Accreditation and Evaluation in Higher Education in Slovakia

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Objectives of this Presentation

- To welcome the initiative
- To provide information
- To share experience

How it all Started ...

- 1989, totalitarian communist regime was overthrown
- 1990, Higher Education Law
  - academic liberties
  - institutional autonomy
  - a provision for 2-tier Bc/Mgr degree system was made
  - Accreditation Commission was established

... and Why

- A guess on law-maker’s intention:
  - to overcome the past
  - to open door for the future
  - to make transition viable
- (in plain text):
  - away from state control
  - towards quality control
  - checks and balances

Accreditation Commission

- Mission:
  - to assist in development of higher education system in Slovakia by evaluating level of educational and research activities of institutions and by accrediting courses
- Legal Status:
  - advisory body of the Government
  - both before and after the new Law 131/2002 on HE

Accreditation Commission

- Principal Tasks:
  - to accredit newly proposed degree courses and re-accredit the running courses
  - to accredit institutions
  - to evaluate institutions (Faculties)
    - (before April 2002)
  - to give opinions on proposals to establish / close down institutes / institutions (Faculties or HE institutions)
Accreditation Commission

Principal Tasks:
- to give opinions on proposals to establish / close down institutes / institutions (Faculties or HE institutions)
- to make recommendations regarding the status of the higher education institution

Accreditation Commission

Principles:
- accreditation is compulsory for all degree courses at all three levels
- accreditation is performed periodically

Accreditation Commission

Principles:
- accreditation criteria are based:
  - mostly on evaluating resources: human, infrastructure, information, material, financial, laboratory etc.
  - programmatic reviews
  - to some extent, outcomes

Accreditation Commission

Principles:
- institutional accreditation
  - is based on a mission (as declared by each institution)
  - concerns principal activities
  - involves
    - self report
    - peer review
    - on site visit

Accreditation Commission

Procedures:
- transparency (documents including minutes of meetings on web site)
- general criteria discussed with representation of HE
- meetings are public:
  - frequently Minister, President of Rectors’ Conference, President of HE Council, President of Students’ Council take part
- Rectors and Deans of institutions on agenda are invited as a rule
Accreditation Commission

Outcomes from Accreditation:
- recommendations to the Minister:
  - to grant the right to confer degrees
  - to grant the right to nominate professors
  - to suspend the rights ...
  - to establish a new university
- recommendations to the Rector:
  - to establish a new Faculty

Outcome from Institutional Accreditation:
- a detailed report that
  - identifies strengths and weaknesses
  - makes recommendations to the Institution

Outcome from Evaluation (before April 2002, currently void)
- for each Faculty, within a group of similar Faculties in the same broad field of knowledge: an attribute (coarse ranking)

Evaluation Commission

Principles:
- new according to Law 131/2002
- periodical evaluation
- concerns all entities attempting to receive government funding for R/D
- concerns solely institution’s research and development
- results in yes/no

Principles:
- evaluation is based:
  - comprehensive report on outcomes of principal activities (mainly research, publications, projects)
  - can be replaced by a certificate of compliance with management of quality ISO standard

Discussion

Quality of research
- at national level:
  - some excellent, some poor
- at international level:
  - are the universities (still) able to compete?

Financing of research
- generally poor (in terms of %GDP)
- only a very small fraction allocated on a competitive basis
- nearly all allocated to institutions regardless of the quality
Discussion

- Quality of education:
  - Accreditation Commission serves as a kind of “safeguard” against attempts to open new courses below any reasonable threshold of quality
  - amount of resources available
  - How do the attempting institutions assure their quality?

Issues for the future

- Implementation of changes in the legislation
- further promoting the concept of quality in HE system and institutions
- strengthening international dimension
- strengthening professional dimension
- discussing relation of quality and financing