Study concerning the evaluation of the quality of ARACIS activity by the HEIs management

Simona LACHE
Director of ARACIS Department of Accreditation
This study has been carried out within the process of external and internal evaluation of ARACIS activity

The team:

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Romanian National System of Higher Education
Structure of education fields

- Main fields: 6
- Scientific branches: 36
- Doctoral/Master study fields: 78
- Bachelor study fields: 85
- Bachelor study programs: 368

Source: HG No. 114/2017

academic year
2017-2018
Romanian National System of Higher Education - educational offer versus candidates’ demand - 

**ISCED 6**  
*1*st cycle - bachelor  
- No. of accredited HEIs: **97**  
  - public: 55  
  - private: 42  
- No. of study fields in HEIs: **368**  
- No. of study programs: **2640**  
- Places offered per year: **210.588**  
  (62.000 funded by the state)  
- No. of students enrolled in the 1*st* year of study: **119.065**  
- Total No. of students: **405.638**

**ISCED 7**  
*2*nd cycle - master  
- No. of accredited HEIs: **87**  
  - public: 55  
  - private: 32  
- No. of study fields in HEIs: **895**  
- No. of study programs: **3156**  
- Places offered per year: **150.610**  
  (35.600 funded by the state)  
- No. of students enrolled in the 1*st* year of study: **56.284**  
- Total No. of students: **103.827**

**ISCED 8**  
*3*rd cycle - Ph.D.  
- No. of accredited HEIs: **57**  
  - 56 universities and Romanian Academy  
- No. of study fields in HEIs: **4.011**  
- No. of doctoral schools: **210**  
- Places offered per year: **5.000**  
  (3.000 funded by the state)  
- No. of students enrolled in the 1*st* year of study: **4.774**  
- Total No. of students: **19.143**
Study aim and objectives

Objective a)

- improving the quality evaluation in higher education, periodically performed by ARACIS
- strengthening the quality management in higher education institutions

Objective b)

- identifying the opinion of higher education institutions regarding the quality of activities conducted within the process of external evaluation performed by ARACIS
- surveying the opinion of expert evaluators from ARACIS national evaluators pool regarding the role the agency plays in the development of the higher education system in the following period of time
The sampling

Total 879 respondents

SAMPLE A - HEIs management
55 public HEIs
466 respondents
30 private HEIs
160 respondents
Total valid questionnaires 576 (out of 626)

External survey

SAMPLE B - ARACIS experts
(academics and students)
277 respondents
academics
51 respondents
students
Total valid questionnaires 303 (out of 328)

Internal survey
The structure of the questionnaire

I. The assessment of the quality of services offered by ARACIS (model used: HETQMEX, SERVQUAL)

II. The assessment of ARACIS role and mission

III. Trends and risks of the higher education system

IV. Open questions

V. Identification Data

Sample A: 8 dimensions/30 items
Sample B: 13 dimensions/48 items

2 questions/7 items

18 trends
15 risks

2 questions

Sample A: 5 questions
Sample B: 3 questions
I. The assessment of the quality of services offered by ARACIS - Quality centered management

II. The assessment of ARACIS role and mission

III. Trends and risks of the higher education system

IV. Open questions

V. Identification Data
## Quality Centred Management: mean values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Mean dimension total HEIs</th>
<th>Mean dimension Public HEIs</th>
<th>Mean dimension Private HEIs</th>
<th>Difference Public – Private HEIs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Leadership</td>
<td>8,58</td>
<td>8,63</td>
<td>8,39</td>
<td>0,24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Commitment</td>
<td>9,15</td>
<td>9,16</td>
<td>9,11</td>
<td>0,05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Total Customer satisfaction</td>
<td>8,81</td>
<td>8,93</td>
<td>8,42</td>
<td>0,51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Involvement</td>
<td>9,14</td>
<td>9,22</td>
<td>8,89</td>
<td>0,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Training and education</td>
<td>8,51</td>
<td>8,54</td>
<td>8,42</td>
<td>0,12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ownership of problem</td>
<td>8,41</td>
<td>8,41</td>
<td>8,42</td>
<td>-0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reward and recognition</td>
<td>8,68</td>
<td>8,75</td>
<td>8,43</td>
<td>0,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Teamwork</td>
<td>9,18</td>
<td>9,32</td>
<td>8,72</td>
<td>0,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General mean</td>
<td>8,81</td>
<td>8,87</td>
<td>8,60</td>
<td>0,27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quality Centred Management: ranking of dimensions

Sample A - HEIs management

1. Leadership: 8.58
2. Commitment: 8.15
3. Total customer satisfaction: 8.81
4. Involvement: 8.14
5. Training and education: 8.51
6. Ownership of problems: 8.41
7. Reward and recognition: 8.68
8. Teamwork: 9.18

Scale from 1 to 10
Average = 8.81

Sample B - ARACIS experts

1. Leadership: 8.81
2. Commitment: 8.87
3. Total customer satisfaction: 8.85
4. Involvement: 8.9
5. Training and education: 8.68
6. Ownership of problems: 8.49
7. Reward and recognition: 8.78
8. Teamwork: 9.32

Average = 8.86
### Quality Centred Management: correlation matrix

#### Sample A – HEIs management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>D.1</th>
<th>D.2</th>
<th>D.3</th>
<th>D.4</th>
<th>D.5</th>
<th>D.6</th>
<th>D.7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total customer satisfaction (the resulting variable)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>0.8054</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>0.6586</td>
<td>0.6752</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>0.7675</td>
<td>0.7015</td>
<td>0.6952</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and education</td>
<td>0.5580</td>
<td>0.6237</td>
<td>0.6124</td>
<td>0.6241</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership of problem</td>
<td>0.7554</td>
<td>0.8287</td>
<td>0.6688</td>
<td>0.6988</td>
<td>0.6769</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward and recognition</td>
<td>0.7848</td>
<td>0.7833</td>
<td>0.6615</td>
<td>0.7353</td>
<td>0.6588</td>
<td>0.8303</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>0.7915</td>
<td>0.6831</td>
<td>0.6955</td>
<td>0.7836</td>
<td>0.6334</td>
<td>0.6852</td>
<td>0.779</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. The assessment of the quality of services offered by ARACIS (model used: HETQMEX, SERVQUAL)

II. The assessment of ARACIS role and mission

III. Trends and risks of the higher education system

IV. Open questions

V. Identification Data
## Evaluation of the mission and role of ARACIS: mean values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Missions’ components</th>
<th>Mean values</th>
<th>General mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public HEIs</td>
<td>Private HEIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>To assess</strong>, according to quality standards, the capacity of HEIs to fulfil the expectations of the beneficiaries.</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td>8.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>To contribute</strong> to the development of an institutional quality culture in higher education.</td>
<td>8.97</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>To ensure</strong> the protection of direct beneficiaries on the provision of study programs by producing and disseminating systematic, coherent and credible information, publicly available.</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>8.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><strong>To propose</strong> to the ministry of education the strategies and policies of continuous improvement of the quality of higher education, in close correlation with the secondary education.</td>
<td>8.61</td>
<td>8.34</td>
</tr>
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I. The assessment of the quality of services offered by ARACIS (model used: HETQME, SERVQUAL)

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Ranking the top 10 trends that will influence HE in Romania in the next 5 years

1. A better cooperation between the higher education institutions and the socio-economic environment - 72.4%
2. Increasing the process of internationalization - 61.3%
3. Increasing the use of IT & C in teaching, learning, evaluation, research, institutional management and internal and external communication processes - 57.1%
4. Applying an approach based on abilities and education outcomes - 51.7%
5. Developing some approaches based on quality criteria concerning the level of financing of higher education - 49.7%
6. Strengthening the universities autonomy and increasing responsibility of the higher education institutions for the act of management - 47.4%
7. Strengthening the links between teaching and scientific research - 47.2%
8. Diversifying and developing the offer of lifelong learning programmes - 38.0%
9. Increasing competition between higher education institutions and other organizations of basic and lifelong learning - 35.9%
10. Increasing the degree of convergence between national education policies and the European Union policies - 34.5%

Percentages out of the total 576.
Increasing the involvement of underrepresented groups of students in the process of higher education (disadvantaged categories, students with...)

Increasing the degree of autonomy of students in the education process / Developing the student centered teaching system

Increasing professors' mobility within and outside the country

Increasing students' mobility within and outside the country

Increasing the degree of involvement of students in research projects

Developing schemes of educational support for freshmen students

Increasing the involvement of students in the process of decision making

Increasing students' mobility within and outside the country

Implementing a multi annual (or study cycles) financing system

Ranking of the next 11-18 trends that will influence HE in Romania in the next 5 years

percentages out of the total 576
Ranking the potential risks that will influence HE in Romania in the next 5 years

- The risk of underfinancing the education system: 71.7%
- The risk of significant decrease of high school and baccalaureate graduates: 59.0%
- The risk of diminishing the quality of the teaching process: 51.0%
- The risk of decreasing the rate of marketplace insertion of graduates: 47.6%
- The risk of increasing the dropping out rate: 42.7%
- Reducing the number of state subsidized places: 41.0%
- The risk of increasing the number of graduates who will choose to work abroad: 35.4%
- The risk of a very small number of students, below the level of possible organization and functioning of some programmes: 34.2%
- The risk of insertion of graduates in fields other than their initial education: 32.5%
- The risk of decreasing the number of young people from rural area who are enrolled in higher education programmes: 25.9%
- The risk of unbalance between educational supply and demand (the number of candidates higher than the number of available places): 20.1%
I. The assessment of the quality of services offered by ARACIS (model used: HETQMEX, SERVQUAL)

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Open questions analysis

2 open questions related to:

• suggestions for improvement of the ARACIS evaluators activity;

• trends of the Romanian higher education regarding the quality assurance and quality management.
Summary

- **The quality indicators** defined in the ARACIS standards are identified as important means which, better defined and chosen, could lead to a quality improvement in quality of higher education;

- **Reconsidering the weight** (maximizing) of indicators related to learning outcomes is widely supported;

- **Increasing the responsibility of the internal quality assurance systems** is frequently cited as one of the main goals of all activities in this area;

- **Financing of HE based on performance** is identified as a possible solution to improve the quality assurance and quality management in universities;

- **A better use of new technologies** is a constant goal at the universities level;
Open questions analysis

Summary

- Improving the means for addressing the needs of the labour market is considered one of the important ways for increasing the quality of higher education in general;

- A better correlation between the national and international standards is proposed;

- Student involvement in all activities related to the academic process should be improved;

- Although improvements in the ARACIS activity are necessary, the academic system should continue to rely on the Agency, as an already validated mean to increasing quality in HEIs
Synthesis of the positive and negative aspects revealed by the university management

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Synthesis of the positive and negative aspects revealed by the university management

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✓ To propose to the ministry of education the strategies and policies of continuous improvement of the quality of higher education, in close correlation with the secondary education |
| Evaluators activity     | ✓ The activity performed by ARACIS evaluators is in line with the assumed mission | ✓ Excessive bureaucratization  
✓ Need for periodic training of evaluators |
| Tendencies              |                                                                           |                                                                                                                                          |
## Synthesis of the positive and negative aspects revealed by the university management

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| **Evaluator activity**     | ✓ The activity performed by ARACIS evaluators is in line with the assumed mission | ✓ Excessive bureaucratization  
✓ Need for periodic training of evaluators |
| **Tendencies**             | ✓ ARACIS is perceived as an important actor for the future, in the direction of improving the quality assurance and quality management in higher education, provided the necessary improvement of its methods and practices | ✓ Formalism and bureaucracy  
✓ The way the Romanian higher education is financed  
✓ Decreasing level of instruction of youth, pupils and students  
✓ Decreasing the importance of the teaching activities in the evaluation of the academic system (in the view of financing)  
✓ Implementation of the internal quality systems in universities  
✓ Increasing the drop out rate among students |
## Synthesis of the positive and negative aspects revealed by the university management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
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<th>THREATS</th>
</tr>
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<td><strong>ARACIS mission and role</strong></td>
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<td>✓ Influence of the global context; increased competition</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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Synthesis of the positive and negative aspects revealed by the university management

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<td>Evaluators activity</td>
<td>✓ Evaluation focused on teaching &amp; research activity and less on the formal, bureaucratic, collateral aspects</td>
<td>✓ Lack of consistency in evaluators activity (different approach of different evaluators, in the same field)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Increasing the professionalism of evaluators</td>
<td>✓ Risk of subjectivity in decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Periodic training of evaluators</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Tendencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above outlines the opportunities and threats identified in various aspects of university management, focusing on ARACIS mission and role, evaluators activity, and tendencies.
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Periodic training of evaluators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendencies</td>
<td>✔ A higher weight given to the teaching process in the evaluations of the academic system</td>
<td>✔ Maximizing the weight of criteria related to research results through publications, compared to criteria related to the teaching process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Quality standards and indicators used by ARACIS are seen as important mean to increase quality in higher education, provided that they are better defined and chosen</td>
<td>✔ Marginalization of the didactic component of higher education, in favour of scientific research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Financing based on past performance</td>
<td>✔ Increasing the gap between the output of the Romanian education system and similar European and global results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Quality standards in line with international (European) provisions</td>
<td>✔ Massive devaluation of higher education degrees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you for your attention!