

QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: FROM PROCLAIMED TO REAL DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

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Abstract. *Higher education institutions are considered as the main bearers of socio-economic development of society in general. Having in mind that quality is considered as an important part of institution's responsibility as well as its' sustainability, it is necessary to provide a holistic approach that would cover all processes in the institution and offer students and other stakeholders the expected standards of professional and competent functioning in all aspects of life and work. On that basis, every higher education institution tend to design and implement scientific research and professional work in various fields, and to promote and nurture creative and critical thinking values, academic integrity and professional ethics. Dedicated to this mission, many of them attempt to establish themselves as reputable HEI's in the country and the region committed to the standards of the European educational space, endeavoring to develop science, academic community, local and regional social community. Vision of many faculties is oriented toward becoming recognizable in the international academic community by constantly striving to meet as higher as possible educational, scientific and academic community standards, but also, in accordance to their original principles and actions, to contribute to the development a culture of quality in the society. Therefore, the quality management of a higher education institution is a process that continuously and systematically follows-up over a long-time period whether the established system of quality assurance, monitoring and control is effective and adjusted to proclaimed European standards. Purpose of this presentation is to gain insight into to current developmental state of quality management in HEI's in relation to the proclaimed standards.*

Key words: *quality of management, management of quality, higher education institutions, policies, management systems, organizational improvement*

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1. INTRODUCTION

It could be said, and the abundance of literature confirms it, that quality represents one of the most provocative and at the same time the most intriguing terms in the business world. The numerous definitions present in the available literature allow us to discuss it as a very broad concept that has the potential to be seen from different perspectives, angles and contexts. Overall, all attempts to define quality academically are challenging and at the same time insufficient to describe the essence of quality in all its complexity and specifics. While some authors describe it with the help of synonyms of superiority and excellence, others treat it as a function of specific, measurable parameters, others speak in terms of expediency, i.e., that quality is what the user wants, others relate it to the level of meeting the user's expectations. Also, there are those who focus on quality as a value category or those who see it as the totality of features and characteristics of services that meet the set requirements, expected wishes and preferences of users, but among them there are also those who consider quality to be a transformation, i.e., a qualitative change and a process that never ends.

Although initially difficult to be defined, it seems that the concept of quality has long been under the auspices of the economic and industrial sector, i.e., in the center of their interest and concern. In fact, enabling and achieving good business results made quality very quickly a social concern that affects all areas of social life and functioning, especially the area of public services. Numerous reflections on the best ways to achieve the quality of public services, as well as proposals for specific application frameworks for productive quality management in this field have resulted in complex and often provocative debates and dilemmas. Different discussions and disputes were started about the merging of the two terms "quality" and "management", since the first mainly related to competitiveness, as well as sustainability for a long period of time, while the second was mainly related to business activities, organization and control of daily activities of an entire organization.

Educational organizations, especially higher education institutions, were often unjustifiably absent from such endeavors. Systematic analysis of national and international sources from the field of education, primarily from higher education pedagogy, gives the impression the authors seem to not be able to reconcile with the term management, there is a kind of reservation or even aversiveness to use it in the field of education as well as in all other areas of public services. This not only leads to selectivity, but also to a certain superficiality, because it leads to the tendentious use of different terminology, often inadequate to the educational context, or narrowing the scope of quality management only to the quality assurance process.

This phenomenon is to some extent justified because insufficient development and affirmation of management in education, especially in higher education, also leads to inadequate management of terminology. Among other things, management, as a relatively new field of study in academic and scientific circles, is still insufficiently researched, so it is quite logical that developing countries, such as Serbia, need more time to accept this concept within the education field, which was primarily related to politics, trade and economy. Management is related to development because it brings positive changes and strives towards innovative ways of organization and functioning. And since it is about the development, progress, improvement and achievement of the quality of the educational system, good planning, organization, control and management are important. In higher education institutions, in order to achieve the desired growth and development, and even the preferred level of quality, it is necessary to use some existing experiences, to test, improve,

eliminate shortcomings and risky aspects, "and that cannot be done..." as Jovanović points out (2022, p. 102) "... by maintaining the status quo, but by introducing changes, namely transformational changes – usually complete and all-embracing modifications". Modern higher education organizations and the needs of educational systems and the educational market in general can progress only on stable foundations and objective perspectives of management, as well as a realistic vision and commitment of wise leadership. Therefore, the management of a higher education institution is a field of study and practice that deals with the operational segment of its functioning, and only ensuring the quality of educational services, especially at the tertiary level, is the key to distinguishing among competitors in the educational market as well as ensuring long-term sustainability.

Quality in education is a matter of vital importance precisely because of the responsibility that higher education institutions have towards multiple stakeholders - users of educational services (students), society, etc. Also, in the context of higher education, quality is one of the most significant aspects of knowledge creation, human resource development, and socio-economic strength of the development of society in general and the country. It is important to keep in mind that the concept of quality in higher education is usually grouped into several categories: (1) quality as a measure of value set by the academic community itself, (2) quality as a measure of alignment with the ultimate, long-term or short-term goal of students, and (3) quality as the value of the achieved higher education threshold (defined standards, which, if met, classify the institution as a good educational institution).

In the field of higher education, quality cannot be viewed in isolation from structure and process, that is, effective and successful organizational arrangements, which undoubtedly belong to management. Looking at the various definitions attributed to the term quality as well as the term management, although it seems undeniably difficult or even impossible to arrive at a unique or even precise, unambiguous definition of quality management, there is a generally accepted and tacit view of the author that it represents a "management approach" and according to Dean and Bowen (1994, p. 92), made up of a "set of mutually reinforcing principles, each of which is supported by a set of practices and techniques". The crucial importance of the issue of quality management in higher education institutions is highlighted by Becket and Brooks (2008) emphasizing that many countries and many cultures constantly keep this issue as an unavoidable item on their agenda. Therefore, quality management has become embedded in many organizations since the beginning of the 21st century. It has gradually started to reflect the understanding that long-term improvement cannot be achieved without paying significant attention to the practice of quality management, that is, as the authors Rosa and Amaral (2007, p. 2008) suggest that "quality of management" is as important as the "management of quality". Finally, we should not forget that the expectations of citizens towards the activities of higher education institutions are much higher now than in the past. The society believes that higher education institutions should educate and shape students into active citizens ready and prepared for the future, i.e., a world characterized by an inexhaustible need for competent experts equipped with soft skills, active and interactive in terms of market research and opportunities for socio-economic development, creative and innovative in terms of transferring knowledge from the academic community to other interested parties, etc. On that basis, every higher education institution strives to develop a mission that would focus on the design and implementation of higher education, scientific research and professional work in various fields, and to promote and nurture creative and critical thinking values, academic integrity and professional ethics. Dedicated to this mission, many of them attempt to establish themselves as reputable HEI's in the country and the region,

committed to the standards of the European educational space, endeavoring to develop science, academic community, local and regional social community. Thus, in the modern era, many higher education institutions, especially in countries in transition, as well as education viewed globally, face a not so simple task related to balancing between reacting and responding to current changes and initiating changes. A particular challenge is to reach an alignment between the important role they play in economic development and their role in human and social development. The problems are further complicated if there is also the requirement to serve national needs as well as "playing skillfully on the global field to satisfy global needs". Therefore, vision of many faculties is oriented toward becoming recognizable in the international academic community by constantly striving to meet as higher as possible educational, scientific and academic standards, but also, in accordance to their original principles and actions, to contribute to the development a culture of quality in the society. Because of that, quality management of a higher education institution is a long-standing process that needs to be done continuously and systematically over a long-time period and follows-up whether the established system of quality assurance, monitoring and control is effective and adjusted to proclaimed European standards.

2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT VS. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

In the dynamic world of higher education, where there is a constant effort to improve its competitiveness, quality must be redefined again and again. From a futuristic point of view, the aspirations to improve the way of doing business in national higher education institutions by modelling the best global practices prolong the existing discussions about quality. They can also be seen as a positive reflection of the involvement of people in the development of the quality culture. It is precisely the public discussions about how to internally manage or improve quality that have intensified in recent years. It is important to note here that in academic circles there is a certain terminological confusion where the terms quality management, quality assurance, quality improvement, quality control, quality assessment are used interchangeably to describe all or part of the institutional process of focusing on quality issues. While the definitions of each of the above terms may vastly overlap, the specific understanding of the terms may vary. This actually indicates that individual countries may have somewhat different emphases in the application of quality principles within their educational processes and situational contexts prone to change. However, as stated by Luxton (2005, p. 8), despite the present terminological variations and specific differences in approaches, international trends have shown a tendency towards convergence rather than divergence and separation, especially when it comes to the principles of what a higher education institution that is effectively engaged in quality improvement should be like. Even where specific approaches to developing already improved quality exist, sharing best practices with institutional bodies and faculty organizations in charge of quality can significantly help refine their processes and expectations. The above-mentioned author suggests that all aspects related to quality in higher education can be divided into quality management (QM) and quality improvement (QI). While quality management is generally used to refer to structures within a higher education institution that assist in quality management issues, the term quality improvement is often used to describe specific quality processes. Separating these concepts is pointless because they are interdependent and related to each other, vital concepts necessary for the success and sustainability of a higher education institution.

3. QUALITY MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS IN SERBIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – PROCLAIMED PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

Ensuring the quality of higher education, its evaluation and monitoring is of key importance for achieving and maintaining its well-being and further development, and therefore the well-being and development of the country. In order to achieve the goals of the current Bologna process, Serbia is still working on establishing a quality assurance system in accordance with European educational standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European area as one of several segments. According to the model standards and guidelines adopted at the proposal of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) Serbia accepted to establish quality assurance mechanisms through the quality assurance process and accreditation procedures in order to improve the quality of higher education institutions and encourage mobility. The goal is to support mechanisms, present good practice examples and accountability of participants in the quality assurance process, while building awareness of the necessity and obligation for the results of the quality assurance process to be transparent and available to the general public. Among other things, the culture of quality is promoted with the transfer to the modern culture of business and management in higher education institutions. This means that much more importance is now given to the institution's ability to effectively manage its own quality, and this, on the other hand, implies that external accreditation bodies want to find and single out mature institutions that can successfully identify their own strengths and areas that are needs to be improved, and then to develop a strategy for introducing the necessary changes, which will ultimately be evidenced by the results. If we start from the assumption that quality assurance is: "internal and external evaluation procedures, the implementation of which helps improve the quality of education in HEI's" we can conclude that this complex process usually involves: planning, evaluation, monitoring, maintaining, and improving positive results achieved. Also, both external and internal quality assurance should be based on consistent and formulated criteria. The internal quality assurance system includes the provision of continuous assessment and development of the quality of the teaching, learning, and research process at both the institutional and program level, the professional development of the staff, and the improvement of the quality of services and conditions provided by the institution. The external quality assurance system consists of institutional authorization and accreditation. Authorization is an external quality assurance mechanism for higher education. It is an institutional assessment that determines an institution's compliance with authorization standards. The evaluation process is carried out by a group of experts and is based on the analysis of the information reflected in the self-assessment report of the institution and the information obtained during the visit of the experts. Authorization is mandatory for all higher education institutions to be able to carry out educational activities and issue a state-recognized diploma. Accreditation of higher education programs is an external mechanism for quality assurance in higher education, implemented by the National Entity for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NAEQA). Accreditation is a program evaluation that determines a program's compliance with accreditation standards. The assessment is carried out by a group of accreditation experts and is based on the analysis of the information contained in the program self-assessment report, as well as the information obtained during the expert visit. Accreditation is mandatory in Serbia. Since 2006, when the National Council for Higher Education first adopted the criteria for monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance, the

Guidelines on procedures for self-evaluation and quality evaluation of higher education institutions has become the main document defining the standards of self-evaluation and quality evaluation of higher education institutions in Serbia. This document mandates that all higher education institutions must conduct self-evaluation based on the criteria specified therein, which are also followed by expert groups in conducting external evaluations of higher education institutions. The data that is collected and organized every year, or every three years, gives an insight into the implemented individual activities and enables the monitoring of changes and actions undertaken to improve the quality of any considered aspect of quality. Dissemination of relevant quality indicators and their additions is constantly carried out. Currently, there are many quality indicators, both at the University level and at the faculty level, and it is easiest to observe them in the context of qualitative and quantitative quality indicators.

The first step in the evaluation process of a higher education institution is the internal evaluation. It represents a valuable experience and a necessary prerequisite for achieving the goal of improving the quality of the institution. It consists of collecting data, surveying students and teaching staff, after which the set goals and requirements are reviewed and discussed more thoroughly, and it is certainly necessary to meet the set standard requirements and comply with the established criteria for ensuring the quality of higher education, both nationally and internationally. In this sense, the faculties undertake and assume responsibility for continuous monitoring, improvement and development and ensuring the quality of work in numerous areas such as: (1) study programs (undergraduate studies, master's studies, doctoral studies), (2) teaching process, (3) scientific research, (4) teachers and associates, (5) students, (6) quality of studying and student life at the faculty, (7) textbooks and literature, (8) library resources, (9) IT resources, (10) space and equipment, (11) non-teaching support by professional services and Faculty Secretariat, (13) funding, (14) publicity of work, (15) quality management system and systematic quality monitoring, (16) role of students in quality improvement, and (17) self-evaluation process.

As quality is considered an important part of the institution's responsibility, even its sustainability, and in order to ensure a holistic approach that would cover all processes in the institution, and offer students and other users the expected quality standards, many faculties in Serbia have taken serious steps. For example, the permanent requirements and needs of the faculty to intensively and systematically research, monitor and analyze all activities in the field of higher education, the quality of study programs, the teaching process, scientific research and scientific-professional work, to further develop and upgrade them in accordance with the standards and positive practice of academic the national and international community gave rise to the establishment of organizational units or special bodies such as Quality Improvement Centers or Quality Committees. In this way, the faculties ensured that every subsequent planned, systematic and organized faculty self-evaluation is under the authority of these organizational units or bodies. The very success of evaluation and quality assurance largely depends on the support of the institution management. They operate in accordance with the Statute of the faculty and on the basis of the strategic work and development plan. In order to achieve higher levels of development, most faculties focus on the implementation of coordinated measures and basic activities of quality monitoring, assurance and development, which fall under the scope of work of special Committees for the improvement of quality or smaller working groups such as the working group for the analysis of the success and efficiency of studies,

working groups for ensuring the quality of teaching, working groups for monitoring and improving the quality of scientific and research work.

The main goals, areas, subjects and measures for quality improvement are defined by the strategic development documents of each individual faculty, such as the *Institution's Quality Assurance Strategy*. This is how the faculties clearly specify their focus on the improvement of their programs, which is one of the key segments of the reform of higher education in Serbia, as well as its integration into modern trends in university education. Such strategic solutions clearly show the directions of growth and development of the institution, predict long-term (realistically achievable) goals and objectives, but also the direction of action with optimum utilization of available resources in order to meet the set goals. For the purposes of sustainability and an adequate response to the demands and changes of the educational environment, higher education institutions tend to periodically analyze and improve their strategies, and make changes and additions as necessary. Although the goals and objectives are contained in them, the organizational units in charge of quality specify them even more thoroughly through completely rational and constructive short-term and long-term action plans.

It actually implies the formulation, proposal and adoption of Action Plans for the implementation of the Quality Assurance Strategy of a specific higher education institution. Such plans specify the procedures, activities and measures for all areas of quality assurance, the entities that will implement them and, most often, the indicative deadlines for their implementation. With such actions, higher education institutions not only formally meet one of the standards of the institution's self-evaluation, which refers to the definition of the quality assurance strategy while making it available to the public, but by actively working on the development of these action plans, their regular modification and adoption at the institution level, they also officially analyze and check if the activities defined by the plan were completed, evaluate the current situation with the SWOT analysis and create a basis for creating new and more effective action plans. This means that institutions that take their mission and vision more seriously are constantly making attempts to eliminate the shortcomings of the previous ones and will overcome the limitations of current activities and specify the responsibilities of all entities responsible for implementing the planned procedures. Furthermore, the necessary steps for the adequate implementation of the *Quality Assurance Strategy* are defined and the proposal of specific measures and activities that can be implemented in a longer or shorter period of time is listed.

In addition to establishing quality improvement mechanisms, many faculties in Serbia set as their priority the achievement of the highest level of quality in higher education, scientific research and innovative ventures, as well as professional and administrative activities of the institution. With such tendentious movements and constant effort on improving quality, especially with regard to innovative study programs and their compatibility with international programs, ensuring interaction, effectiveness and efficiency of the instruction process, excellence in scientific research and professional work, and continuous improvement of the entire faculty activity and the development of a culture of quality, they actually open up space for transformation into modern and attractive educational and scientific institutions competitive with related faculties in the country and region with the same or similar profiles, resources and potential.

When talking about the external quality control of higher education institutions in Serbia, it is carried out regularly by the Accreditation Commission in the fourth year of the accreditation cycle and during the accreditation of the higher education institution. At the request of the Ministry or the *National Council for Higher Education*, the external quality control of a higher education institution can be carried out on an extraordinary basis. In cases of regular external quality control, the starting point is the internal evaluation report submitted by the higher education institution, i.e., the results of the internal evaluation. This process is initiated by the commission for accreditation and quality control. Compliance with established and published quality standards of the higher education institution and its programs is verified. The check is carried out in pre-defined areas (teaching, teaching staff, space and equipment, literature, management process, publicity of work...) based on known and clear criteria, and in accordance with the law. Moreover, apart from identifying the facts important for decision-making, part of this inspection is a direct insight into the work of the higher education institution, during the visit of the review committee to the institution. The external quality control must be organized in a way that ensures the improvement of the quality of the higher education institution, and the participants of the quality control must have clearly defined accountability and responsibility. The verification procedure must be conceptually such that it ensures the expediency of the procedure in terms of improving the quality level of the higher education institution. After the analysis of the submitted documentation and a direct insight into the organization and functioning of the institution, the *External Evaluation Report* is prepared, which should be created in a clear and understandable language, emphasizing the decisions, findings and recommendations that the reviewers make to the institution's management. In fact, the focus is on the evaluation of three important aspects of quality assurance: (1) adequacy of self-evaluation - whether the self-evaluation was carried out in accordance with the standards for quality evaluation of higher education institutions and study programs, (2) meet the standards - complete, partial and non-existent, and (3) optimum activities - which activities of the higher education institution are qualitatively satisfactory, partially satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Accordingly, the final report that the reviewers submit to the competent body, i.e., the *Accreditation Commission*, should contain: (1) analysis of the fulfillment of standards for the external quality control of the higher education institution, (2) deficiencies in terms of the fulfillment of standards, and (3) proposals and suggestions for improving the quality of higher education institutions. The external quality control procedure is improved and adapted to the changes in the higher education system.

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS IN SERBIAN HEI'S – WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Since 2006, when the *National Council for Higher Education* adopted the criteria for monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance for the first time, the *Guidelines on self-evaluation and quality evaluation of higher education institutions* has become the main document defining the standards of self-evaluation and quality evaluation of higher education institutions in Serbia. This rulebook mandates that all higher education institutions must conduct a self-evaluation guided by the criteria specified in it, which are also adhered to by expert groups in conducting external evaluation of higher education institutions. The data that is collected and organized every year, or every three years, provides insight into the activities carried out and enables the monitoring of changes and

actions taken to improve the quality of any considered aspect of quality. Dissemination of relevant quality indicators is constantly carried out, as well as adding to them. Currently, there are a large number of quality indicators, both at the University level and at the Faculty level, and it is easiest to observe them in the context of qualitative and quantitative quality indicators. As quality is considered an important part of the institution's responsibility, including its sustainability, higher education institutions should adhere to a holistic approach that would ensure the coverage of all processes in the institution, and deliver the expected quality standards to students and other users of education services. In such a complex process, it is important to keep in mind that standardization should not be perceived as the only way to unify the organization, but rather as a model of clear guidelines (created in the form of criteria as part of each individual standard) with the help of which it is easier to achieve the desired results in business, primarily functioning of the educational institution. Specifically, quality standards in higher education actually represent official documents that contain requirements and guidelines concerning the educational climate itself and operations in higher education institutions, which are the subject of standardization. This standard implementation process is carried out for the purpose of designing, modifying or improving an educational product, educational service and the educational processes themselves at the tertiary level. The goal is to identify and eliminate problems and intensify effectiveness and efficiency of the higher education institution. It is important to keep in mind, as Harvey (2012) said that quality issues are also related to issues of standards. Due to the frequent overlapping of the concept of quality with the concept of standards, their differentiation is necessary because standards can primarily be defined as measurable outcome indicators that are used for comparative purposes. Additional confusion arises because the term 'standard' denotes both, a fixed criterion (against which the outcome can be compared) and a level of attainment. Broadly speaking, difference between quality and standards could be represented as the difference between process and outcomes, that is quality refers to how things are done whereas standards are used to measure outcomes. In order to avoid the overtone of institution unification, perhaps it would be more appropriate to speak of a set of guidelines and instructions on how the process of providing educational services and achieving the intended objectives should look in order to meet the expected quality. And experts from authorized bodies, such as the national accreditation body, which ultimately issues a certificate, i.e., accredits the institution, assess whether they are in compliance with the given standards, that is, instructions and guidelines. Without the intention to diminish the value and importance of deeper interpretations of the concept of standardization, for the sake of limited length and limitations of this work, it seems rational to present the quality assurance standards in higher education institutions schematically.

However, the possibility of meeting all the proclaimed standards, criteria, guidelines and instructions contained in them is an issue that deserves special attention. In order to identify the key issues that institutions face in reaching the defined standards, it is necessary to start from the question: what is happening in reality? In this regard, it is important to approach the in-depth, critical and systematic analysis of the available reports on the self-evaluation of the quality assurance of higher education institutions. Namely, by analyzing available self-assessment quality reports conducted by higher education institutions, there could be observed common problems related to the standardization of most higher education institutions in Serbia. Specifically, the diagnosis of the current situation can adeptly identify some obstacles that prevent the institution from fully meeting or

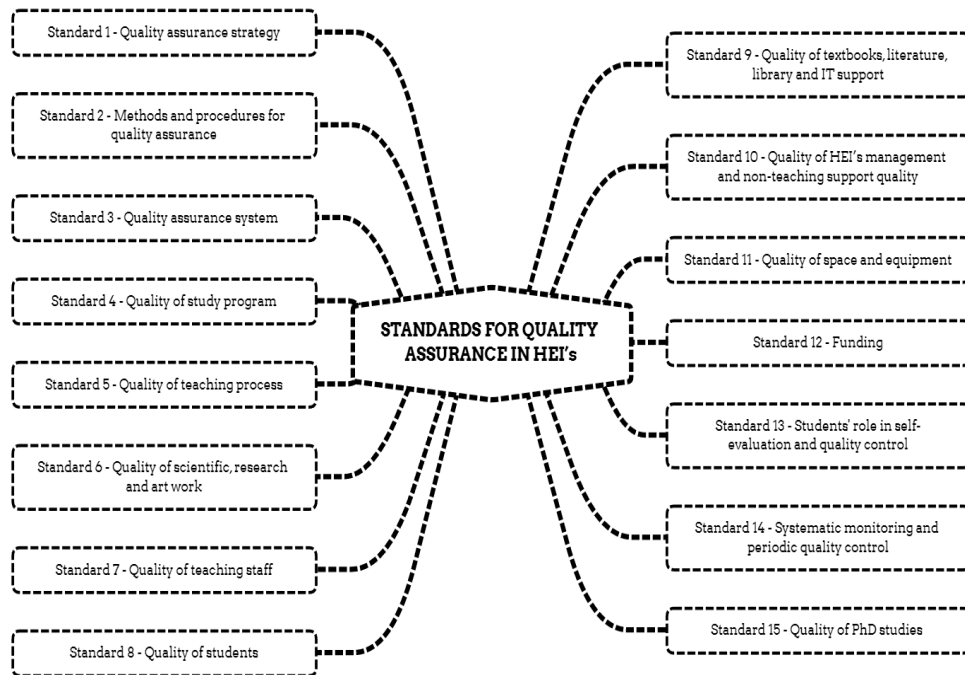


Fig. 1 Higher education institutions quality assurance standards

adequately responding to some guidelines and criteria of the standard. Some of them, very interesting and important for the functioning of certain processes in higher education institutions, are worth highlighting (schematic 2).

Speaking of standard 1 (*Quality assurance strategy*) from the figure shown above, one of the criteria imposed on higher education institutions is a greater presence of business entities, more specifically, employers in order to respond to the needs of the labor market, because the best information about needs and requirements comes from them. And the exchange of experience, knowledge, requirements for the necessary skills and competencies of certain professions could be adequately viewed through their inclusion in the work of the HEIs itself. But the main problem that numerous faculties in Serbia are facing is that they have not established a network of employers who would participate in collaborative work with management teams in faculties. It seems likely that the main reasons relate to the lack of resources and funds necessary to organize the activities aimed at career development and connecting with employers. Even if there are such activities, they are insufficient, and are usually organized by certain centers that operate like volunteering activities and organizing occasional meetings with potential employers. Moreover, one of the criteria within this standard is inclusion of students in organizational units of faculties that directly deal with quality improvement. Although most faculties have established *Centers for Quality Improvement* or some kind of *Committees*, student participation is obviously minimal, at a lower percentage than it should be. This is particularly evident when talking about the participation of students at higher levels of studies, especially doctoral ones. One of the reasons for the reduced, even invisible

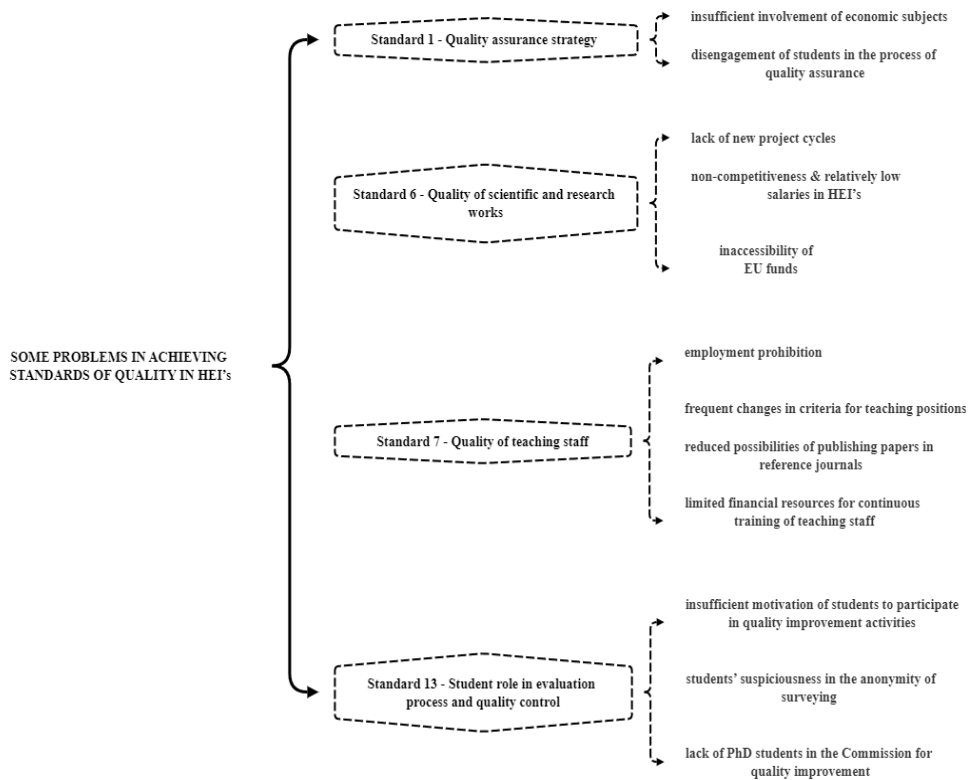


Fig. 2 Some problems in achieving standards of quality in HEI's education institutions

participation of PhD students in the work of the *Commission for Quality Improvement* lies in the lack of time due to their employment, simultaneous work on a doctoral dissertation and fulfilling other conditions necessary for their professional advancement. But, in order to address certain observed deficiencies or shortcomings, greater participation of students is necessary, especially when speaking about giving constructive proposals and solutions for detected problems in teaching and other areas of HEIs functioning from their side.

When it comes to the fulfillment of standard 6 (Quality of scientific and research work) based on the SWOT analyzes contained in numerous reports on the quality of higher education institutions, one significant problem is evident. This includes the lack of tenders for new project cycles, and in addition to that, the uncertainty due to rigid selection, specifically speaking of national projects and those one oriented toward the social sciences. It seems that every project cycle ends with the selection of a higher percentage of projects from other fields, primarily technical and natural sciences compared to the percentage of those from the social sciences. This greatly slows down and sometimes makes impossible the research work of teaching staff, especially junior researchers or assistants, various types of publications and other solutions that can arise through participation in projects. Also, relatively low salaries of employees in the higher education sector influence non-competitiveness. The coefficient used for calculating the salary of employees in higher education is particularly problematic since it has not changed for more than 15 years, which significantly affects the financial stability of the most educated part of society, but also

specific social, economic, and many other inequalities and aspects of work and life. If the inaccessibility of European funds is added to that, it could be said that the teaching staff employed at higher education institutions are alone and left to themselves in providing quality scientific and research work to prove their competence in the fields they deal with.

Standard 7 (Quality of teaching staff) is similar to the above described Standard 6. In addition to already mentioned problems, some other very present issues should be mentioned. In the recent accreditation period, which included numerous higher education institutions, employment prohibition on a state level happened. This to a greater extent reduced the possibilities of HEIs for getting new scientific and teaching personnel. Along with that, there are frequent changes in the criteria for selection into teaching positions and obtaining new title at the university level which introduce additional turbulence and uncertainty among employees. Also, some faculties emphasize the impossibility of publishing papers in reference journals precisely because of the specifics of the scientific field they deal with, which is again more present in the field of social sciences compared to others. Last, but not the least, is the problem of limited financial resources of HEIs that could be invested in the continuous training of teaching staff, and this important aspect remains the burden of the employee themselves.

Finally, within the framework of Standard 13 (Students role in assessment and quality control) one of the criteria is the surveying of students about the quality of HEIs in all areas stated in the Strategy of quality assurance. Despite the developed awareness of the importance of quality culture, some reports often mention the problem that students were not being motivated to participate in quality improvement activities. According to that, it could be identified increased suspicion of a certain number of students about the anonymity of the survey. And the fear of retaliation is also present. Although the student survey on the quality of studies is based on the principles of voluntariness, anonymity, neutrality and protection of the dignity of the persons whose work is the subject of evaluation, the above-mentioned reasons significantly reduce the possibility of obtaining an objective assessment and a realistic picture of the situation. In particular, it is necessary to emphasize the current mistrust of students that involvement in the self-evaluation process will bring real changes and that their proposals will be heard and respected.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The requirements of educational market and constant demands for contemporary improvement of conditions for quality organization and functioning of HEI's in the Republic of Serbia leads to reconsideration of the current developmental state by using systematic analysis of reports created according to proclaimed standards of quality. The problems mentioned above are just a few of the detected problems common to most of the quality reports of HEI's included in the analysis. Some are of course omitted, due to limitations of the scope of this paper. Instead of a conclusion, it is worth to point out some other key problems in the quality assurance process faced by HEI's. Firstly, new accreditation prices on the state level cause problems for faculties especially those with numerous study programs which significantly affects their stable functioning. Secondly, the number of reviewers increases from two to five and one of them need to be from foreign country, more precisely, from a foreign HEI's. Also, there is a lack of insight into the main HEI's problems by the side of European Association for Quality Assurance. And, sometimes different reviewers have different treatment and

interpretation of standards. Clearly, a constant and inexhaustible dilemma about the connection between the standards and their inherent criteria, and the possibilities of the institutions from the developing countries, including Serbia, is additionally stirred up by the issue of "discontinuity" and distrust in the functionality of certain quality management models, because the key bodies are not inclined to analyze and respect the current development capacities and crucial problems that higher education institutions face, and experts from the education field are often in a dilemma whether the standardization model is generally acceptable, and applicable in the field of quality management. The gap is further widened due to the entrenched opinion and firm conviction that quality management in education is unsustainable because it has been "copied" from other, highly developed countries. Such copying is strongly criticized because the education activities and the higher education process itself, by its nature and essence, properties and interest groups for which it is intended, does not tolerate such artificial solutions.

Nevertheless, it seems that it is important to verify certain effective and efficient models in practice, and not to judge their unsustainability in advance. While acknowledging the obvious differences and specifics, it seems that the next step should be directed towards a deeper understanding and public presentation of the main issues faced by most higher education institutions, and also finding solutions for their elimination and mitigation. After that, it seems likely that some of the operational management models adapted to the conditions in which Serbian higher education institutions operate could offer a flexible matrix for complex educational organizations, which could be further checked, verified, upgraded and improved through a systematic approach and implementation in practice. This would allow for the development of functional foundations and adaptable models of quality management in HEIs. Over time, efficient and effective solutions for overcoming the existing imbalance would be established in the tertiary sector. That is why it is important in the education system of Serbia to constantly invest in the search for applicable and integrative models that should "break away" from established bureaucratic patterns, administrative burnout and implicit theories about the unification of educational organizations. Nevertheless, there is no model that can provide an ideal, one-size-fits-all solution for all organizational requirements.

Those are some issues that exist, however, every HEI's that strives for good functioning and delivery of quality educational services will see these issues as challenges for which adequate, short-term or long-term solutions should be found in the future. Therefore, work on solving them actually leads to changes which are in the essence of quality management. And quality management is developmental process that never ends.

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UPRAVLJANJE KVALITETOM U INSTITUCIJAMA VISOKOG OBRAZOVANJA: OD PROKLAMOVANOG DO REALNOG RAZVOJNOG STANJA

Visokoškolske ustanove sagladavaju se kao glavni nosioci socio-ekonomskog razvoja društva uopšte. Kako se kvalitet smatra važnim delom odgovornosti i održivosti institucije, neophodno je obezbediti holistički pristup koji bi obuhvatio sve procese u ustanovi i ponudio studentima i drugim zainteresovanim stranama očekivane standarde profesionalnog i kompetentnog funkcionisanja u svim aspektima života i rada. U tom smislu, svaka visokoškolska ustanova teži ka osmišljavanju i ostvarivanju naučnoistraživačkog i stručnog rada u različitim oblastima, promovise i neguje vrednosti kreativnog i kritičkog mišljenja, akademskog integriteta i profesionalne etike. Posvećene ovoj misiji mnoge od njih pokušavaju da se afirmišu kao renomirane visokoškolske ustanove u zemlji i regionu posvećene standardima evropskog obrazovnog prostora nastojeći da razvijaju nauku, akademsku zajednicu, lokalnu i regionalnu društvenu zajednicu. Uz to, vizija mnogih fakulteta je da postanu prepoznatljivi i u međunarodnoj akademskoj zajednici kroz stalnu težnju da ispune što više obrazovne, naučne i akademske standarde, ali i da u skladu sa svojim izvornim principima kroz svoja delovanja doprinesu razvoju kulture kvaliteta u društvu. Iz tih razloga, upravljanje kvalitetom visokoškolske ustanove je proces koji kontinuirano i sistematski prati u dužem vremenskom periodu da li je uspostavljeni sistem obezbeđenja, praćenja i kontrole kvaliteta efikasan i usklađen sa proklamovanim evropskim standardima. Svrha ovog rada je da se stekne uvid u aktuelno razvojno stanje upravljanja kvalitetom u institucijama visokog obrazovanja u odnosu na proklamovane standarde.

Ključne reči: upravljanje kvalitetom, kvalitet upravljanja, visokoškolske ustanove, politike, sistemi upravljanja, unapređenje organizacije