

EUniAM International Conference

A Quest to (Re)Define University Autonomy

Conference Proceedings

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New Challenges and Opportunities for Higher Educational System in the Republic of Moldova

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The entire worldwide educational system is changing. Higher education faces the challenge to find ways and solutions to survive in a competitive market that goes through knowledge and information revolution. Moldovan education system is also changing, noting both the challenges to be overcome and opportunities, the realization of which would bring a positive impact on higher education in Moldova. For the implementation of the Bologna principles in higher education there were made several legislative reforms that are noted by academics. At the same time, research results show that along with the achievements there are many drawbacks. One of the most important is university autonomy. The optimization of the relationship between state involvement and university autonomy is always in the sight of the discussions held between government institutions, particularly ministries and universities. University autonomy is declared by the Law on Education, the draft of the Education Code, other normative and regulatory documents. What is the limit of state influence and what is the extent of university autonomy? The trend of the educational market dynamics shows that the change is irreversible and the choice may be - or adapting and developing competitive advantages - or opposing and staying on alert in the future.

Management – the Employees in the Framework of Financial Autonomy

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In order to insure the quality of education the institution needs well-qualified personnel, and the transition to financial autonomy allows more efficient management of human resources, taking into consideration the personnel performance and the staff need and allows the flexibility of employees remuneration. It is necessary to develop human resources management strategies and policies, elaborating internal regulations concerning faculty recruitment, evaluation of professional performances of the employees. The goal of this method of evaluation is to appreciate objectively the personnel activity by comparing the degree of accomplishment of the evaluation criteria established for the time period with the real obtained results. Beside the payments from salary funds, taking in consideration university's financial situation, the employee can benefit of other compensatory and stimulation payments. To give the university the power to establish different reward, supplement and increase systems additional to base remuneration, also establish a reward based on the annual activity results from the remuneration savings fund. In the context of financial autonomy, the limits established by the Government will partially disappear and in this case all types of personnel might benefit of decent

Performance Evaluation of Teaching Staff – an Instrument of Quality Assurance

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Within human resource management in higher education, evaluation of performance of teaching staff is one of the main quality assurance instruments. This is particularly important in terms of university autonomy. The quality of didactic staff refers to teacher's professional specialty knowledge and research potential, didactic capacity, professional ethics, activity in the academic community. Evaluation criteria target the teaching, methodic, scientific activity and social relevance. Performance evaluation of teaching staff has a significant influence on teaching and social activity, as well as on the organizational climate within institution with direct repercussions on increasing its efficiency and quality of education process. This process starts with self-assessment of teaching staff which should reflect their own activity, how they interact with their colleagues, compliance with the exigencies of contemporary education. Assessment by students is an important component in the formation of a correct opinion about professional and moral performance of teaching staff. At the same time, not all universities from the Republic of Moldova use this assessment tool, lacking regulations, methods and criteria for evaluation of performance of teaching staff. If Universities establish and approve well-defined criteria based on employee's professionalism, continuous improvement, organizational, functional and personal capacities, teachers with the best performances will be promoted.

Students as Partners in Insuring the Financial Autonomy of the University

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The vision of European Space for Higher Education is that students are not “clients” and “raw materials” for universities. They are partners with full rights that participate in all decisions concerning the content and the organization of the education process. According to the Communique of the Ministers of Education from Berlin 2003, “Students are full partners in decision making in higher education”. The students' involvement is greater in all areas of academic life, including financial component. The purpose of this communication is to analyze the current situation, to point out some issues related to the correlation “employees- students” in the financial autonomy of the university. We will speak about the role of the students in supporting the financial autonomy of universities, the importance of the tuition fees, the State involvement, the need to the state regulation of the students' number, the students' freedom in finding financial resources for tuition fees. We will also present the experience of other countries in this area.

Problem-Based Learning: The Aalborg Case

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Aalborg University was founded in 1974 joining a number of local institutes for higher education in Northern Jutland. Right from the start an innovative pedagogic method was chosen as one of the unifying factors of the new University. The Aalborg model of Problem Based Learning (PBL) combined a tradition of project pedagogy in Denmark with collaboration with industry. Project work proves to be an excellent method for developing competencies in teamwork and problem solving that are highly relevant in professional practice in fields like engineering and medicine, as demonstrated by feedback from employers clearly indicating a preference for Aalborg graduates. The presentation will highlight the Aalborg PBL principles and elaborate the impact of the paradigm change from teaching to learning on the role of the teachers.

University Autonomy and New Quality Paradigm

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The paper addresses issues regarding higher education autonomy in a European Post-Humboldtian setting, and the institutional balancing between education and research. It points out aspects of legislation and regulations affecting university autonomy and education development. It highlights the impact of the decision of EU Member States to build a common space of research and education, the influence of this agreement on national laws, and the importance of state support for universities to achieve and maintain high-level positions. The paper also call attention to aspects of bureaucratic processes that increase the difficulties of implementing innovative teaching programs, which impedes meeting the social market requirements. Since the relationship between research and education is closely linked to the internal governance structures of universities, the paper brings to light the governance role in articulating the value system of research and education quality assurance and control systems. It is emphasized the need to maintain an optimal proportion between the number of students and the learning tasks, in order to prevent increasing research side-lining from institutional realities.

Is University Autonomy under Pressure by New Research Funding Regimes? – Experience for Aalborg University, Denmark

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Three general trends seem to characterize current allocation of university research funding in most universities worldwide. First, universities become more and more dependent on external funding for research. Second, the share of dedicated programmes and competitive funding increases at the expense of so-called basic ('free') state funding. Third, the allocation of funding from government to the university level and further from the university level to the research groups and individual researcher becomes more performance based led by New Public Management approaches. Section 1 introduces the overall theme of research funding and autonomy. In section 2, the paper investigates how these three general trends are present in a Danish setting. Section 3 takes Aalborg University as a concrete case and describes how these three trends influences the allocation of research funding. Section 4 takes a closer look into how this new research funding regime may influence the organization -, financial -, staffing -, and academic autonomy in the short and long run. Section 5 summarizes the main conclusions.

Management Development in the Context of Financial Autonomy

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University financial system operates under centralized mechanisms and does not take in consideration performance criteria in the allocation of budgetary resources. The base for calculation in financial resources allocation depends on the amount allocated in previous year or the funding under the historical costs. Insufficient funding from the state budget requires extra budgetary resources identification and recovery. Thus, when the power is centralized the implementation of decisions takes very long time and causes the delay of problem solving, blocks access to cash balances, as result universities cannot find optimal solutions and break their work. In the context of financial autonomy, we assume that universities have the freedom in decisions that will allow them to handle the budget individually, will be entitled to manage funds and the allocation from State budget will not be based on historical costs, but on funding per student. Through these reforms, universities hope to limit the Government influence in University, so that the Ministry has lower involvement in the universities activity and cannot impose anything without legal basis. Also, an advantage would be if the Ministry can have more confidence in universities.

Student responsibilities in the framework of university autonomy

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The Bologna process together with such elements as ECTS and the new grading scale brings result oriented learning described in terms of the learning outcomes. This approach aims on providing student with clearer picture of the programmes and courses offered by the higher education institutions. At the same time this approach makes the students responsible for their studies together with providing them with the power to influence content of their studies and selecting courses and tracks which are modern and relevant to the respective degrees. Swedish experience clearly shows that this approach can provide good results in the long run: implementation of such approach started after the HE reform 1977. During this period of time Swedish students became a very active and influential force when it comes to development of the project content. In case of KTH this process also resulted in introduction of new pedagogic methods as constructive alignment and CDIO where the students became a part of the active learning process.

Main Factors Determining the Formation of University Autonomy in England

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Initially a historic retrospect of the establishment and progression of the higher education in England is provided. This concise review sheds light on the role of various institutions in the development of university autonomy (UA) in England, the role being played by the Church and the Royal institution. The high level of UA in England has been the case since inception. The modern time developments have been most significant in the last 20-25 years. Consequently, the focus of the analysis of recent events is on the change of UA in England in the 1990s and 2000s when the most significant transformation in the university autonomy has taken place. Departing from the governmental structure in the United Kingdom resulting from devolution various sources have been referred relating to and impacting the university autonomy. It is highlighted the latest development of UA in England indicates that there are preconditions created for greater than before autonomy and academic independence of the institutions of higher education in the country.

Evolution of University Autonomy in Bulgaria Since 1989

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Ever since 1989, Bulgaria's higher education sector has gone through significant change. This process has been characterized by a swift radical conversion from overregulation to significant university autonomy. After Bulgaria joined the European Union (EU) in 2007, a prime government's objective became the acceleration of the social and economic convergence to EU norms as well as a work force equipped with the skills required by the speedily developing knowledge-base in the country. To safeguard equal admission against the backdrop of rising tuition fees the Bulgarian Government launched an extensive student loan scheme covering the tuition costs of full-time students, and a loan scheme for covering the living expenses of young parents studying at universities. Overall university autonomy related reforms have already dealt successfully with a number of issues in this area. More efforts are applied. Thus, a major undertaking has been the collection of information on educational outcomes and the respective graduate employment in the period 2010 - 2012 as part of the Bulgarian Universities Ranking System (BURS) initiative. Overall, Bulgaria has achieved a lot through the implementation of university autonomy reforms.

Embedded Autonomy: Explorative Case Study on Changes in Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions in Lithuania

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This paper provides an exploratory case study on how higher education (HE) reforms are embedded within broader social and legal institutions and what effect such interaction have on university autonomy. To conceptualize the interactions between autonomy as exercised in strategic and day-to-day decisions of universities, the HE policies and broader national contexts, the paper adopts and further develops analytical framework proposed by Williamson (2000). We test the proposed analytical model by analyzing the outcomes of HE reforms carried out in Lithuania in 2009.

Voucher Style Higher Education Funding in Lithuania: Introduction and Further Adoption to the Reality

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Lithuania as the other countries of the European Union (EU) face challenges to modernize higher education. Voucher style funding scheme has seemed very attractive as modern, innovative and liberal way to promote competition in very dense populated, underfunded and of the dissatisfying quality higher education institutions sectors in Lithuania. As the voucher system demonstrated its first results it was obvious that such funding system as full free market expression does not work perfectly and the corrections such as introduction of purposive financing, grants or increasing number of voucher groups are needed. The establishment of the voucher system did not raise the quality standards that much as it was expected as demand-side financing forced universities widely use marketing tools or accept students even with low entrance marks. What is more, competition among universities created unintended competition among different science programs, which triggered discussions that liberal market does not ensure the fulfilment of state needs for various specialities.

The Strengthening of Academic Autonomy: Higher Education Accreditation Practice in Lithuania

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Institutions of Higher education granted with academic autonomy to decide on their academic content and the degree programs have to assure the quality level and accountability to the society as well. However the desire to keep particular level of the quality might encourage government to introduce control mechanisms. Accreditation which is defined as a formal statement that institution or the study program meets the agreed standards is one of the widely used control tools. European countries are seeking to co-operate on strengthening quality assurance in HE sector. However the control frameworks are kept as national responsibility and the perception of the accreditation differs among the nations. Institutions of higher education (HE) in Lithuania have externally controlled academic autonomy as only accredited institutions might operate and only accredited programs can be carried out. The liberal streams reducing requirements for accreditation challenged the HE institutions' inner quality assurance system but at the same time encouraged to register new study programs with fashionable title and questionable content. In addition, there are some cases where the accreditation is not released and surplus of the information need to be given to the accreditation officers.

Human Resource Management in Higher Education Institutions Operating on the Principles of University Autonomy

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Implementation of amendments to the legislation in force with respect to higher education institutions operating since 01.01.2013 on the principles of university autonomy of these institutions opens new opportunities for these institutions in the development of individualized strategies and policies in human resource management and big responsibilities to the university community and control bodies. University staff autonomy represents the right of academic community to establish their own institutional strategy in organizing and managing the human resources of the university by promoting educational and research priorities, institutional flexibility and security of staff working relations, assuring compliance with the legislation in force. Providing staff university autonomy is carried out through their own mechanisms of employment, monitoring, motivating and staff flexibility. Human resource management is a process that allows higher education institutions to modify any part of its structure so as to ensure efficient operation, based on appearing changes, providing quality educational services. Of course, all personnel policies approved at universities are required to derive from the normative acts, which often create some situations that have no legal regulation or can be interpreted controversial. The purpose of this presentation is to identify some of these situations and come up with some legal solutions that need to be made at either the level of educational institution or at the state level in order to improve human resources management.

The Contribution of the University to the Life and Progress of the community

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The paper describes how the universities may contribute to the life and progress of the community by high quality services in education and research. The University Stefan cel Mare of Suceava is an exhaustive university that prepares specialists in various fields: economics, law, mechanical, electrical and IT engineers, letters, science of education, sports etc. This permits to the university to play an important role in the life of community. Beside the specialists prepared in the university, the teachers, and not rarely together with their students, are very implied in various projects of the community.

Some Reflections on the New Salary System in Higher Education Institutions with financial autonomy

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The present article focuses on the importance of designing a labor remuneration system within higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova offering solutions to the strategic problems faced by these institutions. The implementation of effective personnel policies aiming to motivate the personnel is realized when internal regulations are adopted meant to ensure an equitable and transparent pay system. The elaboration of specific performance indices reporting the performance of the institution is difficult and complex, as well as responsible and necessary. Indeed, the goal of each manager is to boost the employees' level of responsibility and job performance. It is generally acknowledged that the worth of a higher education institution is not constituted so much of the available material and financial resources as of its personnel potential. The key to success lies in the hands of the human resources whose qualification and professionalism form the effectiveness of the entire system. Due to their qualification, knowledge and studies all the ideas and goals of the institution can be translated into reality. They are the ones to promote the mission and the philosophy of the institution. Thus, they make the force capable of destroying the institution or increasing its level of competitiveness.

Internationalization in the Context of Universities' Academic Autonomy: Current and Future Prospects

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The present article reflects the conceptual framework of the internationalization as one of the top priorities of higher education in Moldova, presenting the way in which the internationalization affects Moldovan universities and facilitates their inclusion in the international knowledge and research area in the context of academic autonomy. It analyzes national policies and legal framework in the field, presenting the opportunities and obstacles of the internationalization process. It presents methods, models and strategies of internationalization of higher education in Moldova. It examines and summarizes the experiences of international cooperation, achieving the academic mobility, recruitment of international students and the creation of partnerships with universities from other countries in the context of university autonomy. It analyzes the risks associated with the process of internationalization. The SWOT analysis of the internationalization of higher education in Moldova is accompanied by proposals to enhance the experience of university autonomy.

Teacher Mobility: University Management and Faculty Autonomy

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USV supports teacher mobility as it brings multiple benefits to the members of the academic community: it ensures advancement of knowledge, both through visits to foreign universities and through the shared experience of teachers coming to Suceava. Mobility leads to the opening of the European area of education; it increases academic competitiveness, enhances education quality and also promotes mutual understanding in the Europe of languages and cultures. Organizationally, the university management is based on centralized administrative and financial management of mobility and decentralized identification of partner institutions, study programs, selection of participants and use of the mobility results. The balance between the unitary management of certain issues at the institutional level and decentralization of the decision-making process at faculty level ensures continuous development of mobility and brings tangible benefits to teachers and students.

Are governance structures fit for purpose, effective, and accountable?

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In Higher Education the concern about governance is closely associated with the movement towards greater autonomy. While recognizing the importance of governance there has been a tendency to focus on manifestations and measures of autonomy and the management structures which are required. It is vital to reassert that good governance of public and private institutions determines their quality, integrity and effectiveness. Governments and institutions have different perspectives on autonomy and it is perhaps not sufficiently appreciated that ‘external governance’ needs to adjust to establish genuine autonomy and an environment in which governing bodies in their turn transform ‘formal’ autonomy into a reality. European models of University governance are changing but is it possible that there is more to learn from the corporate approach in addressing the scale and complexity of autonomous Universities? This might encourage closer scrutiny of accountability, size, composition (membership), responsibilities, appropriate relations between leaders, senior managers and governing bodies. In particular it might raise questions about the role and relationship of the Rector with the governing body. Structures, membership, formal responsibilities do not, however, guarantee effectiveness or accountability – how is success to be measured?

University Autonomy – The Swedish Case

Lennart Ståhle, Independent consultant, former Deputy University Chancellor, The Swedish Authority of Higher Education.

This presentation aims to give an overview of the current trends in the Swedish debate about university autonomy and how the Swedish Scene has developed in the recent years. This is mainly done with European University Association's work with university autonomy and the development of the EUA scorecard. But the presentation also gives a discussion about the concepts “academic autonomy” and “academic freedom”. These two concepts are sometime seen as synonymous but it is argued that there is a difference between the concepts that has to be maintained.

The Rationale for and How to Build University-Business Collaboration: Trends and Organising Principles

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Collaboration between universities and the business community is on the agenda in most countries. The old formula of theory production and subsequent application in practice has been replaced by a new formula of interaction between theory and practice. The aim of this paper is to discuss the rationale for this development, conceptualize the development, and provide recommendations as to how to build university-business relations. The paper will argue that the rationale for this development is twofold: Firstly, innovation has become the key “productive” and “competitive” factor of a (global) market economy, and as knowledge and managers/experts with high level of competence are key drivers of innovation, universities are the obvious partner for the business community. Secondly, while the concept of formal knowledge has been around for many years, experiential knowledge and its importance for knowledge development is of recent origin. Experiential knowledge is by definition embedded in practice and this fact makes the business community an obvious partner for universities. Thus, there is a mutual, dynamic and beneficial relation between universities and the business community. But the collaboration is not a smooth one as the collaborative partners are based on two different rationales. The paper will discuss the challenges and opportunities of collaboration and provide guidelines as to how to organize the collaboration.

Case study of Financial and Organizational autonomy: Management of the External Funding at the Department Level

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Degree of autonomy, which universities has been granted in Denmark resulted in multifaceted implications for the different levels of the organizational structures. The paper will present how the financial and organizational autonomy has been translated into the practical models of management of the external funding at the department level at Aalborg University. The case of the Department of Biotechnology, Chemistry and Environmental Engineering will give an overview of the procedures and issues taken into consideration to ensure transparency, rule of law, and efficiency in managing the funds from research councils, foundations and industry contracts that in 2012 constituted approximately 53% of total department revenue. The Government–University interface will be analysed in terms of capacity of the university to act within space of action given by the state, exploring the effect on the organisational and financial autonomy of the institution. The overall aim of the paper is to give better understanding the contextual factors (formal requirements and expectations, multiple actors, economic and budgetary pressures) in the decentralisation processes. Furthermore the challenges how to balance possible side-effects of decentralisation and at the same time how to guarantee accountability will be discussed.

Academic Autonomy in the Light of Government-University Interface

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In this paper, the academic autonomy of universities is analyzed in the light of obligations, rights and responsibilities of the stakeholders regarding the following component parts of the educational process: *setting specializations / educational programs, developing the curriculum and syllabus, enrollment to studies, organizing and developing the educational process, quality assurance of studies*. There are determined the regulatory documents which legislate the relationship of the parties, laws that describe how to achieve these regulations. Then, the weak and strong parts of these documents are highlighted. There are also formulated proposals of amendments for the improvement of the legislation in force.

Academic Autonomy in the Light of Staff-students Interface

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The paper discusses academic autonomy in relation to such aspects of the educational process as enrollment to studies, organization of the didactic process, teachers' rights and obligations, students' rights and obligations. Given this context, it is performed a detailed analysis of the regulatory documents developed according to the existing normative acts in this area which set the relationship between the involved interested parties. Also, the negative and positive aspects of these documents are highlighted and certain proposals to improve legislation in force are proposed. For example, in terms of rights and duties of teachers, the responsibilities are well defined by the Law on Education no. 547-XIII of 21 July 1995, art. 55 (a) with the subsequent amendments. They are also developed in the codes of ethics of universities and cover the entire spectrum of teachers' professional activity. However, there are cases when the same rights and obligations are treated differently by universities, because universities do not have a common toolbox that they could guide on in the development of these codes. This paper provides a similar analysis of the other component parts of the Staff-Students compartment.

How much we Know about University Internationalization and University Autonomy: An Exploratory Review

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In this paper we aim to deepen our theoretical and practical understanding of internationalization of universities by exploring the relationship between university internationalization and university autonomy. It has become an accepted practice for universities to incorporate internationalization in their mission statements and strategic plans. Conventional wisdom suggests that universities should adapt their strategies, resources, and structures and organizations to international environments. However, recent examples of university internationalization failures and withdrawals from international markets raise concerns about the sustainability of university internationalization efforts as well as about the erosion of individual and university-wide autonomy. Herein, we conjecture that the process of university internationalization and its sustainability is determined by the structure and exercise of university autonomy settings at home and in host countries. We conducted a systematic review of the literature to identify empirical studies that theorize and conceptualize the intersection between university internationalization and university autonomy. We put forward a process model of university internationalization and develop propositions to guide future research at this intersection. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on a phenomenon that has received scant attention in academic research and policy debates, namely sustainability of university internationalization viewed through the lenses of university autonomy.

The Role of Governing Bodies of HEIs in the Context of University Autonomy

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One of the key issues for the modernization of Europe's higher education system lies in the controversial concept of university autonomy which generated a lot of debates in recent years. First of all it concerns the university governance and relationship between the state and higher education institutions. Since studies on University Autonomy were sequenced in four dimensions: organizational, financial, staffing and academic, university governance structures should be included in the first one, i.e. in the organizational autonomy. Therefore, this study is focused, first of all, on presenting several definitions of the concept, and second, on describing the role, mission, responsibilities, size and composition of the HEI governing bodies. It also outlines the main types of governance structures, division of responsibilities among the governing bodies, elected staff and student members, the inclusion and appointment of external members in the governing bodies, term of office, etc. in the Republic of Moldova as well as examples from other countries. It is difficult to make a comparison between individual organizational forms because of the diversity of national frameworks, but we can affirm that current situation in Moldova's higher education system can be characterized by limited university autonomy. Thus, in order to enhance it, a series of improvement actions and activities should be implemented.