

## Quality at Newly Established Private Universities: New Strategies for Leadership Management

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### Abstract

Nowadays, the demand for quality in higher education is increasing. The process of massification and internalization of universities require better performance in quality of teaching, academic research and other educational related activities. In this context universities in order to be competitive and successful in market they have to rethink their strategies and to be open to new leadership management approaches. Well established universities due to their institutional culture may face some barriers when they try to make changes on their managerial strategies. In addition newly established universities have a significant chance on designing and implementing new fruitful strategies regarding students enrolment, academic activities and education management. Those strategies will contribute to enhance quality in higher education in short periods and to be more capable of overcoming new challenges. Therefore, the role of leadership management is very significant regarding designing and implementing the most appropriate strategies for their institutions. The aim of study is providing a managerial framework for leadership management of newly established universities by promoting a total quality educational approach. This study will focus on challenges of newly established universities in Albanian higher education system

**Keywords:** newly established university, quality, leadership management, higher education, total quality

### Introduction

Today's students have more opportunities regarding selecting an appropriate university for their academic and professional development and they have the tendency to search for universities that provide a high quality of teaching, and the best student services along with affordable costs. They want to be sure when making important investment on their life such as choosing the right university for undergraduate studies. Therefore, many HEIs are developing different managerial strategies in order to increase their organizational performance and quality in education. Albania is a rapidly evolving country that witnesses a continual shift in educational needs for its society both higher education enrolments and the numbers of institutions expanded dramatically during the last decade. Rapidly growing youth education; in the period after collapse of communism 1991 increased in number of high school students. Already in the last 20 years, Albanian higher educational system was characterized by expanding, which means not only the large number of students who study at the university, but also to the opening and operation of private higher institutions. Since 2000 Albanian government has decided to start a policy of expansion in private higher education that has resulted in new universities across the country. Today, there are 14 state universities and 42 private higher institutions in Albania (APAAL, 2013). The main reasons after promoting establishment of new universities throughout the new developing countries are increasing access to higher education and to achieve a wider distribution of qualified and more educated individuals among different regions of society (Saarivirta & Consoli, 2008)

This expansion of private higher education has raised questions regarding the quality of private universities. This fact has increased the expectations of society from higher education institutions as the main institutions that have the duty to prepare the next generation for the challenges of future (Bruçaj, 2013). The aim of study is providing a managerial framework for leadership management of newly established universities by promoting a total quality educational approach. This study will focus on challenges of newly established universities in Albanian higher education system

### Literature Review

Leadership as traditional concept may be considered as the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement' (Stogdill, 1950). Nowadays the concept of leadership embraces a variety of approaches including transformative, charismatic and visionary leadership, which they treat leaders as 'managing meaning' rather

than goal achievement, and motivating followers through a variety of symbolic activities. According to Kotter "Leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles." (Kotter, 1996). It is very important to understand the perception of university staff for leadership management responsibilities regarding positively improvement of staff working climate. In education system, leadership management is defined as "as responsible for learning outcomes and measures the improvement of quality of education".

Leadership management is seen as one of the key factors for the advancement of newly established small private higher education institutions. According to Bryman the characteristics of leadership at both departmental and institutional levels:

### **Providing direction**

Creating a structure to support the direction

Fostering a supportive and collaborative environment

Establishing trustworthiness as a leader

Having personal integrity

Having credibility to act as a role model

Facilitating participation in decision-making; consultation

Providing communication about developments

Representing the department/institution to advance its cause(s) and networking on its behalf

Respecting existing culture while seeking to instill values through a vision for the department/institution

Protecting staff autonomy (Bryman, 2007)

The role of the leadership management in universities, is to increase the overall organizational performance by using all human resources effectively taking into consideration that newly established universities have a limited number of staff therefore recruiting and retaining the quality of staff is very important for the future of institution

### **Quality in higher education**

The recent development on massification and internationalism of higher education have contributed significantly to raise the awareness of the main actors in this field to the importance and role that of quality in higher education has on achieving success of private universities in this competitive environment. Defining quality in the field of services is not easy but becomes even more difficult to define quality in higher education. It is very difficult to have single unique definition of quality in higher education in addition there is no universal consensus on which the best methodology regarding of implementation of quality within higher education quality can be defined in terms of perfection, excellence, and value for money, fitness to purpose, or transformation. According to some researchers the most important definitions of "quality" in higher educational system as the following (Harvey, 2005; Leckey & Neill, 2001; Mahmut Ozer, 2010; Quinn, Lemay, Larsen, & Johnson, 2009):

Quality is fulfilling and exceeding customer needs.

Quality is everyone's job.

Quality is continuous improvement.

Quality is leadership.

Quality is human resource development.

Quality is in the system.

Quality is fear reduction.

Quality is recognition and reward.

Quality is teamwork.

Quality is measurement

Establishment of internal quality system and outcomes of quality processes generally differs in the newly established universities in comparison with early developed and well-established ones.

To many researchers well established universities had difficulties regarding same changing paradigms on educational philosophy because of old culture (Youssef, 1998).

Therefore is very important to make clear the strategy which universities will follow in order to implement quality standards. It is also very important for promoting quality education at higher education institutions the way which leadership in higher education is quotient and responds to the demands and needs for organizational learning (Forest, 2002).

Therefore the role of effective leadership is considered to be the main factor regarding the promotion and implementation of quality in higher education system (Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2002)

Many studies done on perception of university staff regarding responsibilities and challenges of leadership management of universities have identified many common characteristics faced on different university environments.

The most important responsibilities and challenges of leadership management of universities according of results of those studies done on perception of academic and administrative staff are listed below (Lewis, 1994) (Owlia, 1996) (Flores-Molina, 2011; Owlia, 1996) (Sallis, 2002) (Brucaj, 2013)

### **Expected responsibilities of leadership management in higher education**

#### **A proactive approach to pursuing the university's mission and vision**

An emphasis on a visionary and strategic approach that guides and provides focus for what the leader seeks to achieve for the institution.

Being internally focused, being well connected in the institution

Being externally focused, good partnership collaboration, implementing appropriate benchmarks examples

Being flexible in approach to leadership, in coordination with staff motivation climate

Challenges of leadership management in higher education

Offering high quality academic programs and a total quality education with limited resources

Emphasizing research and fostering the quality of teaching

#### **Enhancing student learning experience and outcome**

Achieving national ranking. Becoming a national university is the grand and long-term vision for several small private universities which were evaluated and ranked as successful universities.

### **Methodology**

The aim of this study was to understand the styles of or approaches of leadership which are associated with effective leadership in higher education, especially at newly established Albanian private higher education institutions

For the purpose of this study, the results from a staff climate survey with 127 participants who were currently working in different newly established private universities in Albania and results from a SWOT analysis contacted by 15 private universities were analysed in order to obtain university staff perceptions of the factors that contribute to institutional total quality and effective leadership strategies that have been used to promote a high-quality education.

### **Study Results**

Promoting a high-quality education has been a great challenge for key leaders at newly established private universities. Conclusions from staff climate survey completed by 127 individuals working as university staff pointed out that newly established small private universities are striving for quality in their work with a tendency to a focused mission, an effective strategic plan with a solid commitment.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the most important areas which university staff see leadership as a key factor

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
organizational climate	127	4.58	.556
supervisory leadership	126	4.51	.701
staff motivation	127	4.54	.664
institutional loyalty	127	4.69	.530
Valid N (list wise)	126		

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Table 2: The challenges of new established universities in Albania according SWOT analysis results from 15 universities

NO	Challenges	Number of universities that faced the same challenges
	We select only the challenges that were faced by four or more universities	
<u>1</u>	Quality of enrolled student at university	<u>37</u>
<u>2</u>	Infrastructure and campus environment problems	<u>65</u>
<u>3</u>	Scientific research	<u>46</u>
<u>4</u>	The luck of management information <u>program</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>5</u>	Need for academic and administrative regulations and procedure	5
<u>6</u>	Not enough effective academic and administrative staff	<u>24</u>
<u>7</u>	Luck of literature	<u>35</u>
<u>8</u>	Coordination problems between academic staff and administrative	6
<u>9</u>	New established institution, luck of organizational culture	<u>35</u>
<u>10</u>	Luck of social environments for students within campus	<u>44</u>
<u>11</u>	Compulsory engagements of academic staff with administrative duties	<u>36</u>
<u>12</u>	Centralized budget	<u>27</u>
<u>13</u>	The existence of negative perception for private universities in society	<u>48</u>

The findings from both interviews and staff climate results point out the importance of the following facts regarding educational leadership at newly established universities:

Providing strategic direction to university staff in order to realize the mission

Providing structure and support to realize strategic plans

Providing a supportive and collaborative environment between university staff

Establishing trustworthiness leadership atmosphere

Encouraging university staff in decision-making process

Being open to new strategies and developments

Protecting staff autonomy and integrity

Promoting academic excellence

In the heart of success to create and promote an academic context which will help individuals to fulfil their academic and professional potential relay the success of an effective leadership management. Therefore, is very important to foster collegial climate and academic autonomy in university environment in order to achieve an appropriate academic climate. Similarly, the results of study have shown that to increase the quality standards in higher education institutions it is essential for leadership management to adopt certain leadership strategies to implement total quality management philosophy in the higher educational system.

## Recommendations

At newly established universities, we should change the way we think about our own education process and product. Today only institutions that meet changing consumer needs and demands will succeed." Newly established universities in order to survive in this competitive educational market of higher education should constantly focus on quality improvement. In this perspective the appropriate effective leadership strategies can make great differences in promoting and delivering a high-quality education at newly established universities

One of the key strategies regarding improvement of quality in education at newly private universities is having systematic reviews of all academic programs learning outcomes. Effective leadership management is the strongest motivations for university staff to have institutional loyalty, to be committed to academic excellence, and devoted to university mission. According to study results one of the most effective leadership styles in higher education system is servant leadership approaches. According this model a successful leader is the one who not only has the authority to make decisions and lead the university to reach it mission but also has the commitment to be a servant of the community

Newly established universities that are focused on reaching quality standards by having a clear strategy on implementation of total quality philosophy at university level have many chances to be successful due to their centralized structure of small university environment. To be successful HEI's requires a devoted leadership management who is capable of involving all academic and administrative staff of HEI's in process of implementation of quality standards

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