

Mechanism of Strategic, Politic and Process Management of Universities Educational Services Quality

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Abstract: Development and implementation of quality management mechanism of higher education services is an important issue which has a high potential to solve problems that has emerged on the national level. It was determined that university management as well as in any organization is carried out on three levels of decision making: strategic, tactical and operational. On the basis of the ENQA standards and recommendations as well as modern common methodology and quality management practices, the functioning of the higher education services quality management mechanism should be considered in the plane of the three levels of decision-making (three hierarchically subordinate components of the mechanism): the strategic, political and process. Components of the universities services strategic quality management include: strategic analysis of the environment and the university self-esteem, development of strategic plans and managing the implementation of university strategy. It is determined that political control of higher education services quality include a broad statement of universities objectives. They are determined by top management of universities and they must be officially proclaimed (published) and communicated to all staff of the university and its departments. Defined political goals of universities in the field of quality are structured by functional areas of management and administrative activities. Outcomes of the current research show that implementation of process management in higher education which is the basis of the quality management system, requires the identification, structuring and analysis of key processes of the university.

Key words: Higher education, quality management, university control, development, educational services, strategy

INTRODUCTION

The results of analytical research of the state and development of the quality management processes of higher education in post soviet countries determine the loss of functioning efficiency of the higher education institute which does not fully comply with its fundamental functions. Evidence of this are the low levels of socio-economic, humanitarian, scientific, technical and innovative development of country. At the same time these trends are accompanied by the rapid growth of the higher education system which manifests itself in the sequential formation of a large network of universities with three times more large contingent of students post-graduate students and doctoral candidates compared to the 1990 year. Serial analysis of quality control processes on the level of the entire higher education system and individual universities found that

in modern conditions the solution of the issue of higher education quality improvement and the performance of its basic functions as a public institution is largely because of the improvement of internal management systems in universities. Experience with bureaucratic licensing and accreditation procedures shows that the quality of governance of higher education in terms of a network of accredited universities which count >1000 institutions is quite an effective mechanism in terms of the minimum requirements and the formation of formal obstacles to the entry way to the educational services market for everyone (which may ultimately discredit the public institution of higher education). At the same time, the European experience of higher education management and doctrinal documents of the Bologna process determine that the main link in the process of quality assurance in higher education are universities that are directly the operators of the education market. Stimulating factor for the

development of activity in the sphere of quality management on the level of universities is the fact that the dynamics of the contingent of entrants each year is reduced and the network operators of the higher education services market for a long period of time will operate in the market which shows a decrease of its capacity. However, the main fundamental factor that determines the need of intensification at the institutional level of higher education quality management is the lack of a positive effect of the functioning of the higher education system on the country's economic development, its social, innovation and humanitarian components. Such trends are a fundamental factor in the reduction of financial resources that government can spend on the functioning of higher education.

Thus, there is a situation where universities are facing two strategic threats. The first lies in the fact that customer base is reduced with an unchanged number of participants in a competitive market. Another threat is that high schools network which is the core of a public institution of higher education in the long term will feel a decrease in public funding, due to the lack of appropriate filling the state budget due to the effect from the functioning of higher education.

It should also be noted that the substitution of a lack of Russian matriculates by foreign students which can be considered as one of the solutions to the problem of customer base and capacity of the higher education market increasing is also an issue, mainly due to the quality management. In the context of the functioning of the international education market which is characterized as a high-tech and modern type of service production, the importance of acquiring competitive advantages of individual universities and the recognition of documents on education in other countries. In this case, there is the issue of compliance with international standards of quality and availability of relevant certificates in high school. As a consequence, the quality of governance is becoming one of the most important in this case but in this direction, it acquires a distinct utilitarian character.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Economy of the higher education sphere is an object of numerous researches. Scientists devoted their attention to the question of higher education quality in general (Bagirov, 2005) European integration processes in the field of educational services (Gayrapetyan, 2006), socio economic development of the education market (Kasyanov, 2004). Separate science stream was formed in the sphere of university management (Popov, 2002) and internal quality control systems of higher education

(Sobolev, 2004). Higher education was observed as an indicator of regional social development (Vorozhbit, 2015a) and in assessment of regulatory impact on the regional level (Vorozhbit, 2013). Scientists conducted the study of marketing approaches to the promotion of universities educational services (Vorozhbit, 2015b) and developed the method of estimation of the level of university science integration in the national innovation system (Vorozhbit and Pristup, 2015). At the same time, complex of questions that concern concrete aspects of implementation of universities quality management conception is still unsolved and demands attention within the current condition of universities services market.

In these conditions, the development and implementation of higher education quality management mechanism is an important issue which has high potential for solving the problems that arise on the national level, the level of the higher education system and individual universities level. The most important feature of this trend of improvements and modernization of education is that the development and implementation of the control mechanism is largely associated with organizational measures and are not capital intensive. In this case we are talking about the fact that development of the higher education system is not associated with an increase in the budget or private financing (although the fundamental factors and possibilities of such an increase in current conditions are absent) and a more efficient use of existing resources, the volume of which in the tactical and strategic perspective will decrease. Lack of progressive changes in the individual university management system, in particular the quality of the management of their services, has promising implications of a negative character which are to eliminate institutions and radical institutional changes.

University management as well as management of any other organization, carries out at three levels of decision-making: strategic, tactical, operational. On the basis of standards and guidelines of the ENQA as well as modern common methodology and quality management practices, the functioning of the higher education services quality management mechanism is appropriate to consider in the plane of the three levels of decision-making (three hierarchically subordinate components of the mechanism): strategic, political and process. Strategic management of universities quality services is not a separate area of strategic planning and overall long-term institution management philosophy. The quality of services should be considered as the primary target setting in general tree university purposes. Medium-term planning is interpreted as a political level of the implementation of management functions, due to the fact that despite the overall strategic

direction of the university management quality, implementation of the strategy requires the implementation of decomposition of certain tasks and functions with the result that there is a certain organizational structure with functional and linear units.

Positioning quality as the main and target goal of universities functioning, quality management, along with other functional areas also requires an appropriate selection (along with marketing, finance, administration and PR-accompaniment) providing a certain functional status and the corresponding organizational support (formation of separate organizational units). In turn, the operational level of management is considered as a kind of process control due to the fact that the modern methodology of quality management and the relevant international standards require the use of a process approach to quality management. As a consequence, the individual functional areas of management and linear units in the short term are treated as institutional units, mediating systematic set of specific processes that occur at the output of university to provide services with a certain level of quality. Thus, short-term planning, organization, management and control are based on the actual results and forecasts of individual processes implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial conditions for construction of the university strategic management system are some of the objective tendencies which are formed in the external environment which simultaneously serve as strategic guidelines that limit the scope and target arguments of control functions, threats and opportunities. The composition of these conditions include the following: increase of the level of requirements for the quality of educational services from the part of consumers which is caused by the possibility of choosing from a number of similar training programs in a number of universities; the emergence of a large number of logistics objects that can be used in the educational process which consequently generates a certain consumer expectations; simultaneous expanding the range of basic and additional services that are provided in one university (including regional higher education system) with increasing differentiation of consumer demand (quantitative and qualitative increase in the list of consumer needs); increased competition between universities on the educational services market which is exacerbated by unfavorable demographic processes and the presence of sufficiently extensive (both in the regional and sectoral dimension) network of universities; a significant differentiation of consumer

demand and the state order for individual specialty which is accompanied by a fairly significant disparities in the labor market.

Objectivity of the demands of universities services strategic quality management development is caused due to the fact that all the activities of universities should be focused on the achievement of clearly defined targets in terms of quality thus becomes important adaptability of universities to change character of the external environment, review the contents, directions and volumes of provided services.

One of the key requirements of ENQA and ISO standards is to have formulated strategic quality objectives which are specified by appropriate policies and procedures for quality assurance. The strategy, policy and quality assurance procedures should be publicly released and get an official status. The strategy, policy and procedures conventionally combined in quality management doctrine, the development of which is based on a comprehensive study of the strategic perspectives of the labor market and educational services. Customer needs and expectations also require studying, so as needs and expectations of research staff, personal and other stakeholders. The structure of university quality doctrine should be put in this form: the quality management policy of educational, scientific, methodical and educational activities of the university; strategic development targets of the university in the projection of quality service management; mechanisms, instruments, arrangements and implementation measures of the strategic targets achievement policy.

Public displays of universities doctrine in the field of quality are formulated and promulgated: mission vision, strategic goals and objectives of the university with the appropriate decomposition of the task in the organizational dimension (between different departments and organizational units). Consistent formulation of these provisions will ensure the understanding of the strategy and quality policy within the university and to reach the awareness of staff on certain key issues in particular: vision (positioning) of universities in the education market and the wider society; key objectives of the university are functioning; key stakeholder groups and consumers, on the needs satisfaction of which university operates; quality management objects (specific characteristics of educational services and the content of universities obligations concerning their long-term provision) and ways to ensure their future state.

At the same time doctrine in the field of quality and its external manifestation in the form of a succinct mission is a mean of identification and differentiation of university in the market. With the help of mission there is an

opportunity to highlight and demonstrate the uniqueness, identity and customer value of services of a particular university. Identification of high schools in the market environment can also be achieved by determining the value for schools: consumers of its services and society in general; faculty and staff; image at the regional, national and international level; material and technical equipment and innovative teaching techniques.

All of the above provisions on the strategic positioning of universities fit quite well in the overall economic concept of the strategic management in the organization. Generalized, the process of strategic management of the higher education services quality should be divided into three components (a strategic analysis of the environment and the university self-assessment, formulation of strategic plans, managing the implementation of the university strategy), the implementation of each of them determines the reach a certain higher level of service quality (Fig. 1).

Strategic analysis of the environment and the university self-assessment is the initial element of the strategic management of the university. The main purpose of the self-assessment is to identify opportunities and problematic issues at the stage of the development and implementation of quality management systems as well as the evaluation of the functioning of individual processes and needs in their improvement at the stage of development of the quality management system. In this case, the work explores the organizational units of universities in functional areas based on grounded index systems that identify problem areas, assesses the state of internal and external environment.

On the basis of this formulation is carried out strategic development priorities in the field of quality. The basis of this kind of analysis is methodical bases of strategic intra studies (SWOT, STEP, ABC, PEST analysis), a systematic approach, the method of expert assessments and sociological method (involving internal and, if necessary, external experts), economic analysis, graphical method, modeling method.

As a result of this kind of self-generated report documents, some of which are intended for internal use in the process of management decision-making, the other part is made as a report on the quality of self-assessment and is open to public access document that declared the status quo of quality management system and the results of its operation (it is desirable that both of these parts of the report information as much as possible to match).

The strategic planning of university in the field of quality is to develop a strategic plan designed to increase customer value and enhance the university educational services customer's satisfaction. This plan consists of a

series of long-term university's objectives, set out specifying tasks and responsibilities aimed at their solution. Taken together, this is a strategic vision of the university in the field of quality. It should also be noted the importance of choosing the basic positioning strategies on the market and assess the effectiveness of planning and forecasting.

Strategic planning in the field of university's services quality management covers a number of important questions, the generalized sense of which is the following: formulation of development objectives and specifying aims in the field of quality, assessment monitoring and control parameters; scheduling of key indicators of university's work in functional (studying process, research activities, development of methodical support, educational activities and additional services for students) and administrative (finance, marketing, PR support and international relations) directions; planning of the university's quality management system development and its impact on competitive position; evaluation of university's development forecast indicators according to optimistic and pessimistic scenarios.

The planning process of quality management strategies in higher education is associated with a number of complications in its development. The main obstacle is connected with problem of preliminary decisions making process that is dependent on the structure of authority in high school. The new strategy usually destroys a type of relationship which was developed in an educational institution and may enter into conflict with the policy guidance. The natural reaction on this is the fight against any innovation that breaks traditional relationships and structure authority. Another significant problem is that the introduction of strategic planning in general and in the field of quality management in particular, leads to a conflict between the former activities (operational control), providing a profit and the new that carry strategic advantage in the future. In universities on the early stages of the implementation of strategic planning in the field of quality management is no corresponding motivation of personnel, there is no reliable information about the external environment of universities and the available statistics on competitors is not sufficient to develop a strategy. Programme-oriented planning is an important method of formation of the strategic objectives and criteria of quality management as it allows formulating priorities for future development of the university in the field of quality. There is the possibility of adapting a standard set of goals and criteria specific to the university environment. The essence of this kind of adaptation is to analyze the existing objectives of the functional areas of the university quality control and

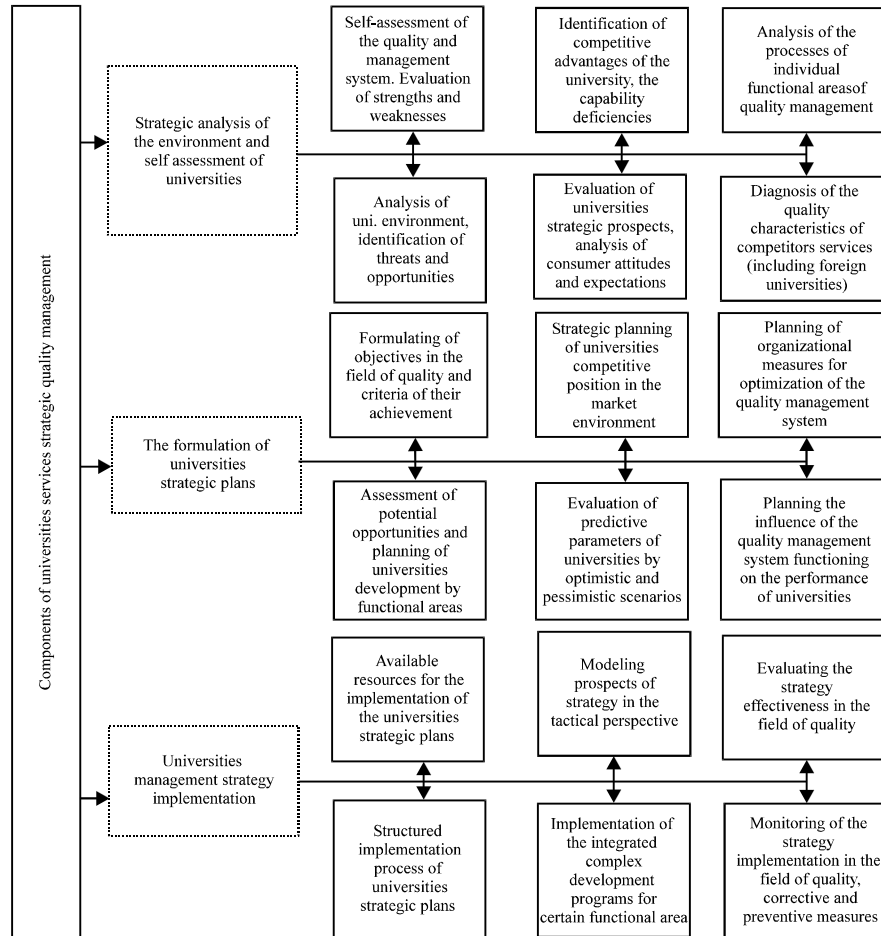


Fig. 1: Elements of Universities services strategic quality management

selection of the most important management criteria, based on the specifics of the university as well as the composition used endpoints of the educational and scientific sphere. Among the objects of university's strategic quality management planning worth to distinguish the following:

- Quantitative and qualitative composition of the teaching staff, its age and sex structure
- Logistical support (training and laboratory facilities, equipment, communications)
- The procedure for the reception and the contingent of students stuff coming to study
- Development and improvement of methodical maintenance technology of the educational process
- Research and development work, the innovation process
- University's international relations, scientific cooperation, exchange programs

- Indicators of financial and economic activity, the situation in the education market, the competitive position of the university

Speaking about the implementation of strategic plans in the field of universities quality management services, we should note that this issue is largely related to the market positions of university within the framework of regional, sectoral and national higher education system. Despite the overall imperative of total quality management and continuous improvement, resource, market and human resource capacity of universities in a variety of situations characterized by difference which determines the need to choose different strategies for implementing long-term plans in the field of quality management. Among sufficiently large number of standard strategies in terms of planning and for particular control object, we have identified four species strategies (strategy attack, defense, concentration diversify) which will be described.

Universities quality policy is a common intention and the direction of the university in the field of quality management which manifest themselves in the medium-term goals and objectives, formally expressed by top management and appropriately disclosed. Publication of universities quality policy require reporting to the public about the results of its implementation. Such statements should be formal and based on the results of self assessment or the assessment carried out by third parties. In both cases, such an assessment must be made on the basis of clear diagnostic systems and indicators.

Based on the content, position in the structure of educational services governing quality management systems and features of the policy in universities in the composition of its main characteristics should be included:

- Compliance with the strategic goals and objectives of the university in the field of quality management
- Availability of the provisions governing the continuous improvement of individual processes of the university
- Ability to assess the validity of the provisions of the quality policy
- Provision of a quality policy should be communicated to all members of the faculty and staff of the university

On this basis, it should be noted that the political control of the quality of higher education services include a broad statement of intentions and objectives of the school. It is determined by the top management of universities, made in writing, shall be officially proclaimed (published) by management and communicated to all staff of the university (in particular its subdivisions). Mission, vision and policy in the field of quality management should be understood and accepted by all. It is important to set goals to be concrete expression in the form of some of the measured parameters and characteristics which allows precise control of the degree of achievement of objectives. The goal in terms of quality is what achieves or aspires university in the field of quality. It is necessary to develop achievable and measurable goals related to quality policy. The formulation of the objectives should be carried out so specifically that they can be understood to put into practice and assess the extent of their achievement. Figure 2 shows an example of the formulation of the political objectives of universities in the field of quality management system and political objectives with appropriate assessment of their achievement criteria.

The main political goal of the university in the field of quality (one of its variants) is proposed to determine as

the provision of universities services high customer value, satisfaction of all stakeholders (students, employers, faculty, university staff) as well as the fulfillment of all basic functions of universities in the regional (branch) socio-economic system. This kind of policy formulation takes into account the objectives of universities entrepreneurial component which is to provide such services which would be characterized by relatively high consumer qualities and in the future given the option to convert the cost of training students in far exceeding their cash flows. The social component of the university is also important.

The thing is in provided services which are first of all designed on the base of the needs of satisfaction of all stakeholders, both in internal and external environment. Another important issue is a consideration of the need to ensure implementation of the role of universities in the environment in which they operate (region, industry, professional sphere). In this case we are talking about the fact that functioning of universities should acted as a catalyst of scientific and technical, social, innovative development of the humanitarian sphere which is defined as a priority target area of the university range of services.

The political objectives of the university in the field of quality structured in functional and administrative areas of university management, or in other words, the key functional areas of quality management. In this kind of functional zones marked educational process, scientific-technical and innovative activity, methodological support. Among the administrative functions of services quality assurance allocated universities administration, marketing and PR-support, finance, resources and logistical support.

For each of the functional areas of management and administrative offered certain groups of performance indicators to be used as criteria of political goals achieving. These indicators are quantitative, relatively easily calculated internal services of universities and are quite informative.

Quality management of university services on the basis of the process approach is one of the key requirements of ISO standards which are the basic and most general methodological basis for the application of specific educational standards of quality management. ISO standards are documented and regulated secure expression of process-oriented management philosophy. At the same time within the said concept of the quality this control is total (TQM, Total Quality Management) that is the object of control is the whole system of services provision on all stages preceding their provision and stages that occur after the end of the educational

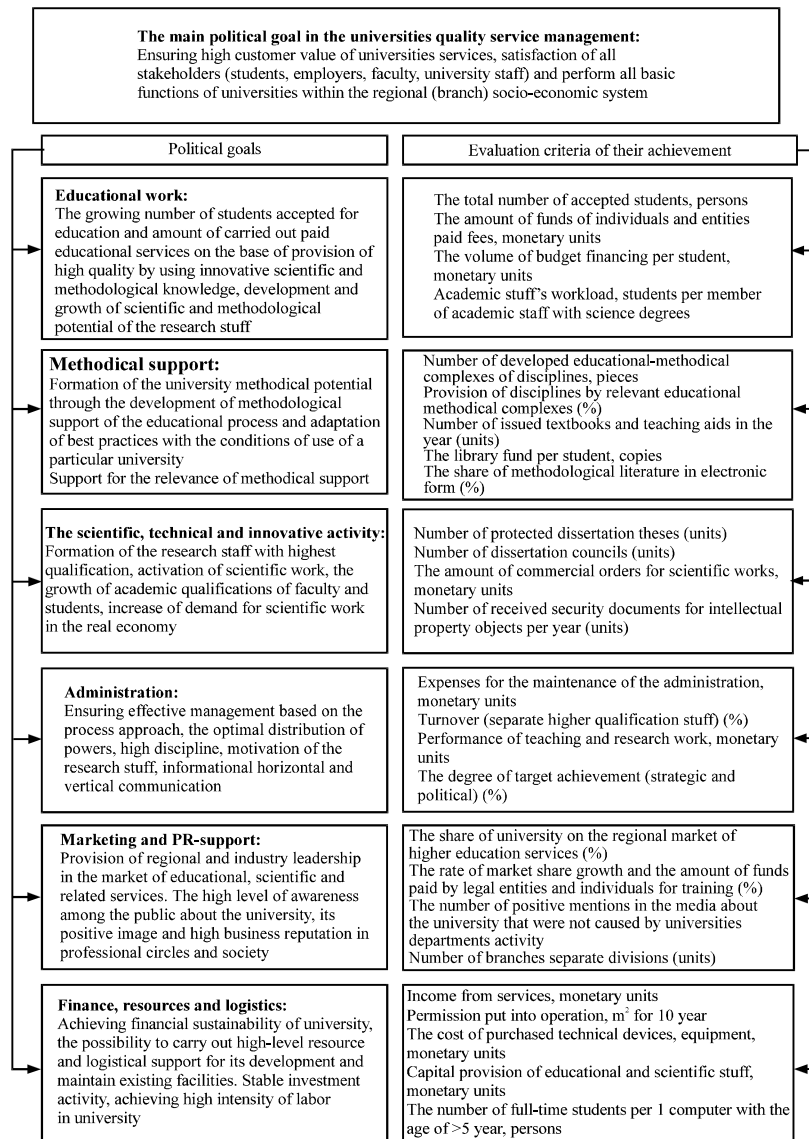


Fig. 2: The policy objectives in the field of universities quality management services and benchmarks of their achievement

services providing process. Thus, the whole manufacturing process and service providing process considere as a systematic collection of related processes, a more specific level which in turn may also have atomic structure.

In general, the term process is fundamental as for modern management and quality management in particular. As a process in the broad sense understands some sequence of interrelated or interacting activities (work, operations) whose aim is to turn the “inputs” of the process in its “outputs” in order to achieve a certain result as a rule the creation of certain products or provision of certain services to consumers (Petruk, 2013).

As part of the process, including facilities management, often identify certain resources that are divided by the criteria of long-term and short-term usage. Here as a resource in general understands a wide range of production facilities factors and logistics used in the provision of educational services: faculty, staff, buildings, technologies and teaching methods, equipment, technology, intellectual property and etc. Each of the process is considered as a separate system with a certain level of autonomy as a consequence, the analysis process requires external environment which affect it. But the most important issue is that each of the processes to be controlled. In other words, each of the processes is a

specific area of management authority and responsibility. Using modern quality management philosophy, the official responsible for the implementation of a separate process quality management system is a process owner or manager.

Considering the activities of the organization traditionally speak about workflows or business processes. The latter term is currently used in respect of any organizations that are not necessarily commercial, including universities. One of the key properties required of any workflow is its so-called “capability” which is understood as the ability of the process to perform the desired function from it and produce the output result or services to establish and the expected properties. Process control loop is typically included to ensure that properties in the process scheme. Scope of the concept of “process” is not limited to technological and production processes or service processes. In fact, any work performed by humans or machines, it is a process. Thus, the process can be considered, on the one hand, in a very general sense as the totality of people, equipment, materials, methods of measurement and the external environment which interact with each other to produce a “output” of required quality and on the other, a narrower sense as a kind of limited employment or operation performed by a specific person or a machine (Kleshcheva, 2013; Alshareet, 2015).

Modern quality management philosophy is based on a process-oriented thinking which in turn requires clear information base, provided by evaluation and diagnostic systems. Such diagnostic and evaluation systems are typically statistical database analysis which determines the list of corrective and control actions as well as being the basis for management decisions. The information on the functioning of all processes is a certain code, a function that describes the work of universities in a certain time interval, the use of an operational impact on the arguments of this function later change the state of the entire system of universities. To put these provisions more specifically, all of the key activities within the university (teaching process, scientific-technical and innovative activity, methodological support, administration, universities, marketing and PR-support, finance, resource and logistics) are modeled as processes which are characterized by certain inputs and results (outputs) and management features (Fig. 3). The purpose of the quality management system functioning is the issue of control and remedial action on the input streams and the internal operations of their processing. The purpose of this control action is to obtain a desired output

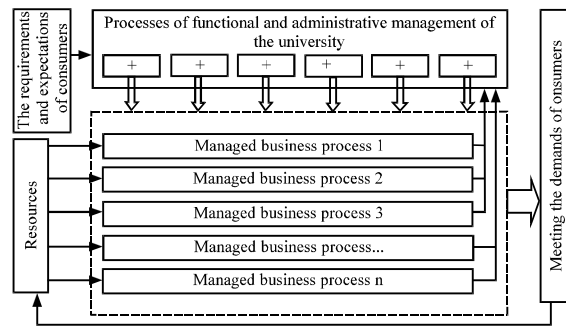


Fig. 3: System of the universities services process oriented quality management

(planned) result with this kind of outputs must get sustainable (since all the processes are cyclical and the cycle of some processes can be very short). Such resistance can be statistically evaluated as a low variation of planned and actually received indicators characterizing the process output. Another important issue is to ensure the qualitative characteristics of the process output which also require consideration and support.

CONCLUSION

Effective process management of universities services quality is based on the following: identification of management processes, main working (control processes) and auxiliary processes of the organization; a clear subordination of each process to responsible person the owner or manager of the process; development of continuous monitoring and improvement of each process system, including the evaluation system of process parameters; carrying out (if necessary) a radical restructuring process-business process reengineering; reorientation of all important control systems: financial, personnel, procurement and other processes to support.

IMPLEMENTATIONS

The implementation of the process approach and quality management as a whole is largely dependent on its organizational support. Anyway, each process requires identification. Another important issue is that within each process working staff, organization and management, within the specificity of the functioning of universities are the main component of process management. As a consequence, strictly organizational support processes are the key for managing the quality of university services.

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