

NATIONAL POLICY ON QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION – CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Hristo Hristov and Mariya Hristova

Abstract: The article presents a critical analysis of the Bulgarian national policy in higher education in terms of quality. Key documents and ideas related to quality management at all its levels: European, national and university, including the amendments in the Higher Education Act adopted in February 2016 are marked and comments are presented on their appropriateness and effectiveness. The paper focuses on university management, and in particular on two ideas: 1. The university quality management should be coordinated by contents formally with the National Qualifications Framework, with the national accreditation systems and the Bulgarian University Ranking System (BURS); 2. It should generate motivation for high quality connecting the achievements of university teachers with recognition and remuneration, which requires an objectified and adopted system of evaluation. It can be expected that such university management, which stimulates quality, can result in a complete transformation of the university atmosphere, a redistribution of finances to leading academics and managers and over time would cause a natural selection of academic staff in favor of quality

Keywords: University Quality Management, European Qualifications Framework, National Qualifications Framework, Academic Standards, Quality Improvement

I. EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL POLICY ON QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

European context

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is built on the principles and values set as early as in the Bologna Declaration in 1999 being enriched and approved in the following years. One of these principles is *the quality of higher education*. Explicitly or implicitly, it was included in the agendas of periodic meetings of Ministers of Education of the countries participants in the Bologna Process in Prague, Bergen, London, Leuven, Vienna, Budapest and Bucharest. As a result, the following decisions were made:

- *European Qualifications Framework (EQF)*¹ in the EHEA, which serves as a basis to build national qualifications frameworks;
- General principles, criteria and methodology for quality assurance;
- Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Educational Area.

The European Parliament adopted **an Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe's Higher Education Systems**², where it is underlined that “the quality and relevance of higher education are key conditions for extracting maximum benefit from the intellectual capital of Europe.” It encouraged the institutions of higher education to develop and implement their own internal systems of quality management and accreditation agencies to apply the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance. In the European Commission's Agenda the quality of education is considered a key driver of development and modernization.

National background

The higher education in Bulgaria up to the democratic changes in 1989 was designed for other purposes, in another time and under other conditions. The training was oriented to the planned economy's needs. It was the state (government) that was in the center of higher education. The government determined the necessary close-profile programmes oriented to the needs of this type of society. Through the Higher Attestation Commission (HAC) the state awarded scientific titles. The establishment and management of the system were centralized by the government and devoid of public control and academic competition.

A few months after November 1989 the Parliament (the National Assembly) adopted the Academic Autonomy Act that empowered universities with autonomous status established by the Constitution of the country. Despite these serious steps towards a market environment, the reforms in higher education seriously lagged behind. That is one of the few areas of public life in Bulgaria where the natural law of supply and demand is still limited. Competition is in the “entrance” instead of “exit” of universities where the labour market is.

The governing bodies for management of universities include only full-time teachers. The representatives of students usually have a passive participation and also exhibit insufficient competence. These academic authorities offer the programmes and university enrollment numbers to the government. Logically, the universities base their proposals on their own interests, on the historically established facts of a given university: availability of teachers, opportunities for academic promotion, existing school facilities, etc. The government cannot assign an enrollment number larger than the declared one despite its needs.

In fact, without any direct connection to the labor market, through their governing bodies the universities in Bulgaria define what programmes to be

¹ [European Qualifications Framework, 2008]

² [Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe's Higher Education Systems, 2011]

taught and how many students to be enrolled, who will teach them and what curriculum, what academic and educational standards will be met. Although quality should be equivalent to the user's satisfaction, employers are absent where and when a higher education school decides the areas which they are interested in.

Another significant circumstance must be added to the above-mentioned. The resource-oriented model of institutional funding of public universities is still in force. According to it, the Council of Ministers gives state subsidies to universities to support training. The government subsidy is defined by standards differentiated (by professional fields) per student. Money follows the student. The budget subsidy of each university is proportional to the number of students including PhD ones. As a consequence of this principle, the universities in Bulgaria lower the requirements to students: both during enrollment and training and when they are examined. This model of institutional funding reduces the quality of education because the university enrolls and retains even unprepared students in order to protect its staff and budget. This model is likened to a cylinder – “students enrolled as many as graduates”.

Thus, the government allowed the damage of:

- the consistency of programmes offered and labor market demands;
- the correlation between knowledge and applicable skills offered by the university and those necessary for the user;
- relationship between the training system and the system of graduates' careers.

Businesses and public practice have significant shares in the quality of training. They are the true reference to compare the adequacy of university curricula and teaching contents to the training requirements of actual practice. Unfortunately, “the market of intellectual products”, which universities operate in, in the best case provides feedback to the university a few years after the training because by its nature it has a large time constant. The data about the market satisfaction is late to such an extent, that it does not influence substantially the management process at a university. The users of university products are not real partners in the educational process.

The academic staff, the intellectual potential of the nation, has one of the lowest payment in Europe. Nowadays the university teachers not only don't know well enough the needs of future employers, but also have interests different from theirs. They are cut off from the actual professional practice, which university graduates enter after acquiring diplomas of higher education. Without having to place any particular blame for the current disharmony, university teachers are not often aware of the actual needs of knowledge and skills in practice and they themselves could hardly give them to their students. This is partially due to the fact that under the existing criteria of academic promotion, there is no particular importance paid to the career and habilitation of teachers whether the students they teach have relevant skills for their future professional practice or not.

The quality achieved by a teacher is not accordingly assessed [**Zareva; Matiev; Kirova, 2014**]. There is no feedback attached to the salary and there are no beneficial consequences for the one who has achieved quality. They are forced to seek opportunities for their promotion and find additional funds in non-

academic activities, and sometimes that is at the expense of quality, which the university expects from them. They are often involved in the teaching process of another university. All this demotivates the teacher. The process of “brain drain”, especially of young scientists from Bulgaria is quite strong. If there are any young newcomers to join the academic staff, the applicants are not often the most capable and prepared graduates. The existing professorial and teaching staff is aging and the absence of future generations’ desire for research and teaching jobs affects the ability of universities to reproduce their scientific potential.

Higher education in Bulgaria today

In compliance with the *European Qualifications Framework*, in 2012 the Council of Ministers approved the *National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria* (NQF)³, the last three levels of which define knowledge, skills and competencies general for all Bachelors, Masters and Doctors in Bulgaria. The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) of the Republic of Bulgaria became a member of *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA) and is guided by its principles and standards. The Parliament adopted the Strategy for the development of higher education in Bulgaria 2020 and Action Plan for its implementation. Six years earlier the Higher Attestation Commission, which for many years had selected habilitated academic staff of universities and academic institutions, was closed. Thus, the removal of this major obstacle to academic autonomy created conditions for competition of autonomous universities.

The Strategy for Development of Higher Education adopted a year ago outlined a new philosophy to higher education. The future new model puts the personality of an undergraduate student, a PhD student, or a postgraduate student in the center of educational paradigms. It is a model where one has the right to choose what to study, where to study, whether and when to graduate but also he/she should take the responsibility of choice and decision. This model requires an innovative educational policy oriented to diverse personal needs and multiple choices.

Nowadays the emphasis is placed on the results-oriented model where the university’s revenue corresponds to the quality of educational services it provides.

Recognizing the weaknesses of institutional funding, in 2012 the government began to gradually introduce adjustments into this model. Part of the state subsidy for higher education (currently only 4 % is paid as a stimulus for universities with professional fields, which are top-rated in the *Bulgarian University Ranking System (BURS) of Ministry of Education and Science*.⁴ This ranking system was created using European funds and includes criteria in

³ [Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2012]

⁴ Bulgarian University Ranking System, 2013

several sections such as: accreditation evaluation, learning process, research, academic staff, learning environment, social life and administrative services, career of graduates and compliance with the labour market. Thus, the government does not only declare its quality policy, but also begins to implement it through appropriate financial mechanisms. Since money does not “follow the student” any more, the “cylinder model” shrinks to a “funnel model” where it is “easy to enroll but difficult to graduate”. Now, inversely, the student follows the funds given to universities for achieved quality and level of student professional realization post graduation.

To a large extent BURS repeats the criteria of NEAA. There is no consistency between the weights of evaluation criteria in both systems but it must be recognized that BURS is a step in the right direction. After the forthcoming imperative improvement of both systems and their harmonization, they can become an effective tool for quality management in higher education on a national level. Recent changes in the Higher Education Act provide for an increase in the share of budgetary funding for quality assessed according to BURS.

One of the first steps in the adopted *Action Plan* for the Strategy was to make amendments to the Higher Education Act in February 2016. Performing its functions in education policies in compliance with the dynamics of social development, the government introduced priority professional fields and protected programmes, which there is a social need for (although those seeking higher education are not always aware of that): engineers, teachers, mathematicians, physicists, IT experts, agronomists, etc., and which are stimulatingly funded by a special order. The share of state subsidies for quality and performance has been increased. For several years this share will cover the bulk of the state budget for maintenance of training: in 2016/2017 academic year it increases to 30% and in 2019/2020 it will be 60%.

Left without the needed state subsidies, universities will be forced to get rid of inefficient and uncompetitive academic structures and programmes, and vice versa, will develop others, which the country needs. Thus, adequate national quality policy could be implemented by statutory financial mechanisms, without forced decisions and administrative measures. It is still necessary to also discover efficient incentive mechanisms for prospective students to enroll in these programmes, which now may appear to them difficult and unprofitable.

II. CONTENTS OF UNIVERSITY QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The key ideas, which this paper advocates for, are related to university quality management. Two important steps are offered as efficient tools:

- To generate motivation for high quality effectively connecting the achievements of the academic staff and students with their recognition and remuneration.
- To coordinate the University Quality Management by contents and formally with the National Qualifications Framework, the national accreditation and ranking systems and BURS, which is not a fact now.

Within the context of the quality of education, the problem of university management acquires particular significance. The mandatory *System of Evaluation and Quality Assurance of Education* was introduced by the Higher Education Act 10 years ago. As a consequence, all universities introduced their own systems of quality management, some of which are in compliance with the international ISO standards. However, the analysis of the situation shows that a number of shortcomings in university quality management and the systems as part of it have not been overcome. Along with some positive results, these quality systems are accepted ambiguously both at universities and nationwide.

Academic authorities often have formal terms and are skeptical of systems. With assessing quality, there are no “reference points” for comparison: requirements standards. Qualifying the characteristics of programmes, which the curricula are based on, has not been complied with the National Qualifications Framework. Therefore, they cannot be considered as the necessary requirements and standards and the task for such harmonization has not been assigned.

The process of quality evaluation and its results still remains rather formal and inefficient:

- Realistic self-evaluation has not become a common practice.
- There is a lack of interest from evaluators in the evaluation process.
- Small part of students participates fully in surveys on quality achieved.
- The evaluation is done within the university but the end user is outside of it.
- The importance of a subjective factor is too high, which puts the adequacy of assessments into question.
- The publicity of evaluation is limited and does not create competition to achieve quality.

The feedback between quality and its carrier – the teacher, student, academic leader – is not complete and practically “broken”.

The *Strategy of Higher Education* states that low efficiency of the systems is largely due to the “lack of incentives for the best teachers”. This “hinders promotion and fixes the traditions of equalization”. Currently all teachers having one and the same academic rank receive one and the same salary, regardless of the work done, the complexity and quality of the creative product they produce. One of the main reasons for that is the lack of adequate and objective quality assessment.

To connect quality achievements with remuneration and recognition of teachers and academic authorities, it is necessary to objectively and adequately assess the results of their work and creativity.

Quality needs to form adequate incentives for students as well. Presumably students, especially those in Master’s degree courses, are “internally” motivated for knowledge and skills. But observations on university realities show that it applies to not more than 15-20% of the student community. Furthermore, under the current system of testing and evaluation it can not be stated that the best students and those with the highest quality of training have achieved the highest results. At that, it is the numerical expression of success that scholarship incentives and some very tentative steps of universities towards “external” motivation depend on.

Quality and standards

We cannot disagree with the statement that quality is the result of the intellectual environment and intellectual process imminently inherent within each university. This quality is not connected only with the knowledge as much as it is connected to the thinking and reasoning applied to that knowledge.

However, this understanding arising from the sound university conservatism does not allow quantifying quality and therefore it can be difficult to proportionally encourage it. So, this paper looks for a different understanding and starts from the definition that:

Quality is a *complex multidimensional set of properties and characteristics of higher education (training of students) and its subjects (university, programme, syllabus, teacher) that give it ability to meet determined or suspected dynamically changing requirements to it* [Hristova, M., 2007]. Quality is as better as the difference is less between the dynamically changing requirements to the educational subject and the results, as well as the sooner this difference is overcome.

From this definition it appears that quality cannot be measured and assessed if there are no requirements defined to the relevant object and if there are no adequate measures.

The requirements for different educational degrees are included in the contents of the EQF and NQF. They are standards of knowledge, skills and competences on EU and national levels but there are no academic standards for the “output” of university and its programmes.

The standard is a definition of the results to be achieved and the rules to be followed, which is formalized and approved by an authorized body. According to the ENQA document “*Standards and recommendations on quality assurance*”⁵ it is not supposed to keep “strict implementation of the standard”. Also, “it should not be interpreted as a prescription that can not be changed”. The academic standards should be developed in compliance with the National Qualifications Framework.

Assessment and evaluators of university objects – programmes, subjects and teachers

In world-wide university practices there are different approaches and methods to assess the quality of training. Some of these rely on measuring outcomes; others rely on the difference between inlet and outlet of the “black box”, which for these methods is the higher-education institution.

It seems that “step by step” is the most appropriate approach. This approach is used to evaluate various aspects of training and research: teaching contents, organization and performance of learning processes, teaching skill, school facilities, standards and requirements for evaluation of students, exam procedures, outcomes, themes and volume of research, involvement of teachers and students in research, quality of scientific results, etc. The aggregate

⁵ [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2013].

value and significance of all these aspects determine quality. It is traced how all the steps in that process of education and research are performed and how they are controlled. If they are done in the best way, one can expect the best results.

The method is applicable in the National Evaluation System in Bulgaria (NEAA). For example, 14 criteria are used for institutional accreditation, much more indicators and 127 assessments with maximum values of 0.2 to 4.0 in a 100-point interval scale. The method is also applied in BURS to determine ratings of professional fields at different universities.

To objectify assessments, an evaluation should be:

- **Multi-factorial (Multi-criteria).** Set of assessment factors and criteria directly related to the standards for the certain object; it covers and seals the concept of quality.

- **Multi-subjective.** There are a minimum of three different evaluating entities (parties) with different viewpoints. Those who have opposing interests are deliberately selected. They are usually grouped into users, self-assessment entities, and independent evaluators.

- **Quantitative.** Quantitative assessment is the determination of the degree of approximation of “what is” to “what should be” (standard). Assessments are given for criteria and indicators in a 100-point interval scale, as the maximum for each criterion and indicator is pre-defined depending on its weight.

- **Expert.** No formal evaluation methods are looked for and proposed. There are no precise measures and formalizations with evaluating quality indicators both in the national evaluation system and the university one. It relies on the expertise of a multi-subject.

It is assumed that formal models cannot cover all sides and shades and are usually highly stylized. The mathematical relationships are rather questionable. That causes inexactness. Moreover, the evaluators are not responsible; they are not deeply involved in the evaluation process. It is why assessment should be expert by nature, based on direct and indirect impressions, personal experience and expertise on current and objective information from the public and verified data of the university. The fulcrum of evaluation is presented by standards and requirements for assessments.

The multi-subjective evaluation requires evaluators with different interests: self-evaluation, users and independent experts.

Users include: employers who use university products: business entities, companies, public and social organizations; undergraduate and graduate students and when assessing a subject – fellow teachers in subjects chronologically following the one under evaluation.

Independent evaluators include industrial, professional and trade organizations (eg. Union of Electrical Engineers, Chamber of Civil Engineers, Union of Scientists, Federation of Scientific Unions, Medical Association, Union of Economists, Union of Lawyers, etc.), editorial boards of journals, etc.; former undergraduate and graduate students; Master degree students – for undergraduate courses; PhD students – for Master degree programmes.

Criteria and indicators for evaluation of programmes, subjects and teachers

Quality is not a physical quantity and in strict metrological aspect it cannot be measured. Therefore, as stated above, different “viewpoints” are evaluated – quality criteria that can be assumed as analogous to physical quantities.

Criteria and indicators are developed for each of the evaluated objects. They have different significance, which is determined by specific weight coefficients or as a percentage of the total evaluation. This is determined by the governing body – the one that “makes policy” of quality. Indicators for the quality of education are divisions of the criteria. The relationship between criteria and its indicators is hierarchical. The criterion is a consolidated component of the complex (aggregated) assessment of quality and stands at the “entrance” of the process. The indicator is a component of the criterion summarizing the initial data of quality and “lies” at its “exit”. The indicators do not contain quality explicitly, so evaluators are not tempted to be subjective, in particular to liberalize their assessments as in the case of direct quality assessment. This indirectness increases the reliability of assessments.

The assessment follows the principles, logics and mechanisms of programme accreditation in the national evaluation system. They have to be “transferred” and creatively transformed from professional fields to training programmes, subjects and teachers.

Validation of assessments

Assessments are probed on the university website before being proved (validated) to use. Anyone can make remarks and comments. Transparency and public awareness as factors for objectivity are relied on.

The validation of assessments is done according to an established way through faculty and university management bodies taking into account the comments on their publication. The results of the evaluation are processed electronically. The final estimates are published on the faculty website.

The evaluation of a teacher, subject or programme is an element of the non-formalized space where subjectivism cannot be overcome in principle. Objectification requires multi-factorial and multi-subjective nature but they lead to complexity. When it is very complex, it might be inapplicable or inefficient. On the other hand, the lack of quantitative measures does not allow adequate stimulation of the teacher and leader. The problem of reasonable sufficiency is an optimization related one. The current level of electronic communication and processing make possible a more complex system.

Harmonization and Comparative Analysis of evaluation systems and standards on different levels

The EQF is a standard of the EHEA related to what a graduate (holder of the respective degree) must know, understand and what they can do. By adopting the EQF, the European institutions have committed to uniformity of re-

quirements, which each country of the EHEA should strive to. It is a tool that aims to make qualifications and education systems in different countries of the community more easily recognizable and comparable. The EQF facilitates the mutual recognition and it is important for learners and employers. It promotes mobility of students and PhD students to an extent comparable or higher than through the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

Currently education in the EEA member countries should be brought in compliance with the European standards ensuring equivalence of degrees and harmonized with the NQF, which presumably is harmonized with the EQF (framework standards). However, the high level of abstraction, which the EQF and NQF are necessarily written on (to be generally valid), does not allow to directly use them for the development of educational content. To decrypt and specify knowledge, skills, values and professional qualifications arising from the framework standards for each programme, it is necessary to apply intellectual effort by a leading teacher (in charge of a course) with high professional competence in this programme.

To illustrate the idea advocated in this paper, an attempt is made (see Fig.1) to schematically present the harmonization of curricula at a university with the EQF and NQF where knowledge, skills, values and competencies for a degree (educational and qualification degree) in higher education are given in a broadened plan (right column). It means that university academic standards (USt) for different programmes and degrees must be coordinated with the NQF. This harmonization reaches the lowest level – an element of the learning process (Sb): subject, internship, project, diploma thesis, dissertation.

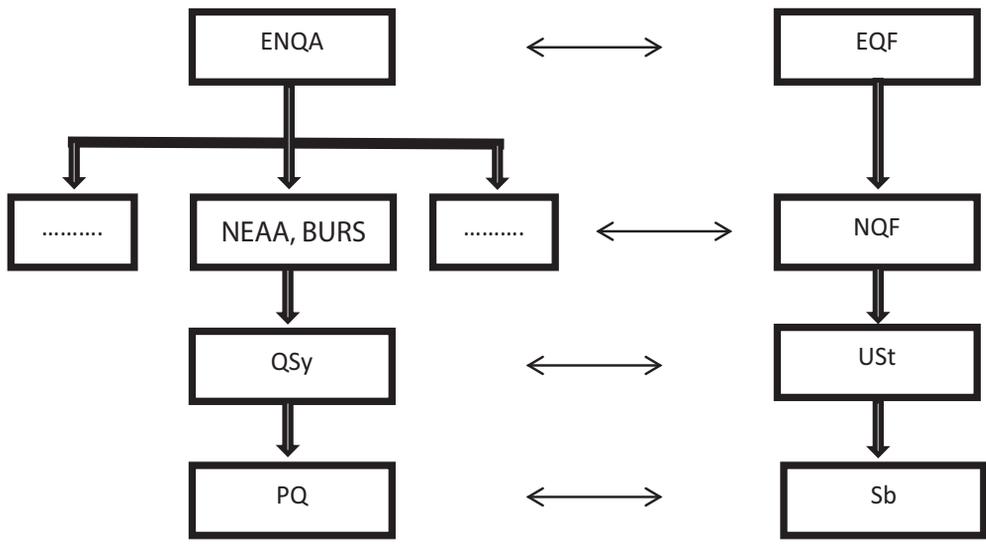


Fig. 1. Formally and by-content harmonized hierarchy of requirements, monitoring and evaluation of higher education

At the same time it is necessary to coordinate the levels of system control and quality assessment also vertically: from ENQA (left column), through the National System for University Ranking (BURS) and the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) where the place of NEAA is as well. Hence, downwards the hierarchy leads to university quality systems (QSy). The personal quality control (PQ) is on the lowest level: a subject and a teacher. There should be a unified structure of rating systems with a single point scale on all levels.

The two subsystems (of content and of evaluation) are interconnected horizontally: evaluation criteria should check the requirements for knowledge, skills and competencies, and vice versa: academic standards must be coordinated with the criteria system.

Especially, it should be emphasized that the proposed harmonization is not in contradiction with university autonomy and consequent independence in choice of systems. But if universities want to direct interests inside them and generate aspirations, which are harmonious and synergistic to NQF, with the criteria, which will be externally evaluated by, if they want better rating in the national ranking system with the consequent budget bonuses for the university, they must coordinate input-output links with the external systems.

The internal evaluation of programmes at the university shall be made according to criteria, rules and mechanisms arising from the NEAA and BURS criteria and in similar numerical scale. It is necessary to avoid divergence and focus the efforts of academic staff and students on activities and areas recognized as important and valuable in the stage of development. Thus it is possible to obtain better chances for top rating of the respective university in BURS, which is financially rewarded by the state.

The positive differences from the evaluation system of NEAA and to a bigger extent from rating offered by BURS are as follows:

- academic standards as reference points for quality assessment, which do not exist in national evaluation systems;
- including users and independent evaluators in assessment, which cannot be said about NEAA despite some positive steps in that direction;
- development of rules and mechanisms (some of them being offered in this paper) to overcome subjectivity in evaluation, which is too strong in accreditation.

At the same time there remain significant differences between national rules and university standards. Here are some of them:

1. National criteria refer to all types of universities in Bulgaria without considering their missions, visions, values and goals. This makes these criteria sufficiently abstract and general. University quality criteria, hence academic standards as a basis of quality assessment have to meet the peculiarities and requirements of the respective university.

2. Under the conditions of competition on the intellectual market, each university looks for its niche, opportunities to unfold its strengths, which brings meaningful specificity both in standards and their implementation. Best universities can afford higher standards that meet the interests of proven and nationally recognized academic staff and well-trained, motivated and talented students.

III. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STIMULATION OF ACADEMIC STAFF

Stimuli have a moral and material expression.

The recognition of academic teachers as scientists, their aspiration for promotion and getting professorship, are deeply embedded values in everyone with an academic career. That is why he/she is sensitive to injustice in evaluation and has a right to respond when being undervalued. It is a sign of their professional honour and teaching dignity which affects significantly his/her motivation at the university and ultimately on the quality of their work. Therefore, the establishment and proper functioning of quality assessment systems and university management of teacher's motivation are so important.

Quality management systems should motivate teachers. They should close the feedback loop: evaluation of the achieved quality, reward for those who achieve quality, quality improvement, evaluation, etc. They should offer personalized treatment to the teacher, thus removing the proven as contraindicated equalization of remuneration for one and the same position of remuneration for one and the same position.

Of course, fairness dictates an adequate financial equivalent. It does not take into consideration separate and sporadic awards but rather a systematic link of remuneration with the end results of each employee's work.

The existing situation when all staff at one and the same academic position receive one and the same salary despite the difference in quality of results and quantity of their creative work, which is very different, sometimes measured in times, creates a sense of injustice. That is the moral ground for demotivation of many of the academic staff who do not get the recognition they deserve. It does not create the competitive behavior, which is characteristic of the world we now live in.

It is possible to suggest a formal model used to obtain a quantitative measure for appropriate remuneration. Besides the academic position that a person occupies at a university, the scientific degree that one has acquired, the academic load, measured by the standards of academic employment, the model must take into account the quality of education and research. An important factor supporting this thesis is that, through the budget, the government stimulates quality as determined by the established ranking system. Since it operates on national level and after changing the Higher Education Act in early 2016, which strengthened the significance of this factor, it must be applied to evaluate academic staff at the university using the same approach. Thus, the approach is transferred from professional fields to the person at the university already appreciated by an objectified university system of quality management. A unified system "from top – to bottom" is created.

Conclusion

Although with a certain delay, the state has found appropriate approaches and the right decisions to stimulate the quality of higher education without forcefully interfering in the academic autonomy of universities. Yet many higher education institutions are lagging behind in responding to this government policy: i.e to the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework, focusing on the priority professional fields, implementing the adequacy of the system of quality assessment, recognizing university teachers and students for achieved quality etc. This paper offers approaches and models through which teachers could be evaluated for quality, consistent with the national qualifications framework as well as with user satisfaction. A system to recognize and stimulate faculty is recommended, through which the university personalizes the approach towards each staff member.

The coordination of evaluation systems at a European, national and university levels will lead to a single “top – down” system of university management, which directs aspirations and forms interests, aligned and synergistic with governmental policy, as well as with the mission, values and policies of the higher education institution. This would also motivate students to learn better and participate in the evaluation because now much depends on them and they recognize their power. Furthermore, this model solves problems in consumer relations which now become a part of the system. The feedback between the quality and remuneration allows for system improvements, which would then subsequently increase its adequacy and efficiency. Any shortcomings, gaps or weaknesses would disrupt the interests of academic staff and will trigger timely adjustments.

A university management, which stimulates quality, would transform the entire university environment. It may lead to a redistribution of financial funds towards leading teachers and managers, and over time cause a natural selection of academic staff in favor of quality.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EHEA – European Higher Education Area
EQF – European Qualifications Framework
NQF – National Qualifications Framework
ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
NEAA – National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency
BURS – Bulgarian University Ranking System

Correspondence address:

Hristo Hristov, Prof. DTSc
TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY- SOFIA
8 Kl. Ohridski Blvd.
1000, Sofia, Bulgaria
Tel. (+359)882449509
E-mail: cac@tu-sofia.bg

Correspondence address:

Mariya Hristova, Assoc. Prof., PhD
Todor Kableshev University of Transport
158 Geo Milev Str.,
1574 Sofia, Bulgaria
Tel. (+359) (02)9709 476
E-mail: mhristova@vtu.bg