacity he was involved in the design and management of various EU funded projects regarding continuing vocational education and professional reconversion. He holds a PhD (Fluid Mechanics, Aerodynamics and Aircraft Engineering) from the Polytechnics University of Bucharest and he is finalizing a second doctorate in Higher Education Management at the University of Rouen (France). During his academic career (started in 1982) he held various positions: assistant, lecturer, associate professor, and finally PhD professor at the Polytechnics University of Bucharest and the National School of Administrative and Political Studies.

→ *Stimulating Cooperation between Universities and Employers with a Particular Focus on Graduate Employability*