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REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

Academic Excellence Workshop

**The Importance of Non-Formal Education
and the Role of NGOs in its Promotion**

Alina-Gabriela Burlacu¹

Abstract: Non-formal education it is still a vague concept in our country but has begun to become more and more important especially after Romania's accession to the European Union. Although its development has taken small steps until now, we already see its importance not as a substitute but as a supplementary segment of formal education. The labor market today is more and more demandable, the competition between candidates is acerbic and the need for proving specific skills and competencies has gain a great importance. We cannot neglect the benefits and the added-value that non-formal activities can bring to the personal and professional development neither its contribution to the under-privileged groups. The NGOs remain the main providers of non-formal education and they should raise the awareness towards this educational component.

Keywords: intercultural dialogue; life-learning; skills; competences

Motto: "Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten"

B.F. Skinner

1. Introduction

Non-formal education is a concept very-well known and promoted in Western European countries and has known a real boom over the past few decades. The reason why it has been given so much attention to this segment of the education is that it has been acknowledged that formal education cannot supply anymore what young people need for their personal and professional development. Although we still witness a monopoly of formal education institutions, non-formal education contributes more and more to the life-learning process and to the development of human capital. Non-formal education first appeared as a concept in the late 80's when it has been noticed and agreed that formal education by itself cannot lead to the development of the society and cannot respond to learning needs and requirements of the labour market.

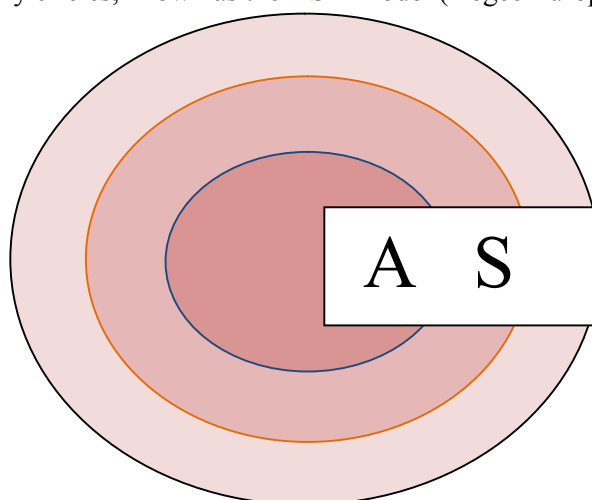
In Romania it is still acknowledged like an abstract concept with few areas of applicability in comparison to formal education programs and methods. The main question remains whether the curricula provided by the schools it is enough in order to prepare students for labor market and help them correspond to its demands. The skills and competencies acquired through non-formal education programs can make the difference between thousands of law students, for example that finish their studies every year. The Romanian educational system should not regard non-formal education as being less important than academic education but invest in it as a supplementary way for students to acquire personal and professional performances.

¹ Centre for Academic Excellence, Bucharest, Romania, Corresponding author: gabriela.burlacu@yahoo.com.

2. Formal, Informal and Non-Formal Education. Features

The impact and the added-value of non-formal education in nowadays societies has been highlighted by institutions like UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Commission that have tried to create an inventory of features, principles, methods, and activities that run in the sphere on this concept. For example, UNESCO (1997) defines it in comparison with formal education pointing that informal education may take place both within and outside educational institutions and...depending on country context it may cover educational programs to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life-skills, work-skills and general culture. The Council of Europe (1999) also defines non-formal education in correlation with the traditional forms of education mentioning that it has to be placed outside but supplementary to the formal education curriculum ...and it is designed to improve the range of skills and competencies of young people. As for the European Union, non-formal education as a method of life-long learning is essential taking into consideration the need for active citizenship and improving employability (European Commission, 2001).

In comparison to formal education, non-formal education is neither chronological, hierarchical or addressed to a certain segment of the population. The interaction between the two concepts is seen as three concentrically circles, known as the ASK Model (Aegea Europe, 2008).



These are the three pillars of education: attitude, skills and knowledge. While academic education focuses on the exterior component, knowledge non-formal comprises the second two and integrates the information you already have in order to discover what you can do with them for your personal and professional development. The pattern also illustrates the fact that one circle of knowledge is not enough for the development of students and cannot prepare them for living in a community and obtaining a job. In order to achieve these objectives, learning has to comprise a cognitive dimension, a social dimension and a practical one.

Non-formal and formal education should be linked in order to achieve the best educational results for the youth. A first attempt to create a bridge between this two was made by the Council of Europe that published in 1995 the Education Pack "All different – All equal". In the Communication on Lifelong Learning: formal, non-formal and informal learning published by the European Commission (2001) the three types of education are being differentiate as it follows:

Formal education	Informal education	Non-formal education
Structured and planned Intentional from the learner's perspective Leads to certification	Not structured Non-intentional Does not lead to certification	Structured Intentional from the learner's perspective Typically doesn't lead to certification

The main feature of non-formal education is linked to the development and the diversification of the educational dimensions over the past few years. The free-access provided by this form of education is a great opportunity for the children whose families don't have enough possibilities to keep in school. Also it reaches some under-privileged categories of young people such those living in the countryside, those abandoned and those with physical or mental handicap. Also, the programs provided are based on the active participation of those involved and it responds to certain needs and objectives established on a common ground with all the participants. Real life experiences are being reproduced so that you learn by doing not only by listening without knowing how to put something that you've learn in a context.

3. Principles and Characteristics

We can distinguish two levels when we consider the results of non-formal education activities: the personal level and the social one. At the personal level we can identify results as self-esteem, self-awareness, involvement in community life, becoming more responsible toward yourself and others, more creative, more motivated. On the social level, the impact is also major and we can mention for example social inclusion, active citizenship, communication skills, networking, tolerance, etc.

We can also experience the "learn to learn" concept that encourages active studying through participation in role plays, games and simulations. You can easily reproduce situations that involve teamwork, language skills, public speaking skills or leadership and these soft skills are not yet offered the necessary importance by the curricula thought in Romanian schools today.

If we take a look over one of the European Union mottos we can see the importance shown to the **unity in diversity**, a Pan-European identity that can be achieved through intercultural learning, a major component of non-formal education. The mobility offered by youth projects such as Youth in Action, raises the awareness of young people in Europe about cultural diversity, encourages tolerance towards participants from other cultures and creates a feeling of belonging that prevents racism and xenophobia. Thus, young people can explore new countries, create relationships with people their age from all over the world and in the end this feeling of empathy and tolerance transforms them in enthusiastic promoters of human rights.

According to the European Commission and the Council of Europe (2004), the principles and characteristics of non-formal education are: voluntary and self-organised character of learning,, intrinsic motivation of participants, close link to young people's interests and aspirations, participative and learner-centred approach, supportive learning environment.

The recognition of the importance and impact of non-formal education is made by the Council of Europe through the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field. In this document it is mentioned that both formal and non-formal types of education enable young people to acquire additional knowledge, skills and competences and contribute to their personal development, social inclusion and active citizenship, thereby improving their employment prospects (Council of the European Union, 2006).

4. Importance for Students Access to Labor Market

If we take a look to recent statistics we notice that, the youth unemployment rate in the EU 27 was around twice as high as the rate for the total population throughout the last decade and youth rates are generally much higher than unemployment rates for all ages (EUROSTAT, 2012). These numbers are highly concerning and give a signal of alarm concerning the lack of correlation between the education provided by formal education institutions and the requirement of the labor market. This explains in

fact the appearance of non-formal education programs as a result of the fact that the output of school classes is incompatible with the requirements of the employers.

In almost any job advertisement we see requirements like specific skills and competencies in addition to a certain academic background. In this case, NGOs have an important role in providing special programs and activities that develop the skills required and create equal opportunities for everyone interested in some kind of job. A student's CV with extra-curricular activities it has become more attractive to an employer that searches for employees with team spirit, great communication skills, respectful and self-determined to get their job done and reach their goals. Students participating in non-formal education programs can increase their chances to get their dream job and extending their connections and their list of potential employers by participating at different workshops, conferences, internships, traineeships. It has been proven that participating in programs like that and acquiring leadership competences, communication skills, organizational and social competences makes students more prepared for the professional life, more engaged citizens (as they) follow democratic and organizational value and practices (Atanasiu&Olteanu, 2010).

5. Methods and Activities

According to the Council of Europe Symposium on NFE Report, appeared in 2001, there are four kinds of methods involved by non-formal education activities: communication – based methods, activity-based methods, socially-focused methods and self-directed methods. The first type focuses on interaction between participants, intercultural dialogue, conflict resolution, etc. The second one is based on experiments, simulation activities or different role-play while socially-focused methods imply teamwork, networking, etc. The self-directed methods it is focused on the participant that tries to become more involved in its activities, more responsible, discover his professional and personal objectives or develop his analytical thinking and creativity.

There is a wide range of activities implied by non-formal education, most of them recreating real life experiences. Every game or activity is supposed to develop a certain skill or transmit a certain message. For example, you can develop collaboration activities that are based especially on group interaction, leadership and teamwork games that involve coordinating a team, offering feedback, giving or receiving instructions, problem solving situations. In order to keep the cohesion of the group and encourage active participation we can propose ice-breaking and energizing games.

6. Future Development. The Role of NGOs in its Future Development

Nowadays, NGOs are the main providers of non-formal education through their project and programs. This role implies the promotion of this kind of activities among a wide number of young people and raising awareness on the impact and importance of non-formal education in schools, universities, public institutions and business sector. They also should encourage lobby activities in order to incorporate non-formal education methodologies into the traditional curricula provided by formal education institutions. On the other side it is important for NGOs to make their activities accessible and attractive to all sorts of target groups in order to cover a wide area of domains.

NGOs should ensure the promotion of non-formal education activities and methods through the media and all the communication channels available such as socialization groups, forums, etc.

The Centre for Academic Excellence as a provider of non-formal education activities aims at developing human capital and strengthens personal and professional development of students outside the programs provided by Romanian universities. Thus, we try to facilitate access to relevant information for youth (scholarships, internships and jobs), to mobilize public and private resources in order to implement youth oriented programs and to offer professional guidance. The Centre has established numerous partnerships with institutions and organization with similar principles and reunites elite academia that share common values with respect to the necessity of developing

innovative methods in order to further improve academic progress, both by means of practice and research. Thus, we are creating a link between formal education as provided by the universities and non-formal activities that should be regarded as complementary not opposite types of education.

7. Conclusion

In the society of knowledge we cannot ignore the role of non-formal education in the development of persons and societies. We must create bridges between the traditional methods of education and non-formal ones in order to provide young people all the skills and competences required for them to integrate in the labor market. NGOs should develop projects and programs aimed at obtaining recognition and provide certification for non-formal education activities. The opportunities offered by the “European mobility” should be exploited in order for the next generation to become more and more aware of the democratic values, active citizenship, tolerance and intercultural dialogue.

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Diploma Supplement - Instrument of the Quality Assurance Process in the Romanian Higher Education?

Mădălina Cocoșatu¹

Abstract: The quality of education, graduate's performances and the level of abilities and skills acquired during their studies are reflected in the Diploma Supplement, crucial tool in ensuring quality in higher education and in university's activity centering on the student. The Diploma Supplement is a response to challenges, aiding mobility and access to lifelong learning opportunities. It promotes transparency in higher education and fair and informed judgements about qualifications. National higher education institutions produce the supplement according to a template jointly developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. The purposes of this paper are to analyze the importance of universities' classification realized for the first time in Romania and the impact that it has on student, because I consider that the student is very important for developing universities' structure and activities.

Keywords: education; quality assurance; classification of universities; diploma supplement

1. Introduction

The need for institutionalizing quality in higher education in Romania was generated by the period of expansion of the university educational offers, the number of higher education organizations multiplying from 46 in 1989 to 63 in 1993 and then to 126 in 2000. In year 2011, the number of universities accredited in the national education system is of 90 state and private universities.

Quality assurance and quality management in education represent an intervention field which requires both the development and the implementation of internal assessment, management and activity quality assurance systems and procedures, and the professionalization of the managerial activities at the level of the higher education institutions. Still, we must not forget the fact that the entire activity of a university should be focused on the students.

In Romania, quality assurance is a process regulated by law. Law no. 87/2006 for the approval of Government Expedite Ordinance no. 75/2005 institutes quality assurance as compulsory process for all suppliers of education, process which consists of an ensemble of actions, performed at the level of the organization providing the educational services or at the level of a study program, meant to increase the trust of the beneficiaries that the services offered fulfill certain standards stipulated by law.

¹ National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania, Address: 6 Povernei str., Sector 1, Bucharest, Romania, Tel.: +4021.318.08.97, fax: +4021.312.25.35, Corresponding author: madacosatu@yahoo.com.

2. The Relationship between the Classification of Universities and the Quality Assessment of the Educational Process

The quality of education in the Romanian higher education targets finalities anchored in European context, opening the way to the opportunities offered by the European knowledge society.

The hierarchization of the study programs and the classification of the universities represent a very good instrument for the dimensioning of the higher education institutions. According to the provisions of art.193, para. 4 of Law no. 1/2011, the universities in Romania are classified into 3 categories:

- a) universities focused on education;
- b) universities of education and scientific research or universities of education and artistic creation;
- c) universities of advanced research and education.

The hierarchization of the Romanian universities, performed by the Association of the European Universities in year 2011 on the basis of the self-evaluations of the rectors' offices help in the differentiated financing of the educational units, according to performance criteria, and to the setting of the schooling number.

Thus, only 12 universities are focused on education, 30 universities of education and scientific research or universities of education and artistic creation and 48 universities of advanced research and education.

As can be seen, more than half of the universities were unable to classify within the first two categories, being, in fact, in the target area of the merger indicated by the law of national education.

In fact, the universities focused on research received during the university year 2011-2012 a number of places in the master and doctorate programs higher by 20%, the universities of education and research have a schooling figure equal to that of last year, in what concerns the master program and diminished, in what concerns the doctorate, while the universities of education have assigned a diminished number of places for the master program, at the same time having a doctorate schooling number reduced to the minimum. More exactly, only 1.6% of the doctorate places financed this year by the state are assigned to universities from the third group.

In what concerns the hierarchization of the study programs, only a fifth of the programs offered on the educational market are part of category A, in category B there are 22.1% of the total of 1075 programs, while category C comprises approximately one quarter of the study programs. The lowest number of programs is found in group D – 12%, while group E comprises 20% of the programs.

In this period of economic crisis and of continuous transformation of the legislative framework regulating higher education, there is a serious external constraint, namely the chronic under-financing of the universities, which makes them rather careful regarding their own survival, dependant, first of all, on the students' entry flows, and less on the academic "quality" of students throughout their studies.

From the analysis of the indicators which are at the basis of the classification of the universities and of the hierarchization of the study programs, it is derived the fact that universities are self-focused, being concerned with their own financial survival, students being important to the highest extent from the quantitative viewpoint, as bearers of financial resources (whether they pay tuition or they benefit of state scholarships).

In the evaluation of the universities and in granting grades, such as accreditation and/or recognition as university with high degree of trust, the focus is placed on research, and not on the didactic process or on the students' performances. This is one of the reasons why universities are thus constrained to give higher importance to the research indicators, to the detriment of the students' current needs and concerns.

The promoters of the conception of the educational quality based on research performance claim that a solid performance in research is a necessary condition for good teaching. Still, the considerable volume of research performed on the relationship between the research performance of the teaching staff and the efficiency of teaching failed to indicate a positive correlation between these two spheres of the academic activity (Skolnik, 2010).

81% of the teaching staff interviewed considers that the main purpose of the university is teaching.

The external quality assessment methodology used by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)¹, comprises a number of 42 indicators, out of which 12 measure the *inputs* into the system (human, financial, material resources etc.), 20 measure the process of using the resources, and only 5 measure the actual results of the activity of a university.

3. The Role and Importance of the Diploma Supplement on the Labour Force Market

The representations on the quality of the higher education derive from the overall perception on its ability to prepare the graduates for the labour market. The students, the teaching staff and the employers appreciate not only the diploma obtained upon the graduation of the faculty, but also the competences the students gained during their university studies. Thus, the regulation and use of the Diploma Supplement is what supplies information on the competences gained by the graduate and the level of his/her knowledge.

Starting with the graduates of the university year 2005-2006, all higher education institutions accredited or authorized to function temporarily issue, free of charge, together with the diploma of bachelor degree, the Diploma Supplement².

Also, according to the Order of the Minister of Education, Research, Youth and Sports no. 4151/2010, is instituted the supplement to the master diploma. The supplement accompanies, compulsory, the master diploma and is issued free of charge by the accredited higher education institutions where the finalization exam of the master university studies took place.

The existence of a Diploma Supplement does not guarantee the status of an institution, its awards, or whether it is recognized as part of a national higher education system. However, it should contain information on these aspects.

The 48 European countries taking part in the Bologna Process have agreed that each graduate in their respective country should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically.

The Diploma Supplement is intended to facilitate the implementation of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Lisbon 1997.

The Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES and was adopted in 1999.

The Diploma Supplement is based on the following important founding principles that respect national and international academic autonomy:

1. Flexibility and adaptability to local needs;
2. National and international applicability;
3. Objectivity of information provided;
4. Recognition for academic and professional purposes.

¹ ARACIS is member with full rights in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is registered in the European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR)

² Order of the Minister of Education, Research, Youth and Sports no. 5289/2008

The bachelor degree diploma supplement is issued only after the passing of the study finalization exam and is a document attached to the bachelor degree diploma, which offers a standardized description of the type and level of the qualification, of the content, the institutional framework and of the study program graduated, as well as of the results obtained throughout the studies.

The Diploma Supplement must, thus, be drafted as to ensure the highest possible transparency for the knowledge and competences gained by the graduate of a university study cycle and to increase the chances of the graduates to insert of the national and international labour market. The Diploma Supplement comes both to the aid of the employer, and of the graduate.

The advantages offered by the Diploma Supplement for students are the following:

- Facilitates the comparison of the academic results and of the competences developed;
- Offers a description of the academic career and of the competences gained during the studies;
- Offers an objective description of the achievements and competences gained;
- Facilitates access to work or study opportunities abroad.

For higher education institutions, the benefits are:

- It facilitates academic and professional recognition, thus increasing the transparency of qualifications;
- It protects national/institutional autonomy while offering a common frame which is accepted all over Europe;
- It promotes informed judgements about qualifications that can be understood in another educational context;
- It raises the visibility of the institution abroad;
- It promotes the employability of their graduates at national and international level;
- It helps to save time since it provides the answers to a lot of recurrent questions put to administrative services in institutions about the content and portability of diplomas.

The supplement is designed as an aid to help recognition – it is not a CV or a substitute for the original qualification, and it does not guarantee recognition.

The Diploma Supplement is drafted bilingual (in the Romanian language and in a language of wide circulation), in order to ensure the transparence of the university training system in Romania and to facilitate the comparison of the titles, diplomas and certificates which can be obtained in the Romanian higher education.

Diploma Supplement comprises eight sections, all compulsory, the content being not allowed to be modified, and which must be filled out correctly, with the observance of the language indications especially mentioned in certain columns:

1. Information identifying the holder of the qualification.
2. Information regarding the defining of the qualification. This column comprises the name of the academic qualification obtained and, where the case, the title awarded, the study field and, respectively, the specialization / specializations graduated.
3. Information regarding the level of the academic qualification. This section presents those information which allow the correct classification of the qualification for bachelor degree or master degree, the official duration of the program (3 years or, as the case may be, 4 years for the bachelor degree; 5 or 6 years for the integrated bachelor and master degrees; 1 - 2 years for master programs etc.), as well as the criterion/criteria for being admitted to the study cycle.
4. Information regarding the study program and the results obtained. This section refers to the teaching form graduated, as well as to the requirements of the program, respectively the conditions for passing

the subjects, the minimum number of transferable credits necessary for graduation, conditions for enrollment to the final exam and any other details contributing to the better understanding of the diploma issued.

5. Information regarding the rights conferred by the qualification – indicate the value of the title obtained from the viewpoint of access to the continuation of the studies, and, where the case, the professional status of the graduate.

6. Additional information. This column comprises that information necessary when the holder performed part of his/her studies in another higher education institutions, in the country or abroad.

7. Certification of the Diploma Supplement.

8. Information regarding the national educational system – comprises a standardized description of the university studies, as well as a diagram, in order to facilitate the rapid understanding of the system structure, executed by the national information center ENIC-NARIC and agreed by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports and by the National Conference of Rectors in Romania.

From the comparative study of the Diploma Supplement within the same specialization belonging to different universities one can achieve a very objective and realistic correlation between the abilities, competences and number of credits awarded for each study subject.

4. Conclusions

By means of performing the classification of the universities and the hierarchization of the study programs, the students and candidates for faculty know how high-performance is the study program they are attending.

The periodical assessment of the study programs has a purpose both the awarding of grades, and, what should be more important, the adjustment and self-adjustment of the mechanisms, processes and instruments used at the level of the universities for the supply of quality services.

Also, both the candidate for a certain faculty and the employers can know, from studying the content of the Diploma Supplement, the type of skills and competences gained, which leads to a better integration on the labour force market.

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University Ranking, an Important Quality-Assurance Tool

Crina Rădulescu¹

Abstract: “University Rankings” - or “League Tables”, as they are known in the United Kingdom – have in a short period of time become an important feature in policy-making and practice in higher education. They are now a global phenomenon serving different purposes for different and varied audiences. Even if they are not necessarily universally appreciated, there is an increasing understanding that they have become the “third arm of the quality-assurance tool, together with accreditation, government regulation and licensing” and they are clearly here to stay. Indisputably university ranking has changed the way higher education institutions and their activities are being presented, perceived and assessed at the institutional, local, national and international levels. In our research we will try to answer some questions concerning this topic: is university ranking an inflexible tool, which favors traditional universities, with resources and experience?; what types of performance indicators, procedure and ethical considerations should be included in a conceptual framework or typology for higher education ranking systems?

Keywords: ranking; universities; quality; indicators

1. Introduction

Rankings and league tables of higher education institutions (HEIs) and programs are a global phenomenon. For the many purposes that HEIs serve, they have become a part of the framework of national accountability and quality assurance processes, allowing more nations to see the development of future rankings. Given this trend, producing rankings and league tables hold HEIs accountable for quality in their own data collection, methodology, and dissemination.

Ranking approaches and systems, like higher education institutions, vary extensively and are often tied to the unique higher education context of a nation. However, each system or approach tends to include a logical set of elements. Data is first either collected from existing data sources or original data is collected. Following this, the type and quantity of variables are selected from the information gathered. Next, the indicators are standardized and weighted from the selected variables. Finally, the calculations are conducted and comparisons are made so that institutions are sorted into “ranking order.” These rankings are often controversial and heavily debated in some local, national, and now increasingly international contexts. Whether or not colleges and universities agree with the various ranking systems and league tables findings is insignificant; ranking systems clearly are here to stay. When U.S. News and World Report began its annual ranking of “America’s Best Colleges” in 1983, publishers in other countries quickly followed with their own hierarchical measures of providing consumer information and institutional marketing while attempting to impact the quality of higher education.

The issue then becomes not whether ranking systems should exist, but rather how these higher education ranking systems might best be constructed. In other words; what types of performance indicators, procedures, and ethical considerations should be included in a conceptual framework or typology for higher education ranking systems?

¹ Jr. Lecturer, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania, Address: 6 Povernei str., Sector 1, Bucharest, Romania, Tel.:+4021.318.08.97, fax: +4021.312.25.35, Corresponding author: radulescucrina@gmail.com.

Current methodologies exhibit various strengths and weaknesses. Different rankings/league tables include indicators that students may overlook when thinking about an institution's quality. These rankings allow institutions to distinguish themselves based on who they are and what they do for consumers of higher education. Similarly, rankings methodologies indirectly impact quality in higher education because of their ability to promote competition.

Nevertheless, the inherent weaknesses of these rankings/league table methodologies often overshadow their strengths. Rankings/league tables' major flaw may be their continual changes in methodology. For instance, although institutions may not actually change in a significant way, ratings can fluctuate year-to-year because the weights assigned to different indicators have changed. Likewise, many rankings come up with a single number that summarizes the overall ranking of an academic institution. This practice makes it difficult for students to distinguish among institutions based on the characteristics they find most important. Additionally, much of the objective data used in the rankings/league tables is self-reported by the institutions. Continuing such a practice without external validation of data could lead to difficulties for rankings/league tables in the future as institutions place more stakes in rankings' ability to influence behavior.

“Rankings of higher education institutions should reflect the healthy balance between universal global values and local characteristics of cultures, societies, and educational systems. It should be reflected in ranking methodologies leading to international comparisons and stimulating the search of excellence in the international educational space.”(Kozmiński, 2002)

As the provision of higher educational opportunities becomes increasingly international, so the need for reliable means of international institutional comparison becomes more prescient. Where, at the turn of the century, no truly international ranking of higher education institutions existed, a number of organizations now compile and publish annual global university rankings. The two most frequently cited of these rankings are the Academic Ranking of World Universities, compiled by researchers from the Institute of Higher Education at Shanghai Jiaotong University, and the Times Higher University World Rankings, compiled by employees from the Times Higher Education Supplement, based in London.

These two rankings currently represent the most comprehensive efforts to compare universities across borders, although it should be noted that in specific fields such as business administration, top schools have been ranked by a number of different publications for some time. Business Week started the trend in 1988, and the Economist, Forbes, The Wall Street Journal, and The Financial Times have all since followed suit.

2. The Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)

The Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) was first published in June 2003 by the Center for World-Class Universities and the Institute of Higher Education of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China, and then updated on an annual basis.

The original goal of the Shanghai Jiaotong University (SJTU) ranking was to discern what kind of research gap existed between Chinese and 'world-class' universities, and was conducted as an academic exercise rather than an act of consumer advocacy for international consumption. In response to requests from international colleagues, SJTU researchers have since agreed to publish their findings on the World Wide Web.

More than 1000 universities are actually ranked by ARWU every year and the best 500 are published on the web.

Although the initial purpose of ARWU was to find the global standing of Chinese top universities, it has attracted a great deal of attention from universities, governments and public media worldwide.

A survey on higher education published by The Economist in 2005 commented ARWU as "the most widely used annual ranking of the world's research universities"¹. Burton Bollag, a reporter at Chronicle of Higher Education wrote that ARWU "is considered the most influential international ranking"².

One of the factors for the significant influence of ARWU is that its methodology is globally sound and transparent. The EU Research Headlines reported the ARWU work on 31st December 2003: "The universities were carefully evaluated using several indicators of research performance."³ Chancellor of Oxford University, Chris Patten, said "the methodology looks fairly solid ... it looks like a pretty good stab at a fair comparison."⁴ Professor Simon Marginson of University of Melbourne commented that one of the strengths of "the academically rigorous and globally inclusive Jiao Tong approach" is "constantly tuning its rankings and invites open collaboration in that" (Marginson, 2007).

The ARWU and its content have been widely cited and employed as a starting point for identifying national strengths and weaknesses as well as facilitating reform and setting new initiatives. Bill Destler, the president of the Rochester Institute of Technology, drew reference to the ARWU to analyze the comparative advantages that the Western Europe and US have in terms of intellectual talent and creativity in his publication in the journal Nature (Destler, 2008). Martin Enserink referred to ARWU and argued in his paper published in Science that "France's poor showing in the Shanghai ranking ... helped trigger a national debate about higher education that resulted in a new law... giving universities more freedom"(Enserink, 2007).

Starting from 2009, the ARWU has been published by Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, a fully independent organization. Besides ARWU, the Consultancy is going to provide various global comparison and in-depth analysis on research universities, supporting relevant decision making by national governments and universities in global context.

ARWU uses six objective indicators to rank world universities, including:

- the number of alumni, 10%;
- the number of staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, 20%;
- number of highly cited researchers 20%;
- number of articles published in journals of Nature and Science 20%;
- number of articles indexed in Science Citation Index - Expanded and Social Sciences Citation Index, 20% and
- per capita performance with respect to the size of an institution, 10%.

Table 1. Definitions of measures used in the 2009 Annual Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) Top 500 rankings.

Measure	Weight	Definition
<i>Alumni</i>	10%	The total number of the alumni of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals. Alumni are defined as those who obtain bachelors, masters or doctoral degrees from the institution. Different weights are set according to the periods of obtaining degrees. The weight is 100% for alumni obtaining degrees after 1991, 90% for alumni obtaining degrees in 1981-1990, 80% for alumni obtaining degrees in 1971-1980, and so on, and finally 10% for alumni obtaining degrees in 1901-1910. If a person obtains more than one degree from an institution, the institution is considered once only.
<i>Award</i>	20%	The total number of the staff of an institution winning Nobel

¹ A world of opportunity. (2005). The Economist, Vol. 376. Issue 8443, p. 14-16.

² Group endorses principles for ranking universities. (2006, June 9). Chronicle of Higher Education.

³ Chinese study ranks world's top 500 universities. (2003, December 31). European Commission<Research<Headlines.

⁴ Chris Patten's speech. (2004, February 5). Guardian.

		Prizes in Physics, Chemistry, Medicine and Economics and Field Medals in Mathematics. Staff is defined as those who work at an institution at the time of winning the prize. Different weights are set according to the periods of winning the prizes. The weight is 100% for winners after 2001, 90% for winners in 1991-2000, 80% for winners in 1981-1990, 70% for winners in 1971-1980, and so on, and finally 10% for winners in 1911-1920. If a winner is affiliated with more than one institution, each institution is assigned the reciprocal of the number of institutions. For Nobel prizes, if a prize is shared by more than one person, weights are set for winners according to their proportion of the prize.
HiCite	20%	The number of highly cited researchers in 21 subject categories. These individuals are the most highly cited within each category. The definition of categories and detailed procedures can be found at the website of Thomson Reuters.
Nature & Science (N&S)	20%	The number of papers published in the journals Nature and Science between 2004 and 2008. To distinguish the order of author affiliation, a weight of 100% is assigned for corresponding author affiliation, 50% for first author affiliation (second author affiliation if the first author affiliation is the same as corresponding author affiliation), 25% for the next author affiliation, and 10% for other author affiliations. Only publications of 'Article' and 'Proceedings Paper' types are considered
Publications (PUB)	20%	Total number of papers indexed in Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Science Citation Index in 2008. Only publications of 'Article' and 'Proceedings Paper' types are considered. When calculating the total number of papers of an institution, a special weight of two was introduced for papers indexed in Social Science Citation Index.
Per capita	10%	The weighted scores of the above five indicators divided by the number of full-time equivalent academic staff. If the number of academic staff for institutions of a country cannot be obtained, the weighted scores of the above five indicators is used.
Overall	100%	
<i>Source: www.arwu.org</i>		

For each indicator, the highest scoring institution is assigned a score of 100, and other institutions are calculated as a percentage of the top score. The distribution of data for each indicator is examined for any significant distorting effect and standard statistical techniques are used to adjust the indicator if necessary.

Scores for each indicator are weighted to arrive at a final overall score for an institution. The highest scoring institution is assigned a total score of 100, and other institutions are calculated as a percentage of the top total score. The scores are then placed in descending order.

To generate a final ranking, the performance of each university in each measure is expressed as a percentage of the top-performing university. Then, the weightings shown in Table 1 are applied to these relative measures and a total score calculated. To obtain the final ranking, each university score is then expressed as a percentage of the score achieved by the top university. For example, a score of 80 means that the overall weighted performance of that university was 80 percent that of the top performing university.

There are two key points to note about the measures used in the ARWU rankings. First, the ARWU indicators measure the research performance of a university, with no indicators of teaching performance.

Second, five of the six measures are totals of either people or research outputs. Only one indicator is calculated on a per academic staff member basis. This means that the ARWU is, to a certain extent, a measure of volume of research, with larger institutions at an advantage.

Of the specific measures used in the ARWU rankings, the inclusion of Nobel prize winners is controversial as it is largely science-based and can be subject to politicking (Marginson 2007). It also means that institutions earn points from people who may have long since ceased to be associated with that institution through a halo effect. This historic nature also applies to the HiCite measure, which examines citations of individuals between 1981 and 1999 (Holmes 2006).

The ARWU compiles an overall ranking, but it also breaks out each university's performance in five subject fields (math, physics, chemistry, computer science, and economics/business) as well as in five broader fields (natural sciences and math, engineering/technology and computer sciences, life and agriculture sciences, clinical medicine and pharmacy, and social sciences).

Although the Shanghai rankings are perhaps the most frequently cited of international rankings, the methodology is certainly not without its critics. the quality of an academic institution be open to the same type of evaluation?

Among the most vocal (and visible) critics of the Shanghai rankings has been the Times Higher Education Supplement. The flaws perceived by the British newspaper led it to produce its own annual international ranking of universities. In an editorial that accompanied its inaugural report in 2004, the publication questioned the validity of using the number of prizewinners among faculty and alumni as a criterion for gauging the overall quality of a university, especially in an historical context. Why credit a university for enrolling a prizewinner 40 years ago? Furthermore, why credit only the university at which the original research was conducted and not the institution that currently pays the prizewinner's salary? All valid questions considering the Shanghai rankings allot a 30 percent weighting to the faculty and alumni prizewinner categories. In response THES sought to produce a ranking that took into account a broader spectrum of criteria on which to judge the academic quality of universities worldwide.

Despite its popularity, the Shanghai rankings have come under some criticism regarding both their methodology and choice of variables (Liu and Cheng, 2005 and Van Raan, 2005). Vincke (2009) notes that using an averaged score to measure performance has a determining influence on the ranking. With respect to the choice of variables, Shanghai University uses only a limited set of criteria, which measure academic performance solely in terms of research excellence, to rank a wide range of universities. This "one size fits all approach" fails to capture the specific characteristics of a university and ignores the objectives an institution pursues outside of research, such as education and a social mission. In terms of its criteria, the ranking is biased in favor of science and technology and almost totally disregards other fields such as the arts and humanities.

Thus, schools with strong scientific departments fare much better in the rankings than schools that specialize in the arts, humanities or social sciences. The ARWU also favors English-speaking universities as English is the predominant language of academic publications. Van Raan (2005) points out these biases and warns against the misuse of overly simple bibliometric indicators. Finally, the ARWU does not take into account the effect of size on performance. Zitt (2007) notes that ninety percent of criteria used in rankings are size-dependant. Indeed, the Shanghai rankings essentially measure overall production and not efficiency, an approach that favors large universities. And while they do include one variable to this effect ("PCP"), it is rendered almost useless as it is only computed for the universities which survive pre-selection based on their performance with respect to the other criteria.

3. Times Higher Education Supplement (Thes)

The first THES rankings were published in 2004 and were designed to inform readers of the THES about the comparable performance of the world's universities through measuring a number of

dimensions of university performance. Up to and including 2009, the THES rankings were compiled by QS Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd.

Building on its criticism of the SJTU rankings and its experience producing domestic league tables, the THES has sought to produce a ranking that is “current, rather than historical,” and finds suitable “proxies for excellence in teaching and research.” With this in mind, the THES methodology places great stock (70%) on peer review.

The measures used to compile the 2009 THES rankings include: survey results from academics and employers that captures the perceptions of the quality of a university, measures of class size, research impact and the proportions of international faculty and students at an institution (see Table 2). A key point to note is that the THES is heavily reliant on surveys about the perceived quality of universities, with the academic and employer survey contributing 50 percent of the weighted performance score.

From 2007, the THES rankings have been calculated in a way that reduces the dispersion in performance in the various measures, reducing the impact of outliers. This process involves the use of z scores¹ to calculate the relative performance of universities compared to the top performing university. The weightings in Table 2 are then applied to the score in each measure to arrive at a relative score, which is then expressed as a percentage of the top performing university. This overall score is then used to determine the rankings.

Table 2. Definitions of measures used in the 2009 Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) Top 200 rankings.

Measure	Weight	Definition
<i>Academic Peer Review</i> (Acad PR)	40%	Composite score drawn from peer review survey (which is divided into five subject areas). There were 9,386 responses in 2009 (6,354 in 2008).
<i>Employer Peer Review</i> (Emp PR)	10%	Score based on responses to employer survey. There were 3,281 responses in 2009 (2,339 in 2008).
<i>Faculty Student Ratio</i> (EFTS/FTE)	20%	Score based on student faculty ratio. A lower number of students to staff is treated as representing higher quality of teaching.
<i>Citations per Faculty member</i> (Cites/FTE)	20%	Score based on research performance factored against the size of the research body. The citations are sourced from the bibliometric database SCOPUS and represent the total for the last five years.
<i>International Faculty</i> (Int faculty)	5%	This measure captures international reputation and is measured by the proportion of international faculty at a university. A higher proportion is treated as representing better performance.
<i>International Students</i> (Int students)	5%	This measure captures international reputation and is measured by the proportion of international students at a university. A higher proportion is treated as representing better performance.
<i>Overall</i>	100%	

Source: www.topuniversities.com

Marginson (2007) argues that the large weighting applied to survey responses (50 percent) captures how a university is perceived, not how they actually perform. The result is that universities are being judged on credentialism and not actual learning and research outcomes. In addition, he argues that there is a lack of transparency in these measures and a problem with regional bias. Marginson argues

¹ A “z” score indicates how many standard deviations an observation is above or below the mean value.

that universities in the UK and USA will have better name recognition. This is compounded by a low response rate (around 1 percent) for the academic peer review measure.

Marginson has also criticized the use of the number of students to academic staff as a proxy for teaching quality, with a lower ratio supposedly reflecting higher quality. Marginson argues that teaching quality cannot be accurately assessed using a resource quantity indicator such as this.

Though the ranking authors suggest that the proportion of international students reflects the prestige with which an institution is viewed, Marginson argues it simply rewards volume building. This measure will also favor universities in English speaking countries and those in countries where there is a centrally mandated export education policy.

Many of the criticisms leveled against the Shanghai rankings could also be applied to the THES rankings. However, the THES does attempt to reduce the emphasis on scientific and technological fields of study in composing its ranking. Nonetheless, the somewhat arbitrary nature of choosing and weighting criteria — often termed the “weight-and-add” approach, and common to the SJTU, THES and a majority of university rankings around the world — leaves the THES ranking open to criticism, after all there are far more than six factors and interactions within those factors that decide the overall environment of a campus.

4. Case Study – Romania

There are 56 public higher education institutions in Romania, 28 accredited private higher education institutions, 21 private higher education institutions certified to provisionally operate and 5 private higher education institutions certified to provisionally operate in the process of accreditation.

A total of 110 higher education institutions and none of them is to be found in the best 500 universities published by the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU).

University of Bucharest (UB) and Babes-Bolyai University (BBU), Cluj-Napoca are the only institutions in Romania that have managed to be included in the 2009 edition of Times Higher Education - QS World University Rankings, of the best centers higher education in the world.

The two institutions were not ranked among the top 500. University of Bucharest ranged overall between 500 and 600 places in the rankings after consecutive three years stood at 400 and 500 seats category. UB ranked 288 in Natural Sciences. In turn, BBU, placed after the location 600, is mentioned for the first time this international ranking.

“Times Higher Education”, ranking based on votes of the academics and alumni worldwide, includes 39 European universities in the top 100, three more than last year. Instead, Americans are in decline, with 36 higher education institutions, six fewer than in 2008.

Romanian universities are missing from all hierarchies made worldwide, whether based on criteria like popularization of the institutions or their web sites, the number of awards received by students or teachers or the number of results in research.

In 2005, it was realized a research (Florian, 2006) concerning the Romanian universities and the ARWU ranking. This research was an attempt to estimate the score that Romanian universities would obtain in this ranking, as none of them entered the top 500 of world universities.

The data presented suggested that the results of the Shanghai ranking are irreproducible. At least the data concerning the SCI indicator suggested that the authors of the Shanghai ranking deviated from the official published methodology when computing the scores of the universities. It is understandable that the values of some of the indicators used are hard to reproduce, as in the case of the Size indicator, where data about universities’ personnel are hard to obtain and inconsistent, and sometimes requires using educated guesses, or as in the case of the N&S indicator, where the necessity of weighting as a function of author importance may require an error-prone automated counting method. It is less acceptable that the values for an objective indicator such as SCI cannot be reproduced using the

published methodology. These findings undermine the relevance of the Shanghai ranking and adds to other critiques of its methodology and results. The conclusion of the paper was that the results are irreproducible, given the currently published methodology. The inconsistencies found here may be clarified if the authors of the Shanghai ranking will publish also the un-normalized values that they used for the indicators, and the actual transformations they performed on data. It would be useful if they would insure the transparency of their results, or at least implement on their website the possibility that the public compute automatically the score of any university, given raw data.

When taking into account the ARWU criteria, the following observations were made. Romanian universities have one graduate winner of Nobel Prize - George Emil Palade, who graduated in 1940 Faculty of Medicine, University of Bucharest, Faculty which is now part of UMF Carol Davila. Graduation Year corresponds to a score of 0.4, according to the weighting methodology as Shanghai. Romanian universities have not graduates winners of the Fields Medal, or Nobel prize winning professors.

According to ISI Highly Cited¹, in 2005 it was one single researcher „highly cited” from România: Ionel Ciucanu, West University of Timisoara, Agricultural Sciences. In 2010, there are two, prof. Ciucanu and Gheorghe Paun, Institute of Mathematics of the Romanian Academy, Computer Science.

The articles published by researchers from Romania (till 2005) in prestigious journals Nature and Science were around 11.

Since obtaining Nobel Prizes or Fields is relatively unlikely in the short term, the way how the Romanian universities could increase their ranking scores in Shanghai is by increasing the number of ISI articles, and especially in the Humanities, and improving quality publications science, which could lead to increased presence in prestigious journals Science, Nature or index Researchers "highly cited".

The estimation shows that even the best universities in Romania must increase its score by at least 2 times to enter the top 500 universities in the world.

The number of ICI articles, absolute or related to personnel, represents the main source of points for the Romanian universities according to the Shanghai methodology.

5. Conclusions

Each year, the release of the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) Top 200 and the Annual Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) Top 500 university rankings generates significant interest around the world.

As well as generating media interest, it appears that international university ranking systems have achieved some degree of public and policy credibility in a number of countries (Marginson 2007). This is due, in part, to the impact of rankings on the choice of destination of international students, an important source of revenue for higher education institutions. Research suggests that international students are among those most likely to look at league tables when making their decision about where to study (HEFCE 2008).

Given that international university rankings systems appear to be here to stay, it is important that the information provided by these rankings is fully understood. The analysis shows that delving beyond the overall ranking and understanding the limitations and scope of the ranking systems is key to assessing the performance of the world universities in the right context.

Regardless of the prestige of such lists, college academic rankings should be taken with a grain of salt. The greatest criticism and controversy surrounding ranking lists involves questions of methodology. Additionally, because each publisher uses slightly different factors for ranking schools, the lists of rankings are not necessarily comparable. However, many students and parents still consider such

¹ <http://isihighlycited.com/>

rankings to be useful when selecting a college to attend, which attests to the continued popularity of ranking lists like the ARWU or the THES.

European Union will create a new global system for classifying universities, in an attempt to improve the European universities and to improve the economic power of Europe.

National rankings of universities have become a common practice in the 1990s, however, as higher education has gained a global dimension, more and more students choosing to study abroad, it has developed a tendency to draw up global rankings of universities, reports EUObserver.

This means that the classification system receives an increasing attention for various reasons: the students use them to restrict their list of options, public and private institutions decide to allocate funds to universities according to their position in these rankings, universities use them to promote themselves and some politicians to give them as achievements or national aspirations.

Although the number of rankings increases every year, there are two major university rankings - and rival: Times Higher Education Supplement in the UK and Shanghai Jiao Tong University Academic Ranking of World Universities in China.

Both classifications are prepared from mid-2000 and in general both show that American universities are far ahead of those in continental Europe.

In the last six SJTU rankings, 17 American universities were among the 20 universities of the world, the only European higher education institutions in the top 20 were Cambridge and Oxford. At the same time, THES included in the top 20 only 12 American universities, four British and, occasionally, one French.

European Commission and some Member States have criticized the way these rankings are prepared, saying they are very biased and "not accurately reproduce diverse and multifunctional nature of universities and their research activities.

"The Commission believed that many of the current rankings really do not fulfill their purpose, for example, because they focused more on research than on the aspect of teaching and the institutions in their entirety, and not on programs or departments," says executive The Brussels when asked to create a new classification system for universities.

France calls for a long time to create a European alternative to the current classification systems, arguing that the current selection criteria favor Anglo-Saxon institutions of higher education and disadvantage on the French or other European countries.

According to the European Commissioner for Education, Maros Sefcovic, the European project of drawing up a new "multidimensional" ranking create "a better balance between research and the indicators for quality education."

The plan to develop a European system of classification of universities is part of wider EU efforts to modernize higher education, as part of an overall strategy for economic growth.

In the end, it still remains a good question: Can be the quality of academic research accurately captured by a single aggregated measure such as a ranking?

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THE 7TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
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REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

**Linking Public Administration and
Law Studies within European Union**

Mihaela V. Cărăușan¹

Abstract: The year 1987 represented for us, scholars, the turning point for the Europeanization of high degree studies. The European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) is a European Union student exchange program which has proved its utility in the last two decade. The public administration and law studies are two of the fields of studies which have benefited from the ERASMUS Programme. In this respect we will try to learn the lesson of internationalization from the European contact through ERASMUS programme. The ‘win win’ for students is not just in the increase of knowledge in the area of administrative sciences and law, but also in the share of cultures. The ERASMUS gives students a better sense of what it means to be a European citizen. In addition, many employers highly value such a period abroad, which increases the students’ employability and job prospects.

Keywords: internationalization of studies; European area of education; the free movement of students; global freedoms

1. Introduction

Through its policy, European Union wants to create a European area of freedom, security, justice, and now of education. In such an area, the citizen’s control at the internal boarder is no longer needed because they are the fundamental right holders - the right to move freely and establish their residence were they want. Mobility of persons is one of those conditions necessary to promote and sustain a competitive system among the member states and also among them and the third countries.

The right to education was a national one and has become according to art. 14² of the European Union Fundamental Rights Charta, one of the rights protected by European Union. This right gives the possibility to everyone to find educational establishments around Europe. Along with this right the free movement of citizens is mentioned in the EU Fundamental Rights Charta – art. 45. At the beginning of the European project only the employers had the right of free movement, in time, this right has been extended to all EU citizens. Starting with the existence of the European Union citizenship which gives to its holder fundamental rights and duties, Directive 2004/38/EC establishes a unique judicial instrument for the free movement of EU citizens and their family members.

European law moves foreword to the third millennium law by giving to the EU citizen two of the fundamental rights – the freedom of movement and the right to education. We must recognize, now that the law cannot be conceived without the existence of “global freedoms”, freedoms for all without

¹ Senior Lecturer, PhD, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Faculty of Public Administration., Romania, Address: 6 Povernei str., Sector 1, Bucharest, Romania, Tel.:+4021.318.08.97, fax: +4021.312.25.35, Corresponding author: mihaelacarusan@gmail.com.

² (1) Everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training. (2) This right includes the possibility to receive free compulsory education. (3) The freedom to found educational establishments with due respect for democratic principles and the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions shall be respected, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of such freedom and right.

discrimination. These are, without any doubt, linked to the exercise of active European citizenship based on democratic principles. (Cărăușan, 2009)

Now we can speak about the internationalization of PA and law studies thanks to this 'open gate' programme. In our study we will try to emphasize the growth of the programme from students to staff and teaching activities as well as its influence in the internationalization process.

In our investigation, we will use a complex research strategy that combines both the quantitative and qualitative research methods. For a better view over the role played by the ERASMUS programme in the internationalization process of public administration and law studies, we will use documentary and content analyses and as tools of investigation – a written/web questioner and interviews (with employers and ERASMUS students/alumni). Moreover, in our research we intend to reach and to formulate how public administration and law studies should look in the future, in a globalised world – issues that decision makers in higher educational systems, should consider in developing strategies for potential students in administrative and law sciences, for future 'world students'.

Under the umbrella of the Lifelong Learning Programme, the ERASMUS has become a driver in the modernisation of higher education institutions and systems in Europe and, in particular, it has inspired the establishment of the Bologna Process. For all this, we consider it important to have research in this area without which we cannot speak about the internationalization of studies.

2. ERASMUS around Europe

Many studies¹ show that a period spent abroad not only enriches students' lives in the academic and professional fields, but can also improve language learning, intercultural skills, self-reliance and self-awareness. The ERASMUS programme is one of those which have opened the system of western studies to the eastern world; it helped us (from Eastern Europe) to improve the future public servants qualification and teaching activities.

The **Programme for Community Action in the Field of Lifelong Learning** (the Lifelong Learning Programme – **LLP**)² contributes through lifelong learning to the development of the EU as an advanced knowledge society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. The programme aims to foster interchange, co-operation and mobility between education and training institutions and systems within the EU so that they may become a world quality reference by bringing European added value directly to individual citizens participating in its mobility. This programme continues the main actions launched under previous action programmes (in particular, it brings together the various actions financed under the SOCRATES Programme and the Leonardo da Vinci Programme).

The LLP has run since 2007 and consists of: **four programmes** focusing on *school education* (Comenius), *higher education* (Erasmus), *vocational training* (Leonardo da Vinci) and *adult learning* (Grundtvig) respectively; a **Transversal Programme** targeted on cross-sectoral areas (policy cooperation and innovation in lifelong learning, languages, development of innovative ICT, dissemination and exploitation of results); □□ and a programme to support teaching, research and reflection on European integration and key European institutions and associations (**Jean Monnet Programme**).

The LLP is open to practically everybody who is involved in education or training: pupils, students, trainees and adult learners; teachers, trainers and other staff involved in any aspect of lifelong learning (LLL); people in the labour market; institutions or organisations providing learning opportunities in any area of education or training; the persons and bodies responsible for systems and policies

¹ See in this sense the OECD and EU policy papers and the studies presented at the international conference: International mobility of the highly skilled.

² Established by Decision No.1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 published in the Official Journal of the European Union No. L327 of 24 November 2006.

concerning any specific aspect of LLL at local, regional and national level; enterprises, social partners and their organisations at all levels, including trade organisations, professional organisations and chambers of commerce and industry; bodies providing guidance, counselling and information services relating to any aspect of LLL; associations working in the field of LLL, including students', trainees', pupils', teachers', parents' and adult learners' associations; research centres and bodies concerned with education and training issues and not-for-profit organisations, voluntary bodies, non-governmental organisations.

The European Commission is responsible for the overall programme implementation; its Directorate-General for Education and Culture coordinates the different activities. The Commission is assisted in this task by the LLP Committee which comprises representatives of the Member States and other participating countries and is chaired by the Commission. And the 'decentralised actions' are under the management of the national agencies in the 33 participating countries and the 'centralised' actions, such as networks, multilateral projects and the award of the ERASMUS University Charter, are managed by the EU's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.

The National Agencies play a key role in the practical implementation of the programme, as they are responsible for publicising the programme at national level, contributing to the dissemination and exploitation of results, and in particular for the management of the whole project life-cycle of the decentralised programme actions at national level. The increase/decrease of the students' mobility under the LLP programme and also the increase of the number of universities which signed the Erasmus University Charter depends on the national agency responsiveness.

In our study we will pay attention to higher education programmes, those which are influencing the training in public administration and law studies. And out of this, to the mobility of the students around Europe.

ERASMUS is the EU's education and training programme for mobility and cooperation in higher education across Europe. Its different actions not only address students wishing to study and work abroad, but also to higher education teachers and enterprise staff intending to teach abroad and to higher education staff seeking training abroad. In addition, ERASMUS supports higher education institutions to work together through intensive programmes, networks and multilateral projects as well as to reach out the world of business.

The mobility is the period of time spent in another participating country in order to undertake study, work experience, other learning, teaching or training activity or related administrative activity, supported as appropriate by preparatory or refresher courses in the host language or working language.¹

Few, if any, programmes launched by the European Union have had a similar Europe-wide reach as the ERASMUS Programme. The vast majority of European universities (more than 4,000 higher education institutions in 33 countries participate) take part in ERASMUS. More than 2,2 million students have participated since it started in 1987, as well as 250,000 higher education teachers and other staff since 1997 (this type of exchange was further expanded in 2007).

The main aim of the programme is to create a 'European Higher Education Area' and foster innovation throughout Europe. So, ERASMUS has become a driver in the modernisation of higher education institutions and systems in Europe and, in particular, has inspired the establishment of the Bologna Process.

Higher education institutions which want to participate in ERASMUS activities must have an ERASMUS University Charter. The Charter aims to guarantee the quality of the programme by setting certain fundamental principles.

¹ Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), Guide 2011, Part I: General provisions, http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call11/part1_en.pdf

The ERASMUS University Charter (EUC) provides the general framework for all the European cooperation activities, which a higher education institution may carry out within the ERASMUS programme. Awarded by the European Commission following a call for proposals, the Charter sets out the fundamental principles and the minimum requirements to which the higher education institution should comply when implementing its ERASMUS activities. In addition, EUC holders may apply for the ECTS/DS label through a specific call for proposals.

3. The Professionalization of Public Administration and the Judiciary

The modern professions are complex, social institutions which select people of varied skills, often from several social strata, and organise them into different levels of operation and diverse interest groups. Each level and groups may be sensitive to contingencies not shared by the profession as a whole. (Smith, p. 410) Our complex modern state has multiple relations and the problems occurring in different areas of sensitivity of the professions, are highlighted during periods of professional change. Professionals have the special privilege of freedom of control from outsiders. (Cărăușan, 2010)

Human resources development aims to increase the professional capacity of employees to continue their growth and advancement in the system and to develop, to enhance their ability as a successful employee in compliance with their duties and greater responsibilities. The ultimate objective of human resource management reform is not only to increase the quality and performance but also to increase efficiency, productivity, to save resources and to serve public interests. (Cărăușan, 2010)

There is a close correlation between the economic situation, employment labour and political decisions to increase or decrease employment labour in the public sector, public sector employment conditions and recruitment policies. (Cărăușan, 2010)

Changes in HRM in the public sector must be supported by the state reform, namely by the creation of a career system designed to attract in terms of pay and by providing guarantees in terms of planning and building a career. These two reforming actions can acquire reputation for public system and the existence of a real professional mobility. For example, to give a possible solution to improve the quality of public services, the employee should be recruited from the first 10% of graduates each year, but it should also provide opportunities to build attractive careers. We have to think and promote the today student as the future civil servant and the future magistrate. For that, we have to train them in a European environment, to make them aware that the national system is not anymore sufficient in a globalised era.

Recruitment is a process for ensuring a sufficient number of qualified candidates from which they select those that best fit to undertake the functions required within the system. The study period done abroad, in other European country, does not matter for public authorities when they organise a recruitment contest. But in the private sector we will not find the same situation; for them, if a student studied abroad it means courage and maturity.

The creation of training organizations submitted to public authorities, supports the development of its key source – its human resources. To train means to invest in people, to enable them, to operate more efficiently and to support them so that they may be free to use their best native skills (Weiss, 1999, pp. 429-430). It is obvious that only achieving theoretical standards is no longer sufficient.

That is why the European universities are now promoting more and more the mobility of students and its employees in other countries. The students' mobility are for studying or internships/placements, and for employees are the teacher assignments and staff training. To rejuvenate the public system, we have to pay more attention to the training system of the young future civil servants or magistrates and that means to pay more attention to their skills, to their practical European skills. A national civil servant or judge/magistrate of an EU member state cannot be conceived without European experience, experience which is hard to have at such a young age. For that, we see in the Erasmus programme a possibility to gather such an experience.

As far as the situation created by the crises and by the labour market is concerned, we must admit that young people entering the labour force for the first time cannot find a job commensurate with their educational qualifications.

Some specific skills or cluster of skills have become the ‘hard core’ which provides each profession with a distinctive focus. Such skills are not always uniformly distributed throughout the profession. We saw that professional qualification in the public system involves several factors which are interconnected in the same process, such as politics, motivation and quality of life.

It becomes important, therefore, in professional analysis, to know who possesses the nuclear skills and who does not, since the latter representatives may feel, or even be, limited in the full exercise of their professional competence. (Smith, p. 414) We wonder if an Erasmus student has more skills than a ‘national’ student. We are not going to analyse such a situation but it will be a matter of research for a future paper.

4. The Erasmus Role in the Internationalisation of Public Administration and the Judiciary

ERASMUS offers university-level students the chance to go to another European country to study and do work placements (traineeships). Periods abroad contribute to qualifications at home and help students get to know different cultures and languages as well as gain vital experience. Periods abroad – both for studies and for placements – can last from three to 12 months each, for a combined total of 24 months.

More than 2 million students have experienced what it means to do an ERASMUS term in one of more than 4,000 higher education institutions in 33 participating countries. These include all the EU Member States as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

ERASMUS student mobility is open to all students studying in a participating country and enrolled in at least the second year in their home institution. So, any students can participate in the programme without discrimination, the programme also provides attention to those students which are having special needs. The home institution of the students applies for ERASMUS mobility grants to its national agency while the interested student has to turn to the international office and/or ERASMUS office of his or her home higher education institution.

The students’ mobility for studies enable students to benefit educationally, linguistically and culturally from the experience of learning in other European countries and to contribute to the development of a pool of well-qualified, open-minded and internationally experienced young people as future professionals.

Erasmus reached the one million mobility target in 2002. The two million target was reached at the end of academic year 2008/2009. The 2 million student was Romanian - Laura Popa, University of Nottingham, master degree. The aim set out in the Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council for the Lifelong Learning Programme is to reach at least three million student mobility under the Erasmus programme and its predecessor programmes by 2012¹.

In the academic year 2008/2009², 198,523 students went to another European country to study or train. The largest number of outgoing Erasmus students was from France, or 28,283, (14.1% share), followed by Germany with 27,894 outgoing students (14%), and then Spain with 27,405 (13.8%) The total flows of outgoing student mobility reached in the academic year 2008/2009 was of 2,065 million out of which 317,581 in Germany, followed closely by France with 316,996 and by Spain with

¹ Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning, Article 21a.

² Lifelong Learning Programme, The Erasmus Programme 2008/2009, a statistical overview, December 2010, <http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc/stat/report0809.pdf>

288,239. Since the beginning of the mobility programme we can observe a straight increase in the number of mobility from 3,244 students to almost 200,000 students per academic year.

In the number of incoming Erasmus students for studies and placements, in 2008/09, all participating countries experienced an annual growth as compared to the previous year. Malta (31.6%) had the highest annual growth, followed by Cyprus (25.5%) and Greece (24.3%). Finland, the Netherlands and Germany, on the other hand, experienced the lowest growth rates between academic years.

Overall, incoming mobility has increased by 80% in the 31 participating countries since 2000/01. The number of incoming students has increased steadily in every participating country since 2000/01, except in the UK. There, the increase in incoming student numbers during this period is only 8.9% taking into consideration their restrictive policy in signing Bilateral Agreements (a.n.).

As in previous years, Spain remained the most popular destination for European students during the academic year 2008/09 with 33,172 incoming students (16.7% share), followed by France with 24,614 incoming students (12.4%) and then Germany with 21,931 students (11 %). Romania, Latvia and Bulgaria sent about three times more students abroad than they received.

In the academic year 2008/09, approximately 60.74% of Erasmus students were female. This percentage is somewhat higher than the proportion of female students of the total student population in the 31 participating countries in 2008 which was 53.94%¹. The average age of Erasmus students in 2008/09 was 23.5 years at the beginning of the year 2008.

The number of Erasmus students as a proportion of the whole student population in the participating countries in the academic year 2008/09 was on average 0.91%,² up from an average of 0.85% in the previous year. Some of the very small countries, i.e. Luxembourg and Liechtenstein, have much higher mobility rates.

Taking into account the average study duration at a higher education institution of approximately 4-5 years, it can be estimated that around 4% of European students will participate in the Erasmus programme at some stage during their studies.

Apart from the very small countries, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein which have only one higher education institution each, Austria was the best performing country in terms of outgoing Erasmus student mobility as a proportion of the total student population (1.73%), followed by the Malta (1.59%) and then The Czech Republic and Spain (1.54 %). Out of the 31 participating countries, 21 matched or were above the average. This entails that 10 countries were below the average of 0.91%. The lowest average participation rate was in Turkey (0.31%), Romania (0.35%), and the UK (0.46%).

Another method to determine the relative position of a country would be to compare Erasmus students to the number of graduates at Bachelor and Master level or equivalent. According to Eurostat data, higher education graduates in 2008 accounted for over 4.56 million in the 31 participating countries. If the total number of graduates is compared with the number of Erasmus students in the academic year 2008/09, then Erasmus students were about 4.44 % of all graduates, a slightly higher proportion than in the previous year (up from 4.23%).

As we have observed, many countries experienced a significant imbalance between incoming and outgoing students, particularly Turkey and Romania. Austria, Estonia and Belgium, however, had the best balance between incoming and outgoing students. Studying the ten Central and Eastern European countries (CEE) in Erasmus student mobility between the academic years 2003/04 - 2008/09 we can observe the gap between the numbers of incoming and outgoing students in these countries has narrowed in this five year period. Whereas both numbers of outgoing and incoming students in these countries has increased during this period, the percentage growth in incoming numbers was much higher than the growth in outgoing numbers.

¹ Eurostat 2008 data. Out of a total student population of 21,802,899 in the EUR31, women are 11,761,494 and males are 10,041,405.

² Here, the number of Erasmus students is divided by the total student population number in each country. The total EUR31 student population according to Eurostat 2008 data was around 21.8 million students.

The lack of knowledge about the possibility offered by the Erasmus programme unfortunately affected the mentioned countries. Beside this, the economic-financial crises did not give them the financial support to sustain their period abroad. As we already know, the Erasmus programme was not created to be supported financially entirely by the European Commission; the selected students also have to find sources for co-financing its grant. Most of the time universities are co-financing the grant, but the expenses are not covered and so they have to find other institutions (public, private or NGOs) to grant them financial support.

‘Social sciences, business and law’ were the most popular subject areas followed by ‘humanities and arts’ and ‘engineering, manufacturing and construction’; ‘science, mathematics and computing’, ‘medical sciences’, ‘education/teacher training’ and ‘services’ were underrepresented subject areas relative to their share of the European student population.

Studying with Erasmus in the academic year 2008/09 was most popular among students in the ‘social sciences, business and law’ areas (a 41.6% share), followed by ‘humanities and arts’ (23.3%) and then by ‘engineering, manufacturing and construction’(14.3%); ‘services’, ‘agricultural and veterinary sciences’ and ‘education’ were the subject areas from which students participated the least in Erasmus.

Subject areas seem very stable when it comes to student mobility for studies. During the period 2000/01 to 2007/08 there was an increase in number of Erasmus students studying ‘social sciences, business and law’ but a decrease in those studying within ‘humanities and arts’¹. Public administration studies are in the area of social sciences and the majority of faculties in this field of study, are associated or are a department under law, political sciences and business faculties.

For many European students, the Erasmus Programme is their first time living and studying abroad. Therefore, it has become a cultural phenomenon and is very popular among European students. The Programme fosters not only learning and understanding of the host country, but also a sense of community among students from different countries. That is why this experience is considered both a time for learning as well as a chance to socialize.

Erasmus in the students’ curriculum vitae is seen as being a very positive thing because that one word explains the whole experience of studying abroad. Hence, those who partake in the Programme are often considered more employable than those who do not.

Thinking the construction of the European identity we can strongly affirm that the Erasmus students are the ambassadors of a pan-European identity. The political scientist Stefan Wolff, for example, has argued that ‘Give it 15, 20 or 25 years, and Europe will be run by leaders with a completely different socialization from those of today’, referring to the so-called ‘Erasmus generation’. (Bennhold, 2005)

5. Learn from the Outcomes of the ERASMUS Programme

The Erasmus we have to recognise influenced the labour market, especially because the students are seeking it having in mind their future career. Lowell (2007), for example, shows an increase in the emigration rate of university graduates from about 4 percent in 1980 to about 7 percent in 2000 in developed countries. The increased demand for skilled labour and the importance of highly skilled individuals for innovation has induced many countries to implement policies geared to attracting skilled migrants from abroad (OECD, 2002). Understanding the determinants of migration is a key to formulating such policies.

In particular, it has been hypothesized that student mobility may act as a ‘stepping stone’ for later labour migration (Guellec & Cervantes, 2001). Numerous countries, including the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom, attempt to attract highly skilled mobile workers through policies relating to student mobility programs (Guellec & Cervantes, 2001).It is well recognised, and demonstrated, the fact that some develop countries brain drain the poor ones, and the students are

¹ Other subjects comprise "General programmes", "Agricultural sciences", "Personal services" and unspecified areas of study.

manoeuvred in this sense. Despite the widespread belief in the link between studying abroad and international labour market mobility, empirical evidence is very limited. Establishing a causal link between studying abroad and labour market mobility later in life is a challenging task because students who decide to study abroad are in many ways different from students who undertake all of their education in their home country. (Parey and Waldinger, 2008)

Parey and Waldinger demonstrated that studying abroad increases a person's probability of working abroad by about 15.20%. This result suggests a strong causal link between international labour market mobility and previous international mobility. Qualitative evidence suggests that besides career concerns soft factors such as interest in foreign cultures or living with a foreign partner are important determinants for the decision to work abroad, and we suggest that the effect of studying abroad may work through these channels. The period of study done abroad is affecting the set of skills that a student acquires during his/her studies. In our research we have applied a questionnaire at the European Administration field of study, 2nd year (the year among which we promote the ERASMUS programme), academic year 2010/2011. The results obtained reveal the fact that most of the students consider that the following skills are important for their career: the capacity to understand different cultures and customs of other countries and the ability to work in an international context. So, out of 60 students 21 of them considers that they already have the first skill, and in the same time more than 32 of them consider that this is an important requirement in the labour market. Also, as it concerns the latter skill more than 23 of them choose a middle high value (5 on a scale from 1 to 7) as the best representation of their self assessment. The vast majority of them (44 students) consider that the ability to work in an international context is high valued by the labour market, and they are trying to reach it during their study period and expect to the university to help them in improving it.

We can think of the effect of studying abroad as affecting the set of skills the student acquires during his/her studies. We can shed some light on this question by investigating whether individuals who have studied abroad return to work in the same country or they decide to work in a foreign country. There are a number of reasons why mobile graduates may be more likely to work abroad in the countries where they studied abroad before. During their study period abroad they may have obtained skills that are of particular relevance in that labour market, e.g. language skills, knowledge about the local labour market, or personal contacts which facilitate a match. On the other hand, it is possible that studying abroad affects the probability of working abroad equally for different work destinations. This would be the case, for example, if studying abroad widens the horizon of the student generally and leads him/her to search for a job internationally, independent of where he/she studied before. Especially, studying abroad could operate as a stepping stone to increase the set of feasible destinations. This question is also highly relevant from a policy perspective: The ability of the ERASMUS scheme or other student mobility programs to achieve an integrated European labour market depends on the assumption that students who went abroad to study in Europe are internationally mobile after graduation, but remain in Europe. (Parey and Waldinger, 2008)

6. Conclusions

The ERASMUS programme brought a shine light in the internationalisation of the public administration and law studies. ERASMUS is not just for the benefit of the students, also the universities have learned from the students' experience. And, furthermore the university staff was included in the programme to foster the main idea of the harmonisation of the European studies. The Bologna process, as a result of the implementation of the ERASMUS programme, helped us to have a much more wide view on the importance of the public administration and law studies. We have been able, for example, to see how a national student 'blossom' in a European civil servant through the ERASMUS.

Simona Cojocaru, a former ERASMUS student in public administration, when she went to Portugal said: '... I will go ERASMUS... It is my "hello", my "goodbye", my only thought.' Back in Bucharest she concluded: 'If you have my chance of going ERASMUS, don't hesitate, not even one second...it

is worth everything... I just have in my mind the great moments... I forgot how hard it was to leave from home... It was more than I could ever imagine... so... "GO ERASMUS"... my only advice... and to be subjective... "go to Portugal"... When this experience ends, you are different, people look differently at you. Maybe you even have more chances than other do... It's like you have another status than the "normal" students do. It helps you to define your personality, your expectations from life and also from yourself. It gives you hope and it makes you wish to improve yourself and your life.'

With Simona's thoughts in mind we will try to summarize what ERASMUS student get after a study period in foreign country. Taking into consideration that the national educational systems are concentrated in offering theoretical and practical knowledge about the national public area, in some cases in comparative European context, the ERASMUS experience brings to our students different knowledge about a different system which offer different civil services to a different society.

From the CEE countries perspective ERASMUS opened the western European educational system to them and give them the possibility to analyze in a comparative context the public systems. ERASMUS also started the harmonization process among public administration and law studies, and more helped them to have a European approach.

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THE 7TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

ECTS & DS Labels Keys for Academic Excellence

Radu Stoika¹, Madlena Nen²

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to present an assessment of the importance of how and what are the actual results after the higher education institutions have had designed the credits system in direct relations with their own characteristics. Also is important to identify and analyze how are the effects after the ultimate design of students guides and if those effects are bringing with them better feedback in terms of increasing number of cohorts of students. With this research paper we intend to make an overview of the results after this changes (re-design the curriculum, ECTS credit system, new learning modules, better, flexible and comprehensive students guides) making the institutions more close to excellence in education and get ready for the ECTS & DS Labels – awarded by the European Commission. All of those institutional changes can be measured in the final stage by an very actual indicator like the attainment and completion rates as well as by the labor market prospects of graduates.

Keywords: ECTS; Diploma Supplement; students; higher education institutions

1. Actual Situation of European Higher Education Area

All European countries have realized significant structural changes, facilitating that all European Higher Education Area rose to a new level that facilitates to a better response to all the new societal demands.

This is the new ground floor for the new objectives that will be in placed for the new development strategy for 2020. All those changes couldn't be possible to be achieved by today if the voluntary cooperation of all 47 European countries was stimulated the – a success story by now- Bologna Process.

This initiative provided a European framework and modernizes in order to concentrate all common efforts to reform and up-grade the higher education system.

The Bologna reform agenda specify a large dimension of the new European higher education area.

The most important 5 action lines that are in the Bologna declaration are related to the:

- easy readable and comparable degrees (through diploma supplement tool);
- establishment of a credit system (European Credit Transfer System);
- promotion of mobility;
- quality assurance;
- European dimension (joint and double degrees).

¹ Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, Address: Nicolae Iorga Building, Calea Serban Voda no 22-24, Sector 4, Bucharest 040211, Tel. +4 021 335.46.53, Fax: +4 021 335.02.53; Corresponding author: rstoika@gmail.com.

² Military Technical Academy in Bucharest, Address: 81-83 George Coșbuc Blvd, Bucharest 050141, Romania, Tel.: +4021 335 4660, e-mail: madlenanen@yahoo.com.

What we consider important is that the impact of the reform emerged through Bologna Process is not limited only to the countries participating in the programs financed by European Commission, but also through Tempus program that supports educational reforms in 27 Tempus countries, inside and outside of the Europe.

Starting with the most important aim of Bologna Declaration – that adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees which is dedicated to promote European people employability and above the international competitiveness of the European higher education system we can appreciate that before with the adoption of Bologna declaration in 1999, in Europe were a large variety of higher education systems like : bachelor system of four-six years, in some cases finalized with a diploma that was equivalent with master's degree in other systems. Through Bologna process, is was made the base for adoption by the member states a system clearly defined by two cycles – bachelor and master, in which the access for master studies was made after the student finalized his/her studies in a bachelor period of minimum of three years.

Starting with ministers conference from Berlin in 2005, it was made the basement for integration is this “Bologna System” the research “component” of the third cycle – the doctoral program. But the bridge towards implementation a wide integrated common platform – composed by the tree cycles- was the presence of three very important tools – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, the Diploma Supplement and the requirements for a national qualification framework.

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System was stipulated in the Bologna Declaration¹ (1999)“as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility” focused on the objective that universities have to assign credits to foreign students which have had a mobility for study/placement in the respective higher education institution.

The next “Bologna tool”, Diploma Supplement was introduced by European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO in 1990s. This is a standardized template which contains many descriptors about the current status of students like: nature of studies, level and context and the finished studies that the student completed. This document was introduced in this large higher education area with the main objective of increasing transparency of education. According to the treaty of ministers in Berlin (2005), all the graduates should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge.

Finally, the third tool, that was introduced by Bologna Process, is the national qualification framework. This new tool has its main objective to describe and clearly express the specifications between the qualifications in all cycles of education.

2. European Curricular Reform

We intend now to give a more closer look to the issues of curricular reform in European Higher Education Area with a special highlight on its key issues: learning outcomes, curricular design, employability and higher education institutions as “open learning centres”.

Regarding learning outcomes as a result of a successful European qualification framework, they should give comprehensibility and diversity at EU and national level.

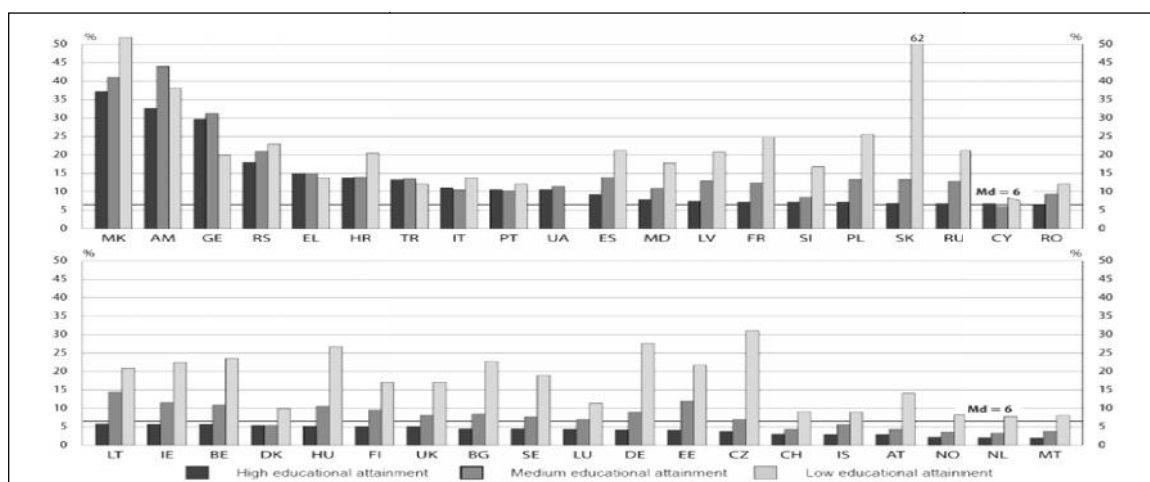
The implementations of National Qualification Frameworks should receive a special attention in order to highlight what descriptors is defined to characterize learning outcomes and competences for separate levels and disciplines. Regarding curricular design we appreciate that the first innovative examples of higher education European cooperation are the joint and double degrees which we consider the base for future development of European education area. Another idea is that, until now, it was made a lot of efforts by all stakeholders in order to reach a balance between what is necessary to teach and what can be individually learned, which can have benefits in reducing study durations and high drop-out rates among students.

¹ The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999.

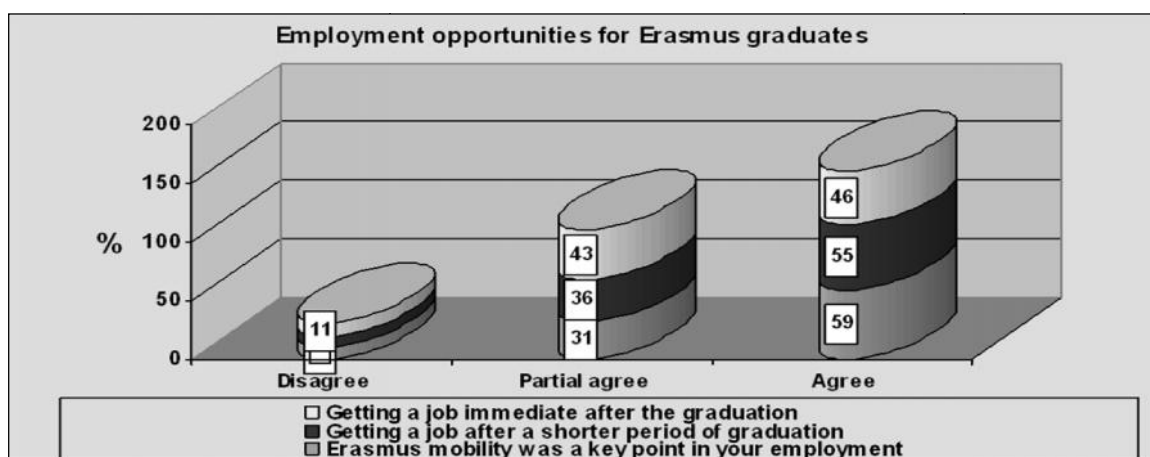
Another, key issue that we want to underline is the problem of graduates employability. In order to increase this number, is necessary to give special attention to the cooperation between universities – professional associations and employers. Few years ago, theirs involvement in curricular reform has been considerably limited. Even today, the difference, when a graduate is hired on a particular employer, is not so obvious, who distinguishes quite hardly Bachelor and Master Degrees.

In order to increase the employability of graduates, the entrepreneurship education should be provided on a wide scale in all curriculum system along with the opportunity for every student to take a mobility for placement in an enterprise.

If we see the unemployment ratios (according to EuroStat figures¹ for the average unemployment ratio of persons aged 20-34 by educational attainment level for the period 2006-2010), we could appreciate that the higher education level of education it correspond a lower unemployment of young people.



On another hand, a study conducted among university graduates (Stoika, 2012) who have had a Erasmus² mobility shows that, the “Erasmus graduates” strongly agree (59% of subjects interviewed) that the period of mobility abroad helped them in having a job sooner that theirs colleagues who haven’t conducted an Erasmus mobility.



Thus to the fact that now, in the context of world crises and the efforts to emerge to a more favourable situation, we consider that awarding special labels (ie. ECTS and DS Labels) in order to highlight the efforts made by a particular higher education institution to create a more flexible and integrated

¹ Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

² Erasmus Program, part of Lifelong Learning Program financed by European Commission.

curricula together with a more close cooperation with the actors in the labour market, is a stimulative European measure in order to achieve the strategic goals.

3. ECTS and DS LABEL

In 2008, the European Commission decided to launch the ECTS-DS Label¹ award after the consultation with the main stakeholders. The whole exercise of awarding labels have as target recognising excellence in the application of either system and promoting the overall objective of European Credit Transfer System and Diploma Supplement (making teaching and learning in higher education more transparent across Europe and facilitating the recognition of all studies. Secondly through these labels ensures the transfer of learning experiences between different institutes, greater student mobility and more flexible routes to gain degrees also aids curriculum design and quality assurance.

4. Conclusions

Introducing ECTS on a wide scale through higher education institutions across Europe have had as a result increasing transparency on every level. Also, as a Bologna Process tool, the Diploma supplement creates the base for a more standardised descriptors regarding the level, content and status of studies fulfilled by the diploma holder. Taking also in consideration the fact that until now at the European level, the number of ECTS Label holders (41 institutions) and DS Label holders (164 institutions) is still low, we consider that all the stakeholders should try to reinforce all measures to ensure more flexibility in curricula, full recognition and greater cooperation between the space of academic and economic area in order to achieve academic excellence and a better response to the needs of world in the future.

5. Selective References

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¹ DG EAC/C-1/Ares (2011) n° 1046779, Brussels