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With all our hearts and sincerity, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to all the authors, reviewers, and editorial board members for their valuable contribution for this journal. We look forward to a successful cooperation.

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THE IMPACT OF MOBBING AND CONSEQUENCES OF WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

Abstract:

Mobbing and discrimination are all around us. The terms of mobbing and discrimination appeared twenty years ago. These terms represent specific behavior in the workplace. Mobbing and discrimination in the workplace include individual or group of people targeting a co-worker for mocking, isolation and exclusion from the work, humiliation, etc. Mobbing and discrimination are not something new. There existed and there will be exist in the future in all organizations. Mobbing and discrimination are not just the problem of an individual. There is the problem of the whole society. Mobbing and discrimination create large costs for the whole society and destroys the organization. Prevention of workers is a tool against mobbing and discrimination.

The best prevention against mobbing and discrimination is the awareness of employees, employers, and professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, and doctors. The aim of the paper is to analyze whether or not is there mobbing and discrimination in the workplace.

In this study is included a survey conducted in the company. The topic of the survey was mobbing and discrimination in the workplace. The survey included 60 people in ages 18-53. The survey contained 20 questions. Respondents had to answer with YES or NO.

The key research questions were about isolation and exclusion from the work, mocking, humiliation, turning others against them and sexual abuse.

Keywords:

Mobbing; discrimination; worker; society; organization

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Introduction

In the last 20 years of the 20th century, the concept of attitude towards of the worker and the employment relations changed. A new work culture is emerging in which workers have great value and rights. Therefore, many studies have been made of this phenomenon with the desire to recognize it as well as to determine its characteristics so that it can work to improve interpersonal relationships and to prevent mobbing. At the same time, great competition in the market, the globalization of organizational change, the economic crisis, the new economy, job insecurity and the expectation of workers' flexibility have led to an increase in the frequency of mobbing. Employers are forced to analyze every problem that has a negative impact on productivity and production costs. Research has proven that one of the important factors in declining productivity is mobbing.

The terms of mobbing and discrimination appeared twenty years ago. Mobbing and discrimination in the workplace include individual or group of people targeting a co-worker for mocking, isolation and exclusion from the work, humiliation, etc. There are the problem of the whole society.

The best prevention against mobbing and discrimination is the awareness of employees, employers, and professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, and doctors.

This paper deals with the phenomenon of mobbing and discrimination, their consequences, prevention and measures to protect employees from mobbing and discrimination.

The aim of the paper is to analyze whether or not is there mobbing and discrimination in the workplace. In this study is included a survey conducted in the company. The topic of the survey was mobbing and discrimination in the workplace.

Mobbing and discrimination on the workplace

Mobbing

Mobbing or psychological terror at the workplace refers to hostile and unethical communication that directed by one or more individuals to an individual [1]. The definition of Heinz Leymann wants to show that mobbing aimed to destroy a person. The consequences of mobbing are the health, social and psychological problems of the victim.

A person who practices mobbing do it consciously with a view to force workers leaving the workplace. Mobbing consists of several activities. The first activity is a change in work climate. Work climate consists of feelings, sensations and perceptions that are not just the words. The person first detects the distance from a colleague or superior, neglect or excessive viewing. Thereafter various activities effect of the victim's behavior.

Mobbing divided on horizontal and vertical mobbing but it all depends on who is the abuser and who is the victim.

Vertical mobbing is the situation when superior mobbing one subordinated worker, or, if mobbing is serial, the superior mobbing one by one worker until he destroyed the whole group or one group of

workers (subordinates) mobbing one of the subordinates [1].

Horizontal mobbing is the situation when harassing actions occur among workers in the same position in the hierarchical organization [1]. The group of workers can join against one worker and trying to prove himself that they are more capable and powerful. The cause of horizontal mobbing can be internal problems and jealousy. If a worker is conducting mobbing to another employee, it is often the case to eliminate him because of his career prospects, feelings of endangerment, envy and jealousy.

The consequences of mobbing

What will be the health consequences of mobbing depends on three important factors:

The intensity of mobbing,
The period of mobbing,
Criminal personality of the abuser and the victim [1].

All the health distress and symptoms of mobbing divided into three categories:

1. Changes in social-emotional balance (equilibrium),
2. Psychophysiological Balance Changes and,
3. Behavior changes [1].

Changes in the social-emotional balance are depression, panic attacks, depersonalization, crying crisis, etc.

Changes in the psycho-physiological balance include rapid heartburn, sleep disorder, headache, dizziness, chest tightness, lack of air and gastrointestinal disturbances.

Behavior changes include isolation, passivity, aggressiveness, anorexia, bulimia, alcoholism, drug addiction, and sexual dysfunction.

Prevention

There are three categories of mobbing prevention: primary, secondary and tertiary.

Primary prevention is to prevent stress and mobbing, and those who are responsible for human potentials should consider those. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to impose penalties for mobbing in the workplace in the work contracts, to educate and inform employees, to regulate hours of work and to promote work culture. Investing in mobbing prevention will make a big benefit for the company, as it will reduce the possibility of mobbing.

Secondary prevention is keeping mobbing under control by taking effective measures. It is important to listen to anyone who thought that it is a victim of mobbing, and the counselor of trust assumes this role.

Tertiary prevention has the role of helping the mobbing victims getting back as soon as possible and restoring balance in health and dignity. Ways to help mobbing victims are rehabilitation in specialized institutions, self-help groups, early diagnosis and law.

Discrimination

The right to freedom from discrimination is universal human right. Discrimination is an inadmissible and unjustified distinction of persons based on some of their characteristics [2]. The term discrimination came from the Latin

word *discriminare*, which in translation means to separate (to make a difference).

Forms of discrimination are direct and indirect, segregation, harassment and sexual harassment, failure to make reasonable adjustments, and incitement to discrimination.

Direct discrimination is treatment based on any of the grounds of discriminatory behavior whereby a person is, has been treated, or would be treated less favorably than another would in a comparable situation. Direct discrimination consists of unfavorable treatment conditioned by some of the discrimination grounds.

Indirect discrimination is specific provision that is neutral and puts people at a disadvantage in relation to another person in the same situation.

An example of indirect discrimination is not allowing the marriage to persons of homosexual community.

Harassment is a term that encompasses a wider distribution. It is divided into sexual harassment, racial, ethical and other types of harassment. Sexual harassment is any verbal, non-verbal or physical unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that seeks to, or actually violate, the dignity of a person, which causes a fearful, hostile, degrading or abusive environment [2].

Segregation is the separation of persons forcibly or systematically on some discriminatory grounds. Examples of segregation are classrooms for students of different religious backgrounds.

According to the Labor Law, direct or indirect discrimination in the field of work and working conditions are prohibited, including selection criteria and employment conditions, advancement,

professional guidance, vocational training and refinement and retraining [3].

The Labor Act exists to prevent and limit the occurrence of discrimination. Employers have a number of obligations to avoid discrimination and mobbing at work. The implementation of legal regulation ensures equal and lawful fulfillment of rights and obligations from employment [4].

Measures to protect workers

The victims of mobbing and discrimination can get more types of help. The victim of mobbing or discrimination is difficult to instruct how to protect itself. In order to facilitate this, there are introduced laws that protect the victim and punish abusers. However, it often does not help. The abuser creates a climate of insecurity at the victim and the victim does not dare to seek help later. Informational interviews are important because the victim can advise on mobbing or discrimination at work.

Measures to protect employees from mobbing

There are several tips to help a person if someone become a victim of mobbing. The victim needs to strengthen itself and never give in. First, the victim must recognize that he/she became a victim of mobbing and must try to find a way to help itself. It is important to seek help from psychiatrists, doctors, and others but they will hardly replace its own actions.

In the case of mobbing, the victim should not quit or leave the workplace but should respond to attacks. It is very useful to respond to harassment

in a calm but clear and decisive manner, and to show the abuser and witness that the behavior of the abuser is now known as mobbing or psychological, moral abuse [1]. If possible, it is necessary to try to leave that situation calmly by finding a common language.

Another thing that a person has to do is try to collect information that they can use if there is a court proceeding. Such information will serve as proof of the victim of mobbing.

The third thing a person has to fulfill is to find witnesses, allies, and help. Victim support can be:

- Senior colleagues or colleagues who are protected
- Trade Union
- The Association for Helping the Victim of Mobbing
- A general practitioner or a physician working in medicine
- Psychologist, psychiatrist
- Lawyers
- Self-help groups for the victims of mobbing [1].

Getting away from work is the fourth and final way. Before the victim decides to leave the workplace, it needs well thought out. A victim decides to leave the workplace when the work stress becomes unbearable.

The victims of mobbing are exposed to many more consequences. For example, after losing a job, they may have trouble finding a new job. Even if they find a new job, they could have permanent sick leave because of their poor health and exhaustion. As a result, the person may unfortunately be fired again.

Measures to protect employees from discrimination

The measure and protection of the dignity of a worker is regulated by a collective agreement and an agreement concluded between the workers' council and the employer. The collective agreement is a two-sided legal act concluded by the union and the employer. An employer may not modify a collective agreement to his or her will [5]. An employer who employs more than 20 workers must publish a work rulebook in which will be clearly defined what are the salaries of the workers, the organization of work, the protection at work and other important issues. The employer is not obliged to publish the work regulations if the issues above are regulated by a collective agreement.

In most work regulations has noticed that there is no established procedure and measures to ensure the conditions in which an employee will not be exposed to harassment or sexual harassment [5].

Research of mobbing and discrimination in the workplace through a survey in the „XY“ company

In this study is included a survey conducted in the company. The topic of the survey was mobbing and discrimination in the workplace. The survey included 60 people in ages 18-53. The survey contained 20 questions. Respondents had to answer with YES or NO.

The following graph shows the gender of the respondent.

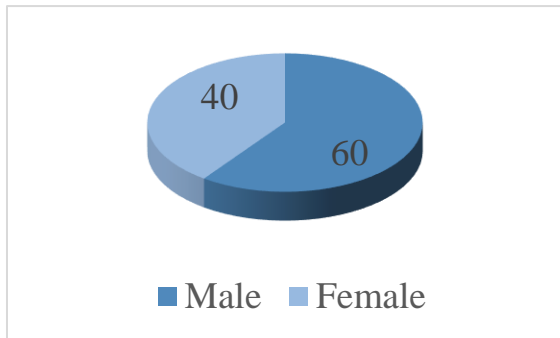


Figure 1. Gender of the respondent ;Source: created by authors

It can be seen from the graph that 60 percent of respondents were male and 40 percent were female.

The following graph shows the percentage of respondents, who have experienced the invasion of privacy. It can be seen from the graph that 15 percent of respondents had experienced the invasion of their privacy.

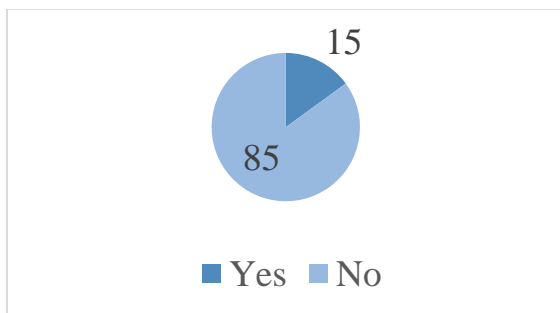


Figure 2. Invasion of privacy; Source: created by authors

The following graph shows the percentage of respondents, who find hard to get a day of vacation for no reason, who are forbidden from attending any course and who hard to get a salary raise.

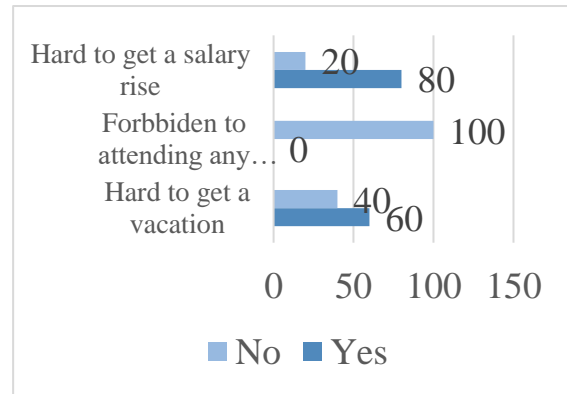


Figure 4. Experiences of respondents (3); Source: created by authors

It can be seen from the graph that none of respondents experienced forbidden from attending any course, but even 80 percent of respondents experienced hard to get a salary raise and 60 percent of them experienced hard to get a vacation. The following graph shows the percentage of respondents, who excluded from communication or from meetings.

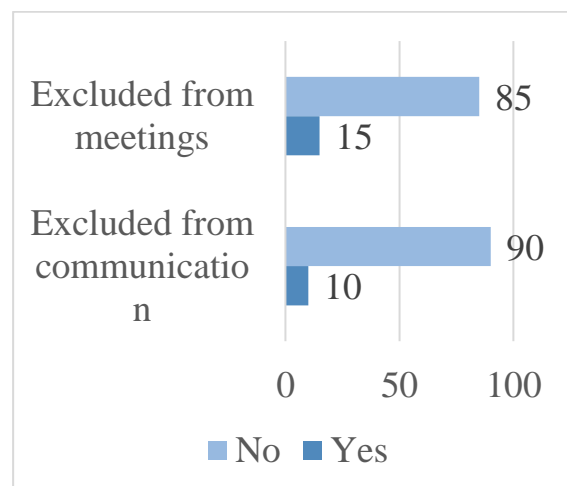


Figure 5. Experiences of respondents (4); Source: created by authors

It can be seen from the graph that 10 percent of respondents excluded from communication and 15 percent of respondents excluded from meetings.

The following graphs show the percentage of respondents who experienced isolation and exclusion from work, mocking and humiliation, turning others against them, physical and sexual abuse.

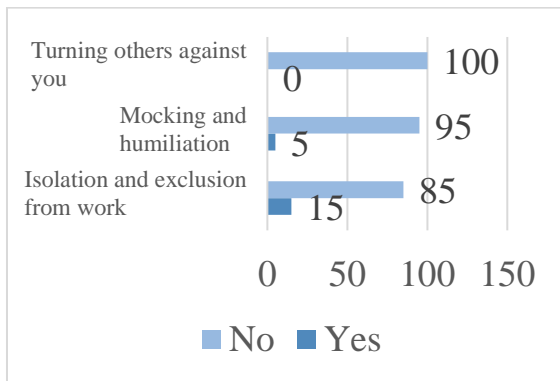


Figure 3. Experiences of respondents (2); Source: created by authors

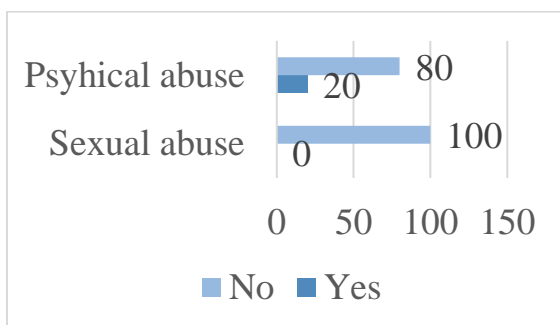


Figure 3. Experiences of respondents (2); Source: created by authors

It can be seen from the graph that none of respondents experienced abuse or turning others against themselves on the work but 20 percent of them experienced physical abuse. The 15 percent of respondents experienced isolation and exclusion from work, and 5 percent of respondents experienced mocking and humiliation.

The following graph shows the percentage of respondents who have been criticized based on

religion and sexual orientation or without any reason.

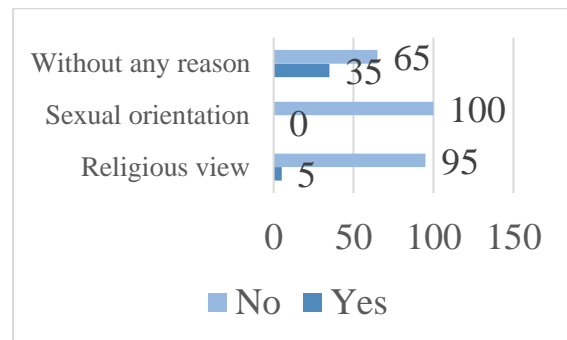


Figure 7. Experiences of respondents (6); Source: created by authors

It can be seen from the graph below that none of respondents experienced criticism based on sexual orientation, but 5 percent of respondents had experienced criticism based on their religious view. About 35 percent of respondents had experienced criticism without any reason.

The following graph shows the percentage of respondents who were a victim of mobbing and discrimination.

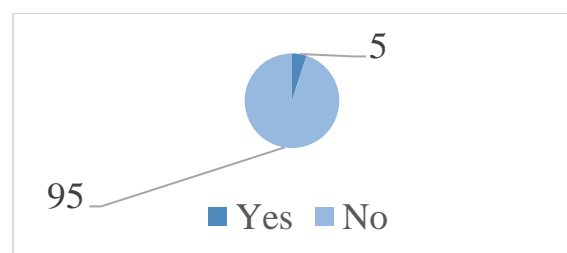


Figure 8. Victim of mobbing and discrimination; Source: created by authors

It can be seen from the graph that 5 percent of respondents were a victim of mobbing and discrimination.

Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to analyze whether or not is there mobbing and discrimination in the workplace. In this study was included a survey conducted in the company. The survey included 60 people in ages 18-53.

Analysis showed that none of respondents experienced abuse or turning others against themselves on the work but 20 percent of them experienced physical abuse.

Also 15 percent of respondents experienced isolation and exclusion from work, and 5 percent of respondents experienced mocking and humiliation.

The 15 percent of respondents had experienced the invasion of their privacy. Furthermore, 60 percent of respondents find hard to get a vacation and even 80 percent of respondents find hard to get a salary raise.

The 10 percent of respondents excluded from communication and 15 percent of respondents excluded from meetings.

Even 85 percent of respondents overloaded with work and 20 percent of respondents though that their merits attributed to others.

Neither one respondent experienced of ignoring its suggestions and ideas.

None of respondents experienced criticism based on sexual orientation, but 5 percent of respondents had experienced criticism based on their religious view. About 35 percent of respondents experienced criticism without any reason.

Even 5% of respondents considered as victims of mobbing or discrimination in work and private life.

Therefore, it can be conclude that mobbing and discrimination existed and there will be exist in the future in all organizations.

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Budimir, Verica¹

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN THE PROCESS OF RE-ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN CROATIA

Abstract:

The paper aims to clarify the process of re-accreditation in Croatia and the standards for quality evaluation and to show the internal structure of the quality assurance system based on the example of a higher education institution that successfully passed this procedure during 2019. The importance of the work is evident in the enrichment of European scientific literature by presenting the re-accreditation process in Croatian higher education.

Keywords:

Quality; higher education institutions; ESG standards; re-accreditation; internal quality assurance system

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Introduction

Legislation of the Republic of Croatia prescribes the obligation of re-accreditation of higher education institutions (HEI). Re-accreditation is the process by which the Agency for Science and Higher Education in Croatia, every five years, verify the quality of the HEI and its compliance with the standards prescribed for quality evaluation in the re-accreditation process, which are in line with the ESG standards. Croatian HEIs are currently undergoing a new cycle of re-accreditation, which is being carried out according to new standards for quality evaluation. A well-established internal quality assurance system (QAS) is vital in order to prepare an HEI for this process successfully. The paper aims to clarify the re-accreditation process in Croatia and the standards for quality evaluation. The goal is to show the internal structure of the QAS based on the example of an HEI that successfully passed this procedure during 2019. The literature review presents the importance of the re-accreditation process for quality assurance (QA) in higher education in general, with an emphasis on the European Higher Education System. The importance of the work is evident in the enrichment of European scientific literature by presenting the re-accreditation process in Croatian higher education. In addition to scientists, work is also essential for practitioners in higher education, primarily managers and quality managers, through the example of the successful organization of an internal QAS. The limitation of the paper is visible in the presentation of the internal QAS of only one HEI. The paper

provides a basis for further research of internal QASs, based on the examples of other HEIs in the Croatian and European Higher Education System, and the link between the development of the internal QAS and success in re-accreditation.

Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

Many European countries, including Croatia, see their future in a knowledge-based economy. The focus previously placed on secondary education that was sufficient for the labour market needs is shifting to higher education. According to Jarvis [1] placing knowledge in service of humankind lie at the very heart of the idea of the university. With the increasing importance of higher education, public interest and concern for its quality are growing.

QA in higher education can have many different meanings. According to Westerheijden [2], QA can mean restricting the freedom of HEI to offer programs as a result of the government's efforts to increase the responsiveness of HEI to community demands. The need for QA in higher education first emerged in the US. Limited governmental control over the higher education leads to ease the establishment of new study programs and colleges (especially private ones) [3]. QA was seen as a way to prevent students from being exploited.

In the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), QA becomes essential with the implementation of the Bologna Declaration and by the publication of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2005 (revised

2014) [4]. QA is expected at institutional, national and European level. Institutional level implies the autonomy of every HEI in terms of ensuring the quality of education provided to its beneficiaries. The national level implies the creation of an adequate legal framework that enables the design and implementation of a QAS in higher education. For QA of higher education, it is crucial to develop an internal QAS (institutional level) and its external evaluation procedures (national level).

ESG standards in the area of internal QA form the basis for improving the quality of HEIs' services under their institutional autonomy. Also, they provide users - students with the highest quality access to services in the EHEA. The document contains ten standards for internal QA: 1.1. Policy for quality assurance; 1.2. Design and approval of programs; 1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment; 1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification; 1.5. Teaching staff; 1.6. Learning resources and student support; 1.7. Information management; 1.8. Public information; 1.9. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of the programmes; 1.10. Cyclical external QA.

In the area of external QA in higher education, ESG standards provide the basis for the work of external QA agencies and enable a high level of accessibility and understandability of the results of external QA. One of the external quality evaluation procedures observed in this paper is (re)-accreditation. (Re)-accreditation is a process of external evaluation of organization's quality and formal approval of HEI or programme to meet predetermined and agreed on standards in which an accreditation

recommendation with assessment and recommendations for improvement is issued, in order to confirm eligibility for continuing activities of HEIs or scientific organizations [5].

European higher education at the beginning of the 21st century underwent intensive reforms triggered by national development on the one hand and the need to ensure the quality of higher education and evolve comparable programs on other [6]. These reforms triggered by the Bologna Process lead toward a coherent, compatible and competitive EHEA. At the heart of the Bologna Process and the reforms that result from it is the evaluation, improvement and certification of the quality of higher education [7]. One of the most popular methods of external QA in the world is accreditation [8]. While in the 1990s, less than half of European countries conducted an external (supra-institutional) evaluation of HEIs, by 2003, all countries (except Greece) had introduced some form of supra-institutional evaluation [6].

Quality Assurance in Croatian Higher Education

The intensive work on QA in higher education in Croatia began with the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 2001. Croatia then committed itself to promote European cooperation in QA to develop comparable criteria and methodologies. The QAS of HEIs in Croatia is organized following ESG Standards. The external quality evaluation is conducted as an external audit, re-accreditation, initial accreditation and thematic evaluation [9].

The paper explains the re-accreditation process that is mandatory for all HEIs in Croatia.

Re-accreditation of higher education institutions in Croatia

The re-accreditation of HEIs in Croatia is carried out by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) by the Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education Act [9], the Regulation on the Content of the Permit, and the Conditions for Issuing a Permit for Higher Education, Study Programs and Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions [10], the Regulation on the conditions for issuing the Permit for Scientific activity, the conditions for the Re-accreditation of Scientific Organizations and the Content of the Permit [11], following ESG standards. All public and private HEIs are subject to the re-accreditation process, which takes place in five-year cycles. The first cycle began in the 2010/11 academic year, and currently, we have the second cycle. Re-accreditation is carried out according to the annual plan adopted by the Accreditation Council of the ASHE. The methodology of carrying out the re-accreditation, the deadlines, the relevant authorities, the required documentation and the outcomes of the procedure are defined in the document Re-accreditation process of HEI [12]. The process begins with an annual re-accreditation plan issued by the Accreditation Council of the ASHE, followed by the nomination of expert committees. The committee consists of five members (two of whom are foreign) and includes teachers, practitioners and students. The evaluated HEI is obliged to prepare the Self-

Analysis in Croatian and English following the Standards for Quality Assessment and submit it to the ASHE within the stipulated time. Also, they are obliged to update information on teachers, students and study programs in the MOZVAG (information system for support of valuation procedures), based on which an analytical inclosure is made, which is an integral part of the Self-analysis. After the Agency's training, the expert committee visits the valued HEI. During the visit, interviews with all stakeholders (administration, teachers, external associates, alumni, students) are organized, after which the committee compiles a report on the results of the re-accreditation. The committee's report contains an analysis of the situation, recommendations for improvement and ratings at the level of each standard and theme. The report is submitted to the HEI for a statement. After the statement, the report is submitted to the Accreditation Council, which delivers an independent opinion. Based on the opinion, the ASHE makes an accreditation recommendation to the Minister on:

- issuing a certificate of eligibility for pursuing higher education and/or scientific activity;
- denying a permit for pursuing higher education and/or scientific activity;
- issuing a letter of expectation with a deadline for deficiency elimination of up to three years.

When a letter of expectation is issued, the HEI is obliged to draw up an action plan for eliminating the deficiency by the recommendations of the committee, followed by a follow-up phase within the stipulated time. In the case of issuing a certificate, the HEI has to draw up a five-year action

plan to improve quality by the recommendations of the committee and report about realization to the ASHE every two years. All final reports of the committee, statements and accreditation recommendations are publicly available on the Agency's website.

After the conclusion of the five-year re-accreditation cycle, the ASHE analyzes the procedures performed to summarize system-wide results but also to define system development policy and mechanisms for its implementation. The first re-accreditation cycle lasted from 2010 to 2015. The outcomes of the evaluation are visible through the accreditation recommendations, whereby for the 139 evaluated institutions of higher education, 67 certificates, 85 letters of expectation and 15 denials of permits were issued before the follow-up phase (differences in the total number arise because a HEI may receive a certificate of higher education activity but a letter of expectation or denial of a permit for scientific activity and other combinations) [13].

The second cycle of re-accreditation began in 2017, according to an improved model. The emphasis of the first cycle were quantitative indicators and fulfilling the minimum academic requirements. The goal was to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of HEI, in order to encourage the improvement of the quality of HEI, based on the recommendations of the committee [14]. The new model provides an opportunity to verify the compliance of the HEI's operations with key and generally accepted standards, and to assess the quality of all activities and the overall institution. An important role in quality assessment has the

implementation of activities based on the recommendations from the previous re-accreditation cycle.

Standards for evaluating the quality of higher education institutions

The quality assessment of HEIs in Croatia in the re-accreditation process is measured by the level of compliance with the set standards. The first cycle of re-accreditation was based on the Quality Assessment Criteria [15], which included seven standards: (I) HEI management and QA, (II) study programs, (III) students, (IV) teachers, (V) scientific and professional activity, (VI) mobility and international cooperation and (VII) resources (space, equipment, financing). The quality level achieved was evaluated by five levels: not implemented, initially implemented, partially implemented, mostly implemented or fully implemented.

In the second cycle, Quality Assessment Standards for Higher Education Re-accreditation are applied [13]. These standards are substantially in line with ESG standards. The standards are grouped into five themes: (I) internal QA and the social role of HEI, (II) study programs, (III) teaching process and student support, (IV) teaching and institutional capacities, (V) scientific/professional/artistic activity. The standards clearly define the quality level of a part of HEI's activities which should be compared with the actual achievement. In doing so, it has been determined that there are key standards that are discriminatory, and their failure to comply is estimated to impair the quality of the entire HEI. Furthermore, for each standard,

elements have been defined that are taken into account when assessing the compliance of HEI's activities with the standard and the evidence used to conclude the level of compliance with the standard. The attained quality level of each standard and topic is evaluated through four grades: unacceptable level, minimum level, satisfactory level or high-quality level. In doing so, the outcome of the re-accreditation is directly related to the assessed level of quality of the themes. Namely, if any theme is rated as unsatisfactory with the quality level, the outcome of the procedure may be the issuance of a letter of expectation or denial of the permit, while if any topic is rated with the minimum quality level, the outcome of the procedure may be the issuance of a letter of expectation. If all topics are rated satisfactory or high-quality levels, the outcome of the procedure is the issuance of a certificate. However, in this case, it is also possible to issue a letter of expectation if one or more key standards have been assessed with a minimum or unacceptable level of quality.

Theme I. Internal QA and social role of HEI is substantially harmonized with ESG standards 1.1., 1.7. and 1.8. This topic assesses the level at which the institution has established a functional internal QAS (key standard), whether it applies recommendations for improvement from previously conducted internal and external evaluation procedures, how the institution supports academic integrity and freedoms, the level of information availability, the social role of HEI and lifelong learning programs.

Theme II. The study programs comply with ESG standards 1.2. and 1.9. This topic covers the assessment of the compliance of the general objectives of the program with the strategy and needs of the labour market, the alignment of learning outcomes with the level and profile of qualification being acquired (key standard), the achievement of anticipated learning outcomes, the revision and proposal of new study programs, the compliance of ECTS credits with student workload and student practice.

Theme III. The teaching process and student support are aligned with ESG 1.3, 1.4. and 1.6. The topic assesses the clarity of enrolment requirements (key standard), collecting and analyzing student progress and graduation data, student-centred teaching, student support, especially for those from underrepresented and vulnerable groups, support for student mobility, objectivity and consistency of student evaluation and assessment procedures achievements, the issuance of an adequate diploma and diploma supplement, and care for student employability.

Theme IV. Teaching and institutional capacity are aligned with ESG 1.5. and 1.6. It covers the assessment of teaching capacities (key standard), the objectivity and transparency of recruitment and promotion processes, support for teachers in professional development, the integration of infrastructure with learning outcomes (key standard), library equipment and rational management of financial resources.

Theme V. Professional/scientific/artistic work is not directly related to ESG standards. It follows the commitment of teachers to the achievement of

high quality professional and scientific work (a key standard), the social relevance of research and knowledge transfer, recognition in regional, national and international frameworks and the link between professional/scientific work and the teaching process.

Internal quality assurance system in the institution of higher education

The development of an internal QAS plays an important role in the process of re-accreditation of the HEI. A well-structured internal system enables monitoring of the activities in all fields of management of the HEI, thus simplifying writing and creation of better self-analysis.

Organization and operation of the internal quality assurance system

A well-organized internal QAS is based on relevant documentation and bodies involved in its organization and implementation of activities. Observed HEI has adopted the basic acts regulating the functioning of the internal QAS, such as Quality policy, Quality strategy, Manual for quality assurance, Rulebook on the organization and operation of the QAS, Rulebook on the procedure of periodic internal audit of the QAS. Over time, as the system has evolved, in addition to the revision of the basic acts, numerous other documents have been adopted to ensure and improve the quality of the institution, among which are: strategic documents, the annual activity plans and reports, rules and decisions supporting the system (e.g.

rulebook on the improvement of study programs, the rulebook on surveys, etc.), internal reports, key performance indicators, numerous surveys.

In full awareness of the importance of information on quality and effectiveness of activities, HEI performs, which are especially stressed by the ESG standard 1.7. Information Management, Internal reports have been drawn up. The document prescribes collection of 45 reports in a year related to student profile, progression through study, performance and dropout, student satisfaction, availability of learning resources, etc. In response to the document, in order to determine the institution's development trends and facilitate comparisons with other similar institutions in the area and inform the public about results of performance monitoring Key performance indicators have been adopted. The data from internal reports and indicator are important to the HEI for monitoring of the implementation of strategic goals as well as to determine advantages and shortcomings in its operation. Over time, in order to better define improvement activities, target indicator values have been defined. Collected information the HEI uses in planning processes and for ongoing improvements of the QAS.

Management and for this purpose defined persons and bodies (committees) take care of the system. However, for an integral system, it is important to involve all internal (employees and students) and external (businessmen, local community, Alumni) stakeholders and to allow them to make opinions and suggestions for improving the system. In the HEI under study, students are thus involved with

the external stakeholders in the work of numerous committees and the preparation of strategic documents.

In order to carry out activities transparently and continuously and to improve the QAS of the HEI, it is important to draw up annual activity plans (based on strategic documents and other needs), monitor and evaluate their implementation. For that purpose, the HEI prepares annual reports containing an analysis of the performance of the activity, an assessment of its effectiveness and any proposals for better achievement of the objectives. Assessment of the effectiveness of the established QAS at the HEI and its impact on the development of a culture of quality in respect of improvement of the system based on recommendations for improvement is evaluated in the internal audit of the system. Based on the results of monitoring and evaluation, changes are initiated in the system, and it is continuously improved.

The annual plans of activities and measures for ensuring and improving the quality of the observed HEI are in line with ESG standards. As the Quality Assessment Standards for Higher Education Re-accreditation rely on ESG standards, this way of planning and monitoring the realization of the set institutional goals contributes to the achievement of a satisfactory level of quality in all aspects of the HEI performance. The demonstrability of all activities plays an important role and the basis for making quality self-analysis, as well as for the whole process of re-accreditation. The described HEI has set up a portal to support the QAS. The portal allows recording of all activities set out in the plan

of activities, assignment of tasks to responsible persons, the definition of implementation time limits and monitoring of implementation as well as storage of related documentation. The portal contains all QAS documents developed and adopted in a specific year since 2016. Thus the portal also represents a repository of QAS documents. Use of the portal enables the continuous and systematic flow of information and increases the transparency of the whole system.

Self-analysis and results of re-accreditation of the higher education institution

The observed HEI included all stakeholders (employees, students, alumni, business people) in the process of self-analysis. Information and documents from various bases were used in the preparation of the self-analysis: the quality portal, the HEI's archive, web sites, CROSBİ (Croatian Scientific Bibliography), ISVU (Higher Education Information System), MOZVAG, etc. As previously stated, the HEI continuously plans activities on an annual basis following strategic documents and ESG standards, monitors and documents their implementation. All plans, reports and the quality portal on which all evidence is archived, were an important basis for self-analysis and facilitated its implementation.

The expert committee in the re-accreditation process, based on self-analysis, stakeholder interviews and evidence analysis, assessed that the HEI in theme I. Internal QA and the social role of the institution has at a high-quality level. Other themes were rated with satisfactory quality levels. In its report, the committee provides an analysis of

the situation, recommendations for improvement and an assessment for each standard and theme. The analysis of the situation relies heavily on the self-analysis of the HEI, and the results are outlined below.

In the theme I, the committee quotes that the establishment of a functional internal QA system is an example of good practice and the effective implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations. They recommend to the HEI to maintain this level of quality. The overall rating of the topic is a high level of quality, with four standards rated high and one with a satisfactory level of quality. Some examples of good practice presented through self-analysis are the existence of key documents (policies, strategies, rulebooks); action plans; reports on the implementation of action plans; internal reports; surveys; internal audit; implementation of the quality improvement recommendation from previous evaluations; continuous analysis of improvements in the QAS and plans for further development through various activities; information on teaching, professional and research activities and the social role of the HEI, which are publicly available in Croatian and English on the official website; the social role of the HEI achieved through various projects with the community and volunteer work.

In theme II. Study Programs committee states that the HEI carries out study programs that meet the needs of the local and regional labour market. General objectives of the program are well integrated into the strategic goals of the HEI and the needs of the labour market. The projected learning outcomes of the study programs are in

line with the level and profile of the qualifications obtained, but there is space for improvement in part of the study programs. Examples of good practice at the HEI are well-established procedures and methods for revision of study programs; the work of the study program review committees to which all stakeholders are involved; continuous revision of study programs based on the results of internal reports, surveys of former and current students, employers; proposition of new study programs following ESG standards 1.2. and 1.9.; revision and distribution of ECTS credits under student surveys and teacher recommendations; student practise that takes place in the teaching base of the HEI and external entities (enterprises, local community) and is an integral part of study programs; monitoring student and mentor satisfaction with the implementation of professional practice. In addition to the recommendations for modernization of some study programs, the committee rated for three standards the high level, and the satisfactory level for three standards (one of which is key) and the overall grade of the theme is a satisfactory level of quality.

Theme III. Teaching process and student support were evaluated with a satisfactory level of quality, with five standards rated as satisfactory (one key) and five with a high level of quality. Examples of good practice at the institution are: clearly defined and publicly available admission and continuation criteria; collecting passing data and in accordance with the results application of appropriate measures, such as individual counseling and mentoring, to help students take the exams more

easily and continue their studies; rewarding the best students; high level of international mobility of teachers and students; institutional support and individual access to students, especially students with disabilities; objective and consistent evaluation of student achievement; application of different teaching methods (student-centred teaching); students' surveys about teacher and program satisfaction; conducting self-evaluation and collaborative evaluation; adapting the teaching process to vulnerable and underrepresented groups; use of e-learning; detailed course plans that link activities to teaching methods, learning outcomes and student achievement evaluation methods; collaboration with Alumni. The recommendation to the HEI is to increase promotional activities.

In theme IV. Teaching and institutional capacities examples of good practice are the high qualifications of teaching staff; objective and transparent recruitment and promotion procedures based on strategic goals; continuous improvement of teaching and other competencies; rewarding the best teachers; teaching facilities that are appropriate for the completion of study programs and the achievement of expected learning outcomes in terms of professional work; rational and transparent management of financial resources (linking financial to strategic planning). In addition to the recommendations for improving the library and laboratory space, four standards are rated high (one key), two satisfactory (one key) and one minimum quality level, and the overall topic rating is a satisfactory quality level.

In theme V. Scientific and/or professional work, the committee states that the HEI is dedicated to the development of professional, scientific and research activities and is assessed with a satisfactory level of quality. Two standards are at a high level, one (key) at a satisfactory level and one at a minimum quality level. A good practice is evident in: the systematic and continuous (financial) support of the HEI for the scientific and professional development of teachers; continuous publishing of scientific and professional papers; systematic recording and monitoring of published works; scientific conference; implementation of professional, scientific and EU projects in cooperation with the local community and the labour market; active participation of employees in the work of professional associations, etc. The HEI is recommended to raise the level and quality of scientific research and the international visibility of research.

Conclusion

External evaluation of the quality of the HEI through the re-accreditation process is carried out throughout the EHEA, including Croatia. Standards for quality evaluation in the re-accreditation process in Croatia are based on ESG Standards. Every HEI is responsible for quality assurance of its programs. Therefore, in order to succeed in the re-accreditation process, it is important to well organize internal QAS and harmonize it with ESG standards. A well-established internal quality system that enables continuous implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all activities that

ensure and improve the quality of the institution contributes to the quality of HEI and higher education as a whole.

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ANALYSIS OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN ALL BHUTAN CONNECTION (ABC) PRIVATE LIMITED

Abstract:

After the dotcom crises in 2001, there was a need for guidelines for the management and the supervision of a company. Corporate governance aims to strengthen the relationship of the company with all its stakeholders by providing clear rules and practices regarding accountability, fairness and transparency. If the codes of Corporate Governance are followed, a long - term success is ensured (Monks & Minow, 2004). The objective of this project is to do a detailed analysis of the corporate governance structure in All Bhutan Connection (ABC) Private Limited.

Keywords:

corporate governance; stakeholders; long-term success; ABC Private Limited

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Introduction

The corporate world has become very competitive over the years whereby companies now have to ensure that their stakeholders are satisfied while they also abide by certain regulations and structure. Corporate governance is one of those practices that companies implement in order to function efficiently with transparency and accountability. In simpler term, corporate governance describes the relationship between the managers, directors and other stakeholders wherein the corporation also assures the investors that their investments are utilized in the most suitable and profitable manner [3]. Corporate governance plays a significant role in the overall performance of the company as well as the global economy as a whole. The former President of World Bank, James David Wolfensohn has stated that the governance of the corporation is equally important as the governance of any economy or country during one of his speeches [3]. Corporations come into existence due to the need of the society whereby various services and goods are produced which enhances the living standard of the people as well as contributes to the economic growth of a country. This is why proper corporate governance has to be practiced in an organization in order to avoid unethical practices and to enhance a standard operation in all the corporations. Hence all these corporations will work effectively towards the development of the economy.

On this note, given the importance of corporate governance this project aims to analyze the

corporate structure of ABC Pvt. Ltd. which is one of the companies operating in Bhutan.

Objective

The core objective of this project is to do an analysis of the corporate governance structure of All Bhutan Connection (ABC) Pvt. Ltd. , a private enterprise has been chosen to study the Corporate Governance structure. The question for investigation is whether the private enterprise in Bhutan are compatible with the norms of Corporate Governance.

Company Profile

All Bhutan Connection (ABC) Pvt. Ltd. was established in the year 2003 when tourism industry was just blooming in Bhutan and they aspired to be the leading travel agents in country [1]. Their determination and their effective operation have indeed made them the second largest tour operator in Bhutan.

Data Structure

For the purpose of Data collection we applied Questionnaire method for primary data collection. The time zone for the study has been considered for sixteen (16) years from 2003 - 2019

Analysis

The company has operated in ethical manner and various aspects related to each stakeholder have been analyzed below which help in understanding the CG structure of the company. All the analysis

done henceforth is based on the answers retrieved from the survey questionnaires which were given to the relevant stakeholders of the company.

General Analysis

ABC Tours and Treks Private Limited is one of the aspiring travel agents in Bhutan whose vision is to give the best of Bhutan to all the tourists that come to the land of thunder dragon. The company is run by two pioneers who were already in the industry for more than fifteen (15) years. The company started as a small firm and, as of now, it is in its growing stage and it is headed by the board and various departments as shown in the organogram. The company has seen tremendous changes and growth in itself with both financial performance as well as other areas from the year 2003 onwards. The company has the best set of employees and management team which is one of the sole reasons for how it has grown over the years. The company employs those potential candidates who qualify the requirements and some of these requirements are experience whereby ABC does have employees whose experience level is more than ten (10) years.

The company has mixture of employees whose qualification is none while some have masters and degree and this all depend on the nature of work. The company provides various employee welfare plans viz. Group insurance schemes, travelling allowance, incentives if anyone in the family expires, casual leave, earned leave; yearly bonus and maternity leave for four (4) months with salary. These benefits have led to the satisfaction of the employees which is also why the employee turnover ratio trend is around 2.5 to 3% only in ABC.

Analysis of the Individual Stakeholders

Board of Directors

The analysis has been done based on the survey questionnaires prepared for every relevant stakeholders. Based on the analysis, it has been found that there are mismatch between theory and reality for certain criteria for the following stakeholders (given in the appendix). The probable reasons for the mismatch are as follows:

- REASONS
- BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sl. No.	Criteria	Reasons (not matching)
1.	Chairman of the Board	The reason for the mismatch could be because of the fact that ABC is private company which was started by two pioneers and one of the pioneers himself served as the chairman.
2.	Qualification of the BOD	The reason for mismatch could be because at the time of establishment of the company there was not many postgraduate and only those who could not continue their further studies were in tourism business.
3.	Roles of the BOD	The reason for mismatch could be because ABC being a private company their primary focus is on profit and loss.

CEO/ MANAGEMENT

Sl. No.	Criteria	Reasons (not matching)
1.	Qualification	The reason for the mismatch could be due to the fact that ABC is a private company which was started by a guide himself with his passion for the Tourism industry and later he himself served as the CEO.
2.	Relationship between CEO/ management and board	The reason for the mismatch could be due to the fact that the ABC does not have an ideal BOD composition whereby limited people sit on the BOD with CEO and BOD functioning together.
3.	Preparation of agenda for the board meetings	The reason for the mismatch could be because ABC does not have board secretary.
4.	Decision maker	The reason for the mismatch could be because the CEO is more powerful due to the fact that he is the founder whereby he heads the BOD and makes the decision.

CUSTOMERS

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Sl. No.	Criteria	Reasons (not matching)
1.	Disclosure of information to customers	The reason for the mismatch could be that ABC is a tourism company, basically they do not disclose all information. The only information that they disclose is about the key person to contact with, about office and the office address.
2.	Disclosure Policy	The reason for the mismatch could be because the company does not feel the necessity to let the customers know about their disclosure policy as the customers are tourist who stay in the country for a short duration.

SUPPLIERS

Sl. No.	Criteria	Reasons (not matching)
1.	Disclosure Policy	The reason for the mismatch could be because ABC is not obliged to disclose their crucial information to their suppliers. May be they do not want to share information about how they handle their business to the suppliers.

Solutions

Based on the above reasons, the following solutions have been proposed to address these issues.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sl. No.	Criteria	Solutions
1.	Chairman of the Board	The probable solution for ABC would be to restructure the BOD and have an independent director as the chairman of the board because the decision can be taken independently without any manipulation. .
2.	Qualification of the BOD	The probable solution would be to have a strong board of directors with minimum qualification of postgraduate degree with required experiences so that the decisions are taken wisely and professionally.
3.	Roles of the BOD	The probable solution would be to have a well-established board who will be responsible for establishment of vision, mission, and values, responsible for developing strategies so that the company can fulfill their main motive by aligning their activities with companies mission and vision.

CEO/MANAGEMENT

Sl. No.	Criteria	Solutions
1.	Qualification	The probable solution for ABC would be to appoint new CEO as per the requirements while the existing person serving as the CEO can remain the proprietor or the founder.
2.	Relationship between CEO/management and board	The probable solution for ABC would be to distinguish the position of CEO and BOD and CEO should not be heading the board rather BOD should function independently and make final decisions.
3.	Preparation of agenda for the board meetings	The probable solution for ABC would be to have a board secretary.
4.	Decision maker	The probable solution for ABC would be to distinguish the CEO and the board. The ideal board composition should be followed so that CEO does not dominate the board and the board could make the final decision independently.

CUSTOMERS

Sl. No.	Criteria	Solutions
1.	Disclosure of information to customers	The probable solution for ABC would be to share more information about the organization rather than only providing the information when the customer ask for it.
5.	Disclosure Policy	The probable solution for ABC would be to let the customers know about the disclosure policy of organization in order to maintain relationship with them for long run as customers will have more confidence in the company.

SUPPLIERS

Sl. No.	Criteria	Solutions
1.	Disclosure Policy	The probable solution for ABC would be to have a proper disclosure policy in place. It is important for the company to disclose all the necessary information so their stakeholders know how the company is performing. Proper disclosure policy means that there is accountability and responsibility in the company.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of corporate structure of any company helps in understanding the overall performance of the company and their alignment with the corporate governance regulations. ABC Private limited which is a tours and Travels Company based in Thimphu has been in the tourism industry for more than a decade and has been growing and developing since then. This project was done to analyze the CG structure of the company in order to understand how well the CG aspects are being practiced. This analysis on overall basis showed that the corporate structure of ABC does not deviate much from the international codes and best practices of CG or in other words it could be said that the company does follow and abide by whatever the theory states to some extent.

For instance, out of fifty two (52) different questions that were asked to different stakeholders such as BOD, CEO/management, employees, customers and suppliers whereby these questions were taken as the criteria or as a basis of comparison, it was seen that there were only ten (10) mismatches. It means that most of the activities or practices of the company is aligned with what the theories suggest as part of CG. The company can look into these mismatches and work on why this difference is coming up and they could even incorporate the probable solutions proposed by the authors of the report to overcome the mismatch. Similarly, the recommendations provided could be taken in to improve the existing matches in order to enhance the overall corporate structure of CG in ABC Private Limited.

GLOSSARIES

ABC All Bhutan Connection

BOD Board of Directors

CEO Chief Executive Officer

CG Corporate Governance

APPENDIX





ANALYSIS OF THE INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDERS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The analysis is given for those criteria where there is a mismatch between theory and reality [For Inference the cross sign indicates a mismatch between theory and reality]

Sl. No.	Criteria	Theory (the standard practices of corporate governance)	Reality (what is actually happening in the organization)	Inferences
1.	Chairman of the Board	The chairman of the board should be an independent director [4].	The chairman of the board is not an independent director.	×
2.	Qualification of the BOD	The BOD should have the minimum qualification of Postgraduate degree with required experiences [4].	The company only requires minimum qualification of Graduate Degree with experiences.	×
3.	Roles of the BOD	The board should establish vision, mission, and values and is responsible for developing strategies[6].	The BOD just checks the profit and loss account and attend meetings.	×



CEO/ Management

Sl. No.	Criteria	Theory	Reality	Inference
1.	Qualification	The CEO should have the minimum qualification of Graduate degree with required experiences [4].	Undergraduates (Class 12 pass out) with experience of more than ten (10) years.	
2.	Relationship between CEO/ management and board	Board should simply monitor the management and management should be responsible and accountable towards the BOD [4].	CEO is the chairperson and he heads the BOD.	
3.	Preparation of agenda for the board meetings	The board secretary should prepare the agenda [5].	The Human Resource Department is responsible for setting the agenda and date for the board meeting.	
4.	Decision maker	The BOD should make the final decision [4].	BOD and the CEO make the decision.	


EMPLOYEES

In case of employees, there has been a match between theory and reality for all the criteria.

CUSTOMERS

Sl. No.	Criteria	Theory	Reality	Inferences
1.	Disclosure of information to the customers	All material information of the company should be disclosed to the customers [7].	Only the information regarding the key person to be consulted is shared.	
2.	Disclosure Policy	The customers should be made aware about the disclosure policy of the company [7].	Customers are not aware of the disclosure policy.	

SUPPLIERS

Sl. No.	Criteria	Theory	Reality	Inferences
1.	Disclosure policy	The company should have a disclosure policy through which information is being disclosed to the suppliers [2].	There is no disclosure policy associated with the supplier.	

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ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO GEORGIA: RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EU-GEORGIA RELATIONS

Abstract:

Following World War II the European continent was razed to the ground. The war brought about sixty million human deaths, massive destruction, and completely ruined the global economy. European leaders came to the conclusion that only economic and political integration of the European countries could prevent another bloody war and secure the long-lasting peace on “the old continent”. The European integration process commences in the immediate aftermath of World War II and seeks to guarantee peace, stability and equality in Europe. The organization was formally established in 1992 and since then it has hugely been promoting the democratic principles, human rights, rule of law, good governance, and the most importantly, supports the development of a single market,

which in turn, ensures the free movement of goods, persons, services, and capital within the European Union. The EU-Georgia relations have established following the independence of Georgia and have further been strengthened after Russia’s military intervention in Georgia in August 2008. The European community strictly condemns Russia’s “creeping annexation” on Georgian territories and calls on Moscow to reverse its recognition of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region as independent states. The article seeks to analyze the economic and political support of the European Union to Georgia.

Keywords:

The European Union; economic support; political support; democracy; Russian occupation

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Introduction

The idea of the European Union is based on Pan-Europe movement and dates back to the XVIII-XIX century. In 1795, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in his work "Towards heavenly peace" asserted that the creation of the "European States of Europe" would secure lasting peace in Europe. This could only be achieved by democracy and universal cooperation. Outstanding French novelist Victor Marie Hugo and French politician Alphonse de Lamartine were also enthusiastic supporters of the creation of the United States of Europe. "A war between Europeans is a civil war"-continuously argued Hugo. Austrian-Japanese politician Richard Kalergi, who was a true advocate of the Pan-European Union, in his book, "Pan-Europa" emphasized the idea of European unification and argued that only political, economic, and military connections would prevent bloody and devastating wars on the European continent.

The prime-Minister of the great Britain Winston Churchill played one of the most dominant roles in creating the European Union. At the end of the first half of the twentieth century, Churchill once again stressed on the establishment of a unique international organization, which would unite all the European countries by transferring strategic resources to a supranational organization. Several years later, European Steel and Coal Community was created by six founding countries of the EU. The organization has further been enlarged in the following years.

Today, the European Union is a unique international organization consisting of 27 countries, which promote economic, political, legal and social development of member states. Right from the very beginning, its fundamental objective has been to strengthen democratic principles, increase collaboration and inclusion within the European Union and ensure lasting peace and stability in post-war Europe [11, p. 45]. Since 2015, migration crisis, Britain's exit from the UN and rise of populism posed a serious threat to the European Union integration process. However, it still proves to be one of the most effective international organizations in the history of mankind, which hugely contributes to the peace, equality, stability and economic growth of the member states.

The European Union and Georgia enjoy friendly relations since 1991, after which Georgia regained independence from the Soviet Union. Following the Association Agreement in 2014, the EU-Georgia relations have entered a new phase and the EU has become Georgia's main trading partner abroad. Furthermore, the EU also remains firmly committed to its policy of supporting Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and condemns Russia's creeping occupation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region.

The History of the European Union

In the first half of the twentieth century, the European continent was the theatre of conflicts, which brought millions of dead humans and lots of destruction. For all of the centuries, Europe had a

lot of bloody wars, only France and Germany for the period 1870 to 1945 fought three times. European leaders came to the conclusion that only economic and political integration can secure the peace between their countries. The vision of a new Europe, which would overcome antagonistic nationalism, finally emerged from the resistance movements, which had resisted totalitarianism during the Second World War [7].

The twentieth century appeared to be the most destructive in recorded history. The humankind went through two bloodiest wars, resulted in the deaths of millions of innocent people. Those events, on the other hand, have shown the world that universal peace, stability and security was still a mirage of distant vision and made the scientists rethink once again about the chances of civilization's future survival. Atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the terror of Holocaust, massive economic collapse, 60 million dead humans, more than 50 million refugees... these are only incomplete list of the destructions caused by the World War II. After the war it became certainly clear if not fundamental changes in global affairs the next world war could have resulted in the end of the humankind history.

On September 19, 1946, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill delivered his famous speech at the University of Zurich and voiced the idea of creating "the United States of Europe". "...there is a remedy which would in a few years make all Europe free and happy. It is to re-create the European family, or as much of it as we can, and to provide it with a structure under which it can

dwell in peace, in safety and freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe"-stated Churchill [2].

In 1950 European steel and coal community was established by six European countries. Founding members of the European Union are Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. The Idea of United steel and coal community was an initiative of French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, who deeply believed in the philosophy of the French Politician Jean Monet. Monet asserted that one supranational authority and the common production of strategically important resources would prevent new wars between France and Germany.

The next stage of the European integration process was the establishment of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. The European Economic Community was created on January 1, 1958, after the Treaty of Rome. Following the establishment of the European Economic Community, the common market and united economic space was created, whilst tariffs and customs duties were abolished. 1992 is a turning point and a significant moment in the history of the European Union. In 1992, 13 states of the European Economic Community signed a Treaty of Maastricht, which entered into force on November 1, 1993. After signing the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union was formally established [17, p. 88].

The first enlargement of the European Union began in 1973, when Great Britain, Denmark and Ireland joined the organization. The European Union

community expanded the borders to the South in 1981 with the accession of Greece. In 1986 Spain and Portugal joined the community whilst in 1995 Austria, Sweden and Finland became the members of the EU. Further enlargement of the organization occurred in 2004 when the former communist states of central and Eastern Europe joined the European Union, including Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, along with two islands of the Mediterranean Sea-Cyprus and Malta. It is also worth noting that the expansion of the European Union following the disintegration of the USSR and a reunification of Germany were driven by both economic and political motives since the organization strived to prevent the re-establishment of the communist regime in the post-socialist countries. In 2008 Bulgaria and Romania became part of the community whilst in 2013 Croatia entered the European Union.

Economic support of the European Union to Georgia

The European Union established mutual relations with Georgia in 1992 in the TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) framework, which was initiated by the European commission in 1991 and aimed at technically and financially assisting the Eastern European and Central Asian countries. Those countries were Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

The assistance covered a wide range of fields including legal, institutional, and administrative reforms; support of the private sector and contribution to economic development; infrastructure development; environmental protection; agriculture and nuclear security, development of the agricultural economy etc. TACIS aid program also covered Mongolia from 1991 until 2003 [18]. The TACIS global budget in 2000-2006 amounted to 3.14 billion Euro. In 1992-2006 within the framework of the TACIS, the European Commission allocated 131million Euro financial assistance for the social-economic development of Georgia.

Data below shows the sectoral allocation of TACIS funds between 1991 and 2006 (Million Euro)

	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine
National Program	98.9	116.5	75.5	129	137.6	891.6
Cross-Border Cooperation			46.2		22.7	40.2
Regional Program			68		26.15	50
Food Safety Program + EAGGF	102.3+50.2	142.7		63	35.9	
Macro-Financial Assistance	35.6	30			87	675
Humanitarian Assistance	68.79	90.09	11.5	102.2	5.5	20.5
Neighbourhood Programs			11.3			
Nuclear Safety Program	29		5.5			621.2
Human Rights		9.5				5.95
Rehabilitation		18.37				
Contribution To STCU						34

Table 1; Source: World report, 2005

Since 2007 TACIS has been replaced by the European Neighborhood and Partnership instrument (ENPI), which, in its turn, has been replaced by European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) after seven years and included not only Central Asian and Eastern European countries, but also some countries of the North Africa and middle East. In particular, Algeria,

Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Israel, Jordan, Libya and Palestine. Table 2 shows the EU financial

assistance to the six states between 2007 and 2017 years (Million Euro)

ENPI/ENP	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine
2007–2013	285	143.5	94	452	561	1,000
EaPIC 2012–13	40			49	63	
2014–2020	252–308*	139–169	129–158	610–746	610–746	3,084–3,455
Umbrella Support				30	30	770
2014–2017	140–170	77–94	71–89	335–410	335–410	1,675–1,876

Table 2; * Data shows the minimum amount that can be obtained and the maximum payable amount. Source single 2017.

One of the most important steps in the European Union-Georgia relations have been taken on May 7, 2009, when the EaP (Eastern Partnership) was launched between the European Union and six countries of the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. From the very beginning, the idea of EaP was initiated by Poland and Sweden at the Paris summit in May 2008. The fundamental objective of the initiative has been to deepen and strengthen democracy, human rights, stability and cooperation in the mentioned countries. "It is time to look to the East to see what we can do to strengthen democracy", -denoted the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Carl Bildt, in March 2008 [11]; [19, p. 99]. The cooperation has relied on four major platforms:

- Democracy and good governance;
- Economic integration and stability;
- Energy security;
- Development of cooperation between people [19]; [12].

Georgia's visa-liberalization with the EU marked the beginning of a new phase in EU-Georgia relations. It was a mutual agreement between the sides, signed on March 28, 2016, after which Georgia was granted visa-free travel in the Schengen area. "Georgia has done a great job and achieved much. Today is a historic day for all of us and especially for Georgian people who from now on will be able to travel freely into the Schengen area. It is an important step to build an even closer EU-Georgia relationship"-the President of the European Council Donald Tusk stated in recognition of Georgia's visa liberalization [6]. According to the official information provided by the Georgian government since the entry into force of visa liberalization, "more than 300,000 Georgian citizens have travelled to the EU without a visa". On December 18, 2014, the European Parliament approved the "Association Agreement" (AA) with Georgia and thus further supported closer ties with the country. The agreement entered into force on July 1, 2016. The Association Agreement covers a wide range of areas of a key significance, for

instance, democracy and human rights; good governance; environmental protection; consumer protection; industry and energy; social development and protection; education, youth and culture etc. [15]. However, the key pillar of the Association Agreement is “a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area” (DCFTA) which represents a huge success in the EU-Georgia relations. DCFTA offered Georgia a “framework for boosting trade and economic growth by removing customs tariffs and quotas and by comprehensively approximating trade-related laws and regulations to the standards of the European Union. This will facilitate Georgia's progressive integration with the EU single market” [16]. As the High Representative/Vice-President, Federica Mogherini said: „With the full entry into force of our Association Agreement with Georgia, the EU-Georgia relationship becomes both broader and deeper, to the benefit of us all. The EU is looking forward to further strengthening its cooperation with a country that is still working on crucial reforms in areas such as the rule of law, the accountability rules for public decision-makers and transparency“ [3].

Moreover, at the Eastern Partnership summit, which was held in November 2017 in Brussels, the European Commission initiated four main priorities for the member states of the Eastern Partnership, including Georgia.

Stronger economy (economic development and market opportunities);

Stronger governance (strengthening institutions and strong governance);

Stronger connectivity (connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change);
Stronger society (mobility and people-to-people contacts) [4].

Based on official statistics released by the European Commission, since 2009, more than 40.000 small and medium enterprises and farmers have received loans from the European Union, in addition to 130 dollars that was allocated by the organization under the “Horizon 2020” project and which created approximately 10,300 new job opportunities. Within the framework of the ENPARD program, the EU supported the establishment of 1,200 cooperatives in Georgia and modernized Georgian agriculture by financially and technically supporting the farmers. More than 250,000 farmers have been trained in accordance with European standards. The European Union is one of the strongest trading partners of Georgia. Approximately, 31% of the total trade of Georgian products goes to the European Union and contributes to the diversification of the Georgian market. The European Union is committed to providing large grants to Georgia for the development of electricity, transport connections, and water infrastructure. The organization is also committed to fighting climate change and supports the country in its green energy production.

As a consequence of the EU assistance, the first commercial wind farm has been operated in Georgia. The European Union supported the establishment of over 20 offices in Georgia on “The State Legal Aid Service”. The service offers assistance to those citizens who cannot afford a

lawyer. In addition, the EU trained more than 5, 000 judges; lawyers; prison and probation staff; public defenders etc. [4]; [9].

Political support of the European Union to Georgia

The EU fully supports Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The European Union and the United States call on Russia to reverse its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country [10, p. 54].

“... the collapse of the Soviet Union was a blessing to Georgians, Poles, and Ukrainians as well as to the whole of Central and Eastern Europe... when I say Georgia, I mean ‘pride’, when I say Georgia, I mean ‘courage’. You are a small country, but a great nation. You have achieved impossible things because you were, despite all the differences, united around a common goal, that was a free, independent and modern state”-stated the President of the European Council on July 11, 2019, Donald Tusk [5]. In addition, to Russia's economic leverage against Georgia, Georgian-Russian relations have sharpened recently over Russia's illegal “borderization” of the occupied Georgian territories. The Russian-baked separatist forces continuously install and erect barbed-wire border posts in the one of the occupied regions of Georgia- South Ossetia and detain Georgian people, under the pretext of “illegally crossing the border”. Fundamental rights of the local population are violated daily since the occupants install barbers

through people's houses, gardens and cultivated lands. Whilst, Russia's propaganda machine grows stronger in the post-Soviet space, the Georgian government sees European integration as the only solution to secure its people from the threats coming from Russia.

Following the Russian-Georgian war, the EU deployed the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to Georgia, which has been patrolling areas adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Lines with Abkhazia and South Ossetia day and night. This has reduced tensions and potential risks of escalation and contributed to stability throughout Georgia and in the surrounding region. Currently, EUMM has around 200 monitors working on the ground, and a 24/7 hotline, allowing the parties to the conflict to communicate on security-related issues to defuse tensions. The EU also welcomes Georgia's support on EU security issues [8]. The Geneva international discussions were launched in 2008 with the aim of addressing the consequences of the Russian-Georgian conflict and is under the auspices of the EU, UN (United Nations), OSCE (Organization for security and cooperation in Europe) and USA (United States of America. In other words, Geneva format is a political dialogue between Georgian and Russian sides (including the de-facto authorities of Tskhinvali and Sokhumi) [9]; [14].

Conclusion

The European Union has established full diplomatic ties with Georgia since 1992. European states recognized Georgia as an independent country following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and unanimously supported the sovereignty of the

country. Since then, the European Union keeps remaining a strong and reliable partner of the country and supports an independent, democratic, prosperous, and developed Georgia. Clear illustrations of the mentioned are the EU assistance programs, including the TACIS, ENPI, EaP etc. under which the European Commission has provided several millions of financial assistance to Georgia since the early years of its independence. The financial programs address to the development of the following fields of a key significance: small and medium enterprises; agriculture, human rights; gender equality; civil society; transport, electricity, and water infrastructure; green economy; culture, sport and education sector etc. The organization seeks to promote a stronger economy, stronger governance, stronger connectivity and stronger society in Georgia in accordance with the European legislature.

The European Union-Georgia relations have further been strengthened following Russia's war in Georgia in August 2008 and an illegal occupation of Georgian territories by Moscow as a consequence of the war. The EU has made great contributions to the peaceful settlement of the conflict and initiated "the six-principle ceasefire agreement" with the aim of ending the hostilities between the neighboring countries. Moreover, following the war, Geneva international discussions were launched under the auspices of the European Union and the EU monitoring mission has been operating near the administration boundary lines near the Russian-controlled regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali. The fundamental objective of

the EUMM has been to build peace and confidence among the opposing sides.

After the signing of the "Association Agreement" in 2014, the EU-Georgia relations have moved to a new level. The agreement entered into force in 2016 and since then the EU has remained the main importer of a number of Georgian products abroad. The direct consequence of "the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement" has been the materialization of Georgian exports to the EU, including fruits, hazelnuts, garlic, and wine. Copper ore exports are also increasing in numbers. Since 2016, the exports of honey and Black Sea fish are also allowed from Georgia to the European Union. It should also be highlighted that free trade agreement with the European Union represents a great success to Georgia since under the current extremely tense political atmosphere between Russia and Georgia; Russian market is becoming more and more unstable for the Georgian economy. In this regard, the Georgian government should further work for diversification of its exports and reduce economic dependence on Russia.

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