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OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTING QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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EUROPEAN INITIATIVES FOR QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (1)

- **Bologna Meeting/ Declaration (1999)** - The European Ministers of Education committed themselves to establish the **European Higher Education Area (EHEA)** by 2010. The Bologna Declaration encouraged, among other things, *the European co-operation in quality assurance of higher education* with a view to developing *comparable criteria and methodologies*. Other important *goals* agreed in Bologna (for the so-called “Bologna process”) are: *easily comparable degrees, a system based on two main degree cycles (subsequently a third cycle has been included), a common European system of credits and mobility of students and teachers*.
- **Lisbon Meeting/ Agenda/ Process and (2000)** - It launched the appeal *to "make Europe, by 2010, the most competitive and the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world"*.
- **Academic Convention in Salamanca (2001)** - Its discussions were organised around six main topics: *Freedom with responsibility, Employability, Mobility, Compatibility, Quality* and *Competitiveness*. Its conclusion: *“The current globalisation trends in higher education and the challenges of building an European higher education area also require internationalisation of quality assurance. An answer to these challenges is accreditation, and quality assurance mechanisms are a pre-requisite for establishing of proper accreditation procedures. The internationalisation of quality assurance should, on the one hand, ensure quality in the European higher education area; on the other hand, it should preserve national and international diversity and autonomy. In other words, while the decisions are taken nationally, converging procedures and principles should be advised to the national bodies leading to mutual trust in the results of quality assurance.”*

EUROPEAN INITIATIVES FOR QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (2)

- **Berlin Meeting / Communiqué (2003)** - Signatory states invited the *European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA, after 2004 - European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education)* through its members in cooperation with the *EUA, EURASHE, and ESIB*, to develop *an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance* and to explore ways of ensuring an adequate *peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies*, and to report back through the Bologna Follow-Up Group to Ministers in 2005. The Ministers also asked ENQA *to take due account of the expertise of other quality assurance associations and networks*.
- **Bergen Meeting / Report (2005)** – The Bergen Report consists of four chapters. After the introductory chapter on *context, aims and principles*, there follow *chapters on standards and guidelines for quality assurance*; a peer review system for *quality assurance agencies*; and future perspectives and challenges.
- **London Communiqué (2007)** - It was adopted the strategy "The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting". "Further work is necessary in the core policy areas for: improving information on, *promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA*; strengthening cooperation based on partnership; intensifying policy dialogue; and improving recognition."

THE MAIN RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE “BERGEN REPORT”

- There will be *European standards for internal and external quality assurance, and for external quality assurance agencies.*
- *European quality assurance agencies will be expected to submit themselves to a cyclical review within five years.*
- There will be an *emphasis on subsidiarity, with reviews being undertaken nationally where possible.*
- *An European register of quality assurance agencies will be produced.*
- *An European Register Committee will act as a gatekeeper for the inclusion of agencies in the register.*
- *An European Consultative Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will be established.”*

EUROPEAN INITIATIVES FOR QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (3)

LONDON COMMUNIQUE ABOUT QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

- “***The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA*** - adopted in Bergen (ESG) - have been a powerful driver of change in relation to quality assurance.
- All countries have started to implement them and some have made substantial progress. *External quality assurance* in particular is much better developed than before.
- The extent of student involvement at all levels has increased since 2005, although improvement is still necessary. Since the main responsibility for quality lies with HEIs, they should continue to develop their systems of quality assurance.
- We acknowledge the progress made with regard to mutual recognition of accreditation and quality assurance decisions, and encourage continued international cooperation amongst quality assurance agencies.
- The first ***European Quality Assurance Forum*** - jointly organized by EUA, ENQA, EURASHE and ESIB (the E4 Group) in 2006 - provided an opportunity to discuss European developments in quality assurance. We encourage the four organizations to continue to organize European Quality Assurance Fora on an annual basis, to facilitate the *sharing of good practice* and ensure that quality in the EHEA continues to improve.

EUROPEAN CO-OPERATION FOR QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EUROPEAN ORGANISATIONS (examples)

- **ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education** (www.enqa.eu) – Helsinki
- **EUA – European University Association** (www.eua.be) – Bruxelles
- **ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe** (www.esib.org) – Bruxelles
- **EURASHE - European Association of Institutions in Higher Education** (www.eurashe.be) - Bruxelles
- **ECA – European Cooperation for Accreditation** (www.european-accreditation.org)
- **CEE Network - Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies** (www.uka.amu.edu.pl/subnetwork.html) – Vienna

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (examples)

- **QAA - Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education** (United Kingdom)
- **NOKUT - Norwegian Agency for Quality Education in Higher Education** (Norway)
- **HEQEC - Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre** (Latvia)
- **ANECA - National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain** (Spain)
- **ACQUIN - Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute** (Germany)
- **AERES – Evaluation Agency for Research and Higher Education** (France)

ENQA Standards and Guidelines (1)

- The standards and guidelines endorse the spirit of the “July 2003 Graz Declaration” of the European University Association (EUA) which states that **“the purpose of a European dimension to quality assurance is to promote mutual trust and improve transparency while respecting the diversity of national contexts and subject areas”**.
- The standards and guidelines relate only to the three cycles of higher education described in the Bologna Declaration and are **not intended to cover the area of research or general institutional management**.

(Bergen Report, 2005)

ENQA Standards and Guidelines (2)

CONTENTS

1. European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions

- 1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance
- 1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- 1.3 Assessment of students
- 1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff
- 1.5 Learning resources and student support
- 1.6 Information systems
- 1.7 Public information

2. European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education

- 2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures
- 2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes
- 2.3 Criteria for decisions
- 2.4 Processes fit for purpose
- 2.5 Reporting
- 2.6 Follow-up procedures
- 2.7 Periodic reviews
- 2.8 System-wide analysis

3. European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies

ENQA Standards and Guidelines

- some examples (1)

1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance

- **Standard:**

Institutions should have a *policy* and associated *procedures* for the assurance of the quality and *standards* of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a *strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality*. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

- **Guidelines :**

ENQA Standards and Guidelines

- some examples (2)

1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards

- **Standard:**

Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the *approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.*

- **Guidelines:**

The confidence of students and other stakeholders in higher education is more likely to be established and maintained through *effective quality assurance activities* which ensure that programmes are well-designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency.

ENQA Standards and Guidelines

- some examples (3)

1.3 Assessment of students

- **Standard:**

Students should be assessed using published *criteria, regulations and procedures* which are applied consistently.

- **Guidelines:**

The assessment of students is one of the most important elements of higher education. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on students' future careers. It is therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and takes into account the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information for institutions about the effectiveness of teaching and learners' support.

ROMANIAN LEGISLATION ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- **Law 288/ 2004** – on the organization of academic studies
- **GD 1175/ 2006** – on the organization of first stage academic studies and on the approval of their domains and specializations
- **GD 404/ 2006** - on the organization of academic studies
- **Law 87/ 2006** – on the approval of GO 75/2005 (with amendments) on quality assurance of education
- **EMO nr. 3928/ 2005** – on quality assurance of educational services within higher education institutes

[GD = Government Decision; GO = Government Ordinance; EMO = Education Minister Order]

SOME BASIC INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND FACTS IN ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Between years 2005 – 2006 there were established in Romania following organizations dedicated to the quality assurance in education:

ARACIS – *Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (www.aracis.ro) – in way of accreditation by ENQA

ARACIP – *Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-Academic Education* (<http://www.fiatest.ro/eqf/ARACIP%20prezentare.pdf>)

AEACE – *Agency for Evaluation and Quality Assurance in Education* (www.aeace.ro)

- **About 20%** of existing public and private universities **implemented and certified quality management systems in accordance with ISO 9000 standards**
- Other **about 10%** of existing public and private universities **implemented quality management systems in accordance with ISO 9000 standards (without certification)**
- **Two certification bodies** (for quality management systems, QMS, and for personnel, both **ONLY in higher education**) were established in 2004 **with involvement of all concerned stakeholders and with financial support from EEC** (INFRAS programme) – but, till now, without accreditation and certification of their implemented QMS; Unfortunately, according to the new Law of quality assurance in education, it seems that **THERE IS NO NEED FOR SUCH BODIES IN ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION.**

MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPTUAL WEAKNESSES OF ROMANIAN LAW ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION L 87/2006

- No definition of “quality assurance” (a new concept for most of Romanians, *which looks thus like something imposed by Europe !*) and no detailed presentation of *its added value* (especially in respect to the well known “accreditation” in higher education), **generating thus much confusion about the link between quality assurance and accreditation**
- The expertise of existing Romanian Quality Infrastructure (including *standardization and accreditation bodies as well as some dozens of certification bodies and over hundred consultancy and training organizations*) and of some Romanian educational providers was not at all taken into consideration, **generating thus redundancies and inefficiency**
- All included definitions of “quality management” concepts, principles, methods, techniques and tools are not in accordance with ISO 9000 standards (relatively better known in Romania), **generating thus a lot of confusions, misunderstandings and delays**
- The translation in Romanian of ENQA document “ESG” was **<provider oriented>** (instead of <customer oriented>, like its French version, for example)
- **The principle of maximum credibility offered by the third party assessment (for certification or accreditation) – based ONLY on independent auditors and agencies - was totally neglected in practice**

What is QUALITY ?

= "Degree to which a set of inherent characteristic fulfills requirements" (EN ISO 9000:2005)

ENQA COMMENTS ON "QUALITY" DEFINITION [1]

"The word 'quality' was universally felt to lie at the heart of the work of all the participants, and indeed featured heavily in the names of the agencies they represented.

By its very nature, however, it was felt to be very hard to pin down to a definition in any language.

A distinction was made between the *absolute definition* of quality – which would allow ranking of outcomes on a scale – and the *relative definition* of quality which involves judgment against a set standard.

In many cases it was not clear if this distinction was made within languages let alone between languages."

What is a STANDARD ?

= “ Document accepted in accordance with consensus principle and approved by authorized organizational unit establishing - for common and frequent use - terms, guidelines or characteristics referring to different kinds of activity or their results and aiming to acquire optimal level of arrangement in given area.”

NOTE: “It is recommended to base standards on achievements of **science, technique and practice** and aim them to achieve **optimal social benefits.**”
(EN 45020:2000)

ENQA COMMENTS ON “STANDARD” DEFINITIONS [1]

“It emerged that the use of the word ‘standard’ was open to a wide range of interpretations across languages.

In the UK the word refers to a *level of achievement* measured against a reference point.

In France and Germany its translation is used *to indicate an average or norm*. The word ‘criterion’ was suggested as analogous to standard although it was clear that this was not universally accepted.

In relation to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) the word had been interpreted by the authors as meaning *‘principles’ to adhere to rather than something to be measured against.*”

What is QUALITY ASSURANCE?

= **“The part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled”** (EN ISO 9000:2005)

NOTE: Both the customers and managers have a need for quality assurance because they are not in a position to oversee operations for themselves. They need to place trust in the producing operations, thus avoiding constant interventions.

ENQA COMMENTS ON QA DEFINITIONS [1] [2]

“*Quality assurance*” is a term imported into higher education from the world of business (and predominantly from the sector of manufacturing) as is the related term ‘*quality control*’. [1]

The term ‘Quality assurance’ in this report includes *processes such as evaluation, accreditation and audit*. [2]

In France ‘*quality management*’ has been used often in place of ‘*quality assurance*’ in the translation of the ESG, with the intention of instilling a sense of responsibility to the academics to manage quality for themselves. [1]

An interesting point was raised by a Russian delegate indicating that in their system the term following ‘quality’ depended on the audience addressed i.e. *quality assurance* for broader society, *quality control* for regulators and *quality enhancement* for the higher education sector.” [1]

What are QUALITY MANAGEMENT and QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

= “the organization *structure, processes, procedures and resources* needed to implement quality management”

(EN ISO 8402:1994)

= “management system (= system to establish *policies and objectives* and to achieve those objectives) to direct and control an organization with regard to quality

(EN ISO 9000:2005)

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

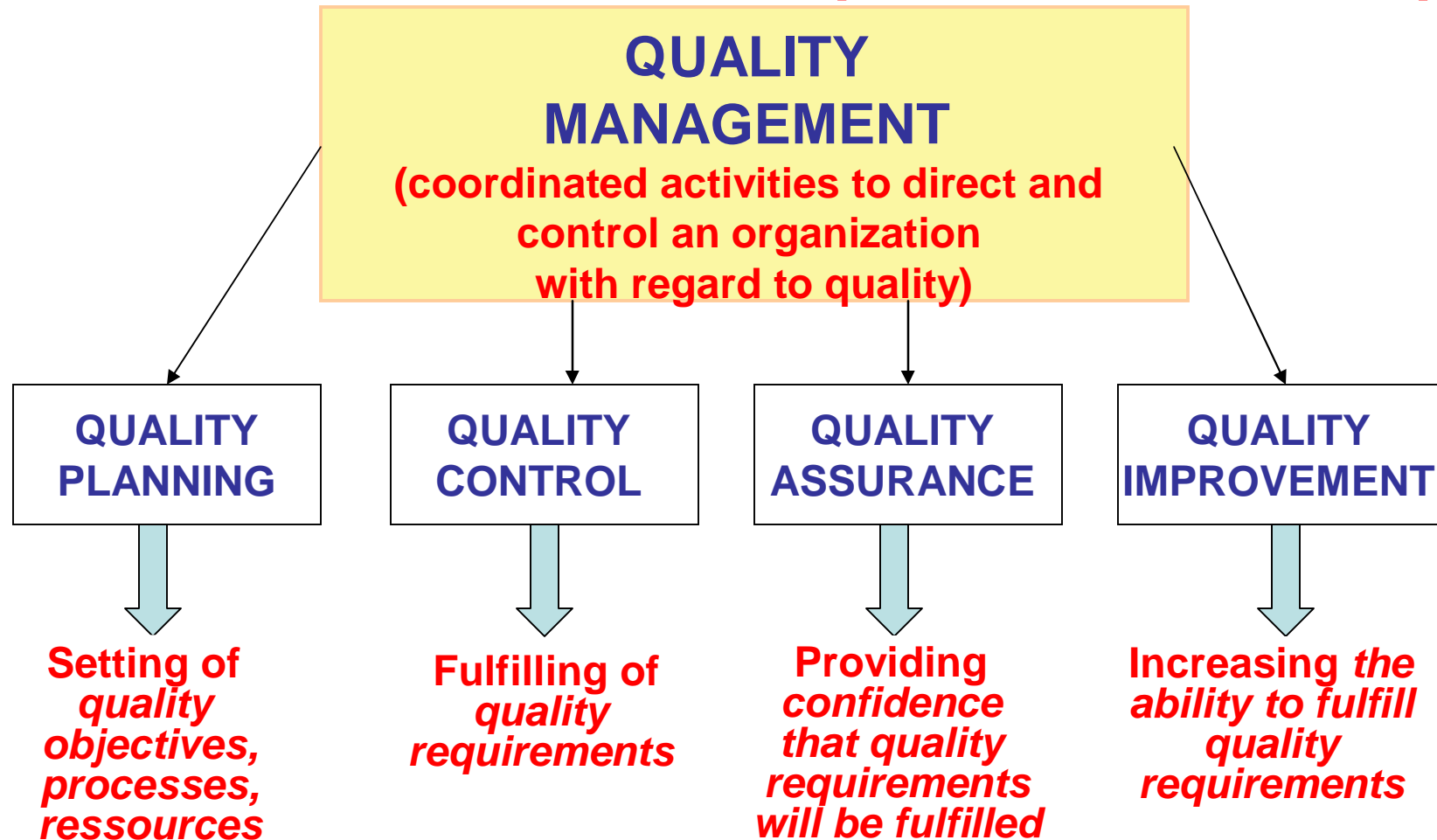
= “coordinated activities to direct and control an organization with regard to quality”

NOTE: Direction and control with regard to quality generally includes establishment of the *quality policy and quality objectives, quality planning, quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement*

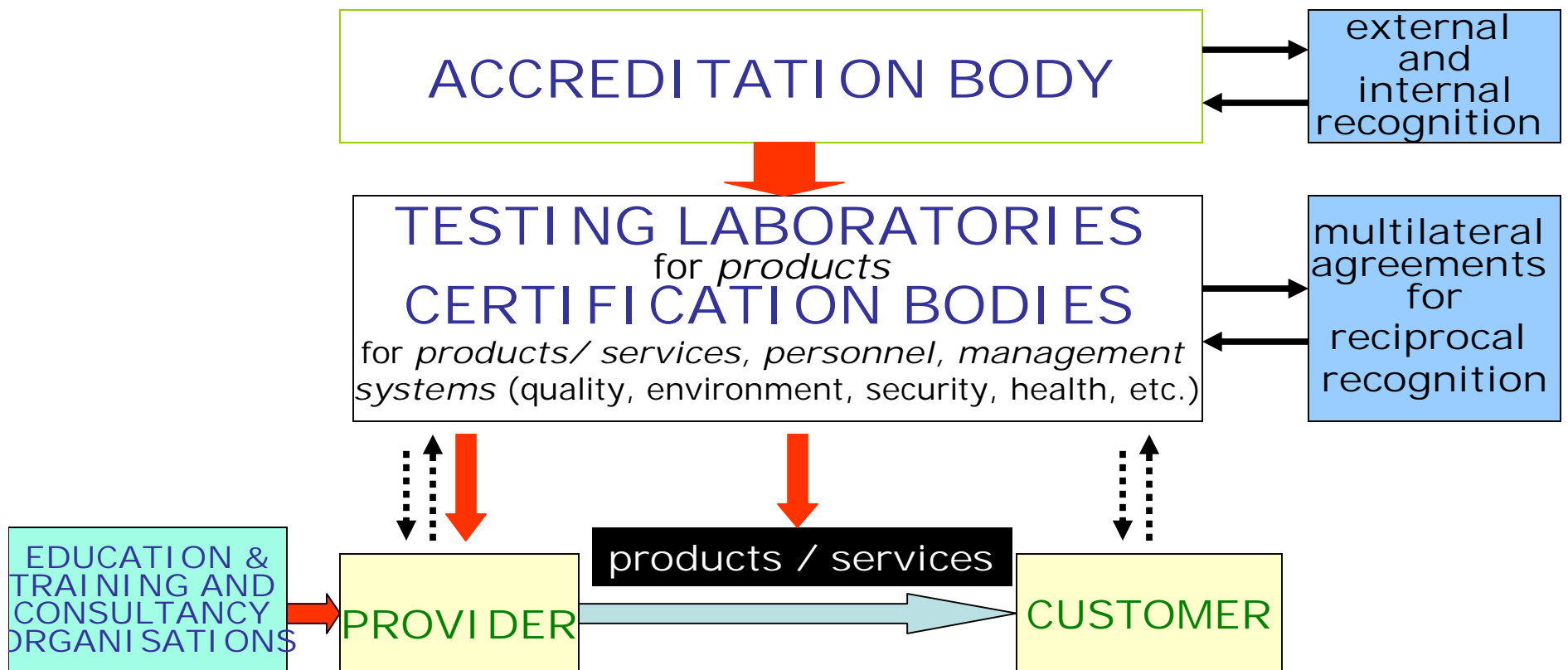
(EN ISO 9000:2005)

NOTE: Both concepts are not defined neither by ENQA nor by Law 87/2006

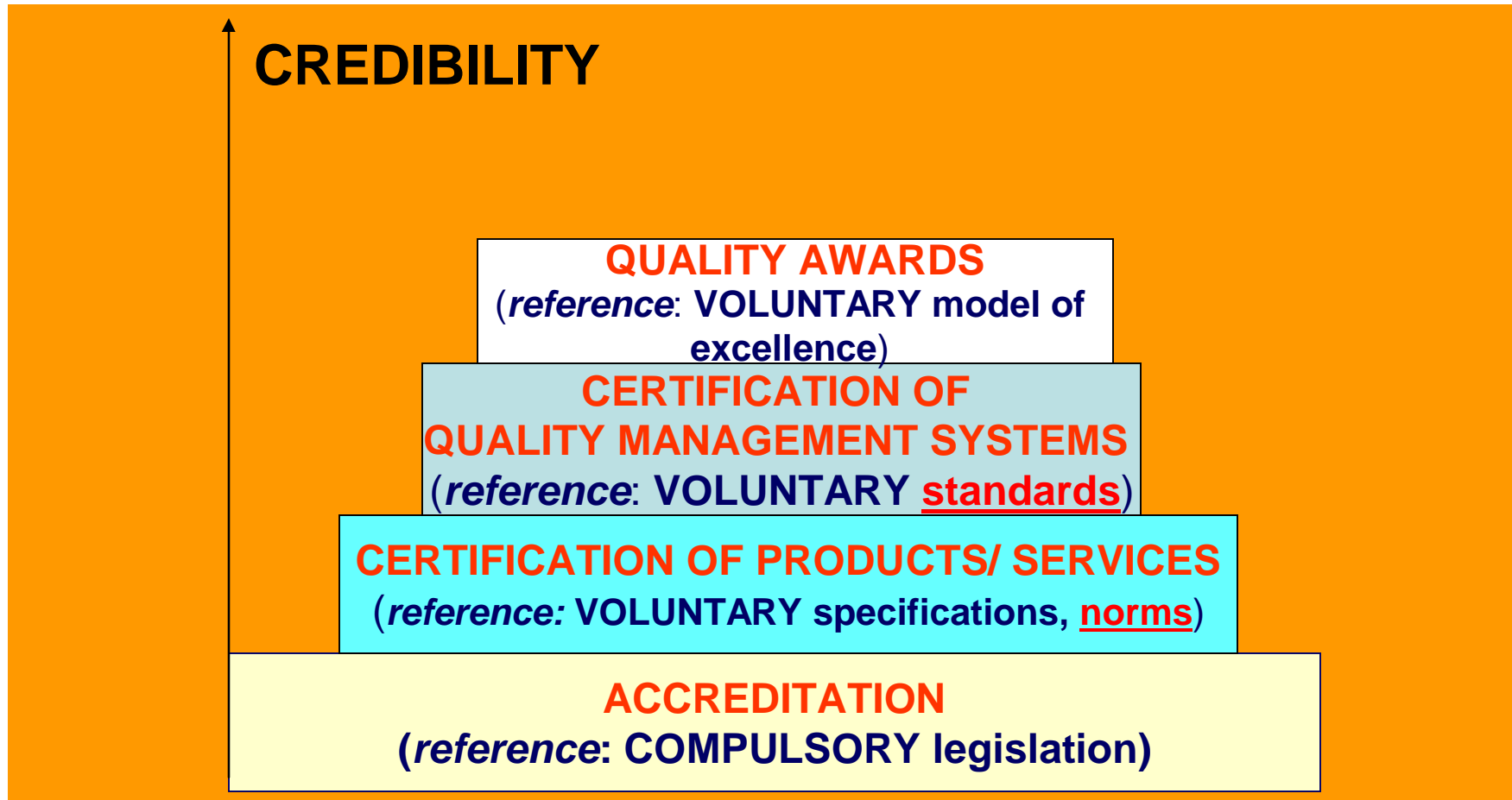
COMPONENTS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND THEIR ROLES (ISO 9000:2005)



TRUST GENERATION through CERTIFICATION and ACCREDITATION



STEPS OF CREDIBILITY (proposal)



PRACTICES AND POSSIBLE REFERENCES FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES PERFORMANCE (proposal)



MOTIVATIONS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ROMANIAN EDUCATION

- Need to generate **more and more consistent trust**, on medium and long term, in the capabilities, results and outcomes of Romanian universities and other schools within the globalised and European education markets (taking into consideration their increasing competition for students and resources).
- Need to **harmonize standards, guidelines, procedures and practices** implemented in Romanian universities and other schools with those implemented in other EU Member States, with a view to make possible the automatic recognition - within the European markets - of diploma and titles issued by Romania, to include Romania in the **European Higher Education Area (EHEA)** and to ensure the free movement of Romanian inhabitants within the European space
- Need to reduce the **adaptation time**, at their first employer, of employees graduating Romanian universities and other schools - through educational offers which are more and more adequate to the needs, expectancies and requirements of employers.

THEORETICAL OBSTACLES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ROMANIAN EDUCATION

- Lack, insufficiency or inadequacy of *quality management knowledge and skills* of people involved in activities related to quality assurance in education
- Lack, insufficiency or inadequacy of *educational and occupational standards*
- Ignorance of *quality management principles, methods, techniques and tools*
- Counterproductive mentality/ approach “*Quality is obtained by detecting problems/ non-conformances and solving/ correcting them*” (inclusively by means of “corrective actions”) and the lack of mentality/ approach “*Quality may be obtained more efficiently by preventing problems/ non-conformances (by means of “preventive actions”)*”.
- Lack, insufficiency or inadequacy of *QUALITY objectives* (with indicators and targets), *policies and strategies* - on short, medium and long term
- Excessive trust in *documents and certification of a quality assurance/ management system*, in the detriment of managerial proactive decisions and of adequate actions intended to manage (plan, control, assure, improve) the quality of education

CULTURAL OBSTACLES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ROMANIAN EDUCATION

- Many *inherited counter-productive mentalities, attitudes and behaviors*
- Lack, insufficiency or inadequacy of **basic education and of training** of people involved in quality management within educational organizations
- Perception of quality assurance/ improvement as a “duty” / “task” of all employees *excepting (top) managers* of the involved organization
- Lack or insufficiency of a *<customer orientation> approach* of quality assurance/ management
- Absolute priority given to *quantitative objectives*, with partial or total disregard of *qualitative objectives*
- *Inefficacy and/ or inefficiency of communication* (including the preference given to the unidirectional communication) with all stakeholders (especially vertically, i.e. within the hierarchical pyramid and horizontally, i.e. between organization’s structures).
- Ignorance of *change reticence and resistance* as well as of existing methods and techniques *with a view to evaluate and reduce them*

MATERIAL OBSTACLES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

- Lack, insufficiency or inadequacy of *material resources* allocated at local and central levels for the quality assurance of education.
- Lack or insufficiency of *financial resources* available for investments in laboratory equipment, information technology and multi-media equipments as well as in the maintenance of these equipments and in afferent consumables.
- Lack, insufficiency or inadequacy of *programs and projects for national, regional and/ or european funding of assurance quality in education* (inclusively the needed financial support for developing, building and implementing of a quality assurance / management system in universities and schools as well as for their certification.

SHORT CONCLUSIONS OF AN EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION [7] (1)

- *The quality of the math and science education in Romania is **traditionally high**, above all in technical sciences, which gives the country an **important competitive advantage compared to its (European) competitors**.*
- This advantage is seen particularly in the **number of IT specialists** in Romania. **With about 64,000 IT specialists, the density of IT specialists per 1,000 inhabitants is greater than in the US or Russia.**
- Approximately **5,000 out of the 30,000 engineers graduating every year in Romania are specialised in ICT** (Information Communication Technology).
- Nevertheless, the transition towards a market economy also required **a shift in focus from technical education to economic and juridical education**. In these areas **the educational system has failed to reach fully satisfactory standards**, as the indicator for the quality of management and business schools shows

SHORT CONCLUSIONS OF AN EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION [7] (2)

- *The quality of public schools appears to be **good**, placing Romania even ahead of Italy. Yet, during our interviews, the view has been expressed that aggregate indicators on the quality of education hide important differences in regional performance. According to this view, the school system fares much worse in some, particularly rural, regions.*
- *The quality of the educational system, as evaluated by the WEF (2006) survey questions, also points out that, on average, **educational performance in Romania is not a major constraint for undertaking business.***
- *Crucially though, as pointed out above, there appears to be **insufficient training in managerial and business-administrational skills.** Romania is ranked **only 70th out of 125 countries, according to the WEF (2006) data, in terms of the quality of its management and business schools.** Most other benchmarking countries achieve significantly higher scores. A SME-level survey by Brown et al. (2004) revealed that half of the managers interviewed in their survey had some form of university education, while only little more than 10 percent of their employees had university education.*

SHORT CONCLUSIONS OF AN EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION [7] (3)

Overall, there appear to be *three major problems related to higher education in Romania.*

- *Firstly, access to higher education is restricted to the country's urban population,* effectively excluding 45 percent of Romania's population from access to tertiary education.
- *Secondly, there appears to be a divide among the different disciplines of higher education.* While, as pointed out above, Romanian universities provide excellent education in engineering, social sciences, including economics and business science, appear to lag behind significantly in terms of quality.
- *Thirdly, there seems to be a mismatch in terms of skills taught at universities and those required by the labour market.* Subjects do not seem to prepare the students sufficiently for the necessities of the labour market. Hence, there is a high need for companies to provide vocational training, which creates considerable additional costs, especially to SMEs. Vocational training is promoted by the National Agency for Employment and Vocational Training, which was founded in 1998. The number of students receiving vocational or apprenticeship training increased from 252,000 in 2001/02 to 289,000 in 2004/05.
- In a similar vein, the Romania's National Export Strategy (2005) stressed *the lack of sufficient provision of continued education at Romanian universities.*

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION !