

DOCTORAL (PhD) DISSERTATION

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**KNOWLEDGE, POWER AND UNIVERSITY:
THE CASE OF ALBANIA**

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KNOWLEDGE, POWER AND UNIVERSITY:
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Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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Statement of Originality

By my signature below, I certify that my doctoral dissertation, entitled *Knowledge, Power and University: The Case of Albania*, is entirely the result of my own work and research. In this thesis, I have cited all the sources (printed, electronic, or oral) I have used, and have consistently indicated their origin.

Date: 13.05.2024

Signature: Viliem Kurtulaj

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AKKSHI - National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation

ALL - Albanian Lek

ASCAL - Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education of Albania

BIRN - Balkan Investigative Reporting Network

CERI - Centre for Educational Research and Innovation

DCM - Decision of the Council of Ministers

EC - European Commission

ECTS - European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

ESU - European Students' Union

EU - European Union

EUA - European University Association

EUR - Euro

EURASHE - European Association of Institutions in Higher Education

FTE - Full-time Equivalent

GCES - Governing Complex Education Systems

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

GER - Gross Enrolment Ratio

HE - Higher Education

HEI - Higher Education Institution

INSTAT - Institute of Statistics of Albania

IPA - Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

QAA - Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

REF - Research Excellence Framework

TAIB - Transition Assistance and Institution Building

TQM - Total Quality Management

UK - United Kingdom

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

US - United States

USA - United States of America

USD - United States Dollar

VET - Vocational Education and Training

Introduction

1.1 Background and Focus

Education is one of the most important sectors of almost every society and country in the world. Education is one of the main pillars of a functional state. Not coincidentally, in the vast majority of governments in the world, education has a special ministry dedicated to it. Higher education is the highest pinnacle of education. The university, for more than a millennium, has been enduring in developed societies as the main institution of higher education and science. Higher education is not independent and immune from political, economic, technological, etc. transformations, hence it constantly has to reflect and re-dimension itself. In Albania, national education gained importance and spread at the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century, while higher education and science spread in the middle of the 20th century. After the fall of communism in 1991, higher education and science in Albania were re-dimensioned.

Until recently, knowledge and science have been supposed to be produced mainly in higher education institutions. Wherefore, the university, as a higher education institution, is supposed to teach, produce knowledge, and develop science. Because education is one of the most important sectors for each country all over the world, it is used often as a valuable tool for several purposes. But the education systems may be different in different countries, cultures, political and economic systems. Education and knowledge may change the society, but, on the other hand, political systems and policies may change the education. For Foucault, an *education system* is a ritualization of the word, a qualification and implantation of the roles for the speaking subjects, the establishment of a “less common doctrinal group”, and the distribution and acquisition of the discourse together with its powers and knowledge (Foucault, 1978/2009).

Because they cannot account for the vast range of circumstances that people find themselves in or assess their influence, broad theories and ecological generalizations frequently fall short in the field of education. Because individuals in educational institutions are entangled in intricate networks of social interactions that are always changing and evolving, doing science, and applying scientific results to education are

very challenging. The science to transform education seems to be more difficult to achieve since context cannot be controlled, in contrast to constructing bridges or dividing atoms or genes. Because of all the interactions involved, context is crucial in educational research. As Berliner (2002) asserts, educational science is unusually hard to do.

In the 1995 CERI (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation) report *Educational Research and Development: Trends, Issues and Challenges*, was raised the question of why the use and promotion of educational research by governments had become a significant issue in OECD countries, and it suggests a number of potential explanations. These explanations include:

- A perception that innovation and economic prosperity in OECD countries are increasingly impacted by knowledge and education.
- A rising concern and accountability regarding educational spending.
- A concern regarding the usefulness and quality of recent research and studies in education.

This doctoral research can be categorized as interdisciplinary, to a certain extent, which includes higher education studies, political science, and philosophy. The term “discipline” can be conceived as a process of training a disciple who has decided to engage in a certain academic field with norms and codes. On the other hand, it can be perceived from the point of view of the disciple himself/herself, who, by devoting himself/herself and submitting to the exercises and system of reward and punishment of the institution, aims to achieve a high level of self-mastery and self-control. Those who carry out scientific activities can be considered as agents who conduct self-contained research or activity but, regardless of the agent's independence, the rules of play of activity are predetermined (Rider, 2015).

Knowledge is not *a priori* attribute, but being knowledgeable can be an attribute, and more knowledge we possess, more power we may have. Knowledge is considered as the most important resource of the twenty first century because, in addition to being accumulatively created, knowledge does not decrease through use (Al-Ali et al., 2020). According to Foucault (1980), knowledge cannot be separated from power. Nor can truth be separated from power. Power cannot be separated from knowledge because, through knowledge and practices, power reveals itself in different disciplines. For Foucault (1980), power is almost impossible to function or exist without having a relationship with

knowledge. He explicitly stated that "*nothing can function as a mechanism of power unless it is deployed according to procedures, instruments, means, and objectives that can be validated in more or less coherent systems of knowledge*" (1997, pp. 52-53). Power needs knowledge in order to regulate, subjugate, and rule.

In this research, the term "power" is used in two meanings. On the one hand, it is related more to the formal power, which means the political bodies and other institutions or agents which, through their decisions, shape or affect policies and higher education. On the other hand, "power" has the Foucauldian meaning: any kind of power that each subject exercise to others through his/her actions or discourses (Foucault, 1980).

Regarding the use of sources in this dissertation, citations in the text often have two dates, one indicating the first year of publication, the other indicating the year of publication used by me. This is done to give the reader a clearer picture of when those ideas were first written or developed by the authors.

1.2 Research Questions

The *research problem* that this thesis undertakes to analyse is related to the low-level performance of the universities in Albania, and the underlying causes of this low performance.

In the light of theoretical and empirical background, and research problem presented above, this study aims to address the following *research questions*:

- 1) What is the role of the knowledge-power relations in the low performance level of higher education in Albania?
- 2) What are the main constraints and powers that dominate the university in Albania, and impede its improvement?

1.3 Hypotheses

The first *hypothesis* of this doctoral research is as follows:

- 1) The knowledge-power relations in Albania have been dysfunctional and disproportionate, preventing the university progress and improvement.

The second *hypothesis* of this doctoral research is as follows:

- 2) The main constraints and powers that dominate the university in Albania and impede its improvement are the lack of will from the political power and the university leaders, and their clientelist relationships.

These hypotheses encompass a number of explaining variables related to education and society such as culture, academic freedom and independence, financial autonomy, accountability, knowledge management in HEIs, connection to the market, study materials, research production and publication, higher education policies, internationalization, services and links with third parties, etc.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

2.1 Power Relationships in Educational Institutions

French philosopher Michel Foucault is one of the important references when it comes to power relations. His work has been used by education scholars as a tool to emphasize how education and social narratives compose their theoretical objects. The relationship between the subject, truth, power, and the constitution of lived experience was one of the focuses of Foucault. His theory on power is well-known for opposing the assumption that power is something that can be possessed or that it exists as a form of repression or domination. According to Foucault, power cannot be considered as something which is held or owned by persons to be used, but as a relation between people or groups of people (Foucault, 1980). Power is something that is exercised, or as Foucault describes it, "a set of actions upon other actions" (Foucault, 1954-1984/2002b, p. 341). For instance, in educational institutions, power mostly refers to the set of relationships between people and groups of persons such as teachers, students, and administrative personnel. Power is more than just oppression or saying "no", it is also generative in the sense that it produces specific types of knowledge and behaviours. Regarding power and subject, Foucault explains:

This form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognise and others have to recognise in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word 'subject': subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subjects to. (Foucault, 1954-1984/2002b, p. 331).

The main emphasis in Foucault's conception of power and subject is the power relations themselves. "A society without power relations can only be an abstraction", he argues (Foucault, 1976/1981, p. 95). According to him, there is a link between power and

resistance. Foucault (1976/1981) explains that wherever there is power, there is resistance as well, and as a result, resistance cannot be outside the power relations. He highlights a variety of points of resistance by emphasizing the relational nature of power. Namely, they are found throughout the power networks. Foucault's most widespread and widely used description of the concept of power is as follows:

A man who is chained up and beaten is subject to force being exerted over him, not power. But if he can be induced to speak, when his ultimate recourse could have been to hold his tongue, preferring death, then he has been subjected to power. He has been submitted to government. If an individual can remain free, however little his freedom may be, power can subject him to government. There is no power without refusal or revolt ... Consequently, those who resist or reel against a form of power cannot merely be content to denounce violence or criticize an institution. Nor is it enough to cast blame on reason in general. What has to be questioned is the form of rationality at stake. (Foucault, 1954-1984/2002c, p. 324).

While the individual subject of human is put in production and signification relations, s/he is also alike engaged in complex power relations. The type of power that applies to instant everyday life aims to classify the individual, defines her/him by her/his own individuality, binds her/him to her/his own identity, and establishes on her/him a rule of truth that s/he must acknowledge and have others recognize in her/him (Foucault, 1954-1984/2002b).

One may raise the question why I use certain ideas and concepts of Foucault in this research. Actually, there are several reasons. The first reason is that Foucault has a philosophical approach to the things he studies. Wherefore, he is not just an expert who knows a certain field well, but, first of all, he gives a worldview to the concepts and topics he deals with. Another reason is that today's educational research appears to place a high value on Foucault, as demonstrated by the numerous academics who have embraced him (Fejes, 2008). Moreover, Foucault himself urged readers to use his books as mini-toolkits from which to select ideas and concepts, and apply them in ways they find useful (Patton, 1979).

Despite the fact that Foucault used the term "domination" to describe a feature of contemporary power relations, he explained that there is no single centre of power and domination, thus I do not focus my research for it only in the state apparatus, which is

overstudied. Body, power, and force are concepts that do not exist irrespective of the discourses about them; rather, they are subjects of inquiry that are formed by and within certain discourses (Brass, 2000).

Not a few authors see power as an integral part of discourse. According to Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1994), it is power relations that decide what a person can say. Moreover, power relations also affect what people take to be true or false. The power of discourse does not lie simply in the description of an event, experience, reality, knowledge, etc. Discourse plays an important role in their constitution. As Foucault (1980) states, the focus of analysis is more on the discourse of experience than on experience itself. People's subjectivity is also shaped, constructed, negotiated through discursive practices (Rose, 1996). Foucault stressed the need of studying practices in order to comprehend subjectivity. Simply stating that the subject is constructed in a symbolic system is insufficient. According to him, the subject is constituted by everyday practices that are historically analysed (Foucault, 1954-1984/1997c). According to Foucault, studying ethics should stress that ethical subjectivity is generated only via people's daily behaviours and practices, not by trying to identify some sort of ideal set of values that people use as the ground for their activities.

The idea is that power produces and constitutes the self. Discourse produces power, consequently, through discourse the self is produced (Foucault, 1982). Personally, I'm not sure if any discourse can produce power, but it is a lesson from history that one of the most effective ways to produce power is through discourse. However, the self does not so easily absorb what power offers through discourse. As I mentioned above, for Foucault, where there is power, there is resistance (1976/1981). The juxtaposition or synthesis of these two constructs the identity of the individual. After all, the vast majority of people choose to believe or follow one of the available discourses.

A discourse may continue to exist, spread, and eventually become dominant by portraying itself as necessary. All depth is a sign of organized power, of authority, and of the need to define and govern. In this manner, the speakers of the dominant discourse may assert their authority and status as the experts and arbiters of discourse, and, consequently, make themselves necessary. In order to sustain this artfully created impression of necessity, discourse should quiet, marginalize, and eclipse any discourse which asserts that all distinctions are outcomes of the discursive event. The speakers must camouflage the discourse's arbitrary nature. In every society, discourse develops constraints and

imperatives that take the form of norms, laws, and maxims. These norms and laws establish who is entitled to speak and what is legitimate to say. Discourse's capability to challenge authority's prerogative to monopolize speech is what gives it its power.

Butler's approach is founded on the idea that discourses and discursive practices create 'truths' and norms, or 'rules of intelligibility,' as he calls them (1990, p. 24). These norms determine what we recognize, how we name or identify what we perceive, and how we evaluate those acts. Those who comply with the norms (intelligibilities) are accepted, whereas those who do not, are rejected and ostracized. Intelligibilities disseminate via discourse, and our acts are understood within those terms of reference, when performed. This approach is known as 'performative constitution'. In an interview with Olson and Worsham (2000), Butler states that there seem to be a collection of legitimizing norms, each of which comes with its own set of consequences or costs.

Referring to Foucault's book *The Order of Things*, dominant discourses of social power at various eras comprehended, categorized, and disseminated knowledge by drawing a contrast between "truth" and "error". Instead of a steady progression toward enlightenment, the "will to truth" that has been in operation throughout history appears to be an eternal interaction between desire and power. By linking "the will to truth" to speech as a means of satiating the "will to power," this relation has enabled the development of many discourses. In Foucault, the notion of the episteme is crucial. This is described as the collection of relations that, at a particular time, link the discursive practices that create and shape epistemological actors, scientific disciplines, and potentially formalized knowledge systems (Foucault, 1966/2002a).

Discourse has the capacity to expose the arbitrary nature of every rule and norm, including those that constitute culture itself with all of its exclusionary rules. By rejecting the concreteness of referents and separating language from representation, Foucault bridges the gap between "words" and "things," freeing discourse from the arbitrary rules and reopening it to the endeavour of expressing everything that can be said. When this gap is bridged, knowledge, science, logic, and authority have no place since their depth is rejected. This use of metaphorical space illustrates the power of discourse to establish an appropriate environment for free-play. The circumstances for free-play from which a discourse of environmental value might emerge and speak are established by Foucault's exposure of the deception of a centre without speech as well as the arbitrariness of itself (Rogres, 2012).

Power is repressive because it creates discourses that have effects which shape the conduct of people. These discourses simultaneously create several subject positions that might be adopted. So, there is a repressive side of power and a productive side of power. When comparing the productive and repressive sides of power, the repressive side appears to be more dominant. People's behaviour is governed by the repressive side of power, and such controls may be both restrictive and bad (Fejes, 2008). But there is agency that makes these harmful discourses apparent, allowing people to resist them and take on other roles as agents of their own lives.

Education has historically been used by various countries to promote democratic values by urging civic responsibility and engagement (Dahlstedt & Olson, 2013). In the past, the impacts that the university had on social change have been considered as long-term. In fact, this can be seen as a two-way process. Because universities are created and shaped by society, the power relations that emerge inside higher education institutions may actually impede and hinder how universities contribute to development and social change. Power relations within the higher education institution can become less obstructive if academics and agents outside the university (non-academics) create bridges of cooperation and work in partnership, learning from each other, to understand as accurately as possible and find optimal solutions for social problems (Taylor & Boser, 2006). Language is a very powerful tool for exercising power. Linguistic relations are at the same time power relations, or as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) call it, symbolic power exercised among speakers and the audience. The use of language is complex. But language cannot be understood correctly without knowing the context.

According to Taylor and Boser (2006), universities are highly hierarchical institutions. Usually, university staff find themselves governed by visible and invisible power structures. Not infrequently, students see themselves at the bottom of this hierarchy. Using what Foucault calls 'an inclusion through exclusion', in the case of universities, implies that students are a kind of excluded from the society in order to entangle them in or connect them to relations of power and knowledge (Deacon, 2006).

Not rarely, the process of education in schools, in addition to providing and acquiring knowledge, is seen as a process of disciplining students. In colleges and universities, this 'disciplinary process' is accompanied or carried out according to a certain professional or academic field. However, it would be a violation of the concept of education if it were reduced to mere providing knowledge and disciplining. Because of the ethics, rules, and

methods, university can be considered also a disciplinary institution, but not just a disciplinary institution. Among other things, higher education is a disciplining mechanism (Butin, 2006).

According to Foucault, in the past, schools used to exercise epistemological power, which means exercising power to extract knowledge of people from people. This worked in two ways. The first way, personal understandings and functional adaptations of students and teachers to school systems may be documented, compiled, and utilized to subject individuals in novel ways. The second way, epistemological power provides a type of clinical knowledge that underlies actual discourses of educational psychology from teacher assessment to school evaluation. From this idea developed the concept of education as a science. The scientific revolution's effect, which emphasizes direct practical manipulation and study of objects, has only later found its way into school and university curricula (Deacon, 2006).

Foucault highlights the power generated in micropractices of relationships, including those in educational institutions. Each person experiences and exercises power, in different proportions. Power should be analysed at its extreme places of application, where it is in close interaction with its subject, and where it establishes itself and manifests its consequences (Foucault, 1980). From the perspective of Foucault, knowledge and power are not mutually exclusive nor equivalent. Instead, they are entangled in a correlative connection, which is grounded on its historical peculiarity (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983). In order to function and be effective, power must be founded in knowledge about the subjects it operates on and in connection to. Based on that, it can be said that the operation of power relies on knowledge about the subject, and power determines what knowledge is appropriate and relevant.

Regarding the power that the educational institutions have today, for centuries they have undergone changes, slowly moving from negative forms of discipline to positive forms of discipline. This change made schooling considered also as a society-wide disciplinary technology. According to Deacon (2006, p. 181), the changes that have taken place in educational institutions, in order to manage the subjects, knowledge, capacities, and to channel them, are as follows:

- the development of new teaching methodologies;
- the application of new forms of micro-discipline;

- the apportionment of time;
- the management of sexuality;
- the manipulation of bodies;
- the spread of lateral controls; and
- the production and extraction of knowledge and the reappraisal of curricula and learning.

Pierre Bourdieu is a French sociologist who has given academic issues and the function of universities in modern society particular attention. He is known for his idea of the three forms of capital (cultural, economic, and social). Bourdieu focused on historical factors (especially demographic and economic developments in French universities) that contributed to the initiation of student protests in May 1968 while analysing tensions and dynamics in the development of the higher education system in France. Bourdieu used statistical analysis to discover three opposing kinds of cultural capital generated inside the university, which were related to (a) the reputation of academic fields, (b) the renewal of academic staff, and (c) their orthodoxy/heterodoxy (Tarifa, 2018). According to him, one of the ways to maintain leadership positions and academic power in the university is to control the mechanisms of recruiting new academic staff, i.e. the reproduction of the "academic corps". Furthermore, Bourdieu adds that universities are marked by ongoing tensions between the academic staff members who embrace and express "heretical" or unorthodox beliefs and those who have the opposite point of view (Tarifa, 2018).

In 2005, researcher Michalinos Zembylas conducted a study entitled "Discursive practices, genealogies, and emotions rules: A poststructuralist view on emotion and identity in teaching". The main findings of his study on emotions and identity in teaching are three: 1) the emotional rules in teaching are historical contingent; 2) the teacher plays a role in controlling his/her own emotions; 3) the identity of the teacher is constituted in relation to the emotional rules in the context where s/he teaches. In short, if we were to use Foucault's approach, it is the disciplinary power and emotional rules that produce and constitute the identity of the teacher.

Even at their most radical, power relations are rarely one-sided, but are almost always reciprocal and multi-sided. Those who officially have the right to exercise "formal" power in the school or university are just as much involved in and subjected to its operations as those who are subjected to it. More than the exercise of power by various agents and actors in the educational institution, which is almost inevitable, both in the classroom and

outside it, the concern may be to avoid or mitigate the effects of domination. The effects of domination have been one of the issues that has intrigued Foucault as well, especially in the pedagogical process. The lecture, which, compared to seminar, seems to be more non-reciprocal and unequal in terms of power relations, can be more sincere and less cunning than the seminar about power relations, which each of them inevitably produce. Foucault was of the opinion that seminars, on the other hand, while important in the educational process, could be more suited for method training than for the development of free and critical thought. It is difficult to say that power relations and exercise have been dissolved or neutralized as a result of the twentieth-century move from traditional didactic or teacher-centred to more cooperative or student-centered educational approach (Deacon, 2006).

Let's look at the scenario of a teacher setting up the classroom in a circle so that every student is facing one another. There is supposed to be a more equal and democratic setting for education. Nevertheless, if we use Foucault's views, one may contend that this is a confessional practice in which all individuals are urged to enhance their relationships with themselves by disclosing their inner desires to others. At the same time, greater observation of everyone is made possible by the circular seating, so no is unobserved.

2.2 Pedagogical Approaches in Education

Different authors have different opinions on what the goals or objectives of pedagogy should be. Pedagogy is not just teaching. It is a complex process that must consider the characteristics of the student, the nature of the subject, the context, etc. (Chekour, Laafou, and Janati-Idrissi, 2018). Also, pedagogy is related to understanding, increasing motivation, student development, discovering student tendencies, etc. Several studies have shown that the problem that students have in acquiring knowledge in educational institutions does not lie in the knowledge itself but in the pedagogical approaches and techniques (Ma, Fulmer, and Liang, 2017). Pedagogy varies in approach and techniques. Different subjects may require different pedagogical forms and approaches.

During the communist regime, in Albania, formal education was massified, but not higher education. The pedagogical methods and model were mainly copied from the Soviet model of education, or rather, they were a kind of Leninist pedagogical model of “the one

who knows". Thus, pedagogy in educational institutions was very teacher/lecturer-oriented.

Different concepts and strategies have been created and spread in this area, and they have significantly influenced learning processes. One of the most current and discussed pedagogical theories is Cognitive Learning Theory. The beginnings of cognitive theory have early roots in Plato and Descartes as two of the first philosophers to delve deeply into the ideas of cognitive behaviour and knowledge. Their views on knowledge and behaviour inspired further thinking on cognition. Wilhelm Wundt, John Dewey, William James, John Watson, and many more scientists and psychologists have investigated and studied how the mind and thinking function. In the realm of cognitive psychology, Jean Piaget is widely regarded for his work on internal structures, knowledge, and the environment. The Swiss psychologist and educational researcher is also renowned for his development stages, which unbuckle and analyse ages and competencies of understanding. According to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, learning, among children, occurs in four phases depending on the person's age (Cherry, 2022). Piaget's four stages are:

- Sensorimotor stage: Birth to 2 years
- Preoperational stage: Ages 2 to 7
- Concrete operational stage: Ages 7 to 11
- Formal operational stage: Ages 12 and up

But, since these stages of learning were developed by Piaget for children, they may not fully explain the learning process of university students.

Over time, more scientists have done research and experiments on the theory of cognition, and various developments, such as the invention of the computer, have strongly influenced how we understand the brain and the learning.

In depth, cognitive approach of understanding is a theory of learning that puts a strong emphasis on thought. In order to assist students to understand a concept or subject they are having difficulties, cognition urges them to "think about their thinking." In order to comprehend cognitive learning theory, the concept of "metacognition" must be understood. Metacognition is commonly referred to as the awareness of one's thoughts and mental processes (Western Governors University, 2020). The backbone of cognitive learning theory is the idea of understanding how you think.

The theory of cognition invites students to reflect on thinking and mental functions, as well as how both outside and inside factors might affect cognitive thinking. Learning is simpler if the cognitive processes are functioning correctly. However, issues may arise if there is a problem with a cognitive function. Social Cognitive theory and Cognitive Behaviour theory are two categories which derive from Cognitive Learning.

According to social cognitive theory, learning takes place in a social setting and is affected by the learner, surroundings, and behaviour. Social cognitive theory asserts that an individual's capacity for performance and learning is affected by a number of circumstances and conditions. Both their inner ideas and the factors around them can have a significant impact on how they think. Learning is affected by social interactions, environmental cues, observable behaviour, and how individuals perceive these clues. For instance, a lecturer can assist students in understanding the results of a certain action. This could encourage students to engage in such social activity.

Cognitive Behaviour theory postulates a direct link between our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. This essentially indicates that our feelings and behaviours are shaped by our thoughts. Each of these cognitive factors may have a real effect on how students learn in a classroom environment. For example, if a student believes s/he is not good enough at a certain subject such as chemistry, that it does not come swiftly to him/her for any reason, s/he is more likely to feel frustrated and angry during a chemistry class.

The idea of acquiring a theory is the opportunity to apply it in practice when we find it appropriate, valuable, and useful. In this case, it is important to understand how cognitive learning theory can be applied in the classroom. Some of these learning practices include the following:

- Asking students questions so that they explore deeply in their thinking.
- Giving students the opportunity to make mistakes so they can understand where a particular thought or process fails or is not working.
- Encouraging self-reflection in students through meditation, self-analysis discussions, etc.
- Giving students the opportunity to think aloud through activities such as group projects, in one-on-one interactions, etc. (Western Governors University, 2020).

It would be important to bring here what has been considered one of the greatest changes or improvements in history of pedagogy. The new approach that pedagogy has taken as a

result of the influence of Rousseau, German idealism, Froebel, and Pestalozzi is essentially a revolutionary acknowledgment. There are three basic components to education: what is taught (knowledge, wisdom), the educator (teacher or lecturer), and the learner (pupil or student). For a long time, the student had no bearing on pedagogy. Rousseau and his successors made a shift of the focus of science from knowledge and the educator toward the student, understanding that only the student and his/her features can help us in our attempt to develop an organic form of education (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014). Regarding the relationship between science and teaching at the university, Spanish scholar and philosopher Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014) states that when science enters a profession, it must be distanced from its origins in pure science and structured around new principles and centres as professional technics.

Another question that can be raised is what is the importance of pedagogy. According to Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014), a person is concerned and engaged with education for a very straightforward reason: In order to live confidently, freely, and effectively, one must acquire a vast array of information and knowledge, and a child or young person has a very limited capacity to learn. He adds that, as scarcity is the basis of economic activity, the basic tenet of education is the scarcity of the capacity for learning, and it is essential to offer teaching in exact proportion to how much a student is unable to learn. In the middle of the eighteenth century, with the advent of the new capitalism, the richness of human knowledge was greatly increased. As a result, life began to take on an entirely new level of complexity and demanded an ever-increasing equipment of technics. Consequently, education was swiftly broadened and increased to satisfy the requirement for learning a variety of subjects that were much above one's capacity to learn (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014).

Freire's idea of pedagogy - also known as *liberatory pedagogy* - aims for pedagogy to do two things. The pedagogical process should allow, enable, and even encourage both the student and the lecturer/teacher to develop a critical thinking and consciousness so that they can understand their relationship with the world. The second, which is related to the first, makes pedagogy, by developing consciousness, guide and help students and lecturers/teachers to become subjects that means human beings conscious of themselves, of context and conditions, and of the world. Freire, in this case, used the term for subject as cognitive subject or instrument of choice (Freire, 1982a). The definition of the subject matters because it is related to education. For Freire, the teaching process requires the

existence of a subject who, while teaching, learn and, while learning, teaches (Freire, 1998).

Fayolle and Verzat (2009) highlight three major phases in the evolution of teaching methodologies. They notice a transition from 1) the conventional approach of merely conveying knowledge to 2) the rational transmission of capabilities with the objective-based approach, and then 3) to the approach of building skills via practical training. Parallel to these three main phases, the project-based approach and the problem-solving approach have assumed a prominent role in didactics activity (Chekour, Laafou, and Janati-Idrissi, 2018). Over the last decades, a new pedagogical approach, mainly for scientific subjects, called as historical investigation, has emerged. According to Kipnis (2002), this approach allows students to become somewhat scientists who recognize problems, create hypotheses, engage actively in the experiments, analyse the results, and discuss the findings with their peers.

In the *objective-based* approach, objectives are provided as students' behaviour. Consequently, the creations of these objectives pertain to activities from the student's perspective rather than the lecturer's project. The success of students in this approach is dependent on the accomplishment of concrete objectives. But the objective-based approach might have the risk that, by concentrating on small, non-global objectives, students begin to lose focus on their learning (Chekour, Laafou, and Janati-Idrissi, 2018).

According to Carette, Defrance, and Kahn (2006), the *pedagogy-based* approach urges students to engage on processes that are too limited, preventing them from grasping the significance of learning. The *competency-based* approach, in contrast, is devoted to encouraging students work on global tasks that are relevant to their daily lives. This approach is identified by its comprehensiveness, construction, application, significance, and transfer (Lasnier, 2000). The main goal of a competency-based approach is learning to mobilise (Carette, 2008).

The *project-based approach* is an active pedagogical method that promotes learning via the completion of a tangible production. Projects are usually focused on real-world problems, which instils a feeling of responsibility in students (Huber, 2005). This pedagogy's manner of operation is based on the students' motivation.

The *problem-solving* approach is increasingly being applied in disciplines where it is difficult for students to acquire all of the knowledge in the subject in a short period of

time. Students engage in teamwork to address a problem by obtaining new information that might lead to a solution. However, several studies have shown that using the problem-solving approach, students struggle with their learning (Robardet, 2001).

Historical Investigation approach combines the historical approach and the investigative approach. Kipnis first introduced the idea of the Historical Investigation approach (IH) in educational sciences. According to his view, studying science in the context of history should be acquired through student practical investigations (Kipnis, 1996). The essential thought behind this approach is for students to experiment (unguided) while studying science in its historical context. The primary goals of this approach are to expand students' comprehension of scientific ideas and theories, build and enhance procedural knowledge, encourage students' engagement in science, and bring up the history of science (Heering & Höttecke, 2014).

But there is also a principle in education or pedagogy which is called the principle of economy. Our approach to teaching should be based on the simple premise that the student cannot absorb all what we would like him/her to learn. The principle of economy goes beyond just implying that it is important to economize the content of the courses and subjects being delivered at the university. It has a broader implication which implies that the student must come first when organizing higher education and constructing the university, not the professors or corpus of knowledge. As Ortega y Gasset states, "The university must be the projection of the student to the scale of an institution" (1930/2014, p. 55). The one who inhabits the university, the student, has two dimensions: what s/he is (a human with a limited capacity for learning), and what s/he has to know in order to live in society. Therefore, we must start with the average student and consider him/her as the core of the institution called university, as its central and essential component (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014).

To comprehend the significance of learning in the economy, it is important to differentiate between several types of knowledge, which may be classified as *know-what*, *know-why*, *know-how*, and *know-who* (Lundvall, 2000). Knowledge concerning "facts" is referred to as *know-what*. Here, knowledge is close to what is generally considered information - it may be split down into pieces. *Know-why* is related to knowledge regarding principles and rules of action in nature, in the human mind, and in society. This type of knowledge is quite essential for technological advancement. The skills to accomplish something is referred to as *know-how*. *Know-how* is that type of knowledge produced and maintained

inside the boundaries of the individual firm or research group. *Know-who* refers to knowledge about who knows what and how to execute what. Yet, it also requires the ability to cooperate and interact with a variety of individuals and experts. The general trend to a more complex body of knowledge and new products that often incorporate multiple technologies, each of which has grounds in several scientific areas, further emphasises the need of having access to a variety of knowledge sources.

These several types of knowledge are acquired through various channels. Whereas *know-what* and *know-why* may be acquired through books, lectures, and database access, the other two kinds of knowledge are founded on practical experience and social engagement and cooperation. *Know-what* and *know-why* can be codified and conveyed as information more simply and readily. If the appropriate institutional mechanisms are created, they may potentially be offered in the market for sale. This is why economic research generally focuses on learning processes that include the transmission of *know-what* and *know-why* while ignoring *know-how* and *know-who* (Lundvall, 2000).

Know-how is often learned in a way similar to apprenticeships, in which the student follows the professor as a reliable authority figure. *Know-who* is obtained through social interaction and, to a lesser extent, through specialised education contexts. One key reason why large companies invest in research is because it provides them with connection to informal networks of academic experts (Lundvall, 2000).

Of particular importance for this research is *Service-learning* theory because this pedagogical theory combines classroom learning with extracurricular activities. This theory has become popular in higher education in the United States since the 1990s. Le Grange (2007) defines *Service-learning* as a philosophy, pedagogy, and form of inquiry that includes or integrates classroom learning and community service activities. This pedagogical theory requires that, at first, learning objectives be set, the problems and needs of the community be identified and addressed in a sustainable way, so that students and lecturers can learn during the service. The service should be well organized and always in relation to the academic curriculum (Skinner and Chapman, 1999). *Service-learning* is often associated with other concepts such as social justice, ethical practice, and civic responsibility (Stanton, Giles and Cruz, 1999). Giles and Eyler (1994) have identified six benefits that come from applying service-learning theory:

- 1) the continuity of experience; 2) the principle of interaction; 3) process of inquiry that leads to further knowledge through participation; 4)

reflective activity that leads to learning; 5) citizenship promoting conscious awareness of values; and 6) democracy through conflict resolution and inclusion. (Carrington, 2011, p. 2).

Another author, Butin (2003) uses the formula of four **Rs** to explain a *Service-learning* framework of values:

1. **Respect** (for other participants in the service-learning process)
2. **Reciprocity** (servers react and participate together thus creating mutual outcomes)
3. **Relevance** (is the connection and contribution that service-learning adds to academic learning)
4. **Reflection** (participants reflect on their experience in order to derive the proper meaning)

The critical pedagogical approach can be noticed in Service-learning theory as well. However, having a critical approach to the things you learn or discover during the educational process does not mean that the whole focus or purpose of education is on critique. Prentice and Garcia (2000) explain the term "service-learning" as a reciprocal relationship where learning and service respond, strength and help each other. In higher education, "service-learning" has gained importance from academics such as Boyer, Battistoni, Zlotkowski, Bringle and Hatcher etc. The 2000-2010 decade has seen a significant increase in attention to this theory in order to integrate it into higher education. As Billing and Welch (2004, p. 222) say, Service-learning was considered "an avenue for civic and engagement and scholarship" in higher education. The theory of service-learning is mainly described by the authors in two directions or paradigms, charity and social change. The critical service-learning approach tries to shift the focus from charity to social change (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004). This pedagogical approach invites or directs participants to take responsibility for the future of the society in which they belong and for the key/critical issues facing the community. In this sense, service-learning can become a "problem-solving" tool for social and political issues or reforms (Fenwick, 2001). Mitchell (2008), on the other hand, says of the critical approach of service-learning theory that it aims to question the distribution of power in society, to establish and develop authentic relationships, and to attempt social changes. This pedagogical model can bring transformations in education itself and in action because it orients students and lecturers

towards the roots and causes of problems which require not only study to be understood but also service (Morton, 1995).

Butin (2005) argues that Service-learning outcomes have an impact in four aspects. The first aspect is the technical one which has to do with the pedagogical process and the impact on students in practice. The second aspect is the cultural one which is related to the meanings that are created during the practice. The third aspect is political and focuses on the positions that subjects take with the aim of changing social imbalances. The postmodern aspect is the fourth point which deals with the role of Service-learning as a process which disturb, disrupt and redefine its own relation with the world. In the postmodern approach, Service-learning theory tends to move from learning a linear knowledge with a structured approach to an efficient knowledge which is also created by the practical application of theoretical knowledge acquired in university auditoriums. Thus, theoretical knowledge is supplemented by various practices which have ethical, inclusive, and appreciative features (Butin, 2005). What would be valuable is not simply a practical application (e.g., in laboratory conditions) of theoretical lessons, simply enough to acquire practical skills. What would help education is the application of theories in the world, where problems really exist, approaching them with certain principles such as ethical practice, inclusiveness, civic responsibility, etc.

A major difference from pre-service education is that in Service-learning, students are allowed, even encouraged, to explore, adapt and apply their own learnings to experiences out of school. In terms of a methodological approach of Service-learning, Carrington (2011) provides three major themes: joining theory with experience and thought with action; allowing and encouraging students to enter into relationships with others, into caring relationships also; giving weight and importance to critical learning and pedagogy. By interlinking theory to practice or action, students have a chance to create a new, different perspective on understanding academic learning.

Applying Service-learning in the higher education sector urges lecturers, students, as well as university leaders, to question existing curricula, their own assumptions, and social inequities (Baldwin, Buchanan & Rudisill, 2007). Experts in this field point out that Service-learning in education has the ability to adapt academic concepts to pragmatic use by giving them a multidirectional dimension (Carrington, 2011, p. 11). Learning functions as rhizomes having as features connectivity and heterogeneity. Students, in addition to knowledge in the auditorium, acquire and accept the assemblages of

knowledge produced on site. According to Carrington (2011), academic learning, through Service-learning, acquires a nomadic quality accompanied by haecceity. Service-learning strives to take education to another level. Having an inclusive approach, it tends to overcome academic shortcomings and focus on social transformations at the levels of specificity and singularity.

The theory of Service-learning is of particular importance to this research because it is multidimensional when it comes to knowledge. It does not only provide students with knowledge in the auditorium or classroom. Students have the opportunity to learn more, and to diversify and enrich their knowledge from the service activities in which they are involved. By expanding the range and perspectives from which they acquire knowledge and experience, students automatically create an advantage over other students who only acquire knowledge in the classroom. Also, Service-learning can have an effect in reducing the lecturer's exercise of power over students. In addition to the lecturer, students also have a reliable source where they receive the knowledge of the practitioner, which comes from their experience in the service. This reduction in the power of the lecturer, and the diversification of knowledge and sources of knowledge acquisition, consequently would cause a positive effect on the performance of educational institutions.

Academic success, according to Alonso, Gallego, and Honey (1994), is intimately tied to learning processes. David Kolb (1984) introduced his idea on experimental learning styles, also called the Learning Style Inventory, following years of study in the early 1980s, suggesting that the efficiency of adult learning would grow if the learning object were experienced more explicitly and genuinely. Hence, Kolb defines learning as the process of creating knowledge via the transformation of experience. For him, learning is a comprehensive process of adaptation to the context rather than an outcome, because learning necessitates the resolution of disputes between dialectically antagonistic modalities of adaptation in order to create knowledge, or to learn (Kolb, 1984).

The theory of Learning Styles has been contested by the scientific world, primarily for decontextualizing the teaching-learning process, stressing personal experiences at the detriment of psychodynamic, social, and institutional components (Moura and Cestari, 2017). Unlike learning style theories, Deleuze (1964/2000) argues that nobody learns anything from anybody, therefore nobody teaches anyone anything. He claims that there are no methods for teaching and learning. Deleuze (1964/2000) outlines that the pathway of a scholar's learning consists in *recherche*, which is the "search for truth". So that the

truth can be disclosed, that is, for effective learning to occur, there will be disappointments, discoveries, and the need for learners to relinquish their illusions. As per Deleuze (1964/2000), a mistake implies in us a readiness to think, a desire, and a natural passion for truth. In his view, truth is the result of a struggle with thought, because knowledge is not passive.

Even if the learner is unaware of it at first, the learner's interaction with people and things is a possible chance for learning. Deleuze (1964/2000) sees learning as the creation of something new, a one-of-a-kind occurrence in thought. Deleuze is explicit in his assertion that learning involves doing with the other rather than imitating the other. Actually, we cannot comprehend the process of learning by simply imitating, without first knowing why and how it works (Moura and Cestari, 2017). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1991/2008), there is no single creating and solidifying stem of knowledge that spreads to truth, because knowledge's construction is modular in structure, with no branches, but points that emerge from everywhere and lead to anywhere. They develop the idea of rhizome, which contrasts with the fragmented manner of generating reality as well as the positivist approach to knowledge creation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/2008).

In fact, linking theory with practice in the educational process is a long-discussed topic. Many scholars have raised questions and tried to give their solutions whether education should be only theoretical; if there should be practice as well; how can the connection of the two be made; which should have more weight; etc. Two French philosophers Deleuze and Foucault see theory and practice as inseparable, in the sense that even if we want to separate them from each other, it is not possible. According to them, “practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another” (Taylor & Harris-Evans, 2018 p. 18).

Recently, we can notice an approach to give purely theoretical or abstract fields of study an orientation towards application possibilities in other fields. This not only helps the theoretical areas of study become viable but also helps other areas, of a more technical nature, to make sense, become explicable and maintain ethical character. For instance, one of the most meaningful examples can be found in the field of law. The drafting of constitutions or laws does not have only technical features. When a constitution or a law is written, the work first begins based on a philosophical approach. This is what is commonly called the spirit of the constitution or the spirit of the law. But what exactly is the spirit of the constitution or the law? This can be understood as a theoretical approach

on which the drafting of the constitution or law has been worked on. For example, a constitution or a law may have a liberal, leftist, Marxist, conservative, etc. spirit. It is almost impossible to create a constitution without relying on a theoretical approach. This spirit can be categorised as the philosophical approach. These are such cases where theory and philosophy can be used to be relevant to real life. Moreover, almost every institution needs to be based on or guided by principles, ideas and concepts. As Kant emphasises, "concepts without institutions are empty, and institutions without concepts are blind." (Rider, 2015, p. 11).

A range of elements impact the learning process, including the curriculum in the sense of the priority of topics addressed, flexibility in addressing these topics or challenges, and students' consciousness and practice of operations related with knowledge management in their learning. The learning process is also influenced by teaching techniques and methods, students' learning abilities, which are influenced by cultural variations in a more varied student body, students' quest for a more active, immersive learning environment, and the necessity for students to be able to assimilate updated massive volumes and dynamic information (Smant et al., 1999). Moreover, the learning process can also be influenced by students' willingness and motivation to learn and study, in addition to the learning environment.

The lecturer acts as a facilitator for the teaching/learning processes, assisting students in realizing their full potential (Al-Zoubi, 2014). For lecturers/professors, a knowledge management platform that can integrate various kinds of information, be adaptable, can be effortlessly searched, and has a user-friendly functionality, can be very helpful and valuable (Saba & McDowell, 2007).

Law et al. lists various skills and competencies required to handle knowledge and information, such as:

- Relative and organized knowledge.
- Solve complex problems.
- Collaborate, exchange knowledge, work with experts.
- Communicate, give persuasive presentation.
- Construct knowledge products.
- Integrate and critically evaluate knowledge.

- Identify and evaluate secondary effects (Al-Zoubi, 2014, p. 36).

Problem-based learning, case-based education, and joint research activities are examples of social constructivist teaching techniques that encourage students to build and develop knowledge proactively by dealing with real challenges (Al-Zoubi, 2014).

Several academics, including Baldwin (2008), argue that active learning involves the following:

- comprehending the information/knowledge and developing students' discourse abilities.
- feedback is crucial in learning. Rather of delivering feedback on actual performance, feedback must concentrate on improvement instead of grading.
- the capacity to function effectively in a group environment in higher education. Lecturers should improve students' abilities such as cooperation and teamwork, conflict resolution, critical thinking, negotiating, solving problems, and so forth.
- motivation. Field experts argue that there are three kinds of motivation: goal types, causes of satisfaction, and general incentive to learn, along with the four motivational factors such as interest, relevance, expectation, and satisfaction.

Cognitive processing tasks are the kinds of thinking activities that students employ to process subject content. They obviously lead to learning outcomes regarding knowledge, comprehension, and so on (Vermunt & Vermetten, 2004).

Universities should not only teach students information and knowledge. The "student's head" should not be seen just as a space that needs to be filled with information and knowledge. The student's head should be seen as a space that, above all, should be structured. This means that the university should not only provide students with knowledge and applied skills but should prepare students in such a way that they know how to use their mind and knowledge in different situations. Much of the knowledge gained at university, especially in technology-related fields, may become obsolete and outdated shortly after the student graduates from university. The university must prepare the student to be able to succeed in different environments and situations, to know how to absorb new knowledge, how to properly adapt to new challenges, etc. In addition to the transmission of cultural, professional, and scientific knowledge, the university must

cultivate in students the skills of how to think and act. If the student does not know how to think, the acquired knowledge will not be of much use to him/her.

Through logical organization and ingenious teaching at the university, the professions may be taught effectively and with considerable breadth. Extruding subjects that a student cannot grasp does not satisfy the "principle of economy in education," which calls for economy in the teaching of the content that still has to be taught (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014). The process of changing the attention from content to student competencies, or of enhancing procedural types of knowledge over declarative types of knowledge, may be useful for general innovation research as well.

It is necessary to transform classrooms and auditoriums from places where students do assigned activities under the supervision of lecturers into settings where they may actively engage in their own learning. It is crucial to provide a learning setting that foster certain aspects such as critical thinking, problem solving, and reflective learning, not only for students but also for lecturers and professors (Brown, 1992). Given that the university, in accordance with its name and mission, must offer universal (comprehensive) knowledge for each study programme, then this implies that both the teaching of profession and culture must be carried out in a rationalized manner and with best and most effective pedagogical practices. This means that pedagogy, among other things, must be systematic, synthetic, analytical, comprehensive and student oriented.

2.3 University

University as a concept has been defined by several researchers, theorists, and educational scientists. Each of them has contributed to having a broader and more accurate idea of the university today. Many educational scholars define the today's university as an institution which has three main functions: 1) teaching; 2) scientific research; 3) service to third parties. These functions have implications, which makes the university have multiple roles for the society. For example, through teaching, the university contributes to education, information, culture, and emancipation of the society. Through scientific research, the university contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge, scientific findings, providing data from scientific measurements, possible invention of technological devices, drugs, vaccines, etc. Through the service for third parties, the university offers society, companies, or institutions its experience, knowledge, expertise,

scientific data, and scientific inventions it has achieved. In addition to these three main functions, there are authors who attribute other institutional responsibilities to the university. For instance, Ben-David (1977) charges the university with the responsibility of advancing and expanding social justice as well. For him, the only way the university can fulfil this is by adequately educating capable, driven, and appropriately prepared students from all classes and communities. Another scholar of education, Allan Bloom (1987), defines the university as an institution or space that provides an atmosphere for learning.

The concept of a university is not neutral; it does not reflect a definitive, objective traversal of any specific institutional reality. University is one of the several denominations that are subject of a conflict that has a subjective, political, and conceptual nature related to their own existence. The university is the place of an idea, the specific ground of its conception, and this idea is specifically a political idea of philosophy (Azizi, 2016). When philosophy starts to occur primarily in universities, the university arises as a philosophical idea. When philosophy takes on the university as its own subject, it invests it metaphysically, treating it more like a metaphysical institution than merely as an administrative one.

Bloom (1987) sees the existence or mission of the university linked with the use of reason. For him, the university is the environment where inquiry and philosophic openness flourish freely. Its aim is to foster the noninstrumental use of reason for its own sake and to create an environment in which philosophical doubt is not intimidated by the dominant's physical and moral power. The university ought to support vulnerable and demure reason. But even reason itself can be dangerous because it can turn into prejudice, and prejudice generated by reason is the worst kind of prejudice. As the epitome of genuine openness, a key function of the university, in the era of reason, is to defend reason from itself (Bloom, 1987).

Universities are complex amalgamations of economic, political, legal, and epistemic power relations that still reflect their roots' exclusionary and inclusionary dichotomy. University campuses are artificial enclaves in which students are encouraged to learn socially desirable behaviours, information, and knowledge before being reintegrated into society. According to Foucault's prediction of the last century, universities will become increasingly significant politically as a consequence of new worldwide demands for

active, multi-skilled, and self-regulated citizens, as they amplify and reinforce the power-effects of a growing layer of intellectuals (Deacon, 2006).

The "concept of the university" is a cosmopolitan one, and in the modern society, particularly in the sciences, not national governments, but the worldwide disciplinary communities determine research goals and reputation. Universities are complex organizations that function in the sphere of values and culture, and are preoccupied with important political concerns. Anderson (2010) considers universities as the only institutions capable of doing essential research free from short-term pressures to deliver results.

The discussion about universities intensified in the 1990s. The discussions have been mainly dominated by postmodernist critique, which portrays university as a stronghold of late modernity. According to the postmodernist thesis, universities are outmoded, archaic organizations that, along with other institutions of modernity, are striving to survive in the ashes of modernity, in a global era of information-based capitalism. This argument, which is particularly explained in Bill Readings' book *The University in Ruins* (1997), focuses on the idea that, as a modern institution, the university will ultimately vanish alongside the nation-state it serves. He argues that, as a due to globalization, universities have lost their original "spirit" and are no longer the significant cultural institutions they once were. In his view, the university has become a business enterprise/company and is valued as such, competing with other companies (Readings, 1997).

The determination of the existence of the intensity of the university does not constitute an assessment of the amount, progress, or level of knowledge produced and exercised there, but it has to do with the place occupied by the relationship with knowledge in the existence of subjects and the structuring of the community. It is about the consistency of knowledge as a specific place of political existence. The issue is political because it has to do with the possibilities of subjectivation, specifically with the question of what process or possibilities of subjectivation through knowledge the university cultivates (Azizi, 2016). In recent decades, external factors have strongly influencing higher education trying to shape it according to their own view and interest. Some of these factors are globalization, knowledge-economy, neoliberalism, etc.

2.3.1 The Idea of the University

For decades, the role of the university has been under constant debate, not only among academics but also among policymakers, decisionmakers, and other actors of society. The 19th century English thinker and theologian John Henry Newman defined the university as a centre of "universal knowledge," where specialized training - while valuable in and of itself - was pursued secondarily to a more comprehensive liberal education. These values served as the foundation for the distinctively British concept that education should focus more on developing generalists rather than limited specialists, and that the non-vocational disciplines, such as the arts or pure science, might shape the mind in ways that are useful to a wide range of professions and jobs (Anderson, 2010).

The university is an essential pillar that enables people to challenge dogma, build on existing knowledge, and deal with paradoxes between faith and reason (Newman, 1852 & 1858/2015). In his book *The Idea of a University*, John Henry Newman states that the very name of the university is incompatible with any form of constraints. He supported an inclusive and comprehensive perspective of knowledge. Newman's philosophy asserts that teaching at the university should cover more than just job skills, and students should attend university to develop their most autonomous and diverse viewpoints, experiences, and mental habits (Lanford, 2019). Newman's views on education for university students are known for disagreeing with the utilitarianism of Locke and Mill, who believed that the fundamental purpose of educational institutions must be the production of marketable capabilities in support of more general economic goals. Newman (1852 & 1858/2015) holds a strong (and steadfast) contempt for educational results "which can be weighed and measured," arguing that the goal of education should be defined in a more general sense than student evaluation and specialization within a particular field. Although Newman was not strictly opposed to training for a profession, he did advocate for promoting interdisciplinary study in the university curriculum so that both students and professors might make connections and tackle humanity's most challenging philosophical, social, and scientific concerns. In general, Newman provides two arguments regarding the nature of education for students. He obviously is in favour of a liberal education that prioritizes the growth of the personal intellect over institutional unit of measure and the development of tightly defined skills, but he also believes in the university's capacity to bring together a wide range of perspectives and fields of expertise in the interest of broader and deeper understanding (Newman, 1852 & 1858/2015).

For a long time, there has been a general opinion in Europe which differentiates universities into two main university models: the Anglo-Saxon model and the Continental model. For Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014), the contrasts between English and continental universities are overstated, and they ignore the fact that the most significant differences are to be attributed not to the universities themselves but rather to the very unusual English character. What should be compared is the trends that characterize the development of universities in different countries instead of the obviously varied degree to which those trends have advanced (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014).

Bloom (1987) argues that the main and first task of the university is to keep the permanent questions and issues front and centre. Regarding the mission of the university, it is not of the significant importance the fact that the English universities are not state-run institutions. Although this fact is significant to the culture and history of the English, it does not preclude their higher education institutions from operating basically in a similar way as the state-run universities on the continent. According to Ortega y Gasset's analysis (1930/2014), even in England, universities are state institutions; although, English people have a very different image of the state compared to the people in the continental Europe. In summary, Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014), contends that the vast differences between the universities of the different countries have less to do with the universities themselves than with the nations themselves. Furthermore, the most remarkable development over first half of the twentieth century has been the convergent movement of all the European universities, which was an attempt to homogenize them all.

For Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014), university-level higher instruction consists of two things:

- A) The teaching of the learned professions.
- B) Scientific research and the preparation of future investigators.

A question that can be asked here is whether the university is only professionalism and research? In fact, the university is and should be more than that. In addition, I would add another element to the teaching in higher education. Students, in addition to receiving professional knowledge of the programme they have chosen to study, and scientific knowledge related to research and methods, they must be offered and equipped at the university with another type of knowledge which is universal civic knowledge. If only the knowledge related to a certain programme will be taken at the university, then the

university would be more like a higher vocational school. By its nature, and the name it bears, the university must also include universal knowledge. Regardless of the programme that students have chosen to study, there are some universal knowledge that they should receive at university. This could be described as general education which aims to form or advance civilized and cultured subjects in the university. Courses of a general character, such as philosophy, history, arts, etc., should be part of the curriculum of any university study programme. The knowledge gained from these types of courses is often known as “general culture”.

The phrase "general culture" is used to convey the idea that the student should be provided that kind of knowledge that would, in some manner, develop his/her moral character and intellect. This approach has its roots in the medieval era when the university was established. The university in the medieval period did not conduct scientific research. As for professions, it was little interested in them. Almost everything in the university was about "general culture", with courses such as philosophy, logic, theology, rhetoric, arts, grammar, etc. (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014). Of course, times have changed, the world has evolved, and the demands and needs of humanity have progressed so that the university can no longer have as its mission only the provision and equipping of students with "general culture". What is important is that the university does not lose this feature by focusing only on teaching related to a specific profession.

In fact, transmitting the intellectual heritage was the main objective of higher education, including education for the professions, rather than preparing students for a wide range of specializations. This does not mean that education was not practical. Actually, it was quite practical indeed (Ben-David, 1977). Moreover, Allan Bloom (1987) brings to attention the fact that it is an indisputable reality that the students who come to university are generally uncivilized, so the universities face the responsibility to civilize them. For him, a worthwhile programme of liberal education instils in the student a love of truth and a passion for living a meaning life. Bloom (1987, p. 370) argues: *“True liberal education requires that the student's whole life be radically changed by it, that what he learns may affect his action, his tastes, his choices, that no previous attachment be immune to examination and hence re-evaluation.”*

One may ask what this general culture is and how important it is to human. Ben-David (1977) argues this kind education in the university broadens the student's horizons, and develops his/her intellectual and moral identity. For Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014), culture

is what it allows people to live a life that is above meaningless misery; it enables humans to live a life above a pointless tragedy or an inner degradation. Culture is the essential structure of ideas of a period of time. It does not matter if these ideas are entirely or partially within the scope of science because culture is not science. Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014) argues that intercultural education may promote harmony by highlighting the fact that all cultures have a common humanity and by distributing the cutting-edge knowledge and insightful viewpoints of each academic discipline.

The concept of "method" is often related to terms such as illumination, enlightenment, or *Aufklärung*. Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014) argues that what we now refer to as "a cultured person" was once referred to as "an enlightened person," or someone who had a thorough and clear understanding of the paths of life. Culture is a vital component of life and an aspect of who we are. If there is a proper institution to enlighten its own members and, consequently, the society, that is the university. If it is to be genuine, the historical significance of regaining the university's core purpose of "enlightenment" must be addressed. This indicates that it is the duty of universities to accurately and truthfully present to humanity the entire culture of our era. This view about education is also supported by the prominent German philosopher and thinker Walter Benjamin (1910-1917/2011, p. 58) when he states: "What we want, in other words, is *cultivation* of the natural advance of humanity: *culture*. The expression of this wish of ours is: education."

If the teaching or transmission of culture in the university is neglected, we may perhaps produce better and more skilled physicists, lawyers, doctors, engineers, etc. than before but less cultured. The university, as an institution of universal knowledge, before producing a skilled professional, must produce a proper citizen. To produce only good professionals, vocational schools of different levels can be sufficient. Because the society need qualified professionals, the university should be able to provide professional education and training. But, for Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014), society must first and foremost ensure that the necessary qualifications and capacities for another type of profession - the profession of governing - are developed.

It is important to maintain the teaching of culture and the system of vital ideas in the university. This is one of the main functions of the university, probably more basic and essential than other functions. A person who does not possess the main basic concepts of culture such as of physics, history, biology, philosophy, etc., Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014) considers that person an uneducated individual. He argues that the shocking picture of

how cruel, how foolish, and yet how aggressive is a person educated only in one area and essentially ignorant of all else was witnessed by civilization at the beginning of the twentieth century. Teaching at university only courses that are directly related to a particular programme can have consequences for society, both culturally and politically.

In summary, for Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014, p. 48), the university's teaching includes three main functions:

- a) The transmission of culture;
- b) The teaching of the professions;
- c) Scientific research and the training of new scientists.

It can be said that the type of today's research university has its origins in a very important period in the history of the modern university, at the time of the educational reforms initiated by the Prussian Minister of Education, Wilhelm von Humboldt. Starting with the University of Berlin, which was established in 1810, the "Humboldtian" university served as a model for European universities, and, by 1914, German universities were usually regarded as being the world's best universities (Anderson, 2010). Even later, until the 1930s, with the exception of the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, German universities - such as those in Heidelberg, Berlin, Goettingen, and Leipzig - were considered among the bests. According to the German philosopher and sociologist, Jürgen Habermas, the Humboldtian concept of the university was instrumental in the exceptional international brilliance and accomplishment of German university science on a global scale from the 19th century through the 1930s. The Humboldtian idea had a wide influence in the Western university world. The research universities in the United States, which currently dominate the international rankings, were moulded by the Humboldtian philosophy. Especially, Johns Hopkins University was established in the USA in 1876 with the Humboldtian idea of the university in mind (Tarifa, 2018). Up to the expansion of mass higher education in the late 20th century, the Humboldtian university might be viewed as the defining expression of the university concept. The integration of teaching and research in a scholar's or scientist's activity was the fundamental Humboldtian idea. Instead of only passing along the past's heritage or imparting skills, the Humboldtian university's purpose was to develop knowledge via creative, original, and critical research. The scientific pursuit of truth should be the basis of education and research, and students should actively engage in this research, no matter

how modestly. Research was seen as a support function for teaching by Humboldt, and the specialized research that eventually became the foundation of the German universities' distinction was a later development. It wasn't until the 20th century that research started to be recognized as a crucial activity in and of itself, advancing scientific discoveries, economic development, military power, and social welfare. It's a relatively new practice, fuelled by Britain's preoccupation with rankings lists, to place so much emphasis on research as the primary goal of the university (Anderson, 2010). In fact, only a few institutions in any national system may properly implement the model of the international research university, which is seen at its richest and most powerful in the United States.

The "Humboldtian" model of the university has four main principles: a) the unity of teaching with research in the activity of professors; b) the unity of the natural sciences with the humanities and with philosophy. The latter was considered an essential discipline, c) the unity of science with general education; d) the unity of the science with enlightenment. This charges the university with the responsibility of shaping a society with free and equal citizens (Tarifa, 2018). In summary, Humboldt strongly believed that the role of universities should be to enhance knowledge via original and critical inquiry, rather than merely transmitting the cultural and scientific heritage of the past or by teaching the students specific skills and habits. According to his idea, learning itself should be founded on the pursuit of knowledge, and that students should be involved in the research process (Tarifa, 2018).

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, in the USA, the perception of the university and, more broadly, the idea of the function of education and the school in the development of democracy, were both greatly influenced by the prominent philosopher John Dewey. His well-known book *The School and Society* (1899), which has had a significant impact ever since, might be considered a manifesto that served to reshape the American education system. Dewey believed that education is a social process that fosters progress and that it is life itself, not just a means of preparing oneself for it. He asserts that the university was intended to be a centre where study was conducted, a site of libraries and museums, and a place where the greatest resources were collected, stored, and arranged (Dewey, 1899).

To understand the evolution of higher education, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, Heaney (2015) analysis two reports on higher education that were adopted by the UK

government. The first report is the *Robbins Report* of 1963, and the second one is the *Browne Report* of 2010.

The university is described in the *Robbins Report* (1963) as a privileged location, a centre for innovation, knowledge, and the broadening of intellectual and social horizons. Education has implications beyond only the financial ones. Indeed, the actual or genuine value or meaning of university studies is greater than or not entirely reducible to its quantifiable components. This student-subject will understand that s/he is not being given a ton of material but rather is being introduced to a world of free research. Robbins (1963) believes that the creation of economically competitive subjects is not the only or even the main purpose of higher education. Robbins explicitly argues against publishing records becoming stand-ins or measures of academic excellence. He states that "published work counts for too much in comparison with other kinds of excellence" (Robbins, 1963, p. 184). In Robbins's report, academic freedom means the freedom of inquiry, to teach and research. It also includes academic work being conducted free from market factors or rationality. Furthermore, Robbins contends that overly strong incentives for publication might encourage people who do not have the skill or genuine desire to carry out research to do so because they believe it would help them advance in their careers. Here, the academic is not considered human capital, and knowledge produced by academics is not a market product (Robbins, 1963).

On the other hand, the *Browne Report* (2010), which was adopted by the 2010-2015 government in the UK, has a different approach to higher education. Regarding the university courses and tuition fees, Browne states:

[S]tudents will only pay higher charges if there is a proven *path to higher earnings* [...] Courses that deliver *improved employability* will prosper; those that make false promises will disappear.

Here, we can clearly notice a change from the Robbins report. Students are now also consumers, investors, and entrepreneurs instead of being only subjects. Here, students are sites of human capital. But this approach may pose a problem for science. The *Browne Report* (2010) states that courses or programmes for which there is no employment market will eventually disappear. This means that all scientific disciplines for which the market has no interest will no longer be studied. A similar approach can be noticed in the directives and policies of the European Commission. The European Commission is pushing strong towards a connection of university research with private

sector and industrial interests. According to the European Commission: “Innovation policy is about helping companies to perform better and contributing to wider social objectives such as growth, jobs and sustainability” (Halász, 2013, p. 278). The relation and cooperation of higher education institutions with private industry may provide benefits for universities, companies, and the whole society. But if science will be totally driven by the interests of companies of private sector perhaps science will lose a part of itself. Actually, the standards of scientific evaluation do not indicate that a scientist is not driven by specific values. Adopting these standards themselves indicates that seeking the truth is a value, as otherwise, standards would be meaningless. In fact, scientific evaluation is not impartial. It is motivated by the desire to discover the truth. Universities uphold certain values and principles. Value neutrality is the idea that other values should be subordinate to the pursuit of truth outlined by science, not a denial of all other values (Ben-David, 1977).

Many of the greatest scientific achievements in the world, such as Newton's theory of gravity, were not discovered or invented as a top-down demand, or because some businessmen were clamouring to pay for them, but they were achieved, not rarely, by the personal inner vocation of the scientist. Consequently, the questions that can be raised here are: Does this kind of science in university, directed by the pragmatic demands of various private companies, prevent scientist from carrying out his/her work and research according to his/her own professional vocation and interests? Does not this approach prevent the science from achieving great discoveries and even though those discoveries are not part of any company's interests?

Neither Newton's discovery of gravity nor Einstein's discovery of special relativity were achieved due to market demand. However, they are among the greatest scientific discoveries of humanity. If scientific research depended only on the interests of private companies, would it be in danger of disappearing for many fields for which the private sector has no demand or interest? I am afraid, yes. Actually, one could argue that no one is asking for the university to be run solely according to the demands or interests of private companies or corporates. If so, this seems a fair and logical process. But then, how to explain the statement of the *Browne Report* (2010), mentioned above, that the study programmes that are not required by the market will eventually disappear?! If the study and research programmes that are not demanded by the market are headed for extinction, then the claim that no one is demanding that the university be driven only by market

demand is not very true, but seems more like manipulation. In order to claim exclusivity, it is not necessary that the claim always have the word "only" in it. If the market decides which programmes or fields of research disappear in the university, this means exactly that the university life is oriented only by the demands of the market.

As Ben-David explains (1977), the need for pure research is not an end in itself. The idea of pure science here provides no favour for "purity" for its own sake. Indeed, such research may genuinely be driven by practical relevance and have valuable application. This implies that researchers have the autonomy to choose which issues to research, and are primarily evaluated by their peers who possess the necessary expertise and knowledge based on the inherent intellectual value of their contributions. Since the purpose of this research is to arrange and advance knowledge, innovators and users of advanced knowledge should decide its course and assessment, similarly to how users of applied research and entrepreneurs should determine the course and assessment of research that is applied to their items (Ben-David, 1977).

In fact, the claim that the university should be connected to the market is a tautological repetition because universities are already connected to the market, especially in the capitalist world. As long as in the university, students learn and study specific fields that are strongly related to specific professions, the university is automatically connected to the market because these students apply in the market the knowledge and skills they learn in the university. Simply put, if a student graduates in Architecture, it is very likely that s/he will enter the job market and work as an architect in a certain company, where s/he will apply the knowledge s/he has learned in the university. The request to connect the university to the market is a request that does not make much sense today because such a thing is happening. The request to connect the university with the market have to be replaced with the request to find the most efficient ways of connecting the university with the market. The university is and must be inseparably in constant relationship with the market.

The market could serve as a driver/catalyst of scientific research at the university. Undoubtedly, financial interest gives a boost to scientific research. It is undeniable that the desire to make money is one of the main drivers of development. This is explained by the fact that many developments and inventions, in various fields, have taken place outside the university, in the market. But the problem appears when the market becomes the "God" to which scientific research must worship. If it depended only on market

demand, would we still have scientific research in disciplines like astronomy or philosophy? Would we have scientific research to discover and learn more about how the universe or our planet was created? I do not believe that there are many private companies willing to invest a lot of money to advance our knowledge on topics such as how the world was created, or what kind of planets and how many stars exist in the two trillion galaxies that are estimated to be in the observable Universe. The close cooperation of the university with the market has proven to be very useful, even inevitable; the total dependence of the university and its activities on the market might be problematic.

Going back to the *Browne Report*, since this report does not address the evaluation of academic output, Heaney (2015) analysis another important document which is the *Research Excellence Framework* (REF). REF is a UK government-run assessment of the academic and research output of universities. It was initially conducted in 2014, taking the place of the prior Research Assessment Exercise. Each department of university presents research portfolio indicating members of the staff, publications, doctoral degrees issued, research income, and research environment. Publication lists should include case studies and the impact of the research. These submissions by university departments are evaluated by different panels as part of the specific units of evaluation, mainly based on the criteria of "outputs," "impact," and "environment." (REF, 2012, p. 6). Just to clarify, the "impact" criterion does not include effects on academia or education. Government financing is directly correlated with doing excellent research; institutions that generate the least quality research receive less support and vice versa (Docherty, 2011). The freedom is somehow limited by the market and the concrete (i.e., economic) implications of research on society. Additionally, the freedom is limited by the epistemological tools of political economy and statistics to determine the relative impact of various research output units. According to the *Research Excellence Framework* (REF) also, the academic is seen and managed as a site of human capital, and their knowledge conduct and production mainly consists of the production of a market-product.

In the *Robbins Report* (1963), knowledge is a component of a transforming educational experience, and its importance and value are not to be quantified. In the *Browne Report* (2010), there are knowledge and skills that are obtained when you get a degree. In the *Robbins Report* (1963), academic freedom is a value that is not grasped by the market. In the *Research Excellence Framework* (REF) (2012) assessment exercises, we can notice that the production of knowledge is inextricably linked to neoliberal governmentality and

market reasoning. The quantifiable nature of knowledge and how it relates to the financial worth of capital are what give it value.

Above, three important documents related to higher education in the United Kingdom were taken for analysis. This selection was not random. The reasons why they were chosen are as follows: a) Great Britain has one of the oldest systems of higher education and some of the most excellent universities in the world; b) through these three documents we can see the transformation that British higher education and, consequently, Anglo-Saxon universities have undergone in the last 60 years; c) the Anglo-Saxon approach to higher education is so influential today that it is shaping higher education in many countries of the world; d) the reform of higher education in Albania (2015) had the Anglo-Saxon system as a model and aimed to bring Albanian universities closer to the British model.

The "Robbins principle", which states that university spaces should be open to everyone who qualifies for them based on aptitude and accomplishment, was formulated in 1963 in the Robbins committee on higher education report in Britain. The campus universities of the 1960s, often known as "plateglass" institutions, exemplified the Robbins-Oxbridge model, which represented a distinctively English "concept of the university." (Anderson, 2010). The idea that universities ought to be communities, where the moral impact of residential life and social engagement outside of the classroom are as essential as formal education, was nearly universally accepted at the time. It is still regarded that the British university ideal includes leaving home as a necessary component of the student experience. Studying at the university means that, as long as you study there, you become an inhabitant of the university, part of it, co-owner and co-shaper, learner and contributor. For a period of 3, 4, 5 or more years, the student must have some kind of detachment from family reality, and belong to the university. This means that s/he must live all the time in a university environment. It is not enough for a student to go to university, attend two hours of lectures a day and then leave university life to return the next day. University experience should be more than that. For a student, the ideal is to be surrounded all the time by other students and lecturers during the entire period of studies. To make this possible, the best way is to create large university campuses and campus life. A student is not a pupil who only absorbs information and knowledge. The student reflects, comments on the knowledge. S/he needs to continuously engage in discussions with his/her peers outside of formal lecture hours. If a student, after the lecture, returns home

and continues to discuss with his/her family the same things s/he discussed before attending the university, it is likely that s/he will not establish a strong relationship with university knowledge and critique. If a student is surrounded all the time by a university environment, students, lecturers, researchers, etc., even if s/he is not very interested in studies, s/he is more likely to get involved in studies over time because people are social beings who can be influenced. By comparison, it's almost impossible to live for five years inside a stadium and, over time, not become interested in sports. University campus life influences students and professors by making them more involved.

In 1997, in the United Kingdom was released the *Dearing Report*, a collection of important reports on the future of higher education in the UK. The political perspective that competing in the "knowledge economy" was the most crucial responsibility of a higher education institution in an era of globalization is reflected in the *Dearing report*. Even though Dearing obviously reaffirmed a number of the classic pillars of higher education, the report also supported the view of treating students like clients, which is significantly dissimilar from the idea of a "community of scholars and students." The influence of this British approach to higher education began to spread throughout Europe. At a meeting in 2000 in Lisbon, the heads of the European Union developed a similar strategy for the "European Higher Education Area". What came next, in 2007, was the Lisbon declaration of the European Universities' Association. The Lisbon Declaration was considered as an update of the Bologna Declaration. Although it maintained the necessity for university autonomy, its formulation tended to soften the strong statements made in 1988 and to give way to the management and financial priorities of governments (Anderson, 2010).

Universities supporting commercial interests is nothing new or surprising. The essential issue is to what extent financial needs should be met by priorities established outside of academic institutions that are beyond academic curiosity and interests, originality, and discipline-specific intrinsic growth. A knowledge economy relies on the independence and quality of the knowledge, and freedom of thought is the sole condition for creativity (Anderson, 2010).

When governments attempt to use universities to cause social change, they are frequently criticized for "social engineering." But, since their beginnings, social functions have been a part of universities. It is difficult to imagine any genuine university as an "ivory tower" living outside of its historical and social environment, no matter how much one may argue

about the fundamental nature of universities. Universities are sometimes expected to maintain society as it is by replicating the current power structure, and other times to transform it. A notable example of social engineering is the Victorian-era reform of Oxford and Cambridge, which freed these institutions from the dominance of the aristocratic and Anglican elite and redesigned them for a new middle-class elite. In Britain's 1970s and 1980s polytechnic boom, some sector leaders formulated a "polytechnic philosophy" that emphasized the institutions' distinctions from traditional university. They claimed that polytechnics carried on a long tradition of contributing to the community, and that addressing and solving practical issues, and assisting students acquire qualifications come before the pursuit of pure knowledge. This concept of "people's universities" derived from the British left's long-standing vision of education as a tool for individual emancipation (Anderson, 2010). An alternate perspective is the idea that demand and competition would reshape university in a new model, called as marketization.

For Anderson (2010), there are three possible destinies for the concept of a university that integrates teaching and research, fosters the general powers of the mind, and provides specialized instruction. First, it could be applied to the component of a large-scale higher education system with relatively minor modifications. This was the Robbins approach, but it appears unnecessary for a variety of vocational training, and imposes enormous demands on resources. Secondly, one may write off the Humboldtian university, put it in the past, and reshape all universities into a utilitarian and managerial framework. Thirdly, there may be a greater receptivity to the premise that universities serve a range of purposes and interpret the term "university" in various ways, provided that access to research-led universities is just and democratic, which is unlikely to be the case if those universities are permitted to be privatized or to charge market rates. The American case illustrates that accepting difference rather than suppressing it is healthy for university education. According to Anderson (2010), the principle of liberal education and the disinterested pursuit of knowledge appear to be better in the US than in Europe.

If we are relying on the past for advice, it is preferable to view the "concept of the university" as a collection of tensions rather than a fixed set of features. These tensions are always there but are resolved differently based on the period and area. Most evident, the main tensions in the university are between autonomy and accountability, as well as between teaching and research. Anderson (2010, p. 6) lists other tensions such as those

“between universities' membership of an international scholarly community, and their role in shaping national cultures and forming national identity; between the transmission of established knowledge, and the search for original truth; between the inevitable connection of universities with the state and the centres of economic and social power, and the need to maintain critical distance; between reproducing the existing occupational structure, and renewing it from below by promoting social mobility; between serving the economy, and providing a space free from immediate utilitarian pressures; between teaching as the encouragement of open and critical attitudes, and society's expectation that universities will impart qualifications and skills.” These are university dilemmas that continue to concern academics and policymakers.

The public role of the university, according to Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein (2009), is in danger of being lost or limited to a handful of measurable tasks. They are concerned with the state and role of the university, analysing the transformation of the pre-modern (medieval) university into the modern university. According to their reasoning, people in premodern (medieval) times lived their own finitude facing something infinite (God), which was outside of the world. On the other hand, in modern times this type of report no longer exists in the university. The relationship of the finite, the limited with something infinite, external (such as God), turns mostly into a secular relationship with processes within the university and science that are almost always infinite (Simons and Masschelein, 2009).

As we seek to overcome our human limitations by mastering these autonomous forms, the modern university aids in the discovery of truth and exposes the character of our role and place among broader historical currents. According to Simons and Masschelein (2009), the state is required to support universities, but it should not necessarily seek direct economic returns because the idea and role of the modern university are set above such instantaneous issues and concerns (Allen, 2011).

Based on the ideas of Simons and Masschelein (2009), Allen notes that today's universities have returned or are returning to the 'entrepreneurial university'. According to him, today's "entrepreneurial university" is characterized by a very different relationship to the world. Allen (2011) argues that the entrepreneurial university no longer aims to lead us to a better future by its privileged grasp of the mechanisms underlying our existence, even though there are elements of modern university. This means a pass into an entrepreneurial concern that focuses on maximizing the use of currently available

resources. This process, according to him, is a transformation from historical to environmental self-understanding (Allen, 2011).

The sense of being in a perpetual state of scarcity of resources has replaced the modern endeavour to comprehend and master historical processes with the entrepreneurial experience of finitude (Simons and Masschelein, 2009). The leading concepts of progress and emancipation are swapped out for concepts like empowerment, innovation, and excellence. Simons and Masschelein (2009) criticise this change since, in their opinion, particularly innovation is an ahistorical term with no point of reference other than what is required or available in a market-based system. In this context, in order to maximize its own potential, the university needs to adapt itself to the competitive world from which it is very difficult to be detached.

According to this approach, this transformation may endanger the existence of the university itself. Regarding this issue, Simons and Masschelein (2009, p. 205) raise the question: ‘Why do we still need universities when it is possible that each of its functions (research, teaching, service/innovation) is being performed more efficiently (more excellently) by other monofunctional institutions?’.

In fact, it may be true that special, monofunctional, profiled, specialized, independent institutions may be more effective in performing each of the aforementioned functions. For example, research centres or think tanks can achieve very good results in scientific research; schools and vocational courses can have very good teaching performance; private companies can be very efficient in providing services or innovation. However, a counter question that can be asked is why the university should not be effective and competitive in these aspects? Moreover, the university has something that other institutions do not have. The university can be comprehensive as it can combine all these processes. Moreover, the university has the advantage of spreading knowledge since it has an audience of young, energetic, educated people such as students. Also, the university has the advantage of having a diversity of human resources such as experienced academics, young researchers, bureaucrats, and students. However, the university also has disadvantages. The university has no profitable industry that can invest heavily in innovation, nor does it have customers where it can test or practice its findings or inventions.

The university model also changes the approach of the academics who work in it. In the modern university, academics and lecturers usually do not see themselves as the category

whose task it is to contribute to the modernization of society. Different is their approach in the entrepreneurial university where academics are required to have a public role in the modernization and innovation of society and the country, taking into account the needs (Simons and Masschelein, 2009). But there are researchers who criticize this role of academics in the entrepreneurial university. Allen (2011) argues the issue with this organizational shift is that it causes an immunization and separation that is specific to the entrepreneurial university. According to him, this leads to the formation of a collective of individuals who share nothing but their constant endeavour to meet the needs of the outside world.

The concern raised here is that as the entrepreneurial university grows over the world (stimulating excellence and innovation in a mutually competitive setting), an increasing sphere emerges in which the private application of reason is the sole form employed. Those working in this university environment are becoming increasingly concerned with the improvement of their respective institutions. They are integrated into the private application of reason. Perspectives eventually shorten as a result of escalating requirements of performativity, where performance solely is what counts. That means that an ethic of obedience or subordination to a continuous quality judgment becomes an absolute priority. As academics become more immersed in the pursuit of ranking, innovation, impact, excellence, fund-seeking, and so forth, the sphere inhabited by the private use of reason expands to encompass university life, causing significant distraction. This shift has been described by several authors as immunizing academics and universities from the world they once intended to lead (Simons and Masschelein, 2009; Allen, 2011; Ball, 2003).

Performance metrics, which reflect the entrepreneurial mindset of researchers and academic units, quantify excellence. These intellectual technologies that designate the excellent researcher or research unit via the inscription and computation of performance mensuration are the mechanism by which research excellence is fully revealed and computable (Rose, 1996). Talent enhancement consists of a collection of techniques for fostering excellence (Monash University, Research Strategic Plan 2011-2015).

The role of excellence in teaching is similar to that of excellence in research in that it serves as a means of directing academics' teaching methods and career prospects toward the university's economic goals. Like in research, performance measurement standards give specific definition to abstract ideas of excellence in learning and teaching by turning

them into scripts that can be counted and compared. Although excellence is a discourse that is strongly rooted in technical processes and techniques, it is not the sole vocabulary used to explain and assess academics (Cannizzo, 2015).

Taking into account the above criticisms, authors such as Simons and Masschelein (2009) suggest the establishment of a new university model, which is neither modern nor entrepreneurial. They propose for a "world university," a form of institution that exposes and discusses issues and concerns that are of interest to the public and that bring the public together. According to them, this type of university would forsake its trust in pure facts, such that, a reality that operates as an inner world, providing authority to researchers while placing ordinary individuals in a state of ignorance or simple opinion. It would also avoid simply answering to needs, which, as previously as argued by them, immunizes the institution, as well as assuming that the university is the intermediary to the realm of facts and solutions. The philosophy on which the world university and its personnel should be modelled is that they hold a public function. In some ways, this function is more constrained than their function in the modern university, but, on the other hand, it is also more expansive. The world university bounds itself by acknowledging that it must not usurp social issues and transform them into privatized concerns for experts to address. The world university, on the other hand, expands itself by acknowledging that its revised public function demands interaction with its public on subjects of concern and interest. This type of university is supposed to transform objects into issues of concern by illustrating the complex entanglements of facts or needs. This creates a space in which it is plain that no one has a solution, and that discussion and dialogue are needed. It is expected to be a space where there is a breakdown in the hierarchy between those who have access to objective facts and those who do not, between specialists or enlightened scholars and average citizens. Simons and Masschelein (2009) back this idea by explaining that in this type of university, experts should not really convey the idea that they are addressing and talking in terms of universal truths or privileged access points. Instead, this university would develop into a hub for world citizens to come together to discuss issues that concern them.

According to Simons and Masschelein's (2009) analysis, the entrepreneurial university runs the risk of becoming immune to problems of greater concern. In response, they provide a series of ideas that may serve as the cornerstone of a revival in which the university once more focuses on serving the public good while avoiding the flaws of its

perhaps more self-assured modernist forerunner. Despite the revelations provided by Simons and Masschelein, Allen (2011) points out two shortcomings in their analysis. On the one hand, it undervalues the entrepreneurial university's resistance ability. On the other hand, it offers a replacement – the world university - that runs the danger of making the same mistakes as its predecessor. Allen (2011) refers to them as the underestimating problem and the problem of extended immunization. Regarding the extended immunization, Allen means that the core problem with the "world university" proposal is that it appears oddly detached from world problems. Actually, this world university has to face and tackle the reality, not just by bringing up pressing concerns, but also by acknowledging that its overarching mission of enlightenment cannot be separated from the varying and unequal realities of the people it aspires to gather. The world university shouldn't allow itself to turn into a production of quiet and cosiness above the unfair and unequal realities that exist below, due to the dispersal of power, which asserts that power never vanishes and never becomes insignificant. The university should actively engage with such realities while also being politically committed and self-critically aware.

According to Habermas, the aim of education - particularly higher education - in the advancement of democracy, should be to organize society in a way that allows for more liberated modes of interaction and discourse among its members. He claims that discursive communication, which is taught mostly in schools, particularly in universities, and assumes freedom and justice, has been "colonized" in nowadays society and is hampered by the functional requirements of the state and the market. For Habermas, even the university's language and pedagogical methods were unable to resist this "colonization". He argues that, in these conditions, the university's challenge is to liberate itself from this "colonization" or, in other words, the university, as a component of the public domain, must free the critical reason from the oppression of power and money and contribute to the development of a functioning participatory democracy (Tarifa, 2018). Habermas asserts that among several other things, democracy and higher education both foster conditions and possibilities for the emergence of discursive communication, which is needed for the pursuit of the truth. In essence, a democratic society is one in which its citizens learn, and this also holds true for universities. One of a university lecturer's responsibilities is to demonstrate and instruct students on how to build an essential public sphere where individuals can discuss in order to find solutions to issues of society (Tarifa, 2018). This is how education supports reasoned social action, in Habermas' view. This is

where Habermas recognizes the crucial and transformational role of education in general and, specifically, of universities.

In a constantly changing international economy, higher education institutions face several challenges (Birgeneau, 2005). Birgeneau (2005) claims that universities face an increasingly interlinked world in which knowledge, innovation, and creativity are crucial components of healthy societies. Bloch (2005) believes that our society has entered a new era, one of knowledge, in which the fundamental strategic resource required for development and progress is knowledge, practically speaking, educated people. Universities are facing new and amplified external pressures as a result of globalization, and the last several decades have seen increased demand on higher education institutions to adapt to this international integration (Bloom, 2005). In the framework of the continuous integration of countries, the movement of ideas is one of the main elements of globalization, along with the movement of goods, capital, and labour (Scott, 2005). Scott (2005) identifies two key characteristics of what he refers to as "21st century globalisation": 1) Intensification of trends related to "knowledge society". The growth of information and communication technology, which has been followed by a cultural revolution, is one of these tendencies. 2) Rapid changes and innovation have caused confusion about individual identities, social affiliations, gender roles, and employment and career.

In today's era where globalization and digitization have changed, accelerated, and facilitated access and acquisition of information and knowledge, a question that can be raised is: *What do we still need the university for?* If the university is only necessary to train or learn a specific profession, this can be done through training centres, higher vocational schools, etc. If the university is necessary to have access to information and knowledge, this access nowadays can be achieved online on the web. The university differs because, in addition to specific training, it also provides the universal knowledge or approach that a person needs. That is why it is called *university* because at it, the student, in addition to professional and technical knowledge, also receives a general, universal knowledge. Also, the university selects the appropriate and needed information and knowledge to provide to the students. The university guides the student. Reading the wrong books and articles, or receiving the wrong information can be more harmful than not reading or being uninformed at all. For example, reading the wrong books can

manipulate young people and make them believe in untrue things such as the earth is flat, or certain propaganda.

The university should have a liberal arts nature, which means that, in the university, the student not only learns about a specific field but also learns how to be a decent citizen. If the university has this spirit, the student has a space and time to discover himself/herself. In this case, the university is an oasis between the intellectual emptiness that the student has when s/he enters the university and the inevitable professional training in the years of study that lie ahead. The university ought to develop in the student the idea that learning should and can be both synoptic and accurate (Bloom, 1987). Also, at the university, the student learns the skills to adapt to the evolution of his/her profession, knowledge, techniques, and new professions, which, by the time s/he is a student, they may not have been invented yet. For these reasons, study programmes should have a degree of flexibility in terms of curricula. If the university operates in accordance with the above-mentioned principles, it helps the student not only to form civically and culturally, to acquire knowledge on a certain field, to perfect a certain profession, but also to discover herself/himself. Of course, knowledge and professions should not be separate; they should have relations with each other and serve each other. Heidegger (1985) argues that it is the professions that impact and administrate the people's greatest and most fundamental knowledge of their whole existence. University life must be consistent with the mission, needs, and limits of the institution. In this way, the university would be more genuine and sincere with itself and society. Among other things, the university is science and intellect constructed into an institution.

Nevertheless, in the globalization context, the question of what universities should do to remain competitive, assure the quality of goods and services, and ensure that their students have a meaningful academic experience, can be raised. As a result of globalization and marketization, universities have been compelled to reconsider how they instruct, carry research, and manage the institution and its multiple stakeholders.

The university is not and should not be seen as an employment agency. Of course, the university helps significantly in finding a more suitable and well-paid job, but this is not the main goal of the university. Actually, the concept of this sort of higher education, where one studies a particular subject with the goal of earning a decent living from it was largely an introduction of the nineteenth century, even though such an idea of education has been around in the eighteenth century and probably earlier (Ben-David, 1977). The

reduction of unemployment should be linked with vocational-professional education, which has as its specific purpose the training and introduction of qualified persons with vocational skills into the labour market. On the other hand, there is no reason why the university should not be connected or not have relations with the market. For a higher education institution to be productive, successful, and sustainable, there must be an equilibrium between the internal and external pressures.

Along with teaching and research, universities, additionally, have to contribute to society. Universities must guarantee the supply of qualified human resources for society and economy as well. Universities have a vast knowledge base that can serve to drive the development of new sectors and opportunities. The government should find ways to support universities to use this knowledge base efficiently. On the other hand, in addition to contributing in social and economic growth, it is the task of universities to put their knowledge and expertise to the market and, consequently, to generate income. With this revenue, universities may enhance the quality of the public good and the market services they offer (Birkner, 2022). In capitalist societies, whose economy and development are based on the free market, knowledge creators must be able of integrating their knowledge into the market. Also, companies need to connect with knowledge creators. Specifically, in the case of Albania, research institutions and HEIs must get more involved in business operations in order to assist Albanian ventures and companies grow and become more competitive.

2.3.2 Academic Freedom in University

Academic freedom is a crucial issue in higher education. But, the idea of freedom itself can have several approaches and meanings. I am presenting shortly two of them which derive mainly from philosophical approaches. The first idea of freedom is to conceive it as self-legislation or autonomy. This approach to freedom is not related to the concept of liberty. Being autonomous or acting in autonomy requires continually individual commitment and effort. Freedom as self-legislation stands on the idea that one can improve and master one's desires and wishes, by observing, understanding and modifying them. Ideally, autonomy is a double freedom, from external barriers and internal constraints. On the other hand, there is freedom as liberty, which means that one has the freedom and space to do whatever s/he pleases, to follow his/her vocations without

hindrance. Freedom here is considered broad and almost boundless. According to this categorization, the academic freedom that academics can have in the university can be freedom as autonomy or freedom as liberty (Rider, 2015).

The seventeenth-century German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz considered the concept of responsibility related to the freedom of the individual, which does not depend on logical obligations but on moral ones. A century later, another German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, stated that it is necessary for people to be conscious of their own freedom in order to establish a ground for moral concerns and arrangements (Atıcı, 1997).

Bloom (1987) believes that the availability of alternative ideas and thoughts is just as necessary for freedom of the mind as—if not more so than—the lack of legal restrictions. For him, the most effective dictatorship is not the one that uses force to enforce conformity; rather, it is the one that eliminates all awareness of alternative options, renders it unthinkable that other options are possible, and destroys any sense of the outside world. Reasoned thoughts, not feelings or duties, are what set an individual free (Bloom, 1987).

Regarding the academic freedom, Heidegger (1985) argues that the greatest freedom is to give oneself the law. In his view, this kind of "academic freedom" has been abolished in the German university since it was just negative and not truly genuine. For Heidegger (1985), in most cases, academic freedom meant being free from concern, having arbitrary objectives and inclinations, and acting without restriction in what was done and left undone.

Among other things, academic freedom is also a condition for the evaluation of lecturers and researchers at the university. Only in freedom is there a possibility for a person to act or not to act according to his/her choice or decision without any external constraint or restriction. In this sense, freedom is considered generally as a presumption of responsibility. The only activities for which people may be blamed or praised, penalized or awarded, are those that we freely do. Human freedom is a fundamental, vital, and inalienable right, and it occurs within the framework of knowledge. Freedom may be understood as a state in which individuals act as moral agents based to and rationally based on their own choices and rational decisions. So, freedom is closely linked and interrelated to responsibility and accountability. The more freedom of choice and decision you have, the more responsibility you have, and consequently the more accountability can be required from you.

Universities have had an international approach since they were founded. However, universities were not immune to the strong influence of nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and politicians turned to them to help create national identity and advance national interests. Anyways, the global outlook of university activities persisted. Another characteristic was that universities maintained some corporate identity and autonomy even when the central state set faculty hiring, payment policies and courses' curricula. The current concept of "academic freedom" emerged in reaction to this pressure, and national constitutions in many countries now specifically include it as a fundamental right. Actually, the concept has two facets. First, it is important that individual scientists and academics have the freedom to do research, teach, and publish their findings. Universities would be protected from religious or political intervention if objective science obeyed strict intellectual standards and was subject to what is now known as "peer review." In democracies, universities became the homes of public intellectuals and an independent and innovative cultural force as academic freedom expanded to include the right of academics to speak out on political issues and be active citizens.

Second, universities should have internal autonomy to manage their own activities and make their own choices about academic issues. According to Humboldt, universities functioned better and served society and the state the most when they were shielded from urgent extraneous forces (Anderson, 2010). Even though the nineteenth century was the era of laissez-faire capitalism, no one at the time advocated for running universities as commercial enterprises. This kind of autonomy was a component of classical liberalism, which believed that a pluralist civil society with self-governing institutions provided the best protection for freedom and diversity. On the other hand, neoliberalism, which aims to remove all obstacles to the free market's activity, has proven to be quite different. The Bologna declaration of 1988, named "the Magna Carta of the European Universities," is the most significant current articulation of the Humboldtian philosophy. According to the first principle of Bologna declaration, "research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power." (Anderson, 2010, p. 3). The second concept was that teaching and research had to go hand in hand, and the third one asserted that freedom in research and teaching was the guiding value of university life. The declaration also said that the university is the custodian of the European humanist heritage, which can be interpreted as a European formulation of

Robbins' argument that universities should disseminate a common culture. However, the Education Reform Act of 1988 of Great Britain gave a new dimension to universities, which was mainly commercial, making them quite business-oriented. But this act was interpreted by many academics as being at the expense of university autonomy and self-governance as it made the university more influenced and dependent on external agents such as corporations, government, media, donors, etc. (Anderson, 2010).

The idealistic image of university autonomy includes, among other things, the following components:

“the ability of academics to determine their own research priorities and devise their own courses; the equal valuation of teaching and research; personal relations between teacher and student; the dominance of discipline-related single honours degrees; well-prepared students, with generous grants which meant that they did not have to combine work and study; academic self-government and collegiality within universities; and collegiality between them, seeing universities as engaged in a common task rather than competing with each other” (Anderson, 2010, p. 4).

Independence and freedom of action, which are backed by authority delegation and personal autonomy from higher education executives, are major indicators of the organizational culture that dominates the university. An open organization culture encourages interaction and the share of perspectives, experiences, and opinions. It also enables employees to voice their thoughts without being concerned about losing their jobs. Cultures that proactively encourage knowledge transfer, exchange, and acquisition offer a favourable setting for increased application of knowledge and the development of knowledge culture.

The job requirements for a lecturer are also very important. The lecturer risks losing her/his academic freedom by actively engaging in self-surveillance as a result of job demands (Tracy, 2000). The subjectivity of a person (lecturer or student) is no longer personal when it engages with the social world. At the moment, one's subjectivity becomes political (Boler, 1999).

The English scholar Stefan Collini argues that universities once meant preparing a small group of people to serve the church, and later to serve the state (Sulejmani, 2017). Universities became a protected space where efforts are made to make the deepening of

human knowledge a top priority. According to Collini, this does not mean that there are no other forms of organization where this knowledge is deepened, but the university, in principle, is not subject to any preliminary goal in the search for knowledge. This is the autonomy of universities, he adds (Sulejmani, 2017). In other words, the university is a product of social circumstances, which is put at the service of society, but preserving the autonomy of thought. Only after freedom and autonomy have been secured, the university can fulfil its social duties.

2.3.3 Scientific Research in University

Science is a methodical and rational approach to finding out how the universe works. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the term "science" is originated in Latin as "scientia," which signifies "knowledge based on demonstrable and reproducible data". Science, as defined by this description, seeks quantifiable outcomes via testing and analysis, a practice referred to as the scientific method. Science is founded on facts rather than opinions or beliefs. The scientific method is intended to question ideas via research (Hamer and Bradford, 2022).

As for scientific research at the university, it is a subject of much discussion. The questions that arise here can be several, such as: does the university necessarily have to be a place of scientific research; what we call science and how we measure scientific research; is there scientific research beyond publications; etc. Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014) holds the belief that there is no compelling reason why the average student needs or should be a scientist. According to him, the fundamental missions of the university do not directly or in any significant way include science in the genuine sense, i.e. scientific research. Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014) argues the university's excessive focus on research and inquiry brings another negative consequence, which is the elimination of another function of the university - perhaps the primary one - culture. However, he admits that the university and science are inseparable in another sense.

Above I raised the question of what we consider science. In the purest sense of the term, science is exclusively research and investigation: it is the process of raising issues, working on them, and coming up with solutions. In light of this, learning a science, teaching it to others, or applying it appropriately is not science because to know is not to research. Researching means finding out a truth or, conversely, exposing an error.

Knowing something entails assimilating it into one's awareness and having it in one's possession after it has been acquired and secured (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014). Science is discovery and creation through certain methods, while the main objective of teaching is to convey and explain what has been discovered and created, to digest it, and to encourage students to absorb it. Above, I asserted that university education should be accessible and attainable by ordinary people or average students. The same cannot be said regarding the access to science. The idea is that the teaching of the professions and the search for truth are not the same thing, and should not be treated equally in the university.

The university, in respect to its primary function, must equip students with culture and make them good professionals in accordance with the chosen study programme. The university must channel the inclinations and interests and economize the time of students and lecturers. This requires good knowledge management in the institution. That means that average students, who have no inclination and interest in science, should not waste time in scientific research, especially at the bachelor's level. The university must take care that these students are provided with the appropriate and updated knowledge in their fields of study, as well as the ways and possibilities of applying the acquired knowledge. Excellent students or those interested in science can and should be involved in scientific research at the university, but not all students. Many students choose a specific study programme in order to become good professionals in a particular field rather than to become scientists. By making scientific research the main focus, the university risks lowering the level of teaching professions to students, and, consequently, not producing good professionals. On the other hand, the university risks lowering the scientific level of the research by making every student carry out scientific research. To put it more clearly, at the bachelor's level, it is enough for the university to teach average students, with no interest in science, only the basics of science and the full arsenal of knowledge and practices of the profession. If the university were to eliminate science from its activity, it would turn into a higher professional school, and if it focused too much on science, it would risk becoming a research institute.

Science is one of the core elements of the university, or, at least, it should be. What is called science is difficult to define exhaustively. Several academics have given different definitions to science. An interesting and unusual definition is that of Richard Feynman (1999) who describes science as “the belief in the ignorance of authority” (p. 187). Percy Bridgman (1947) has given another controversial definition of science, claiming that there

is actually no scientific method, only persons “doing their damndest with their minds, no holds barred” (pp. 144–145).

Many scholars consider scientific research, also known as "knowledge production," as the heart of higher education. The empowerment of academic staff members is greatly influenced by collaboration and cooperation in scientific endeavours. Another important component of knowledge generation is the workplace atmosphere or the organizational climate. Research is an important university's contribution in knowledge community. The university's distinct characteristic is the relationship between research and teaching, where research is supposed to have a significant influence on teaching (Belawi & Hussin, 2007).

Of course, science makes a division of scientific research, mainly into two categories. In one hand stands what is called pure or fundamental research, in the other hand is applied research. Remaining in law studies, we can notice such a distinction. A field of study of a theoretical and somewhat abstract character is for example the philosophy of law, which deals with the nature and spirit of law and the rights of human or subject. Meanwhile, aspects which relate mainly to the social and political context of the legislation are considered as applied legal philosophy.

In academic culture, there is a division of sciences into hard and soft sciences. Subjects such as physics, mathematics, chemistry, geology, etc., are commonly considered hard sciences, while social and human sciences, which include education as well, are considered soft sciences. According to Berliner (2002), in fact, the essential difference is not between the hard and soft sciences, but between the hard and easy sciences. For him, what individuals do in the disciplines of physics, chemistry, mathematics, geology, and the like are easy-to-do science, while social sciences, and especially educational sciences, should be considered as hard-to-do science. Berliner (2002) argues that physical scientists often find the circumstances in which educational scientists do their research unacceptable. Different from the obstacles encountered by the easier-to-do sciences, educational scientists need to deal with specific challenges and local constraints that restrict generalizations and theory building (Berliner, 2002).

In higher education institutions, research is essential for knowledge production and dissemination. Universities are not supposed just to provide knowledge to students, but also to manage existing knowledge and create new knowledge. Therefore, high-level universities nowadays have adapted to their growing position in a knowledge-based

society (Singh, 2010). The sciences must set up their own centres and facilities around the university's core such as laboratories, workshop and discussion areas, etc. The sciences serve as the foundation upon which higher education is based and as the source of its nourishment. Hence, its roots must extend out to laboratories of all kinds and draw from them for the sustenance they can contribute. The university students must move back and forth between the university and these scientific outlets, where they can find courses designed from a wholly scientific perspective almost on everything. Lecturers should work closely with science, under its critics, effects and stimulation. But we must be clear and careful so that teaching and scientific research do not create confusion in the university.

Brown (1992) argues that the university cannot exist without academic or scientific knowledge. *Theoretical advances can emerge from both the laboratory and classroom settings* (Brown, 1992, p. 154). Educational systems were designed to expose students to knowledge outside the sphere of lived experience. Education is intended to guide students in the appropriate way so that they can continually discover and rediscover ideas (Brown, 1992).

The main feature of science is to cultivate the problematic and dubious. Science is a drive to find solutions to problems; the more it works in this line, the better it fulfils its purpose (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014). However, there are also different approaches to scientific research at the university.

In his work *The Order of Things* (1966/2002a), Foucault conducts an archaeology of human sciences, arguing that the composition of those disciplines was constructed throughout modernity by a demand of theoretical and practical structure. When there is a shift in the realm of human understanding that goes to specialisation of knowledge, we have been historically absorbed by modern institutions that govern the activities of those subjects in their social areas, one of which is educational institution.

Each era has a set of fundamental ideas, but culture is more than just a set of ideas, it is the way in which each age thinks and functions. Science is treated in culture in the same way as it is in the profession. Culture uses science to interpret what is essential in our existence. There are whole fields of science that are merely scientific technique are not related to culture. On the other hand, culture demands that we have a comprehensive understanding of both the world and human nature. Unlike science, culture does not stop where the methods of utter theoretic rigor finish (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014). Culture

and profession are not science, although they are significantly fed by science. It wouldn't take long for scholasticism to capture culture and the professions if they were locked within the university and had no interaction with the continuous ferment of science and research of all kinds (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014).

The university and the laboratory are not the same thing; however, they should be considered as complementary organs in a whole physiology (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014). Science cannot be dictated or regimented. Otherwise, is not a pure science anymore. This reminds me of a saying used to describe the truths in the communist regime in Albania: "the truths were determined by the party, while the task of scientists was to prove them right". However, this does not mean that during the communist regime in Albania there was no scientific research and scientific findings. But it is undeniable that many truths, which were presented as scientific, were determined by the top communist leaders of the country according to their own views and interests.

Instead of allowing them to collaborate in an interchange of influence that is as strong and free-flowing as it is, it might be counterproductive to try to merge higher education and research into one. While the university is separate from science, it cannot exist without it. Or, perhaps it should be defined as Ortega y Gasset (1930/2014, p. 75) puts it: "The university is science in addition." For an institution to be a university, it must first be science. The premise at the core of the university's existence is an environment brimming with passion and the exertion of science. The university's dignity rests on science; it is the institution's spirit, the principle that keeps it from becoming a lifeless body. The university needs to be conscious of all aspects of contemporary life. It must be immersed in and accompanied by real life. The university must get involved in current issues by addressing the major issues of the time from its distinctive, cultural, professional, and scientific perspective (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014).

One of the most important and influential philosophers of the 20th century, the well-known German philosopher and scholar, Martin Heidegger, states that we cannot feel the essence of science in its deepest necessity, if we merely criticize the self-sufficiency and absence of presuppositions of an all-up-to-date science (Heidegger, 1985). Science is the questioning holding of one's position in the perpetually self-concealing totality of what is, and for Heidegger (1985), this is the essence of science. He inextricably links science with philosophy. In his eminent essay "The Self-Assertion of the German University" (1933/34), Heidegger expressly states:

All science is philosophy, whether it knows and wills it - or not. All science remains bound to that beginning of philosophy. From it, it draws the strength of its essence, supposing that it still remains equal to this beginning (1985, p. 472).

As for other academic fields, which might be more positivist, research proficiency in those fields requires the researcher to have in-depth knowledge of the concepts, methodology and techniques of that academic field. And the concepts stem from different theoretical and philosophical approaches.

A well-known definition of discipline is that given by Foucault. According to him, *"the disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate"* (Foucault, 1975/1979, p. 223). From Foucault's description, it can be understood that disciplines are not just about sharing, categorizing, and seeking knowledge, but are also "institutions" of power. Educational disciplines, in the form they are today, were established in the late 18th century and early 19th century. They serve mainly to describe institutional boundaries. In the development of programmed pursued research at universities, the idea that universities modify disciplines, divide them into specialties, or establish completely novel disciplines or combine different ones with the aim to generate an intellectual capacity for addressing of real-world issues emerged (Ben-David, 1977).

Educational disciplines arose as a need to control and manage the rapid development of scientific research and results. The culmination of it occurred in the US system of higher education in the form of departments (Clarke, 2007). Also, the conventional division of academic disciplines into large groupings such as the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities has happened relatively late. According to this grouping, the natural sciences include disciplines such as chemistry, physics, mathematics, biology, geology, astronomy, etc.; the social sciences include the disciplines of sociology, psychology, politics, economics, etc.; the humanistic studies include literature, languages, philosophy, history, etc. Until the 19th century, "scientists" were considered only those persons known as natural historians (life sciences) and natural philosophers (physics). These "scientists", most of them, were amateurs and were affiliated mostly with academies than with universities. However, it can be said that the departmentalization of teaching and the university was done hand in hand with the development of scientific specialization. The

university became the main institution and financier of scientific research and activity. Departmentalization brought specialization, and the latter created the conditions for the creation of concentrated areas of expertise. These developments in university and research were accompanied by the establishment of specialized scientific journals (Rider, 2015).

Academic disciplines are often seen as mere theories with little to do with reality. The truth is that academic disciplines are derived from reality; they get developed with the intention of returning to reality as an auxiliary means. The evolution of professions is closely linked to academic disciplines. A profession is characterized by specific knowledge and techniques which are defined and authorized by academic disciplines. Furthermore, for one to be considered or certified as a professional in a certain profession it is necessary to assess his/her expertise and capability. The assessment is based on criteria which are set based on academic discipline (Rider, 2015). If we look at them through Foucault's eyes, disciplines are bodies of knowledge functioning and developing via universities, professional associations, and public institutions which became, in fact, maidservants of the state in the construction of new systems of state surveillance and control of the people.

2.3.4 The Role of Students

The contribution of students to the functioning and improvement of the university is indisputable. This requires student engagement in addition to just attending courses. There are actually several ways of student engagement. For example, student engagement can be behavioural, emotional, cognitive, etc. Behavioural engagement means taking part in education and social activity, which is very important for achieving positive academic outcomes. Emotional engagement is related to affective reactions during the learning process. Cognitive engagement means motivation and self-regulation to acquire concepts and capabilities (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Concepts such as student-faculty partnership, active student participation, active co-creation of curriculum, students as agents of change, which are related to student engagement, have been used to analyse university power relations and the roles of actors in higher education institutions. Typically, postmodern scholars and philosophers have dealt extensively with the issue of

power relations between actors in institutions such as the university (Westman & Bergmark, 2018).

In his renowned essay *The Life of Students*, Walter Benjamin opposes the university articulated around knowledge to the university articulated around study, without forgetting "the life". The essence or possibility of a Benjaminian university (as well as Marxist, psychoanalytic, etc.) is a university thought no longer from the point of view of those who are and always feel there "inside", but of those who are so constitutionally "outside" ", as they destroy the very meaning of the difference between the two statuses (Azizi, 2016). The student must have a voice in the university, and the Student Councils alone are not enough. Just as the lecturer evaluates the students, the students should also be able to evaluate the lecturers for their performance. Of course, the weight of the evaluation that the students make for the lecturer cannot be the same as the weight of the evaluation that the lecturer makes for the students. The governing structures of the university should understand that the emergence of students as subjects is good for the university and for them as well.

The student is the person whose main job and task is to study. As such, s/he does not belong to any social class and is neither poor nor rich. As a result, s/he is neither powerful nor powerless. Not powerful because s/he does not set the rules of truth; not powerless because s/he herself/himself is the truth. The student aims to build the world through knowledge and her/his energy. Therefore, s/he is placed in the name (student), as a friend of knowledge, as an eternal contender to proclaim the truth from herself/himself. Since s/he is not in position, s/he remains a contender for power in opposition. Since s/he is not the presence, s/he remains the resistance. Since s/he does not want to be the sufferer, he remains the doer. Therefore, the student has the duty not only to answer the questions that the university addresses to her/him, but also to address questions to the university. This type of relationship could serve both the student and the university. It would be beneficial for both because the university cannot be a university without the student, and the student cannot be a student without the university. Hence, in a way, the student and the university are a condition for each other. They would not exist independently of each other.

The student is the person who is shocked more than anyone else by the state of society, and the person who has the tendency, more than anyone, to change this state. The student should be a political being who constantly seeks the improvement of social and political situations. According to Walter Benjamin (1910-1917/2011), the unwillingness to bow to

a principle or to be overtaken by an idea is what distinguishes student life. In essence, students should be considered as both teachers and learners at once; as teachers because productivity, especially the one related to creativity, entails total independence, respect and appreciation for knowledge rather than authority.

2.4 Power

Connolly - probably the foremost Foucauldian researcher in American political theory - defines Foucault's idea of power as invested in institutions and stripped from agents, who are artificially constructed subjects. On the other hand, Connolly uses the concept of power to refer to a situation in which power can be said to be exerted. He uses the "structural determination" term to describe circumstances in which the limitations are so tight that there is no room for power to be exercised (Connolly, 1993).

Connolly is very interested on distinguishing authority and persuasion from power. He considers most types of power, such as coercion, force, manipulation, deterrence, conditioning, and anticipatory surrender, as immoral, whilst persuasion, which Connolly believes is not a type of power, maintains a high moral standing in a democracy. Acceptance of authority holds a morally positive zone as well, because Connolly defines it as submitting to an order because it is the right thing to do, even if it is against one's interests (Connolly, 1993).

Foucault does not make any distinctions between right and wrong, good and bad, moral and immoral, or democratic and undemocratic power exercises. For him, all types of power are insidious, and the more insidious the more invisible they are, including the power exercises that do not fall into any of Connolly's divisions but "subtly penetrate ... an entire societal network" (Foucault, 1977, pp. 207-208), such as discursive practices that occur almost instinctively, with no one thinking that power is being exercised.

For Foucault, there cannot be division of power and authority since all power is founded on knowledge, which supplies the authority for its use and the right of particular individuals to exercise it. Connolly's conception is nevertheless entangled with Weber's and Dahl's traditional ideas of power, authority, and legitimacy. His work proceeds to examine power over others and the power to accomplish something in the sense of A affecting B to achieve C (Connolly, 1993, pp. 243fn). This A over B functioning way

contradicts Foucault's kinetic understanding of power. According to Foucault, A's actions impact B, who then resists, influencing A in subsequent iterations, and all of this occurs in a framework set by discourse and practice. Actually, it can be said that the core point of Foucault's understanding of power relations lies in the interaction of power and resistance.

In Foucault's conception, freedom is a prerequisite for power. In other words, power only exists in situations where there is room for manoeuvre. Contrary to common belief, power and freedom are not mutually exclusive. Instead, power relies on freedom. This is due to the Foucauldian philosophy, which sees power as a relational component that permeates the social body and manifests in human relationship. Therefore, the efficient manipulation of such dispersion can serve as the explanation for power concentrations. As a result, power is not directed downward, a plain reversal of the belief that power originates from above. But the traditional conception of power endures strongly. Even when dealing with power at a local scale, generally, we are inclined to claim that power represents the broader interests of capital, the State, and so forth. Foucault, however, contends that these are merely displacements by which we avoid addressing the true issue of power in all of its complexity, assuming instead that everything emanates from the market economy, capitalism, or just this society (Foucault, 1977b).

Over time, in the history of Foucault's thought, there is a shift from disciplinary power to pastoral power and self-discipline. There is a change from one scenario in which the subject makes changes to a voiceless and obedient body to another circumstance in which the subject makes changes to himself/herself via technologies of the self. Foucault highlights that through a variety of techniques and modes of resistance, subjects are capable of maintaining self-control (Allen, 2000). He studied at ways to achieve freedom and reduce the effects of domination under various systems of power. In essence, the subject acknowledges that s/he is capable of actively working on him/herself and his/her own subjectivity. The ability to generate alternative ways of being that are different from those imposed by the actions of power regimes is particularly enabled by "technologies of the self" (Starkey and Hatchuel, 2002). For Foucault (1988b), the technologies of the self are methods that enable individuals to oppose the established power structures.

For Foucault, each individual is fundamentally connected to his/her surroundings. He remarked that in attempting to comprehend ourselves, we employ various different systems. Foucault (1997) argues that whereas technologies of sign systems

enable us to employ signs, signification, symbols, and meanings, production technologies allow us to produce, manipulate, and change things.

Technologies of power also shape how people behave, direct people toward particular goals, and objectify the subject. Technologies of the self allow people to perform specific operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, behaviour, and way of being, either independently or with the assistance of others, in order to change themselves and reach a particular level of happiness, cleverness, purity, excellence, or immorality (Foucault, 1988b).

The idea of technologies of the self emphasizes that people are capable of changing who they are to a certain level within the current domain of power relations. Foucault emphasizes (1954-1984/1997b) that only insofar as the subjects are free, are power relations possible. Power has a relational nature at its core (Foucault, 1954-1984/1997b).

Power is fundamentally relational, according to Foucault, and only becomes visible when it is exercised. As a result, the primary use and significance of power is revealed by its effects, particularly by the way it shapes and changes subjects. Furthermore, Foucault argues that power is a network that involves everyone by utilizing the concepts of discourses and regimes of power/knowledge.

2.4.1 Governance and Management of Higher Education Institutions

Governance and management are also quite weighty notions in this thesis, especially their application in higher education institutions. By governance we do not mean only the macro level as e.g., governing a country, a state, supranational institutions, etc., but also the micro level, such as governance of a department, faculty, university, institution, etc. Foucault goes back to the sixteenth century to discover how governance stepped to acquire the shape of relations of power and techniques that allow these power relations to be exerted. Governmentalization can be described as the extension of new and more thorough means, modes, and techniques of governing not just society, but also the persons that make it up.

The primary function of government has been to collect the taxes, while the religious institutions, like church, were in charge of people's acquisition of knowledge and behaviour. Later, governments significantly increased their own functions in the technical

aspect (dealing with public health, public education, sanitation, management of increasing urban populations, and so on) and the pastoral aspect (managing people's daily conduct to conform to societal needs) (Foucault, 1997). Not only was the pastoral role added to the governmental function of the modernizing state, but so was a historical governmental function formerly restricted to domestic relations, specifically education, training, and guidance (Foucault, 1978/1988a).

In his concept of the genealogy of disciplinary society, Foucault talks about a mechanism of control built on panoptic (centralized) power, the confinement of the subject in surveilled areas, and the internalization of social norms by the subjects themselves. Hence, more or less, panoptic power is based on the restraint and confinement of the individual. On the other hand, Deleuze introduces the concept of control society which functions by freeing the subject into a complex structure of registration and consumption. From this point of view, Deleuze analyses the functioning of the university today. According to him, freedom in the university today resembles consumer choice, with flexible and transferable credits, and flexible modes of distance learning. Deleuze notes that all levels of schooling are adapting to the corporate model and in this process, technology is playing an important role. He views this process with scepticism as, according to him, it makes students and teachers identify only as potential producers of profit. The effect of this process might have a negative impact on scientific research in universities. The formal curriculum will focus on job preparation and entrepreneurship. Consequently, the university risks turning into an employment agency or private enterprise. The consequences of this model for Deleuze can be seen in many aspects of university life. For example, work in academia has become almost inseparable from grant writing, university facilities and capacities are increasingly being used to organize conferences or similar activities, or for corporate advertising, rather than for teaching and research (Carlin and Wallin, 2014).

Governance is related to knowledge. The traditional explanation of government derives from "governing men" which means taking people by the hand and leading them to salvation, development, and prosperity through a procedure, a technique of concise piloting, implying a full breadth of knowledge about the people and context (Foucault, 1997). People - to govern themselves and others - need to know truths, which are produced by knowledge systems that determine what is true and false (Foucault, 1997,

pp. 70-71). Knowledge is a key element of governance. Governing is exercising power. The university possesses knowledge, hence it is an institution of power.

The use of knowledge to improve governance in field of education, at different levels of policy making, requires the identification of the main domains through which this can be done. A project of OECD, named *Strategic Education Governance (SEG)*, identifies six domains to increase the effectiveness of governing education systems. These domains are: 1) Accountability, which enables local discretion while limiting fragmentation, and promotes a culture of learning and improvement. 2) Capacity, which ensures capacity for policy-making and implementation, and stimulates horizontal capacity building. 3) Knowledge governance, which promotes production of adequate evidence and mobilizes produced evidence for convenient use, stimulates a culture of evidence-use and nurtures evidence-related capabilities. 4) Stakeholder involvement, which integrates stakeholder knowledge and perspectives and fosters support, shared responsibility, ownership and trust. 5) Strategic thinking, which crafts, shares and consolidates a system vision, adapts to changing contexts and new knowledge, and balances short-term and long-term priorities. 6) A whole-of-system perspective is recommended, which overcomes system inertia, develops synergies within the system and moderates the tensions (OECD, 2019).

The government, in order to exercise power in society, needs to produce and accumulate knowledge through its institutes, which are not only universities or research and scientific centres, but also hospitals, asylums, prisons, etc. In addition to the state, private companies and corporations also produce and accumulate knowledge themselves to understand society's purchasing behaviour. So, power and knowledge encompass one another in their own existence. The university is a place where knowledge is produced, consequently the university is also an institution of power.

The Learning Outcomes approach is a key element of the European Union's skills policy. Bridging the gap between education and the job market, making curriculum more useful for the latter, and fostering competence-based education are major components of the European skills policy, and these objectives are aimed to be applied to all educational subsystems. Halász (2017) argues that the Learning Outcomes model is not just an innovation in and of itself, but it also generates new innovations. This is similar to what the innovation terminology refers to as an open innovation platform, initially relating to business operations but also used to public sector services and adaptable to educational innovations (Halász, 2014). In the public sector, open innovation is an advanced method

of executing public policies, and providing social innovation or “out-crowding” policy application by allowing independent social or professional agents to elaborate the features of policies that are intentionally kept open (Halász, 2017).

The Learning Outcomes strategy is intended to transform not just how curriculum are created and delivered, but also how education systems are administered (CEDEFOP, 2013). In fact, the Learning Outcomes approach, which supports outcomes-based or standards-based direction, has usually been regarded as a reflection of New Public Management. Public management reforms that promote standardisation and quality assurance in the education industry play a significant role in facilitating the transition to Learning Outcomes, which may be utilised as a governance instrument by such reforms (Halász, 2017).

The functioning of public institutions, such as the university, in accordance with New Public Management theory is a much-discussed topic. The financial problems faced by universities today, especially in Albania, make this discussion very topical. Certain study programmes are facing shortages of students and non-generation of income. This problem is mainly encountered by those programmes that are not seen as very profitable by students after graduation. Teacher education, exact sciences such as chemistry, physics, mathematics or philosophy are just some of the study programmes that are barely surviving. In fact, initiatives to make certain departments or faculties economically viable, creating financial opportunities for them and giving them the opportunity to contribute to other areas of higher education have existed for decades. For example, one of these forms has been through certain ethics courses for students of other disciplines such as medicine or business. Courses like business ethics or biomedical ethics are some of the best known. The structure and way of functioning of the university would make the projects or research programmes come naturally. Conceptual questions and problems arising from theoretical fields, such as formal logic, integrated into scientific practice, can produce new theories or methods. A classic example of the application of philosophical theorizing in practice is cognitive science. In recent decades many attempts have been made to put such fields of study as philosophy into something concrete. Other such courses, developed in recent years, that we can mention are digital ethics, environmental ethics, decision theory for organizations, etc. (Rider, 2015).

One of the important aspects of the Learning Outcomes approach, as entrenched in the idea of qualifications frameworks, is that it serves as both a major policy objective and a

governance and implementation instrument. As a major policy objective, it comprises components such as increasing the labour market relevance of curriculum and fostering competence-based or student-centered education. As a governance and implementation instrument, it aids not only in the fulfilment of key objectives, but also in changing the way education systems are administered (Halász, 2017).

Programmes supporting the application of Learning Outcomes approaches at the institutional as well as personal levels can only be successful if both individuals and institutions have high levels of adaptability and absorption. If the Learning Outcomes approach is employed without proper implementation intelligence, it may have unexpected negative consequences, including bureaucratizing teaching and learning (Halász, 2017).

In countries where individual and institutional agents have strong "implementation intelligence", and national actors utilize a large repertoire of implementation tools have a far better chance of effectively adopting Learning Outcomes approaches. Studies have shown that successful implementation involves a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches, but an inadequate use of the second not only establishes formal structures without resulting in genuine changes in institutional practices, but also brings negative consequences. The use Learning Outcomes techniques has been especially noticeable in higher education because of the efficacy and influence of the Bologna process (Halász, 2017).

The employment of Learning Outcomes strategies in institutional-level curriculum design usually leads to more intense engagement with representatives of students' prospective employers, so this extensive interaction with employers exerts pressure on curriculum designers to adopt the Learning Outcomes approaches (Halász, 2017).

In his writing "The Self-Assertion of the German University" (1933/34), Martin Heidegger, as a philosopher and rector, makes an analysis of the university leadership. It is commonly acknowledged that the university's self-administration or self-governance is one of its most important characteristics, and, according to him, this should be maintained. Clearly, self-governance entails that universities setting their own goals and choosing how they will be achieved. For Heidegger (1985), self-governance can only be real if it is based on self-examination, but the self-examination can happen only in a strong and efficient university's self-assertion.

Governing Complex Education Systems (GCES), an OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation project (2019), revealed characteristics of effective governance to assist nations in addressing modern education governance challenges. According to these findings, effective governance models prioritise processes over structures. They are flexible and adaptable to change and unpredictability. Effective governance systems foster capacity development, open dialogue, and stakeholder involvement. They use a systemic approach, integrating evidence, knowledge, and data utilisation to better policy creation and implementation.

Capacity is a large and critical sphere that includes ensuring that people, institutions, and systems have the necessary resources and abilities to perform specified tasks and duties. Resources include financial and human resources, along with time and material (technical) resources. Like tasks, responsibilities are decentralised in complex systems, and knowledge is spread, both where it is created and where it is needed, throughout levels of governance and stakeholders (Blanchenay and Burns, 2016).

For Hess and Ostrom (2007, p. 8), “knowledge is assimilated information and the understanding of how to use it”. A fundamental aspect for successful knowledge governance is to enhance decision-makers' systematic use of evidence, therefore minimising the relative impact of biases, shortcuts, and fallibilities in decision-making. Efficient knowledge governance supports the systematic examination of evidence throughout the whole gamut of evidence, during the decision-making stage (Langer, Tripney and Gough, 2016).

Knowledge governance refers to procedures that manage the generation of knowledge, mobilizing knowledge for various users and uses, structuring knowledge flows among actors, and encouraging the knowledge utilization (Fazekas and Burns, 2012).

The goals of knowledge governance, comprising both the demand and supply aspects, may be put up in four sections.

- Stimulating the generation of appropriate and thorough evidence;
- Mobilizing generated evidence for appropriate application;
- Promoting an evidence-based mindset;
- Developing evidence-based competencies (OECD, 2019).

In complex education systems, where there is less direct hierarchical authority, decentralised decision-making, and disseminated knowledge, an emphasis on stakeholders throughout the policy process is essential for effective policy making. Adapting policies to local settings, legacies, and requirements involves linking stakeholders' knowledge and opinions. Stakeholder involvement can encourage sustainable transformation by fostering ownership, trust, and generating legitimacy for policy initiatives (OECD, 2019).

Because of system complexity and evolving internal and external dynamics, optimal policy strategies are not necessarily predefined, but arise and grow as new knowledge occurs. Strategic thinking is concerned with integrating short-term objectives with long-term views, as well as organisations integrating their existing core operations with shifting external factors and requirements. This integration and harmonization occur at all levels of governance. The continual process of strategic thinking seeks to adjust strategies as new situations are predicted and occur, in collaboration with stakeholders, regularly analysing and, if required, amending long-term objectives, while remaining faithful to a long-term vision throughout time.

Strategic thinking, in conjunction with a whole-of-system perspective, stakeholder focus, and knowledge governance, aims to develop, deliberate, and integrate long-term plan and vision for the education system. Strategic thinking deals with the integration of new knowledge and the adjustment of policies and practices to new developments and occurrences at any of the system's levels. Strategic thinking helps to balance the obligation to react to urgent priorities and short-term objectives with the long-term plan of institutions throughout all levels within the system (OECD, 2019).

Coordination and harmonization among agents, governance levels, and policies need a vision that goes beyond the boundaries of individual decision-making and accountability. A whole-of-system approach can be appropriate to the entire education system as well as to relatively autonomous and self-sufficient entities such as education institutions (Blanchenay and Burns, 2016). In complex systems, the multiple connections between components are a generator of inertia to change, necessitating synchronized efforts to build greater mass to overcome system inertia (Mason, 2016). Adopting a whole-of-system vision can assist in harmonizing policies, as well as stakeholders' positions and responsibilities throughout the system. This can enhance the efficacy and effectiveness

of policy initiatives while also assisting in the resolution of disputes across priorities (Burns, Köster and Fuster, 2016).

In the academic setting, governance does not revolve around state power as it does in conventional political theory. It is more focused on a set of devices that enable a type of self-government, which is accomplished through the creation and evolution of theories, suggestions, strategies, and technologies for the conduct of conduct (Rose, 1999b).

Government is both empowered and constrained by the "expertise, vocabulary, theories, ideas, philosophies and other kinds of knowledge" that are accessible to administrations (Dean, 2010, p. 25). The techniques for self-reflection and self-evaluation serve as both applications of a theoretical knowledge of worker motivation that promises to provide predictable workplace routines and results, and practices for constructing a sense of self within an institutional environment. Academics have adopted neoliberal technologies such as managerialism, marketization, and economic rationalism through discourses on "individuality," where one's decisions emerge as if led from inside and are regarded as rational and personal actions (Bansel and Davies, 2010). Academics consciously place themselves into neoliberal discourses by using such technologies, creating the sense of being a free agent to make one's own decisions. The ways in which academic life is regarded as problematic or in need of intervention, and to which programmes for governing are able to be presented as responses and alternatives, are inextricably linked to the success or failure of self-governance methods (Cannizzo, 2015).

When programmes with common problematizations or patterns of problem generation come together to produce a shared way of thinking and doing, or mentality, governance is formed within certain historical moments (Rose et. al, 2006). For instance, in Britain, one such case happened when academic governance began to transition toward a performance-based culture of rewards and penalties (Power, 1997).

When it comes to budget allocation, neoliberal governments typically seek cost-effectiveness and transparency (Cannizzo, 2015). Policy-making is "the unification of a political space [...] a successful hegemonic attempt to define a political reality, subject identities and modes of action." (Gottweis, 2003, p. 260). Institutionalized cognition and thought alone cannot adequately describe governance since the latter involves the practical arrangement of individuals and spaces. Practices, programmes, and political rationalities are three distinct aspects of governance that may be distinguished analytically and each of which contributes to the nexus of governmentality (Cannizzo,

2015). Foucault (1954-1984/2003, p. 175) describes governance as “the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific and complex form of power.” A policy paper is never an end in itself. Policy documents are approaches and strategies for addressing and resolving problematizations.

Instead of being a radical process through which organizational change may be influenced from teaching or research onwards, innovation is an embodied plan for the implementation of institution-led advances. Through innovations in knowledge and methods of knowing that integrate humans into governmental practices, new subjectivities are created (Rose, 1999). In the liberal setting, governance arises from specific relations between institutions, subjectivity, and competence and people are considered to be potentially engaged in their own government (Rose, 1999b). Governmental mentalities rely on the theories, ideas, terminology, and philosophies of expertise to establish a uniform language and the administrative instruments of govern. Subjectivity is arranged by expert language, which is reflected in the programmes made feasible by the competence of experts.

The growing need for flexible academic labour is ingrained into the higher education business model as a result of the corporatization of the university. Worsening personnel-to-student ratios and a reducing nucleus of full-time tenured faculty staff cause a need for more adaptive and flexible personnel who can be persuaded to maximize the effectiveness of the university's educational activity (Lorenz, 2012). The urge to co-opt the academic and integrate that identity into a business model reflects the evolution of higher education institutions into economically-motivated marketplaces for knowledge and qualifications.

Dewey makes the case in his other well-known book, *Democracy and Education* (1916), that democratic ideals, not authoritarian ones, should govern the university life and operation. Dewey was one of the first academics to express the view that public universities needed to be transformed into really democratic institutions that were driven by community needs. Developing a participative democratic society, in his opinion, could be significantly assisted by universities. Dewey (1916) believed that if the educational system does not enhance the advancement of democracy, there is a problem with the university.

Usually, educational reforms that aim to open up the university to business, by making it more entrepreneurial in nature, argue that this will make the system more financially

effective, boost performance and productivity, offer more choices to consumer, provide value for money, etc. (Selwyn and Shore, 1992). Shore and Roberts (1993) argue that by adopting the Quality Assessors' narrative of management and by supplying the necessary performance indicators, the "Quality Control" and "Quality Audit" procedures make universities more exposed to direct outside influence. In Foucauldian terms, this is an illustration of how externally imposed standards are internalized to shape subjectivity. Actually, the main source of guidance for many of the Quality Assessment procedures and practices is the Japanese Total Quality Management (TQM) approach to quality assurance. The key features of this strategy may be summed up as follows:

- it is founded on the idea that institutions/organizations should prioritize serving customers in all aspects of operations and on the presumption that there is always room for quality improvement.
- the basis of TQM management is that every employee in the organization should be "empowered," which means they should be in charge of managing their own areas of responsibility.
- although quality should be determined by those most suited to do so, quality assurance must be management-driven.

Individuals and departments are in charge of managing their own spheres of responsibility and are accountable for the quality of the services they provide (Shore and Roberts, 1993).

A clarification of the terms 'quality' and 'excellence' is necessary here. Supporters of assessment usually claim that "quality" is "effectiveness" and "fitness for purpose". Regarding excellence, according to management approach, means the demonstration of the presence of "system" and producing "value-added." The management system of the university, based on the panopticon model, is an organizational pyramid-shaped system in which the lecturer is expected to maintain self-discipline and act as the agent in charge of setting and attaining goals. The system accomplishes its initial goal, economy and coercion, by isolating and objectifying the subject and by having the subject internalize the disciplinary mechanism itself. In such a management system, lecturers observe their own activity (Shore and Roberts, 1993).

In the current university system, the inherently individualistic CV and publication list are translated into tools of social stratification that strengthen vertical lines of power. Shore and Roberts (1993) argue that the university lecturer is driven toward a continuous and

unrelenting goal of improving his/her performance and to accomplish what is in fact the unachievable aim of total quality in all of his/her tasks since there are no definite, shared, or formally established criteria for excellence. Although management theory could imply that this has a positive impact (as the employee is encouraged to constantly better themselves), in fact, especially in the higher education context, this situation might lead to dread, harmful internal competitions, and the fracturing of solidarity (Shore and Roberts, 1993). The concern raised by various scholars is that, by making management styles, values, and goals part of university mission statements, there is a risk that teaching will become increasingly quantified, standardized, and bureaucratic. Based on the philosophy of new public management, where what cannot be measured is devalued, the university and the academy risk losing several quality components that are difficult to measure, especially in the short term. Another critique faced by this management approach is that today unpredictability and self-development in the university are perceived as liberal ideals of bygone times, and they are almost entirely overtaken by a new populism in which the availability of courses and how they are arranged are determined by the degree of customer demand (Shore and Roberts, 1993).

One of the significant shifts in the direction of educational policy is the growing attention on educational outcomes (such as student accomplishment and results). Meanwhile, previously, the attention of education policies, including the OECD's, was more on inputs and participation rates. Today there is a greater interest in what happens and is obtained from these investments and activities. Not only are course fulfilment and qualifications taken into consideration when interpreting results, but also skills and competencies, entrance to and achievement in the labour market, and broader social outcomes. Policymakers are becoming more concerned with the outcomes that education really generates and, subsequently, with what knowledge or information educational research can provide (Burns & Schuller, 2007).

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD, the interaction and relationship between decision-makers, educational institutions, and scientific research should be according to the following scheme (Figure 1).

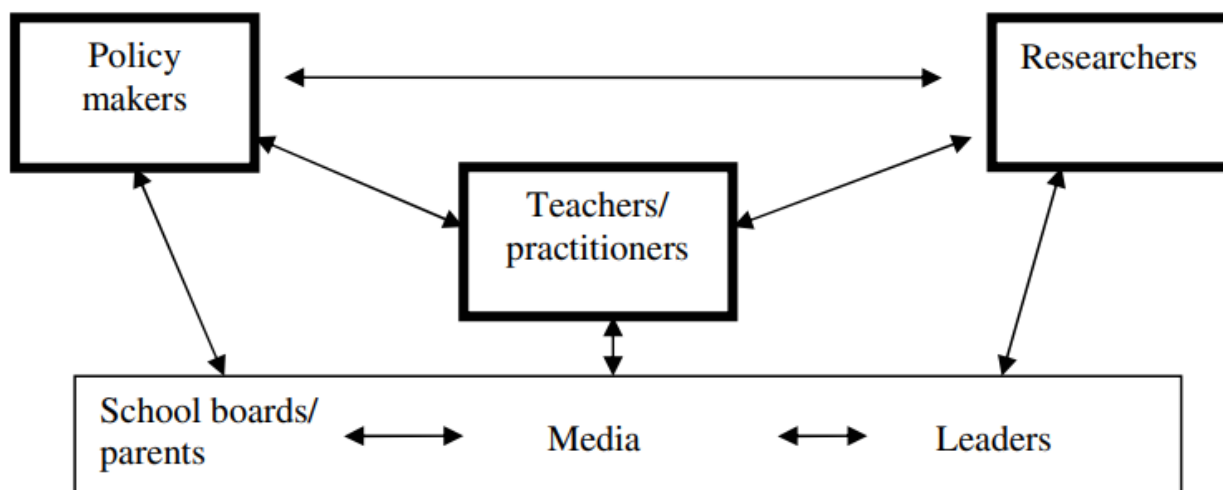


Figure 1. Relationship between decision-makers, educational institutions, and scientific research

Source: OECD (1995)

From the decentralized architecture of the federal countries (such as Canada and Germany) to the strong centralized systems seen in certain other nations (e.g., France, Korea), countries have significantly diverse educational systems and ministerial models. It is noted that most of the OECD countries have recently shifted toward decentralizing educational decision-making, giving local authorities additional authority and responsibilities (Burns & Schuller, 2007).

In the case of Albania, the government and the Parliament are the major policy-making bodies in the country for higher education. The Ministry of Education and Sports, which is in charge of higher education, is responsible for initiating and managing education policies. The Council of Higher Education and Research functions as the Ministry's advising body on educational policy. Public and private HEIs are represented in the Rectors' Conference, where they can try to have an influence on decision-making. Although public higher education institutions are free to determine their own admission requirements and tuition rates, the government has reserved the power to impose fee caps and additional admission requirements. In order to assure legal conformity, the Ministry of Education and Sports permits the foundation of new study programmes and regularly inspects higher education institutions. For academic personnel, the government also specifies requirements for promotions. The chairman of the National Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (ASCAL), which is in charge of accreditation and external

quality assurance of HEIs, as well as the members of the Accreditation Board are also chosen by the government (Law on Higher Education no. 80/2015).

Professional academics, researchers, and decision-makers are not the only actors active in shaping higher education reform. There are a variety of other important individuals who, among other activities, provide ideas, acquire data, and evaluate outcomes. There has been an increase in interest in the creation and interpretation of research evidence by practitioners, including lecturers, other educational personnel, and their unions. This acknowledges both the potential contribution they may make and the necessity of preserving their belief in the reform process if it is to be carried out successfully. University leaders have significant influence and may facilitate or impede the generation and utilization of research evidence. Engaging university leaders in the research process in order to give them a feeling of ownership over the effort is a useful method to obtain their support (Slavin, 2004).

Many scientists and researchers, around the world, try to find ways to make their research useful and usable for public policymakers. On the other hand, policy-makers express concerns about the value and utility of social science research that is supported by government funding. The question of whether social science research that aims to affect policy is genuinely "used" is one that both parties are interested in, but before this important concern can be effectively addressed, it is crucial to comprehend what "using research" truly means. A clarification of the term "research utilization" is necessary, in order to understand better the way and degree in which social science research has influenced and shaped public policy in the past and identify ways to optimize its contribution in the future. The American scholar of education and policy analysis, Carol H. Weiss (1979), has extracted seven different models associated with social science research utilization. These seven models are as follows:

1. **The Knowledge-Driven Model** (basic research → applied research → development application) Assumption: the very presence of knowledge pushes it to be developed and put to use.
2. **Problem-Solving Model** It entails applying the outcomes of a particular social science research directly to a pending decision. Research offers conclusions and empirical evidence that contribute in the resolving of a policy issue. The application of research is driven by the decision.

3. **Interactive Model** (The process in this model defies clear diagrams since it is not one of linear order from research to decision, but rather a disordered complex of linkages and back-and-forthness. The use of research is just one tool in a multifaceted process that also involves experience, political perspective, pressure, social technologies, and judgment.)
4. **Political Model** (The position of decision-makers is predetermined by the cluster of interests underlying a policy issue. Anyway, in such cases, research can be utilized as ammunition by a side if they consider the results favourable and helpful.)
5. **Tactical Model** does not use the findings and conclusions of the research that is appealed but the mere fact that research is being conducted.
6. **Enlightenment Model** (Policy is not directly impacted by the results of a single research or even a group of associated studies. The policy-making process is instead shaped by the notions and theoretical approaches that social science research has provided.)
7. **Research as Part of the Intellectual Enterprise of the Society** (Policy and social science co-operate and interact, influencing each-other and being affected by the big trends in social thought.)

All of these models of social science research utilization are probably applicable in certain circumstances. None of them, assuredly, offers a totally satisfying solution to the question of how a governmental system might effectively commandeer its research resources to guide public policy (Weiss, 1979).

For Burns & Schuller (2007), the research that is used to generate evidence-informed policy may be separated from merely scientific research in very general terms by the former's orientation toward informing action and the latter's orientation toward building theory and testing hypotheses. There are a variety of pragmatic factors at play when national governments decide whether or not to participate in the development of evidence-based policy. These include the time needed to gather evidence, the cost required to fund the research, and the potential for jurisdictional disputes (Burns & Schuller, 2007).

Research findings that stay in the academic world won't be accessible or understandable when required, considerably reducing their influence. For research to be effective, it must

also take cultural context into consideration. One of the most effective methods for stimulating implementation of evidence-based policy is to gain over local support.

It is not simple to bridge the gap between internally and externally diversified groups of researchers, policymakers, and lecturers. Intermediary agencies and think tanks can be used as a way of closing this gap. As generic examples of "brokering," a variety of efforts that try to close the gap between policymakers and researchers, and evaluate the quality of existing evidence, have been produced. Brokering can take place in an informal setting, such as when colleagues share research data and knowledge about a current policy subject. Additionally, it might take a more formal shape, such as the development of connections between national research institutes and their closest policy equivalents.

According to Burns & Schuller (2007) these agencies must overcome the following challenges:

- include all stakeholders involved in the process;
- analyse the conflict between the need for thorough research and the demand for immediate outcomes for policy-making;
- disseminate results to all interested parties;
- make sure the financing is stable and long-term.

2.5 Knowledge

The notion of knowledge is vast and exceedingly complex, therefore it is not simple to explain in a single clear statement. Data, as described by Ackoff (1989), are symbols that represent attributes of things, occurrences, and their surroundings. They are the outcome of observation, research but they might be useless unless they are in a useable, relevant form. The difference between data and information has essentially functional character rather than structural. Data and information differ essentially by function rather than structure. Information is contained in descriptions. Information systems receive data and process them. Information may be easily collected in documents or databases, and even vast volumes can be retrieved using contemporary information technology platforms (Kidwell et al., 2000). Aranganathan and Lakshmi (20210) state that knowledge is generated only when information is integrated with experience and judgment.

Knowledge is "know-how" (instead of "know-what" or "know-who") and is what enables information to be converted into instructions. Knowledge can be gained by being transferred from someone who possesses it, by instruction, or by inference through experience. This argues that data are symbols (for example, numbers, characters, or words) that reflect something about reality, but they have not much meaning until they are placed in a context through some type of question. When data is placed into context, it becomes information. Knowledge is the capacity to employ the information to specific activities (Nilsen, 2010). The act of knowing is described by Shor and Freire (1987) as an attempt or process to reveal and unveil the object of study, to find the reasons why it is as it is, and to understand its political and historical context.

A prominent approach for explaining knowledge presents two kinds of knowledge: explicit and tacit. Explicit knowledge is information that has been documented and can be used to support action. This kind of knowledge can be embodied in words and numbers and disseminated as data, scientific formulas, product specifications, instructions, inherent value, and so on. Explicit knowledge can be easily and systematically transferred among people. On the other hand, tacit knowledge is know-how and learning that is entrenched in the thoughts of the organization's employees (Kidwell et al., 2000). This kind of knowledge is quite personal and difficult to formalise, making communication and sharing with others challenging. Subjective perceptions, intuitions, and gut feelings reside in tacit knowledge. Additionally, tacit knowledge is firmly embedded in a person's experiences and actions as well as the concepts, values, or emotions s/he or she holds (Edvinsson and Malone, 1997).

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) claim that the importance accorded to formal natural sciences as a model for the other disciplines reflects Western civilisation's strong normative bias in favour of clear and structured knowledge. They demonstrate how Japanese corporations manage product creation and innovation in ways that clearly acknowledge the importance of tacit knowledge. The quest for innovative solutions via vague metaphors and analogies grounded in intuition leaves plenty of potential for innovation and the development of new intermediate conceptions (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Lundvall (2000) suggests that the optimal organisational model for producing new knowledge is one that combines a standard divisional structure with *ad hoc* horizontal units tasked with launching innovative products and knowledge.

A more favourable view of tacit knowledge as a fundamental component of the learning experience in education may be one approach to decrease students' early polarisation in the educational system. In general, it may contribute to the production of a more skilled workforce (Lundvall, 2000).

People generate knowledge, but knowledge is embodied in groups, organizations, institutions, companies, corporations, etc. Explicit knowledge in an organization includes strategies, techniques, procedures, copyrights, products, and services. Skills and competences, experiences, relationships inside and beyond the institution, ideas, and individual attitudes and values are all examples of tacit knowledge in an organizational environment.

Knowledge production is not an intermediary activity. Gaining knowledge is a direct material involvement, a practice of intra-action with the world as part of the world in its dynamic material configuration and in its continual articulation (Barad, 2007).

Innovation and knowledge production are interconnected processes in which multiple players and organizations share information and collaborate in order to generate new knowledge (Lundvall, 2000). It is already widely accepted that knowledge is at the heart of economic progress (OECD, 1996). Globalization and rapid technological development have made a lot of knowledge learned to be worthless after a few years if not updated. Nowadays, for economic prosperity, the capacity to learn and forget is more crucial than having a particular, specialised knowledge. Success in the actual market economy demands quick learning and forgetting for individuals, companies, regional and national economies (since old habits are usually impediments to learning new practices) (Lundvall, 2000).

Most formal institutions place a significant focus on codified knowledge, as well as on know-what and know-why. Analysing the extent to which training may employ the helix of tacit-codified-tacit knowledge more productively is a major challenge for pedagogical research. Problem-oriented and practice-based strategies that emphasise the creation of know-how may help to bridge the gap between formal education and what happens in the real labour market. Teamwork and practice in conveying what has been learned to others are techniques for enhancing "know-who" knowledge competency (Lundvall, 2000).

According to Lundvall (2000), in the learning economy, tacit knowledge is as vital as, if not more vital than, formal, codified, systematic, and explicit knowledge. The two sorts

of knowledge are symbiotic. Whereas codified knowledge may be shared and transferred, a company requires tacit knowledge to be functional. Tacit knowledge succeeds in situations requiring the use of several senses at the same time, skilled physical behaviour, and an awareness of social relationships. The more quick and severe the change process is, the less relevant it is to attempt to codify knowledge. In a stable situation, there may be a gradual shift from tacit to non-tacit knowledge (Lundvall, 2000). Moreover, Reich (1991) argues that tacit and scientific knowledge must be combined for the economic advancement.

The German philosopher Nietzsche explains genealogy as a method where everything that already exists "can be reinterpreted in the service of new intentions, repossessed, repeatedly modified to a new use by a power superior to it" (Nietzsche, 1887/1996, p. 58). What is established at the historical beginning of something does not necessarily reflect the unchangeable identity of its origin. Truth is unquestionably the kind of error which cannot be denied since it was formed into an immutable shape over a lengthy period of time in history (Nietzsche, 1882/2001). Influenced by the ideas of the German philosopher Nietzsche, Foucault (1984) states that the differentiation of values results from the dominance of certain individuals over others, and the idea of liberty is produced by class dominance, and the genesis of logic can be attributed to the coercive acquisition of items essential for living and the imposition of a length that is not inherent to them.

Even under the guise of history, knowledge does not rely on rediscovery, and it categorically excludes our own rediscovery. "Knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting," says Foucault (1984, p. 88). History's forces respond to spontaneous conflicts rather than being directed by fate or regulating systems. We want historians to reinforce our conviction that the present is supported by enduring purposes and unchangeable necessities. But in the real meaning of history, there is no marker or point of reference, and we are just one of innumerable lost events. History's duty is to document the essential birth of truth and values. It should develop into a distinct knowledge of energies and flaws, heights and degenerations, diseases and cures. Its goal is to develop into a healing science (Nietzsche, 1880/1974). The assertion of knowledge as perspective is the final feature of effective history. In the process of cognition, through the historical meaning, knowledge is given permission to build its own genealogy (Foucault, 1984).

Hobbes also analyses knowledge. He divides knowledge into two types where only one of the types belongs to science. The first type of knowledge is the knowledge of facts; the second type is the knowledge of the derivation of one statement from another. Knowledge of facts is feeling and memory, and is absolute knowledge. This knowledge has to do with a fact that has happened. Every witness possesses this kind of knowledge. The knowledge of the derivation of one statement from another is conditional and is scientific. In this case, Hobbes gives as an example when we know that a figure is a circle because every line passing through its centre divides that figure into two equal parts. This is scientific knowledge. (Hobbes, 1651/2005, p. 51).

Wilhelm Dilthey, a nineteenth-century German philosopher at the University of Berlin, believed that a natural separation could be made between the sciences and another type of knowledge, which he referred to as *die Geisteswissenschaften*, or, to put it in a word, *the humanities*. He established a distinction between the two types of knowledge, and his fundamental philosophy was built on the resulting dualism. Dilthey argued that the humanities strive to understand importance within a frame of reference as broad as our overall perspective on life, including its ideals, objectives, and practical judgment, whereas the sciences aim to define interactions within constrained frames of reference (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014).

A mode of thinking and teaching in the university which is being taken up more and more in analysis by various scholars is that of rhizomes. The concept of rhizomes was developed by Deleuze and Guattari and has been widely adopted in higher education (Carrington, 2011). Although understanding this concept may be difficult as it is a philosophical product of two well-known French authors, I will try to explain it and its possible use in the field of higher education. The rhizome mode of thinking or meaning-making has three main characteristics: it is a-centred, it has no hierarchy, and it is networked (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987). The rhizomic approach treats data as singularities, recognizing their nuances, contradictions, differences, and difficulties. Thought and knowledge are immanent. Rhizomic logic recognizes that we can only produce accounts which are incomplete, intermediate and more open-ended (Carrington, 2011, p. 6).

This model opposes the linear and hegemonic way of knowledge and thought. The rhizome pattern can be considered as the opposite of the tree pattern where there is a unity and singularity. The rhizomes function as a network without a centre which can grow and

develop in all directions. By not having a structured order, the rhizomes not only have no end, but no beginning. A rhizome creates its own principles of structure as it does not fit to any one generative or linear pattern (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987). With the lack of a centre, a space is created for the establishment of external networks. Rhizomes have six main characteristics or principles: 1) connection; 2) heterogeneity; 3) multiplicity; 4) assigning rupture; 5) cartography; 6) decalcomania. The first two principles (connection and heterogeneity) serve to orientate the relation that Service-learning creates between theory and practice. Hence, the student understands inclusivity and ethics in Service-learning by becoming actively inclusive, responsible and caring. The principle of multiplicity serves to understand Service-learning as an assemblage. The idea is how to acquire a new knowledge which is created through the interconnections between the two types of knowledge, the one which is acquired in the university auditoriums, and new knowledge on site. The collections that are formed can provide values, and ethical and inclusive practices. The last two principles of the rhizome (cartography and decalcomania) serve that inclusiveness and diversity to spread, take root and take the form of a map in Service-learning. Nevertheless, this map is always open with the possibility to be contested, changed, reformed, and reshaped at any time (Carrington, 2011, p. 4). In the optics of Deleuze and Guattari, there is transition in assemblages which means the process of active making and unmaking of the thing. The transition shapes and places the elements in its orbit and puts them together in an arrangement.

The principle of assigning rupture serves in Service-learning to decentralize academic learning and knowledge from institutional boundaries and to make it appropriate to be applicable in practice. If I use the language of Deleuze and Guattari, this process would be called deterritorialization and reterritorialization. “An assemblage establishes connection between certain multiplicities drawn from... semiotic, material and social flows simultaneously” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 25). Assemblage is a conglomeration of units (things, materialities, people, spaces, etc.) which has as features that is always emergent, active but temporarily stable. In this way, the use of the concept of assemblage makes it possible to describe and analyse things combined together in a complex way because, although always active, dynamic and ongoing, they can be seen as momentarily stable (Taylor & Harris-Evans, 2018).

Rhizomes destabilize the system of linear and hierarchical organization of knowledge. They affect root and branch. Rhizomes, not only can spread in any direction, but they can

move in levels as well. The concept of rhizomes does not have a general organizing principle (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018).

The rhizome mode goes beyond the concept of structural knowledge which can only emerge from the roots. Meanwhile, Service-learning goes beyond the idea of knowledge that is sufficient only for the requirements of the course. According to Butin (2005), Service-learning explores and points out the linkages between power, knowledge, and identity by challenging the static approach to teaching and learning. This approach allows students to experience learning or studying so that each of their experiences interconnects the academic and practical field.

Modern era coincides with the continual process of universalizing knowledge in general and philosophy in specifically. According to the Albanian philosophy scholar, Orgest Azizi (2016), despite being established as an institution as early as 1180 in Bologna, 1096 in Oxford, etc., the university, in the XVIII century, is still rare, and has not reached the concept of own. For him, the sites and sources of knowledge, their production, reproduction, and transmission are still mostly outside of universities and are typically private or semi-public, especially in the case of philosophy. Azizi (2016) argues that philosophers such as Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Leibniz had no significant relation with the university, much less Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot. Immanuel Kant is perhaps the first to embody so strongly in philosophy, and perhaps more than anyone else, the figure of the philosopher-professor.

The universitization of knowledge was also a progressive nationalization of it. Once extensively spread outside of the university, the sources and sites of knowledge also went beyond the scope of the state and its objectives. Limited types and amounts of knowledge were required by the premodern state for its operation and survival, including expertise of military strategy, religious dogma, finance, art of taxing, and historical and genealogical chronicles for dynastic glory. On the other hand, the modern state is a state of a population that it imposes itself as a subject, and a state that treats its own population as an object. Such a state is supposed to be the possessor, centralizer, and controller of knowledge since it is a state/power that occurs and is exerted in and on a society, and in accordance with it. The modern state is inescapably a knowledge state. In the modern age, which is also the age of the emergence and formation of new European states, knowledge, together with the forms and instances of its production and reproduction, will become a permanent and increasingly political subject. Thus, the development of a comprehensive

state policy on knowledge (but not only) becomes necessary for the existence of modern states, which become interconnected with a whole education policy (Azizi, 2016). The university will be one of the most significant links in such a dynamic, not only from the standpoint of benefit from a purely utilitarian perspective, but also as an instance that lends meaning to the whole and in which the worth of this benefit is represented.

Of course, there are knowledge, discourses, narratives, truths that are born, develop and exist outside the university. This does not mean that these knowledges are in conflict with the university, they can exist alongside the university. Trying to answer the question of what remains outside the university, Azizi (2016) brings as examples Marxism and psychoanalysis as two great discourses of modernity, which, structurally, were born and developed outside the university. He argues that this externality of these discourses from the university was both a condition of their development and consistency, as well as a challenge and questioning of the function of the university. This is because the source of truth came to them from another space, outside the university, a space that had its own laws and exigencies. In the case of Marx and Marxism it is the political-revolutionary action, and in the case of Freud and psychoanalysis it is the space of the clinical report (Azizi, 2016). If Marxism and psychoanalysis are taught in the university today, they are taught as results, but not done there.

For Geng et al., (2005), at universities, there are two types of knowledge: scientific knowledge and practical knowledge. Scientific knowledge is made explicit and apparent through education, research publication, and conferences; it flows inside the institution through student incorporation in learning processes and scholar studies of research outcomes, collaboration between universities and job market. Practical knowledge, on the other hand, is the assistance given by employees, which creates explicit knowledge in certain fields such as management, student services, etc.

The teachers'/lecturers' will to the core of science should get stronger as they become aware of its simplicity and depth of knowledge. The students' will to the core of science should make them push themselves to achieve the greatest clarity and discipline of knowledge and integrate demanding, resolute, engaged understanding about the people and its condition into the core of science (Heidegger, 1985).

Universities, in order to conduct scientific research, must have a relatively high level of knowledge. As Heidegger (1985, p. 489) says, "science is not to be without knowing". By its own capacity, the university develops toward its fundamental ground, which is only

accessible through the knowledge it cultivates. This means that it is impossible to determine the essence of the university from an external source, such as "politics" or another goal that has been set up for it (Heidegger, 1985).

Universities have been and, eventually, will continue to be holders and creators of knowledge (Birgeneau, 2005). Birgeneau (2005) argues that higher education institutions seek to provide future generations with the capabilities, cultural and scientific literacy, adaptability, and aptitude for critical inquiry and moral decision-making that they will need to contribute to society. Because they are engaged in knowledge generation, distribution, and learning, higher education institutions are considered to be in the knowledge business (Rowley, 2000).

2.5.1 Knowledge-Power Relations

Foucault deals with the relationship between knowledge and power mainly in his collection of essays *Power/Knowledge* (Foucault, 1980). In his works, Foucault shattered the previous foundation for the conventional separation between power and knowledge, expressed in the expression of resistance to unjust power use: "speak truth to power." This phrase, in Foucault's view, demonstrates that individuals who use it are unaware of the relationships between power, truth, and knowledge. According to him, there is no such thing as knowledge or truth that is not intertwined with power.

Staying at Foucault, it has to be noted that his approach defies simple categorization. Regarding the relationship between knowledge and power, the basic of Foucault's philosophy is that knowledge cannot exist without power, and power cannot function without a commensurate sort of knowledge. Power is not a fundamental right that is ceded to a governing body or individual as part of a mutually advantageous contractual relationship. Repressive power is the reverse of contractual power since it is not an abuse as oppression was in reference to the contract. Repression, on the other hand, is only the outcome and continuation of a dominance relation (Foucault, 1976/2004). Nevertheless, power is not repression either, or at least, repression is just one of the final shapes that power may take, as according to Foucault.

The contemporary knowledge of human derives mostly from institutions that focus on human, such as schools, hospitals, prisons, etc. The answers to human's issues are found in those institutions, and power techniques are invented in order to prepare people

according to the needs of society, state and economy or making them "healthy" and "regular" to fit and adapt easily. These power techniques, which are developed from the knowledge base found at such institutions, work on both the human's inner being and outer frame (Foucault, 1975/1979).

Actually, power coexists with knowledge and "regimes of truth" in all knowledge systems, practices, and institutions in society, such as the family, school, etc. Power exists not just alongside knowledge but it is affected by it. Successful management of power, in addition to personal or collective skills, requires information and knowledge. In this respect, the exercise of power, based on knowledge, would produce what I call "sustainable power". Of course, I am not considering the ethical aspect here because ethically, sustainable power, in addition to skills and knowledge, should also be based on justice.

"There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1975/1979, p. 27). In fact, the disciplinary practices related to systems of knowledge generated from and implemented in societal institutions were of major interest to Foucault. As Clegg (1989) points out, modern institutions' disciplinary practices are discursive practices, knowledge reproduced through activities enabled by the framed assumptions of that knowledge. To exert a different kind of power, a critical one, we have to go outside the knowledge frameworks that generate the power relations. Because of their knowledge, often positions of power are considered legitimate.

The examination is one of the first and most powerful techniques that illustrates the integrated relation between power and knowledge that was established in the modern period. In fact, examination is a very old Chinese invention. It became a regular system in China in 650 during the Sui Dynasty. This examination system, called Imperial examinations or Civil Service Examinations or *Keju*, was used to recruit civil officials in China, and lasted until 1905 (Elman, 2009). The Chinese imperial system died quickly with the Republican Revolution of 1911, but its collapse was already obtained in 1904 when the Qing Dynasty lost control of the education system. Along with the examinations, the dragon throne (symbol of the dynasty) and its elites fell apart in the twentieth century. Imperial examination was not only a system of evaluation but also a political and power instrument. Among other things, it was at the service of the bureaucracy and the imperial regime. *"These regular testing sites, which in terms of the*

role of police surveillance in the selection process operated as “cultural prisons,” elicited the voluntary participation of millions of men, ... and attracted the attention of elites and commoners at all levels of society” (Elman, 2009, p. 407).

Because of that strict examination system, officialdom in China developed into the privilege of a few. As the gateway to formal appointment, civil service examinations bestowed social and cultural reputation on families wishing to attain or preserve their position as local elites. Political power and legitimacy were acquired through education since higher status in society and legal privileges were essential consequence of the examination process to enter the civil service. As Manchu leaders peacefully handed up one of their primary means of cultural control that had for generations generated broad acceptance of the imperial regime, a social, political, and cultural linkage of traditional values, dynastic power, and gentry position crumbled. However, the spirit of the civil service examinations was present in Chinese public school and university entrance exams, which later spread worldwide (Elman, 2009). The academic examination validates that information and knowledge have been effectively transferred from educator/teacher/lecturer to student, allowing the latter to progress to the next level of his/her education or enter a career for which s/he has been taught, tested and assessed. Examination itself is a system of control and assessment of knowledge, information, skills, etc. But the examination is also a power that the system or the examiner has over the examinee. The examinee has the opportunity to obtain power through the examinations if s/he is successful.

One question that can logically arise is why knowledge and power are so intertwined in today's societies. According to Brass (2000), this happens because all of the disciplinary practices that saturate these societies, spreading out from the institutions and knowledge systems that uphold them, have one fundamental focus: human knowledge. All of these institutions, as well as contemporary society in general, are centred on the human. The questions that need to be answered are such as: What exactly is human? What are his/her inner inspirations and motivations? What are his/her wants, needs, and ambitions? How is the journey and progress of human in institutions at all stages of life from birth to cemetery? (Brass, 2000).

Every possession of knowledge is a potential power and every exercise of power implies knowledge as a "raw material". In modern and postmodern societies, knowledge and power are even more interconnected because the institutions and systems of knowledge

that these societies have created are focused on knowledge of human (Brass, 2000). As liberal state and market are a tremendous force in the functioning of today's society, it is constantly required to know human behaviour along with abilities, desires, tastes, wants, and needs.

As for knowledge-power relations within the university, of course there are dynamics and confrontations between the two. The American model of the university has long been closely related to the production and dissemination of knowledge. As explained in previous subchapters, the modernization of the American university system was mainly based on the nineteenth-century German university model (Bloom, 1987). The English model also had an impact. However, what was produced in the USA went beyond these models. Ben-David (1977) says that the American university reform can also be seen as an extension of the European university reforms. The German university model had the greatest influence in the world, mainly because of one fundamental principle: the unity of teaching with research. This unity gave extraordinary results in science as well. Also, the German university was more general in nature than specialized. Another distinguishing factor was the fact of being a self-governing institution (Ben-David, 1977). These were excellent premises for the reform of the American university which preserved the departmental autonomy and gave the university a more specialized nature, although it preserved the Liberal Arts programmes. But the biggest change that the American university faced is that it became part of the capitalist logic. This created new dynamics between departmental autonomy and freedom of competition which somehow shaped the American university. These dynamics between these two components, which often collide with each other, gave a new dimension to the production and positioning of knowledge in the US. In order to manage these dynamics, a professional and balanced management of knowledge, human resources, and institutional interests is needed.

2.5.2 Knowledge Management

Over the last three decades, knowledge management has grown in popularity and reputation as a managerial tool and research field (Cranfield and Taylor, 2008). Knowledge Management is considered to be gradually but steadily gaining the attention of many organizations in their pursuit of a competitive advantage (Boahene, 2003). The concept of knowledge management has acquired credibility over the years not just as a

result of expanded research initiatives on the topic, but also as a result of greater use of it as a management tool in commercial organizations (Cranfield and Taylor, 2008).

The increasing expansion of data and technology enables data to be transformed into meaningful information, known as knowledge (Ismail and Yang, 2007). While there is no commonly acknowledged definition of knowledge management, the most of them are quite similar. Rumizen (2002) defines knowledge management as a systematic approach to creating, capturing, sharing, and using knowledge required for an organization's success.

If management is mostly information-focused, knowledge management concentrates on information access. Culture-focused approach concentrates on the dissemination of knowledge, whereas a technology-focused approach highlights information technology tools. Nevertheless, the circumstances of organizations might determine which of these approaches is most suited. Several studies have found that the largest barriers to knowledge management contributors are cultural ones (Sarmadi et al., 2017). Knowledge management operations are effectively facilitated and maintained by organizational culture. Butnariu and Milson (2012) demonstrated that knowledge management in higher education should enhance knowledge creation suitable to its environment and foster the development of capabilities and talents.

Since knowledge management has been described in a variety of ways, it may be inferred that the academics do not place a strong emphasis on any particular knowledge management notion. The multidisciplinary character of knowledge management reflects various epistemologies and methodologies (Dalkir, 2005). This implies that managerial mindset affects knowledge management. Differences in knowledge management are usually the product of information-focused, technology-focused, and culture-focused perspectives (Gottschalk, 2005).

“Knowledge management ... draws from existing resources that an organisation may already have in place - good information systems management, organisational change management, and human resources management practices” (Davenport and Prusak, 2000, p. 163). People generate knowledge, but knowledge is embodied in groups, organizations, institutions, companies, corporations, etc. Explicit knowledge in an organization includes strategies, techniques, procedures, copyrights, products, and services. Skills and competences, experiences, relationships inside and beyond the institution, ideas,

and individual attitudes and values are all examples of tacit knowledge in an organizational environment (Agrawal, 2010).

Knowledge management idea emphasise the need of organisations to "know what they know." Educational institutions, like other institutions, preserve, access, and disseminate knowledge in some way. The question is whether the efficient application of such knowledge capital adds value to the products and services they offer (Milam, 2001).

Knowledge management programmes that are effective identify and exploit the know-how contained in work, with an emphasis on how it will be implemented. The goal of knowledge management is to make the appropriate knowledge available to the relevant people at the proper time (Kidwell et al., 2000).

Organizations that seek to improve their knowledge work management should analyse their procedures with the goal of increasing performance. According to Nickols (2010), the following steps demonstrate the procedures that should be followed by organizations for good knowledge management:

- Developing basic process competence;
- Looking for missing metrics;
- Considering benchmarking;
- Working to diffuse internal knowledge and practices;
- Providing a supportive learning environment;
- Addressing known knowledge gaps;
- Checking and rechecking assumptions;
- Making the implicit explicit;
- Learning from malfunctions.

For Robins (2018), the majority of organizational members' social conduct is significantly, broadly, and long-term influenced by the corporate cultural environment. Knowledge is a social phenomenon, and its development does not happen on its own; it needs appropriate backdrops (Sarmadi et al., 2017).

Every member participates in the production, dissemination, and application of knowledge in an organization/institution with a knowledge culture. Every society benefits from culture in terms of knowledge advancement, and academic culture, as a significant subculture, has a significant impact on the growth of knowledge production.

According to Ponzi (2002), knowledge management, in the early 2000s, was in the process of asserting itself as a novel component of management, and it is gradually but steadily catching the interest of higher education institutions. The major source of increased knowledge comes from culture. Academic culture is a significant subculture that has a significant influence on how knowledge is created. The relationship between educational groups within the university community gives academic culture its substance. Academic culture describes the ways in which university members engage and communicate with one another (Sabaghian, 2009). It is also recognized as one of the most useful factors in determining higher education policies.

Knowledge management is a process in which universities have devised methods to acknowledge and archive knowledge capital within the institution that are derived from staff from different departments or faculties, and occasionally, from other organizations that have similar goals or expertise (Firestone, 2001). Knowledge management may also be described as the process of converting information and intellectual capital into long-term value. It supplies individuals with the knowledge they need to take actions (Kidwell et al., 2000). Knowledge management deals with ensuring that the appropriate knowledge is available to the proper processor, whether human or machine, at the relevant time and in the right format for the right cost (Holsapple and Joshi, 1999). Kidwell et al., (2000) argue that universities that undertake initiatives to share knowledge in order to meet business goals are highly valuable.

For Sarmadi et al. (2017), the essential components of academic culture are knowledge-focused mission and university management assistance. The integration of people into an organization's culture and mission, which serve as the foundation for knowledge generation, increases their dedication and, consequently, results in successful knowledge management.

The growth of social capital and improved communication and interaction, based on the confidence of academic staff members, are both necessary for the development and enhancement of knowledge management in universities. In a cultural setting, individuals are encouraged to learn, explore, and experiment through valuation such as the reward system. People are evaluated, in a knowledge culture, more according to their knowledge management criteria than according to their organizational hierarchy. Social institutions, including academic ones, are both a result of community culture and a producer of the cultures (Sarmadi et al., 2017).

It is important to create the necessary conditions in order to foster more interpersonal trust, open communication, individual flexibility, and organizational communication. Academic environment is no different since academic staff members deal with interpersonal and collective communication, organizational identity, trust issues, teamwork, and collaboration. The organization's identity should be taken into account by academics. On the other hand, managers must consider cultural factors in order to successfully manage organizations.

Sarmadi et al. (2017) suggests a number of recommendations to improve the level of knowledge management through communication at the organizational level:

- Interaction between HEIs promotes shared commitment to principles and norms, which in turn promotes scientific culture. Therefore, it's important to enhance informal communication channels. Scientific associations, team research, expeditions, and similar activities are particularly beneficial in this area.
- Information systems that are relevant should be generated for academic groups to share knowledge.
- It is important to provide academic staff members with the proper incentives in order to promote interaction and knowledge exchange.
- In order for information and knowledge to circulate horizontally all across the organization, participation levels for decision-making have to be enhanced while, at the same time, organizational intra-level restrictions should be lifted.

There has long been dispute between two rival theories of professional knowledge in the realm of management. According to one perspective, a manager is a technician whose work involves using management science-derived ideas and techniques to solve common organizational challenges. In the second approach, a manager is seen as a skilled practitioner of the art of managing who cannot be boiled down to a set of clear-cut guidelines and ideas. As in other disciplines, "art" has a double meaning in management. It may refer to intuitive judgment and competence, the perception of phenomena and the ability to take appropriate action, often known as knowing in practice. But it may also refer to a manager's thought on occurrences that conflict with her/his intuitive understandings while s/he is taking action. A manager's life revolves entirely around the company/organization/institution that serves as both the backdrop for her/his activities

and the object of her/his analysis. As a result, s/he reflects in action on aspects related to organizational life.

For society's ongoing quest of knowledge, universities are the primary conduit. Knowledge management in learning environments should offer a collection of ideas for connecting people, processes, and technologies, and provide a platform for discussion on how organizations may support the policies and procedures that encourage knowledge sharing and management.

University lecturers are excellent examples of knowledge workers. The most interesting aspect of putting these concepts into practice is that the students (the main “customers”) can also become an essential component of the institution since they can play a crucial role in aiding knowledge creation and dissemination across the system. The development of lecturers' and students' positions as knowledge workers within larger, more integrated educational institutions is one of the significant challenges brought on by the emergence of the knowledge economy (Butcher, 2014). Knowledge management mechanisms can facilitate lecturers and students in exchanging insightful knowledge, reducing duplication of effort, engaging in self-paced learning, conducting research using, among other sources, archival data/information, and engaging in reflective practice to foster continuing professional and personal growth.

Generally, academic personnel believe that managing knowledge is part of their job. They see themselves as managers of their own knowledge, and, therefore, are actively engaged, at a certain level, in knowledge management. Academics often associate themselves with their research group or discipline first, followed by their university, and this is where their devotion and emphasis are focused (Cranfield and Taylor, 2008). It is challenging for universities to gain support for institutional-wide initiatives and transformation, such as knowledge management, unless there are seen and demonstrated advantages at the academic and individual levels (Becher, 2001).

The power of knowledge, which is the most significant source that has been built up cumulatively and does not diminish with usage, marks the twenty-first century. The knowledge management system integrates, as a whole, the organization's repository of individual and collective experiences, learning, perspectives, beliefs, etc., as well as the organizational components in organizational culture and information technology infrastructure (Al-Zoubi, 2014). Through knowledge management strategies and procedures, members of the organization can successfully complete company's

objectives. A company that properly manages knowledge is often seen as a learning organization. Al-Zoubi (2014) stresses that, according to numerous studies, the best approach to get a competitive advantage is through knowledge dissemination and reaction to knowledge.

The nature of academic personnel and academic job conceptions have a strong influence on the institution's culture and enforce their own characteristics that contribute to the capacity to use knowledge management as a management technique. To adopt knowledge management in any institution, the appropriate culture must be cultivated. Universities have two different cultures: academic culture and administrative culture, with sub-cultures within each, for instance, by field or function. Academics are supposed to be experts in their own discipline, thus they are resistant to being managed. According to a study conducted in 2008 in seven higher education institutions in the United Kingdom, it was observed that academics are not opposed to sharing best practices, but they also seek to maintain and use their academic freedom in order to foster innovation and creativity (Cranfield and Taylor, 2008). Essentially, the contemporary university is divided between two cultural sections: academic and managerial. This division has significant implications when considering the suitability of various knowledge management principles and strategies. Academics and managers occupy these university's two sections (Cronin, 2001).

Universities can serve as a suitable platform for knowledge management theory and practice, which are warmly embraced by the business sector. In the era of globalization, accelerated technological development, and growing competitiveness, the application of knowledge management framework in universities has emerged as a distinct phenomenon. Compared to its situation in the business world, knowledge management awareness in universities is still at a lower level (Al-Zoubi, 2014).

A university's management structure determines its ability to react rapidly to external factors and pressure. The effect of decentralization might be that faculties and departments, and thus the deans or heads of the departments, become really powerful, weakening the centre from undertaking systemic or institutional-wide transformation without the individual's consent and financial backing of the deans and heads of the departments. The good aspect of this structure is that if there is a climate and culture of trust and cooperation then the centre must secure the approval of all deans and heads of departments before engaging in any structural reforms that would increase the imitative

performance. Centralized models do not face this issue, and according to research conducted in the United Kingdom, newer, modern universities seem to be more entrepreneurial in character and use the more central approach (Cranfield and Taylor, 2008).

Five different categories of knowledge are often employed in organizations, according to Cross and Baird (2000). The first kind is ingrained in people's minds and is acquired through operational actions, research, teaching, and job experience. The second type is knowledge shared in work groups, such as agreement on workplace regulations. The third type of knowledge is knowledge that has been formally collected and arranged for usage, like course syllabus or data centres. The fourth type of knowledge, which includes lab activities, is knowledge that is integrated into organizational processes. The fifth category of knowledge is integrated into production and services, such as the abilities of students who have graduated, patents, research publications. Each type of knowledge can be utilized for the accomplishment of organizational objectives and goals.

For Rowley (2001), the following four key aspects of knowledge management can be employed to group knowledge management projects:

1. The establishment of knowledge deposits or basins which serve to absorb and collect all explicit knowledge in the organization, and to share it with the members of the organization.
2. Methods and instruments that facilitate access to knowledge.
3. Knowledge-based culture, in which top executives sets objectives for knowledge exchange through policy documents, job instructions, etc.
4. Respecting knowledge as an asset, or the intellectual capital component of knowledge management, is vital for enhancing the idea that knowledge is a significant resource.

Based on the knowledge management literature, reusing external knowledge is critical for improved productivity, lower costs, and less reliance on individual know-how (Al-Zoubi, 2014). A learning organization is one that fosters individual and organizational learning in order to encourage success in adapting to ongoing change (Rowley, 2001).

Universities are commonly viewed not just as teaching institutions, but also as organizations that generate new knowledge and provide assistance to social communities.

Knowledge management has a crucial role in increasing the efficiency and productivity of university aims and providing several advantages to university. The advantages and disadvantages of the knowledge strategy that dominates the today's university are tied to the loss of information that emerges when whatever to be studied is abstracted from an uncontrollable complex reality and put it in a simplified and manageable framework of an academic field or profession (Vanderburg, 2003).

Butcher (2014) lists that the following principles as driving the adoption of a knowledge management strategy:

1. Begin with a strategy.
2. Engage users in the development of the knowledge management strategy and methods.
3. Carefully differentiate knowledge management strategy from technology deployment and information system management.
4. Make sure that the wider organisational climate encourages and promotes knowledge production and sharing.
5. Consider knowledge management to be a repetitive process.
6. Assess the effectiveness of knowledge management.

Regarding the application and benefits of knowledge management in the university, Al-Zoubi (2014) gives the following assumptions:

1. The successful implementation of knowledge management in university administration needs a comprehensive, integrated perspective of the system's applications.
2. The application of knowledge management in universities improves education quality and learning results.
3. The effective application of knowledge management necessitates the participation of academics, managers, and students in this structure.
4. There are several aspects that impact academics, management, and students' successful utilization of knowledge management.
5. Academic achievement in the assessment process is related to successful learning results.

6. The major inputs of institutions in a particular society are the learning results.
7. The feedback given by various institutions can be used to measure the success of learning results.

The capacity to practice the procedures associated with the knowledge system is required for successful implementation of it. It is referred to as the breadth to which academics and management personnel generate knowledge through inter-engagement between explicit and implicit knowledge, the exchange of such knowledge among personnel, and the utilization of organizational learning processes that lead to innovation in knowledge management. Individuals are essential for the creation of knowledge actions because employees are knowledge themselves and require little information to generate knowledge (Hassell, 2007).

The use and operation of a knowledge management system enhances university education quality. An efficient knowledge management system demands that every academician engage in proper knowledge management in his/her teaching activities, which involves producing, sharing, acquiring, preserving, and successfully distributing knowledge to users of knowledge, particularly students (Mohayidin et al., 2007).

Al-Zoubi (2014) presents four main stages that must occur in order to create a culture of knowledge sharing and cooperation. They are as follows: (1) making knowledge apparent, (2) raising knowledge intensity, (3) constructing knowledge infrastructure, and (4) cultivating a knowledge culture. Collective knowledge capitalization occurs with sharing in knowledge community members: from individuals to groups and teams to organizations. Teachers/lecturers may improve their teaching ability, competence, experience, and action research by using knowledge management. Knowledge exchange is not confined to the organization.

The results of a study conducted in eight universities in Malaysia show that the information structure, as well as knowledge acquisition, development, preservation, and distribution, are crucial elements in designing knowledge management activities at the individual, faculty, and university levels (Mohayidin et al., 2007).

Cronin (2001) argues that academics can benefit from sharing their knowledge and best practices by:

- Creating course syllabus repositories.

- Providing guidelines for evaluating various pedagogical styles and approaches.
- Emphasizing insights gained from distant education experiments.
- Establishing online communities of practice or platforms for the sharing of tacit knowledge and on-the-job experiences.

The university must have connections and relations with institutions and enterprises outside the university. This would bring benefits to all parties. A knowledge of a not so academic nature, but valuable, would enter the university. Such knowledge is usually possessed by practitioners in various institutions and companies. According to Schön (2008), competent practitioners usually know more than they can say. In their everyday actions, they demonstrate a form of knowledge that is mostly tacit. In fact, practitioners themselves frequently demonstrate the ability to reflect on their intuitive knowledge while taking action, and they sometimes use this ability to deal with the unusual, complex, and conflicting circumstances that arise in practice.

Practitioners possess that professional knowledge to which Schein (1972) attributes three characteristics:

1. A foundational discipline or element of basic science from which the practice has grown or is based.
2. An element of applied science or "engineering" from which many of the routine diagnostic techniques and problem-solutions are generated.
3. A set of abilities and attitudes related to providing services effectively to customers while making use of the underlying fundamental and applied knowledge.

Also, practitioners have the abilities to know and reflect in action. The attributes of knowing are as follows: Practitioners are capable of doing some acts, acknowledgments, and judgments spontaneously. Many times, practitioners do not even realize they've learnt to do these things; they just catch themselves doing them. Practitioners may have once been conscious of the understandings, which they later absorbed to become the basis for their actions. Other times, they might not have been aware about them at all (Schön, 2008).

A practitioner can correct overlearning through reflection. Reflecting in action means that the improvisation entails changing, combining, and recombining a group of figures within

the framework that defines and unifies the performance. The practitioner can make new meaning of the situations of ambiguity or uniqueness which s/he may allow herself/himself to practice by reflecting on them. S/he can also expose and critique the tacit understandings which have developed around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice.

The potential objects of a practitioner's reflection are as various as the types of phenomena that are in front of her/him and the systems of knowing-in-practice that s/he provides to them. He may consider the implicit norms and appreciations that support a judgment or the theories and methods underlying a pattern of behaviour. The practitioner may reflect on how s/he felt about a circumstance that prompted her/him to take a certain course of action, how s/he phrased the issue s/he was attempting to resolve, or how s/he defined her/his position within a wider institutional framework. A new description of the phenomenon may be developed by the practitioner, who may then test it using an on-the-spot experiment after surfacing and criticizing her/his original knowledge of it. S/he can develop a new theory about the phenomenon by addressing the feeling s/he is experiencing about it. When one reflects while performing (in action), s/he also becomes a researcher but in the practical setting. S/he develops a novel theory of the particular case rather than relying on the categories of recognized theory and methodology (Schön, 2008).

The practitioner's actions also result in unforeseen transformations that affect the situation's meaning. While in practice, the situation always speaks/conveys something; the practitioner listens, and then reshapes the situation after taking account of what s/he has heard/learned. The practitioner amasses a collection of examples, illustrations, understandings, and doings. When a practitioner understands a situation that s/he considers to be unusual, s/he views it as something that is already part of her/his toolbox. The practitioner gains a new perspective on the issue and a new pathway for action when s/he adds the situation to her/his repertory, but the sufficiency and usefulness of her/his new perspective must still be evaluated in practice/action. Experiment is a necessary component of action reflection. The practitioner's experimentation is exploratory, move-testing, and hypothesis-testing at the same time when s/he reflects in action on a situation s/he regards as exceptional, paying attention to phenomena and uncovering her/his intuitive knowledge of them. Hence, the same activities serve all three purposes (Schön, 2008).

Doing and thinking go hand in hand with reflection-in-action. Reflection is fuelled by doing and its outcomes, whereas doing extends thinking via the tests, movements, and probes of experimental action. Each provides for the other and makes limits for the other.

A practitioner, who reflects-in-action, has a tendency to question the description of the work at hand, the theories s/he applies to it, and the performance standards that guide her/him. While questioning these things, the practitioner also questions the components of the organizational knowledge architecture in which her/his activities are entrenched.

In a school that supports reflective teaching, teachers would question the prevalent knowledge system. Dilemmas and disputes would emerge and take centre stage. In the organizational learning system, conflicts and dilemmas tend to be suppressed or they result in polarization and political warfare (Schön, 2008).

The university-business partnerships enable and facilitate the interaction and cooperation between academics and practitioners, and between students and practitioners. This cooperation is mutually beneficial. From this direct interaction with practitioners, academics can see how the theories they develop work in practice; what problems practitioners face; what are the obstacles of certain theories when applied in practice; in which direction a certain field or industry is going; what the demands of that market are; etc. Interaction with business and practitioners can serve academics as real-world laboratories for their areas of interest. The students also can benefit from this cooperation because they have the opportunity to see the practical application of what they learn at the university. They have the opportunity to understand how a certain sector works practically, and create connections with the market before graduation. On the other hand, business benefits from cooperation with universities as their practitioners have the opportunity to confront their ideas and work activities with another perspective such as that of academics. Through the cooperation, business can have access to the research and innovations that take place in the university and their results, and have access to a platform of young potential professional employees such as university students. Clinics are one of the valuable examples where the interaction between academics and practitioners allows both parties to benefit greatly by having access to knowledge, developments and practices taking place in each other's institutions.

Universities in Albania have the possibilities to implement knowledge management approaches to enhance all components of their mission, from teaching to public service to research. An institution-wide approach to knowledge management can bring major

advancements in sharing knowledge, both explicit and tacit, and the associated surging benefits. Employing knowledge management strategies and technology in higher education institutions can be just as important as it is in the business world. The spirit of organizations transforms as they become more efficient through exploiting knowledge capital. When implemented appropriately, it may result in improved decision-making abilities, shortened “product” development period time, better academic and administrative services, and lower costs (Kidwell et al., 2000).

3. Higher education in Albania

3.1 Background

The first documented traces of higher education in Albania date back to 1380 with the University of Dyrrhachium founded in the city of Dyrrhachium (today Durrës). In Latin, this institution was called *Universitas Studiorum Dyrrhachium*. The first Rector of the university was John of Dyrrhachium. In 1936, due to the Ottoman invasion, the university was relocated to the city of Zadar (today in Croatia) (University of Zadar, 2018; University of Durrës "Aleksandër Moisiu", 2006). However, modern higher education in Albania has its beginnings immediately after the Second World War. Founded in 1946, a two-year pedagogical institute served as the first higher education institution in the country. This institution was known as the Pedagogical Institute of Tirana. Along with other teacher training subjects and programmes, the institute was an important component of the Albanian government's strategy to abolish illiteracy in the country by 1955. A National Research Institute named the Institute of Sciences was founded by the Albanian government in 1947. In addition to these two pioneer institutes of higher education in the country, during the first half of the 1950s higher education in Albania was expanded and diversified by founding five other new institutes in Tirana, namely the Polytechnic Institute, the Institute of Medicine, the Agricultural Institute, the Institute of Economics, and the Institute of Law. On this basis of higher education, some of these institutes merged in 1957 establishing the first university in the country named the State University of Tirana (Duro, 2012). Nowadays, this institution is named University of Tirana, and continues to be the largest university in Albania.

Several higher institutes were established in the country during the communist regime, which after 1991 were transformed into universities. In 1991, the Higher Institute of Agriculture was transformed into the Agricultural University of Tirana. In 1957, the Higher Pedagogical Institute was established in Shkodra, initially with a 2-year cycle of studies, and later with a 3- and 4-year cycle. This institute functioned as such until 1991, when it was transformed into the University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi" (University of Shkodra - official website). The Higher Pedagogical Institute of Elbasan, established in

1971, was transformed into a university in 1991 being called the University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani" (University of Elbasan - official website). University of Gjirokastra "Eqrem Çabej" was established in 1991 on the basis of the Higher Pedagogical Institute, which was founded and operated in the city since 1971 (University of Gjirokastra - official website). The Higher Agricultural Institute of Korça was also founded in 1971, and in 1992 gained the status of a university, initially being named the Polytechnic University of Korça and, since 1994, it has been renamed as the University of Korça "Fan Noli" (University of Korça - official website). In 1991, the Polytechnic University of Tirana was founded. In fact, this university is considered a continuation of the Polytechnic Institute founded in 1951 in Tirana. In 1957, this institute, together with several higher institutes that had been established in Tirana, founded the State University of Tirana where the Higher Polytechnic Institute was transformed into the Faculty of Engineering of the university. In 1991, this faculty was separated from the University of Tirana, creating the Polytechnic University of Tirana (Tafaj and Shahini, 2019). In 1966, the Higher Institute of Arts was founded in Tirana, which was basically the merger of three artistic institutions: the State Conservatory of Tirana, the School of Fine Arts, and the Higher School of Actors "Aleksandër Moisiu". In 1990, the Higher Institute of Arts was transformed into the "Academy of Arts". In 2011, the Academy of Arts was named the University of Arts, keeping the structure of the faculties unchanged (University of Arts - official website). In 1960, the Institute of Physical Education was established in Tirana. In 1971, the name of the institute changed to the Higher Institute of Physical Culture "Vojo Kushi". In 2000, this institution was named the "Vojo Kushi" Academy of Physical Education and Sports. In 2010, this institution of higher education was named as the Sports University of Tirana (Sports University of Tirana - official website). The University of Medicine Tirana was founded in 2013 after it was separated from the University of Tirana where it had been in the form of a faculty. However, this university has its roots in the Higher Institute of Medicine established in 1952, which in 1957 formed the Faculty of Medicine of the State University of Tirana (University of Medicine Tirana - official website). University of Durrës "Aleksandër Moisiu" was founded in 2006 in the city of Durrës. The University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali" was founded in 1994 in the city of Vlora. Initially, it was named as the Technological University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali". Later, it was renamed as the University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali" (University of Vlora - official website). The description above briefly explains the history of the establishment of the first and main public institutions of higher education in Albania.

The higher education system in Albania quickly grew between 1960 and 1970 by offering part-time and evening programmes at the regional campuses of the State University of Tirana and the Higher Institute of Agriculture. In 1972, there were 11 regional campuses, accounting for almost 58% of all students enrolled (Tafaj and Shahini, 2019). About 15 years after Albania had switched to the democratic and capitalist system, the process of massification in higher education emerged. In fact, even this process in Albania occurred very late, also because until 1991 it was a communist dictatorial country where higher education was exclusive to a very small elite. Globally, the massification of higher education started in the 1920s in the USA, while in Europe this process started in the 1950s (Ben-David, 1977). The massification took place during the right-wing government of the Democratic Party (2005-2013). This process happened in two directions. First, student quotas to study at existing universities were significantly increased. Thus, it became easier to be admitted to a university in Albania. Second, the number of private universities increased, and several branches of state universities were founded in various cities (Kajsiu, 2015). Massification was perhaps the first major step in the change of higher education institutions in Albania since the communist regime. Actually, a modern educational institution is also the outcome of development of an educational discourse driven by liberal views, embodied in the symbolic expression "education for all" (Moura and Cestari, 2017). But, regarding the process of massification in universities, Freire (1982b) thinks that any attempt at mass education should have at least one basic purpose. This process, according to him, should enable people to delve deeply into what he calls the *prise de conscience* of reality. This is accomplished by problematizing human's relationship with other people and with the world. As can be understood, for Freire, the reality where we exist should be the main subject of education. The following three major phases saw the expansion in both the number of higher education providers and student enrolments.

Period	Expansion phases
1950-1970	The overall enrolment increased from 300 to around 25,500
1980-1991	There was an increase in student enrolment from 15,000 to 25,000

2004-2013	In order to cope with the rising demand for higher education, which climbed from 53,000 to 173,000 students, private HEIs were allowed and encouraged to be get involved.
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Table 1. Phases of higher education expansion in Albania in the number of higher education providers and student enrolments

Source: (Tafaj and Shahini, 2019)

Prior to 1991, Albania had one of the lowest gross enrolment ratios (GER) in the continent and the region, lower than 10%. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) in Albania reached its highest point in 2015 at 70% and fell to 57% in 2017 (UNESCO – Institute for Statistics, 2023). The decline in student enrolment in HEIs in Albania is mainly caused by policy changes made in the mid-1970s, and the mass migration in the 1990s and after 2015. Under the communist system, government interventions would take the form of lowered intended student quotas, increased admission requirements, and fewer higher education providers. The primary factors for admission to HEIs were party allegiance, social class, and, in the end, the academic achievement. In 2014, the left-wing government, newly in power, as part of a new higher education reform that was approved in Parliament a year later, suspended or cancelled the licenses of two public and 18 private HIEs because of poor quality and non-fulfilment of standards (Gjonça, 2014). In addition, the government imposed an entry-level grade requirement for admission to higher education, raised tuition fees, terminated part-time undergraduate programmes, and promoted the establishment and operation of vocational education providers.

In fact, an in-depth analysis of the developments of education and university in Albania during the 20th century until the 1990s would be very interesting and valuable to carry out due to the unique nature of the political regime, economy, and international relations of Albania in that era. This analysis could require an approach from the perspective of the sociology of history. Albanians educated abroad, the special relationship of the Albanian society and state with religion, the involvement of the intelligentsia, political terror in the Albanian political leadership, etc., make communist and pre-communist Albania a very interesting and unique case study. But this dissertation mainly focuses on the university in Albania in the post-communist period. However, the reasons I raised above are an invitation for further research to shed light on the university, power relations, the production and utilization of knowledge, and the clashes between knowledge and power in communist and pre-communist Albania.

Zgaga et al. (2013) identify three waves of reforms in higher education in the Western Balkans from a regional standpoint: a) transition; b) Bologna reform; c) political pressures. All of them were accompanied by significant legislative changes. However, Albanian higher education, since 1991, has only undergone two significant reforms. During the period of 2007–2013, the right-wing government made changes in higher education in the country. The government managed the adoption of the Bologna Process for all degree cycles; through a central Matura assessment, it centralized the admissions procedure; it implemented the state examination for regulated professions; it raised institutional autonomy; it launched the process of integrating research institutes at public universities that were once part of the Academy of Science; it broadened the higher education system in terms of students, HEIs variety, and degrees (Tafaj and Shahini, 2019). In 2014, the leftist government changed, above all, the admission procedures, tuition fees, and academic governance by thoroughly separating the academic from the administrative operations.

The funds of international actors such as the European Union have given a small boost to developments in higher education in Albania as well as a kind of orientation. The European Commission, between 2007 and 2013, provided financial support to Albania through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA I), which had two subsections: (1) transition assistance and institution building (TAIB), and (2) cross-border cooperation, with a total budgetary distribution of about 594 million EUR (EU Policy Hub, 2017). From this financial aid of the EU to Albania during the period 2007-2013, only two projects were financed in the education sector in Albania, namely: "Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Albania" in 2008, and "Rehabilitation of Vocational Education and Training (VET) schools in Lezha, Fier and Cërrik" in 2011. The EU's financial contribution to these two projects was EUR 9,200,000 in total (7.000.000 + 2.200.000). From the total budget of 594 million EUR of the IPA I program (2007-2013) for Albania, only about 1.6% was channelled into education, specifically only for vocational education and training (European Commission, 2023).

As for the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) for the period 2014-2020, the only EU funds for education in Albania from this package have been for the renovation and reconstruction of educational institutions damaged by the earthquake of 26 November 2019 that occurred in Albania. Before the earthquake, none of the money from this EU package for Albania was channelled towards education (European Commission, 2020).

As can be seen, the funds from the EU IPA packages for Albania are channelled very little in education, even less in higher education. The few EU funds that have gone to education in Albania have mainly focused on education and vocational training and the reconstruction of educational institutions damaged by the 2019 earthquake in Albania. However, these funds seem to have had an impact on the policies of the left-wing Albanian government, which is trying to promote VET, and orient young people towards vocational education.

The international aspect of higher education in Albania has consistently been an issue. Since the late 1940s when it was founded, the higher education system in Albania, like the entire educational system, has been strongly influenced and supported by the Soviet Union. Consequently, education in Albania, including higher education, was structured according to the Soviet philosophy and model (Schmidt-Neke, 2007). Up until 1961, the vast majority of student and staff mobility was with the Soviet Union and other Eastern Europe countries. Between 1950 and 1961, the average number of Albanian students going abroad to study was 130. 1961 was the year when Albania cut off its connections with the members of the Warsaw Treaty and fell into self-isolation. Only after the 1980s did Albania start to open up, and the number of students studying abroad progressively climbed, mostly in France and Italy. For example, from only three Albanian students studying abroad in 1971, the number increased significantly to 110 in 1985 (Tafaj and Shahini, 2019). Along the period of transition, mostly from 2003 when the Bologna Process started to be implemented, the higher education system in Albania has been significantly affected by regional cooperation within the framework of Albania's EU integration and the policy suggestions of international organizations, such as the World Bank and UNESCO. Based on the data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, for the period 1998-2020, Albania had, and still has, a huge negative net flow ratio of internationally mobile students. Most of young Albanians who choose to study abroad reside in the European Higher Education Area (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2018).

To have a clearer idea of the evolution of higher education in Albania, figure 2, through nine indicators, shows in summary the development of higher education in Albania for the period 2005-2018.

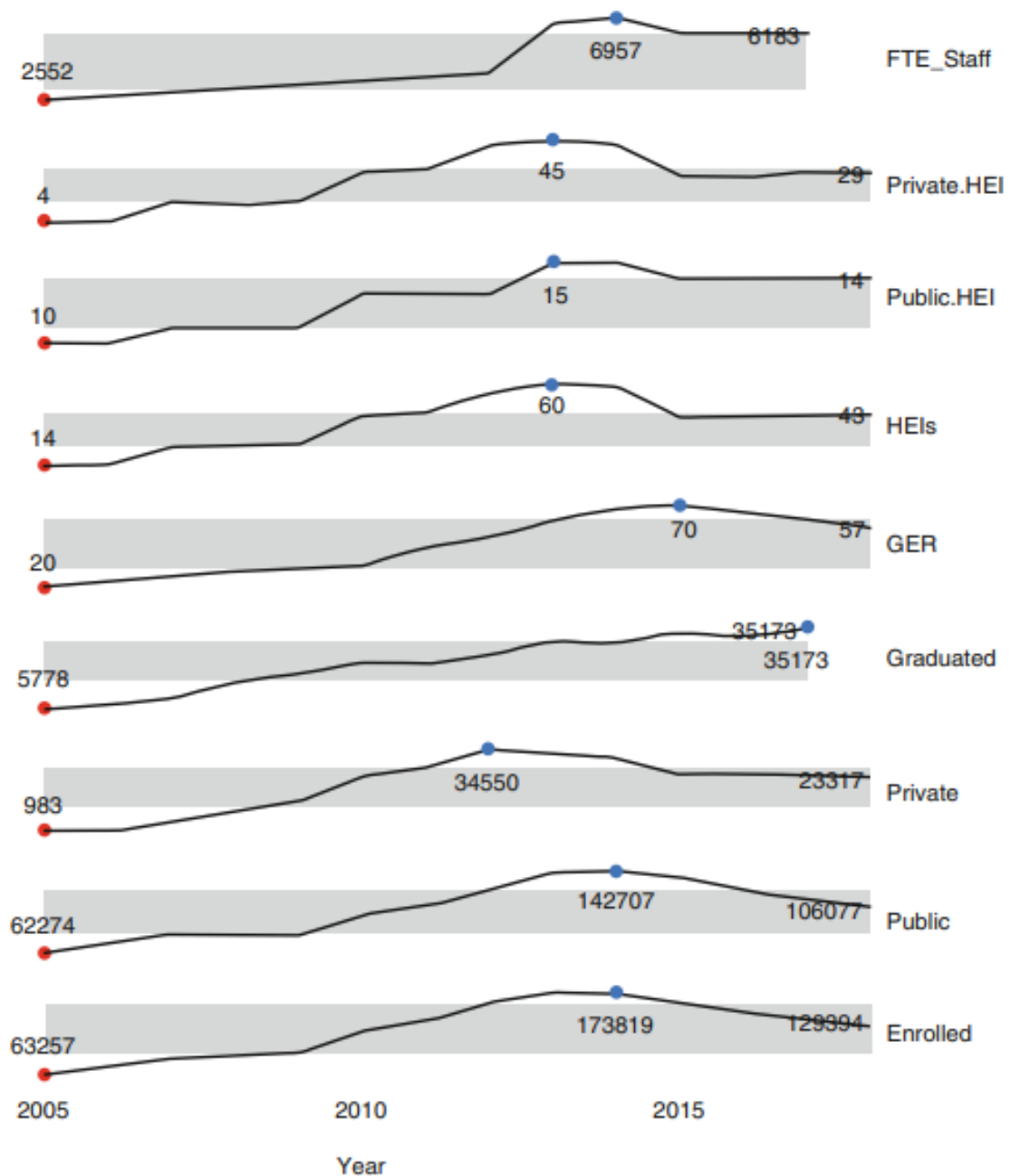


Figure 2. Development of higher education in Albania for the period 2005-2018

Bottom-up reading of the figure: 1) total number of students enrolled; 2) number of students enrolled at public universities; (3) number of students enrolled at private higher education institutions; (4) total number of students graduated; (5) gross enrolment ratio; (6) total number of higher education institutions; (7) number of public universities; 8) number of private higher education institutions; 9) full-time equivalent staff.

Source: Tafaj and Shahini, 2019

3.2 Albanian Higher Education in the EU Framework

It was not until the early 1970s that European Union ministers of education agreed to meet in Brussels, and the first resolution creating an action programme in the field of education was enacted in 1976. In June 1987, Erasmus, the flagship initiative of the EU, was launched (Pepin, 2007).

Dissatisfaction with the university system and administration was made clear in 1968 through student demonstrations and other events throughout Europe. As the pillar of a sustainable cultural community, the European Parliament pushed for the Europeanization of universities in 1969. The idea to establish a European Centre for the Development of Education was put out by the French Minister of Education at the time, Olivier Guichard. As attentions and interest in education increased in international platforms, in 1967, was founded the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). A year after the Sorbonne Declaration, signed in May 1998 by Ministers of France, United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy, was initiated the Bologna process, which sought to restructure the European higher education institutions in a way that would make them more commensurate and compatible (Pepin, 2007). The Bologna Process was launched in 1999 by EU member countries' ministers responsible for higher education in order to establish a European Higher Education Area.

Since 2003, Albania has been a full member of the Bologna Process / European Higher Education Area. Important elements of the Bologna Process such as the three-cycle model for the university (bachelor-master-doctorate), the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement have become part of Albanian higher education for several years. In fact, technically, the Bologna Process is an intergovernmental initiative that started outside of EU rules, and the EC one of the members of the Bologna Process. Nevertheless, Pépin (2007) argues that this process cannot be defined apart from EU policy.

The European Union, especially the European Commission, has been quite proactive in the field of higher education. The EC modernization strategy has been endorsed by EU ministers and is widely supported by major stakeholders such as EUA, EURASHE and ESU. The agenda is divided into three sections: curriculum reform, governance reform, and funding reform. Actually, the governance reform goes against a continental heritage of state-run universities as well as a broader trend towards strong regulation. The

European Commission urges universities to be autonomous bodies with strong quality assurance, a contrast to the continent's heritage of faculties. It also expects to see significantly more strategic collaborations between higher education institutions with the business world and public agencies. Also, the European Commission encourages changes in the financing of universities. The funding reforms seeks for a diversification of university funding streams that are closer related to performance, as well as promotion of equity, access, and effectiveness. As of 2006, the European Commission places a special emphasis on the modernization agenda, university-business partnership, and higher education transparency (Corbett, 2011).

To understand the importance and situation of higher education in Albania, we can have a look on various indicators. Below I review several data related to higher education in Albania and compare them with the average of the European Union. According to the World Bank data for Albania from 1994-2020, government expenditure on education has never exceeded 4% of GDP in any year.

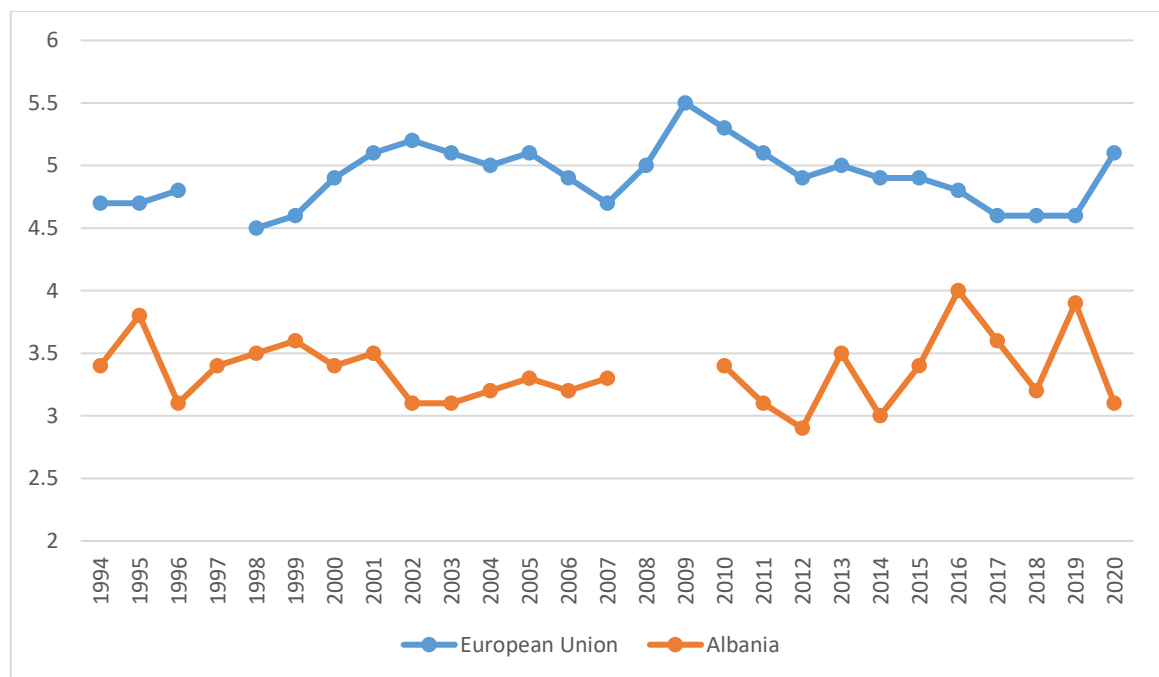


Figure 3. Government expenditure on education (% of GDP) in Albania and in the EU

Source: World Bank

According to figure 3, the year with the highest percentage in Albania is 2016 (4% of GDP), while the years with the lowest percentage are 2012 (2.9% of GDP) and 2014 (3% of GDP). There are no data for the years 2008 and 2009. If we compare it with the average percentage of GDP that the European Union spends on education, we can see that Albania

is very low. From the data of the World Bank, for the period 1994-2020, the year with the lowest percentage is 1996 (4.5%), while the year with the highest percentage is 2009 (5.5%). It is not difficult to notice from this indicator how little importance and investment is dedicated to education in Albania.

As for government expenditure on education in Albania, from 1997 to 2020, the total percentage ranges from 9.6% to 13.6%. Compared to the average percentage of expenditure on education in the European Union, Albania stands almost at the same levels. However, for the same period of time (1997-2020), the average expenditure on education in the EU has never fallen below 10.4% (2014, 2020), while the highest level was 12.1% (2005, 2006).

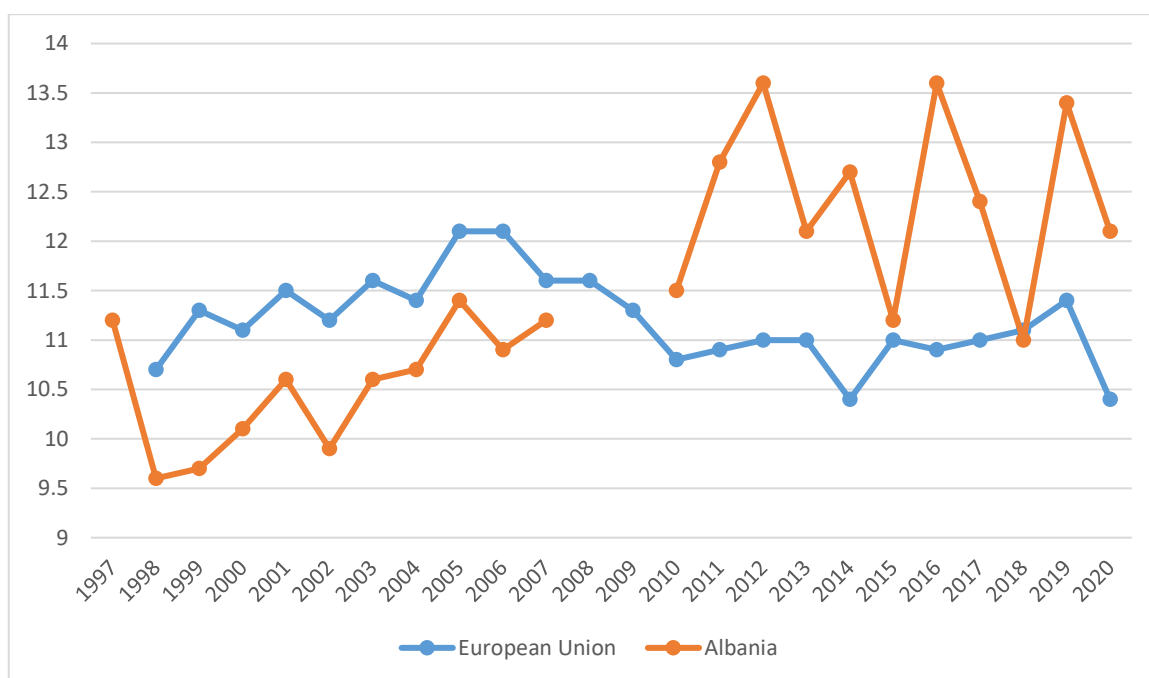


Figure 4. Government expenditure on education, total (% of government expenditure) in Albania and in the EU

Source: World Bank

Referring to the data of the World Bank regarding the percentage spent on tertiary education in Albania from the government expenditure dedicated to education as a whole, there are data only for five years of the post-communist period. The highest percentage of expenditure on tertiary education was in 2013 with 22% of government expenditure on education. If we compare it with the percentage spent on tertiary education in European Union from the government expenditure dedicated to education as a whole, we can notice that this percentage in Albania is about 3-4% lower.

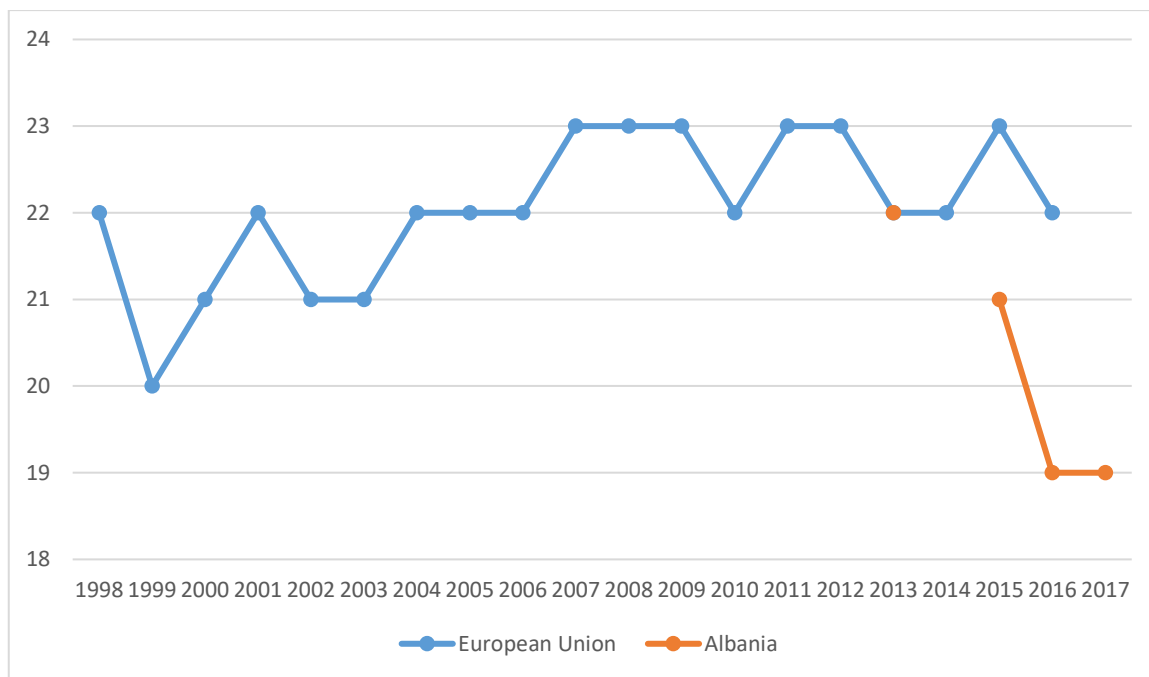


Figure 5. Expenditure on tertiary education (% of government expenditure on education) in Albania and in the EU

Source: World Bank

The indicator that perhaps shows more clearly the interest and investments of Albanian government towards students and, consequently, towards tertiary education in Albania is the percentage of government expenditure per student. Figure 6 shows the average general government expenditure per student in tertiary education in Albania, expressed as a percentage of GDP per capita. Unfortunately, data is available only for the years 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017. While in Albania the maximum percentage of government expenditure per student in tertiary education was 14.6% (2016), the average of government expenditure per student in tertiary education in the European Union is much higher. This average percentage in the EU is almost double the percentage in Albania. The figure below shows data for the period 1998-2016 in the EU.

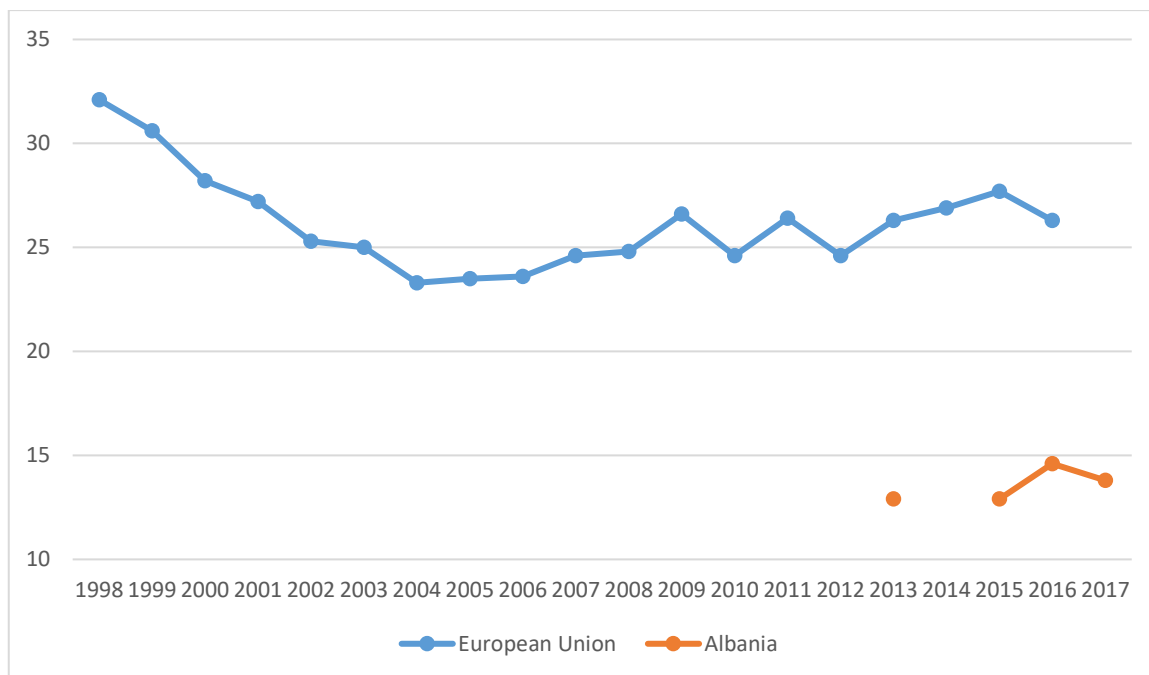


Figure 6. Government expenditure per student, tertiary (% of GDP per capita) in Albania and in the EU

Source: World Bank

In 2014, Albania signed the "Horizon 2020" agreement with the European Union, which opened the way for Albanian researchers, universities, organizations, institutions to apply for a period of seven years (2014-2020) for scientific research to a fund worth 80 billion euros. But the statistics published by the European Commission show that Albanian academic institutions have had difficulties absorbing funds from the EU. According to data from the European Commission, within the "Horizon 2020" programme, projects from Albania have managed to receive a total of 5.7 million EUR in funding from the European Union. The weight of financing that Albania managed to receive is only 0.01% of the total financing of "Horizon 2020". The number of signed grants is 48, or 0.14% of "Horizon 2020". The number of organisations from Albania involved in these projects is 53, or 0.03% of "Horizon 2020". The ratio of the successful applications from Albania to the total number of eligible applications received is 6.87%. While the average of successful applications in the "Horizon 2020" program is 9.55%. The number of eligible proposals from Albania for funding in the framework of "Horizon 2020" programme is 477, or 0.17% of "Horizon 2020". The number of organizations from Albania that have applied for "Horizon 2020" grants is 611, or 0.06% of "Horizon 2020" applications in total (European Commission, 2023).

Not all universities in Albania have been successful in absorbing funds from the "Horizon 2020" programme for their own projects. The only university that has managed to receive over one million euros in funds from the "Horizon 2020" programme is the University of Medicine in Tirana. Other higher education institutions in the country have managed to absorb insignificant financial amounts. In addition to universities, there are also institutions and organizations (public and private) such as the National Agency for Territorial Planning, the National Association of Orphans of Albania, Turgut Ozal High School, etc. that have managed to win projects within the "Horizon 2020" programme but in very small numbers. Figure 7 shows the financial amounts that higher education institutions in Albania have managed to benefit from applications in the "Horizon 2020" programme.

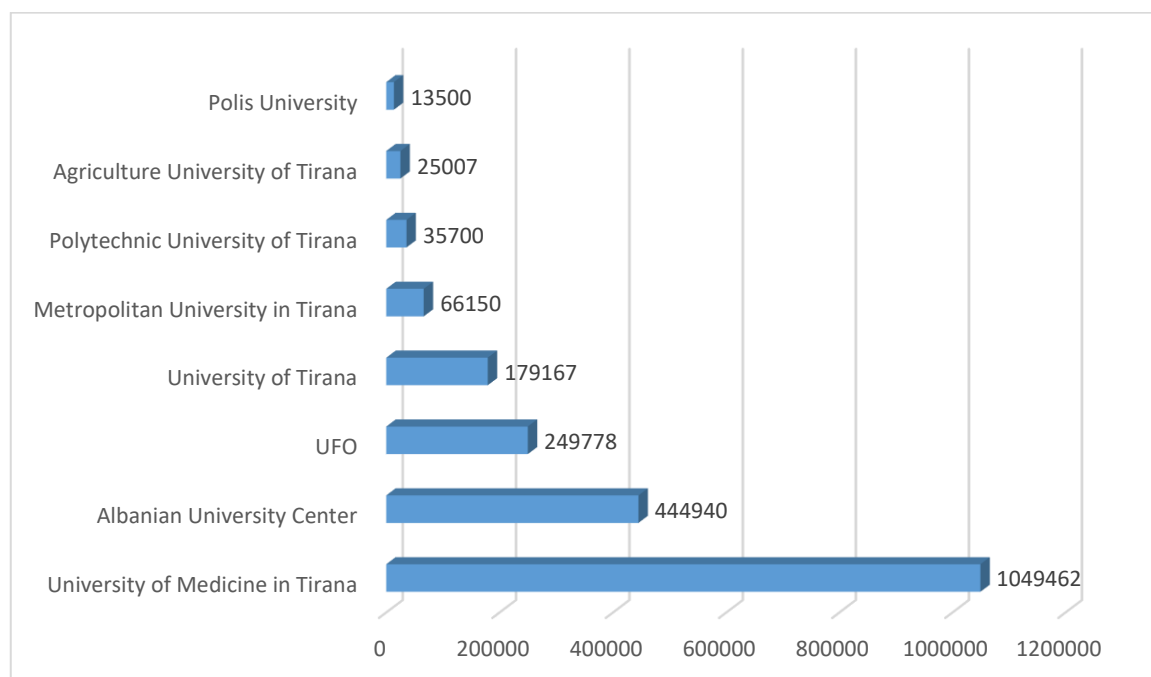


Figure 7. Financial amount (€) that Albanian universities have managed to receive from the "Horizon 2020" programme

Source: European Commission

As for the types of Albanian organizations that have managed to receive funds from the "Horizon 2020" programme, the chart below shows the breakdown in percentage.

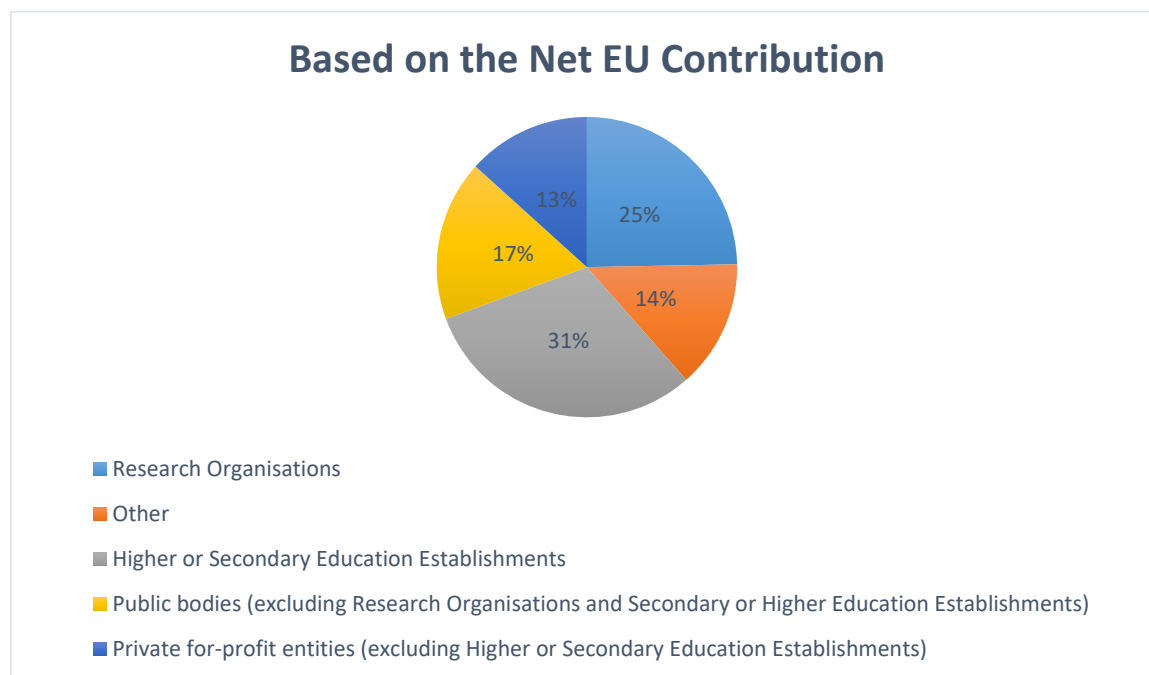


Figure 8. Types of Albanian organizations that have managed to receive funds from the "Horizon 2020" programme

Source: European Commission

Horizon 2020 was a research and innovation funding program of the European Union for the period 2014-2020, with a budget of around 80 billion EUR. The successor program of "Horizon 2020" in the European Union is "Horizon Europe" which is also focused on research and innovation for the period 2021-2027, with a budget of around 95.5 billion EUR. According to the official data of the European Commission, within the "Horizon Europe" programme, project applications from Albania, until March 2023, have managed to receive a total of 2.42 million EUR in funding from the European Union. The weight of financing that Albania managed to receive so far is only 0.02% of the total financing of "Horizon Europe". The number of signed grants is 16, or 0.30% of "Horizon 2020". The number of organisations from Albania involved in these projects until March 2023 is 22, or 0.06% of "Horizon Europe". The ratio of the successful applications so far from Albania to the total number of eligible applications received is 17.27%. While the average of successful applications in the "Horizon Europe" programme until March 2023 is 19.29%. The number of eligible proposals from Albania for funding in the framework of "Horizon Europe" programme so far is 109, or 0.28% of "Horizon Europe". The number

of organizations from Albania that have applied for "Horizon Europe" grants, until March 2023, is 139, or 0.07% of "Horizon Europe" applications in total (European Commission, 2023).

Similar to the case of applications for funding in the "Horizon 2020" programme, not all universities in Albania have been successful in absorbing funds from the "Horizon Europe" programme for their own projects. The institution that has managed to win more funds from the "Horizon Europe" program, until March 2023, is the University of Tirana. However, the amount this university has managed to benefit so far is modest, only 720,880 EUR (European Commission, 2023).

In addition to universities, there are also institutions and organizations (public and private) such as the Institute for Habitat Development, National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation, Institute for Environmental and Territory Management, Institute for International Studies, Ministry of Internal Affairs, etc. that have managed to win projects within the "Horizon Europe" programme, until March 2023, but in very small numbers. Figure 9 shows the financial amounts that higher education institutions in Albania have managed to benefit from applications in the "Horizon Europe" programme until March 2023.

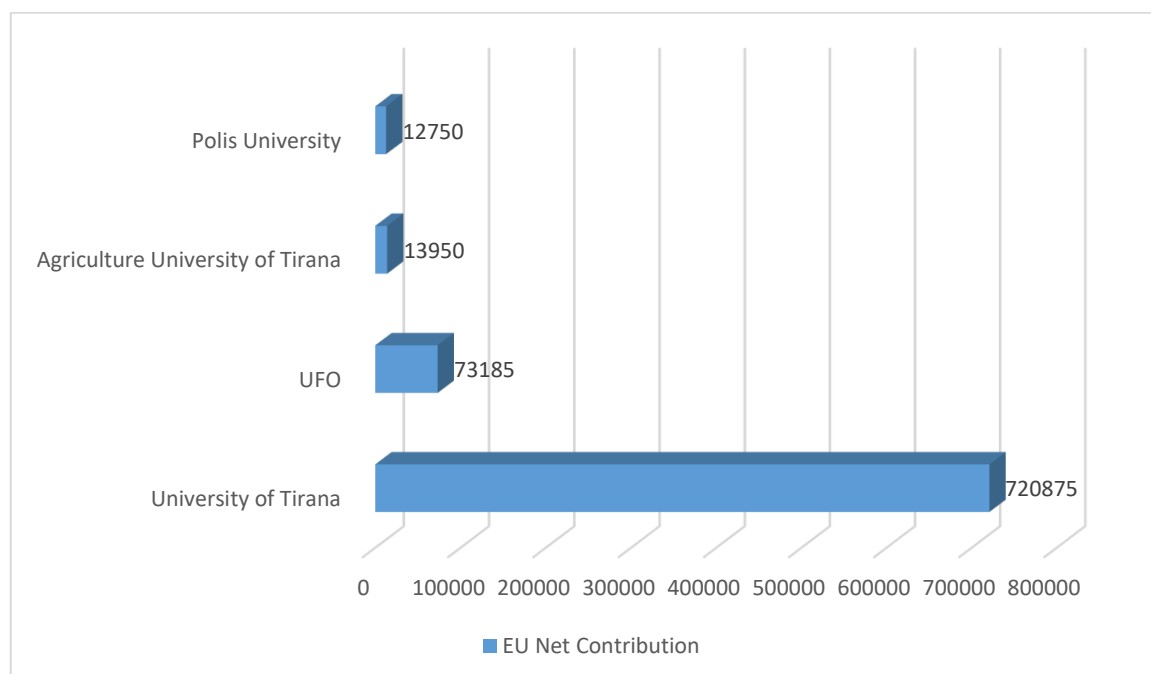


Figure 9. Financial amount that Albanian universities have managed to receive from the "Horizon Europe" programme (until March 2023)

Source: European Commission

Regarding the types of Albanian organizations that have achieved to receive funds from the "Horizon Europe" programme, until March 2023, the chart below shows the breakdown in percentage. The two types of organizations from Albania that have received the most such funds, until March 2023, are research organizations, with 45%, and higher or secondary education establishments, with 34%.

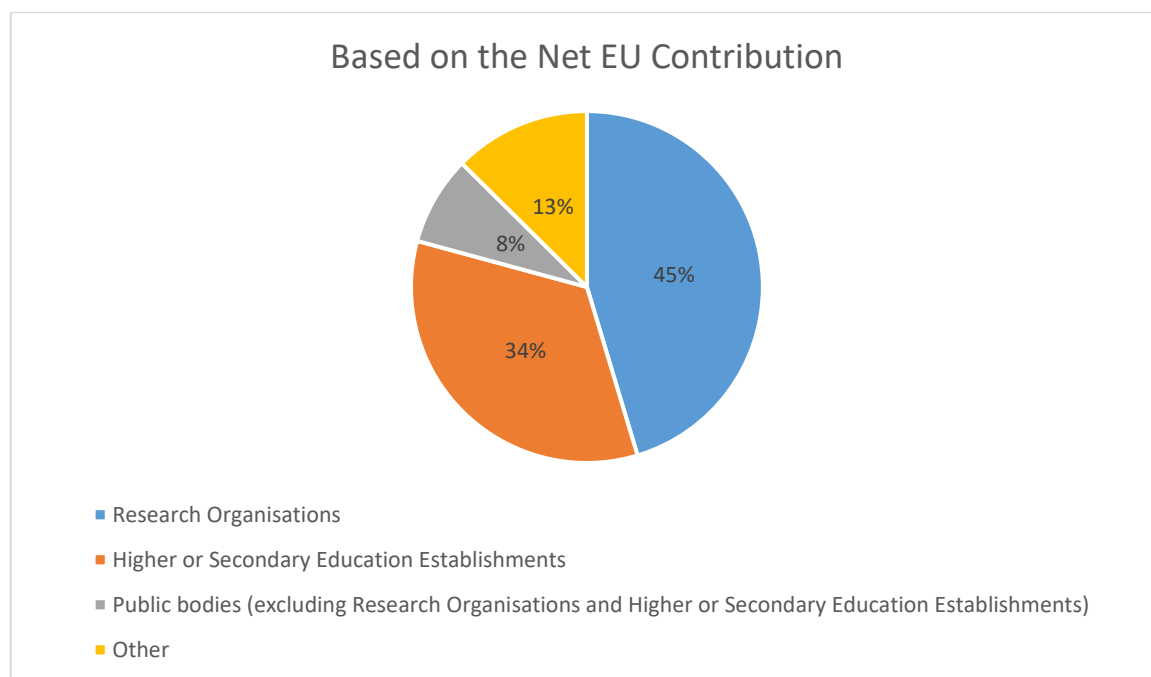


Figure 10. Types of Albanian organizations that have managed to receive funds from the "Horizon Europe" programme (until March 2023)

Source: European Commission

Despite the relatively small financial amounts received by Albanian universities from EU programmes, a positive development is the fact that the number of projects won by Albanian HEIs is increasing. The funds that Albanian universities receive from winning projects in EU programmes such as Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe have an impact on power relations between universities and government institutions. These funds are not issued and controlled by national actors. This is very important because it means that universities create another source of income besides government funds and student fees which are the two main sources on which public universities in Albania are maintained. By having another source of income, public universities in Albania gain more independence and begin to free themselves, however little, from the exercise of power that big national actors, such as the government, exercise over them. Income from student fees and other sources such as the EU programmes means universities have less need for

state funding. This makes the universities more detached from the influence of the government, and have a greater power in decision-making. However, it should be noted that replacing funds from the state budget with other sources currently seems impossible for public universities in the country.

The challenge, not only for Albania but also at the European and maybe global level, is to enhance and better conditions and climate so that universities can play a more significant function in a knowledge society by being more efficient and productive in their interrelated missions of education, research, and innovation. The Albanian government should not expect Albanian higher education to be shaped and developed only by external actors and factors such as the European Union. Because of how the Treaties define the European Union competences in respect to higher education, the EU cannot intervene directly on higher education within Member States, let alone on other countries that are not part of the EU (Corbett, 2011).

3.3 Current State of Higher Education in Albania

From the data provided by the Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Albania (INSTAT), since 2018, a decrease in the number of pupils and students at all levels of education can be observed. However, what interests us is the trend of students enrolled in higher education institutions in Albania.

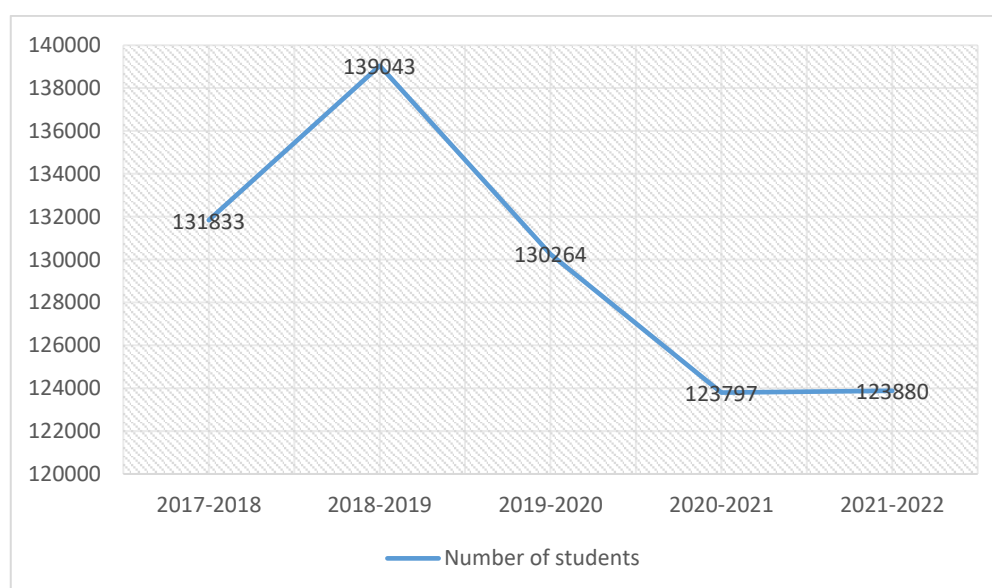


Figure 11. Number of students enrolled in HEIs in Albania (2017-2022)

Source: INSTAT

An important indicator in education is the ratio of students per 1,000 inhabitants. In Albania this ratio is low, and, what is worse, it is decreasing. There are several reasons, such as studies in better universities abroad, population aging, emigration of young people, loss of trust in higher education institutions, etc. Figure 12 shows the number of students in Albanian HEIs per 1000 inhabitants, for the period 2017-2022.

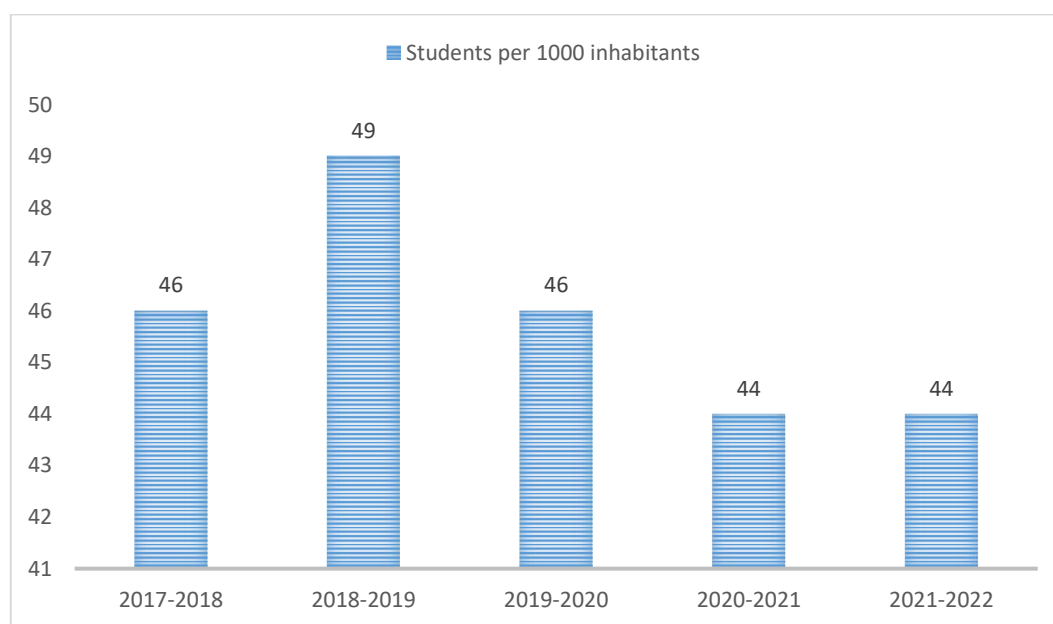


Figure 12. Number of students in Albanian HEIs per 1000 inhabitants (2017-2022)

Source: INSTAT

As for the fields of study that Albanian students choose to study in Albanian HEIs, for the period 2017-2021, it turns out that the largest number of them study in the field of "business, administration, and law". The second place is occupied by the field of "health and wellness", although the number of graduates in this field is about half of those studying "business, administration, and law". The fields of study that have fewer and fewer students enrolled are social sciences, arts and humanities, and natural sciences. Figure 13 shows the percentages of graduates in Albanian HEIs according to fields of study, for the years 2017 and 2021.

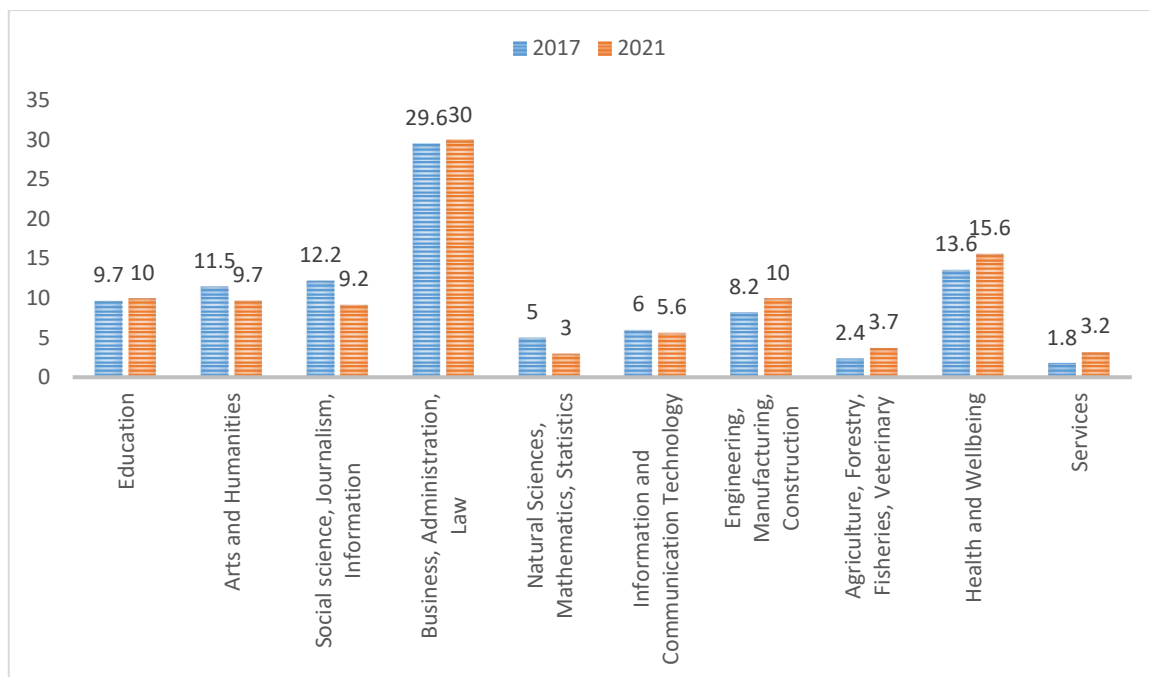


Figure 13. Graduates by fields of study in Albanian HEIs in 2017 and 2021 (in %)

Source: INSTAT

To create a clearer idea about the most preferred fields of study in Albania, table 2 shows the number of students in Albanian HEIs for each field of study for the years 2017-2021.

Academic year	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Field of Study					
Education	10,689	10,062	9,062	8,367	8,085
Arts and humanities	15,441	14,348	12,537	10,972	9,536
Social sciences, journalism and information	12,259	14,086	11,397	10,277	9,204
Business, administration and law	30,233	33,447	32,732	31,173	32,227
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	6,325	7,060	5,962	4,924	4,553
Information and communication technologies	8,228	10,016	8,883	8,341	8,458
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	18,730	20,019	20,775	20,537	22,555
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	4,564	4,999	4,158	3,458	2,770
Health and welfare	19,837	20,727	20,199	21,195	22,130
Services	3,088	4,279	4,559	4,553	4,362
Total	131,833	139,043	130,264	123,797	123,880

Table 2. Number of students enrolled in HIEs in Albania by field of study (2017-2021)

Source: INSTAT

Regarding the gender of individuals attending higher education in Albania, most of them are women. In 2021, 32,690 students graduated from HEIs in Albania, where 66.1% of the graduating students were women. The fields in which more women have graduated are "Education" with 82.3%, followed by "Arts and Humanities" with 79.9% and "Social Sciences, Journalism, and Information" with 79.1%. The fields in which more men have graduated are "Engineering, Production, and Construction" with 64.4%, "Services" with 63.9% and "Information and Communication Technology" with 61.6%.

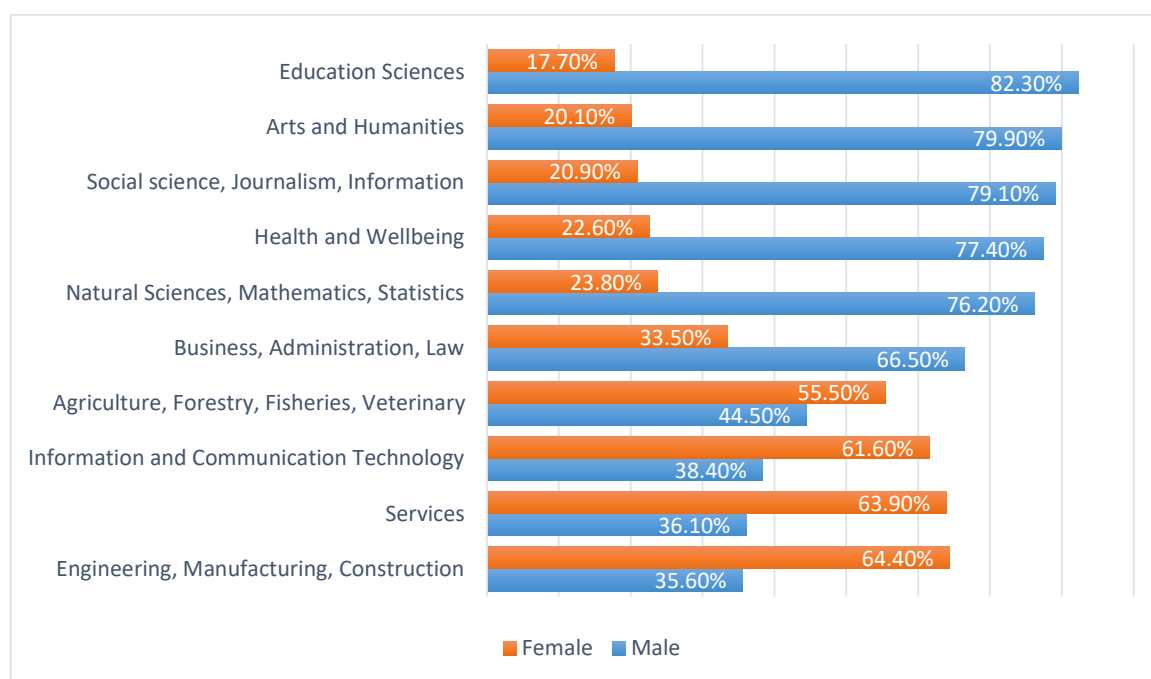


Figure 14. Graduates by field of study and gender in Albanian HEIs in 2021 (in %)

Source: INSTAT

According to data from the Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Albania (INSTAT), the University of Tirana continues to have the largest weight in terms of the number of students. The University of Durrës "Aleksandër Moisiu" ranks right after the University of Tirana. Although founded late, in 2006, the University of Durrës has more students than other universities in Albania which have more history and tradition in higher education. This is mainly due to the geographical location of the University of Durrës "Aleksandër Moisiu" which is located in a very populated region and very close to the capital. Also, this university has adapted the study programmes to the requirements of the labour market, which may have made it more attractive for students.

During the last years, the number of students who graduate from Albanian HEIs (bachelor level), compared to the number of students who graduate from secondary/high schools, is decreasing. For example, in the academic year 2020-2021, the number of students graduating in Bachelor studies was almost half the number of students graduating from secondary/high schools (INSTAT, 2023).

The 2000s were the years when higher education in Albania expanded with private institutions of higher education. The first private university in Albania is the University of New York Tirana, which was founded in 2002. A year later, Luarasi University was opened. In 2004, the Albanian University and the Catholic University "Our Lady of Good Counsel" were established. In 2005 Barleti University began its activity, while in 2006 the European University of Tirana, Aldent University, and POLIS University were founded. These can be called the pioneer private institutions of higher education in Albania. Afterwards, dozens of private institutions of higher education were founded in the country, some of which did not survive the time. According to data from the Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education of Albania (ASCAL), currently, 15 public institutions of higher education and 27 private institutions of higher education are functional in the country. Meanwhile, 25 private institutions of higher education in Albania no longer exist because they were either closed by the government for not meeting the standards, or they did not survive the higher education market (ASCAL, 2023). In a small country like Albania, with a population of around three million inhabitants, having 42 public and private institutions of higher education seems very exaggerated and unnecessary.

In 2014, after an inspection of all private and public institutions in the country, for non-compliance with standards, the left-wing government suspended new student registrations for doctoral studies in all Albanian HEIs. This suspension lasted until 2022 when the government decided to reopen doctoral programs in HEIs. In a request for information addressed to the Ministry of Education and Sports on 9 February 2023 regarding the quotas allocated for doctoral studies in higher education institutions in Albania, the ministry replied on 14 February 2023 by making available the doctoral quotas. After eight years of closing the third cycle of higher studies in Albanian HEIs, the Ministry of Education and Sports approved 476 quotas for doctoral studies in the public HEIs (this does not include the University of Medicine of Tirana for which quotas for third cycle studies have not yet been approved), and 55 quotas for doctoral studies in non-public

HEIs. Public HEIs have the overwhelming percentage of doctoral studies. Because they are relatively small institutions, and with not much experience, private universities in Albania have a very limited number of quotas for third cycle studies. The doctoral programmes that have the most quotas are mainly economics programmes. It may be paradoxical that one of the countries with the weakest economy in Europe produces so many Doctors in Economic Sciences.

According to the Albanian Law on Higher Education no. 80/2015, one of the missions of higher education is the integration of teaching with scientific research. The government finances scientific research directly from the state budget, or through projects supported by the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (AKKSHI). According to the data provided by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network in Albania (BIRN Albania), for the period 2015-2019, the state budget and AKKSHI financed a total of about 110 million ALL for scientific research in higher education institutions in the country, of which 41.9 million ALL were distributed by AKKSHI with an annual average of 22 million ALL. Out of 11 public universities, Fan Noli University in Korça, University of Arts, and Aleksandër Xhuvani University in Elbasan have not had funds allocated from the state budget for scientific research during the period 2015-2019. The universities that have received the most funding for scientific research are the Agricultural University of Tirana with 41.9 million ALL, and the Polytechnic University of Tirana with 21 million ALL (Shehu and Sinoruka, 2020).

From this amount of money of 110 million ALL that the government distributed for scientific research in the years 2015-2019, 41.3 million ALL went to laboratories at the Agricultural University of Tirana and "Aleksandër Moisiu" University in Durrës. The rest of the fund was spent on scientific research and the publication of scientific journals. The distribution of these funds over the years has not been uniform. What is noticed is that most of them, or 73.4% of the total, were allocated in 2019, after massive student protests, as part of the government's much-promoted University Pact (Shehu and Sinoruka, 2020).

According to the rector of Tirana University of Medicine, Arben Gjata, funding until 2018 was done through a grant that was transferred from the state budget for universities, while in recent years, projects are also financed by AKKSHI. The Rector stated that since 2013 when this university was established, 2019 was the first year that the university itself allocated a fund for scientific research. On the other hand, in 2019 the government,

through AKKSHI, has assisted scientific research at this university through the financing of three projects (Shehu and Sinoruka, 2020).

Professor Andrea Maliqari, Rector of the Polytechnic University of Tirana, explains that at his university, scientific research is based on three main columns which include the funds coming from AKKSHI, the applications made for international projects and the grant that the university itself has. He states that, during 2019, at the Polytechnic University of Tirana, there were nine scientific research projects financed by AKKSHI and ten projects from international funding, donations, and from the university's budget. Maliqllari explains that international funding and funding from AKKSHI are mainly applications for projects, while funding from the university budget is mainly support for conferences that take place at the university or for academic staff that participate in conferences (Shehu and Sinoruka, 2020). Of course, these funds give more freedom and independence to the university. Also, through these funds, the university has more opportunities to develop and carry out its own activities. On the other hand, funding from non-governmental agencies affects the power relations in which the university is involved. The university gains more financial independence through these funds, which means it is less vulnerable to the exercise of power by political and governmental powers. As for the funds issued by AKKSHI, it is another instrument in the hands of the government to exercise power over academic and research institutions since AKKSHI is a public institution dependent on the government.

Artan Fuga, professor of communication at the University of Tirana and member of the Assembly of the Academy of Sciences of Albania, is also sceptical about the work, organization and quality of scientific research in Albania. He emphasizes that most of the research work done in the country is abstract and does not address the problems that society has. According to him, scientific research is mostly measured by scientific articles that are never applied in reality. Fuga adds that the country has acute problems, but scientific research in Albania is hardly engaged in solving them. For him, scientific research requires investment, but it should also provide financial benefits. Fuga states that scientific research in Albania has management problems, for the most part it is either fraud or theoretical repetition of discoveries abroad without any personal contribution and without impact on the life of the country. The myopic politics towards scientific research in Albania begins from the idea that Albania is a small country, which has no science to do, he underlines. But Fuga argues that science is not only great science, but also small

or medium-term changes applied in technology, management, innovation that can be related to the needs of our economy, communities, country (Shehu and Sinoruka, 2020).

The professor of natural sciences, Aleko Miho, says that the main problem lies in the fact that the support of scientific research is not something understood and desired by the authorities in the country. He bases this claim on the fact that the research products that take place in Albania are not taken into account by the decision-makers and the government (Shehu and Sinoruka, 2020).

Data collected and published in 2020 by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network in Albania (BIRN Albania) show that, from 2015 to 2019, 11 public universities in Albania received a total of 110 million ALL (about 976,000 EUR) from the Albanian government.

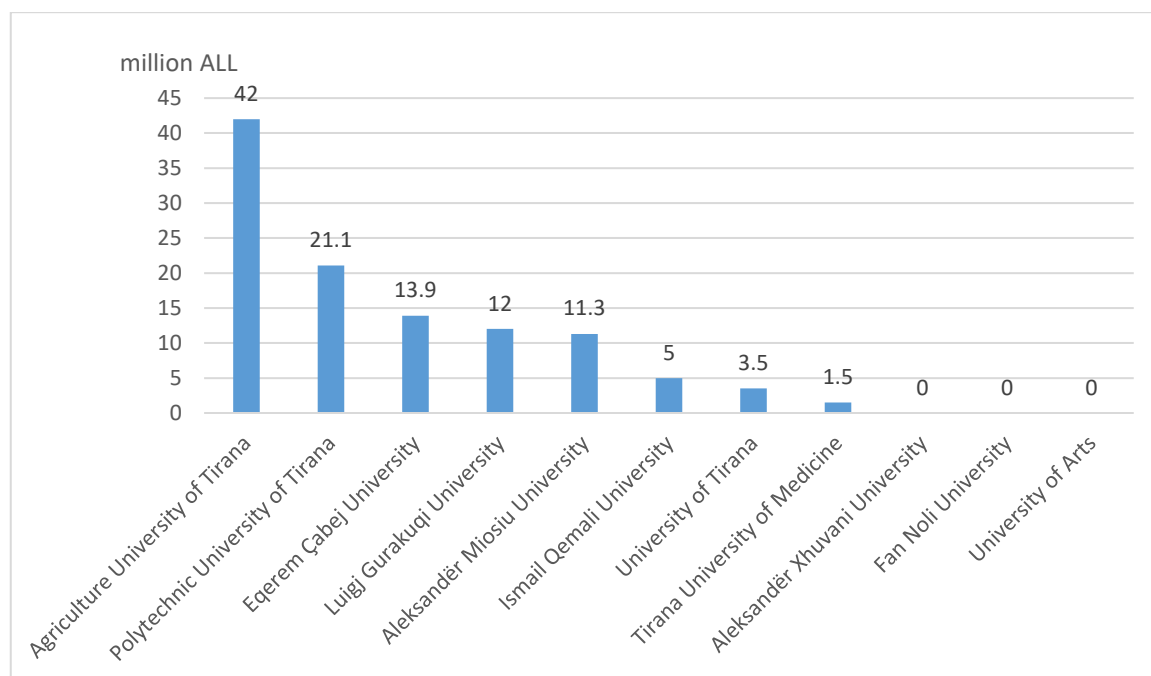


Figure 15. Funding of scientific research in public universities in Albania 2015-2019

Source: BIRN Albania

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Paradigm and Methodology

According to Lukenchuk and Kolich (2013), over the last decades, the concept of research in the social and human sciences has changed. Positivism and its related methods have lost some of their reputation, and on the other hand, interpretative methodologies have gained legitimacy and popularity, influencing the nature and scope of educational research. Paradigm is a key element in research. Paradigm is (1) a system of inquiry, (2) a model, and (3) a way of knowing (Lukenchuk & Kolich, 2013). For Clark (1986), a *paradigm* is what the members of a scientific community share, and conversely, a scientific community consists of people who share a paradigm.

The topic of this research, which implies university, knowledge, and power, has mainly qualitative and theoretical features. One of the advantages of qualitative research is especially that it can provide the depth of necessary information, for instance, reform recommendations or potential explanations for why something works or does not (Burns & Schuller, 2007). The main interests of this research are not focused on technical issues. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods and the high number of interviewees do not necessarily make the study more valuable. Due to its features, concepts and methods, this research can be categorized into the Critical and Interpretative paradigms.

In addition to a theoretical analysis, the research methods used in this doctoral research are interview method and document analysis method. In the context of global transformation of the university and its relations with knowledge and power, this study focuses on the case of Albania. Case study research is a research method that incorporates particular approaches to data collection and data analysis, based on a single or multiple case studies, and can be explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive (Yin, 1994).

This research work consists in analysing the university sector in Albania, especially the public sector; evaluating the relations of the university with knowledge and power; analysing the factors which keep the level of higher education in Albania in the current

state; and suggesting the appropriate actions and reforms that need to be undertaken in order to increase the level and performance of universities in the country.

The research paradigm behind this methodology has been influenced by a number of authors, such as, for example, Antonia Lukenchuk and Eileen Kolich (2013) who have summarized and categorized several authors and books regarding paradigms of research. In this summary, interview is widely regarded as a qualitative method. Authors such as Matthew Woolsey, Maria E. Hernandez-Rodriguez categorize the interview method under the Interpretative paradigm. Christine L. Kramp Pfaff and Regina Schurman categorize interview under the Interpretative and Pragmatic paradigms. Krista Robinson-Lyles and Sharon Duncan categorize the interview method under the Critical and Interpretative paradigms. Andrea Lehmacher categorize interview under the Pragmatic, Empirical-Analytic, and Interpretative paradigms. Thus, from all these categorizations we can easily realize that interview as a method can be a valuable subject of interpretation. In this way, interview can be criticized and analysed. Regarding theories, interview method can also be linked with several theories. According to Krista Robinson-Lyles, interview method is more valuable to be used when the research is based on Critical Theory, Critical Pedagogy, and Praxis of Critical Democratic Education (Lukenchuk & Kolich, 2013).

Of course, this research aims to have critical thinking features. For Denzin and Lincoln (2011), critical paradigm is one of the paradigms on which interview method takes place. Critique has a very important role in science and academia. Not for nothing, scientific journals use the peer review system for every article they publish. Moreover, serious journals use double-blind or triple-blind peer review. However, critique should be cautious and well-founded because it might become problematic if it claims too much. According to Foucault (1954-1984/2000), critique should not go so far as to turn into recommendation. He adds that critique should not absorb the premise of a deduction which shows what and how needs to be done. In an article written by Darren Webb (2009) about contemporary educational theory, published in the *Oxford Review of Education*, he argues that if critical research is to move beyond critique and provide alternatives to the prevailing regimes of power, it has to be driven by some notion or idea of an integrated social whole towards it strives to.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant also uses a critical philosophical approach. The distinction of Kant in his critical philosophical approach is the method, which, as he says,

is the guarantor of the validity and truthfulness of the results. The critical method is characterized by autonomy, which differs from dogmatic philosophy. The latter does not question its own resources, conditions, and procedures. Whereas, the critical method has itself as a critical subject. Critical philosophy situates the object of inquiry in reference to the premises or assumptions that frame the question, and questions whether or not those premises are sufficient for an appropriate solution, and if so, how (Kant, 1781/1965). In order for philosophy, as a scientific discipline, or the philosophical approach to be rigorously and epidemiologically accountable, it should orient itself to its own resources, possibilities, and delimitations.

Kant says that the 'limitation' of scientific knowledge, the boundaries of what can be said substantially, is not a limitation at all, but rather a demonstration of our freedom. We are free to hesitate when we encounter metaphysical and dogmatic claims about freedom and necessity, and free to rely on our own reason rather than external authority in the form of 'established truths' and ask ourselves if these arguments actually bring us closer to satisfying answers to questions that are of the greatest concern for us (Rider, 2015, pp. 11-12).

To understand why interview can be a valuable method for the critical paradigm, we need to see some other categories of this paradigm. Transactional/subjectivist and value-mediated findings are the epistemological features of this paradigm. The methodology is dialogic and dialectical, which means that interview method is suitable for it. The nature of knowledge is structural and historical insights, which means that, open-ended structured interviews are a valuable method to reach this nature of knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The objective of positivist or interpretative research is to establish "truths" concerning pedagogical and educational methods (Fejes, 2008). But, according to Foucault (1983), such research could be dangerous, as could be discourses in general. Fejes (2008) brings here the example of how the concept of *Bildung* is employed by critical theorists. The concept of *Bildung* holds that the aim of education should be to develop people's ability to become more reflective of themselves and their surroundings in order to achieve emancipation and free themselves from social norms and constraining relationships. *Bildung* is the idea of freeing oneself via learning, that is through self-autonomy and critique (Fejes, 2008). But, according to Masschelein (2004), such a structure is enabled by, and strengthens, the limitation it confronts. This logic is based on the idea that by

believing that we are free, we accept constraints. Even though we think of ourselves as being free, it is a certain type of historical self-government figure that causes us to experience power relations. Whereas education is typically seen to constitute self-autonomy and critical thinking as a means of achieving power-freedom, we may also "see" education as a means of empowering individuals to manage their own lives within the context of power relations.

Paradigms	Methodologies	Methods
Empirical-analytic	Quantitative	Experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, survey
Pragmatic	Quantitative, qualitative, mixed	Grounded theory, action and practitioner research, case study
Interpretative	Qualitative	Case study, [auto]-ethnography, narrative, phenomenology
Critical	Predominantly qualitative, can be quantitative or mixed	Various qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods
Post-structuralist	Predominantly qualitative and critical	Experimentation with various methods and ways of representation
Transcendental	Predominantly qualitative	Variety of qualitative methods

Table 3. Paradigms, Methodologies, and Methods

Source: Lukenchuk & Kolich, 2013

Methodology can be defined as the strategy, plan of action, process, or structure that underlies the selection and application of certain methods, as well as the connection between the selection and application of methods and the intended results. Methodology is the examination of the possible plans to be carried out - the journeys to be undertaken - so that an understanding of phenomena can be obtained (Polkinghorne, 1983, p.5). Method designates particular activities that are used to achieve research results. Methods include various experimental designs, sampling procedures, measuring instruments and the statistical treatment of data (Lukenchuk & Kolich, 2013).

David C. Berliner (2002) points out that it is important not to confuse the methods of science with the process of science, and prominent scientists clearly understand this distinction. What counts for scientific methodology, as according to Peter Medawar, is a misconception of what scientists actually do or must do (Berliner, 2002). Berliner (2002) criticizes the approach which considers evidence-based practices research as the only "scientific" approach to gaining knowledge or as the only one that provides reliable evidence. For him, this mindset demonstrates a partial comprehension of science in general and a misunderstanding of educational research specifically (Berliner, 2002).

Certainly, there is a relationship between theory and practice in this research, also because education is a theoretical and practical issue. Being so, the connection of theory with practice is needed. Based on McKeon, Elbaz-Luwisch points out the different ways of conceptualizing the connection between philosophy and action. So, in the method called "logistic", theory is conceptualized to direct practice. In the method called "problematic", it is practice which drives the development of theory to the solution of practical problems. The third one is the "dialectical" method, where theory and practice are interrelated and mutually influencing one another (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997). Both can give advices to one another in order to improve each other.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

This research includes three main research methods of gathering data (information, ideas, considerations, suggestions). These three methods are (1) literature review, (2) documents analysis (Law no. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania"; Final Report on the Reform of Higher Education and Scientific Research; etc.), and (3) open-ended structured interviews.

The selection of key publications related to university, knowledge, knowledge management, power, knowledge-power relations, and the specific publications related to higher education in Albania in the post-communist was the first step. The selection criteria are: (1) the focus of the publication: higher education (university), knowledge, knowledge management, power, and the relationships between them; (2) the period covered by the study: while studies related to theoretical concepts of power, knowledge, and university have no time criteria, studies related to higher education in Albania should cover the post-communist era. The main exclusion criteria are whether the studies have

purely technical character or whether they focus more in the pre-university education. As for the document analysis, the main source is the law no. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania" which is a product of the recent reform in higher education. This law is a core document that has given shape to higher education in Albania, but part of my analysis are also other documents such as the *Final Report on the Reform of Higher Education and Scientific Research* written by the Commission for Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the Statutes and Regulations of public universities.

Another source of data are the interviews. Doing open-ended structured interviews with three categories of interviewees (academics, decision-makers, students) is another way of gathering not only information about higher education sector in Albania, and its relations with power and knowledge, but also the experience, opinions, approaches, considerations, and suggestions of the interviewees. From the 31 interviews conducted, the most useful and valuable answers related to the topic of this thesis are cited in the following chapters.

4.3 Case Selection

Albania provides a very interesting, maybe a unique, case of study because it was one of the wildest and closed communist dictatorships in Europe (1945-1991). It was the most isolated country in Europe for almost half a century, and the last country in Eastern Europe where the communist regime fell down. Albania was an "island" or a "bunker" in the heart of Europe. From its beginning to nowadays, the higher education in Albania has passed through several reforms tending to implement different models which have often caused confusion and malfunction.

In 1991, the communist regime fell down in Albania but not the communist system of values created by the regime, and internalized by the society, consciously or unconsciously. Cultural changes seem to be more difficult than political ones. The new establishment who came to power in 1992, had various relations with previous political power, and, consequently, had enough knowledge to use that political moment in their favour. This encompasses a number of explaining variables like: education of the new establishment; the relations of the new establishment with the previous communist regime; the statuses and positions of the new establishment leaders, etc.

As part of Eastern Europe, from 1945-1991, Albania was a dictatorial communist country with its specifics in education sector. As almost all former communist countries in Europe, the education sector was centralized, controlled and used by the state-party. In communist Albania, private sector and free market didn't exist at all. Everything had only one owner, the state. And the state also had only one owner, the party, or as Milovan Djilas (1957) says, the new class. There were just a few state universities and only a privileged small percentage of youth could attend them, through selections which were being approved by the party.

Actually, the whole education sector in Albania was radically reformed after the World War II when communists took the power for more than 46 years. After the early '90s, when communism fell down and the country became a democracy, the education sector gradually started to change again. It started to be more decentralized, more autonomous from the political power, freer in terms of ideology, methodology and practice, and more independent in terms of funding.

Several reforms have shaped and are still shaping the higher education sector in the country. Higher education in Albania has passed through several education models, struggling to find itself in each of them. From 1951-1992 the education system had the characteristics of the soviet model of education. From 1992-2015 the system of higher education changed gradually towards the continental model. From 2015 on, as the result of the last governmental reform, higher education has been trying to move towards the Anglo-Saxon model. Due to the permanent legal changes that have been made to the higher education sector in Albania in the post-communist period, the Albanian university seems to have difficulty creating a stability and a tradition as it is constantly changing.

In fact, the relations between power and higher education in Albania have been subject of political changes. During the communist regime, from 1951-1991, higher education institutions (as the whole education system) were also an instrument of propaganda, supporting the ruling class and promoting the Marxism-Leninism ideology. After 1991, when Albania started its democratization process, this feature of education as instrument of propaganda, became weaker. In democratic systems, the political powers such as government cannot have full control over the university, therefore cannot directly use it for propagandistic purposes.

Among many public debates, the debate about the last higher education reform, respectively Law No. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher

Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania", initiated by the government, and approved by the Parliament of Albania in 2015, is still current in Albania. Student protests in December 2018 and January 2019 were the biggest student protests in the country after those of December 1990. These protests paralysed the higher education institutions for more than two months. Due to the pressure from the protests, eight ministers were fired or had to resign, including the Minister of Education, Sports, and Youth. In response, the Council of Ministers made several decisions seeking to meet some of the demands that came out of the student protests. These DCMs, along with several orders of the Minister of Education and Sports, have again become the subject of debate. In short, higher education in Albania remains a sensitive and challenging issue.

4.4 Interview Sampling

The interview sampling methods of this research are snowball and purposive sample. By meeting and interviewing relevant people who belong to one of the three defined categories, they also served as a bridge to meet and interview their colleagues who have expertise or interest in higher education. The snowball sampling method became more necessary because the interviews were mainly conducted during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, which made it very difficult to ensure the relevant participants for interviews. On the other hand, purposive sample is also employed, which allowed me to choose the interviewees according to preselected criteria relevant to the research topic. That means that I could select the individuals I think have more experience and insights into this topic, respecting the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for the selection of the interviewees are as follows:

- has an interest in higher education,
- has been engaged in higher education policy making,
- has been or is part of the public debate on higher education in Albania,
- has expertise in higher education studies
- has done research on higher education,
- has been or is a representative of a certain organization, movement, body, or group related to higher education.

The selected interviewees meet at least one of the criteria listed above. Most of the interviewees (academics and students) are from the higher education institutions in Tirana. Albania is a small country with about three million inhabitants, and therefore the vast majority of universities and students are concentrated in the capital. In this way, this is quite representative. Regarding the decision-makers, their selection is made taking into account one main criterion: decision-making job position related to the higher education sector. Lecturers/professors, university leaders, students, and politicians are the main actors of the education sector. Lecturers and professors are the ‘knowledge’ of the university; students are the ‘inhabitants’ of the university; and politicians are the decision-makers of higher education sector. Interviews are individual, structured, and open-ended because this is qualitative research. 31 individuals were interviewed, of which 19 are academics (lecturers and researchers), three are decision-makers; and nine are students. The questionnaire for the category of academics has 32 questions; for the category of decision-makers has 24 questions, and for the category of students has 24 questions. Of these questions, 16 questions are common to all three categories of interviewees. The interviews include three categories of people in order to be as comprehensive as possible.

No.	Category	Number of persons interviewed
1	Academics (lecturers and researchers)	19
2	Decision-makers	3
3	Students	9

Table 4. Categories of interviewees and the number of people interviewed for each category

All 31 interviews were conducted by me personally during the period November 2020 - August 2021. 30 interviews were conducted face to face, while one interview was conducted via online video call. All interviews were taken in Albanian. There were no language barriers during the interviews because Albanian is the native language of the interviewees and mine. All the interviews are transcribed by me, resulting in a material of about 430 A4 pages.

The objective in qualitative content analysis is to systematically transform a large amount of text into a highly organised and concise summary of key results. Content analysis, as in all qualitative analysis, is a reflective process. There is no “step 1, 2, 3, done!” linear progression in the analysis. This means that identifying and condensing meaning units, coding, and categorising are not one-time events. Qualitative research is about seeking out variations and not controlling variables as in quantitative research (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

Analysis entails classifying, comparing, weighing, and combining original material to extract the meaning and implications, to reveal patterns, or to stitch together descriptions of events and processes into a coherent narrative. Researchers construct from their analysis informed, vivid, and nuanced reports that reflect what the interviewees have said, and which answer the research questions. A departure point of the qualitative data analysis is that this is *not about counting* or providing numeric summaries. Instead, the objective is to discover variation, portray shades of meaning, and examining complexity. The goals of the analysis are to reflect the complexity adequately in the data presentation (Vogel, 2005).

5. The Perspective of Practitioners on Higher Education in Albania

In the framework of this doctoral study, 31 structured open-ended interviews were conducted by myself. To be as comprehensive as possible, individuals in various positions were selected to be interviewed, which I have divided into three main categories: 1) academics; 2) decision-makers; 3) students. Respectively, 19 academics, 3 decision-makers, and 9 students were interviewed.

Specifically, in the category of **Academics**, the following were interviewed: 11 university lecturers; 1 rector; 1 vice rector; 3 deans; 1 vice dean; 1 higher education researcher, 1 university professor and member of the Academy of Sciences of Albania. All of them are from public universities.

In the category of **Decision-makers**, the following were interviewed: 1 Deputy Minister of Education and Sports; 1 Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of Education and Sports; 1 Director of a sector covering higher education in the Ministry of Education and Sports.

In the category of **Students**, the following were interviewed: 6 Bachelor students; 3 Masters students. All students study in public universities.

For the category of academics, the interview has 32 questions. For the category of decision-makers, the interview has 24 questions. For the category of students, the interview has 24 questions. Of these questions, 16 questions are common to all three categories of interviewees. The interviews were conducted during the period November 2020 - August 2021. All the questions can be found in the annex of this thesis. The interviewees were asked exactly as the questions were written. In cases where there was ambiguity or misunderstanding of a certain question by the interviewee, I explained the question verbally.

The difficulties in finding the relevant individuals to be interviewed, and to conduct the interviews, have been considerable because the period in question was the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Universities were empty because teaching was taking place online. Anyway, even though in difficult and unusual times, after many contacts and persistence,

I managed to interview over 30 valuable people for the study, which was my objective. Since the interviews have many questions that require elaboration, the average length of an interview is about 14 pages of A4 format, which means that more than 430 pages of material were collected in total from all the interviews. 30 interviews were conducted face-to-face while one interview was conducted by video call. Interview questions are mainly related to the operation of the university, power relations in the university, the influence of political power in the university, the level of academic staff, the law of higher education, the connection of HEIs with the labour market, etc.

Each of the interviewees signed an Informed Consent before conducting the interview. One of the points of Informed Consent is that the interview is confidential so that the interviewees can express themselves freely. Consequently, the identity of the interviewees is not disclosed in the thesis. For academics, they are cited using the names **Academic 1** to **Academic 19**. For decision-makers, they are cited using the names **Decision-Maker 1** to **Decision-Maker 3**. For students, they are cited using the names **Student 1** to **Student 9**. This chapter aims to provide an approach from the perspective of practitioners who are directly involved in higher education in Albania. Depending on the questions and answers given by the respondents, the most useful and valuable responses of them are cited below in this chapter.

5.1 The Approach of Academics, Decision-Makers, and Students on Higher Education and the Role of the University

All 31 interviewees (19 academics, 3 decision-makers, 9 students) were asked the question: **"Do you think the university should have a clear specific mission? If yes, what?"** The dominant approach in the responses of the interviewees is that the mission of the university should be the professional education/training. Specifically, 11 academics, seven students, and all three high-level decision-makers mentioned the professional education and training as a core mission of the university. Unlike the other two categories of interviewees, academics are more diverse in their responses. In addition to professional education/training, they expressed that the missions of the university should also be general/civic education, scientific education/research, being at the service of society, serving the national agenda and interests, and building an independent way of thinking. Academic 4, who is also a member of the Academy of Sciences of Albania,

claims that *“the university should be orientated towards applied sciences; there should be a great openness to training in the labour market... The university does not graduate in knowledge but trains in the profession, in application, and gives freedom to the student to take her/his own responsibilities. The role of the university today should be to escape from its traditional mission of a universal theoretical knowledge of human formation that is not related to a profession, and going towards a profiled professional, technical and highly applied school. The university should be a research centre open to the private world, research, etc.”* On the other hand, Academic 1 says that *“the university does not have a specific mission, since specificity should not be sought in a destination. The university should be a human institution. Staying here, its specificity should be vocational knowledge and the human aspect, both from a moral and social point of view. Otherwise, if the specificities are narrower, then the universities would be converted into vocational schools. The university must never lose its universal human prevalence.”* Academic 3 emphasizes that *“we live in a class society, and as a result, the university also has a dimension of professionalization, preparation of a qualified workforce. However, what should not happen is that the university is reduced to only this dimension. So, I think the best experiences are those that combine the professionalization of a future workforce with an education that is scientific, philosophical, but also civic in the sense of a kind of civic virtue is learning with a culture of discussion, criticism in general with democratic culture.”* Academic 6 answered the question shortly by attributing to the university the mission *“to produce citizens, knowledge, and be useful to society.”* Academic 8 argues that *“the specific mission of the university is to develop civic and political engagement, and to provide the instruments of theoretical thinking. So, it has a mission of completing human.”* Academic 13 thinks that the mission of the university is *“to build an independent way of thinking in all the actors who are part of it, and through this thinking, (regardless of the market conditions, the work, or the career they may follow) they will be guided by a certain mindset which does not necessarily come from the context, the culture, but comes from the experience that they had during their studies and through critical thinking.”*

Students see the mission of the university mainly related to the profession and the labour market. Student 1 answers that *“the mission of the university should be the qualification of students so that when they enter the labour market, they are able to cope with it, to meet the demands of the labour market.”* Student 5 thinks that *“the university should*

prepare people for the labour market who know the profession, but who are also communicative and capable to integrate into society.” Student 3 states that “in addition to the mission to prepare for the profession that the student herself/himself has chosen, the university also has the mission of preparing the individual for her/his contributions to society.”

The interviewed decision-makers are more compact in their opinions regarding the mission of the university. Decision-maker 1 states that *“the university should have a clear specific mission in accordance with its fields of activity, depending on the character of a higher education institution operating in a certain field of study and research.”* Decision-maker 2 believes that *“the university should have a clear mission, and the mission is to prepare capable and skilled professionals.”* Decision-maker 2 argues that *“universities, in general, should have the mission to form specialists, experts or work force as suitable as possible with the labour market, even with the global labour market. But in Albania, most universities do not have it.”*

Another question that was asked to the three categories of interviewees is: **“Does the lack of academic freedom affect university performance?”** The impetus that made me ask this question are the developments of recent decades in higher education in Asia, especially in China. Although China is a country with serious restrictions on academic freedom, higher education in China, especially some institutions such as Tsinghua University, Peking University, Zhejiang University, University of Science and Technology of China, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Fudan University, has experienced an exponential growth (Times Higher Education, 2023; Shanghai Ranking, 2023).

The overwhelming approach in the answers of all the respondents was that the lack of academic freedom has a significant negative impact on the performance of the university. Academic 2 states that *“it is indisputable that the lack of academic freedom affects the performance of the university, but academic freedom should not be understood as anarchy. Sometimes freedom can be abused and it can bring other elements. So, we should have some common standards in the university.”* Academic 4 thinks that the lack of academic freedom affects a lot, especially in the humanities and social sciences. According to him, *“the lack of academic freedom is the imposition of a dogma on the free results of scientific research. It is a uniformity or, as Hannah Arendt said, the closure through a single explanation of everything that society has with a single paradigm. I do*

not know that there is a great flourishing of humanities and social sciences in China. While in the technical, exact, informatics sciences it is not excluded that an authoritative and very vertical direction of the universities agrees with a request and results in the technological direction, as George Orwell tells us in his work "1984" where a power that controls everything is accompanied by a very high technological level of surveillance of people." Academic 8 states that *"if by academic freedom we understand the choice of positioning to theorize, the lack of this not only affects the performance of the university but also contributes to the dissolution of the idea of the university."* Academic 12 underlines that *"by not allowing freedom to the lecturer to do scientific research, or the intervention of the political power in the academic freedom of a professor who is engaged in research that highlights the shortcomings of a certain policy, then this will distort the results and data, and automatically leads to non-reflection of reality."*

The impact of the lack of academic freedom on the performance of the university may also be different depending on the culture of the society. Academic 13 argues that, *"at least in our context, I believe it affects. Perhaps in China an alternative version of the world view on the university could have had positive results. But we have chosen that type of university that is heavily influenced by European, Western culture."* Academic 17 points out that the case of China is not the case of Albania. *"We have unbridled academic freedom. Sometimes unbridled freedom is foolishness in itself. Today in our universities anyone writes anything, outside of any kind of standards and criteria. I cannot call this academic freedom or academic performance. At the end of the day there are some standards that must be maintained."* Academic 18 also makes a distinction between the Albanian case and the Chinese one. *"In my view, the lack of academic freedom affects, and for those of us who lived, worked and studied in both regimes (before and after 1990) the difference is clear, the impact is very evident. Especially in the humanities, the difference is very big. ... The university is a temple of knowledge and freedom of speech. Academic freedom for university students is like oxygen for living beings. The case of China is very specific, as China has surprised with some achievements even in the conditions of ideological restrictions. The Chinese have known how to combine the restriction of freedoms and the liberalization of the economy and the market; they have been able to achieve technical and technological progress, despite the relatively low wages and poor quality of life of the masses. Such a large mass of people, apparently, cannot be controlled in any other way, except with restrictions on freedoms and rights"*

(of different thinking, of expression, of political organization, etc.). Meanwhile, Chinese capitalism has shown a performance that is surprising the world. I too have been surprised at the pace of work and life in China when I have been given the opportunity to visit. Yet, I remain convinced that academic freedom is essential in the university world and beyond.” Academic 3 adds that in Albanian universities academic freedom is not a big issue, but the problem lies in the impossibility of exercising academic freedom. He argues as follows: *“I do not believe that in Albania there is a serious lack of academic freedom in the sense of research. However, if we define academic freedom in a positive sense, not negative freedom that someone hinders you, but freedom that provides you with resources enough to excel academically. In that sense, yes, there is a lack of academic freedom.”*

The interviewed students are also of the opinion that the lack of academic freedom would have a negative effect on the performance of the university. Student 4 says that *“it would definitely have an impact. It would be like learning lies.”* Student 5 adds that *“the lack of academic freedom certainly has a negative effect on the performance of the university because, in the conditions of the lack of academic freedom, neither knowledge is transmitted as it should be, but neither is the cooperation totally sincere between the participants.”* Also, all interviewed students affirm that they do not notice a serious violation of academic freedom in the universities where they study.

The interviewed decision-makers estimate that academic freedom is important in the performance of the university, but they add that it is not enough for the university to perform well. Academic 1 states that *“there is a correlation between academic freedom and the performance of a HEI. If there are tendencies to limit or minimize academic freedom, I believe it would affect the quality of higher education services.”* On the other hand, Decision-maker 2 adds that *“in itself, academic freedom is absolutely important, but I do not think that the performance of a university depends only on academic freedom because you can be very able to express your opinions but first you have to be able to provide the knowledge to create the professional of the future, while giving her/him the freedom of critical thinking. I mean there is an overlap, it is not only academic freedom that gives quality, but normally academic freedom gives you the possibility of having an open university.”* Decision-maker 3 adds that *“in countries like Albania, too much academic freedom does not translate into performance. It is very difficult in a country like Albania to convert freedom into performance. ... For example, in Romania the*

government appoints rectors and deans. Normally, the academic freedom of choice is limited there, but it sets clear performance objectives for university leaders, and, based on those objectives that are public, they can be replaced."

The three categories of interviewees were asked the question: **In addition to teaching, do Albanian universities conduct research on pure and soft sciences? If not, what might be the reasons?** Almost half of the interviewees answered that scientific research is not carried out in Albanian universities. Those who answered that scientific research is carried out in Albanian universities mainly refer to activities such as conferences, workshops, seminars, congresses, individual research work of lecturers for obtaining academic degrees and titles, etc.

Academic 2, from the University of Medicine in Tirana, declares that scientific research is carried out in his institution because, unlike many others, their work is related to the clinic. *"We do clinical research; we don't do real deep research because we lack laboratories. We don't pretend that we discover anything new but we do the studies we can do, clinical and epidemiology studies. I don't pretend that we in Albania to invent something new."* Academic 3, states that research work is carried out in the form of conferences, scientific articles. *"But the problem is that we don't have a mechanism to encourage and support this. This remains rather in the inspiration of each lecturer or in some formal rules where, if you want a higher scientific degree, you have to do some work such as to publish some things. There is no mechanism that requires us, for example, once every 2-3 years to have some scientific productivity."* Academic 4 explains that Albanian universities mostly reproduce knowledge. *"There is no scientific research with distinct results. The first reason is because very little is invested in research. Second, in the career of a lecturer, "genuine research" occupies a relatively small weight. Third, because it confuses research with communication, which means that lecturers are required to publish articles without regard to what is inside those articles. Fourth, because the conditions to visit other universities, to participate in international research teams, are very small. Fifth, because scientific journals are missing, libraries are poor. But, above all, because Albanian society has an economy that has suffered regression from the point of view of technological performance, and, in general, the society has no interest in undertaking studies. It is also political because in the relationship between politics and knowledge, politics has taken on a monopolistic power and does not want to compete with*

the element of knowledge." Academic 6 claims that in this part, the universities in Albania are very backward. *"I believe that this is the weakest point in the Albanian university for the reason that it has to do with the formation of the research capacities of the lecturers themselves, to then continue with the infrastructure, financial resources. But the first point is the main reason because there is a gap of huge gap between what we know and what we pretend to know. And it's a problem we dare not say out loud."* Academic 7 emphasizes that *"in the Faculty of Dental Medicine, as far as I know also in the Faculty of Medicine, the opportunities for scientific research work are zero. In the conditions where there are no investments for scientific research work, this point of the mission (scientific research) has been reduced."* Academic 8 argues that *"the reasons why there is too little research work in Albanian universities are due to the lack of skills, the inferiority complex compared to foreign universities, and the underpayment of research work."* Academic 9 points out that *"due to receiving degrees or titles, we are legally obliged to do scientific research work. But the main problem is the quality of their performance, and this is not always related to the ability of academics but to the infrastructures. You cannot do scientific research in the exact sciences as long as there are no suitable laboratories. Another important component is the financial part."* Academic 16 claims that *"one of the reasons that scientific research is scarce is the lack of funding. The other reason is the lack of any kind of control where you can write anything that you might have copied from beginning to end. If the plagiarism check game is opened for lecturers, 90% are out."* Academic 17 notes that the main problem that Albanian universities carry out little research is mismanagement. According to him, *"the money is there, but we have institutions that have been massively mismanaged. I have the deep conviction that the money is all there, either from our budgets, or from student fees, or from foreign donors. It's endless money. I was part of these projects but we mismanage them. We have lost the concept of work. Mismanagement comes from a lack of vision."*

Most of the students interviewed, exactly six out of nine, think that universities in Albania do not conduct scientific research. Student 2 states that *"in these three years of my studies, I have never been informed about a research work in my university."* Student 4 says that scientific research *"does not exist at all. As for the reasons, I don't know, I have no idea."* Student 5 argues that *"in Albania, there is almost no scientific research. This is due to the lack of infrastructure, which is also a consequence of the unwillingness of those who have the power to improve it."* Student 6 states that, *"to my knowledge, no research work has*

been carried out in my faculty, at least in my five years of study. The main reason is lack of will. Another very important reason is funding, which is very scarce.” Meanwhile, Student 7 says that in the faculty where he studies, such activities are carried out from time to time. *“Conventions, meetings, conferences on violence against women, protection of minors, social topics, etc., are often held. Even during the pandemic period, such organizations have been carried out very often through online social platforms.”* Student 8 claims that *“various conferences were held where the lecturers also asked for the help or participation of the students for the realization of various topics.”* Student 9 states that *“until today I have not come across any research work. I am not aware of the reasons. I, personally, have not been involved, and I have not heard of any such project.”*

On the other hand, the interviewed decision-makers state that research or scientific activities are carried out universities in Albania. Decision-maker 1 says that *“Albanian universities carry out scientific research because it is obligatory for them. Then, quality is another matter.”* Decision-maker 2 asserts that the research work in Albania is not at the levels it should or could be. *“Normally there is scientific research work while there are still PhD students in the process, but they are not at the appropriate levels. There are several reasons. Funding is probably not at the highest levels. Another reason is the way universities or doctoral studies have been organized. Doctoral studies may have been based on the idea that it should be started from the project proposed by the student and not from a general study of the university that are the areas of interest for doctoral studies.”* Decision-maker 3 states that the universities in Albania carry out research work on a sectoral basis, which means that *“some sectors or some universities are much more advanced, while some others are further behind. Universities themselves have different microclimates in this regard. ... Another problem is that the entire research has been more focused on scientific titles than on results. Academic titles, even the entire process of publishing articles in journals is questionable. There are even many “foreign” journals [where Albanian academics have published their articles] that are actually Albanian and were created in Albania. So, all this chasing after academic titles has been very problematic because it hasn't brought about the need for real research.”*

Following the previous question, the academics and students who participated in the interview were asked: **In addition to teaching, are you personally involved in research work or project at your institution?** 18 out of 19 interviewees, in the category of

academics, work at a university. Half of them, 9 out of 18, state that they are not involved in any research activity at their university. As for the students, the situation seems worse because only one out of nine claims to have been involved in research work during her/his university studies.

All 31 interviewees, in the three categories, were asked to choose one of the following four options: **The main criterion determining the hierarchy within the university in Albania is: a) knowledge; b) academic conjunctures within universities; c) political relations and affiliations; d) other criteria.** (*By hierarchy we do not mean academic titles, but university leadership positions such as rector, dean, and head of department. The respondents could choose more than one option.*) The main criterion that determines the hierarchy within the university in Albania - according to the vast majority of the interviewees - is the academic conjuncture within the university. Another factor frequently mentioned by interviewees is the political relationships and affiliations. Worrying is the fact that a significant percentage of students and lecturers think that the relations with politics is an essential factor to reach leadership positions in the university. Knowledge is a factor of little importance to the hierarchy in the university, as asserted by academics themselves, students, and even decision-makers.

Academic 1 explains that *“there are academic conjunctures within universities. For example, it is surprising how even the last elections (30 July 2020) showed us how the one who is the continuity of the nomenclature always wins, and this applies mainly to rectors and deans. But I believe that political relations and affiliations are also valid, because in order to create a continuity of the nomenclature you must also have support from outside.”* Academic 3 thinks that it is between option B and C. *“Knowledge is out of the question. Those who are very passionate about knowledge see the position of dean or rector as a cursed position. It is something between conjunctures, that is, clientelism within universities, and relations with political parties.”* Academic 10 says that *“academic conjunctures within universities are a fundamental feature of the university bureaucracy in Albania. I think that governments, over these decades, have let the bureaucracy free, they haven't held it to account, and the bureaucracy has, in a way, done whatever it wants in the university.”* Academic 13 states that *“all three options have their own impacts. I would say that, given the political situation in Albania, I believe that the third option (knowledge) has become more and more tangible in recent years.*

Universities, either from the financial aspect or from the autonomy aspect, have always been influenced by the political context.”

Eight of the nine interviewed students think that the main criterion determining the hierarchy within the university in Albania is either academic conjunctures within universities or political relations and affiliations. Only one student answered that knowledge is the main factor in this hierarchy. Student 2 says that *“according to my opinion, which I am very convinced of, most of it is determined by political relations and affiliations, as is common in other institutions in Albania.”* Student 5 answers this question as follows: *“I think that the hierarchy is determined by the academic conjunctures within the university and political relations and affiliations. Mostly from the latter. Those who are at the highest levels of the hierarchy come from the close connections they have with key actors in politics. ... Knowledge is very little valued”.*

Even the interviewed decision-makers believe that, currently, the weightiest factor in the hierarchy within the university in Albania is the academic conjunctures within the university. Decision-maker 3 argues that, *“since it is the universities that organize the election processes themselves, the elections themselves create a kind of medium and long-term continuity of the processes that are more like 'partisanship'. I do not want to use the term 'clan' because it is not always a clan. It is a type of grouping that people create over the years. Certainly, knowledge is secondary in this regard.”*

The three interviewees in the three categories were asked: **How do you assess the connection of decision-makers in Albania with knowledge?** Their answers show the weak connection that decision-makers in Albania have with knowledge. Of the 31 interviewees, none answered that the decision-makers in Albania have a strong or stable relationship with knowledge, not even the decision-makers themselves. The vast majority of responses indicate that this connection is weak or non-existent.

Academic 1 argues that the connection of decision-makers with knowledge is minimal, and progressively weak. *“They have no curiosity. They do not want to know either empirically or any a priori knowledge. There is no history, no longevity, no progression, no future. ... The socialist government has been a government of reforms. In order to make reforms, you really need to create deep knowledge, as the premise of making these reforms. I do not know of one reform that has gone as it should. Why? Because reforms*

cannot be done simply with arrogance. Not only do they not have knowledge, but they also do not have the predisposition to be open to knowledge, they do not even have the humbleness of understanding." Academic 10 assesses this connection as non-existent. He states: "I don't think there is a connection, to be honest, in the sense that I see them completely disconnected. Here we have an authoritarian line of government, of politicians. It has been published in various articles how the composition of the Parliament of Albania has changed, from the 90s where professors and academics dominated, it has gradually come to completely ordinary people with clear criminal records. There are specific cases. The relationship between decision-makers and knowledge is that they have no relation." Academic 11 believes that this connection is weak and deficient. He adds that, "often and especially from 2015 onwards, the university has been seen as an opponent of various political agendas, and has been treated as such by the government." Academic 6 says that "at best, they have role models from other countries, and at worst they have very little knowledge when making decisions. But my concern, and how I want to see this, is the fact of what role universities have in decision-making. We have very little impact, very little voice, and there is a huge disconnect between what reality is and decision-making." Academic 15 states that, "regarding the Parliamentary Committee on Education, I say with complete conviction that the members of the committee do not have any kind of background to be part of that committee." Academic 17 argues that "we have no history that has raised accumulated knowledge. We have no history of cooperation between our institutions, e.g., to operate as a chain in decision-making." Academic 18 responds as follows: "It is sad, but I will say what I think. I have always been saddened by the fact that studies, research, scientific achievements of research teams are little or not considered by decision-makers. In most cases, not at all. And this is a big problem. In Albania, this contradiction is evident. You can do a study that international experts evaluate excellently, with maximum points, while decision-makers in our country do not consider it at all, but make decisions that interest the political force in power and a limited group of individuals or subjects." Academic 19 estimates that decision-makers in Albania have an average level of knowledge. He argues that "the decision-makers, I mean legislators, cannot have specific knowledge in different fields. They can have a general knowledge like any of us." Academic 2 explains that his university has very good relations with the Ministry of Health, with which the profile of the university is most connected. "It is not that we have not been asked or heard about important issues of the country. It is not that the university did not play a role at the

decision-making level. The Ministry of Health, at our request, has allocated funds for the construction of a new centre that will be the centre of clinical simulation, and the centre of continuing education. ... Of course, there are also political decisions which avoid our suggestions because the role of the university can be an advisory role, to recommend. Always, the decisions are taken by the government.”

2/3 of the interviewed students also think that the connection that decision-makers in Albania have with knowledge is weak. Student 3 believes that *“those people who are representatives in the Parliament do not have the right professional level and knowledge to be decision-makers.”* Student 5 thinks that *“the decision-makers in Albania obviously do not have a very good relationship with knowledge. And in those cases that they have, it seems that those people who have penetrated to the top of society do not use knowledge towards values, meritocracy or democracy.”* Student 7 also believes that *“most of them do not have the appropriate knowledge. This can also be seen in the fact that some laws or DCMs change every two weeks. Because there are so many changes so often, something is wrong, there is a problem.”*

The three decision-makers interviewed estimate that the connection of decision-makers with knowledge in Albania is at average levels. Decision-maker 2 explains that *“the level of our MPs has been declining. In the 90s we had more professors, doctors. Now there is a conglomerate, a different approach. ... In the executive, the connection with knowledge is stronger than in the legislative, also because of the way in which the selection is made.”* Decision-maker 3 claims that, *“in many cases, important decisions are also influenced by important consultancies. I am talking about important long-term decision-making.”*

All 19 interviewed academics were asked: **Concerning the services university can provide, how is the connection of university with third parties such as industry, business or public administration in Albania?** Their responses clearly state that the connection of universities in Albania with third parties (industry, business, public administration) is generally weak. The factors of this situation are several. Academic 1 states: *“I do not see any connection. If it exists, then it exists as a construct, as something that was raised in time or as something where certain faculties of the Albanian university have come up with a flag to create the credibility of these third parties. But this also happens due to the defect of Albanian third parties.”* Academic 2 points out that he does not know of any strong connection. *“The Albanian economy is structurally weak. What I*

notice is an advertising relationship, e.g., allow a company to advertise in the yard of faculty. We open the door of the university for advertising because with the advertising money, the university pays the electricity bill, money that the state does not provide. This is the degradation of the relationship between industry and the university.” Academic 5 explains that it is being worked towards providing services to third parties. “At the University of Tirana, service to third parties is provided by an institute that is the Institute of Applied Nuclear Physics, which has contracts with private companies, the airport, because it provides elements that are necessary for them.” Academic 6 argues that “the connection with public institutions and political reforms is almost non-existent, at most it can be individuals, lecturers who can give opinions in a detached way but not as a structure. With third parties, organizations, industry, again the relationship of lecturers is individual, not as a department, as a unit.” Academic 9 estimates that the relationship is still very weak, and there continues to be a gap between them. “This happens because the university itself has remained closed, has remained with the idea that ‘I finished my mission’. On the other hand, the industry itself, other business actors, have a different mentality that they do not approach the university to get the expertise.” On the other hand, Academic 13 says that he has noticed many agreements and collaborations between businesses and universities. Moreover, he adds that “there have been organized job fairs; we have had guests from different businesses who create spaces in their businesses for students.” Academic 14 argues that “we have strong connections and collaborations, which help us a lot, with businesses. We have relationships and collaborations with powerful and well-known companies in the national and international market. Cooperation with dental businesses consists of this form: workshops and seminars are organized for the implementation of new techniques, at least in terms of theory.” Academic 17 underlines that “all over the world, such connections are sources of profit for universities. While we do not see this as a source of profit because we have seen the institution of the public university from the communist mentality, it is the property of everyone. ... You have to make the connections with the market yourself.” Academic 18 claims that almost every department in his faculty has some kind of cooperation with external subjects. He explains that “we, for third parties, certainly engage and work constantly. Be it as structures, as departments, or research workgroups. For example, the Department of History is more engaged in the issues that historical archives and museums need. The Department of Geography certainly contributes to issues of territorial regulation, environmental and landscape issues, demographic issues, settlements,

migration issues, etc. The Department of Journalism is fully focused to cooperate with the Audiovisual Media Authority, media subjects, and other institutions, public and private.”

Based on the responses of the interviewees, the model of the Albanian economy, lack of interest from the private sector and public administration for the university, and the lack of university capacities seem to be the main factors that make the connection of the university with third parties weak. In those cases where there is a connection, it is usually superficial or just individual relations of the lecturers with third parties. A stronger connection between the university and third parties, for cooperation and service provision, seems to be in the University of Medicine Tirana due to the nature of this university, which closely cooperates with public and private hospitals, medical and pharmaceutical companies, etc.

Also, the category of academics was asked the question: **How much internationalized are the universities in Albania, and what could be the benefits of internationalization?** Most of them, respectively 10 out of 19, think that universities in Albania are slightly internationalized. Academic 1 says that *“we are, indeed, part of a program called 'Erasmus', and it's good that we are. But if you look at the number of applications in this programme, you will understand that they are negligible.”* Academic 3 asserts that *“there are formal agreements with certain universities. These Erasmus programmes also work somehow. I am not sure how many Albanian students benefit from them, or from academic exchanges. As far as I know, we do not have any foreign students in the auditorium. Here in our faculty, a joint Master's program has been opened with a university in Austria, but even there, almost all the students are Albanians.”* Academic 4 emphasizes that he would not call it internationalization but openness because *“in my concept, internationalization means that a university has elements that come from foreign universities. The presence of foreign universities in Albania is almost zero, which has caused the monopoly of public and private Albanian operators. This is the first thing to break. But this is hindered by the monopolistic interests of internal actors and operators. It is a kind of monopoly of culture by the state and other Albanian operators, as it happens in the economy and other industries. Second, there is a lack of budgets and material opportunities for different courses to be taught by foreign lecturers, or for Albanian lecturers to be pushed and have the opportunity to teach at other universities. As for*

student exchanges, in the framework of Erasmus or other programmes, it is very sporadic and at very minor levels. So, we have isolation which is the result of monopolization which brings mediocrity.” Academic 10 states that “in my department, those colleagues who have advanced, who have made progress, have done so precisely thanks to relations with internationals. They have cooperation with them. I’m not talking about these H2020, FP7 projects. These are very unattainable for us. We do not even have the technical training on how to apply to these projects, before we get to the implementation possibilities.” Academic 14 says that “we are not internationalized because, at a minimum, we do not offer any syllabus in English. At the moment, we do not have any foreign students. The only thing we have in the framework of internationalization is that we can do student short exchanges. ... Internationalization would bring many benefits because I believe the creation of networks between universities is the most contemporary part of the well-being and increase of the quality of a university/faculty.”

Academic 2 explains that in his university, internationalization is mainly related to acquaintances and personal relationships of the staff members. “Being a medical university, and since doctors move a lot abroad for training, etc., we have many individual, human, and personal connections. ... This has made us have endless connections with many universities in the west. We have cooperative relations with dozens of universities. We are in the final phase with the University of Bologna to do joint doctorates. We are working again with an Italian university to do English study programmes. Of course, this requires an increase in hosting capacity.” Academic 5 explains that “internationalization, in terms of benefits, in addition to expanding partners, creates opportunities for increasing exchanges, expanding areas of agreements. I think internationalization brings a big benefit which is the exchange of know-how. I am of the principle that the more staff members or students move for short periods of training or teaching, it definitely gives a completely different approach and way of thinking and acting afterwards in the institution.” Academic 6 says that “internationalization can greatly affect the growth of research capacities; it has to do with mobilities as a whole, for lecturers, for students and for everything else. The more contact we have, the more we will realize how weak we are. It creates positive dynamics.” Academic 9 assesses that the benefits of internationalization are many “such as staff exchange, student exchange, practice exchange, access to literature and their libraries, access to research infrastructure.” Academic 16 believes that the benefits from internationalization would

be maximum and many. *"Albanian students who go abroad have the opportunity to see the environment there. Even foreign students who come to Albania, if they have a positive experience, the tendency is to focus even further on something they liked in Albania. For example, in the geological aspect, Albania is fantastic, not just for the minerals it has but for the rock structures, as natural monuments. Whenever researchers come from abroad, they are amazed. So, if a foreign student had a positive experience in Albania, s/he would come again and this would create relationships and other opportunities such as projects and exchanges."*

From the responses of the interviewed academics, we see that internationalization of universities in Albania is mainly focused on the mobility of students and lecturers, but this happens mainly on the outbound. Also, part of the joint activities with international partners come as a result of the personal relationships that the lecturers and professors have. As for the benefits that come from internationalization, they are manifold. The staff of Albanian HEIs can benefit from the exchange of *know-how* with their international colleagues. Also, from internationalization, Albanian lecturers and researchers have the opportunity to carry out scientific research in more developed laboratories, be in touch with more advanced technology, share views and approaches with their counterparts, etc. Students also have the opportunity to learn and test themselves in a new and more demanding university environment. Moreover, by cooperating, Albanian university staffs would adapt to the working culture and methods of international partners, which, over time, would make them more productive. Corruption would also be reduced because, by working with international partners who control each other, the opportunities for corrupt activities become smaller. Nonetheless, it must be said that, despite the current low level, universities in Albania are experiencing a gradual increase in their internationalization.

Since knowledge management is one of the main points of this research, the interviewed academics (19) and decision-makers (3) were asked the following question: **University is an institution of knowledge. Hence, knowledge management within the university is supposed to be an important element. How do you evaluate the production, dissemination and application of knowledge at universities in Albania?** Before going to the answers of these two categories of interviewees on this topic, I have to point out that it was a bit surprising to me the reaction of the interviewees when they were asked

this question. The vast majority of them were not familiar with the concept of "knowledge management", but asked me for an explanation of the question.

13 of the 19 academics interviewed evaluate knowledge management in universities in Albania with negative marks. Academic 1 emphasizes that *"the credibility of the knowledge produced by the university has been eroded."* Academic 3 argues that *"there is no discipline in the true Foucauldian sense that there are mechanisms that channel information. If this happens, it happens more of the anonymous market forces. In this sense, I have the impression that there are these major external forces that impose a kind of self-discipline in accordance with them, but not that there are structures that require, with a kind of regularity, a certain product that is then divided into certain fields, disciplines, and gets evaluated."* Academic 4 says that the state of journals at universities is unfortunate. *"There are almost none, or those that are, are quite formal. The communication of foreign journals is missing because there is no possibility of communication. ... Textbooks are the monopoly of lecturers who seek to sell their own books to students and maintain this monopoly. Participation in international conferences is almost minimal due to lack of funding. All these make the management of knowledge circulation to be at very weak levels."* Academic 9 states that *"due to the overlapping of administrative functions, I think that knowledge management is not at the right level."* Academic 10 declares that *"there is no structured effort to qualify staff. There is no skill assessment. We are very weak. Look at the chaos that happened when the acquisition of titles and ranks was slightly liberalized. There was a tremendous explosion, a great fictitiousness of scientific research."* Academic 11 considers it *"deficient and problematic. One of the biggest problems of HEIs, especially public ones, is the impossibility of distributing journals or books that are published in the framework of scientific activities."* Academic 14 says that *"the transmission of this basket of knowledge is only through the teaching process."* Academic 16 says that *"each lecturer does the things s/he knows. They usually keep doing the same things they have been doing all their lives. There is no update."*

Decision-maker 1 gives a more neutral answer about knowledge management in universities, saying that he thinks that *"there are good experiences of managing the knowledge that is produced. This is seen in the context of institutions according to fields of study and research. We have good experiences, but there are also institutions that do not justify them."* Decision-maker 3 explains that both situations are found in Albanian

universities. He mainly connects knowledge management with how active the leaders of universities and faculties are. *"There are universities that neglect this part. It can be done by the lecturers themselves to maintain the quality, but it is not done by a vertical demand. There are also many good cases where deans and rectors are in the process themselves."* Whereas, Decision-maker 2 declares that he does not have an answer to this question because she lacks information in this field.

Based on the answers of the respondents, the most functional part is the dissemination of knowledge by which they refer to the teaching process, but no further. Production and application of knowledge seem to be minor processes in universities in Albania. From the answers of the decision-makers, worrying is the fact that one of them (a very high-level official in the Ministry of Education and Sports) declares that she has no information about what happens within the universities in Albania in the aspect of knowledge management and circulation.

The interviewed students were asked: **How do you assess the connection of your university lecturers with knowledge?** Their answers have been mostly appreciative and positive. Student 2 thinks that the lecturers *"are prepared. In fact, I think that in Albania, lecturers are quite underestimated. Rare are those who do not possess enough knowledge, at least at my university"*. Student 8 also thinks that *"the lecturers are prepared"*. Student 1 answers shortly by admitting that his lecturers *"have enough knowledge"*. Student 3 states that the lecturers *"have knowledge about the subject, and they are proficient"*. Student 4 also states that his *"lecturers are proficient"*.

Student 9 explains that *"this depends on the lecturer. In general, the lecturers of my university are informed, they have knowledge. There are lecturers who know how to convey this knowledge, there are also those who are not capable enough"*. Student 5 argues that, *"in my faculty, in general, the lecturers are professional and have a lot of knowledge. But there is also a small number of lecturers, who are not where they are because of knowledge. This category is not so numerous in number, but they give the impression that they dominate because they have a great influence on the lives of students"*. Student 7 thinks that the lecturers *"do their job, but they can do better. They have passable knowledge"*. Student 6 points out that *"most of the lecturers have very 'dry' knowledge. Some are really very good; they belong to the intellectual category."*

Beyond that, most lecturers are too lazy, they don't know enough. Sometimes I feel really bad that I know more than the lecturers. This happens to many students. Lecturers have below average level knowledge". As noted by the responses of the interviewed students, from their perspective, it seems that the university lecturers in Albania possess sufficient knowledge of the areas they cover. It seems that the lecturer-knowledge connection, in general, is not an issue.

5.2 The Approach of Practitioners (Academics, Decision-Makers, and Students) on Power Relations in the University

The interviewed academics and decision-makers were asked several questions focusing on power relations in the university. The first question on this topic was: **In the framework of power relationships, are there interventions of political power in HEIs in Albania? If so, in what way?** 12 out of 19 academics, and 2 out of 3 decision-makers admit that political power somehow interferes in university life. The ways in which politics intervenes in the university are mainly related to the (s)election of administrators, rectors, and deans. An interviewed lecturer stated that the interference of politics in the university is so deep that it is almost impossible to find a rector who has not been affiliated with a political party. Also, the Boards of Administration of universities, in most cases, are controlled by the government. Another aspect of political intervention is related to the recruitment of lecturers. A dozen of university lecturers interviewed claim that usually after general elections there is an increased recruitment of lecturers from universities. They confess that most lecturers are employed in public universities in this way. Another aspect of political intervention, affirmed massively by the interviewees, is related to the grading of certain students. However, over the years, a decline in the influence of politics in university life is observed.

Academic 1 says that the government already has full control of the university. *"Political power does not need to intervene because it has already taken it. Political power has already taken over the university. ... Here we are talking about a university usurped through the higher education law. Therefore, I think that the government does not need to make great efforts in this direction."* Academic 3 argues that *"political power has influence in this sense, which affects the choice of rectors and deans because, over the decades, political parties have entered their own people to academic staffs. There is an*

interesting few-month period in public universities after a political party falls from power. New university job positions open up, and more people than usual are hired at the university, who are usually people from the party that came to power. Thus, today you find many people within the university who owe their job position to a certain political party. Then, these people choose the deans, rectors, Then, the deans and rectors get connected with the parties in power and in the opposition because they have other interests, tenders, recruitments, and many other things. Thus, a kind of binomial is created, government or political parties on one side, and the rectors and deans on the other.” Academic 4 answers this question by saying: “Yes, of course. In the administrative boards of the universities, the Minister of Education has her own people delegated there, with whom she controls the university. Every 4-5 years universities must be ranked, and certify their quality through the Ministry of Education authorities. It is said that they are independent agencies, but the heads of these agencies are appointed by the Minister of Education. For each new study programme, a signature must be obtained from the Ministry of Education. All these make the political, administrative, bureaucratic control to be extraordinary, and seriously damaging.” Academic 6 states that “the intervention was more peripheral than I thought before. Of course, there is, it is reflected in personal, small influences, usually during election periods. ... They are general influences to hire someone; about a student's grades because s/he knows someone. Even the lecturers themselves have political biases, and are sometimes influenced.” Academic 8 explains that “the political power has intervened more through the lack of policies and, lately, through policies without proper study of the university terrain. Another type of intervention of political power is of the banal form through the employment of their own people and the passing of students they consider theirs.” Academic 9 also asserts that “political intervention is mostly related to banal issues such as staff employment, infrastructure, or in various financial budgets.” Academic 10 states that “there is no doubt that there are interventions. In my opinion, it is a silent agreement in the institutional sense that we leave each other alone. You don't ask us for money because we don't have any for the university, and we leave you alone, you do whatever you want in there. Plus, then there are the individual connections of the rectors mainly. I don't believe there is a rector of a public university in Albania who was not an identifiable member of a political party.” Academic 11 claims that “about 80% of lecturers in public and private universities are militants of political parties. “Militant” is probably not the right word, but that's what I prefer to call them. They are militants of a political party from which

they always receive orders, either in the election processes at the university, or even when local and national elections are held.” Academic 17 claims that there are political interventions regularly. “The main part is this: if you obey me, do whatever you want and bear no responsibility. It's quite simple. I don't investigate you; I don't control you; you won't be held responsible, just do what I say, mainly to the leaders of the university. That's how it's always worked.”

On the other hand, Academic 5 claims that *“it is not that there is no desire from all governments to have influence, but, fortunately, it is not that they have had an effect. All governments, like any kind of power, seek to have more and more power.”* Academic 16 says that, *“compared to public administration or other sectors of the state, political influence in the academic world is smaller. ... There was a time when all the lecturers were with one or the other political wing. But in the last 10 years, a kind autonomy has developed to some extent.”* Academic 7 declares that in her faculty *“no political support or interference has been felt.”* Academic 18 also says: *“I have noticed that at the University of Tirana, politics has failed to intervene. Even when it has tried, it has encountered resistance and has withdrawn.”*

Even the decision-makers asked, 2 out of 3 accept the involvement of political power in the university world. Decision-maker 1 shortly states that *“there may be impacts and influences of certain political segments.”* Decision-maker 2 declares that *“legally there are no political interventions. But, in Albania there is always political interference in some areas, so I cannot say that there is absolutely no intervention at this regard. In what ways, I don't know, it can be in different forms.”*

As can be understood from the answers of the interviewees, in Albania, the political power has much more influence on the university than the university has on the political power. This is also due to the fact that the university in Albania, as an institution of knowledge, has lost its prestige in society. University knowledge does not influence political power because it does not meet the main criteria to do so. The social representation and authority of the knowledge produced in the Albanian university are quite weak and very little present in the media. Political-economic power in Albania relies quite little on knowledge carriers, this is also due to the non-production and non-innovative character of the Albanian economy. The structure of the Albanian economy is very different from the region, with high exposure to agriculture and construction, while in the Western Balkan countries the industry sector occupies the main weight in the

economy. The structure of the Albanian economy has remained the same for decades without being able to reorient itself in production chains that provide higher income (Monitor, 2023a). Also, knowledge in Albanian society is not a significant factor in the legitimacy of power. In the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment "PISA 2022", Albania is ranked 62nd, among the 80 countries that participated in the test (Monitor, 2023b). A very poor result that highlights the high percentage of functional illiteracy in the society. Also, there are not a few cases when high-level politicians and decision-makers in Albania show a deep lack of knowledge of the fields they cover and are responsible for.

Another question asked to the interviewed academics is: **How would you describe the power relations within the university between university leaders, academic staff, and students?** 7 out of 19 see these power relations as normal or correct. The rest, 12 academics, see these relationships as problematic in general. Academic 2 argues that, *"from time to time, there can be problems because everyone sees it from their own point of view. Although we have had different concepts, different perspectives, we have discussed at length and usually found common ground."* Academic 6 also claims that *"they mostly have consensus among themselves. The key word is a harmonious co-existence. There is no contrast."* Academic 5 acknowledges the tense power relations between the leaders of his university when he says: *"We at the University of Tirana have had a rather conflicting situation in the past four years, for the sake of the truth."* However, he evaluates these relations as *"correct, within the entire legal framework provided for, and they function on a kind of mechanism, discussions, and decision-making as provided for in all regulatory acts."* Academic 14 considers these power relations to be *"normal enough. I would never exclude or leave without mentioning the internal conflicts that are present in all universities and that, in some way, disrupt the climate of communication but not the running of work."*

Regarding the power in the university, Academic 3 argues that *"students are excluded, except for some who belong to political party forums. As a result of this relationship, the students of the political party forums are the last link in the chain that starts from the party leaders, goes through the rectors, deans, a part of the lecturers, and ends with the students of the party forums. Mass students are excluded. As for the university leaders - academic staff relations, there is also a contradiction, especially between the lecturers*

who love their work, who have a kind of autonomy in their professional life, and the leaders, the bureaucrats. But another part of the academic staff is either docile, in the sense that they do not want to be disturbed, or completely dependent on these leaders. It is a symbiotic relationship, this feudal relationship between leaders and lecturers. They do each other favours. We will make you dean and rector so that tomorrow you will tolerate us. It is a relationship of interest, clientelistic, you give me - I give you." Academic 4 explains that *"the heads of the universities get their mandate from the lecturers through elections and then they have nothing to do with the lecturers. Lecturers have no role in decision-making neither in the Deanery, nor in the Rectorate, nor in the Senate. It is the same as elective democracy at the social level rather than participatory democracy. I vote for three seconds and goodbye after 4 years. The relationship is "leave me alone, I leave you alone".* Academic 8 describes the power relations within the university as *"perverse relations, in the sense that Hannah Arendt gives this word, as the opposite of sensitivity."* Academic 10 describes the power relations within the university as *"authoritarian. We have cases of layoffs of lecturers, but not for ethical violations, but for the fact that the lecturer has expressed an opinion against the incumbent. For example, in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Tirana, in 2014, a professor was fired just because he started raising some grievances. ... Then, this oppression continues below. For example, the sale of their own books by lecturers to students would not happen if it were not for this relationship. Certain lecturers can offend and insult students."*

Academic 12 says that *"groupings, even in universities, are separate. The division is often made by politics. At the time of university elections, this division appears more. You can see those poles inside the university. There are conflicts between the candidates for rectors and deans, and this conflict is reflected in the academic staff and students because the candidates for leadership positions try to influence the academic staff and students to vote for their candidacy."* Academic 15 explains that *"regarding the relationship between students and the rector, there is no reason for the rector to regard the students because in his/her election, the students have 10% of the total vote. 10% of the vote is nothing when in the last elections, the rector started celebrating while the votes of the students, who are 90% of the university's population, would be counted one day later. Meanwhile, within the academic staff, we have noticed that there are elements involved in criminal groups that were seen in the last elections where one of the most dangerous exponents of*

the country was arrested a day after it was made public that he interfered in the elections. Family and nepotic clans within the university are also important.” Academic 16 notes that “the main thing is the lack of student power because there are no independent student organizations in Albania. ... The relationship ‘head of the institution - lecturer’ is a relationship ‘we pretend to work; they pretend to pay us’. There is no account requirement, but a conjunctural relationship is maintained ‘I give you the vote, you leave me alone’. The lecturer-student relationship is at the will of the lecturer. The student is this fragile and bent creature, while the lecturer forces the students to buy his/her own books for nothing, grades them without criteria, does not teach, threatens them, sexually harasses them, etc.” Academic 17 reveals that “recently, power has been decanting. Everyone does her/his own thing, and not being involved in any other kind of process has made our system, to some extent, decomposed. No one is responsible for what s/he does. The moment I tighten the criteria for students, I run into an institutional quagmire. If I have 100 students and 60 fail, I get a directive from the institution not to fail 60. Even if it doesn't come to me verbally, it comes to me by procedure. The university organizes another exam season after a week and tells me to give the students the same exam questions. De facto it tells me ‘Pass them’. It is an internal conflict what the student wants, what the lecturer wants, what the leadership wants. In this sense it is a mere formalism.”

In summary, about a third of the interviewed academics describe the power relations within the university as normal or correct. The rest of the answers see the power relations within the university as problematic, describing them as authoritarian, conjunctural (personal relations, nepotism, clientelism), conflictual, etc. The relations take on the features of the university leaders rather than institutions. Consequently, the relations are more personal than institutional. Therefore, the problems that arise usually have a personal character because they come as a result of clashes between individuals for personal interests. Also, the interviewed lecturers assert that there have been cases of lecturers being dismissed from their jobs, not for breach of ethics, but for the fact that the lecturer in question has expressed an opinion against the dean or rector. Tense relations are noticed mainly in the period of elections for university leaders where there have been cases of interference by third parties such as political parties, but there have also been extreme cases where criminal groups have been involved. The authoritarian relations are also observed in the responses of lecturers who asserted that they had direct and indirect

instructions from the governing bodies of the faculty to carry out unfair actions such as mass passing of students in the exams.

The interviewed academics were also asked **“How much power in decision-making does academic staff have at the university today?”** 9 of 19 estimate that the academic staff in public universities in Albania have no or little power in decision-making within the university. On the other hand, 4 say that academic staff have some power, but limited, and 6 admit that the academic staff have enough or full power.

Academic 1 thinks that *"the academic staff have very little power, for many different reasons. Part of the blame lies with the academic staff themselves, not just the law. The academic staff have not stand up to protest, they have not thought about their own rights, because they considered their job a privilege, not an obligation or a right."* Academic 11 underlines that, *"in the elections for the leaders of the university, the vote of the academic staff has a weight of 90%. This must be balanced with the percentage of students."* Academic 19 also emphasizes that the academic staff has power in decision-making because *"the way governing authorities are elected in the university belongs to the assembly of lecturers. The assembly of lecturers is the decision-maker that chooses who will be the rector, the dean, the heads of the departments"*. Academic 14 estimates that the academic staff has sufficient power because, according to her, *"the academic staff makes not most but all decision-making"*. But, Academic 16 marks that, *"regarding the curricula, the academic staff has power. Curricula are set by the academic staff without being imposed from above. If we look at decision-making in financial terms, the academic staff has no power at all"*.

Academic 2 says that *"the academic staff has full power because they do the lectures; they have the right to ask; they have the right to do the research they like; and they have the right to vote, which is very important."* Academic 5 brings as an argument the fact that, *"referring to the law of higher education in Albania, it is the academic staff that chooses all the leadership authorities."* Academic 9 says that *"the academic staff have limited power. This is related to the recruitment of the academic staff, mainly at public universities. If the Head of the institution hires individuals who then owe her/him for their employment, it is understood that power is compromised from the start."* Academic 10 explains that *"in order to have power, the academic staff must be organized because the individual power of a lecturer does not work logically. What power can an individual*

lecturer have over the dean? There is no power alone. But if there was an organized collective, a union of lecturers, then it would be possible to exert pressure to gain some rights." Academic 15 argues that this is also related to culture. *"This structure reflects the problems that our society has everywhere. We want to be dictated to and stay away from decision-making, sometimes, even willingly, in order not to become part of the problems that arise later, or to not have responsibilities that affect the comfort of the day. We, in all our experience, have found that leaders, rectors are the sheriffs of universities despite the fact that the law does not treat them as such".* Academic 17 emphasizes that the power of the academic staff in decision-making is *"almost zero because of the great complexity of the lack of meritocracy. The lack of meritocracy means that the moment I have a claim, and I can raise a group of colleagues for a right of ours, but I cannot do it because I have come this far without meritocracy, and I am threatened by the one who hired me".*

As noted by the responses of the interviewed academics, the dominant argument of the interviewees who assert that the academic staff has power in decision-making is that the academic staff elects the Rector, the Dean, the Head of the Department, and the Academic Senate by vote. On the other hand, other interviewed lecturers bring arguments that claim otherwise. The meritocracy complex among lecturers is one of the main arguments. Many lecturers working in HEIs are recruited by the university leaders not in a meritocratic way but through nepotism and clientelism. This means that some of them are family members and friends of the university leaders. Also, these lecturers, who have been recruited without meritocracy, feel indebted to the university leader who hired them. Consequently, they do not dare to oppose any idea or order that comes from the governing bodies. Another argument in favour of the lack of power of the academic staff is the cultural aspect. In Albanian society, the culture of collective decision-making is very weak. Also, several lecturers interviewed emphasize that there is a lack of organization among them to demand their rights or to oppose the decisions they consider unfair.

The interviewed academics and students were asked **"How much power in decision-making do students have at the university today?"** 15 out of 19 academics answered that students in Albania have little or no power in university decision-making. The interviewed students have more or less the same opinion, 3 of them answer that they have no power at all, while 5 say they have a little power in decision-making.

Academic 1 says that, *“for me, they have little power. This is largely their fault. Students are divided. No member of the student body sees himself as a student. S/he sees herself/himself as a private student, not part of the student body”*. Academic 3 emphasizes that *“students have power only in the sense that when they protest, they impose the decision-making of others. When elections are held for Student Councils, 5% of students participate at best. Student Councils have no power; they are usually representatives of political party youth forums”*. Academic 4 says that *“students have zero power. They are slaves to the lecturers, the leader, the dean, the senates.”* Academic 6 says that *“what I think is missing is a more organized approach of students in relation to the institution; to have a decision-making role in the sense of student life”*. As for the weight of the students' vote in the election of the university leaders, Academic 7 marks that *“there are the government's policies that decide the decision-making at the university level. It is not up to us to make that 10% to 30-40%, but for me it would be good if they had more weight”*. Academic 10 argues that *“the students are even further away than the lecturer because in the lecturers, there is the interest of the vote, which has a very high weight in the election, 90%, while the students have the weight of the vote, 10%, but since they are many in number, mathematically, their weight goes very low. In a calculation we made, at the University of Tirana, the vote of a lecturer is equal to the vote of 300 students. ... The youth forums of the main political parties have a ground to work mainly through Student Councils”*. Academic 16 states that *“students have zero power. If they have 0.5%, it is because of the 2018 protest”*. Academic 12 says that *“students have 10% voting weight. This has been reduced with the new higher education law. In addition, they have no other mechanism that they can use except the Student Councils, which are typical communist structures that serve as electoral bases for political parties, and are always captured”*.

Academic 15 underlines that *“students have 10% of the voting weight in elections, and 10% of representation in the Academic Senate. In legal terms, they are incalculable. In terms of potential, it is another matter”*. Academic 11 claims that *“students have little power, but it increases depending on student activism. In times of crisis and protests, their position is stronger anyway”*. Academic 2 thinks that students also have their share of power. Regarding the weight of the student vote of 10% in the election of the rector and deans, he says that, *“as for the percentage of the student vote of 10% in the election of the university leaders, I would not have included them at all students in voting”*.

Academic 14 responds the question by saying: *“They have no power in decision-making, but the opinions, remarks, and suggestions of the students are heard. The weight of 10% of the student vote should have been greater because the faculty belongs to the students”*. Academic 19 asserts that *“since 2018, students have more power, because students are part of the governing bodies of the university, part of the Board of Administration, part of the Academic Senate and some important commissions at the HEI level. There have been improvements since the 2018 protest”*.

On the other hand, the students themselves affirm that their power in decision-making is generally very limited. Student 6 says that *“students have zero power. 10% student vote compared to 90% academic staff vote is worthless. Often students don't even know when the university elections are”*. Student 9 says that, *“I think that if we all come together, we have some power. But currently students at the university are not asked about any decisions that are made”*. Student 5 points out that, *“apart from the effects that students can create indirectly when they make an organized response, in other cases there is no impact as there are no genuine student structures; there are no extensive student discussions”*. Student 3 argues that *“part of the Student Council at the university are students who are involved in the political party forums. And the decisions made in these Councils are based on the interests of the political parties”*. Student 2 affirms that *“the Student Council only shows itself during election periods to get votes from other students”*.

Student 7 explains that *“we have a Student Council, and its head meets with the dean of the faculty from time to time, and to some extent it has some kind of impact. Students' grievances are said. It is not a big power, but we have a small initiative to make the Dean act”*. Student 1 says that the power of the students is *“little. But if it happens that a group of students or a class makes a request, it is immediately taken into account”*. Student 8 thinks that students *“have a small percentage of power. There have been cases related to exams mostly, where we have made requests and they have been taken into account”*.

Regarding the power that students have in decision-making at universities in Albania, the responses of the interviewed academics and students show an unfavourable situation for students. About half of the academics state that students do not have any power at all in university decision-making. A third of them think that students have little power. On the other hand, most of the interviewed students state that they have little power in decision-making at the university, while the rest think that students have no power at all in

decision-making. One of the reasons why students in Albania have little power is because the weight of their vote in the elections for rector and dean is only 10%, an insignificant percentage. In the election of the head of the department, students do not have the right to vote. Even in the Academic Senate, students have only 10% of representation. Such a small proportion of the students' weight has meant that they are very little or not at all interested in knowing the candidates and participating in the elections. Also, the candidates for rectors and deans are uninterested in the students' concerns and what the students think, since the weight of the students' vote in their election is not significant. Student Councils exist but they are usually influenced by political parties and serve more as youth forums of these parties than as independent student representatives. Moreover, due to the lack of a culture of cooperation, Albanian students are usually not organized to exert some kind of pressure on the decision-making authorities of the university.

The category of academics was asked the question **“From your experience, how does the power relations between the lecturer and the students in the auditorium stand?”**

Although half of the academics assess these power relations as normal and correct in general, however, in total, it is noticed that there is an authoritarian feature in this relation.

Academic 3 explains that *“lecturers are still stronger than they should be in the classroom. They have the power of the grade. There is very little accountability for how you grade. The issue that arises here is how can we prevent a lecturer from abusing the grade? As a result, we should have student complaint structures, which, de facto, we don't have. When a request is made by the student for a revaluation committee, there are the friends of the lecturers who do the same. The Dean, who should be impartial between students and lecturers, should be above the parties when there is a conflict between them, is always with the lecturer for a very simple reason: the vote of one lecturer is equal to the vote of 300 students. In this sense, the student has no power. Where students organize, the relation between powers gets balanced. ... On the student side, beyond any attempt to copy, I don't see any other abuse from students. I see the students here much more on the side of the victim”*. Academic 4 is more radical in his answer when he states that, *“on the professional, pedagogical level, the lecturer is an imperial dictator, and the student is a submissive slave”*. Academic 15 assesses the power relations between the lecturer and the students as *“dictatorial. Due to nepotism, if the student creates conflict with one lecturer, s/he also creates conflict with five others because they have family ties. The*

lecturer of the subject in our country prepares the exam sheet, evaluates the exam sheets, gives the lectures, often also the seminar, supervises the exam, so the lecturer has all the mechanisms in her/his hands. The lecturer has all the authoritarian possibilities to turn into a dictator in front of the student. Because of all this power, I think it is the source of all cases of corruption, sexual coercion, abuse in the university. So, more or less, the lecturer controls all the links. If you raise a case in the Ethics Commission or the Appeals Commission, they are commissions between colleagues". Academic 16 declares that "only on the part of the lecturer there is abuse of power in the auditorium. The student cannot do anything to the lecturer. The lecturer abuses the students in different ways. ... One of the main problems that the public university has is the fact that it is copied in the exams. In this case, the student slightly abuses the regulation. There must be institutional will to deal with this phenomenon. Whereas, direct abuse is the position of the lecturer towards the student for many reasons. The abuse of lecturers is a widespread phenomenon, some more and some less, in different forms and degrees".

Academic 8 emphasizes that, *"in most cases, lecturers, more than the power of knowledge, exercise the power of the grade". Academic 10 marks that "the lecturer is currently, with the legal framework, more advantaged, at least until the moment when the students give an evaluation of the lecturer through questionnaires, which has not happened so far. At this moment, the lecturer has a greater power because the lecturer, if s/he wants, simply does not pass the student in the exam, and practically, s/he has prevented the student from graduating. There are authoritarian lecturers, there are lecturers who abuse, but I, however, think that these are the minority in the sense of harming the student on purpose. Then, when it comes to the power relations in the ideological way, it is like this: 'I am the lecturer here, and I am right'. This is how it works". Academic 7 points out that there are lecturers who "introduce a dictatorial tendency towards the students, to impose iron discipline on them, to tighten them through grades, etc., and this causes a lack of respect or appreciation" from the students towards the lecturer. Academic 1 says that, in his judgment, these relationships are "ironic on both sides. There is a double register. I think that the student correctly understands who the lecturer is, and behaves as this lecturer wants. The lecturer also knows more or less the quality of students s/he has in the classroom, and responds according to their expectations".*

Academic 2 says that *“generally, this relationship has no problems, but sometimes there is a little tension between lecturers and first-year students”*. Academic 13 argues that *“having power is much simpler than being recognized as having power. Having power is a written institutional decision, but being recognized as having power is something not written. It depends on everyone's techniques and strategies. At this point, it is no longer a relationship between the lecturer and the student, but a relationship between the student and the institution, because the lecturer is a representative of this institution. Students see the institution as something foreign with which they do not know how to behave; have problems to integrate. This brings tension”*. Academic 12 notices two developments in this direction. According to him, on the one hand, *“we see a devaluation of the figure of the lecturer by the students, and, on the other hand, we see an excessive arrogance of some lecturers towards the students”*. Academic 17 thinks that *“there are no power relations in the auditorium. We deal with this in the theory of leadership, which is the source of authority from the institution, the profession, and things like that. There are no power relations between me and the students in the auditorium. In this sense, I would come up with another term. It is an ethical-civic relation. In my opinion, there is loss in this relation on both sides because the university is not interesting enough to keep students engaged”*.

From the answers of the interviewed students, it seems that they assess the power relations that the lecturers have with them as more correct or normal. Student 1 considers these relationships to be *“calm and sincere”*. Student 2 says that *“most of the lecturers establish some kind of relations and standards that do not allow abuses”*. Student 3 emphasizes that this relationship is based on *“communication between lecturers and students. In addition to the professional side, they have the approach to be open to problems that students may have”*. Student 9 shortly notes that, *“in most cases, it is a correct relation”*. Student 7 considers these relationships as *“good. I am not aware of any cases where the lecturer puts pressure on the students regarding the grade”*.

Student 4 says that the nature of the power relations between the lecturer and the students is difficult to generalize because *“it depends on the lecturer. Somewhere it is smooth, somewhere it is harsh”*. Student 5 states that *“these relations, in general, are problematic. Generally, it is a relation where it seems that the lecturer has all the authority, is in control of everything in the classroom, and the students just have to listen”*. Student 6 also thinks that the power relations between the lecturer and the students

“is mainly dictated by the lecturer. There is an idea that, all the time, the lecturer is the power”. Student 8 describes these relations as “formal, indifferent. The lecturer just comes, teaches and leaves. The figure of the lecturer is seen so serious by the students that we do not even feel free to ask questions or to be comfortable in front of the lecturers”.

In sum, about half of the academics interviewed assess the power relations lecturer-student in Albanian universities as normal or correct. A quarter of the them consider these relations as authoritarian mainly. They state that the university lecturer continues to be a kind of "dictator", while the students are generally submissive. According to them, lecturers are almost omnipotent compared to students. Because of the much greater power that the lecturer has, the abuses on her/his part are greater. The most mentioned abuses are not respecting the correct teaching schedule, bribery, compulsory purchase of their own books by students, sexual favours, etc. As for students, their main abuse seems to be copying in exams, which is somehow related to the culture of non-meritocracy that prevails in Albanian society.

6. Analysis of Legislation and Other Relevant Documents

6.1 The Impact of the *Final Report on the Reform of Higher Education and Scientific Research*

When the left-wing government took office in June 2013, it pledged a new higher education law that would bring the sector in line with European norms. For this purpose, in 2014, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama created a commission called *Komisioni për Arsimin e Lartë dhe Kërkimin Shkencor* (Commission for Higher Education and Scientific Research). In July 2014, this commission drafted a report called *Raporti Përfundimtar për Reformimin e Arsimit të Lartë dhe Kërkimit Shkencor* (Final Report on the Reform of Higher Education and Scientific Research). According to the findings in this report (2014), the massification of higher education in the post-communist period led to some extent to the decline, sometimes drastic, of the quality of higher education in the country. Also, the report noted that Albania had a very high number of HEIs (59 in total) compared to other developed European countries. Albania had about 20 HEIs per one million inhabitants, about 8-9 times more than countries like Great Britain, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, etc. The report of the Commission for Higher Education and Scientific Research (2014) emphasized that Albania invests in higher education several times less than its neighbour countries. Based on the current state of higher education institutions, the Commission for Higher Education and Scientific Research recommended a reform which should focus on four main areas:

- **Supporting Priorities:** creating policies for higher education and scientific research in accordance with the development priorities of the country.
- **Main Funder:** the state should continue to be the main financier of public higher education in the country.
- **Support for Needy Communities:** to guarantee the possibility of pursuing higher studies according to merit and not according to financial status.

- **Guarantee of Quality Standards:** in every element of the system, i.e. the regulatory role of the state in higher education (Raporti Pësrfundimtar për Reformimin e Arsimit të Lartë dhe Kërkimit Shkencor, 2014, p. 18).

The Final Report on the Reform of Higher Education and Scientific Research also suggested that the new higher education law, regarding the new structure of the higher education management system, should take into account four main principles which are as follows:

- putting competition at the foundation of funding;
- eliminating bureaucracy and increasing the effectiveness of the university operation;
- creation of control and accountability mechanisms;
- guaranteeing the institutional autonomy of HEIs (Raporti Pësrfundimtar për Reformimin e Arsimit të Lartë dhe Kërkimit Shkencor, 2014, p. 22).

The Commission's suggestions were valid for public and private HEIs. This report, after making an analysis of higher education in Albania highlighting the problems, suggested the restructuring of HEIs in the country by orienting higher education towards the Anglo-Saxon model. In fact, the main principles that the Commission suggested, such as competition for funds, elimination of bureaucracy, autonomy, accountability, etc. seem to be closer to the pillars of the New Public Management theory.

Parallel to the work of the Commission for Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Education and Sports conducted a general assessment of the higher education institutions in the country. This culminated in August 2014, when the government shutdown 17 private and eight public HEIs, after they turned out to be in violation of basic state requirements. In the same year, for non-compliance with standards, the government also suspended doctoral studies, which were reopened in 2022. Based on the findings of the *Final Report on the Reform of Higher Education and Scientific Research* (2014) of the Commission for Higher Education and Scientific Research, the government composed a new law on higher education. In 2015, the Parliament approved the law no. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania". In 2016-2017, the government also carried out a quality evaluation of the remaining HEIs in collaboration with the British company "Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education" (QAA). Because this assessment was mainly

about the administrative side, i.e., paper check, the Albanian HEIs passed this assessment with relatively good marks.

In the next section of this chapter, I analyse the law no. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania", which is based on the work of the Commission for Higher Education and Scientific Research, to see how and to what extent the suggestions of the *Final Report on the Reform of Higher Education and Scientific Research* (2014) have been reflected in the law.

6.2 Analysis of the Law no. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania"

After about half a decade of discussions, debates, and objections in academic, student, and political circles, on 22 July 2015, the left-wing government brought to the Assembly of the Republic of Albania draft law no. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania". After a marathon parliamentary session of about nine hours of debates, the draft law was voted only by the MPs of the ruling party, receiving 78 votes in favour out of 140 in total. The opposition, which had opposed this draft law, left the plenary session shortly before the vote (*Telegrafi*, 2015). This law is commonly known in Albania as *the higher education law*. According to the claims of the Albanian government, this law relies on the findings and suggestions of the Commission for Higher Education and Scientific Research published in the *Final Report on the Reform of Higher Education and Scientific Research* in July 2014.

At the beginning of the law no. 80/2015 "On higher education and scientific research in institutions of higher education in the Republic of Albania" it is emphasized that higher education is a public good and responsibility, and has several missions such as:

- a) to create, develop, transmit, and protect knowledge through teaching, scientific research, and to promote and develop the arts, physical education, and sports;
- b) to train senior specialists and prepare young scientists, in accordance with the country's development priorities, contributing to the increase of the standards of democracy in the country;

- c) to provide equal opportunities to benefit from higher education and lifelong learning;
- d) to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development at the national and regional level, as well as to the strengthening of public and national security;
- e) to support the country's strategic priorities and development interests;
- f) to integrate teaching with scientific research;
- g) to promote international cooperation in the field of higher education.

To have a clearer idea about higher education institutions in Albania, below I sum up a description of them, based on law no. 80/2015. There are four types of higher education institutions in Albania. Chapter III, Section 1, Article 17, Point 8 of the Higher Education Law defines the types of higher education institutions in Albania, which are: universities, university colleges, academies, and higher vocational colleges. According to the description in the law, in summary, the differences between these four institutions are as follows:

The **university** has at least three faculties. The university offers study programmes in all cycles of higher education studies, as well as professional study programmes.

The **academy** represents a structure composed of at least one faculty. In accordance with the relevant field of competence, the academy can offer study programmes in all study cycles, as well as study programmes with a professional character.

The **university college** has at least two faculties in its composition. The university college offers study programmes in the first and/or second cycle of studies as well as professional study programmes.

The **higher vocational college** is a professionally oriented institution, which prepares professionals with practical skills, and is composed of at least two departments. The higher vocational college offers teaching and training activities that last one or two academic years with a load of 60 or 120 ECTS credits, respectively. The higher vocational college can also be established near higher education institutions that have the status of universities and university colleges. In these cases, it is considered as a main unit of the institution. In all other cases, the higher vocational college is considered a separate unit of higher education.

As can be seen from the above description that the law makes for institutions of higher education in Albania, the differences between university, academy, and university college are very small. The only institution that differs significantly from the university is the higher vocational college. In a country with a small population like Albania, with a weak and limited economic sector, having so many types of higher education institutions, which differ very little from each other, can be considered somewhat excessive and exaggerated. These types of HEIs that differ little from each other have not emerged as a result of demand from below, and do not reflect the existing reality. This division of HEIs has been made top-down by being defined in the law without giving much explanation as to what this division of HEIs consists of. This artificial diversity of HEIs can be seen in the trend of recent years of many higher education institutions in the country turning from academies and university colleges into universities, without any substantial change. The Academy of Physical Education and Sports in Tirana converted to Tirana University of Sports in 2010; The Academy of Arts converted to the University of Arts in 2011; Barleti University College turned into Barleti University recently, etc.

According to the Britannica dictionary, academy is *a society of learned individuals organized to advance art, science, literature, music, or some other cultural or intellectual area of endeavour*. As noted from the description, the nature of the academy is mainly related to the arts. Meanwhile, in Albania, academies are rapidly disappearing as they are turning into universities. The Academy of Arts in Tirana, by Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 234, dated 23.03.2011, was transformed into the University of Arts. By decision of the Council of Ministers, no. 123, dated 17.02.2010, the Academy of Physical Education and Sports "Vojo Kushi" was transformed into the University of Sports of Tirana. In 2015, the Security Academy was established, which is responsible for the education and training of employees of security structures in Albania. This year, 2023, this academy is turning into a university (*Shqiptarja.com, 2023*).

Also, in Chapter 1, Article 3, Point 1 of the law, it is stated that higher education institutions enjoy academic freedom, as well as financial, organizational, and personnel recruitment autonomy. In point 3 of the same article, it is stated that financial autonomy is guaranteed through the right of the HEIs to determine the internal rules of financing, distribution, and use of income, in accordance with the activity and needs of the institution.

Continuing in this chapter, I try to analyse the main aspects of this law to understand if this law is in accordance with its announced mission, and if it manages to ensure academic freedom and financial autonomy.

Regarding the organization of higher education institutions in Albania, Chapter III, Section 1, Article 17 of the law states that higher education institutions are organized into public, non-public, and independent public institutions. According to the law, public institutions of higher education are public legal entities that are self-financed, financed from the state budget or from other legal sources; non-public institutions of higher education are private legal entities, and the activity they develop can be profitable or non-profit; independent public institutions of higher education are public legal entities that are created by decision of the Council of Ministers, at the request of non-profit organizations of the foundation type, created for this purpose.

Chapter V of Law no. 80/2015 is one of the most important chapters of the law as it deals with the academic and administrative organization of higher education institutions. Article 36 of Chapter V defines the Academic Senate as the highest academic governing body. Members of the Academic Senate of higher education institutions are elected by the academic staff assemblies of the main units (faculties), through a general vote, for a four-year term, with the right to re-election. Among the main functions and competences of the Academic Senate, expressed in Article 38 of Chapter V are: proposes the strategic development plan of the higher education institution; approves the Statute of the higher education institution with two-thirds of the votes of its members, after the prior approval of the Board of Administration; designs the general structure of the higher education institution and proposes to the Board of Administration the number of personnel of the institution at all levels; approves new study programmes, new scientific research programmes, their changes as well as their closure; approves the annual plan of academic and research-scientific activities; elects its representatives to the Board of Administration; pre-approves the institution's annual and mid-term budget plan; creates the mechanisms for evaluating the teaching and research-scientific activity of the academic staff, etc.

Other academic bodies are the academic staff assembly, and the permanent committees. The academic governing authorities are the rector, the head of the main unit (faculty), and the head of the basic unit (department). The law stipulates that the highest academic authority of the higher education institution, as well as its legal representative for academic and protocol matters, is the Rector. S/he is elected by the members of the

academic staff assemblies of the main units and the students. Student votes in the elections of the rector are counted as ten percent of the total number of votes. The rector leads the Academic Senate and reports to it. He presents the strategic development plan of the institution to the senate.

In Article 42, Chapter V of Law no. 80/2015 it is determined that the head of the main unit is the dean of the faculty. In public higher education institutions, the dean is elected by the assembly of the academic staff of the main unit and the students. The same as in the election of the rector, also here, the votes of the students in the election of the dean are counted at the rate of ten percent of the total number of votes. The dean conveys the proposals of the basic units to the Academic Senate, accompanied by his/her own opinions.

The head of the department, in public higher education institutions, is elected by the academic staff assembly of the basic unit. Students do not have the right to vote in the election of the head of their own department.

The small weight of students' votes in the election of the rector and dean makes them almost excluded from decision-making at the university. This causes the university leaders to not be interested in the dissatisfaction that students may have regarding their governance. In many cases, the victory of a candidate for rector or dean is announced immediately after the counting of the votes of the academic staff before the counting of the students' votes has started. This demotivates students to participate in voting and makes them lose faith in the university. The small weight of the vote, only 10%, seems more like a mockery of the students than their involvement in decision-making.

According to the law, the rectorate, as a collegial body, draws up the strategic development plan of the institution, based on the proposals of the basic and main units of the institution, as well as those of the administrators. The deanery, too, is a collegial body headed by the dean. The deanery draws up the strategic development plan of the main unit, based on the proposals of its basic units, as well as those of the administrator of the main unit.

Financial autonomy in higher education institutions in Albania, despite the fact that the law states that it is guaranteed, is violated in some cases by the law itself. In Chapter XI, Article 108 of the law, it is literally stated that higher education institutions in Albania operate according to the principle of financial autonomy. However, in Chapter II, Article

7, Point 2, Letter F of the law, it is written that the ministry responsible for education proposes to the Council of Ministers the maximum limit of the tuition fee for first cycle study programmes in public institutions of higher education. This is a point where the law itself infringes on the financial autonomy of public universities.

In Article 42, Chapter V of Law no. 80/2015, it is determined that the highest administrative governing body of the university is the Board of Administration, which is collegial, and whose function is to fulfil the mission of the higher education institution, its financial and administrative progress. One of the most debatable points regarding the autonomy of the university is the composition of the Board of Administration. Point 1 of Article 48, Chapter V, of Law no. 80/2015 states:

Bordi i Administrimit në institucionet publike të arsimit të lartë përbëhet nga shtatë anëtarë, të punësuar me kohë të pjesshme. Anëtarët, përfaqësues të IAL-së, përzgjidhen nga Senati Akademik i IAL-së për një mandat pesëvjeçar, me të drejtë rizgjedhjeje, prej listave të propozuara nga institucioni i arsimit të lartë.... Anëtarët përfaqësues të ministrisë përgjegjëse për arsimin dhe njësisë së qeverisjes vendore janë ekspertë të njohur nga fushat akademike, menaxheriale, ekonomike dhe juridike dhe emërohen përkatësisht nga ministri përgjegjës për arsimin dhe kryetari i njësisë së qeverisjes vendore, sipas përcaktimeve të këtij ligji. [The Board of Administration in public institutions of higher education consists of seven members, employed part-time. The members, representatives of the HEI, are elected by the Academic Senate of the HEI for a five-year term, with the right to re-election, from the lists proposed by the institution of higher education.... The representative members of the ministry responsible for education and the unit of local government are recognized experts from the academic, managerial, economic, and legal fields, and are respectively appointed by the minister responsible for education and the head of the local government unit, according to the provisions of this law.]

Përbërja e Bordit të Administrimit përcaktohet në varësi të planit buxhetor afatmesëm të institucionit publik të arsimit të lartë, të miratuar nga Bordi i Administrimit. Nëse institucioni siguron vetë pesëdhjetë për qind ose më shumë të buxhetit afatmesëm, katër prej anëtarëve janë

përfaqësues të IAL-së dhe tre janë përfaqësues të ministrisë përgjegjëse për arsimin. Në rastet kur institucioni siguron vetë më pak se pesëdhjetë për qind të buxhetit afatmesëm, tre prej anëtarëve janë përfaqësues të IAL-së dhe katër janë përfaqësues të ministrisë përgjegjëse për arsimin. Në rastet kur njësia e qeverisjes vendore, në territorin e së cilës zhvillon veprimtarinë institucioni i arsimit të lartë, kontribuon financiarisht, së paku në masën prej dhjetë për qind të buxhetit afatmesëm të IAL-së, atëherë një prej përfaqësuesve, që i takon ministrisë përgjegjëse për arsimin, përcaktohet nga njësia e qeverisjes vendore. [The composition of the Board of Administration is determined depending on the mid-term budget plan of the public institution of higher education, approved by the Board of Administration. If the institution itself provides fifty percent or more of the medium-term budget, four of the members are representatives of the HEI, and three of the members are representatives of the ministry responsible for education. In cases where the institution itself provides less than fifty percent of the medium-term budget, three of the members are representatives of the HEI, and four of the members are representatives of the ministry responsible for education. In cases where the local government unit, in whose territory the higher education institution operates, contributes financially, at least to the extent of ten percent of the medium-term budget of the HEI, then one of the representatives, who belongs to the ministry responsible for education, is appointed by the local government unit.]

As can be noted, the Board of Administration of the university, which is the decision-making body regarding the financial and administrative aspect of the university, is composed of members of the university and the government. Given that most public universities in Albania do not manage to provide more than 50% of the university's income, most of the members of the university's Board of Administration are government representatives, namely, persons appointed by the Ministry of Education and Sports. Simply put, if the state budget for a public university is higher than the budget that the university manages to generate on its own, then the government, through decision-making in the Board of Administration, controls and directs the university financially and administratively, depriving it of its own autonomy. The University of Tirana, since it

generates the majority of the university's budget, is one of the rare cases where the division of the Board of Administration is four members from the university and three members from the Ministry of Education and Sports (University of Tirana, 2023).

To understand the extent to which the government controls the university through the Board of Administration, below I list the competencies and functions of the Board of Administration in higher education institutions as expressed in point 1 of article 49, chapter V, of law no. 80/2015. The Board of Administration:

- a) guarantees the financial sustainability of the higher education institution and the fulfilment of its mission;
- b) with the proposal of the Academic Senate, approves the strategic development plan of the institution, and supervises its implementation;
- c) with the proposal of the Academic Senate, approves the annual and mid-term budget of the institution, and supervises their implementation;
- d) with the proposal of the Academic Senate, approves the number of personnel at all levels;
- e) evaluates in advance the closure and reorganization of the higher education institution, as well as the division or merger of the higher education institution with another higher education institution;
- f) approves in advance the opening, reorganization or closure of the constituent units of the higher education institution;
- g) gives an opinion on the draft regulation of the institution and approves its financial regulation;
- h) determines the rules for the distribution of the income that the institution provides from the exercise of its activities, as well as oversees the use of funding sources;
- i) is responsible for setting the criteria and procedures for the employment of administrators and administrative personnel, based on the acts of the higher education institution;
- j) appoints and dismisses the administrator of the institution;
- k) preliminarily approves the statute of the higher education institution, before forwarding it to the Academic Senate;

- 1) approves the detailed annual report of the institution's activity, drawn up by the rectorate.

In Article 42, Chapter V of Law no. 80/2015 it is determined that the administrator of the university is the highest administrative authority and responsible for the financial functioning of the institution. S/he is the legal representative of the higher education institution for financial and administrative issues. The appointment of the administrator is made by the Board of Administration of the HEI. As defined in the law, the administrator, in addition to appointing and dismissing the administrators of the faculties and departments after the approval of the Board of Administration, also fulfils the requirements of the rector, in order to fulfil the academic, administrative, and financial needs. These powers of the administrator have meant that Albanian universities practically have two heads: the rector and the administrator. The rector has no decision making on financial and administrative matters without the approval of the administrator. As stated by several rectors, deans, and lecturers interviewed by me, this situation has created bottlenecks and problems in the operation of the university because, often, the rector and the administrator have disagreements due to their different views on the operation of the university.

In addition to the university administrator, the law also provides one administrator for each faculty, and one administrator for each department. The administrator of the main unit (faculty) is responsible for the financial and administrative functioning of the faculty. More specifically, according to Article 54, Chapter V of Law no. 80/2015, the faculty administrator performs the daily financial administration of the main unit; supervises and controls the financial activity of the main unit; meets the requirements of the head of the main unit in order to fulfil academic, administrative and financial needs; cooperates with the authorities and governing bodies of the main unit on the basic issues of its administration. The faculty administrator is appointed and dismissed by the university administrator after the approval of the Board of Administration.

According to articles 55 and 56, chapter V of law no. 80/2015, the administrator of the basic unit (department) is responsible for the financial functioning of the department. The administrator of the department is appointed and dismissed by the university administrator after the approval of the Board of Administration. The functions of the department administrator are the administration of the department's funds;

implementation of the faculty administrator's decisions on how to share the income generated by the department; meeting the requirements of the head of the department in order to fulfil academic, administrative, and financial needs.

As can be understood from the functions of the Board of Administration and administrators, the financial and administrative autonomy of the university is violated, which this law should provide to higher education institutions. Through the budget that it grants to the university, which if it is higher than the financial amount that the university itself provides, the government *de facto* takes control of the institution. Figure 16 explains the administrative and financial structure through which the government controls universities.

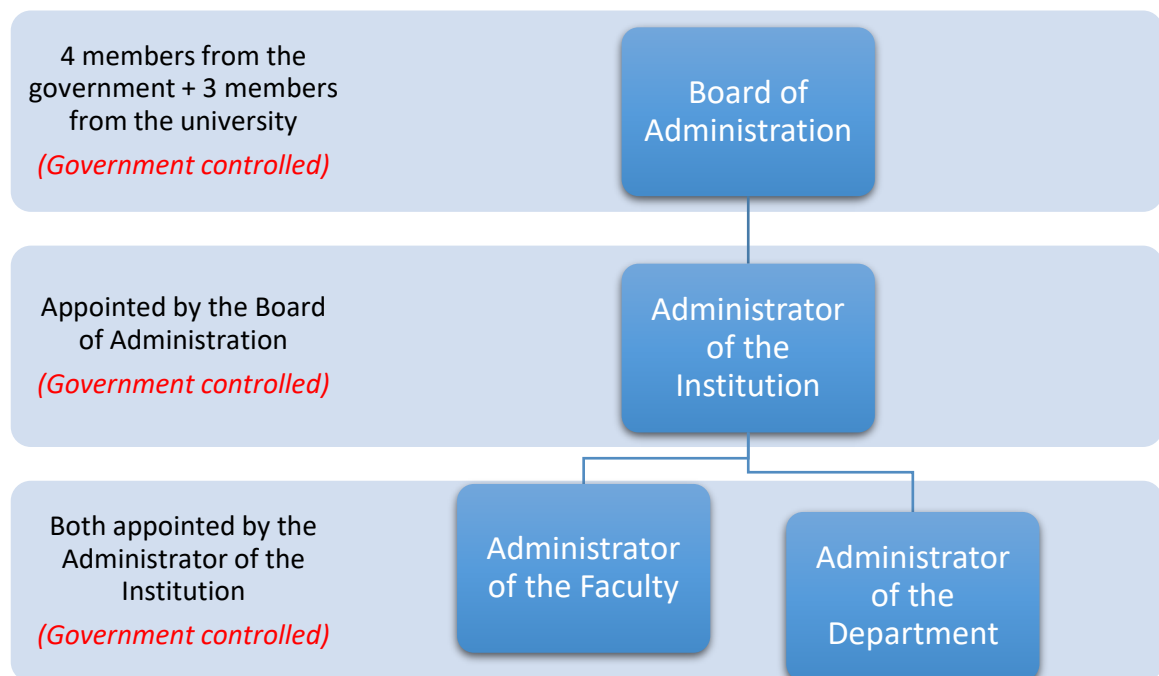


Figure 16. Administrative organization of higher education institutions in Albania (when the HEI itself generates less than 50% of the total budget of the institution)

The Board of Administration approves or rejects the requests of the Academic Senate. The faculty administrator approves or rejects the dean's requests. The department administrator approves or rejects the department head's requests. When the majority of members of the Board of Administrator are appointed by the government, the government automatically controls almost every aspect of the university. However, even in cases where the majority of members of the Board of Administration come from the university,

again, the influence of the government and political parties on them is high. This is mainly due to clientelistic and nepotistic relations and employment in public universities in Albania.

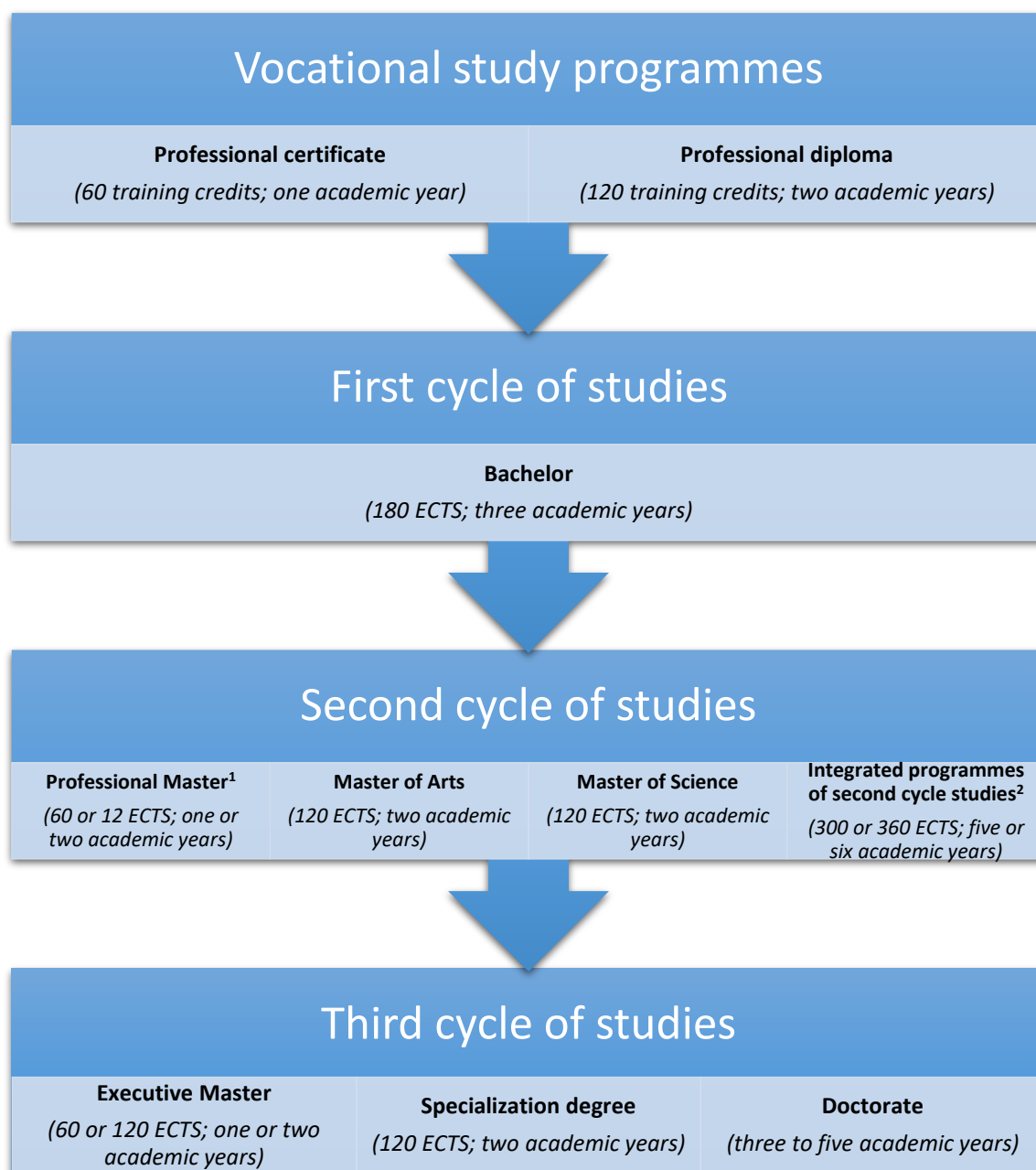


Figure 17. Structure of the study cycles in higher education institutions in Albania

¹ Admission to third cycle study programmes is not possible for candidates who have earned the "Professional Master" degree.

² Integrated programmes of second-cycle studies are offered in the fields of law, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, and architecture.

Source: Law no. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania"

Law on higher education no. 80/2015 defines the study cycles in higher education institutions in Albania. Higher education institutions in Albania offer study programmes, organized in modules, and evaluated in credits, in accordance with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Study programmes in higher education institutions are organized in three consecutive cycles: the first cycle, the second cycle, and the third cycle. Higher education institutions may also offer vocational degrees. The structure and specifics of study cycles in higher education institutions in Albania are illustrated in figure 17.

In Chapter IX, Article 97 of the law, the rights and obligations of students are defined. The law denies students the right to enrol, simultaneously, in more than one study programme, except for excellent students. Also, the law states that students have the right to evaluate the quality of teaching and the work of the staff in higher education institutions. This is an issue that is still facing a lot of resistance in being applied by public universities.

Another unusual issue is the student card in Albania. Chapter IX, Article 100 of the law states that students of public and private institutions of higher education are provided with a student card, which is a unique document. Through it, students benefit from services at reduced prices. The law also states that student benefits from the use of the student card are covered by the funds provided in the State Budget of the relevant ministry that covers the higher education institution or local government units that cover the services provided to students. But in reality, Albania may be a unique case regarding the student card. Unlike standard practices in universities around the world, in Tirana, student cards are issued by the Municipality of Tirana to all students of public universities in the city. From my experience and research, I can admit that it is difficult to find a similar case elsewhere.

If we go back to the suggestions and principles of the Commission for Higher Education and Scientific Research, we see that law no. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania" has not resolved a good part of the issues.

Putting competition at the foundation of funding is one of the principles suggested by the Commission which the higher education law seems to have addressed to some extent. HEIs can apply for project funding at the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (AKKSHI). But, on the other hand, since AKKSHI is a state institution, the

allocation of funds to HEIs can increase the government's influence and power over universities.

Eliminating bureaucracy and increasing the effectiveness of the university operation, which was one of the main suggestions of the Commission, has not been fulfilled at all. On the contrary, the management of HEIs with two heads (administrator-rector) has increased the bureaucracy, and made the operation of the university more difficult and slower.

Creation of control and accountability mechanisms is a principle of the Commission which is somewhat fulfilled by the law through the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASCAL). However, the accountability mechanisms for the high leaders of public HEIs remain weak.

Guaranteeing the institutional autonomy of HEIs is another issue that should have been addressed by the higher education law. As a matter of fact, as long as the government has the majority of members on the boards of public universities, it controls all the financial and administrative activities of the universities, diminishing the institutional autonomy of the HEIs.

In fact, in addition to knowledge institutions, universities are also political institutions. As such, it is probably impossible to consider universities (especially public ones) today as completely detached from political power. In fact, in a way, the government has some rights over the universities although the latter are supposed to enjoy autonomy. Overall, public universities are the responsibility of the government so, in this view, the government has a right to orient them or have some influence on them. Thus, universities, while they should enjoy academic autonomy, find it very difficult to enjoy inherent political autonomy. Also, the world of research and publications is greatly influenced by the will of the political power to provide funds, build scientific centres, etc. These elements make the university connected to political power. Anglo-Saxon universities can also be considered quite politicized nowadays. In fact, in today's world, it is very difficult to imagine public universities totally detached from political power. In itself, this relationship is not an issue. Even if a government tries to orient the university according to an ideology voted for, which suits national strategies and interests, this can still be acceptable. Normally, the political power should be interested in the functioning of the university along with the elements it carries such as study programmes, curricula, research topics, scientific activities, publications, etc. What is problematic is when the

political power is interested in the university with one main goal: to control it so that the university does not become an opponent of the government, but on the contrary, remains silent or, worse, propagates the work of to the government. Exactly, this kind of interest of the political power towards the university is observed in the Albanian context.

The entire reform of higher education in Albania was carried out in the name of democratization, autonomy, and liberalism for universities. The left-wing government in Albania has promoted this reform, saying that it is based on the British model. In fact, what is happening in the higher education sector in Albania can be explained as a certain reduction of liberalism in the economic side without the political one, in Adam Smith without John Locke. According to Hysamedin Feraj, founder of the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Tirana, this reduction is the feature of neoliberalism, while its significance is given by an analogy: neoliberalism is to liberalism as Stalinism is to Marxism. It is simple, clear, understandable, and rhetorically winning because it is somewhat superficial. Within the liberal discourse, neoliberalism is a rhetorical and practical winner because, just like Stalinism within the Marxists, neoliberalism makes for itself the crowd and the political parties, which are tired of slightly more complicated but deeper thinking, and settle in the calmness that scholarly certainty gives them in support of simple "truths" (Feraj, 2015).

Educational reform should not be considered as an ordinary reform. As Walter Benjamin (1910-1917/2011) defines it, educational reform is a cultural movement in several respects.

School reform is positioned beyond the scientific theses of specialists, that it is a way of thinking, an ethical programme for our times-which surely does not mean that everyone must become a proponent of it but only that everyone is expected to take a position toward it. In short, the school-reform movement brings to clear and urgent expression certain needs of our time, which, like virtually all our epoch's greatest needs, belong to the ethical-cultural sphere (Benjamin, 1910-1917/2011, pp. 57-58).

6.3 Higher Education Law from the Perspective of Practitioners

19 academics, 9 students, and 3 decision-makers were asked two questions regarding the law no. 80/2015. The first question is: **“How do you evaluate the latest 2015 higher**

education reform in Albania?” Academic 1 says that *“the effects have been negative because they have created a lot of confusion. A good part of it has not yet been implemented to an overwhelming extent. But the separation of the spheres of power in the administration board and in an academic board for me is an unprecedented blunder. For example, an illustration. Even if my department has a surplus of money, I have to go through many procedures to dedicate a part of this money to an aspect that interests me for scientific research work. It means that I have to go through an endless procedure, often unsuccessfully, so that I allocate the funds where I want, even though I generate the funds”*. Academic 3 emphasizes that *“the reform is deeply negative. It is a reform that does not solve any of the problems of university life, but adds new problems. It does not solve 'feudalism', the clientelism of internal relations, but, on the other hand, it adds strong dimensions of the commercialization of knowledge, the recruitment of students, etc. Practically, it tends to make the university a kind of private for-profit enterprise; to consider knowledge as a commodity of any kind that can be bought and sold in the market, and is offered to whoever pays the most. In this sense, it is catastrophic in conception. Fortunately, as a result of the resistance, it has not managed to be implemented as much as those who drafted it wanted. The law is there but some aspects of it have not been implemented, although it was approved in 2015”*. Academic 4 considers the reform in higher education to be *“a complete failure”*. Academic 7 states that *“the higher education law has many defects in its formulation. The main defect, I think, is that a law suitable for England, or that works in England, cannot be implemented in Albania because Albania is too far from England. We have suffered a lot and continue to suffer the fact that there are two leaders at the same time in a university. We have had many problems related to non-cooperation between various administrators with the rector of the university, or the chancellor with the dean, which has created great handicaps”*. Academic 8 assesses the government's reform of higher education simply as *“a weak reform”*. Academic 10 explains that *“the law in question is problematic because it seeks to commercialize and privatize the university, seeing students simply as customers to budget the university. This is the vision. ... On the other hand, on the bureaucratic aspects, it has formed a structure with two heads, and the case of the University of Tirana is a concrete example of what happened. There is the academic line of the rector and the line of the board of administration which, as we predicted, are in constant conflict with each other. In the last 4 years, the rector of the University of Tirana was constantly in conflict with the board, and this practically paralyzed the university in all aspects, except for*

teaching, which is a routine activity and has been done. There has been an extraordinary delay by the ministry and the government to issue by-laws and guidelines. From time to time, they issue an act, then after a few months they cancel it. So, it is a law filled and bloated with by-laws that have made its implementation very difficult”. Academic 11 calls the reform “tragic as it has turned students into customers, and has increased the level of insecurity in universities”. Academic 15 thinks that “the law has brought many problems. Like any law, after any problem, it had to be amended. Two years after the law was passed, universities did not have the bylaws to implement the law. 50% of the by-laws were issued two years after the approval of the law. That is, the universities operated with the acts of the old law, with the old regulations, but with the new law. ... The law is based on the English philosophy of the university. English law provides for an expensive school which, within its own market, leads to student loans, and says 'this is expensive but I will give student loans. Use it, and pay it off when you hit the job market.' It is a kind of balancing mechanism. Meanwhile, there are no bylaws for student loans here”. Academic 16 refers to the law as “negative, for the simple reason that it tries to give a character to education in Albania that is supposed to follow the trend of the Anglo-Saxon world (UK, USA), but that this is a reform that in those countries has turned out to be extremely problematic. As an education model, it is a business model that means the institution is self-funding, which means tuition fees are extremely high, and this forces students to take on debt. Student debt in the US and UK is very high. In the US, if I'm not mistaken, student loans are second only to real estate loans. There is an attempt to remove the state's responsibility for the public university as a public institution. From time to time, it is mentioned that the reform has not been fully implemented, and this for the simple reason that it is not applicable in Albania. It is impossible to implement a reform where student fees are supposed to skyrocket. The 2018 student protest was precisely about the fees, and forced the authorities to halve the Bachelor's level tuition fees”.

Academic 12 claims that, “when the draft was launched in 2015, I followed it and it was interesting, except for some issues, for example, the reduction from 20% of the student vote to 10%, but also the separation of the administration board with the rectorate. Two poles were created”. Academic 6 says that the reform, “at best, has been too hasty; at worst it has been completely irrelevant to our reality. In essence, I do not believe that it has changed anything”. Academic 13 states that, “from the information I have, the starting point of the reform was to increase the autonomy of public institutions of higher

education. At least from 2015 till date, I haven't noticed any change in this aspect". Academic 14 rates the higher education law as "average because many aspects of higher education are indirectly affected by distorting our academic life. As for the part of the academic titles, which is the main much-discussed part of the higher education law, I have quite a lot of reservations and I have the idea of modifying this part, i.e., modification of criteria for titles".

Academic 18 explains that his university "has presented several objections regarding the new higher education law. Gradually we realized that through the by-laws some of the issues raised by us have been clarified and have taken an acceptable form. There remain some issues that have not yet been clarified and have not yet been applied. I believe that they will not be able to be applied because they have actually been inapplicable since the higher education law was drafted. I believe that amendments should be made. There is a division of powers in the higher education law, and I think this is a good thing, because an academic leader does not have to deal with finances or administration issues. This is a model that the world has accepted over time. The law has its strengths and weaknesses, like any other law". Academic 17 says that "the problem is that this law, after it is prepared, two days before its approval, after the political parties understand it, they make some interventions that completely ruin the law. The law was very good. It increased the autonomy of the departments, increased the autonomy of the faculties, gave us the opportunity to open bank accounts for projects, etc. Many good things. But the changes they made at the last moment ruined the reform. The second point is the vision or mindset we have towards the law. No matter what the law is, I will still do as I want. You know that it has been so many years since the higher education law was passed, and our universities still operate under the old law". Academic 2 thinks that the reform in higher education has positive elements but has also caused negative consequences. "One of the positive elements was the increased autonomy of universities. The problem is not the spirit of the law, it is the way the law is implemented and the shortage of accompanying by-laws. There is a spirit of higher education law which gives much more independence and autonomy to the university. On the other hand, there are other elements which, especially from the financial side, block it. The law of higher education has established two heads in the university, the rector and the administrator, which seemed to me a very good innovation, and it is a model that mainly Anglo-Saxon countries use. But when it comes to the Albanian framework, it often brings deadlocks. In many universities there have

been disputes between rectors and administrators. ... Now the institution has two heads. Many institutions in the West operate with two heads and board because on the board there are people who have no personal interest but only represent. While on our boards there may be many people who have their own personal interests. Also, the relationships in Albania are different, and this causes the law of higher education to sometimes have impasses, especially regarding the management and leadership of the university". Academic 5 assesses that the reform, in essence, is positive. "The positive side of the law is that, apart from having a good approach like the British one, and apart from all the other elements of autonomy, is the division that the law has created between the academic part and the administrative part. Not a strict division, but a division that facilitates the work and makes the governing authorities more oriented to the areas they cover". Academic 9 says that the effects of the law have been "positive in their entirety. This is related to the fact that we have a division of higher education institutions, that is, a kind of categorization of them, something that was missing before. We have the separation between the administration and the academic dimension. This is also a positive and very important element. But what are the negative effects of this law? The law entered into force in 2015, but the by-laws were issued in 2018-2019. Three years after the law was issued, we still did not have a regulatory framework. A very difficult situation was created for the institutions and for the ministry itself, because we could not make applications for new programs, because they said that the relevant instructions have not been issued yet. The process of doctorates and awarding academic titles was blocked". Academic 19 thinks that the law, "as a concept, is a good idea. But I believe that it is still poorly understood practically in Albania".

Meanwhile, the interviewed students have different opinions about the higher education law and its effects. Student 5 says that *"the law has caused additional problems in addition to those that previously existed in education in Albania. For example, I can mention here the way of admission to the university which has become very harmful to meritocracy. In my opinion, the 2015 reform has worsened higher education in Albania. It has had many negative effects".* Student 6 describes this law as *"a disaster. This law should be burned and made completely from scratch. Absolutely nothing has changed since it was approved. There have been reactions to this law since 2013, since the first draft that was proposed. That law is not for students. That law is for the boards or for those people who want to have positions and benefit from this. There is a lack of a student*

card, of student decision-making at the university, of various academic studies, etc". Student 3 states that *"it was an attempt to make a change. What the students want is an increase in the percentage of voting weight in decision-making. Students have 10% of the vote in university elections. Something negative in terms of democracy in universities"*.

Student 4 assesses the law as having *"neutral effects. It had no impact at all"*. Student 8 states that it is *"the same situation. No improvement. The same problems"*. Student 9, regarding the effects of the law, states: *"I would probably say, neutral"*. Student 7 says that the law *"has had a small positive impact, but there is a lot of need for improvement"*.

But there are also students who are completely uninformed about the much-debated law no. 80/2015. Student 1 says *"I have no information. I have not felt any difference"*. Student 2 also states that *"I am not informed at all about this reform"*.

3 decision-makers were also asked, and gave their opinion on the higher education law no. 80/2015. Decision-maker 1 assesses the law and the reform *"more positively than negatively"*. Decision-maker 2 also states that she assesses the law on higher education positively. *"The law, after five years in implementation, may need revisions but in its general approach it is very positive. The law has tried to give freedom, to create independent universities that stand on their own feet without lagging behind the Ministry. The law has left only the policy-making part to the Ministry. I mean, this is the spirit of the law, despite the fact that maybe we in Albania find it a little difficult to always move forward"*. Decision-maker 3 says *"the problem is complex here. The part of the reform from the structural side has definitely tried and set some parameters and some very solid institutional parts. It definitely tries to decentralize the university. ... What I have noticed from the reform is that the reform had some limits in terms of long-term progress. We are dealing now with the strategy, and the strategy always starts from the last year you forecast. I.e. if this reform thought of 2025, it should see 2025 better than the current situation. These forecasts, especially for the economic, budgetary and tariff parts, had some bad calculations, and normally brought some consequences. At that time, we had the extraordinary boom of private universities, some of which were closed; the extraordinary boom in the number of students because until 2010, the universities had been relatively closed, and there was a great opening of the doors. But that great opening of doors could not be infinite. From 2017, the reduction in the number of students began. All those designs that were for increasing the number, started having problems. So, the universities saw the need to increase quotas, fees, to be a little tighter or more aggressive*

in this part. Since this was not accompanied by other elements, there was definitely aggravation. So, really, the long-term strategic approach is important in this case. We went from the country with the highest student growth to a pretty radical decrease in student numbers. This definitely calls for change”.

From the answers of the interviewees, it can be easily noticed that the effects of the reform in higher education, specifically the law no. 80/2015, are mainly evaluated as negative. More than half of the academics questioned assess this law as problematic or a failure. Also, a third of the interviewed students have this opinion about the law. The reasons argued in the responses of the interviewees are related to some specific aspects of the law. The Board of Administration of the university, created by this law, has over-bureaucratized the management of the university, leading to dysfunction. The higher education law has divided the management of the university between two heads, the rector and the administrator, based on the Anglo-Saxon model. But, in the Albanian context, this model often leads to problems. Many universities have conflicts between the attitude of rector and the attitude of administrator. Another criticism of this reform is that the law in question tends to commercialize and privatize the university, seeing students simply as customers to budget the university. Meanwhile, the interviewees who have positively evaluated the higher education reform of 2015 argue that one of the positive elements of the law is the increase in the autonomy of universities. Also, they evaluate as positive the division created between the academic part and the administrative part of the university, which, according to them, facilitates the work and makes the leading authorities more focused on the areas they cover. The division or categorization of higher education institutions has also been assessed as a positive aspect of the law. On the other hand, two of the interviewed students state that they have no information about the higher education law no. 80/2015, and three others confirmed that they have not experienced any change in university life to understand that a reform has taken place.

Staying on the effects of law no. 80/2015, 19 academics and 3 decision-makers were asked **"Does the current higher education law (no. 18/2015) guarantee independence and freedom for universities in terms of academic process and decision-making?"** Academics have been almost split in half in their approach to this issue. Academic 1 says that, *“for me, it has diminished freedom in both respects. Decision-making often has to go through an administrative board. Second, the extremely numerous DCMs that have*

accompanied the higher education law have gone into slavish detail subjugating academic freedom. Here we have to specify everything in detail, even the number of pages of the book with which we will work each lesson. Unacceptable! All this is done with DCM. Does it seem to you that academic freedom increases? If we take the political spirit of the higher education law, it is to kill academic freedom, not to revive it". Academic 3 explains that, "if we see freedom as positive freedom, as an opportunity, no, it does not guarantee it in academic terms. We are forced to design curricula that adapt to demands that have nothing to do with university life, that adapt to the fluctuations of opinion, the impressions of the market. It means that many lecturers are forced to teach subjects that they would not like to teach. From the decision-making level, independence and freedom are even narrower for two reasons. 1) From a formal point of view, the new higher education law has placed at the head of the university administration a board of administration which in most universities is run by the government because their principle is as follows: whoever gives the most money to the university budget has the majority of board members. Only the University of Tirana receives more money from students than the government gives. Only in the University of Tirana, the ratio is 4 to 3 in favour of the university. This is a formal division because if we ask "who are those four and those three", they are all the same. Four may be chosen by the senate of the University of Tirana, but they are the same as party officials. 2) If we look at clientelistic relations within the university, freedom is only formal. They decide practically what they want". Academic 4 declares that "a lecturer does not have the right to change even the syllabus of her/his own subject without the Minister's signature". Academic 7 explains that "the law has many limitations. While a problem has been seen that in every draft instruction that is drawn up by the relevant ministry, we are asked for opinions and suggestions at the last moment. We stay up all night in a time crunch and make these suggestions, and then, unfortunately, these suggestions are never taken into account. It is a phenomenon that always repeats itself". Academic 10 states that "this law, in addition to having a structure with two heads that collide in the university, has an infinite number of DCMs and instructions that create a certain tangle to unravel. The law was approved in 2015, and it has not yet become fully operational in its implementation. On the one hand, formally, perhaps there is freedom for us to make decisions, but in practice, there is not, due to the concentration of power in the hands of a few. On the other hand, it is the disorganization of the academic staff. As they say, freedom has to be earned, no one gives it to you. We as academic staff have been disorganized, we have been in our own little

world. Not at all interested in contributing to the development of the institution, which comes naturally also due to authoritarianism, conjunctures, nepotism, clientelism. It is very complex". Academic 11 declares that the law in question "does not guarantee independence and freedom. HEIs have a binary rector-administrator structure which is also reproduced at faculty levels. Administrators have unfortunately become key figures in faculties, surpassing deans in importance. They have control over financial resources and can paralyze all scientific work carried out within the department or at the faculty level. Thus, I have personally encountered difficulties and lack of support for various scientific activities, even though it is claimed that the resources exist". Academic 15 emphasizes that the law does not guarantee freedom and independence because "it blocks the financial part. Departments have no control over finances. Universities have their finances controlled by an administrator who has nothing to do with university life. As a result, they cannot raise capacities, let alone discussing about the academic freedom".

Academic 12 thinks that, "academically, the law creates freedom for the lecturer. Regarding finances, there is a conflict between the Rectorate and the Board of Administration. In some universities it is more emphasized, in some others, not. By not leaving full decision-making to the university, so that it knows how much power it has, how much it will collect and how much it will spend in a year, it means that the university is not aware of its own income and expenses". Academic 16 claims that "in academic terms, it guarantees it. It is this freedom: 'do what you want'. But in terms of decision-making, in the new higher education law, this parallel structure was built that would manage the financial aspect of the higher education institution's activity, and this parallel structure is called the Board of Administration. If the university is not able to generate more than 50% of the revenue, then the majority of the board is held by the Ministry of Education. In terms of decision-making, how the funds will be channelled, where they will go, how they will be oriented, it can be said that this has gone from the academic world to the Ministry".

Academic 6 states that, in a large part, the law guarantees independence and freedom in terms of academic process and decision-making. "From my experience, it seems illogical why the ministry should be involved in certain DCMs. There are some problematic elements. Lecturers are concerned about the issue of standards, criteria for academic titles, but this requires a certification". Academic 2 thinks that the law "has given the university much more autonomy than it had before. There is academic freedom. But there

is no complete independence because, after all, it is the money of the state budget, public money, and it is the right of the state to have control over the spending of public money. But there is not a good harmonization of the higher education law with other laws, and sometimes deadlocks arise as to which law should prevail. When legal impasses arise, people usually back off because no one wants to get into trouble". Academic 5 thinks that "the law allows a large space for autonomy. Autonomy is clear in the current law. There are definitely elements for which the Ministry of Education has its own obligations, such as legal inspections regarding various processes. The University of Tirana, unlike all other public universities, has a majority on the board of administration. There are four members from the university and three from the government. In terms of autonomy, it is not that we had problems". Academic 8 thinks that "the law, in principle, guarantees independence and freedom, but the by-laws should be seen to understand it more clearly". Academic 9 says that in principle the law guarantees these, but "there are some elements that violate these principles. There are several elements that the ministry and other bodies seek to maintain their access to universities". Academic 13 believes that "academic freedom is guaranteed, but the ground where this academic freedom takes place must also be seen. If you do not do research work, if you lack official publications, if you lack quality scientific conferences in a specific field, normally academic freedom loses its value". Academic 14 responds by saying "yes, there are some moments that decision making is true". Academic 17 expresses "both in the academic aspect and in the financial aspect, the law makes the university more dynamic because it makes the department and the faculty more dynamic. It has decentralized the financial and decision-making parts to a certain extent". Academic 18 shortly states "yes, it guarantees it". Academic 19 also assesses that the higher education law "guarantees this freedom and independence".

Meanwhile, the three questioned decision-makers are of the opinion that the higher education law no. 80/2015 guarantees independence and freedom for universities in terms of academic process and decision-making. Decision-maker 1 answers curtly by saying "yes, it guarantees". Decision-maker 2 states that, "as far as I know the law in its entirety, without going into how it is applied, it guarantees. The law itself, in the way it was conceived, in the way it was written, and all the provisions it has, was made precisely for this purpose, to ensure academic freedom and the independence of universities". Decision-maker 3 says that "independence and freedom are indisputable. A more long-term approach should be taken. We cannot allow to be short-sighted".

As can be understood from the answers, more than half of the academics asked think that the current law no. 80/2015 of higher education does not guarantee independence and freedom for universities in terms of academic process and decision-making. Meanwhile, the three interviewed decision-makers are of the opinion that the current law guarantees this independence and freedom, but without giving much argumentation. Expected answers considering their positions. One of the main reasons why academics have responded that the law does not guarantee academic and decision-making freedom and independence is because almost all the important decisions are taken in the Board of Administration which, in most cases, is controlled by the government. Also, the Board of Administration itself is a very bureaucratic body. The many DCMs that have accompanied this law have somehow reduced the freedom and independence for universities and lecturers. There are lecturers who complained that they cannot even change the syllabus of the subject they teach without going through many procedures and getting the approval from the Ministry of Education and Sports. Also, several university leaders (deans, rectors) interviewed state that, even though the Ministry of Education or other ministries occasionally ask certain faculties and universities for an opinion on certain topics and issues, their opinions are usually taken into account in the final documents issued by the Ministry or the government.

6.4 Statute and Internal Regulations of the University

Institutions of higher education in Albania have the right to draft or change their statutes, but with the approval of the relevant ministry. As provided in Chapter IV, Article 33 of Law no. 80/2015, the Statute is drawn up by the HEI itself, and approved by the Academic Senate and the Board of Administration of the HEI. The Statute is then sent to the minister responsible for education, who, within two months, checks its legality. When inconsistencies between the Statute and the law are found, the minister returns the statute to the higher education institution for revision. When the minister has no comments on the legality of the Statute or does not comment on it within the above deadline, the Statute is considered approved. As can be understood, the university does not have full decision-making autonomy for its own Statute, since the final authority that decides is the Minister of Education and Sports. As for the internal regulations, the law allows higher education institutions to draft and approve the regulations themselves.

The new law on higher education no. 80/2015, approved in the Parliament in 2015, obliged HEIs to produce new Statutes and Regulations. After the law was passed, many public universities in the country continued to function for several years without Statutes and Regulations. In a research work I did on the official websites of public universities, I found out as follows. The Statute of the University of Tirana was drawn up and approved in December 2018, three and a half years after the approval of the law. While the Regulation of the University of Tirana was approved by the Board of Administration and the Academic Senate of the university in July 2022. Hence, for about seven years, the University of Tirana (the largest in the country) operated either without Internal Regulations or based on the old Regulation which is not in accordance with the law. Also, the Statute of the University of Medicine Tirana was approved in February 2019. This university also operated without Regulations for about seven years because it approved it in June 2022. The University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi" approved the Statute in March of 2018, and the Internal Regulation in May 2019. A similar situation regarding the Statutes and Internal Regulations was in almost all public universities in the country. Many of the Statutes of public universities were adopted as a result of the pressure caused by the student protest in December 2018.

Internal regulations are very important for the functioning and smooth running of work in a higher education institution. Also, the internal regulations can cause an impact on the power relations within the institution. To obtain a perspective from practitioners, all 19 academics and 9 students interviewed were asked about the Internal Regulations in their institution. The question they were asked is: **“How functional and efficient are the internal regulations in your university?”**

Academic 1 says *“no, they are not. Currently, we do not have an internal regulation because the new Statute has not been followed by a new Internal Regulation. It was an institutional impasse of the conflict between the deans and the rector. This has generally left the university without a new internal regulation in accordance with the Statute. In this way, the question received the answer, because it could not have been efficient”*. Academic 3 asserts that *“the university has a statute, maybe it has even regulations. I am not sure. These are rarely used, only in cases of some scandalous abuse, when there is a need to settle a score, or in the case of elections. In everyday life, the impact of the regulation or statute is not felt much. It is more the routine. The regulations come into force when there is a major conflict that cannot be resolved informally”*. Academic 4

answers that, *“in general, the regulations are made and implemented. The problem is that those regulations are made on the basis of a law, and the higher education law forces them to be authoritarian, hierarchical, rigid, bureaucratized. The problem is that they are not the necessary regulations. Thus, they are functional but not efficient at all”*. Academic 10 argues that *“there were regulations, but I don't believe that they were efficient. Meanwhile, with the new higher education law, the regulations must be redone, and due to the bureaucratic malfunction of the University of Tirana, the University Statute was approved at the time of the student protest. Due to the clashes within the University of Tirana, the Statute was not approved before. I know that the Statute was also approved by the ministry because it was in the wave of student protest, so the ministry did not return it or make any remarks. As far as I know, the regulations of the University of Tirana have not yet been completed. A working group has been set up and is working on the regulation. We operate with the old regulation for basic elements. The regulation states that action must be taken against the student who copies. Here, copying is a phenomenon, but I don't know if any formal measures have been taken. The maximum we lecturers do is to give the student who copies zero points in the exam. If we are strict according to the regulation, we must give a formal notice; if s/he repeats it he must receive a warning of expulsion, etc. The regulation is not efficient as a whole but it works in certain elements. There is an ethics commission, but I don't know how efficient it is. For example, the phenomenon of forced book selling by lecturers was something that happened in front of everyone. Or in the cases of corruption, bribery, sexual harassment of lecturers, we have not seen that there was a will to take measures against certain lecturers who have become very famous with these actions”*. Academic 12 assesses that *“the spirit contained in these regulations is worrying. Most of these regulations are outside the spirit of the law and the Constitution. For example, in the last university election, in the student category, students were required to choose three candidates for Senate or the ballot was invalid. It is nonsense. The regulations should also be revised in the legal framework”*. Academic 15 explains that, *“with the approval of law no. 80/2015, all universities were obliged to issue new internal regulations based on this law. What has happened is that not only the University of Tirana but also many other universities have not issued the regulations and continue to work with the regulations based on the previous law of 2007. A similar situation is also in the faculties because the faculties themselves draw up internal regulations based on the law. They still refer to the 2010 regulation that was based on the law of 2007. Consequently, there is chaos in terms of services and competences.*

Students do not know to whom to complain about administrative services issues, academic issues, that is, about the schedule, the study program, etc. The lack of regulations and statutes which should be based on the new higher education law have created a collapse of competences". Academic 16 emphasizes that "normally there are regulations. They are things that are written and no one deals with them anymore. More or less, everyone does as they please. Often, we have to discuss and debate the regulations, arguing with each other. Regardless of how they are written, in the end, everyone acts as they please. We operate more by inertia than by regulation. If something is changed in the regulation, it does not mean that it will actually be changed in the application". Academic 17 notes that "most universities have not yet approved the internal regulations. If we talk about the law, here everyone is outside the law. In our faculty, it was approved a while ago. they are approved but no one knows them at all. The whole point of such regulations is that you do it as a process. When there is no process, it is never legitimized. It means that it should pass to the academic staffs, departments, faculties, universities to become efficient, to get opinions from everyone because they are part of the institution, it affects them. The moment you parachute it from above, it is never legitimized. Everyone is an outlaw here. I don't know who is within the law here".

Academic 6 explains that "there are two things: regulations and the internal informational culture of interaction. I believe that there is a kind of harmony between each other. Of course, when there are problems, we refer to the regulation, but most of the time we have "our own language". There is a general arrangement. Regulations can be more decisive for some situations that are experiences that we do not have yet, for example ethics, or complaint mechanisms, or adjustments in the lecturer-student relationship. When there are deadlocks with students, as a result of complaining, the regulation is activated immediately. What I think needs to be improved in the regulations is a better formalization of duties, responsibilities and rights. So, leave no interpretation areas". Academic 8 states that "the regulations are somewhat efficient". Academic 11 states that, "in general, they are functional, but more at the faculty and department level than at the university level. There are cases when they are bent, as in the case of the establishment of the Electoral Commission for the university elections in May 2020". Academic 13 thinks that "regulations in themselves are efficient but it depends on how people understand and interpret them. For example, we have weekly department meetings

which were a tradition that never failed. But it is a big cultural problem here in our country that the cooperative relationship between the base and the superstructure is missing. There is a persistent misunderstanding here. I believe that at this level we can improve much more. Especially the relationship that the student has with the regulations, so that we don't leave it up to the student to interpret the rules as s/he wants”.

Academic 2 affirms that *“the university has a Statute, regulations, and regulations for various elements in addition to the general regulations. Life at the university is built on them, on the basis of the regulation, the statute. We generally apply them, but there are also cases when it is deviated with the reasoning 'this is how the practice used to be'”.* Academic 5 states that, *“after the change of the law, all public universities in Albania had to make new regulations. I guess that our university should have approved the Statute sometime in 2018 because we were waiting for the by-laws. All the elements or problems that may have been encountered have been taken into account to try to solve them, and it is the basic element on which universities operate. There is no conflict because the law, the by-laws, the statute, and the regulations are in harmony. The only thing that has been delayed is the drafting of the Statute and Internal Regulations”.* Academic 7 affirms that *“the regulations are in the processing stage because the Statute has been created. In accordance with this Statute, regulations are also being formulated. They regulate all processes, specify them, and are efficient”.* Academic 9 asserts that *“the regulations exist and are efficient. They are implemented”.* Academic 14 says that, *“in a way, they are sufficiently functional and efficient because these regulations are made by people who know the faculty well, the internal problems, and are made in the legal contours of the country where we live”.* Academic 18 says that *“every faculty is obliged to have the internal regulation of operation, based on the specifics it has. The internal regulations adapt the University Regulations, taking into account the peculiarities of each faculty. There have never been any problems. Of course, they have a positive role. If the Statute is correct in relation to the law, then the Statute provides many details of the work at the university. The regulations are simply more detailed”.* Academic 19 affirms that they *“are now making the internal regulations, adapting it to the new higher education law. Like any internal regulations, over the years there is a need for adjustments. They are efficient. Small problems have been encountered, but they are things that can be overcome”.*

On the other hand, the interviewed students are less informed about the internal regulations of the institution where they study. Regarding the internal regulations, Student 1 says: *"I have not had the chance to use internal regulations, but I believe they should be efficient and functional"*. Student 3 states that *"the Regulations are posted in almost every space of the university. They are functional and efficient"*. Student 4 claims that *"there is a Regulations. When we first registered at the university, we were read the regulations, which, to be honest, I have not heard. It is efficient to some extent"*. Student 7 shows a concrete case. *"We had an online exam, and one student was blind. He asked the course lecturer to conduct the exam orally, and her response was that she would look at the regulations to learn specifically what to do in such situations. So, we have a regulation which is efficient and applied"*.

Student 2 points out that *"I know there is a Regulation, but we have never been given to read it, or have it posted anywhere"*. Student 5 explains that, *"in general, in Albania these Regulations are read when students ask for it. They are not taken as something serious that should be implemented, neither by the lecturers nor by the students. There are simply those who are principled and have some moral values that fit the Regulation. Currently, the Regulation does not affect the situation within a university. We have rarely seen cases where this Regulation has been used to punish someone who has broken it. Always these issues are closed with informal discussions"*. Student 6 says *"we do not know these Regulations except that someone is going to do something, and then s/he asks for it. But if a student does not do personal research, then the Regulations is totally non-existent there, the student does not know what rights and duties s/he has towards the university. S/he does not know the rules, nor are they listed; they are not shown by the secretary or the academic staff"*. Student 8 marks that *"there is a Regulation but they have never presented it to us. And often the rules are broken unintentionally by students, precisely because they are not aware of the content of this Regulation"*. Student 9 claims that, *"until today, I have not seen nor read the internal regulations of the university. I don't even know if it exists"*.

As can be noticed from the answers of the interviewed academics and students, the internal regulations of universities and faculties are not very functional and efficient. Moreover, more than half of the interviewed students stated that they are not aware of the internal regulations in the HEI where they study. This shows the little importance that internal regulations have in the life of the university. Many university practices and

procedures are applied more out of inertia than due to regulation. Also, several academics claimed that the regulations are violated from time to time, especially when there are internal elections for the governing bodies of the university.

7. Conclusions

This doctoral dissertation has focused on the relationship between power and knowledge, particularly in the university setting. The university itself is also an institution of knowledge and power. As a result, university leaders, in addition to the knowledge they possess, carry considerable power. Due to the characteristics of the university as an institution of knowledge and power, it has attracted the attention and interest of political power. The attention of the government and high-level politicians to the university can lead to different decision-making and actions. The way the political power behaves with the university is also related to other external factors such as the level of democratization of the country, the culture of the society, the economic level, etc. But, the attention and interest of the political power towards the university can result in the development and strengthening of the university or in controlling and slackening the university.

Regarding the first research question of this thesis, "*What is the role of the knowledge-power relations in the low performance level of higher education in Albania?*", the hypothesis, expressed at the beginning of this thesis, is generally consistent with the findings of this research. The knowledge-power relations in Albania are mostly disproportionate and problematic in their way of functioning, preventing the university improvement and empowerment. The relationship between political power (government and high-level politicians) and knowledge is disproportionate because political power controls and influences the institution of knowledge that is the university, for its own interests. On the other hand, knowledge and the university have very little influence on political power.

Of the 31 interviewees participated in this doctoral thesis, none answered that the decision-makers in Albania have a strong relationship with knowledge, not even the decision-makers themselves. The current left-wing government has been in power since 2013, and is considered a government of reforms. In order to make reforms, it is needed to create and have deep knowledge, as the premise of making these reforms. The lack of appropriate knowledge leads to the failure of reforms. The reform of higher education, which culminated in the law no. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research

in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania", did not have any significant effect, and, in some aspects, had negative effects. This happened for several reasons. The drafters of this reform, although they had knowledge of higher education in the country and in the world, did not take into account the context where the law would be applied; due to political interference in the draft law before approval in the parliament, the law itself, rather than improving, tries to control the university; the political power is not interested in the empowerment of the university as an autonomous unit because the empowerment of the university could produce a power of knowledge that can disturb the political power.

Moreover, knowledge is a factor of little importance in the university hierarchy and carrier, as claimed by the academics themselves, the students, and even the decision-makers interviewed. Thus, those who hold positions of power in public universities in Albania do not necessarily have the strongest connections with academic or managerial knowledge. Therewith, university management turns out to be one of the weakest aspects in the public universities. The academic conjuncture within the university, and the political relationships and affiliations are the main factors that determines who come to power in the university. Despite the degrees and titles required by the law, which guarantee the possession of a certain knowledge, employment of academic staff in public universities is mainly done through nepotism and clientelistic connections, as widely acknowledged by the interviewees.

In the **knowledge-power-university** helix, each of the three poles exercises power and influence over the other poles, and is also subject to the power exerted on itself by the other poles. Thus, the dynamics of the exercise of power can be versatile and ubiquitous. Any entity exercising power cannot escape the exercise of power over itself by others. Of course, the amount or strength of the power exercise is not the same for all entities or subjects. This varies depending very much on the context and circumstances. The university, as an institution of knowledge and power, stands between the two. It interacts with the political power by experiencing their power and exercising its own power over them.

Regarding the second research question of this thesis, "*What are the main constraints and powers that dominate the university in Albania and impede its improvement?*", the second hypothesis, expressed at the beginning of this thesis, does not answer the question fully and properly. Based on the findings of this research, the main constraints and powers that

dominate the university in Albania, and impede its improvement, are the interests of the political power to keep the university under its own control, which are reflected in the clientelistic relations between the high-level politicians and the leaders of the public universities. Clientelistic/nepotistic relations continue further down the line between university leaders and lecturers, and between lecturers and students. The relationships between these actors, not based on meritocracy and professionalism, can be said to have been the main obstacle to the advancement of the university in Albania. Such building of these relations occurs in a top-down manner. Furthermore, the main dominant powers that hinder the advancement of the university in Albania are the university leaders, who are at the service of the interests of political power. This kind of relation has an impact on knowledge production and transfer activities in the university in several ways. In fact, the political power in Albania is not very interested in intervening in academic matters such as research topics, study programmes, shaping of curricula, international relations of HEIs, etc. The political power affects knowledge in the university through nepotistic and non-meritocratic hiring, which has filled the university with individuals with limited academic skills and without much interest in science. It affects knowledge through clientelistic relations with the heads of public universities and faculties, which has led to the level of knowledge management in these institutions being very weak. The political power in Albania does not really interfere in the selection of research topics, but it influences the research by not funding it or by funding it based on clientelistic relations.

In the case of Albania, the political power pays attention to the university leadership, but the main goal is not to empower it, but to keep it under control. In this way, the political power puts the knowledge and power of the university under control to some extent. This control of the university by the political power is mainly done through university leaders, specifically through rectors, administrators, the board of administration, and deans. In fact, the control of the university by the political power is not done primarily for the purpose of orienting knowledge and research in the university according to the interests of politics, but rather it is done to neutralize the power of the university that can be uncontrollable by them.

In other words, the Albanian government is generally uninterested in the university as long as the mass that makes up the university (lecturers, researchers, students, academics) does not become a disturbance for the government. The political power in Albania does not pay a particular attention to the university – besides leadership – as long as the

knowledge and power of the university are not a threat to the government. Due to the control of public universities by the government – mainly through the board of administration and the rector – the university rarely appears as a power that can disturb the political power.

Because the leaders of public universities are more connected, in one way or another, to political power than to knowledge and their mission, they not only do not "threaten" the political power but serve to neutralize the power that lecturers and students could exercise. This is proven by the way public university leaders are elected and appointed, which I have explained in the previous chapters of this thesis. Also, it is proven by their actions. The clearest example was the December 2018 student protest, which was the largest student protest in Albania since the December 1990 student protest that was followed by the fall of the communist regime. None of the rectors, administrators, and deans of public universities publicly supported the 2018 mass student protest although the demands of the students were basic and necessary (most of them) for the university life. Apart from the widespread popular support, the only ones within the university who publicly supported the students in that protest were a small part of the academic staff. The leaders of the public universities aligned themselves with the interests of the political power that had supported them to reach those leadership positions in the university.

Administrators, rectors, and deans of public universities in Albania are almost all affiliated with a political party. Heads of departments are partly connected to political parties. Because the power of the head of the department within the university is small, the interest of political power in this position is also smaller. Academic staff are also connected with political power due to nepotistic and clientelistic employment in public universities. However, a good part of the academic staff has maintained a certain independence from the interests of the political parties in the country. Within the university, students are the most independent community from political power. Although youth forums of political parties are active in the university, their influence on students seems to be small. The exercise of the power that the students have, in the service of improving the university, is hindered mainly because of their disorganization, and the non-cooperation, even opposition, of the university leaders. In those cases when lecturers or students organize or protest, their power immediately turns into a "threat" for the political power which activates its own mechanisms within the university (board of administration, administrator, rector, dean) to neutralize that power. The power that

originates from the university can also be called the power of knowledge and, in many cases, it can be disturbing or threatening for political power, especially for political power with authoritarian features. For this reason, the political power tends to control the power of knowledge through different ways such as legislation, university leaders, clientelistic employment at the university, etc.

On the other hand, the public universities in Albania have somewhat lost their power as institutions of knowledge. This has also happened with the help of the political power. Small budgets for the university; financial, administrative, and academic mismanagement; and non-meritocratic hiring are the main factors that have led to the decline of the power of the university as an institution of knowledge. Political power tries to control knowledge (the university) in order to, in this way, control the power of knowledge. The will that the political power may have to develop and empower the university collides with the interest to control the power of the university.

The relations between politicians/decision-makers and university leaders of public universities in Albania are ethically corrupt. As a result, public universities in Albania, in most cases, do not operate based on meritocracy, knowledge, and professionalism. These kinds of clientelistic and nepotistic relations, which also extend to the other actors in the university, have caused bad management of public universities and lack of accountability. On the other hand, there is also a significant group within the university that has managed to maintain its own autonomy. This mass of people is very large among students, smaller among lecturers, and very small among university leaders (mainly heads of departments). But due to the legal and administrative powerlessness in decision-making, this group of people, not captured by the interests of political power, is mostly silent and unorganized. However, there are cases when these autonomous groups exercise their power through activities such as student protests, protests of lecturers, their public opposition to government policies on higher education, etc.

Despite the fact that the conclusions presented in this chapter are about the knowledge-power-university relations, particularly in the case of Albania, I have to emphasise that it is not only or primarily about universities, but about the social environment. Also, it can be said that this logic power relations goes beyond Albania. Power, as a complex instrument, can be exercised by each individual, institution, entity, of course, in different proportions. The more important the individual, the institution, the entity, the greater the

power it can exercise. The university, as an institution of knowledge, possesses a considerable amount of power that can exercise over society, government, politics, etc.

The political power has no interest in having in front of itself other powers that could oppose or challenge it. Also, a political power - mainly with authoritarian features - which has significant deficiencies in the possession of knowledge, does not prefer to develop and strengthen other institutions of knowledge which are not at its own service, but can be a concern for it. In short, the political power - with not very democratic features - has an interest in developing the university as long as it is under its own control and service. But a powerful and developed university has the risk of getting out of the control of the political power if the latter is not strong enough and authoritarian.

Regardless of the authoritarian or dictatorial features it may have, if the political power is very strong, then it can prioritize and develop the university without risking its own power because no matter how powerful the university becomes, it does not endanger the political power. In this case, the political power uses the university in its own interest. This may be the case of other countries such as China or Singapore, but it is not the case of Albania. The interest of the political power in Albania is to keep the university not too empowered because the development and strengthening of the university can make the university gain enough power to get out of the control of the political power. Being outside the control and influence of the political power, the power of the university can turn into a problem or threat to the political power itself.

8. Recommendations, Limitations and Ethical Implications

8.1 Recommendations

In a thesis with complex notions such as knowledge, power, and university, in the context of Albania, giving recommendations that can be effective and applicable is not an easy task. In fact, if read carefully, suggestions and conclusions that prompt actions can be found throughout this thesis, mainly at the theoretical level. Nevertheless, I try in this chapter to give some concrete recommendations that can improve the relationship between knowledge and power in a university setting in Albania, and, consequently, improve and empower it.

- The primary objective of a higher education reform, and its spirit, cannot simply be to correct the abuses. Reform, at its core, is always the production of new utilization and uses, and abuses are almost never of major significance (Ortega y Gasset, 1930/2014). An institution can be comparable to a machine in that its whole design and operation must take into account the objective it is supposed to complete. Thereupon, the cornerstone of university reform should be a comprehensive approach and formulation of the institution's goals and principles. As a result, my first recommendation for the government of Albania is to design a comprehensive strategy for the development of higher education in Albania based on (a) social dialogue, (b) the evidence produced by evaluation research, and (c) with the involvement of international expertise such as EU expertise. Moreover, philosophers, scholars, and administrators were the ones who initiated university reform and modernization in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Ben-David, 1977). Such actors (internal and external) should also be involved in the reform of higher education in Albania.
- Globalization and the advancement of technology have caused higher education, professional and academic training to be in a constant struggle to keep up with the latest developments. This requires that for a country like Albania, which is not a vanguard of knowledge and technological developments, it is worthwhile to

establish an independent higher education research centre that can produce background knowledge for continuous improvement of higher education, and its reforms.

- The establishment of an independent anti-plagiarism centre in Albania is necessary. Anti-plagiarism check is one of the main steps towards building normal relations on ethical grounds. Taking into account the large number of public denunciations of plagiarism of high-level politicians, decision-makers, university leaders, professors, etc., anti-plagiarism check is a decisive action to put higher education and science in Albania on the ethical track. Considering the current situation, the anti-plagiarism check needs to be centralized first. In order to create credibility as a process, the centralized anti-plagiarism check should be carried out from top-down. The anti-plagiarism system should be mandatory for all high-level decision-makers (MPs, ministers, etc.) with academic degrees and titles, rectors, deans, heads of departments, and university lecturers. If the system detects plagiarism, the person who committed it should face legal and administrative consequences. I am aware that this process would certainly be difficult and encounter much resistance but it would ensure a more fair and sincere relation between power and knowledge.
- The cooperation of HEIs in Albania with international actors and institutions, which are obviously more developed, would contribute to the improvement of the management of HEIs, the quality of education, the management of projects in Albanian universities. For this, I find it valuable and useful that Albanian universities build partnerships with European universities, beyond the short-term Erasmus+ exchanges. Also, a significant strengthening of the involvement of Albanian leaders of HE in the work of the European University Association (EUA) it would be very beneficial.
- Increasing the funding for universities is another important action that higher education in Albania needs. This can be done through the creation of a small higher education development fund that financially supports individuals, institutions, organizations, etc., that initiate modernizing innovations in higher education institutions, and support the emergence of change agents. But, increased funding should be accompanied by financial autonomy as well. Accountability is

a crucial facilitator of good governance and management in the setting of complex systems.

- This research was mainly focused on the post-communist period in Albania. However, due to the unique nature of the Albanian state during the 20th century, until the 1990s, the study of the relationship between power, knowledge, and the university in communist and pre-communist Albania remains a research task for the immediate future.

8.2 Limitations and Ethical Implications

Like any other research, this doctoral study has its own *limitations* as well. This research is limited in time, taking into account the state of the university in Albania and its relations with knowledge and power in the post-communist period. Another limitation is the analysis of only public universities in Albania. The inclusion of private universities in the study could expand and complicate the research scope because private universities in Albania, in many aspects, face different problems compared to public ones. Although public universities occupy about 70% of the higher education market in the country, the non-inclusion of private universities in the study remains a limitation to mention. Another limitation of this thesis is the lack of a comparative perspective. Since I did my doctoral studies in Hungary, a comparative approach between Albania and Hungary, regarding the relations between knowledge, power, and the university, could make the research more valuable.

The total number of interviewees of 31 individuals can also be considered a limitation. A larger number of interviewees, especially students, could present a more complete picture of the state of the university in Albania. However, I must mention that ensuring and interviewing the proper individuals in person has been of particular difficulty because the interviews were conducted during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. During that period, universities in Albania carried out all their activities, including teaching, in online mode. The research also has literature limits. While international literature on university, knowledge and power exists, the literature on the relationship of these three concepts in the Albanian context is lacking. Although in my judgment the philosophical approach of the theory used in such a research topic is almost necessary, for some, this approach may seem too abstract to explain the concrete malfunctions and problems of a system. I

strongly believe that the power of philosophical thought is that it makes you think, reflect, and those reflections can be converted into concrete ideas and actions. However, since this is not always easy to do, it can be considered as a limitation of this work.

Regarding the *ethical implications*, all the persons interviewed for this research were adults (over 18 years of age) at the time when the interviews were conducted. All interviews were conducted by me. Each interviewee was briefly informed about this research and invited for an interview. After the brief briefing, each of the interviewees gave their written consent for conducting the interview. All interviews were conducted in Albanian language because it is the native language of all interviewees, as well as my native language. I have no family ties or financial interest with any of the individuals interviewed by me (decision-makers, university leaders, lecturers, researchers, students). Also, I have no such relationship with any of the persons mentioned in this thesis. Consequently, I have no conflict of interest with any of them.

9. References

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10. Appendices

10.1 Higher Educations Institutions in Albania (2023)

Nr.	Public Higher Education Institution (2023)	Category
1	University of Tirana	University
2	Polytechnic University of Tirana	University
3	Agricultural University of Tirana	University
4	University of Elbasan “Aleksandër Xhuvani”	University
5	University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”	University
6	University of Gjirokastra “Eqrem Çabej”	University
7	University of Korça “Fan S. Noli”	University
6	University of Vlora “Ismail Qemali”	University
9	University of Durrës “Aleksandër Moisiu”	University
10	University of Arts	University
11	Sports University of Tirana	University
12	University of Medicine Tirana	University
13	Academy of Albanological Studies	Academy
14	Armed Forces Academy	Academy
15	Security Academy	Academy

Table 5. Public Institutions of Higher Education in Albania (2023)

Source: ASCAL

Nr.	Non-public Higher Education Institution (2023)	Category
1	University of New York Tirana	University
2	Luarasi University	University
3	Albanian University	University
4	Catholic University "Our Lady of Good Counsel"	University
5	Barleti University	University
6	European University of Tirana	University
7	Aldent University	University
6	POLIS University	University
9	EPOKA University	University
10	Mediterranean University of Albania	University
11	Tirana Metropolitan University	University
12	Western Balkans University	University
13	Academy of Film and Multimedia "Marubi"	Academy
14	"Nehemiah Gateway" Academy	Academy
15	"Ivodont" Academy	Academy
16	"Qiriazi" University College	University College
17	"WISDOM" University College	University College
18	"Pavarësia Vlorë" University College	University College
19	University College "LOGOS"	University College
20	Tirana Business University College	University College
21	Bedër University College	University College
22	University College of Business	University College
23	University College "REALD"	University College
24	Canadian Institute of Technology	University College
25	Vocational College of Tirana	Higher Vocational College
26	Tirana Esthetics & Style School	Higher Vocational College
27	German Higher Vocational College of Technology	Higher Vocational College

Table 6. Non-public Institutions of Higher Education in Albania (2023)

Source: ASCAL

10.2 Doctorate programmes in the HEIs in Albania (2023)

In a request for information addressed to the Ministry of Education and Sports on 9 February 2023, regarding the quotas allocated for doctoral studies in higher education institutions in Albania, the ministry replied on 14 February 2023 by making available the following data:

Doctorate programmes in public HEIs (2023)

University of Tirana

1. Doctorate in *Natural Sciences*

- Biological Sciences (12 quotes)
- Physics (12 quotes)
- Mathematics (5 quotes)
- Applied Mathematics (1 quote)
- Applied Chemistry (19 quotes)
- Biotechnology (5 quotas)
- Industrial Production and Engineering (5 quotas)
- Informatics (3 quotas)

2. Doctorate in *Law*

- Civil Law (14 quotas)
- Criminal Law (13 quotas)
- Public Law (11 quotas)

3. Doctorate in *European Studies* (2 quotas)

4. Doctorate in *Economic Sciences*

- Economics (15 quotas)
- Finance (9 quotas)
- Accounting (4 quotas)
- Marketing (9 quotas)
- Management (12 quotas)
- Applied Statistics and Informatics (8 quotas)
- Information Systems in Economy (4 quotas)

5. Doctorate in *Social Sciences*

- Education (5 quotas)
- Psychology (7 quotas)
- Social Work (12 quotas)
- Sociology (1 quote)

- Philosophy (2 quotas)
- Political Science (2 quotas)

6. Doctorate in *Humanities, Albanianology, and Geography*

- History (6 quotas)
- Geography (11 quotas)
- International Relations (3 quotas)

7. Doctorate in *Humanities*

- Linguistics (33 quotes)
- World, Modern, and Postmodern Literature (5 quotas)

University of Medicine of Tirana

- 1. Joint doctorate with the University of Florence in *General Surgery and Subspecialties***
- 2. Joint doctorate with the University of Florence in *Obstetrics and Gynecology***
- 3. Joint doctorate with the University of Florence in *Internal Medicine***
- 4. Doctorate in *Radiology***
- 5. Doctorate in *Internal Medicine***
- 6. Doctorate in *Pharmacy***
- 7. Doctorate in *Anatomy***
- 8. Doctorate in *Public Health***
- 9. Doctorate in *Physiology***
- 10. Doctorate in *Ophthalmology***
- 11. Doctorate in *Dental Medicine***
- 12. Doctorate in *Obstetrics and Gynecology***
- 13. Doctorate in *Technical Medical Sciences***
- 14. Doctorate in *Neurology and Neurosurgery***
- 15. Doctorate in *Psychiatry and Mental Health***
- 16. Doctorate in *Pediatrics***
- 17. Doctorate in *Surgery***

Note: For the third cycle doctorate programmes of the Medical University of Tirana, the quotas have not yet been determined by the higher education institution.

Polytechnic University of Tirana

- 1. Doctorate in *Electrical Engineering***
 - Industry Automation (3 quotas)
 - Energy (3 quotas)
- 2. Doctorate in *Civil Engineering* (6 quotas)**
- 3. Doctorate in *Geodesy* (3 quotas)**

4. Doctorate in Oil and Gas Engineering (8 quotas)
5. Doctorate in *Physical Engineering* (2 quotas)
6. Doctorate in *Geology and Environment* (6 quotas)
7. Doctorate in *Information and Communication Technologies* (20 quotas)
8. Doctorate in *Mechanical Constructions and Structural Integrity Assessment* (3 quotas)
9. Doctorate *Sustainability and Innovation for the Built Environment and Product System Project* (the quotas have not yet been determined by university)

Agricultural University of Tirana

1. Doctorate in *Environmental Sciences* (10 quotas)
2. Doctorate in *Veterinary Sciences* (8 quotas)
3. Doctorate in *Food Science and Biotechnology* (8 quotas)
4. Doctorate in *Agricultural Sciences* (15 quotas)
5. Doctorate in *Economics and Agribusiness* (20 quotas)

University of Arts

1. Doctorate in *Musicology* (5 quotas)
2. Doctorate in *Performing Arts* (10 quotas)

Sports University of Tirana

1. Doctorate in *Sports Science* (11 quotas)
2. Doctorate in *Physical Activity and Health* (11 quotas)

University of Durrës "Aleksandër Moisiu"

1. Doctorate in *Economic Sciences* (26 quotas)

University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani"

1. Doctorate in *Technical Medical Sciences* (7 quotas)
2. Doctorate in *Albanology* (7 quotas)

University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi"

1. Doctorate in *Economics and Sustainable Tourism* (20 quotas)
2. Doctorate in *Albanian Language* (9 quotas)

University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali"

1. Doctorate in *Linguistic, Literary, and Cultural Studies* (5 quotas)

Doctorate programmes in non-public HEIs

European University of Tirana

1. Doctorate in *Social and Behavioural Sciences* (18 quotas)

Catholic University Our Lady of Good Counsel

1. **Doctorate in *Public Health, Molecular Diagnosis of Infectious Diseases, and Pharmacovigilance* (5 quotas)**

Mediterranean University of Albania

1. **Doctorate in *Economic Sciences* (29 quotas)**

Metropolitan University

1. **Doctorate in *Artificial Intelligence and Intelligent Systems* (3 quotas)**

10.3 Interview questions

There are three main categories of interviewees:

- a) Academics (lecturers, department heads, deans, rectors, higher education experts and researchers)
- b) Decision-makers (politicians, high-level executives from the Ministry of Education and Sports)
- c) Students (representatives of student organizations and movements, active students in the public debate on higher education, members of student councils, etc.)

Common questions for all three categories of interviewees:

1. Firstly, what does the concept of university mean to you?
2. Do you think the university should have a clear specific mission? If yes, what?
3. Does the lack of academic freedom affect university performance? If so, how?
4. Regarding the teaching, how do you evaluate the skills and general competence of academic staff at Albanian universities?
5. Should universities be more focused on academic or professional knowledge?
6. In addition to teaching, do Albanian universities conduct research on pure and soft sciences? If not, what might be the reasons?
7. The main criterion determining the hierarchy within the university in Albania is:
 - a) knowledge; b) academic conjunctures within universities; c) political relations and affiliations; d) other criteria?
8. How do you assess the connection of decision-makers in Albania with knowledge?

9. Do the people responsible for education and science in Albania possess enough knowledge to make the right decisions about these fields?
10. How do you evaluate the latest 2015 higher education reform in Albania?
11. The student protests of December 2018 and January 2019 were the largest in Albania after the December 1990 student protests which brought about the collapse of communism in Albania. Taking in consideration the government's DCMs on higher education after those protests and the current situation of universities, what has been the impact of these protests on higher education in Albania?
12. What are the main problems facing universities in Albania today?
13. What is the most immediate change that higher education in Albania currently needs?
14. How are the links between HEIs and labour market in Albania? How this gap between these two sectors can be bridged?
15. Currently, according to your information and experience, where does the level of higher education in Albania stand internationally?
16. Do you have any thoughts, opinions, considerations or suggestions to add about higher education in Albania?

Interview questions for the category of academics:

1. Does the current higher education law (no. 18/2015) guarantee independence and freedom for universities in terms of academic process and decision-making?
2. How can the skills and general competence of academic staff be developed?
3. Concerning the services university can provide, how is the connection of university with third parties such as industry or business in Albania?
4. How much oriented are Albanian HEIs towards professional training?
5. How much internationalized are the universities in Albania, and what could be the benefits of internationalization?
6. In addition to teaching, are you personally involved in research work or project at your institution?

7. Do you think that higher education in Albania has undergone transformations in the last three decades? If so, what have been the most devastating and the most positive changes in higher education in Albania?
8. University is an institution of knowledge. So, knowledge management within the university is supposed to be an important element. How do you evaluate the production, dissemination and application of knowledge at universities in Albania?
9. In the framework of power relationships, are there interventions of political power in HEIs in Albania? If so, in what way?
10. Do universities in Albania enjoy financial autonomy, and should they enjoy it? *(Financial autonomy refers to a university's ability to manage its funds and allocate its budget independently.)*
11. What could be the consequences that financial independence could have on universities?
12. How functional and efficient are the internal regulations of universities?
13. How would you describe the power relations within the university between university leaders, academic staff, and students?
14. How much power in decision-making does academic staff have at the university today?
15. How much power in decision-making do students have at the university today?
16. From your experience, how does the power relations between the lecturer and the students in auditorium stand?

Interview questions for the category of decision-makers:

1. Does the current higher education law guarantee independence and freedom for universities in terms of academic process and decision-making?
2. How can the skills and general competence of academic staff be developed?
3. How do you evaluate the current level of decentralization of HEIs in Albania? What if we compare it to the level of decentralization before the 1990s?

4. Do universities in Albania enjoy financial autonomy, and should they enjoy it?
(*Financial autonomy refers to a university's ability to manage its funds and allocate its budget independently.*)
5. What could be the consequences that financial independence could have on universities?
6. Do you think that higher education in Albania has undergone transformations in the last three decades? If so, what have been the most devastating and the most positive changes in higher education in Albania?
7. In the framework of power relationships, are there interventions of political power in universities in Albania? If so, in what way?
8. University is an institution of knowledge. So, knowledge management within the university is supposed to be an important element. How do you evaluate the production, dissemination and application of knowledge at universities in Albania?

Interview questions for the category of students:

1. What has been the role of students in the developments in higher education in Albania in the post-communist period?
2. How do the power relations between university leaders, academic staff and students within the university stand?
3. From your experience, how do the power relations in auditorium between the lecturer and the students stand?
4. How much power in decision-making do students have at the university today?
5. How functional and efficient are the internal regulations of universities?
6. During your studies, have you been or are you involved in research projects at university?
7. How do you assess the connection of your university lecturers with knowledge?
8. How do you assess the pedagogical skills of your lecturers?