European integration in higher education and research in the Western Balkans

Excellence and Quality in Western Balkans- A survey investigating the governance capacity of universities in the region

May 7 2013

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Executive Summary

The aim of this survey reported here was to provide a general overview of the governance capacity of institutions in the Western Balkans.

In developing the survey a questionnaire was adopted that was derived from the U.S Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Performance Excellence in Education. The survey was distributed online to the central management of universities in the region. Central management was asked to rate on a scale 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented) if statements which related to strategic planning, stakeholder focus, benchmarking and results oriented management practices were relevant to them and the extent to which they regarded the same statements as important.

Of the 112 universities sampled, 52 responded within a three-month period (November 2012- January 2013) (27 public, 24 private and one both public and private and for the purpose of this report appears as public). 47 out of 52 universities (92.38%) reported that they have a quality assurance system.

By operationalizing quality management as the combined institutional capacity for strategic planning, stakeholder focus, performance management and benchmarking activities, we have argued that the current survey could identify both strengths and weaknesses in an effort to change the higher education sector in this region.

To identify strengths and weaknesses in governance capacity we divided the average scores responses in three, using 5.00 and 7.99 as cutting points, and drawing on the MB terminology and explanations for interpreting the data. Based on such a divide, it was possible to suggest that for most universities there was a fact-based systematic process in place for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of key governance practices. For some institutions with average scores above 7.99, one might even suggested that these universities have in place very effective, well-developed, and systematic processes to evaluate and improve their quality with clear evidence of innovation, learning and organizational sharing, while for those scoring well below 5.00, there should be plenty of room for improvements.

Commenting on specific governance areas, results indicate that strategic planning and benchmarking perhaps are the area with least developed high capacities. Findings suggest that benchmarking practices in particular are not very developed in the region. In the areas of stakeholder and result-oriented practices it seems that more developed institutional capacity exists. In our survey university characteristics such as age and size seem to have little impact on governance capacity. On the other hand findings reveal that all institutions identify a need for further development.

With respect to country differences, there are some variations. Analysis of governance capacity between private and public universities indicates that average scores, especially in strategic planning, stakeholder focus, and results oriented management practices, are slightly higher in private than in public universities.

Further analysis of the data will be undertaken in the coming year, but in general the data reveals that there are huge variations regarding perceptions of governance capacity across the participating universities as reported by their central management. These variations suggest that the universities respond quite honestly and meaningfully to our survey.

We hope this study will enable the institutions in the region to learn about themselves, to know themselves, to make improvement and changes where necessary, and to interact effectively with the external environment, both nationally and internationally.

European integration in higher education and research in the Western Balkans

A project with the primary aim to strengthen the basis for evidence based policy making in the area of higher education and research in the Western Balkans.

About the project

Reliable data and solid analysis of systems of higher education and research are crucial for the ongoing processes of integration of WB countries to EU and NATO, as well as the underlying reforms taking place in a number of policy areas. However, the necessary data about the countries in the region does not exist yet in a consolidated form; therefore it is not possible to study these issues in a comparative manner. The project "European integration in higher education and research in the Western Balkans" attempts to address these issues through a number of measures strengthening both research infrastructure and stimulating human resources in the region in the period until 2014. The project partners consists of institutions from Norway (Pedagogisk forskningsinstitutt and Intermedia from the University of Oslo, and NIFU – the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education) and the region (Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb in Croatia, Faculty of Political Science at the University of Belgrade in Serbia and Centre for Education Policy in Serbia).

In addition to being relevant for the Development Studies program managed by the Norwegian Research Council, this project is also relevant for the overarching Higher Education, Research and Development (HERD) program of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The relevance lies in the understanding of the crucial role that higher education and research have for economic growth and social development. This role has been identified by a number of key policy makers, especially on the international level. It is along these lines that the EU has decided to base first its Lisbon Agenda and now its Europe 2020 strategy around the so-called *knowledge triangle*: education, research and innovation. Higher education can contribute to economic, political and social development in a variety of ways and to a varying degree, and it should be taken into account that the focus on the contribution of higher education to development may also lead to tensions on the institutional and system level.

The report was written by Antigoni Papadimitriou and Bjørn Stensaker, University of Oslo.

I would like to thank all our participant universities in the survey for their valuable contributions in developing our knowledge about Quality and Excellence in Western Balkans

Bjørn Stensaker
Professor, Project leader
Oslo, Norway May 2013

1. Introduction

Over the last ten years, European influence in higher education among the Western Balkan counties has been generally viewed as having a transformative character regarding developments related to quality initiatives and excellence. At the same time, the Bologna Declaration and the Lisbon Agenda have contributed to change European universities. Currently, most countries in the Western Balkans have signed the Bologna Declaration, beginning with Croatia in 2001 and the remaining five (except Kosovo) signed in 2003. National Reports for the Bologna process reveal that much have been accomplished in the area of quality assurance, and the establishment of agencies for quality assurance, and there are signs that quality assurance systems within the universities are being established.

Nevertheless, sparse research and publications exist regarding quality management practices and excellence in WB's higher education. Hence, the current study aims at investigating the institutional capacity for governance within universities in the seven Western Balkan countries.

2. Quality Management Practices and Excellence in Higher Education

In general, quality management has become a buzzword among policy-makers and consultants, who assume that a more systematic and managerial approach in universities and colleges will help them to improve universities' performance. However, the term quality management can be said to be a rather loosely-specified concept often interpreted as including all activities that contribute to defining, designing, assessing, monitoring, and improving the quality of an organization, field, or individual organization, specifically in the field of higher education or an individual university.

Quality management thus deals with the policies, systems, and processes designed and implemented to ensure the maintenance and improvement of quality. Quality management is supposed to be a means to an end or to multiple ends of improving the quality of all the different services provided. Hence, quality management can be interpreted as a measure of the overall governance capacity of a higher education institution. In this report, quality management is consequently not investigated from a normative basis in the sense that we believe it is possible to identify a specific set of management practices that will lead to distinct results or outcomes.

On the other hand, we do believe that governance capacity is a necessary condition for universities both to assess their own performance and to make informed decision about their future. In the current study, quality management is interpreted at the existence of governance and management capacity in a range of areas we think are important for fulfilling the strategic development of universities in the Western Balkans. Hopefully, this study will enable the institutions in the region to learn about them self, to know them self, to make improvements and changes where necessary, and to interact effectively with the external environment, both nationally and internationally.

3. Survey Tool

One of the main challenges in this survey was to define what quality management practices in Western Balkan universities should include. In general, we were interested in defining processes and other aspects of quality management that have been applied to the

WB universities; we also wanted to address organizational change and the capacity to change. In addition, we were interested in quality processes that emphasized performance improvement and the utilization of routinely collected data to monitor the effects of quality improvement activities. To maintain consistency, we decided to choose from a broad array of strategies for quality improvement such as processes that we believed were tailored to fit to all higher education institution's context within the region. We selected practices that we believe are important as indications of governance capacity within universities in the region. Thus, we selected strategic planning, stakeholder focus, and results oriented practices as our key areas for investigation. In addition, we added some questions regarding benchmarking practices at institutional level. *Hence, in this survey it is the combined capacity for strategic planning, stakeholder focus and results oriented practices that we interpret as quality management.*

In developing the survey a questionnaire was adopted that was derived from the U.S Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Performance Excellence in Education (hereafter MB). This questionnaire has previously been used in a number of other national settings (see, in particular, Papadimitriou 2011).

The advantage of using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence is that the survey tool has been tested systematically, and that it currently provides a systematic view of institutional practices. In our survey, we included statements about governance practices from the following MB categories (NIST, 2005):

1. The **Strategic Planning** Category examined how a university has developed strategic objectives and action plans. This category also examined how universities chose strategic objectives and action plans, how they were deployed, and how progress is measured.
2. The **Stakeholder** Category examined how a university determined requirements, expectations, and preferences of students, stakeholders, and markets. Another area this category examined was how a university built relationships with students and stakeholders, and how it determined the key factors that attracted students and partners and lead to student and stakeholder satisfaction, loyalty, persistence, and increased educational services and programs.
3. The **Organizational Performance Results** Category examined a university's performance and improvement in key areas: student learning results; student- and stakeholder-focused results; budgetary, financial, and marketplace performance; faculty and staff results; operational performance; and governance and social responsibility. Also examined were performance levels relative to those of competitors and comparable organizations.
4. For **Benchmarking** we selected statements derived from MB. The MB incorporated the benchmarking process as an important award criterion.

3.1 Dealing with MB Scores

MB examiners use several scores to examine excellence. Criteria and guidelines developed to help examiners identify the key strengths and vital areas needing improvement in universities that they are evaluating. In our survey, we are not using the scoring in a similar strict way, but apply the scores as more general indicators of governance capacity. Box 1 presents an example concerning scoring guidelines for 70 percent and above. These

scoring guidelines help MB examiners to provide more consistent and meaningful scoring and feedback to applicants.

Box 1 MB scoring guidelines

Scores 70%-80% Universities have effective, well-deployed, effective, systematic processes in place to evaluate and improve their strategy development process and strategic objectives with clear evidence of innovation, learning and organizational sharing, which results in refinements and improved integration. These scores also show how universities' projected performance compare with competitors' projected performance, key benchmarks, goals, and past performance, as appropriate.

Scores 90%-100% Universities have an effective systematic approach, fully responsive, without significant weaknesses or gaps in any areas. A very strong, fact-based systematic evaluation and improvement process and extensive organizational learning/sharing are key management tools; strong refinement, innovation, and integration, backed by excellent organizational level analysis and sharing are evident.

In our survey each of the mentioned quality management practices was subdivided into a number of statements. For each statement, two categories were formatted with a dual scale using a 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented or extremely important): the extent to which universities - via their central management - believed that the this practice (the implementation rate) was relevant for the university, and the extent to which the university central management regarded this statement as important (the importance rate). This survey also included "no opinion" option for each statement. Fowler (1995, p. 165) stated that when respondents are asked for the opinions or perceptions of things beyond their direct experience, a "don't know" response is a potentially meaningful answer, not missing data, and it is best obtained in an explicit, standardized way. The items used in this survey were in English. The instrument was used to conduct a pilot study according to Creswell's (2003) guidelines and it was piloted in October 2012 in Norway and in Serbia. The current survey includes the following countries: Serbia (SE), Croatia (CR), Montenegro (MO), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FM), Albania (AL), and Kosovo (KO).

4. Data Collection

The survey was distributed online to the central management at universities in the region. In general, this would imply that the survey was sent to the rector's office. Our main argument for this target group is that the knowledge about governance capacity is most developed at this level. The anonymity in replying was used to deal with biased responses overestimating the governance capacity of the individual institution.

All public and private universities in the Western Balkans were selected. The population of the survey consisted of 112 universities listed at that time by the Ministry of Education and Quality Assurance Agencies in all seven Western Balkan countries, and that were in actual operation. Dillman's (2000) four-phase administration process was followed to ensure a high response rate: phone calls and personal e-mails were used to provide reminders. Of the 112 universities sampled, 52 responded within a three-month period (November 2012- January 2013) (27 public, 24 private and one both public and private and for the purpose of this report appears as public). The response rate for public universities was 66.6 percent. The response rate within private universities was 34.28 percent. Table 1 summarizes the sample. All respondent universities in **alphabetical order** located in Appendices.

Table 1 Respondents by country and ownership

Country	Public Universities	%	Private Universities	%
Albania	6	46.15	10	32.35
BH	8	100.00	5	31.25
Croatia	5	71.42		
FYROM	3	60.00	2	25.00
Kosovo	1	50.00	1	33.33
Montenegro	1	100.00	2	100
Serbia	4	66.70	4	57.1
Total	**28**	**66.66**	**24**	**34.28**

The survey data were analyzed with descriptive statistical methods, calculating frequencies and means. To maintain anonymity we encoded each university with a letter and a number (A for Albania, BH for Bosnia and Herzegovina, C for Croatia, FM for Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, K for Kosovo, M for Montenegro, S for Serbia). For anonymity, numbers were randomly selected and there is no relation exists between numbers and the alphabetical order universities are listed in the Appendices.

5. Findings

5.1 Application of Quality Management Practices

This section provides a descriptive overview of the MB survey results concerning practices (implementation rate) and perceptions (importance rate). The implementation rate represents the university's perception on whether certain management practices exist and are used at the institutional level. For each of the quality management practices (strategic planning, stakeholder focus, benchmarking, and result oriented) the mean score across respondents per university was calculated across all items. Data showing the mean scores for each participating university by country (overall country's score) was then developed and reported. In this report for each of the 4 mentioned quality management practices, we present two types of information. Firstly each country's average score for each quality management practice, which was derived from participating universities (both public and private) and secondly each university's average for each quality management practice.

5.2 Dealing with people who don't know

Missing data in this survey dealt with a "no opinion" option, as the survey instrument included the following explanation for respondents: "if you do not have an opinion please leave the statement without a check". This option was followed by a note stating that if the respondent had any comments to enter them in the last part of the survey.

Fowler (1995, p. 165) have argued that when respondents are asked for the opinions or perceptions of things beyond their direct experience, a "don't know" (or no opinion) response is a potentially meaningful answer, not missing data. We surmised from the returned questionnaires that the total amount of "no opinion" answers was only 1.16% of the importance rate items and 1.03% of the implementation rate items. Data shows that only 8 universities out of 52 appeared with "no opinion" and mostly in a similar proportion for both importance and implementation (3 universities from Albanian, 3 from Bosnia and Herzegovina and 2 from Serbia). In 2 universities (A5 and BH8) most "no opinion" responses related to Strategic Planning statements. We substituted all missing scores both importance and implementation with a score that was derived from an average in each of the particular quality management practice. For instance, if the average in strategic planning was a 4.56, we substituted the missing score of 4. Otherwise, that value would have been submitted as a score of 1, when in fact, a score of 1 would have misled readers to think the respondent' university had never engaged in QAS. A respondent's comment read:

> *"At University X there was adopted a set of important quality assurance procedures that are developed in accordance with ESG, EQF and other recommendations. For now these procedures are not fully implemented in practice. Next task for QA staff is to establish complete application of these procedures" (Rector at the University X).*

In relation to the implementation rate, such a missing score was understandable (informal process). With regard to the importance rate, it was not clear why the central management did not choose any score from 1 to 10 but rather noted "Next task for QA staff is to establish complete application of these procedures". Perhaps this indicates that quality management practices require additional training at the central management of the university for better understanding and for a possible application.

5.3 University Characteristics

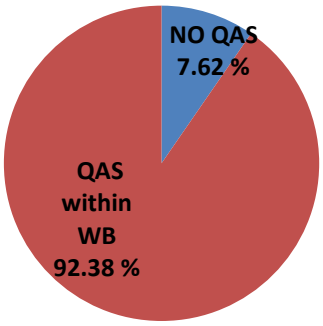
The first part of the survey provided information regarding the university's characteristics age, size, ownership, and location. Table 2 presents information about our sample. In this analysis the ages of participating universities were collapsed into 3 categories: universities which established before 1989 were characterized as 'old', those established during the period 1990-2006 as 'new', and those established after 2007 as 'just established'. Additionally, the number of students enrolled (undergraduate and graduate) was used to determine the size of each university and divide them into categories (splitting the sample in three using the 33.33% rule). Small universities had below 1,999 students, medium sized between 2,000 and 13,999, and large universities over 14,000 students.

Table 2 Characteristics of participants' universities

	AL	BH	CR	FM	KO	MO	SE	Total
Age								
Old	3	5	3	2	1	1	4	19
New	9	6	2	2	1	1	4	25
Just establ.	4	2	-	1	-	1	-	8
Size								
Small	9	5	-	2	-	1	1	18
Medium	3	3	2	2	2	1	4	17
Large	4	5	3	1	-	1	3	17
Ownership								
Public	6	8	5	4	1	1	4	28
Private	10	5	-	1	1	2	4	24

5.4 Quality Assurance Systems (QAS)

Quality management is understood as an umbrella of different organizational practices within universities. Additionally, quality assurance systems (QAS) are also relevant and important to maintain quality management within universities. Thus, in the first part of the questionnaire we posed the question "Do you have a formal quality assurance system?" 47 out of 52 universities (92.38%) reported that they have a QAS (Figure 1).



Only 5 universities appeared without QAS (4 from Albania and 1 from Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Figure 1 QAS within WB universities participated in our survey

5.5 Strategic Planning (Implementation Rate)

Universities were also asked to rate on a scale 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented) if the following seven statements (Box 2) which related to strategic planning practices were relevant to them. The MB criteria enabled collection of specific data about the extent to strategic planning was implemented at the university level. The implementation rate indicated the actual degree of strategic planning practices.

Box 2 Strategic Planning Statements

1. The institution has a strategic plan of procedures, where indicators of student performance are defined.
2. The institution has a strategic plan of procedures, which taking into account the performance results of the institution, focuses on organizational improvement.
3. The strategic plan of the institution, taking into account the interplay of domestic and foreign factors, determines how its performance is programmed and planned in the future.
4. The strategic plan defines the major measurement indicators of the institution and the timetable of their implementation.
5. The strategic plan of the institution has procedures of measurement, performance, and comparison of the short-term and long-term performance indicators of the institution with other institutions.
6. The strategic plan of the institution has specific processes with which its strategic goals are developed along action plans aiming to its continuous development.
7. The strategic plan of the institution records and analyses the strengths and the weaknesses of the institution (SWOT analysis).

Figure 2 depicts the average overall results for the strategic planning practices within the WB. The number next to the country's letter represents the number of universities within the country that participated in our survey (i.e. AL(16) mean that 16 Albanian universities replied etc.). Average country's score for strategic planning practices ranged from 7.82 (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) to 5.5 (Kosovo). For Bosnia Herzegovina average score was 7.23, for Montenegro was 6.95, for Croatia 6.88, for Albania 6.83, and for Serbia 6.16.

The overall highest-scoring (7.82) within WB was reported by universities in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the lowest by universities in Kosovo (5.5).

Figure 2 Average country's score for strategic planning practices (Scale: from 1 = not at all to 10 = fully implemented)

Figure 3 presents average scores concerning strategic planning practices for each participant university. Data shows that there is a variation within those universities as reported by their central management and averages scores range from 1.71 (A13) to 10 (A3). Only 10 universities out of 52 were below 5.00. 2 of those 10 universities were scored 1.71

(A13) and 1.85 (S3). One university scored 3.00 (A14) and the rest 7 universities (K1, M2, S1, BH1, A2, A12, C1) were scored between 4 and 4.86. The vast majority of the universities, 42 out of 52 (80.76%), were scored above 5.00. Interestingly, 19 of those 41 universities were scored between 8.00 and 10.00.

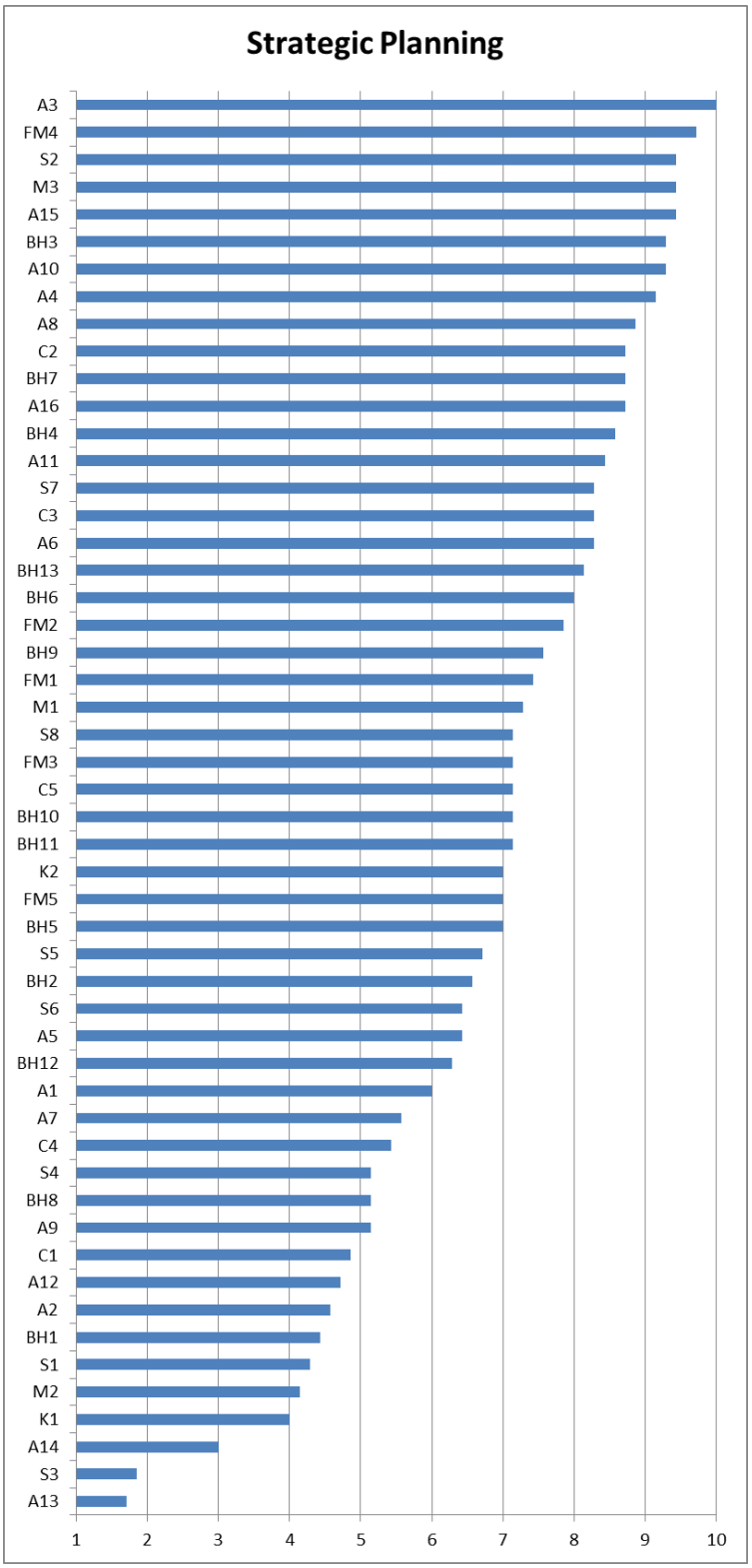


Figure 3 Strategic planning practices within 52 WB universities
Scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented)

The survey data also enabled a series of additional analyses to be conducted to check the results further. Of particular interest was the distribution of implementation of strategic planning (average score) for those universities which scored below 4.99; scores between 5.00 and 7.99 and above 8.00 might have been affected by the age, size, ownership, and location of the universities in the sample.

Table 3 Strategic Planning practices average score analysis as related to university characteristic age, size, ownership, and location.

	Average scores			Total
	below 4.99	5.00-7.99	above 8.00	
Age				
Old	6	8	5	19
New	4	13	8	25
Just establ.	-	2	6	8
Size				
Small	2	10	6	18
Medium	4	6	7	17
Large	4	7	6	17
Ownership				
Public	7	11	10	28
Private	3	12	9	24
Location				
AL	4	4	8	16
BH	1	6	5	13
CR	1	2	2	5
FM	-	4	1	5
KO	1	1	-	2
MO	1	1	1	3
SE	2	4	2	8

Scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented)

In the table 3 above appears that mostly old, medium, large and public universities averages score were below 4.99, none of them established after 2007 and none of them located in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Most of the new and small universities scored between 5.00 and 7.99. Additionally, this analysis illustrates that 50% of Albanian universities scored above 8.00. We also observe whether any variation between universities existed that reported not having a formal QAS. 2 out of these 5 universities scored below 4.99; another 2 were in the middle category (5.00-7.99); and the other one scored above 8.00.

5.6 Stakeholder Focus Management Practices

Universities were asked to rate on a scale 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented) if the following nine statements (Box 3) which related to stakeholder focus management practices were relevant to them. The implementation rate indicated the actual degree of these practices.

Box 3 Stakeholder Focus Statements

1. The institution develops management procedures for the satisfaction of the demands and the ambitions of its students.
2. The institution develops procedures such that "students' opinions" are used for the improvement of its academic procedures.
3. The institution has procedures to compare the satisfaction of its students and its major stakeholders with other respective institutions.
4. The institution has management mechanisms for the demands of the academic community stakeholders and the needs of the society.
5. The institution has management procedures for the complaints of all the academic community stakeholders, aiming to their rapid and effective confrontation.
6. The institution has management procedures for the feedback from the satisfaction of its stakeholders in order to improve its relations with them and satisfy their ambitions.
7. The institution has procedures for the foreseeing and the determination of the future needs of its students.
8. The institution has systematic procedures of data management, which lead to the improvement of the education.
9. The institution has specific procedures of information and measurement of the results, indispensable for the promotion of learning.

Figure 4 portrays the average overall results for the stakeholder focus management practices within the WB. Average country's score for stakeholder focus management practices ranged from 7.94 (Kosovo) to 5.65 (Serbia). For Montenegro average score was 7.74, for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was 7.38, for Bosnia and Herzegovina 7.33, for Albania 6.66, for Croatia 6.09, and for Serbia 5.65.

Figure 5 presents average scores concerning stakeholder focus management practices for each participant university. Data shows that there is a variation within those universities as reported by their central management and averages scores range from 2.66 (A14) to 10 (A3). In this category only 9 universities out of 52 were below 5.00. One of those 9 universities scored 2.66 (A14). 5 universities (S1, S3, C4, A13, and A12) were scored between 3.22 and 3.66 and another 3 universities (A2, A9, and S4) were scored between 4.11 and 4.88. The vast majority of the universities, 43 out of 52 (82.69%), were scored above 5.00. 14 of those 43 universities were scored between 8.00 and 10.00.

We also observe whether any variation between universities existed that reported not having a formal QAS. 3 out of these 5 universities scored below 4.99; another 1 was in the middle category (5.00-7.99); and the other one scored above 8.00.

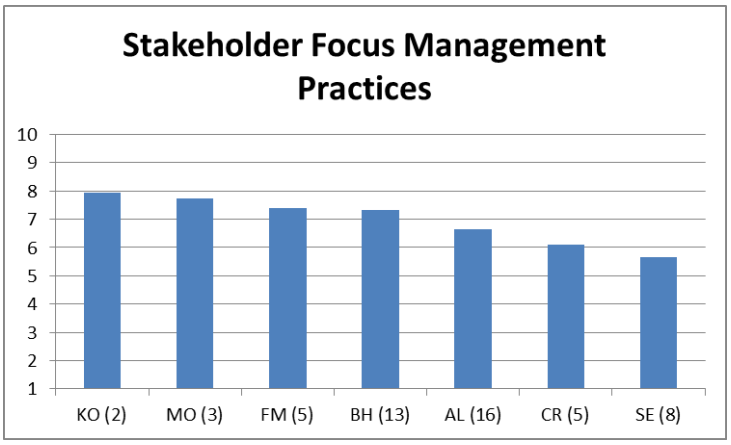


Figure 4 Average country's score for stakeholder focus management practices (Scale: from 1 = not at all to 10 = fully implemented)

Table 4 presents Stakeholder focus management practices average score analysis as related to university characteristic age, size, ownership, and location. In this quality management practice we observe that five Albanian universities, 3 Serbian universities and one from Croatia were scored below 4.99. 7 of those 9 universities were new, 2 were old and none of them were establishes after 2007. This analysis shows that none of them were located in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This analysis shows that the majority of the public and large universities scored between 5.00 and 7.99. We also observe that 50% of the small universities also scored between 5.00 and 7.99.

Table 4 Stakeholder focus management practices average score analysis as related to university characteristic age, size, ownership, and location.

	Average scores			Total
	below 4.99	5.00-7.99	above 8.00	
Age				
Old	2	14	3	19
New	7	12	6	25
Just establ.	-	3	5	8
Size				
Small	4	9	5	18
Medium	3	8	6	17
Large	2	12	3	17
Ownership				
Public	5	18	5	28
Private	4	11	9	24
Location				
AL	5	5	6	16
BH	-	10	2	13
CR	1	3	1	5
FM	-	4	4	5
KO	-	1	1	2
MO	-	2	1	3
SE	3	4	1	8

Scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented)

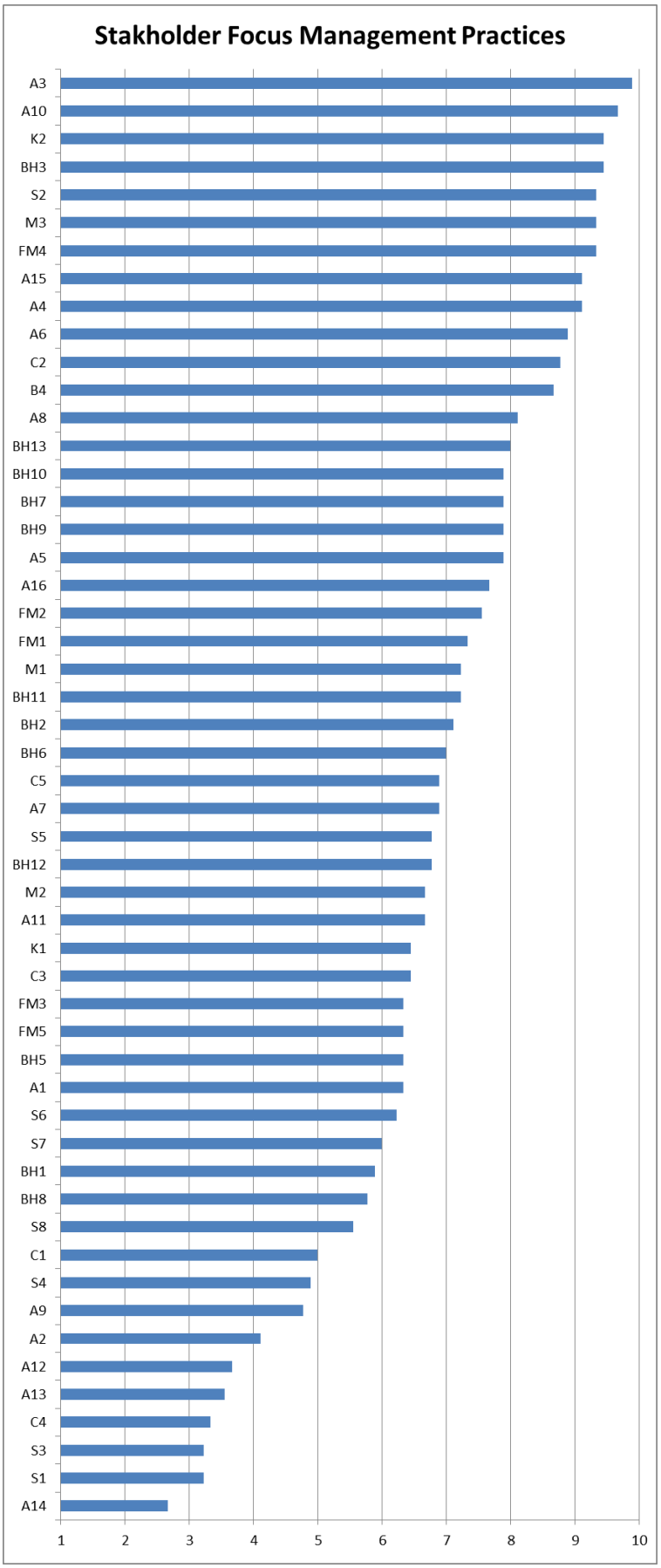


Figure 5 Stakeholder focus management practices within 52 WB universities
Scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented)

5.7 Benchmarking

Universities were asked to rate on a scale 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented) if the following three statements (Box 4) which related to benchmarking management practices were relevant to them. The implementation rate indicated the actual degree of these practices.

Box 4 Benchmarking Statements

1. The institution compares the procedures and their performance with those of other institutions (benchmarking) for the strengthening of the total improvement of its performance.
2. The institution has procedures which summarize the results from students' and academics' satisfaction measurement indicators and compares them with other similar institutions.
3. The institution compares the students' performance data with the corresponding ones of other institutions.

Figure 6 depicts the average overall results for the benchmarking practices within the WB. Average country's score for stakeholder focus management practices ranged from 6.83 (Kosovo) to 3.95 (Serbia). For Bosnia and Herzegovina average score was 7.74, Montenegro average score was 5.66, for Albania 5.31, for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was 4.86, for 7.33, for Croatia 4.2, and for Serbia 3.95.

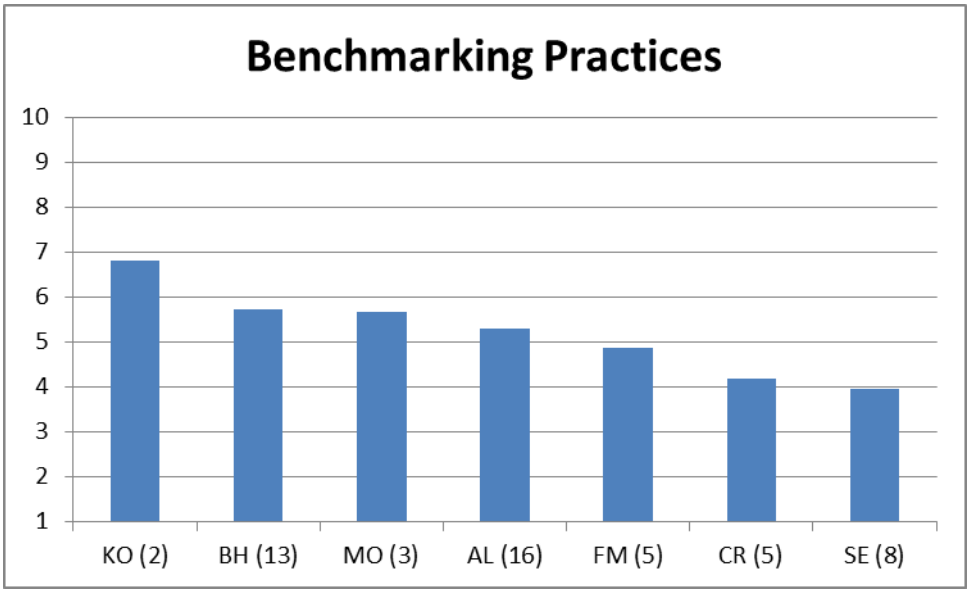


Figure 6 Average country's score for benchmarking management practices (Scale: from 1 = not at all to 10 = fully implemented)

Figure 7 presents average scores concerning benchmarking management practices for each participant university. Data shows that there is a variation within those universities as reported by their central management and averages scores range from 1 (A14, BH8, C4, M2 and S4) to 10 (A3). In this category 21 universities out of 52 (40%) were below 5.00. Another 40 percent was in the middle category and only 10 universities were scored between 8.00 and 10.00.

Table 5 presents benchmarking management practices average score analysis as related to university characteristic age, size, ownership, and location. In this quality management practice we observe that new, all sizes and mostly public were scored below 4.99. This analysis shows that none of them were located in Kosovo. 50 percent of Albanian universities and 62.5 percent of Serbian universities scored below 4.99. We also observe that more than 50% of the old universities scored between 5.00 and 7.99.

We also observe whether any variation between universities existed that reported not having a formal QAS. 4 out of these 5 universities scored below 4.99 and the other one scored above 8.00.

Table 5 Benchmarking management practices average score analysis as related to university characteristic age, size, ownership, and location.

	Average scores			Total
	below 4.99	5.00-7.99	above 8.00	
Age				
Old	6	10	3	19
New	13	8	4	25
Just establ.	2	3	3	8
Size				
Small	7	9	2	18
Medium	6	6	5	17
Large	8	6	3	17
Ownership				
Public	12	12	4	28
Private	9	9	6	24
Location				
AL	8	4	3	16
BH	3	7	3	13
CR	2	3	-	5
FM	2	3	-	5
KO	-	1	1	2
MO	1	1	1	3
SE	5	2	1	8

Scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented)

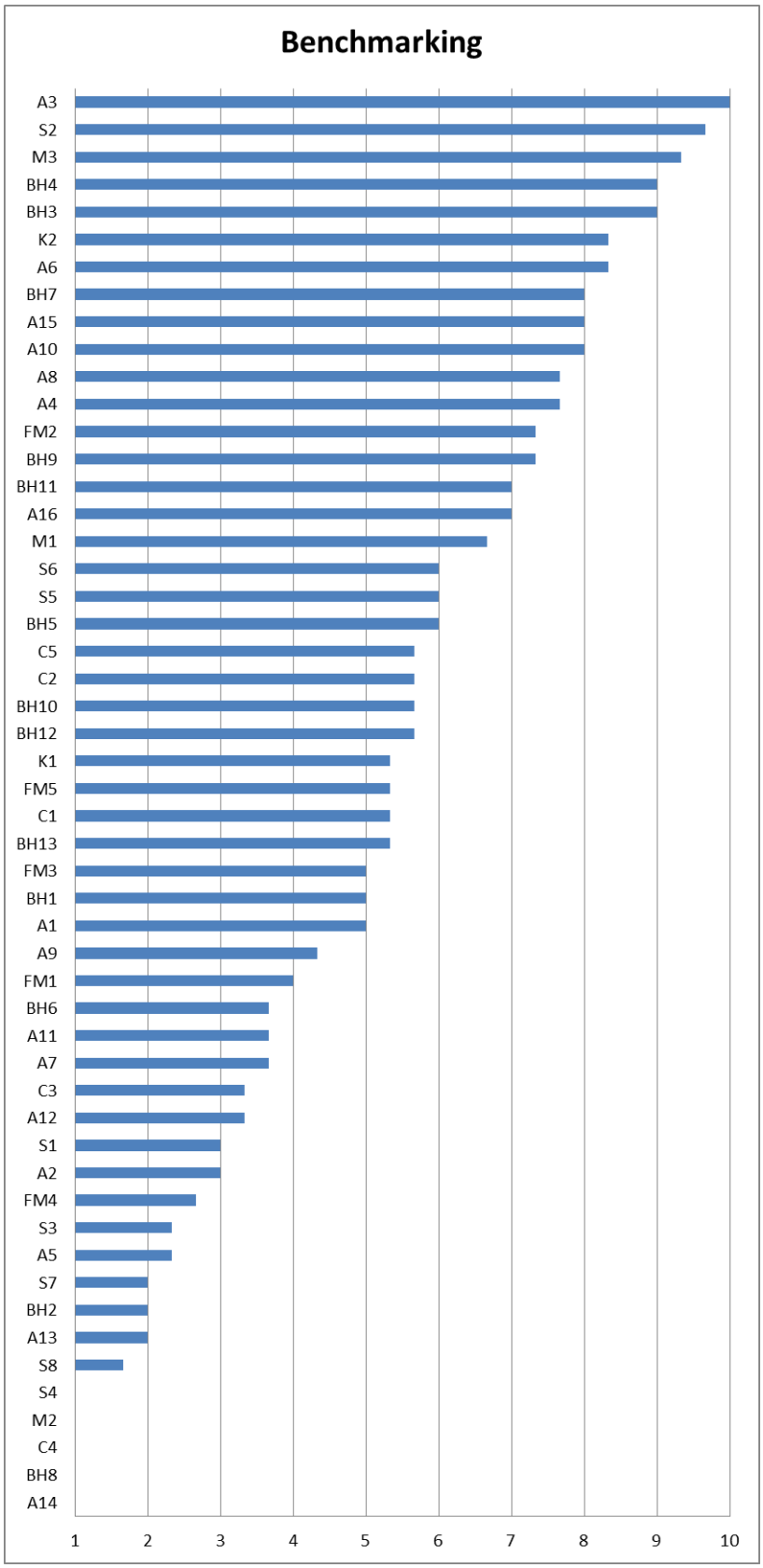


Figure 7 Benchmarking within 52 WB universities
Scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented)

5.8 Results Oriented Management Practices

Lastly universities were asked to rate on a scale 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented) if the following nine statements (Box 5) which related to results oriented management practices were relevant to them. The implementation rate indicated the actual degree of results oriented management practices.

Box 5 Results Oriented Management Practices

1. The institution has data for the measurement of its financial performance, efficacy and performance and effective use of its property.
2. The institution has data for the measurement of the performance and competence of academic staff.
3. The institution has data for the measurement of the performance and the competence of its administrative staff.
4. The institution has measurement indicators for the satisfaction, discontent and progress of its human resource and compares them with those of other institutions.
5. The institution records the major results of its functional performance which contribute to the improvement of the education and the achievement of its organizational efficiency.
6. The institution has important measures for the recording of its efficacy in issues of scheduling and activity plans.
7. The institution has important measures for the recording of its efficacy in issues of responsibility and moral behavior of its leadership.
8. The institution has important measures for the recording of its efficacy in issues of financial management.
9. The institution has important measures for the recording of its efficacy in issues of social responsibility.

Figure 8 depicts the average overall results for the results oriented management practices within the WB. Average country's score for results oriented management practices ranged from 7.42 (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) to 5.72 (Serbia). For Kosovo average score was 7.27, Albania 6.95, Montenegro 6.92, Bosnia Herzegovina 6.88, for Croatia 5.95, and for Serbia 5.72

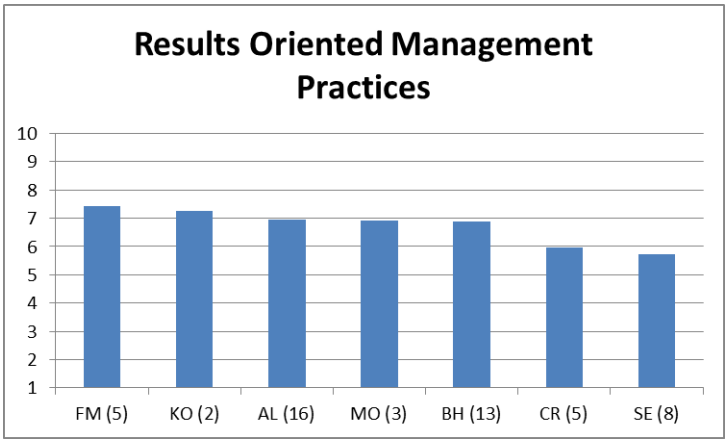


Figure 8 Average country's score for results oriented management practices (Scale: from 1 = not at all to 10 = fully implemented)

Table 6 presents results oriented management practices average score analysis as related to university characteristic age, size, ownership, and location. In this quality management practice we observe that 11 universities were scored below 4.99 (public and mostly from Serbian). This analysis shows that none of them were located in Montenegro and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We also observe that more that 17 out of 15 from the middle category were public universities. Interestingly that 50 percent of public universities scored above 8.00 and also 90 percent of young universities also appeared in this category. Above 8.00 also scored 50 percent of the Albanian universities.

Table 6 Results oriented management practices average score analysis as related to university characteristic age, size, ownership, and location.

	Average scores			Total
	below 4.99	5.00-7.99	above 8.00	
Age				
Old	5	10	4	19
New	6	14	5	25
Just establ.	-	1	7	8
Size				
Small	3	8	7	18
Medium	4	8	5	17
Large	4	9	4	17
Ownership				
Public	7	17	4	28
Private	4	8	12	24
Location				
AL	2	6	8	16
BH	2	8	3	13
CR	2	3	-	5
FM	-	4	1	5
KO	1	-	1	2
MO	-	2	1	3
SE	4	2	2	8

Scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented)

Figure 9 presents average scores concerning results oriented management practices for each participant university. Data shows that there is a variation within those universities as reported by their central management and averages scores range from 2.33 (A14) to 9.88 (A3, BH3, S2). In this category 11 universities out of 52 were below 5.00. The vast majority of 25 universities were in the middle category and 16 universities were scored between 8.00 and 10.00 (12 of those private).

We also detect whether any variation between universities existed that reported not having a formal QAS. 2 out of these 5 universities scored below 4.99, one was scored 5.00 and the other two scored above 8.00.

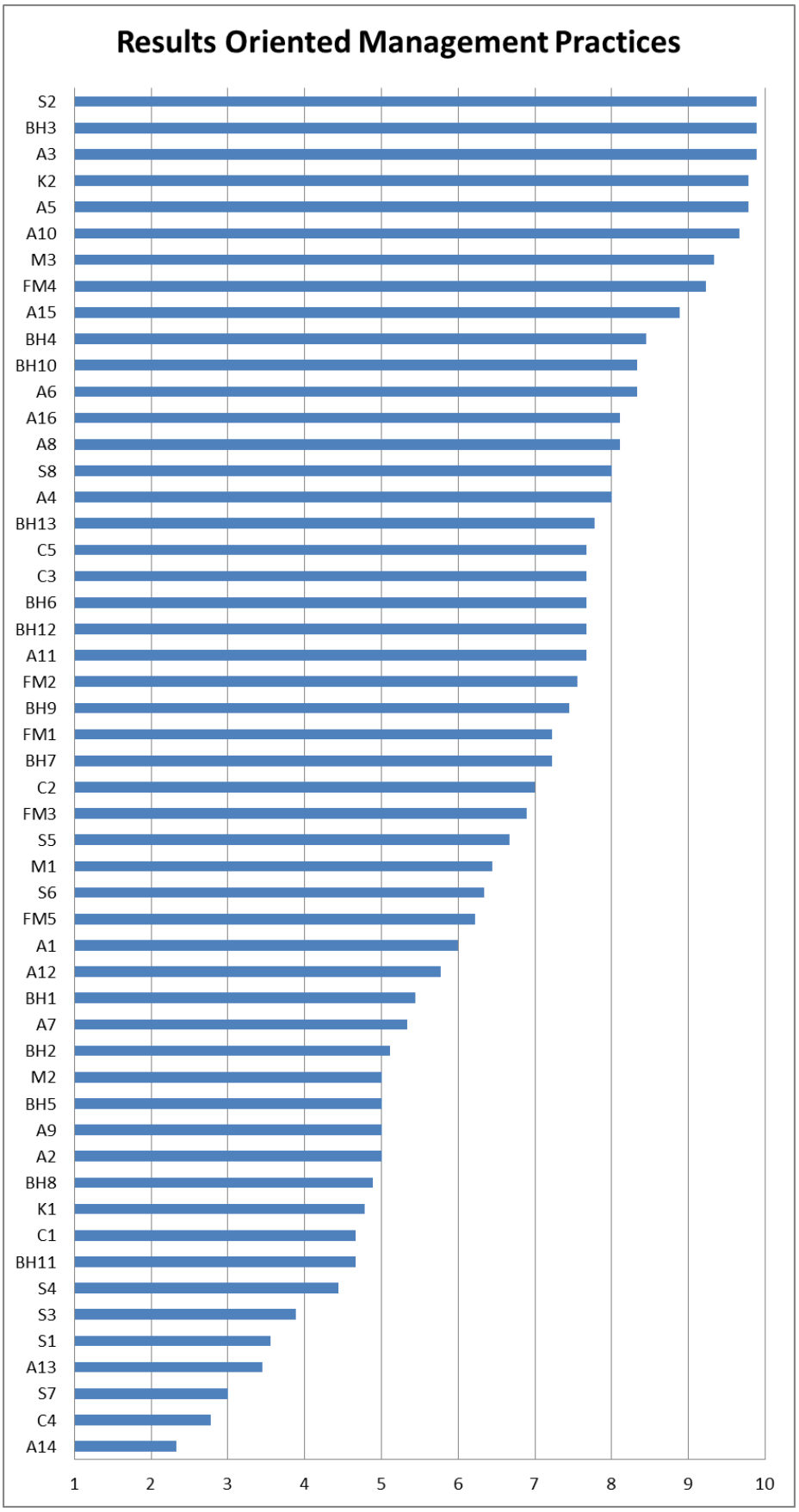


Figure 9 Results oriented management practices within 52 WB universities
Scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (fully implemented)

5.9 Perceptions about Quality Management Practices

This section presents perceptions about quality management practices within WB universities. Additionally, it presents the differences between perceptions (importance rate) and practices (implementation rate). Universities were asked to rate on a scale 1 (not important at all) to 10 (very extremely important) the extent to which regarded the statements about strategic planning (Box 2), stakeholder focus (Box 3), benchmarking (Box 4), and results oriented (Box 5) as important.

Figure 10 depicts the overall findings of this report concerning perceptions, practices and differences within WB for the four quality management practices: Strategic Planning, Stakeholder Focus, Benchmarking and Results Oriented.

Figure 10 Average country's overall findings concerning perceptions, practices and differences for Strategic Planning, Stakeholder Focus, Benchmarking and Results Oriented
Scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (extremely important/fully implemented)

Averages county's score for perceptions about strategic planning ranged from 9.52 (Montenegro) to 6.42 (Kosovo). The differences between perceptions and practices ranged from 0, 92 (Kosovo) to 2, 61 (Montenegro). Perception about stakeholder focus averages country's score range from 9.37(Montenegro) to 7.7 (Serbia) while difference in this category range from 0, 88 (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo) to 2, 55 (Croatia). Benchmarking perceptions ranged from 8.22(Albania and Montenegro) to 6.37 (Serbia), while the difference range from 1 (Kosovo) to 3, 86 (Croatia). Lastly average country's score for result oriented ranged from 9.40 (Montenegro) to 7.65 (Serbia). In this category the difference ranged from 0, 66(Kosovo) to 2, 48 (Montenegro).

5.10 Quality Management Perceptions and Practices with Public and Private Universities

Private universities seem to play a leading role in Western Balkans' Higher Education. Thus, the final section of this report presents perceptions and concerns about quality management practices within public and private universities. As already reported 28 public and 24 private universities participated in our survey. Data revealed that private universities were scored higher in all four quality management practices. Figure 11 shows that strategic planning (7.19), stakeholder focus (7.29), and results oriented (7.26) quality management practices were received higher scores than benchmarking (5.65).

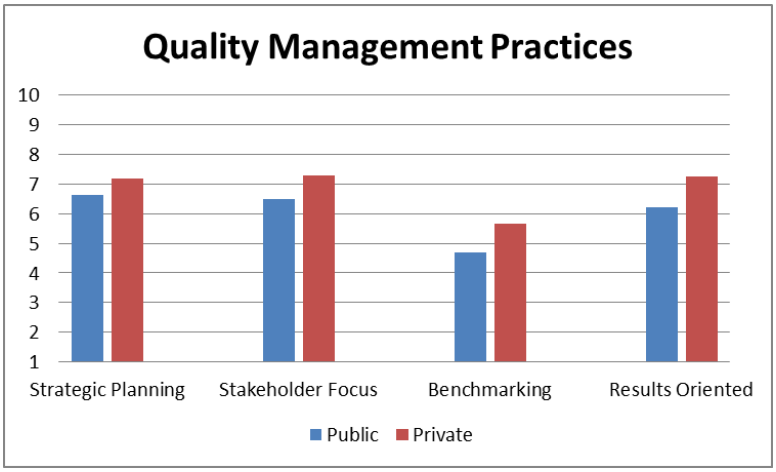


Figure 11 Quality management practices average scores within public and private universities (Scale from 1-not at all- to 10 - extremely important)

On the other hand, figure 12 provides averages scores concerning perception about quality management practices within public and private universities.

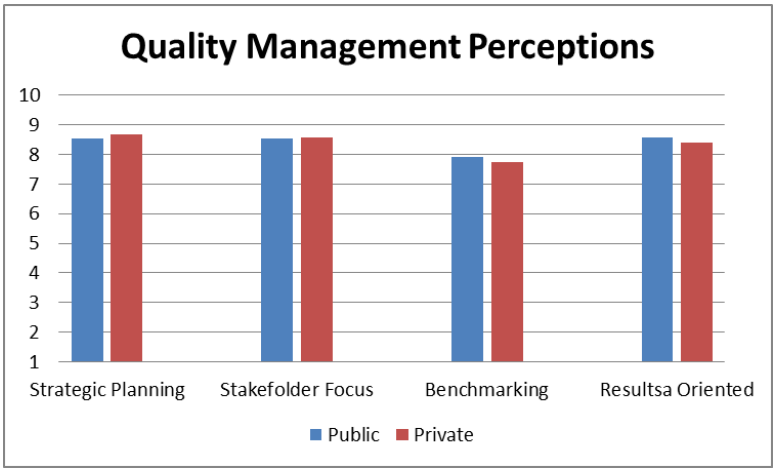


Figure 12 Averages scores about quality management perceptions within public and private universities (Scale from 1-not at all- to 10 - extremely important)

The overall average scores as derived from public and private universities provide nearly equal perceptions across the four categories: strategic planning (public 8.55, private 8.67), stakeholder focus (public 8.51, private 8.58), and results oriented (public 8.57, private 8.38). Although, admittedly lower for both public and private concerning benchmarking quality management practices (public 7.90, private 7.75).

6. Reflections on the Main Findings

The aim of the survey reported here was to provide a general overview of the governance capacity of institutions in the region. By operationalizing quality management as the combined institutional capacity for strategic planning, stakeholder focus, results oriented management practices and benchmarking activities, we have argued that the current survey can identify both strengths and weaknesses in the capacity for change in the higher education sector in this region. Further analysis of the data will be undertaken in the coming year, but in general the data reveal that there are huge variations regarding perceptions of governance capacity across the participating universities as reported by their central management. These variations suggest that the universities responded quite honestly and meaningfully to our survey. However, despite the variations between institutions regarding their governance capacity it is also possible to find some commonalities.

In order to point to areas for strengths and weaknesses in governance capacity we divided the average scores responses in three using 5.00 and 7.99 as cutting points, and drawing on the MB terminology and explanations for interpreting the data. Based on such a divide, it is possible to suggest that for most universities there is a fact-based systematic process in place for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of key governance practices. For some institutions with average scores above 7.99, one might even suggest that these universities have in place very effective, well-developed, and systematic processes to evaluate and improve their quality with clear evidence of innovation, learning and organizational sharing, while for those scoring well below 5.00, there should be plenty of room for improvements.

Commenting on specific governance areas, results do indicate that strategic planning and benchmarking perhaps are the area with least developed high capacities. Only 8 and 7 institutions respectively in our sample scored above 7.99, and with a relative high number of institutions also scoring below 5.00 in benchmarking practices. These findings suggested that benchmarking practices in particular are not very developed in the region. In the areas of stakeholder and result-oriented practices it seems that more developed institutional capacity exists. In our survey university characteristics such as age and size seems to have little impact on governance capacity.

In our survey we also asked whether the institutional management of the institutions saw the need for a strengthening of the governance capacity in various governance areas, and the general finding is that almost all institutions see a need for further developments. This is perhaps not surprising as many institutions in our sample score between 5.00 and 7.99 when asked about their current governance capacity.

With respect to country differences, there are some findings that are worth noting. First, Serbian and Croatian universities seems to score somewhat lower on the overall governance capacity than universities in the other countries in the region. This might hints to specific national characteristics influencing the development of governance capacity in these countries. Second, in some countries, there are also huge differences in the scores in various governance areas; for example, Kosovo scores very low on strategic practices, while extremely high other governance practices (the inclusion of few institutions in the sample from Kosovo might explain this partly).

Analysis of governance capacity between private and public universities indicated that average scores, especially in strategic planning, stakeholder focus, and results oriented

management practices, were slightly higher in private than in public universities. When asking them about the need to strengthen their governance capacity, the data reveal few differences between the two types of institutions. Based on this finding, one could argue that the perceptions of governance capacity are quite similar regardless of institutional ownership.

While our study have pointed out both strengths and weaknesses in overall governance capacity of universities in the region – what we have labeled as quality management, there are still issues that deserve to be pursued further by more in-depth research.

A first issue concerns the fact that benchmarking was rated as the least important by both public and private universities. Why does benchmarking capacity score so (relatively) low? Is the answer that WB universities achieve their goals in a less competitive environment, have less developed international links, or should we just interpret the result as a possibility for institutions in the region to learn more from each other?

A second issue relates to the relative high emphasis on stakeholder or result-oriented practices found within our sample institutions, and the relative weak developed capacity for strategic planning. Does this finding imply that many institutions only are able to maintain a day-to-day focus where institutional survival and short-term thinking is prioritized, and with little room for strategic thinking? Or, is the result rather a sign of traditions in how higher education institutions are run where the image of universities as “strategic actors” is seen as less relevant?

Third, since most of the universities in our sample report to have established a quality assurance system at the institutional level, it would be interesting to study more in-depth the link between the activities of such systems and the governance practices studied here. However, this would imply a more qualitative approach going into some of the institutions to analyze how various governance practices are linked. While we can say that our study have identified examples of institutions with more formalized quality management practices – interpreted as the co-existence of a sample of governance practices – we have still little knowledge about whether strengthened governance capacity actually leads to changes that benefit the development of higher education and research in the region.

Appendices

A1. Participant Universities*

Albania

Agricultural University of Tirana

Albanian University

Aleksander Moisiu University

Epoka University

European University of Tirana

Fan Noli University of Korce

International University of Tirana

Justicia University

Luarasi University

Marin Barleti University

Polytechnic University of Tirana

Tirana Business University

University of New York Tirana

University of Shkodra

University of Tiranna

WISDOM University

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dzemal Bijedic University

International University of Sarajevo

INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY TRAVNIK

Sarajevo School of Science and Technology

Slobomir P University

University of Banja Luka

University of Bihać

University of East Sarajevo

University of Herzegovina

University of Mostar

University of Sarajevo

University of Tuzla

University of Zenica

Croatia

Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek

Juraj Dobrila University of Pula

University of Rijeka

University of Zadar

University of Zagreb

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

International Balkan University

MIT Skopja

South East European University

St. "Cyril and Methodius" University- Skopje

University "St. Kliment Ohridski" - Bitola

Kosovo

ILIRIA College

University of Pristina

Montenegro

University Mediterranean Podgorica

University of Donja Gorica, UDG

University of Montenegro

Serbia

Belgrade Metropolitan University

Megatrend University

Singidunum University

State University of Novi Pazar

Union University

University of Belgrade

UNIVERSITY OF NIS

University of Novi Sad

***University's name derived from replied questionnaires**

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