The impact of electronic commerce on study programmes. The modernization of higher education, innovations and social dimension

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Abstract

In a social and economic environment, knowledge and skills acquired by higher education have become increasingly important (European Commission 2010). Expanding the higher education opportunities in a major part of the society has so far become a social necessity. Lately, the concept of e-commerce in the curricula, and the social dimension (social inclusiveness) are the centre of important policies on the national and international level. It has been affirmed that the social dimension of higher education primarily consists of offering the members of a society the opportunity to participate in higher education.

Universities play a key role in the future of Europe and in the orientation of the economy and society towards knowledge. Particularly, higher education institutions need to open flexible programmes, and find more ways to increase the number of the students in need thereby raising their total number of the students. The flexibility of higher education is also extended by the development of new technologies such as e-learning. Computer networks and digital technology are widely used in e-commerce. The combination of human intelligence and the high speed of computers has enabled the effectiveness of commercial activities. All the processes of negotiation, signing of contracts, ordering and accepting products are done by computers which are connected to the network. This has thus created new problems of consumer protection and intellectual property issues.

In order to protect the copyrights and in order to stimulate the development of e-commerce, we should include in the curricula of higher education studies the principles for the protection of intellectual property and key points of the copyright law in accordance with the network computer technological developments and their applications. Many countries offer two study cycles as a sensible contribution for the flexibility of studies. This offering provides the opportunity to take a bachelor diploma and then enter into the work market, or to further their education with a master's programme. Half of the countries do not show any relationship between the employer and higher educational institutions, thus encouraging the flexibility of study.

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Key terms: e- commerce, e-learning, intellectual property and consumer protection in the higher education curricula, modernization of study programmes.

Introduction

In the so-called "Age of the Internet", a time of powerful technological developments or in a socio-economic environment, where skills and knowledge gained through higher education are becoming increasingly important, access to alternative teaching methods and the expansion of opportunities for higher education to the population have become a social necessity. In recent years the concept of electronic commerce in the curriculum and social dimension (the whole social involvement) are at the center of important policies at both the national and international levels.

Flexibility of higher education has improved by the development of new technologies (e.g.: distance education, e-learning, etc.). In E-commerce, computer networking and digital technologies are widely used. The combination of human intelligence and the high-speed of computers have satisfied people's needs to accomplish various commercial activities efficiently. Negotiating, signing contracts, ordering and receiving the goods are all done on computer networks. In order for students to engage in e-commerce transactions, the need for special knowledge on new computer technologies is essential. For this reason, courses and new training programs are requisite, but what is most important, are the fundamental changes in the curricula for undergraduate students of the first and second cycles.

Additionally, along with the ability to access the internet, other legal and practical issues need to be resolved. The new problems caused mainly involve consumer protection and intellectual property. Based on the above, in order to protect the interests and rights of the author and to stimulate the development of e-commerce, lectures need to be held for the undergraduate programs on the principles of intellectual property protection and the key points of law to the rights the author in accordance with the development of computer networking technologies and their applications.

In some cases, the teaching curricula are outdated, especially in sciences. Sometimes this is a result of the equipment being outdated and/or because the academic staff is not up-to-date with current developments. There is an opportunity to improve the situation, starting from the equipment, especially computer related technologies.[2]

Methodology

- Primary sources: The legal analyze of curriculum reform on higher education, e-learning, innovations and social dimension. The interpretation of this reform through National Strategy on Higher Education, 2008-2013; Lisbon Convention: "For recognition of professional qualifications of higher education in the European region"; and Bologna Declaration: "European Vision of Higher Education".
- Secondary source: Case studies of different European legislation on higher education and teaching methods, referring to the statistics and examples from the publication of European Commission "Modernization of Higher Education in Europe", 2011.

Analyze, concepts and definitions

The need arises to include in the curricula the legal aspects and effective regulation,

2. *Referred to the National Strategy on Higher Education, 2008-2013, approved by the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 1509, dated 30. 07. 2008.*

for example: aspects for fair access to the market; the code of conduct of entities operating in the trade; principles of fair competition which is protected by law; the quality of goods and services; consumer rights protection, etc.. Equally important is the treatment in the study programs of the laws and regulations for sources of information, such as: to standardize the information given, to create an official system of information resources management for different levels, and ensure legal responsibility in cases of abuse the system, etc.

The problem of intellectual property also appears in the case for online transactions, such as the problems of the use and protection of trademarks, patents, copyrights, business secrets and patented technology. Therefore knowledge about the laws and regulations on intellectual property rights should not be neglected in the development of electronic commerce.

Study programs may include disciplines related to e-commerce, providing insights on:

- Security of information and communication technology;
- Cybercrime;
- Protection of state secrets and business secrets;
- Protection of infrastructure and technology;
- The ownership and the right to use the infrastructure and technology;
- Types of taxes and their jurisdictions;
- Implementation and effectiveness of electronic contracts;
- Protection of consumer rights on the Internet and unfair competition or monopolies;
- Form and procedures for financing e-commerce;
- Electronic payments;
- The rights and obligations of the banks on the Internet;
- Intellectual property rights;
- The official website name registration and trademark law;
- Protection of privacy in e-commerce.
- Etc.

Moreover, electronic commerce or e-commerce refers to a wide range of online business activities for products and services.[3] It also deals with business transactions in which the parties interact electronically rather than through direct physical exchanges. Generally, e-commerce is associated with the buying and selling of goods and services on the Internet, or conducting any transaction involving the transfer of ownership or rights to use goods or services via computer.[4] However, this definition is not comprehensive enough to articulate the latest developments and revolutionary business advancements. E-commerce operates through electronic communications and digital information processing to create, transform and redefine value creating relationships between businesses and businesses, and between businesses and consumers.

E-commerce and e-business not only means the transactions on the Internet or on the company's official site, it is a new concept of business which includes business management and economic concepts. Thus, e-business and e-commerce have an impact on many areas of business and management disciplines. For example:

3. *Anita Rosen, The E-commerce Question and Answer Book. (USA: American Management Association, 2000), pg. 5*
4. *Thomas L. Mesenbourg, Measuring Electronic Business: Definitions, Underlying Concepts, and Measurement Plans.*

- Marketing - Advertising on-line marketing strategies and consumer behavior culture which is an area in where the effect is direct marketing.
- Computer Science - the development of different networks and information technologies which best support e-commerce and e-business.
- Finance and Accounting - on-line banking, transaction cost issues, accounting and audits are valued as important knowledge which are based around the global economy.
- Economy - Impact of e-commerce in the local and global economies already includes the concepts of digital economy, knowledge base and how these fit into the economic theories.
- Production and Operations Management - The impact of utilizing online processing has led to reduction of time spent in the production cycle. In most cases, digitized processes only take a few seconds to provide products and services electronically. Production systems are integrated with marketing and finance other operations systems, as well as with business partners and customers.
- Information Systems Management - analysis, design and implementation of systems for e-business, systems integration issues, etc.
- Human Resource Management - on-line recruitment issues or working at home (telecommuting) and replacing permanent physical employees at a work site.
- Business Law and Ethics - various legal and ethical issues that have arisen as a result of virtual global markets. Issues such as copyright, protection of consumer privacy, the legality of electronic contracts, etc.

The Internet allows people from all over the world to connect with each other at lower cost and in a more reliable way. As a technical infrastructure, this is a collection of global networks which share information using a common protocol. Also, as a community of people and information, the Internet is a driving factor for e-commerce. It allows businesses to display and sell their products and services online and gives potential customers access to information about these businesses and their products and services.

In the context of academic autonomy, which refers to the academic freedom of the individual and the institution, the latter can develop innovative curricula, new subject content and, in the context of Quality Assurance and financial margins, they can decide on the opening or closing of the branches and disciplines. This will affect the ratio of the number of students to faculty for each HEIs.[5]

What is online publishing? How useful is it for students?

Online publishing is the process of using a computer and specific types of software to combine text and graphics to produce Web-based documents such as newsletters, online magazines and databases, brochures and other promotional materials, books, etc., with the Internet as a medium for publication.

Students, by using the access to the Internet, can download online books or lectures of their professors, which are published on the webpage and are made available for their program of study. This brings the richness of their library, leading to the creation of an online library. The creation of these libraries is on students' interest, and also for the

5. *Referred to the National Strategy on Higher Education, 2008-2013, approved by the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 1509, dated 30. 07. 2008.*

Higher Education Institution (HEI) to enhance the quality of teaching. At the same time, through e-commerce, students and the academic staff can perform online purchases of the necessary literature for course study, thus overcoming the limitations and succeeding to provide a much easier and faster mode of education.

What are the benefits and advantages of online publishing to business?

Among the benefits of using online media are low-cost, universal access, the independence of time and place, and ease of distribution. These are the reasons why the Internet is regarded as an effective marketing outreach medium and is often used to enhance information services.

What are the problems and issues in online publishing?

The problems in online publishing can be grouped into two categories: management challenges and public policy issues.

In online marketing, there is the problem of unsolicited commercial e-mails or "spam mail." Junk e-mail is not just annoying; it is also costly. There are two major management issues:

- The profit question, which seeks to address how an online presence can be turned into a profitable one and what kind of business model would result in the most revenue;
- The measurement issue, which pertains to the effectiveness of a Web site and the fairness of charges to advertisers.

The most common public policy issues have to do with copyright protection. Many publishers are prevented from publishing online because of inadequate copyright protection. An important question to be addressed is: How can existing copyright protections in the print environment be mapped onto the online environment? Most of the solutions are technological rather than legal. Besides technological support, legal regulation in this area is indispensable.

Flexibility of higher education studies

As highlighted by the European Commission, "universities are key players in Europe's future and for the successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society".[6] Generally, higher education institutions need to open up to flexible learning and introduce more access routes that would enable broader participation of disadvantaged groups, and increase the overall number of students. The flexibility of higher education is also extended by the development of new technologies (for example: e-learning, etc.), computer networks and digital technology widely used in e-commerce.

The more comprehensive and accessible the higher education system becomes, the more the people are able to follow it. As noted above, the flexibility of higher education is also expanded by the development of new technologies (e.g., distance education, e-learning, etc.). Hence the importance of the development of university curricula and the inclusion there within of knowledge about the use of new technologies, is always greater.

Several countries also mention the two-cycle higher education system as a significant

6. *European Commission 2006, pg. 11.*

contribution to the flexibility of studies; enabling students to gain a bachelor's degree and then either enter the labor market or continue to study at the master's level. This could reduce the number of drop-outs from previous master's program candidates which have not provided access to the labor market at bachelor level and have thus required a longer period of studies to obtain a degree.

- Access Routes to Higher Education

  Higher Education Institutions usually follow state policies for university admissions. Many states also allow setting other criteria for the admission of students so students can sit for admission, financial support or recognition of their previous educational achievements. For the number of students admitted to these institutions, Iceland is an example of a country that claims to not pursue funding based on the number of graduates involved in their higher education funding formula. These policies focus on the number of students who take the exam, requiring students' progress. In Hungary, higher education institutions receive funding based on a variety of indicators, including the number of students enrolled in institutions and not just the number of graduates. This can be perceived as a negative incentive for institutions of higher education thus encouraging them to keep students enrolled for as long as possible.

  Overall, fifteen specific educational systems take into account the number of graduates as an indicator in the funding formula and institutions receive a bonus based on the number of graduates. Spain has adopted a number of value policy, where the focus is on the duration of the study, which is regarded as a key element for the accreditation of programs. Additionally, the cost of the tax increases substantially if a student follows the same course for the second or third years. Similar practices where special tariffs are assigned to students for the academic year, but that are usually cheaper than in the above mentioned countries, can be found in the Czech Republic, Ireland, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia.

  Many HEIs also claim to have initiated or strengthened academic services, and student counselors have developed guidelines in an effort to improve the rates of students who successfully complete their studies. Norway introduced the Individual Education Plan, a document which states that all students should fill-in the registration forms. The student shows his goals and plans to study full-time or part-time, and the number of ECTS planned to be earned per semester and academic year. Many higher education institutions organize individualized hours with students who have fallen behind the goals set out in their plans. Reorganization of the cycles and the establishment of bachelor and master programs also contribute to the successful completion of studies. This was mentioned specifically by the Czech Republic and Italy, but it is certainly a significant feature of other educational systems[7].

- Recognition of Priorities/Professional Learning (RPL)

  Recognition of the Prior Learning (RPL) is increasingly considered as a mechanism to facilitate progress and better adaptation of higher education proviso to a variety of learner needs. Most states have general legal arrangements for the recognition of credits obtained in previous studies' programs, and HEIs determine

7. *Referred to the statistics and examples from the publication of European Commission "Modernization of Higher Education in Europe", 2011.*

their specific recognition criteria. Legislation of almost all countries recognizes the autonomy of institutions for recognition procedures, for example: tenure of a former 2-year professional program, before admission into a Bachelor of Arts program. Some states require an entrance examination and several give advantages in scoring to students who have earned previous credits.

- Part-time Study

  More than half of the countries have a legal status for part-time studies. Some countries have a common understanding of part-time study and usually base their descriptions on a reduced number of ECTS credits or the time of studies when compared to full-time study. Others refer to the regulations in a variety of studies. In almost all countries, Higher Education Institutions enjoy the autonomy to decide whether or not to offer part-time studies. However, these study options are provided in most of them. From the survey forms, financing often depends on several factors. In six EU countries, access to student loans is linked to a student's status of full-time studies, which in practice encourages students to choose full-time studies.

- Relationship between Employers and Higher Education Institutions

  Half of the countries will not indicate any procedures regarding the relationship between employers and Higher Education Institutions in fostering flexible learning. Agreements between educational institutions and employers in order to provide research or training courses in the framework of lifelong learning have succeeded in some countries (for example: "Foundation Degree" in the UK).

Curriculum Reform and E-learning

This reform includes restructuring the curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, measures for assessing student achievements and academic staff qualification. Curricular reform has led to the formation of a curriculum under the European Framework and AQF qualifications, and ensuring compliance with local market needs.

Curriculum reform was supported by many IT programs and functioning HEIs. Achievement assessment reform, as a component of curriculum reform, is included in the implementation of the State Matura Exam and Release.

Institutions of Higher Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science should develop policies and strategies for the integration of ICT in universities. One of the main priorities should be to create criteria for the establishment of standards in education technology. Simultaneously, measures should be taken to increase ICT position in the most effective and innovative pedagogical teaching and learning processes. Even in the context of human resources, the focus should be to build leadership capacity that will be used for technology planning, implementation and evaluation. HEIs also need to plan and organize workshops, seminars, conferences, to promote the integration of information technology.

The process of e-education (e-learning) is guided by the following values: setting the highest standards in communication (governmental, national and international) and to promote a climate of professionalism to reflect and adequately be reflected in institutional progress.

Understanding the Social Dimension

It is claimed that the social dimension of higher education consists mainly in providing opportunities for all members of society to participate in higher education. Despite the widespread use of this concept, until 2007 there was a precise and widely accepted definition of social dimension in higher education. Bologna Process, perhaps the most important reforms for change in higher education in Europe, the social dimension has been mentioned in the press since 2001.[8] In the European Union, the council conclusions of 11 May 2010 defined the social dimension as: "Equal opportunities for access to quality education, as well as equality of treatment, including the adaptation of provisions and measures to the needs of individuals" where "equal education and training systems… are aimed at providing opportunities, access, treatment and income that are independent of the economic and social background and other factors that may lead to educational disadvantage."

In Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve, Bologna ministers committed themselves to set measurable targets for the expansion of participation in higher education by the end of the next decade.

Earlier years, Eurydice examining the social dimension of the European Higher Education[9] and concluded that there have been significant changes in higher education systems since 1999, but there are still challenges. In particular:

- The social dimension of higher education [...] is understood differently from one country to other;
- Very few countries have linked their policy on the social dimension of the Bologna commitment to increased participation levels where the population with higher education show the distribution of general society;
- Very few countries have set specific targets to improve participation in higher education and only about half of the Bologna countries systematically monitor this participation.

Empirical studies of entrance/admission and participation in higher education illustrate that many countries are still far from meeting the objectives of the Bologna Process. This should evaluate not only state policies and initiatives but also the impact of the professional and educational background of both parents, as an indicator of achievement in higher education. European Social Surveys show that students from high-income strata are more likely to graduate than those from low-income strata.

What can I do to address this policy empirical reality?

The first concept is that of formal equality which focuses on the equality of conditions. Here everyone is treated equally, regardless of their wealth. In this context, the main goal is to build the system so that no one is discriminated against.

The second concept focuses on the equality of results, rather than consider equal conditions. Exponents of this approach argue for positive discrimination. An OECD study for equal policies in higher education identified three areas where policies can help to promote the goal of an inclusive and equitable social system of higher education (OECD, 2008). First, a more flexible organization of the higher education system provides access

8. EACEA / Eurydice 2010, pg. 14.

9. EACEA / Eurydice 2010, pg. 27.

and greater equality. Here the main goal may be to encourage more flexibility in moving from a higher education institution to another (OECD 2008, p. 49). Next, the nature of the admission and selection measures in higher education has an impact on the equity of the system.

The third area for action identified by the OECD policies related to final results (successful completion of studies), i.e. high scores in education.

Social dimension also affects the financing of higher education. Public funding of HEIs is the main source of revenue for the chief part of these educational institutions in all EU member countries. Viewing historical developments, three successful financial support approaches are proposed for wider access to higher education:

- Increased public funding of higher education by determining relatively low tariffs;
- Setting higher tariffs, providing extensive support through scholarships and loans;
- Expansion of the private higher education sector to reduce pressure on public funds.

The conclusion of student contributions and social dimension can cite that, in recent years, a significant body of researchers/investigators and institutions have advocated increased cost sharing between public authorities and private entities. One argument used in favor of private contributions to the promotion of equality is that public subsidies for higher education derived from taxes in fact constitute a distribution of funds from people with lower incomes to those with the highest. On the other hand, simply passing the financial burden for students without means of support is likely to have a negative effect on the tendency of lower-income groups towards the access to higher education.

In the development of comprehensive policies in higher education, equality in education and determining the funding of tuition fees take into account a number of important factors, such as:

- Socio-Economic Status: For all countries, the impact of the socio-economic status can be greatly affected by student fees and support systems.
- Gender: Gender influences the selection of the branch of study and later in the representation in teaching, as part of the academic staff. Although many countries report gender imbalance, they need to take significant initiatives to address specific programs, for example: women, in certain fields of study.
- Disability: Many countries have special offices for advising students with disabilities, without discrimination, informing them of the ways of getting financial support. For their involvement in the system of higher education, established facilities for example: transfer to universities near their homes. National concept of disability may differ among EU member countries or beyond.[10] Some countries emphasize the need to meet the special needs of students with disabilities, for example, providing unobstructed access to educational institutions. In fact, taking special measures for this category is mentioned as a priority by Hungary and Slovenia. In the UK, Higher Education Institutions have a statutory duty to make "reasonable adjustments" to the specific requirements of students with disabilities. Denmark and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) apply a concept of support and assistance in

10. Referred to the statistics and examples from the publication of European Commission "Modernization of Higher Education in Europe", 2011, pg. 4

this category. The aim is to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to complete their studies on equal terms. In the UK, besides institutional duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities, special financial support is provided. Many German and Austrian universities have raised student offices providing advice to students with disabilities, supporting them in case of discrimination, etc. Similarly, in Slovenia, the majority of Higher Education Institutions employ their own staff; specialists dedicated to working with students with special needs. Moreover, specific measures have been taken in Greece, where students with health problems have the right to be transferred to the university closest to their residence.[11]

- Ethnic Origin: The education of the population should provide equal opportunities for students regardless of ethnicity. Of course for this category of students there are regulatory policies on immigration. At the same time, states pursue their policy of favoring such programs of study, in those areas where an ethnic group showed more inclination or in areas that the state intends to develop. The concept of ethnicity is understood differently among the EU member countries of and beyond and the notion often associated with ethnic origin may be problematic. Action to encourage the participation of specific ethnic groups is more pronounced in Northern Europe and some countries are able to demonstrate successful results. In Norway, for example, although 16% of all immigrants were admitted to institutes of higher education in 2010, the corresponding figure for immigrants aged 19-24 was 38%. This contrasts with a figure of 30% for the population as a whole, showing that immigrants were considerably more enrolled in HEIs, compared with the local population. Generation immigrants tend to choose more "prestigious" studies such as medicine, dentistry, law, business, technology and less for social studies and teaching. The Ministry of Education and Research of Norway has conducted campaigns to recruit more immigrants and students in the fields of teaching. This is partially due to the rising immigration levels, considered particularly important in recruiting immigrant students. Finland has set a target for the number of immigrant students admitted to HEIs which corresponds in correlation with the rest of the population. It aims to pay enough attention to cultural learning and improving language skills. Language is also the focus of action in Estonia, where the funding is to support students learning the national language. United Kingdom (Scotland) began an initiative to encourage institutions to develop appropriate strategies to support students by providing them with gender and racial equality. Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania identify Roma as an under-represented group. Bulgaria offers special courses for the Roma populace, for admission to universities.[12]
- Age: Some countries have adopted policy measures to encourage the participation of "mature students". Several countries offer short-study cycles or specific programs for the working-age group such as the "Senior Programmes" or "Third Age Universities". For example, in Ireland and Malta, a mature student is defined as a student entering college over the age of 23. This is linked to the reality that the average age profile for students is 18-22. In contrast, in Norway, only 54% of all registered students in 2010 were equal to or under the age of 25, 11.6% where in the age group of 41 and above.[13]
- Monitoring: Monitoring is important in approaching these policies. In this process, in

11. Referred to the statistics and examples from the publication of European Commission "Modernization of Higher Education in Europe", 2011, pg. 4

12. Referred to the statistics and examples from the publication of European Commission "Modernization of Higher Education in Europe", 2011.

13. Referred to the statistics and examples from the publication of European Commission "Modernization of Higher Education in Europe", 2011.

conjunction with groups classified on the basis of the above, other elements monitored include the education and professional skills of the parents.

One of the most significant trends in the last decade in higher education is expanding significantly in this area. Expanding of education has also seen significant growth in private education, and higher education institutions recognized by governments. Most of these new educational institutions are small and are mainly located in central and eastern Europe. Percentage of participation in higher education is influenced by many factors, such as: university admission policies, financial support, the demand for skilled workers in the labor market, demographic and economic situation in general.

One of the most important trends in European higher education in the last decade has been the continued expansion of this sector, with a growing number of students reaching an average growth of 25%[14]. This process is a global phenomenon associated with a shift towards knowledge-based societies, and raises new challenges for Europe. These challenges are well known in the European Union Agenda. The European Commission stresses the need to reshape higher education systems in Europe to contribute more effectively to the training and retraining of citizens in a knowledge-based society and economy.

It also places social dimension and financing, as one of the main pillars for the future. This parallels the attention to the social dimension that is developed through the Bologna Process, where a wide sphere of political activity is provided in response to a cross-government commitment to expand participation.

In response to social trends, higher education ministers have stressed that the "Student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our population. They also point out that students' (should be) able to complete their studies regardless of their social and economic backgrounds." This report takes the logic of social dimension and looks at actions taken by European countries to make this vision a reality.

Almost all European countries claim that the growth and expansion of participation in higher education is a major objective of their policies. Improving the quality of higher education has consistently ranked as the most important concern of countries' policies. However, this is not their highest priority.

Even before the financial and economic crisis and the subsequent pressures on public funds, the investment in higher education failed to keep up with the pace of the trends of participation. In fact, while participation grew rapidly before 2008, funding remained the same percentage of the GDP spending.

When referencing demographic trends in Europe, we can say that it deeply affects communities and countries, but the impact will be felt differently in different parts of the European continent. The impact of demographic changes in policy development can be expected to be twofold. First, for a sharp decline in the number of graduates to be avoided, offers of higher education should be extended to young students via lifelong learning. These demographic trends understand and regular funding capacity is needed.

14. Referred to the statistics and examples from the publication of European Commission "Modernization of Higher Education in Europe", 2011.

Discussions and recommendations

This paper has taken a close look at the social dimension of higher education. Although for many, this is a rather elusive concept, this issue has gained attention in political debates at European countries and the national level in recent years due to the rapid transformation of higher education.

Based on the above analyze, I would like to do the following recommendations and suggestions:

- Adapting curricula with new technological innovations.
- Testing of curricula on information society before they are implemented.
- Increase the awareness and education of students on online services.
- Encourage academic staff to implement and utilize new technology.
- Encourage public and private sector cooperation for the establishment of a commercial portal.
- Completion of legal and regulatory framework for the flexibility of education in the Republic of Albania.
- Rigorous implementation of legislation for the Information Society.
- Harmonization of national legislation with that of the European Union, on the information society, consumer protection and other international legal acts in these fields.
- Efficient implementation of the strategy of employment and vocational training, which is based on the Bologna Declaration, which will improve the quality of teaching.
- Efficient implementation of alternative methods.
- Further improvement of the educational system, reflecting the requirements of international conventions.
- Continuous improvement of the curriculum and alternative methods of teaching in higher education institutions.
- To promote education "on equal terms" ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination.

Conclusions

Special measures should be taken to strengthen the social dimension. Such measures exist in many countries to help specific groups based on factors such as socio-economic elements, status, gender, disability and ethnicity. Typical measures include the provision of reserved seats for members of a group, information programs run by separate groups and support services. Whilst some countries focus on measures to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, other countries take a general approach to enhance and expand the overall participation.

- Teaching methods and content of the curricula of undergraduate programs must meet the needs of society and the economy. Methods and style of teaching should provide students with the necessary information. The content of the subjects must overcome traditional restrictions. Students should be provided with alternative choices and flexibility in their studies. Investments to improve teaching, should be focused on the application of modern methods.

- Institutions of Higher Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science should develop policies and strategies for the integration of ICT in universities. One of the main priorities should be to create criteria for the establishment of standards in education technology. Simultaneously, measures should be taken to increase ICT position in the most effective and innovative pedagogical teaching and learning processes. Even in the context of human resources, the focus should be to build leadership capacity that will be used for technology planning, implementation and evaluation. HEIs also need to plan and organize workshops, seminars, conferences, to promote the integration of information technology.

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