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Abstract

This article presents a stage of a quality management model in higher education institutions based on business process modelling. The paper points out the importance of graduates’ satisfaction in assessing quality in universities and looks at a key development, that have shaped the idea of correlating the graduates’ requirements regarding the developed specific and transversal competencies during the study with the required competences in the labor market. On the basis of the existing literature evidence and on the performed results, the paper proposes a business process management model by outlining the importance of understanding graduates’ requirements, their needs and expectations.

Keywords: Higher Education; Quality Management; Business Process Management; Modeling.

1. Introduction

The importance of education for the development of excellence and knowledge contributes directly to the social and economic development of a country. Ensuring the development in this direction involves understanding the mechanisms, which underlines the processes of strengthening academic quality assurance and improvement, but also the existence of a good strategy to achieve the performance. The aim of the research is on the one hand to identify the main characteristic issues of quality in higher education by highlighting the graduates’ perception about the developed

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specific and transversal competencies during the study and their utility on the labor market and on the other hand to 
develop a framework for implementing a quality management model in higher education institutions based on business 
process management modeling. The success of a university depends on its ability to ensure the necessary resources to 
achieve the main objective, which refers to the provision of knowledge and skills embodied in people and technologies. 
The value of such knowledge is defined by the stakeholders of the universities in terms such as quality, relevance or 
utility.

2. Material and Method

The key component for the quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area is the evaluation and the 
accreditation process. There are two types of quality evaluation process in higher education institutions: the external 
and the internal evaluation. It is remarkable that, the external evaluation is based on the internal evaluation mechanisms 
and do not illustrate the aspects related to the students’/graduates’ feedback. The quality assessment through internal 
evaluation includes aspects regarding teaching and research quality, teachers’ performance, students’/graduates’ 
competencies and abilities as well as the curriculums’ structure and graduates’ level of employability (Harvey, 2002).

This article presents the essential quality dimensions in higher education institutions by means of the internal 
evaluation made by the graduates. Understanding and promoting graduates’ satisfaction brings numerous benefits for 
the universities (Hartman and Schmidt, 1995). There are several studies related to the graduates’ satisfaction with their 
overall higher education experience. Palti et al (1993, quoted in Garcia –Aracil, 2009) examined the link between 
student retention and student satisfaction with the educational service facilities and performance. The authors 
illustrated that the career advice services could help student retention and graduates satisfaction. A study made by 
Stwine and Alves (2010) in Sweden and Portugal revealed that a big challenge seems to be how to meet expectations 
demands on young adults, that have ”invested” in tertiary education. Lafuente et al. (2012) analyzed the 
relationship between graduates’ satisfaction with higher education and graduates’ expectation regarding their 
employment status in Spain. The results showed that the less satisfied graduates were those who studied the longest 
and the ones showing less employment and job relatedness. The perception of quality performed by graduates is 
conditioned by the fulfillment of their own expectation regarding to what the higher education institution can provide 
to them (facilities, teaching) and on what they can acquire by themselves (academic performance, social contacts) 
(Lafuente et al., 2012). Analyzing the perception of quality by former students are a valuable feedback, because taking 
into account their experience in the higher education institution reveals the actual correlation between their acquired 
skills and the one needed to their job (Tam, 2001).

This paper highlights the graduates’ satisfaction regarding the developed specific and transversal competencies 
during the study by correlating these with their utility on the labor market. Further, in order to assess a continuous 
development of the quality referring to the graduates’ satisfaction with the provided knowledge and transversal 
competencies, the business process modeling is used. Business Process Management is actually form this point of 
view a provider of tools and techniques to efficiently manage business processes (Huang, 2011). Antune and Mourão 
(2011, quoted in Anand, Wamba and Gnanzou, 2013) admits that BPM is a collection of technologies capable of 
translating business process models into computer-supported activities, while Pyon, Woo, and Park (2011, quoted in 
Anand, Wamba and Gnanzou, 2013) illustrates BPM as being a system which supports business processes using 
methods, techniques, and software to design, enact, control and analyze operational processes involving humans, 
organization, applications, documents and other sources of information.

The adoption of business process improvement strategies and business process modelling in higher education 
institutions is a sign that universities want to perform functions and to develop procedures in order to fulfill the 
extections of the customers. From this point of view, an identified, documented, standardized, managed and 
automatized business processes ensure them to stay competitive on the market and in the same time allows them to 
meet the customer requirements. Further, by using business process modeling in higher education institutions would 
help universities to develop a general framework for the continuous quality management model based on graduates’ 
feedback seen as an output of the educational services, because increased competition in higher education sector 
determine universities to use the graduates’ satisfaction as a quality sign.
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