

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTION SURVEY ON UNIVERSITY EDUCATION QUALITY WITH THE PURPOSE OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract:

One of the most important issues when it comes to university education institutions is the issue of quality assurance. Quality assurance of teaching procedure, study programs and all other procedures that are under way in university education are commitments taken by Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Ministry Conference in Berlin 2003 joining the Bologna process. Those obligations have created many challenges and the need to react accordingly to everyone taking part in university education, with special attention to students.

Students' requests and the survey about their perception of university education quality have their purpose in improving and developing the teaching procedure. This aim becomes greater when considering the fact that there are 45 university education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and growth tendency is evident year by year. Strong competition and the process of mass use of university education sets new functioning demands according to models of business organizations with focus on quality in all its segments.

In this work an insight on students' perception about quality of Business and Technical College in Doboj has been given, acting as an indicator of quality of that institution.

JEL Classification: I21, I25, L15

**Keywords:** students' perception, quality, university education institution, development

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of war the system of university education in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been in constant state of reformation. One of the basic objects of the reformation of the university education is reaching the high quality of education. Providing the quality and development of the university education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is important because of three basic reasons:

1. Development of the university education is very significant for the economical, social and cultural development of the country. Strengthening the university education and implementing developed skills and knowledge preconditions for permanent and sustainable economic growth are made. Knowledge makes new knowledge and opens the possibilities for domestic and foreign investments, which will therefore create new working places and increase the living standard and prosperity.
2. Joining the Bologna process in 2003, which is in the process of implementation, Bosnia and Herzegovina is obliged to certain activities and reforms which will improve its university education and provide quality education in order to join the European education market. An important push in the right direction to the reform was given by the foundation of Agency for university education and providing quality assurance in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2007. The Agency is in charge of defining the standards which define the minimum quality standards of university education, analysing the quality and implementing accreditation of the national universities, which is in process.
3. Founding new public and private universities has significantly improved the market of Bosnian university education. Providing good quality during the entire process of development at universities can strengthen its position and provide advantage when it comes to competition.

Providing quality assurance is an obligation in order to implement reforms which are obligatory according to the Bologna process and it is necessary to successfully accomplish the process of accreditation. On the other hand, providing good quality assurance is an obligation of the universities in order to survive on the market creating advantage against competition.

The most interesting way of evaluating quality of university institutions is providing surveys. In this work students of the Business and Technical College in Doboj have been surveyed in order to get their perception of the importance of the quality work in university education and its institutions.

## 2. UNIVERSITY EDUCATION MARKET IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

According to the information of the Agency for university education and providing quality assurance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are 45 university institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are 10 public institutions which enclose eight universities with more than 100 faculties and academies and six colleges. The private institutions enclose 18 universities with 95 faculties and academies and 15 colleges. Overview of the university institutions is presented in the table No 1.

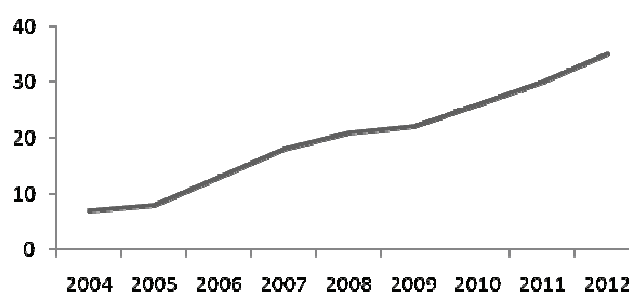
Table 1. The overview of the university institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina according to the organisational districts, entities and ownership.

	Organizational unit colleges and academies			Organizational unit high schools		
	Serbian Republic	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Brcko District	Serbian Republic	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Brcko District
Public sector	31	69	-	2	4	-
Private sector	40	42	13	10	4	1
Total colleges and academies	195			Total high schools	21	

The source: developed by the author according to data the Agency for the development of higher education and quality assurance of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The amount of university education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina is constantly increasing, especially the amount of private university education institutions. During the period from 2004 to 2012, private university education institutions have reached the increase of 22 %, which is presented in the diagram No 1.

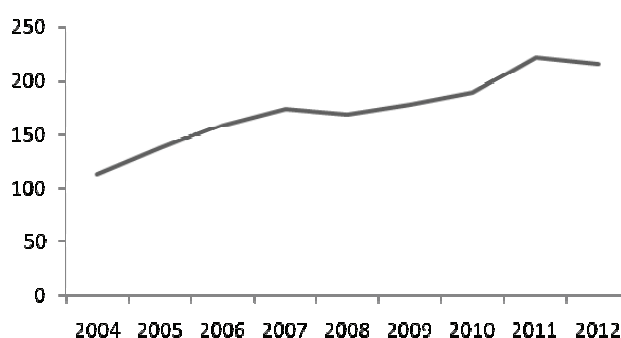
Diagram No 1. Private university education institutions in the period from 2004 to 2012.



The source: developed by the author according to data the establishment of private higher education institutions

During the same period the total amount of university education institutions, including public and private ones, grew at the rate of 10-12 %. Diagram No 2 presents the data.

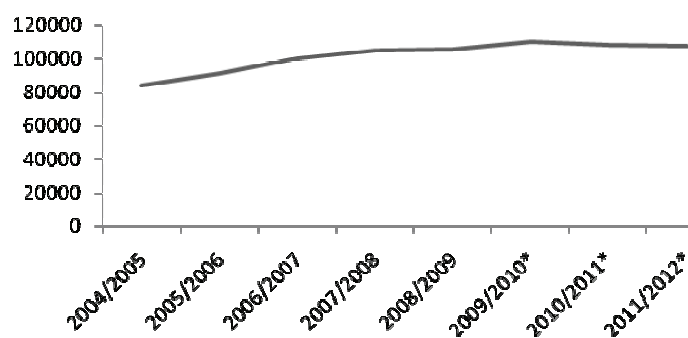
Diagram No 2. All university education institutions from 2004 to 2012.



The source: developed by the author according to data the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina

On the other hand, the amount of enrolled students at the university education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the same period, grew at the rate of 3,45 %, as it is presented in the diagram No 3.

Diagram No 3: Students enrolled in university education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina according to the grade they are attending.



\*All students who study according to the previous curriculum and students who study according to the Bologna curriculum are involved ( first cycle) Students of the second and third cycles of the Bologna curriculum are not involved.

The source: developed by the author according to data the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The displayed information present the structure of the university education market in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The number of university education institutions has constantly been on the increase since 2004. It is mostly due to the growing number of private university education institutions. Demand for the university education which is expressed with the amount of enrolled students does not have growing rate at the same level. It has actually remained unchanged from 2007/2008 to 2011/2012. In fact, the average growing rate of students enrolled at university education institutions for that period is just 0,5 %. Therefore, it is logical conclusion that university education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina constantly have to struggle to remain on the education market. Strong competition and vast number of university education institutions demand functioning of university education institutions in accordance to business organisations focusing on quality assurance. This is the precondition to remain on the university education market in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### **3. STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION QUALITY IN BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE IN DOBOJ**

The purpose of this study is to gain insights into students' perception of the importance of university education quality. The main goal of this research, which was conducted in Business and Technical College in Doboj, was to get insights into students' attitudes toward university education quality. These insights are necessary for the university's further development and survival on educational market.

#### **3.1 Research methods and participants**

The research was conducted among the first-year business economics students. A random sample of seventy-four students ( $n=74$ ) was selected during lectures at the end of the winter semester 2012/2013.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part is designed to gather general information about the student (sex). The second part comprised a list of various Likert items. All the statements referred to the students' attitudes toward the university education in general and their university. The remaining close-ended questions in the questionnaire referred to the factors that affect and determine the quality of a university. Mean, standard deviation, variance and rank were calculated using descriptive statistics. The chi-square test of independence was used to determine the statistical significance of the difference in perceptions between genders.

### 3.2 Results analysis

The insights into levels of agreement with statements referring to the students' attitudes toward the university education in general and their university were attained by use of descriptive analysis. The following table (*table 2*) represents the highest-ranked statements about the students' attitudes toward university education

Table 2 Students' perception of university education

Statement	Mean	Std.Dev.	Variance	Rank
3. A high quality education fosters the development of good work habits in students	4,162	0,833	0,693	1
5. More developed countries (MDC) offer higher-quality university education	4,162	0,957	0,915	2
6. A student graduating from a high-quality university will have better chances of getting employed.	3,459	1,303	1,697	3
1. The majority of knowledge acquired in university is applicable in real life.	3,444	0,998	0,996	4
8. The majority of students is capable of finding employment in their field of expertise.	3,243	1,011	1,022	5

The presented data shows that there are two high-ranked statements: that high-quality education develops good work habits ( $M=4,162$ ,  $s=0,833$ ), and that more developed countries offer better university education ( $M=4,162$ ,  $s=0,957$ ). The remaining three statements that were similarly ranked refer to the students' view on the relationship between education and employment. Students' responses to these statements show that they share their belief ( $M<3,5$ ) that high-quality education raises the chances of finding a job and being given an opportunity to use their knowledge in the field of their expertise. Hence, the students have a similar positive opinion about university education, but are less optimistic about finding a job in their field of expertise and being able to put their knowledge into use. Such an attitude can be seen as a kind of criticism directed toward both the present university education system and institutions that make it. On the other hand, the economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is extremely poor. So the end of 2012. The unemployment rate was 44.5 percent. This indicator, as well as some others are saying that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not (enough) a developed country. It follows that neither its system of higher education, then it is not enough good quality which is discussed in the high level assertion that indicates the quality of higher education in developing countries.

Further research examined the attitudes of students toward simplifying factors, in terms of how important they are for the very quality of higher education institutions and quality delivery of courses. The data obtained are shown in rank and relative frequencies in table No 3.

**Table 3** Factors that indicate the quality of higher education institutions

Factors that indicate the quality of higher education institutions	Frequencies (in %)	Rank
Using the latest breakthroughs and discoveries in science	56,76	1
Variety of courses and majors	40,54	2
Lectures by experts from abroad	29,73	3
Mentorship monitoring students during their studies	16,21	4
A small number of students per professor	13,51	5

It is evident that the most common factor that determines the quality of higher education institutions that referring to the use of the latest achievements of science and knowledge. Specifically, 56.76 percent of the surveyed students rated this factor as very important. Factors that relate to the diversity of subjects and courses to students is also an indicator of the quality of higher education institutions ( $F = 40.54\%$ ). Next ranked factor is the one that talks about organisation lectures by experts from abroad ( $F = 29.73\%$ ). The three best evaluation factors indicate that most students benefit primarily knowledge. Using the latest developments and monitoring of developments in science, as well as the engagement of eminent professionals from abroad to significantly raise the quality of teaching and the university. The result is the introduction of new courses and subjects that follow the development of science, but also recognize the needs of the market.

However, for research, it is especially interesting to see how the students rate the last two factors. Factor who talk about monitoring the mentoring of students ( $f = 16.21\%$ ) and a small number of students per professor ( $f = 13.51\%$ ) students are not identified as indicators of the quality of the university. Although it is quite clear that the two factors are components of higher education in order to ensure quality, the perception of the students they are not. There is statistically significant difference for the factor mentorship monitoring students during their studies. Specifically, the female part of the population of students rated this factor lower ( $\chi^2=18,538$ ) than their male counterparts. A factor of the number of students per professor is not a statistically significant difference between the sexes ( $\chi^2=5,145$ ).

The assumption, however, is that students are the last two factors are relatively poorly evaluated from the simple fact that they do not know them so they do not see it as important for the quality of higher education institutions. This can be singled out as a weakness, but as an opportunity for this institution for higher education in order to increase quality and improve its market position. Organizations continue to monitor Mentorship students, and fewer students per professor mean an individual approach to each student. In this way, the possibility of raising the quality of work with the students for what the student does and better education. On the other hand, the above factors go in favor of the quality of the university. Students are, in fact, very often identified with the institution of higher education where they are educated. Assuming the quality of their education, and higher education institutions will be shared as such from the perspectives of the employer, the environment, the public. Reverse is true of course.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

One of the main goals of higher education reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina is quality assurance. As the signatory of the Bologna Declaration, Bosnia and Herzegovina has committed itself to the process of higher education reforms that will contribute to the higher education development and quality improvement.

The higher education development and the improvement of the teaching process quality are even more meaningful when taking the great number of higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina into consideration. The increasing number of private universities only adds to the importance of the reform.

Questionnaires are commonly used to determine the quality of a higher education institution. The participants in this study were the students at the Business and Technical College in Doboj. The study provides the insights into their perception of university education in general and their university. Several basic results were attained by use of descriptive statistics. The participants share positive attitudes toward university education, but are not sure what opportunities upon graduation, to education offers because they know bad economic situation in the country. You are convinced that the developed countries have better systems of higher education. As the most important factors that speak about the quality of higher education institutions, students see the use of the latest findings in science, the variety of subjects and courses, and lectures from abroad. Mentorship monitoring students during their studies and fewer students per professor, students are recognized as



factors that speak about the quality of the university. The reason lies in the fact that these methods work in teaching students do not know. This can be singled out as a weakness, but as an opportunity for this institution in terms of strengthening the quality and enhance market position.

These evaluations are merely one aspect of evaluating a higher education institution. They present students' attitudes toward higher education quality and the higher education institution itself. Undertaking appropriate corrective measures will bring forth the development of this institution and its survival on a highly competitive educational market.

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