



CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES IN ROMANIAN ECONOMIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: *The situation of Romanian economic higher education is complex and strewn with major challenges, but also with prospects for development and quality improvement which require integrated approaches, adaptability and commitment from all actors involved. The paper examines the current situation of economic higher education in Romania and identifies the major challenges it faces as well as the prospects for its development and improvement. The research includes the aspects related to the internationalization of Romanian economic higher education and also explores the prospects for improving higher education, including investments in infrastructure and human resources, collaboration between universities and companies, as well as increasing access to distance learning programs and lifelong learning using new modern technologies. The paper highlights the importance of collaboration between universities and the private environment, so that study programs are more adapted to the demands of the labor market, regarding the prospects for the quality improvement and the development of economic higher education.*

JEL classification: I20, I21, I23, I25.

Key words: higher education, Romania, quality, internationalization, adaptability.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The research context

Higher education is a crucial factor in the socio-economic development of any country and in increasing the quality of life of its citizens. In recent decades, Romania has made important commitments regarding the modernization and development of higher education, but it still faces numerous challenges and problems. In the context of globalization and increasingly intense international competition, it is necessary for higher education in Romania to adapt and develop its capacity to train specialists with relevant skills and to integrate into international academic and professional networks. Therefore, it is important to analyze and identify solutions for the development of higher economic education in Romania, so that it meets the current and future demands of the labor market and society in general.

Higher economic education in Romania faces a series of problems that affect its efficiency and quality, as well as its ability to respond to the demands of the labor market and the national economy. Underfunding and limited resources, quality of education and performance assessment, adaptation to labor market requirements and development of relevant skills, internationalization and mobility of students and teaching staff, access to higher education and reduction of socio-economic gaps are just some of the major challenges faced face higher economic education in Romania.

1.2 The purpose of the research

The purpose of this paper is to analyze these challenges and problems and to identify solutions and perspectives for the development of higher economic education in Romania. In this sense, the paper addresses the current problems of higher economic education and aims to identify the development directions necessary to improve its efficiency and quality, as well as to increase its relevance for the national economy and social needs.



The paper is based on a critical analysis of the specialized literature, as well as on relevant data and information obtained from official and non-official sources. In addition, the paper will include an analysis of current public policies and the experiences of other countries in the region and the European Union.

1.3 Research objectives

The objectives of the research are the following:

- a) Analysis of the challenges and problems faced by higher economic education in Romania, including underfunding, quality and evaluation issues, maladjustment to labor market requirements and the lack of relevance of educational programs, as well as socio-economic gaps.
- b) Identification of perspectives and possible solutions for the development of higher economic education in Romania, which meet the current and future requirements of the labor market and society in general.
- c) Evaluation of the impact of policies and strategies adopted for the development of higher economic education in Romania, with an emphasis on public policies, on European and international programs and on collaboration with the private sector.
- d) Identification of good practice and examples of success from other countries, which could be adapted to the specifics and needs of higher economic education in Romania.
- e) Proposing concrete recommendations for the development of higher economic education in Romania, which take into account the current needs and requirements of the labor market and society, as well as the prospects for socio-economic development of Romania in the future.

1.4 Research methodology

The research methodology is based on a mixed approach, which combines the analysis of primary and secondary data.

Primary data were collected through *interviews and questionnaires* applied to teaching staff, students and employers in the economic field, with the aim of evaluating their perspectives and



needs regarding the development of higher economic education in Romania. The interviews and questionnaires were designed based on specific criteria, such as the quality of the education programs, relevance to the labor market, available infrastructure and resources, and the degree of adaptation to market demands.

Secondary data were collected through *bibliographic research* and *the analysis of official documents* of higher education institutions and public authorities, in order to identify the policies and strategies adopted for the development of higher economic education in Romania, as well as the current and future trends and perspectives of this field.

Data analysis was carried out through qualitative and quantitative methods such as *content analysis*, *SWOT analysis*, *comparative analysis and statistical analysis*. These methods were used to assess the challenges and perspectives of higher economic education in Romania, as well as to identify concrete solutions and recommendations for the development of this field.

Finally, the research results were synthesized and presented in a detailed report, which includes a comprehensive analysis of the problems and prospects, as well as concrete recommendations which meet the current needs and requirements of the labor market and of society.

1.5 Relevant literature

The *economic security of countries is closely related to the quality of education* and, more specifically, to higher education (Altbach et al., 2019). In Romania, as in other countries, there is more and more pressure on universities and other higher education institutions *to adapt to the demands of the market, financing and globalization* (Murgescu et al., 2019).

The *underfunding and limited resources of higher education* is a major problem in Romania, affecting the quality and relevance of higher education (Avram, 2021). *Budgetary allocations for higher education in Romania are much lower than the European average*, and university funding is also affected by bureaucracy, corruption and politics (Cotirlan, 2020).

In the context of globalization and increased competition on the labor market, higher education must be *relevant and adapted to market needs* (Catană et al., 2021). In this sense, it is important to provide adequate *resources for research, development and innovation* in universities, to ensure a



solid training of students and to enhance their skills and abilities (Bilan et al., 2020). There also needs to be *collaboration between universities and industry* to ensure practical learning and direct application of knowledge gained during studies (Chivu et al., 2019). This can help increase employment opportunities for graduates and enhance the country's economic development.

In a broader context, the development of education and higher education is considered one of the key drivers of economic and social development (Barro and Lee, 2013). Studies have shown that *an increase in the level of education can lead to an increase in productivity* and income, which can have a positive impact on economic development (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2012).

The literature revealed suggests that underfunding and limited resources of higher education can have negative effects on the quality and relevance of education, and adequate investments in research, development and innovation can contribute to better preparation of students and better economic development of the institution.

In addition, studies have highlighted the lack of collaboration between academia and the business sector, which has led to a discrepancy between the skills needed by the labor market and those developed by students in higher education (Barbulescu, 2017; Cozma et al., 2020). This *highlights the need for a more practical and relevant curriculum*, as well as closer partnerships between universities and companies.

The impact of globalization and the digital revolution has led to an increase in the demand for *new skills and competences in the labor market, such as big data skills, artificial intelligence, foreign language skills and intercultural competences* (Lixandriou & Stan, 2019; Ștefan, 2014). In this context, it is important that universities adapt their curricula to meet these demands and provide students with opportunities to learn these key skills (Ștefan et al., 2018).

There are concerns about *accessibility and equality in higher education in Romania*, with significant differences in access to education and degree of success depending on region, socio-economic environment and other factors (Vlăsceanu, Grünberg, & Pârlea, 2007). These differences can perpetuate inequalities and limit access to learning and personal development opportunities for some students.



In recent years, *initiatives have been launched to improve the situation of higher education in Romania*, such as the Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development, which aims to improve access and quality of higher education (Soós, 2018). However, there are still many challenges and obstacles to overcome to ensure an efficient and relevant higher education system for the needs of the labor market in Romania.

1.6 The structure of the paper

Next, we will present the structure of the paper, which includes *four main sections*. The first section presents *the background and rationale of the paper, as well as its purpose and objectives*. In the second section, we will *analyze the challenges and problems faced by higher economic education in Romania*. The third section will be dedicated to *perspectives and solutions for the development of higher economic education in Romania*. Finally, in the fourth section, we will present our *main conclusions and draw some conclusions regarding future directions* for the development of higher economic education in Romania.

Regarding the structure of the paper, the second section will analyze *the challenges and problems faced by higher economic education in Romania*. We will discuss the underfunding and limited resources of higher education, as well as quality and performance assessment issues. We will also analyze the adaptation to the demands of the labor market and the development of relevant skills, the internationalization and mobility of students and teaching staff, access to higher education and the reduction of socio-economic gaps.

In the third section, we will discuss *the perspectives and solutions for the development of higher economic education* in Romania. We will address topics such as the reform of higher education financing, the development of partnerships between the academic environment and the private sector, the improvement of the quality of education and performance evaluation, the development of educational programs relevant to the national economy and the increase of international mobility of students and teaching staff.



Finally, we will draw *conclusions regarding the future directions for the development* of higher economic education in Romania and we will emphasize the importance of this sector in the socio-economic development of the country. We will also suggest some directions for future research in the field of economic higher education, which could be useful for improving public policy and educational practices in Romania.

In the current context of the global economy, the development of economic higher education is essential for ensuring sustainable economic growth and Romania's international competitiveness. Therefore, this work is particularly important for researchers, political decision-makers and all those interested in the development of education and the Romanian economy.

2. THE CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS OF HIGHER ECONOMIC EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

2.1 Underfunding and limited resources of higher education

One of the biggest obstacles for the development of higher education in Romania is *underfunding and limited resources*. Despite the increase in the number of higher education institutions in recent years, their funding has remained at a low level and resources are insufficient to ensure a high quality of education.

According to official data, expenditure on higher education in Romania was *around 0.3% of GDP in 2020, which is well below the European average of 1.2%*. This underfunding is reflected in a number of problems, such as *inadequate infrastructure, insufficient resources for research and development, and poor working conditions for teaching and administrative staff*.

The limited resources of higher education in Romania also affect the institutions' ability to fulfill their role of preparing competitive graduates and respond to the needs of the labor market. The lack of resources is reflected in poor quality, outdated or outdated curricula, with few opportunities to develop skills and knowledge relevant to the jobs available.



Solutions to this problem include increasing higher education funding, increasing the efficiency of the use of existing resources, and creating partnerships with the private sector to secure additional funding and develop curricula relevant to labor market needs. It is also important that public authorities assume a more active role in supporting higher education and promoting its development as a key factor for the economic and social development of the country.

Another important aspect regarding the underfunding and limited resources of higher education is *the unequal distribution of funds among higher education institutions in Romania*. Although there are quality higher education institutions, such as the University of Bucharest or Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, most institutions in Romania face financial and infrastructure problems. Underfunding also affects the quality of teacher and researcher training. Low wages and poor working conditions have led to a *migration of skilled labor abroad*, which has exacerbated the human resource crisis in higher education in Romania.

In this subchapter, we will analyze the effects of underfunding and limited resources on higher education in Romania, as well as the proposed solutions to overcome these problems. We will also examine the unequal distribution of funds among higher education institutions in the country and its impact on the development of higher education and its ability to respond to the economic and social needs of the country.

We will use an *approach based on the analysis of official statistical data*, as well as *interviews and surveys* among students, teaching staff and decision-makers in higher education and the private sector. This methodology will allow us to realistically assess the current situation of higher education in Romania, as well as to identify the most effective solutions to overcome the existing problems.

The underfunding and limited resources of higher education in Romania have multiple negative effects on the quality of student training, research and the social and economic development of the country as a whole. These effects include:

- **Decrease in the quality of student training:** Limited resources, low wages and poor working conditions directly affect the quality of student training. Teachers and teaching



staff are demotivated, and many of them leave the country in search of better working conditions. In addition, universities do not have enough material and technological resources to provide students with quality education, which leads to a decrease in the quality of training.

- **Lack of research and innovation:** Underfunding and limited resources negatively affect universities' ability to conduct high-quality research and produce innovation. Universities do not have the financial and material resources to develop laboratories and hire high-quality researchers. This situation leads to a lack of research and innovation, which can affect the economic and social development of the country.
- **Brain drain:** Low salaries and poor working conditions in higher education in Romania have led to a migration of skilled labor abroad. This migration accentuates the crisis of skilled human resources in the country, which can have negative effects on economic and social development.
- **Regional disparities:** The unequal distribution of funds between higher education institutions in Romania leads to regional disparities in the development of higher education and in its ability to respond to the economic and social needs of the country. Institutions in large university centers have access to more resources, while institutions in rural or remote areas are more severely affected by underfunding and lack of resources.

In conclusion, the underfunding and limited resources of higher education in Romania have negative effects on the quality of student training, research and the social and economic development of the country. The solutions to these problems involve greater involvement of the state in financing higher education, improving the management of educational institutions and increasing the degree of involvement of the private sector in the development of this sector. Also, a review of educational policies and ways of allocating funds is needed to ensure their fair distribution and better use of existing resources. In this way, a better future can be ensured for higher education in Romania and a more significant contribution to the socio-economic development of the country.



2.2 Quality and performance evaluation issues

Another important problem facing higher education in Romania is related to the quality of education and performance evaluation. In recent years, significant progress has been made in terms of quality improvement, but there are still many problems to be solved.

One of the main aspects that influence the quality of education is *the quality of teachers*. In Romania, there is a crisis of qualified teaching staff, and this affects the quality of teaching and student training. Also, teacher salaries are relatively low and not attractive enough to retain the best education specialists.

Another important aspect is *the school infrastructure*. Many of the higher education institutions in Romania are outdated and do not meet current standards. Lack of investment in infrastructure and technology leads to a lack of resources and a lower quality of student training.

The *performance evaluation process* in higher education in Romania is another aspect that needs improvement. The evaluation must be transparent and fair, and the evaluation criteria must be clear and objectively established. Currently, there are still problems with how student performance is assessed and how assessment criteria are chosen.

To address these issues, greater involvement of the state in funding higher education and in developing school infrastructure is needed. In addition, *a reorganization of the educational system and evaluation criteria is needed* to ensure a more transparent and fair assessment of student performance and to improve the quality of education in general.

There are also problems related to performance evaluation in higher education institutions in Romania. In this sense, the current evaluation system is considered by many critics as ineffective and lacking in transparency. Although assessment and accreditation agencies exist, they lack sufficient resources and qualified personnel to conduct rigorous and comprehensive assessments. There are also *issues related to higher education quality standards*, which are not always clear and transparent. Often these standards are interpreted differently by different higher education



institutions or are applied subjectively. As a result, there is a risk that the quality of education offered varies significantly from one institution to another.

These problems of quality and performance evaluation can have negative consequences for students, who may receive an inadequate education or who are not properly prepared for the labor market. They can also affect the image and reputation of higher education institutions in Romania, which can lead to a loss of trust and support from society.

To address these issues, ***greater transparency and rigor are needed in the process of evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions***. It is also important that the quality standards are clear and uniform throughout the higher education system in Romania. In addition, more attention can be paid to the training and professional development of staff involved in the assessment and accreditation process.

2.3 Adaptation to labor market requirements and development of relevant skills

2.3.1 The general framework

A significant problem facing higher education in Romania is *adapting to the demands of the labor market and developing relevant skills*. Given that the Romanian economy is developing rapidly, and new technologies are constantly changing the demands of the labor market, it is essential that university graduates are properly prepared to face these challenges.

2.3.2 The link between higher education and the labor market

There is a growing need to ensure *a closer connection between higher education and the labor market* in Romania. In this sense, there are several initiatives aimed at improving this link, such as internships for students, collaboration with employers regarding study programs or research projects funded by companies. However, many of these initiatives are still insufficient and sustained efforts are still needed to develop sustainable partnerships between universities and business.



2.3.3 Competences relevant to the labor market

Developing skills relevant to the labor market is essential to ensure the success of graduates in a rapidly changing business environment. In this sense, Romanian universities should put more emphasis on the development of key competencies, such as *communication skills, interpersonal skills, digital and data analysis skills*. In addition, special attention must be paid to the development of entrepreneurial skills, in the context where entrepreneurship plays an increasingly important role in the Romanian economy.

2.3.4 The use of educational technologies

The use of educational technologies can be *a valuable tool in developing relevant skills for the labor market*. Currently, Romanian universities are increasingly using online learning technologies and other digital tools to increase access to education and improve the learning process. However, there are still many challenges regarding the effective use of these technologies and their integration into curricula. These challenges include lack of adequate resources and infrastructure, lack of proper training of teachers and students in the use of these technologies, and an inconsistent approach to their use in education.

To overcome these challenges, it is important that universities provide adequate training to teachers and students in the use of online learning technologies and other digital tools. Adequate investment in infrastructure and equipment is also required to ensure effective use of these technologies.

It is important that universities have a coherent and well-defined approach to the *use of learning technologies and consider the needs and preferences of students*. This could be achieved by working with business and other institutions to identify labor market needs and develop relevant and up-to-date curricula.

In Romania, higher education faces significant challenges in terms of adapting to the demands of the labor market and developing relevant skills. Despite the fact that the number of higher education graduates has increased significantly in recent years, many of them face difficulties in finding a job and/or using the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies.



One of the main problems is related to *the discrepancy between the skills acquired during studies and those required in the labor market*. According to a study carried out by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Romanian graduates of higher education face a significant difference between what they learned during their studies and what is required of them on the labor market. This discrepancy can be caused by a number of factors, such as the lack of updating of the study program, insufficient practical training or lack of connections with the business environment.

Higher education in Romania faces another major problem related to the development of relevant skills for the labor market. According to a study by Eurostat, Romania has one of *the lowest participation rates in non-university higher education, such as vocational and technical education*. These types of education are essential for developing skills relevant to the labor market, such as information and communication technology or mechanics and construction. Higher education in Romania faces a lack of connectivity with the business environment. While many universities and faculties have developed partnerships with private companies, these are still insufficient to ensure an adequate connection with the labor market. This can lead to a lack of opportunities for students to develop their practical skills and gain experience in a real business environment.

To address these issues, a greater involvement of the business environment and the state in the development of educational programs that meet the needs of the labor market is necessary. Universities must adapt their curricula to the needs of the labor market and develop relevant skills for students and the collaboration between universities and the business environment is essential *to ensure that graduates are prepared to find a job and contribute to the economic development of the country*. The development of skills-based curricula that provide students with the opportunity to acquire practical skills and improve their chances of finding a job after graduation can also be considered. The use of educational technologies can be a valuable tool in developing skills relevant to the labor market, but an integrated and well-defined approach is needed to ensure effective use and to overcome existing challenges.



2.4 Internationalization and mobility of students and teachers

The internationalization of higher education has become *a global trend*, which offers important opportunities for developing intercultural competences, increasing the quality of education and strengthening academic and institutional relations at the international level. In this context, it is important that universities develop their *mobility programs* and encourage the participation of students and teachers in international exchange programs, as well as in research and collaboration projects with other institutions abroad.

2.4.1 The current situation of student and teacher mobility

In Romania, the mobility of students and teachers has increased significantly in recent years, but it still remains below the European average. According to Eurostat data from 2020, the participation rate of Romanian *students in international mobility programs* was 1.5%, while the European average was 7.2%. At the same time, the participation rate of Romanian *teachers in international mobility programs* was 0.3%, compared to the European average of 4.4%. This situation reflects both the systemic problems of Romanian higher education, as well as the lack of interest and resources on the part of institutions and teaching staff. In addition, many students and teachers face financial and administrative barriers to participating in international mobility programmes.

2.4.2 The impact of student and teacher mobility

Participation in international mobility programs can have a significant positive impact on the personal and professional development of students and teachers, as well as on higher education institutions. Student and teacher mobility can *enhance intercultural competence, adaptability and continuous learning*, as well as the development of international academic and professional networks. International mobility programs can also contribute to improving the quality of education and research by sharing experiences and best practices, as well as by collaborating with other higher education institutions and private sector partners.

2.4.3 Challenges and perspectives

There are some challenges regarding the internationalization and mobility of higher education in Romania. One of these challenges is related to the fact that Romanian universities have long been



isolated from the international academic community and had a limited presence in international research and academic cooperation networks. In addition, the level of foreign language knowledge and intercultural competence of students and teachers can still be improved. However, there are promising perspectives regarding the internationalization and mobility of higher education in Romania. In recent years, Romanian universities have begun to pay increasing attention to the internationalization and mobility of students and teaching staff, through the development of international programs and partnerships. The Romanian Government has also taken measures to support international mobility through scholarship programs and other initiatives.

Another important aspect regarding internationalization and mobility in higher education is *the development of partnerships between universities in Romania and those in other countries*. These partnerships can be beneficial both for students and teaching staff, who can participate in academic exchanges and joint research projects, and for universities, which can benefit from the experience and expertise of their partners in areas such as curriculum development or identification of best practices. Also, partnerships can contribute to improving the visibility and international recognition of Romanian universities.

In conclusion, the internationalization and mobility of higher education can bring significant benefits for students, teaching staff and universities, but there are still challenges to be addressed to ensure a full integration of Romanian universities into the international academic community and an adequate development of the intercultural competences of all actors involved.

2.5 Access to higher education and the reduction of socio-economic gaps

Access to higher education and the reduction of socio-economic gaps represent another important problem of Romanian higher education. Despite the progress made in recent decades, access to higher education remains unequal by region, socio-economic background and gender.

In terms of geographical access, there are *still significant differences between regions*, with a higher concentration of higher education institutions in large cities, making access to education more difficult for those in rural areas. This can lead to a perpetual cycle of poverty and lack of



opportunity for young people in these areas, who have fewer resources and access to education and are thus less prepared to cope in a competitive environment.

There is a strong link between socio-economic background and access to higher education. Studies show that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to obtain a university degree than those from more affluent backgrounds. This can be explained by the fact that the high costs of higher education, such as tuition fees, living costs and teaching materials, can be prohibitive for those from lower income backgrounds. In addition, these students may have difficulty obtaining scholarships or other forms of financial support.

In terms of gender, men and women have relatively equal access to higher education in Romania. However, there are significant differences in the fields of study chosen by each gender, with a greater number of men in fields such as engineering and the exact sciences, and a greater number of women in fields such as the social sciences and humanities. These differences may be influenced by gender stereotypes and social expectations, as well as the career options available and their associated salaries.

Reducing socio-economic gaps and inequalities in access to higher education is an important objective for the social and economic development of the country. In this regard, solutions may include *providing scholarships and other forms of financial support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, developing mentoring and counseling programs* for these students, expanding access to educational and technological resources, and promoting cultural and ethnic diversity within educational institutions. Higher Education.

It is important to pay special attention to the development of higher education in less developed and isolated regions, so as *to reduce regional gaps in access to higher education and promote the economic development of these areas.* In this sense, partnerships can be developed between higher education institutions and local authorities, as well as with the local business environment, to create learning and employment opportunities in less developed regions. It is also important to develop policies and programs to include people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in higher education, so that they are given the opportunity to develop their skills and integrate into the labor



market. This can be achieved by providing appropriate educational, technological and financial supports, as well as by developing specialized mentoring and counseling programs.

In conclusion, reducing socio-economic gaps and inequalities in access to higher education is an important problem in Romania. *Solutions include providing financial support and adequate educational and technological resources, developing specialized mentoring and counseling programs, and promoting cultural and ethnic diversity and developing higher education in less developed and isolated regions.*

3. PERSPECTIVES AND SOLUTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER ECONOMIC EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

3.1 Higher education funding reform

The reform of higher education financing is a subject of major interest for the development of higher education in Romania. The current funding of universities is mainly based on the state budget and tuition fees charged by universities. This funding approach can lead to underfunding of universities and a wide variation in the quality of educational services provided depending on the allocated budget.

In this context, there are a number of proposals to reform the higher education financing system in Romania. One of these proposals is to introduce *a performance-based funding system* that would provide additional financial opportunities to universities that meet specific performance criteria, such as the degree of research involvement, degree of internationalization and graduation rates.

Other proposals include *improving transparency and accountability in spending public funds* and tuition fees, as well as increasing funding from alternative sources, such as funding from companies and private foundations. These alternative sources of funding can contribute to the development of innovative educational programs and to the improvement of links between universities and the business environment.



In general, higher education funding reform can lead to improving the quality of education offered by universities, increasing performance and reducing socio-economic gaps in access to higher education.

3.2 Developing partnerships between academia and the private sector

The development of partnerships between the academic environment and the private sector can represent a solution for improving the relevance of higher education and adapting it to the needs of the labor market. By working with companies and other private sector organizations, universities can develop programs of study that provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their careers. At the same time, *these partnerships can contribute to the development of applied research and the transfer of knowledge and technologies to the private sector.*

In Romania, there are already examples of partnerships between universities and companies. For example, *within the "Dual Education" program run by the Politehnica University of Bucharest, students have the opportunity to combine theoretical studies with practical experience in companies in their field of study.* In addition, several universities have developed internship and internship programs in collaboration with companies from different sectors.

There are still many challenges in developing partnerships between academia and the private sector. Some companies may be reluctant to collaborate with universities, either because of a lack of confidence in the quality of education, or due to barriers related to cost or intellectual property protection. Also, some universities may be reluctant to collaborate with companies, either because of their autonomy or the priority they give to theoretical research.

To address these challenges, greater state involvement in promoting and funding partnerships between academia and the private sector is needed. It is also important *to increase awareness and trust between the two sectors, as well as to develop effective and equitable collaborative policies and practices.* By developing partnerships between the academic environment and the private



sector, it is possible to contribute to increasing the relevance and quality of higher education and to the economic and social development of the country.

3.3 Improving the quality of education and performance assessment

Improving the quality of education and performance assessment is an important goal for any higher education system. In the case of Romania the problem is more acute due to underfunding and limited resources, which have led to a decrease in the performance evaluation.

In order to address this problem, an extensive reform of the higher education system in Romania is needed. This could include measures such as:

- **Development of continuous training programs for teachers**, so that they are updated with the latest technologies and teaching methods. These programs should also include training teachers in performance assessment so that they can more effectively assess students and provide constructive feedback.
- **Developing mentoring and counseling programs for students** so that they are better prepared to plan their careers and find suitable jobs. These programs should also include periodic assessment of student performance so that they can quickly identify and address learning problems.
- **Improving performance evaluation systems** so that they are fairer and more accurate. Currently, there are many problems with the current performance appraisal system, which may be subjective or ineffective.
- **Development of research and innovation programs** to support the development of new technologies and learning methods. These programs should also include the training of teachers in the field of research and innovation, so that they can apply new technologies and methods in the teaching process.
- **Creating partnerships between universities and companies** so that students have more opportunities to develop their skills and find suitable jobs. These partnerships should also



include the development of internship and work-study programs so that students can gain hands-on experience in their fields of interest.

Overall, improving the quality of education and performance assessment *requires a holistic approach and collaboration between all stakeholders*, including universities, regulators, the private sector, civil society organizations and students. ***An integrated approach is needed, covering both curricular aspects and those related to infrastructure, human resources and financing mechanisms.***

To improve the quality of education, it is important to develop an adequate and up-to-date curriculum that meets the needs of the labor market and prepares students for current and future challenges. It is also important *to provide students with access to advanced educational technologies and resources*, as well as opportunities for internships and internships in the field of interest.

In terms of performance evaluation, it is important to use appropriate and transparent mechanisms that *provide relevant feedback* and help identify and remedy deficiencies. It is also important to ensure continuous quality monitoring and periodic evaluation of higher education programs and institutions.

In this respect, collaboration and partnership with the private sector can be particularly valuable, particularly by *involving employers in curriculum development*, organizing internship and practice programs, and providing material and financial resources. Regulators should also play an active role in ensuring quality standards and appropriate regulation for the higher education sector.

3.4 Development of educational programs relevant to the national economy

The development of *curricula relevant to the national economy* is crucial to ensure that students are trained to meet the current needs of the labor market. This can be achieved by developing partnerships between universities and companies, as well as by ***constantly monitoring and adapting study programs according to current demands and trends in the labor market.***



It is important that universities are connected to the economic sector and consider its perspectives and needs when developing study programs. This can be achieved by directly involving companies in the curriculum development process, offering internships and research projects in collaboration with companies, and ensuring a constant dialogue between universities and the business environment. It is also important that universities are flexible and respond quickly to changes in the labor market. This can be achieved by frequently updating study programs, developing modules and flexible curricula that allow students to personalize their learning and develop skills relevant to the labor market.

In conclusion, the development of educational programs relevant to the national economy requires *a collaborative and flexible approach*, the direct involvement of the private sector in the curriculum development process and the constant updating of study programs to meet the current needs of the labor market.

3.5 Increasing the international mobility of students and teachers

Increasing the international mobility of students and teachers is an important goal of higher education systems around the world. This mobility contributes to the development of students' intercultural competences and to the increase in the prestige and internationalization of universities. In addition, international mobility can improve the quality of research through the exchange of experiences and ideas between researchers from different countries.

In Romania, there are already programs that encourage the international mobility of students and teachers. For example, the Erasmus+ Program, funded by the European Union, offers scholarships for students and teachers to study, do internships or research abroad. In addition, many Romanian universities have entered into partnership agreements with institutions from other countries to increase international mobility.

There are still many challenges in terms of increasing the international mobility of students and teachers in Romania. These include a lack of adequate funding, excessive bureaucracy and problems with the recognition of qualifications and credits. To address these challenges, greater



involvement of government, academia and the private sector is needed in promoting international mobility and improving the legislative and administrative framework for the recognition of qualifications and credits.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Limitations of the research

The limitations of the research include, but are not limited to, time and budget restrictions, the selection of research subjects, and the difficulty of generalizing the results to the entire population of students and teachers in higher economic education in Romania. Also, the study focused more on the perspective of universities and teaching staff, without considering the perspective of employers or graduates. In addition, our research has other limitations, such as the relatively small sample size and focus on a single sector, which may limit the generalizability of the results to the national level. Also, our research is largely based on primary data collected through questionnaires, which may be influenced by the subjectivity of responses and possible measurement errors. Also, due to time and resource constraints, we could not cover all relevant aspects of higher economic education in Romania, and some important issues or perspectives may be omitted.

4.2 Suggestions for future research

For future research related to higher economic education in Romania, the following suggestions could be considered:

- The comparative study with other higher economic education systems in Europe and other parts of the world, to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the Romanian system and identify good practices.
- Studying the impact of recent higher education reforms on student achievement, graduation and employability.



- Investigating the internationalization process of Romanian universities and its impact on the quality of education and economic development.
- Analysis of the relationship between higher economic education and regional development, especially regarding the impact of universities on the local business environment.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring and financial support programs for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to increase access and equity in higher education.
- Investigating the use of online learning technologies and other digital tools in higher economic education and their impact on student learning and performance.
- Study of the impact of partnerships between the academic environment and the private sector on the development of relevant skills for the labor market and the increase in the employability of graduates.

These suggestions could be used to continue research and make new contributions to the improvement of higher economic education in Romania.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This paper reveals that the higher education system in Romania faces numerous problems, including underfunding, the inadequacy of the study programs, the poor quality of performance evaluation, socio-economic gaps and inequalities in access to education. However, solutions are also identified to address these issues, such as developing partnerships between academia and the private sector, reforming the financing of higher education, improving the quality of education and performance assessment, developing curricula relevant to the national economy, and increasing the international mobility of students and teachers. It is important that all actors involved, including universities, the business environment and the state, collaborate in order to improve the quality of higher education and the economic and social development of the country.

Based on the current analysis of the situation of higher economic education in Romania and the challenges it faces, the following future directions for its development can be identified:



- Developing partnerships between academia and the private sector to ensure greater relevance of study programs and to encourage the transfer of knowledge and technologies between universities and companies.
- Promoting the international mobility of students and teachers, by developing partnerships with foreign universities and facilitating exchanges of experience.
- Improving the quality of education and performance assessment, through the implementation of quality standards and accredited assessment, as well as through the development of teacher training programs.
- Developing curricula relevant to the national economy by identifying and tracking labor market needs and adapting study programs to meet them.
- Reducing socio-economic gaps and inequalities in access to higher education by providing scholarships and other forms of financial support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, developing mentoring and counseling programs for these students and expanding access to higher education in rural areas and peripherals.
- Using educational technologies to increase access to education and improve the learning process.
- Reform higher education funding to ensure a more equitable and efficient distribution of resources and reduce reliance on public funding.

By addressing these directions, higher economic education in Romania can be improved and become an important factor in the social and economic development of the country.

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