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## **Improving operational – developmental connections: foregrounding an alignment – dealignment – realignment perspective**

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**Abstract:** On the basis of our administrative experiences and gaps in the literature, the authors develop a very practical theory, namely the (ADR) alignment-dealignment-realignment perspective. Using a sample of 80 questionnaires targeting university administrators in Albania, the authors hypothesise direct linkages between education process, quality of support services, achieving sustainability in higher education. The SSPS statistical package was employed to receive reliability analysis, Spearman's correlation, and Chi-square test results. If from one side, budgeting, research, human resource issues, and student's matters are found to have a strong positive monotonic correlation between both, quantity-quality aspects, and information given on a timely basis, the academic policies and degree programs are showing a weak relationship. Additionally, different management categories have different opinions regarding the reasons for which the problem in the HE system occurs. The survey analysis provides valuable insights regarding the existing communication gap among the university administrators and the challenges of HEIs.

**Keywords:** sustainability; HEIs; model; perspectives.

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**Biographical notes:** Eglantina Hysa, is a Senior Lecturer of Economics at Epoka University, teaching international economy, development and growth, and microeconomics. Her research is focused on development economics, social aspects, and quality in higher education institutions. She is the author of many scientific publications including book chapters and technical reports, published in leading international journals and publishing houses, including *Integration of Education, Sustainability, Journal of Applied Economics*, and *Routledge*. She is included as Bologna System expert for higher education in many EU projects.

Russell Foote has been professionally trained to teach and has taught at primary, secondary and university levels. For primary level, he wrote books on language arts and comprehension. For the secondary level, he wrote textbooks on sociology and Caribbean studies. He taught undergraduate and graduate level courses in the social sciences, education and business administration. For the tertiary level, he had written about juvenile delinquency, qualitative research, carnival celebrations. He has been actively involved in graduate supervision, international conferencing, curriculum development and teacher education.

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## 1 Introduction

On the basis of different rationales and purposes, the internationalisation efforts of universities would take different trajectories. While there are several meanings attached to internationalisation of higher education, the study of Bedenlier et al. (2018) offer the position that internationalisation of higher education is an arrangement where foreign students doing courses in various branches of the same university's become beneficiaries of the same strategic plans, goals, policies, programs, policies, curricula and support services. Such an arrangement provides a wider opportunity for both local and foreign students. The curriculum may include any one or combination of social sciences, humanities, education, engineering, business administration, support services and other programs (Hysa and Rehman, 2019). Some of the major challenges are student's mounting debts, graduate employability, program relevance, declining university budgetary allocations and resource mobilisation (Motala-Timor, 2000; Ardakani, 2011; Cai, 2012; Wilhborg and Robson, 2017; Hysa et al., 2017) and the global image enhancement of institutions involved.

Universities should not consider internationalisation a goal in itself, but rather a good contributor which strengthens the position of the institution in furthering its three main pillars: quality of education; research; and contribution to society. It is important that the strategic plans of units and the whole institution to be in the same line with these three pillars. But concretely, what are some internationalisation features and activities of a higher education institution? Here are some general lines on internationalisation and its' prospectus.

- a Inter-institutional agreements among institutions
- b Project involved in international level
- c Joined and double-degree programs
- d Partners in common conferences with international institution
- e Common editorial boards in journals/books/proceedings published inhouse
- f Publications as co-author with international staff
- g Staff and student mobilities
- h Linkage with alumni studying abroad.

But why internationalisation is considered to be an important component of higher education? The main answer to this question is that internationalisation, but not only, is tightly linked to the sustainable of higher education system. In this paper we seek to add a sound assessment of the contribution of interference of internationalisation, governance and other related issues to sustainable development. Said that, we confirm that different elements of the higher education institutions, such as governance, education, research, outreach and campus operations, are found to be important to the sustainable development. In this context, we are listing following component and briefly explain their contribution given to a sustainable educational system and a sustainable development.

- **Governance:** The most progressive type of governance is that which prioritised through its policies a people centered approach to sustainable development. This is in sync with the need for HEIs to contribute to development and foregrounds the significance of people in such a process, a position that has not been sufficiently highlighted in the extant literature. Such an approach-oriented staff and students to problem solve and this reduce many of the obstacles that continue to hinder the attainment of sustainability at the individual, community, Institutional and societal levels. Indeed, people are the engine room for such initiatives but their mobilisation cannot really be achieved within a capitalist framework that continue to prioritise profits instead of people's interest.
- **Education:** HEIs need to introduce and/or reconfigure their Sustainability programs to include broader discussions of what, how, why, the rate of progress towards attaining SDGs, and areas for improvement. Moreover, all disciplines must include a sustainability related practicum for all students in their discipline. Such programs must go beyond the current environmental focus to show how problems that negatively impact on the lives of people cause such individuals to utilise much of their time to reduce such problems and as such they do not have time to show much concern about sustainability. Ways of achieving macro – micro linkages must be urgently pursued irrespective of gender, ethnicity, social class, religious persuasion or geographic location.
- **Research:** There is an urgent need problem solving research such as action research, program impact assessment and interventionist studies on issues that hinder the attainment of SDGs in different countries. HE Is must be mandated to address this and accreditation bodies must prioritise the evaluation of such initiatives. Such research must address cultural, economic, governance, educational aspects with the purpose of developing proposals to reduce same by collaborating with community groups, schools, non-industrial organisations and others. Such proposals must include institutional and implementation frameworks for operationalising their proposals.
- **Outreach:** While HEIs continue to include service in their development agenda, not enough is being done in this regard. Service must also be inclusive of working with non-governmental organisations, arts groups, other educational institutions, businesses on specific projects. Students, irrespective of their majors, must do a service – centered practicum that carries a significant course percentage. University staff must think of serving those people and communities outside of their institutions in order to develop learning communities and to become what Peter Senge calls learning organisations.

- **Campus Operations:** Adopting a policy positions on the above will bring about much-needed changes in campus operations and therefore a more progressive organisational culture. It would facilitate a stronger alignment of campus operations and HIS development objectives. The need to establish a flatter organisational structure may be seen as necessary and more functional for better recruitment, retention of quality staff, evaluation, staff motivation and attracting more international students (Petrova, 2020; Petrova and Mikalauskaitė-Šostakienė, 2021).

To sum up, this study will help in understanding the challenges and gaps in the institutions' collaboration framework and proposes a relevant theory that might bring higher education institutions (HEIs) at a better position. To our knowledge, this study is the first of this kind. Specifically, the research questions are the following:

- R1 Does the degree of alignment (i.e., smooth communication and coordination between employees carrying out different roles and responsibilities in with university's hierarchy) impact positively on academic policy improvements and which issues are prioritised when addressing the concerns of international students on the particular campus?
- R2 Are there any differences in opinion between different positions (level 1 administration and level 2 administration) as to the reasons for each of the discussed issues (budgeting, academic policies, degree programs research, human resource issues, and student's matters) being a problem?

This paper is structured as following: after introduction, the second session includes a brief review on theories and models of internationalisation. The third session covers the modelling of the internationalisation efforts proposing diagrammatic representation of ADR perspective, being a theoretical framework in itself. The fourth session is devoted to the methodology, data analysis and results. Lastly, the discussions and conclusions session take part.

## 2 Theories and models

Theories on this issue have primarily focused on organisational and learning aspects while models have foregrounded networking and knowledge production. Some writers, drawing from organisational learning theory of Argyris and Schon, Edgar Schein organisational culture theory, Bernard Bass leadership theory or Ben Agger postmodern organisational theory, have highlighted the importance of:

- a universities reflecting and learning from experiences of internationalisation
- b cultivating the right culture to achieve goals of internationalisation
- c utilising a transformational leadership approach to this exercise
- d the complexity of the internationalisation project.

Useful models of internationalisation of higher education have emphasised the role of globalisation (Kahn and Agnew, 2017). This however has widened the rich-poor gap between countries and has not been able to bridge national differences now aggravated by increasing nationalism worldwide. Other models have foregrounded the production of

knowledge and intellectual capital (Al-Hemyari and Al-Agnew, 2018) both of which can only be outcomes of an action approach. Organisational theories have focused on outcomes such as learning and culture but these too can only be the outcomes of an action-oriented approaches.

### *2.1 Research trends*

The education system has to go through the deep analysis that has to do with the quality issues, but not only. Even though each nation has its own quality standards, these standards have a lot in common and in generally speaking they converged to each other in adopting the quality to carefully deliver high quality education in order to have a better generation with the high standard of education (Hoxhaj and Hysa, 2015). In addition, it is extremely important to make some analysis in program-based and course-based, which would bring to the higher education institutions some valuable feedback which might be considered to improve the offered programs and courses (Hysa and Mansi, 2020). An overview of research trends on this issue between 1997 and 2016 would reveal a focus on macro and micro-level university concerns in both national and transnational contexts (Bendenlier et al., 2018). There have been comparisons of strategies (Immordino et al., 2016), programs, activities, and teaching methods (Ardakani et al., 2011). Research has also unearthed universities' concerns with global branding (Wu, 2018), competitiveness and developing various forms of transnational educational hubs (Knight, 2011). As student population increases and funding levels decrease across universities, Ivy (2001) sees the need for more aggressive marketing. Other dimensions of research focus have been faculty mobility (Amblee, 2018), students' mobility (Bhandari, 2019), resource mobilisation (Motala-Timor, 2020). In addition, study of Oztergut et al. (2014) supports once again the importance of internationalisation on the realisation of diminishing returns to such investments. As academic administrators globally continue to address managerial and accountability challenges, they must realise that operational aspects must be aligned with strategic goals. Corporate level administrators in universities globally must therefore ensure that the concerns of lower level functionaries are being urgently addressed.

What are the requirements for managing the internationalisation of higher education? Based on some common literature and our conceptualisation, we can list the following crucial issues related to internationalisation:

- a alignment and realignment of policies, programs and procedures with resources (financial, human, information and technological)
- b establishing and maintaining standards of operation for accreditation and quality assurance purposes (Hoxhaj and Hysa, 2015)
- c maintaining funding levels (Rumbley et al., 2019)
- d attracting and retaining international staff (Ozturget et al., 2014)
- e monitoring and evaluating campuses, (locally and abroad) through research-driven data
- f ensuring that policy reforms are student-centered and not simply oppositional, satisfying or constraining (Brower et al., 2017; Hysa, 2014; Hysa and Hodo, 2014; Giguari et al., 2021).

## 2.2 *Accountability*

Senior administrators in universities are expected to carry out a range of responsibilities and are also expected to be accountable for such responsibilities. However, those to whom university administrators submit accountability reports clearly do not ask for more details. This might be because they do not know what else to ask for and because they are so impressed by what is submitted. The persistence of the same issues for so long must sufficient action is not being taken to directly address these internal university problems. Given such realities, it is fair to argue that challenges faced by internationally universities would impact on their current and ongoing internationalisation efforts.

Most reports are revealing of university's dependence on economic drivers of the process and their dependence on this income stream (McCaffery, 2004).

Like Arrow (2000) and Hendrickson et. al. (2013) therefore, we advance the view that institutional strengths and weaknesses of universities are reflected in their internationalisation efforts and practices.

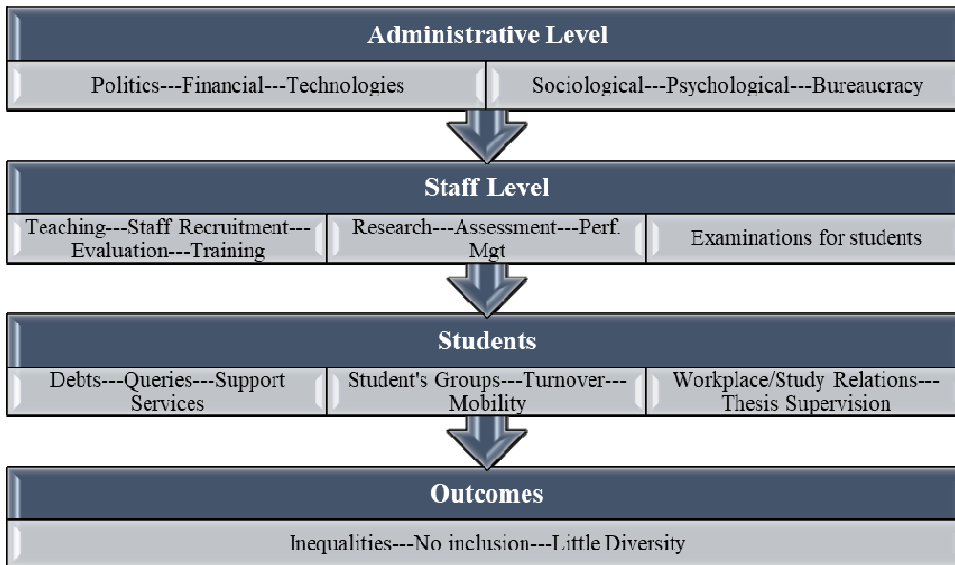
## 2.3 *Concerning issues*

On the basis of a media survey, the following issues, identified below, we're identified as problematic by international students in both the parent university at home and its branch abroad:

- a Very little communication with parent university this no meaningful relationship
- b Absence of any program-workplace relevance
- c Poor thesis supervision
- d Emphasising research-driven and teaching driven research without realising that lecturers do not teach
- e Persistence of biased/subjective approaches to an academic staff recruitment, training, promotion and evaluation
- f High staff turnover in franchise institution
- g Emphasising the significance of equity and diversity in hiring practices but not visibly facilitating same
- h Advancing the importance of the University contributing to the development of the wider society but promoting faculty on the basis of their self-serving achievements in research and publications and downplaying community/public service
- i Long delays by parent university in communicating decisions with respect to students' queries
- j Apart from an occasional visit and campus tour, branch campus operations are never subsequently evaluated by accrediting body of patent university administrators using meticulous organisational research procedures
- k Gender and ethnic inequalities.

Such a focus on students, according to McCaffery (2010) is a cross-cutting theme that is at the centre of all aspects of a university's operations.

**Figure 1** Diagrammatic representation of alignment – dealignment-realignment perspective on international higher education at home and abroad (see online version for colours)



Source: Compiled by authors

### 3 Modelling the internationalisation effort

The below model identifies several factors that are featured at different levels of the university’s functioning. This is a response to Unkele’s (2020) call for an actionable framework. Giving particular attention from a Policy and procedural position to the chain of factors that should be aligned is necessary for improving university academic governance nationally and across borders, a concern of Rowlands (2017). Sociological factors are contextual inclusive of gender, cultural and ethnic aspects while psychological factors refer to cognitions and emotions of administrators that influence the actions of administrators. Such an action framework can generate not only learning and knowledge production but also the production of cross-country emotional and social capitals. The model identifies factors within or across each level are aligned, dealigned and realigned for varying periods of duration, with varying frequency and at different levels of intensity before and during the internationalisation effort. Alignments, dealignments and realignments often have different consequences for participants and their subsequent responses may or may not be predictable. Those participants with the greatest amounts of power, authority and influence are often able to determine the manifest and latent trajectories of alignments, dealignments and realignments. An example of an alignment at the administrative level is outlined below, and the highlighted terms are the aligned elements that can be dealigned and realigned as circumstances unfold. We propose reflection at each level for purposes of insightful cross-cultural dealignment and realignment.



Information is received by administration and taken forward to subsequent meetings. As a result of a period of communication, a decision is taken, discussed and formulated as a policy position. Policies are 'rolled out' as procedures which are formalised as documents. These documents provide guidelines for the follow up Implementation of initiatives. The implementation of initiatives undergoes a review of series of reviews and reports are submitted to administration for their consideration.

But what are the targets to be achieved and the expectations from internationalisation? If agreed on the three pillars of 'Internationalisation' as:

- 1 Mobility (students, academics, administrators, programs, projects, institutions)
- 2 Partnerships (bilateral, multilateral, strategic)
- 3 Curriculum (knowledge, skills and attitudes).

then the institutions need to work on increasing the partnerships and strategically using the arising opportunities to enhance their programs and curriculum. This would be considered as a real contribution to the curriculum and thus to quality.

A second suggestion would be the structural project application and involvement of academic staff. This would significantly contribute to the knowledges, skills, and attitudes of our staff, students and the third parties. This would be considered as a contribution to the curriculum and mobility pillars.

Lastly, the institutions need to find the way to increase the research and the quality of the publications. This could be done by being involved in projects and having a richer academic network, which would be considered as a contribution to the curriculum as well.

To sum up, exploring such a brief study on the internationalisation, the institutions should reflect and draw some concrete results of the past and some insights for the future. This is quite inspiring; thus, the institutions should develop some common lines with the administrative level and should have their support in this context.

## **4 Methodology, data analysis and results**

### *4.1 Elements of the survey-based inquiry*

The questionnaire validated by three experts in the area, was formulated in google forms and spread via internet. The survey was distributed during June 2020 through all the possible channels that might reach the target academic staff of higher education institutions in Albania. Over a period of 30 days, 80 valid responses were obtained, all of them holding high level administrative position in both, public and private universities.

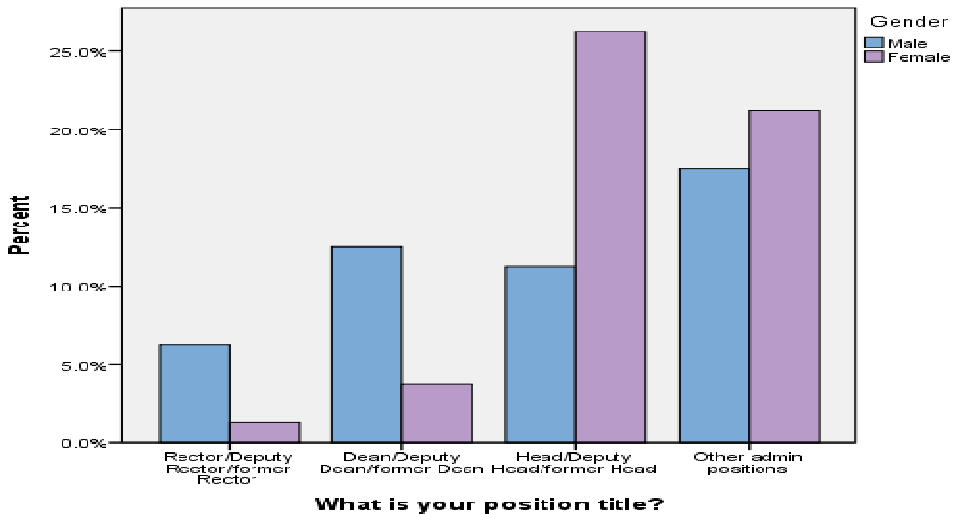
The method used to collect the proper data on this research was the survey-based inquiry (questionnaire) in order to know more on the management process of the higher education institutions in Albania and their capacities to contribute to a sustainable development process of the inner structures. In this regard, the survey was distributed to the following categories:

- 1 rector/deputy rector/former rector
- 2 dean/deputy dean/former dean
- 3 head of department/deputy head of department/former head of department
- 4 other admin positions.

The survey consists of 22 closed-ended questions and 5 open-answers questions. The survey was structured on a 5-step likert scale preconfigured as following:

- 1 (never/very poor)
- 2 (rarely/poor)
- 3 (sometimes/fair)
- 4 (often/good)
- 5 (always/excellent).

**Figure 2** Graphical representation of admin position distribution (see online version for colours)



From Figure 2 we can see that the distribution among the categories is quite similar with the distribution of these categories in the higher education institutions. As such, around 60% of the responders are being head/deputy head/former head of department, or other admin position. The rest 40% are holding the position of rector or dean (and related categories). While comparing the male-female proportions, we find less females for these two last categories than in the positions of department head and other admin duties.

From the cross-analysis of the three items, through the contingency Table 1, it is noticed that young generation is dominating the admin positions, while most of them hold a doctorate. The number of academicians holding a managing duty and having a master degree or a professor title is limited in the Albanian institutions. This is because master degree is not sufficient, and the people being full professors are less in number.

**Table 1** Cross-sectional analysis of items: age group, highest qualification attained, admin position

<i>Age group</i>		<i>What is your position title?</i>				<i>Total</i>
		<i>Rector/Deputy Rector/former Rector</i>	<i>Dean/Deputy Dean/former Dean</i>	<i>Head/Deputy Head/former Head</i>	<i>Other admin positions</i>	
30–39	Master		0	0	9	9
	Doctorate		1	9	6	16
	Assoc. Prof.		0	1	0	1
	<i>Total</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>26</i>
40–49	Master		0	0	1	1
	Doctorate		0	5	6	11
	Assoc. Prof.		5	1	1	7
	Professor		0	0	2	2
	<i>Total</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>21</i>
50–59	Master	0	0	0	1	1
	Doctorate	0	0	5	0	5
	Assoc. Prof.	0	4	3	2	9
	Professor	3	2	0	0	5
	<i>Total</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>20</i>
60+	Doctorate	0	1	2	1	4
	Assoc. Prof.	0	0	0	2	2
	Professor	3	0	4	0	7
	<i>Total</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>13</i>
Total	Master	0	0	0	11	11
	Doctorate	0	2	21	13	36
	Assoc. Prof.	0	9	5	5	19
	Professor	6	2	4	2	14
	<i>Total</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>80</i>

#### 4.2 Statistical analysis and results

Through this study all the statistical analysis and graphical representations have been performed by using the SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) statistical program. SPSS is widely used in survey analysis and computation of many statistical tests.

The aim of this study is to answer the following research questions:

- R1 Does the degree of alignment (i.e., smooth communication and coordination between employees carrying out different roles and responsibilities in with university's hierarchy) impact positively on academic policy improvements and which issues are prioritised when addressing the concerns of international students on the particular campus?

Thus, following up with the first research question (R1), we decide to divide this in two subquestions to be investigated. Accordingly, we have:

R1a There is a correlation between quantity of information per each issue and the information given on a timely basis.

R1b There is a correlation between quality of information per each issue and the information given on a timely basis.

In this session, we have initially tested the reliability of each dimension quantity, quality and timely-bases information. To do this, we have used the cronbach's alpha that must be minimum 0.7 (Demir and Aydinli, 2016; Demir and Mukhlis, 2017). As confirmed from Table 2, all the cronbach's alphas for each dimension is above the abovementioned threshold, specifically the level are quantity (0.904), quality (0.913), timely-bases information (0.919). In the meantime, apart of 'budgeting', none of the other items cannot increase the Cronbach's Alpha if deleted. Given that the difference among cronbach's alpha with and without 'budgeting' is quite similar, we might consider that value to be accepted as a good one.

Additionally, standard deviations of each item seem to be around one. Furthermore, correlation level per each item is less than 0.9, rejecting the risk for multicollinearity (Budur and Demir, 2019).

As in Table 3, a Spearman's correlation was run to determine the relationship between 'quantity (qn)' – 'information given on a timely basis' and 'quality (ql)' – 'information given on a timely basis'. Based on the correlation results, we can follow-up with these results: budgeting, research, human resource issues, and student's matters appears to have a strong positive monotonic correlation between both, quantity-quality aspects, and information given on a timely basis. Respectively, budgeting (qn)  $r_s = 0.789$ ; (ql)  $r_s = 0.772$ ;  $n = 80$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ; research (qn)  $r_s = 0.734$ ; (ql)  $r_s = 0.718$ ;  $n = 80$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ; human resource issues (qn)  $r_s = 0.755$ ; (ql)  $r_s = 0.731$ ;  $n = 80$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ; student's matters (qn)  $r_s = 0.727$ ; (ql)  $r_s = 0.771$ ;  $n = 80$ ;  $p < 0.001$ .

Whereas for academic policies and degree programs these relationships seem to be weaker, where value of correlation,  $r_s$ , are less than 0.7.

R2 There are differences in opinion between different positions as to the reasons for each of the discussed issues being a problem.

We divide the academics into two groups, level 1 Administration (vice/rector/vice/dean); and Level 2 Administration (head of departments/others). And we want to see if the reason of having problem in HEIs are the same in these two groups. Here is the crosstab. The assumption for a table bigger than  $2 \times 2$  is that the expected count is not less than 5 or 20% of the cells have expected count greater 5. So, if we look to the bottom it says 6 cells or 50% have expected count less than 5. This violates the assumption, because 60% is much bigger than 20%. Thus, the assumption has been violated (Field, 2013). So, we focus on the likelihood ratio, here's its' statistics is 9.642; the degree of freedom of 5; and the significance value of 0.086. Hence, we compare the significance level, 0.05, to the p-value 0.086, which is bigger, concluding that we accept the null hypothesis. To sum up we may say that there is no association between the position and the reason of the problems in HE system.

**Table 2** Reliability analysis for group of questions per each issue (8, 9 and 10)

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. deviation</i>	<i>Scale mean if item deleted</i>	<i>Scale variance if item deleted</i>	<i>Corrected item-total correlation</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha if item deleted</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha of dimension</i>
How can you evaluate the quantity of information per each issue?	[Budgeting]	2.78	1.273	18.29	19,802	0.611	0.912	0.904
	[Academic policies]	3.68	0.965	17.39	20,164	0.836	0.875	
	[Degree programs]	3.89	0.981	17.18	20,653	0.754	0.886	
	[Research]	3.51	1.114	17.55	19,365	0.789	0.880	
	[Human resource issues]	3.29	1.150	17.78	19,063	0.792	0.879	
	[Student's matters]	3.93	0.952	17.14	21,285	0.700	0.893	
	[Budgeting]	2.79	1.122	17.96	21,454	0.603	0.920	0.913
	[Academic policies]	3.64	1.058	17.11	20,076	0.820	0.888	
How can you evaluate the quality of information per each issue?	[Degree programs]	3.76	0.997	16.99	20,772	0.793	0.893	
	[Research]	3.44	1.157	17.31	19,306	0.820	0.888	
	[Human resource issues]	3.31	1.098	17.44	19,667	0.832	0.886	
	[Student's matters]	3.81	1.007	16.94	21,553	0.685	0.907	
	[Budgeting]	2.91	1.265	18.35	19,319	0.677	0.923	0.919
	[Academic policies]	3.69	0.963	17.58	20,273	0.836	0.896	
	[Degree programs]	3.84	0.961	17.43	20,323	0.832	0.897	
	[Research]	3.55	1.030	17.71	20,309	0.763	0.905	
Is this information given on a timely basis?	[Human resource issues]	3.38	1.095	17.89	19,190	0.840	0.894	
	[Student's matters]	3.90	0.976	17.36	21,044	0.721	0.911	

**Table 3** Spearman’s rank index correlation for group of questions per each issue (8–10 and 9–10)

		[Budgeting]	[Academic policies]	[Degree programs]	[Research]	[Human resource issues]	[Student’s matters]
Spearman’s rho	How can you evaluate the quantity of information per each issue?	[Budg.]	0.489**	0.387**	0.369**	0.608**	0.387**
		Corr.Coeff.	0.789**	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000
		Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000
		N	80	80	80	80	80
		[Acad. pol.]	0.666**	0.617**	0.530**	0.600**	0.535**
		Corr.Coeff.	0.486**	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	80	80	80	80	80
		[Degr. prog.]	0.573**	0.624**	0.555**	0.582**	0.490**
		Corr.Coeff.	0.424**	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	80	80	80	80	80
		[Res.]	0.633**	0.587**	0.734**	0.619**	0.459**
		Corr.Coeff.	0.507**	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	80	80	80	80	80
		[Human res. iss.]	0.590**	0.488**	0.564**	0.755**	0.333**
		Corr.Coeff.	0.581**	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.003
		Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	80	80	80	80	80
		[Stud. mat.]	0.500**	0.600**	0.512**	0.442**	0.727**
		Corr.Coeff.	0.363**	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		Sig.	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	80	80	80	80	80

Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 3** Spearman's rank index correlation for group of questions per each issue (8–10 and 9–10) (continued)

		[Budgeting]	[Academic policies]	[Degree programs]	[Research]	[Human resource issues]	[Student's matters]
Spearman's rho	[Budge.]	Corr.Coeff. 0.772** Sig. 0.000 N 80	0.396** 0.000 80	0.350** 0.001 80	0.373** 0.001 80	0.536** 0.000 80	0.320** 0.004 80
	[Acad. pol.]	Corr.Coeff. 0.390** Sig. 0.000 N 80	0.646** 0.000 80	0.551** 0.000 80	0.611** 0.000 80	0.622** 0.000 80	0.438** 0.000 80
Spearman's rho	[Degr. prog.]	Corr.Coeff. 0.410** Sig. 0.000 N 80	0.559** 0.000 80	0.663** 0.000 80	0.620** 0.000 80	0.581** 0.000 80	0.522** 0.000 80
	[Res.]	Corr.Coeff. 0.491** Sig. 0.000 N 80	0.602** 0.000 80	0.512** 0.000 80	0.718** 0.000 80	0.599** 0.000 80	0.372** 0.001 80
Spearman's rho	[Human res. Iss.]	Corr.Coeff. 0.542** Sig. 0.000 N 80	0.509** 0.000 80	0.469** 0.000 80	0.541** 0.000 80	0.731** 0.000 80	0.332** 0.003 80
	[Stud. mat.]	Corr.Coeff. 0.399** Sig. 0.000 N 80	0.489** 0.000 80	0.624** 0.000 80	0.540** 0.000 80	0.540** 0.000 80	0.771** 0.000 80

Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4** Position (level1 and level 2 administration) \* Reason of having problem in HEIs crosstabulation

			<i>Reason</i>						<i>Total</i>
			<i>Ad</i>	<i>Al</i>	<i>In</i>	<i>Po</i>	<i>So</i>	<i>To</i>	
Position	H/D/O	Count	4	8	6	0	28	8	54
		Exp. count	5.4	6.8	6.8	2.0	25.7	7.4	54.0
		Residual	-1.4	1.3	-0.7	-2.0	2.3	0.6	
	R/VR/D/VD	Count	4	2	4	3	10	3	26
		Exp. count	2.6	3.3	3.3	1.0	12.4	3.6	26.0
		Residual	1.4	-1.2	0.8	2.0	-2.3	-0.6	
Total		Count	8	10	10	3	38	11	80
		Exp. Count	8.0	10.0	10.0	3.0	38.0	11.0	80.0
		Count							

**Table 5** Chi-square tests

	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymptotic significance (2-sided)</i>
Pearson chi-square	9,116a	5	0.105
Likelihood ratio	9,642	5	0.086
N of valid cases	80		

Notes: a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.98.

## 5 Discussions and conclusions

The above is a first-of-its-kind grounded actionable account that explain some of the major linkages across all levels of universities that are engaged in the internationalisation of higher education. This explanation is positioned and advanced within a dynamic theoretical framework known as the ADR perspective. We posit that internal challenges faced by parent universities invariably emerge from alignment, realignment and realignment decisions that may or may not be articulated and documented and are therefore latent or manifest.

We should emphasise that the central argument of our theory of alignment, dealignment and realignment, as is being explained in Figure 1, is that the quality of the international program and the likelihood of a positive effect on international students depends very much on the degree of alignment, dealignment and realignment of roles and responsibilities of individuals in different positions across the different levels of the university hierarchy. A good foundation and establishment of this theory in the higher education institutions will drive to a significant contribution to the sustainability of education system.

This study was based in the case of Albania, using quantitative method of primary data collected. In total, we collected 80 response from university administration position to clearly answer two research questions. As the finding suggest, the first research



question is partially accepted. Budgeting, research, human resource issues, and student's matters have a strong positive monotonic correlation between both, quantity-quality aspects, and information given on a timely basis. However, the academic policies and degree programs are showing a weak relationship with the quantity, quality, and timely information. This is somehow a worryingly outcome since academic policies and degree programs are considered to be the base of the universities. Correspondingly, the dealignment (improper communication and coordination) affect the whole academic structure, having negative effects even in the international aspect.

Concerning the second research question, we found that the level 1 administration (vice/rector/vice/dean) and level 2 administration (head of departments/others) have different opinions with regard to the reasons for which the problem in higher education system occurs. Among the reasons we listed the:

- a insufficient consultation
- b too much bureaucracy
- c power plays
- d administrators not understanding education enough and focusing purely on financial matters.

The responders could select more than one, thus we took into the consideration all the possible answers given by them. Accordingly, and not surprising, the outcome shows that these two might have some conflicting viewpoints and issues even among them. As such, if there is a sequence of alignment, realignment and realignment within universities, this will reflect to significant improvements in the internal situation.

In order to have a sustainable education system, we conclude that it is necessary and critical to examine this level of operations of future internationalisation efforts are to do better than yield diminishing returns. It is hoped that this article stimulates further research on the operational aspects of the internationalisation effort in and across geographic regions.

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## Annex

### Questionnaire

Topic: how smoothly do universities operate

This survey is distributed online through all the possible channels that might reach academic staff of higher education institutions in Albania. We intend to have some results from public and private institutions that would serve to find out the gaps in education system and the issues in which the managing bodies would need to further improve. Note: This survey is anonymous and fully confidential to the name of the respondent and the HEI he/she represents.

Please tick one of the following

- 1 Age group:  
 less than 30  30–39  40–49  50–59  60+
- 2 Gender:  Male  Female
- 3 Highest qualification attained  
 Masters  Doctorate  Associate Professor  Professor
- 4 Number of years working at university level  
 0–5.  10–15  20+  5–10  15–20
- 5 Number of years in administration  
 0–5  10–15  20+  5–10.  15–20

6 What is your position title?

( ) Head of Department ( ) Provost ( ) Dean of Faculty

( ) High level in Administration ( ) Others

Please use the 1–5 for the following questions

1 (never/very poor)

2 (rarely/poor)

3 (sometimes/fair)

4 (often/good)

5 (always/excellent).

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	<i>Budgeting</i>	<i>Academic policies</i>	<i>Degree programs</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Human resource issues</i>	<i>Student's matters</i>
7.) How often do you communicate with another administrator higher than yourself on each of the following?						
8.) How can you evaluate the quantity of information per each issue?						
9.) How can you evaluate the quality of information per each issue?						
10.) Is this information given on a timely basis?						

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Please use the 1–5 for the following questions: (continued)

1 (never/very poor)

2 (rarely/poor)

3 (sometimes/fair)

4 (often/good)

5 (always/excellent).

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	<i>Budgeting</i>	<i>Academic policies</i>	<i>Degree programs</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Human resource issues</i>	<i>Student's matters</i>
11.) How often do you communicate with someone at your level on these issues?						
12.) How often do you communicate with someone below your level on the following?						
13.) How often do you communicate with someone at the same level as your level on the following?						

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Please use the 1–5 for the following questions

- 1 (recently)
- 2 (1-2 years)
- 3 (3–4 years)
- 4 (5–6 years)
- 5 (more than 6 years).

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	<i>Budgeting</i>	<i>Academic policies</i>	<i>Degree programs</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Human resource issues</i>	<i>Student's matter-s</i>
14.) How long has each of the following been a problem?						

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15–17) For which of the following do you also communicate informally with someone

Please use the 1–5 for the following questions

- 1 (never/very poor)
- 2 (rarely/poor)
- 3 sometimes/fair)
- 4 (often/good); 5 (always/excellent).

	<i>Budgeting</i>	<i>Academic policies</i>	<i>Degree programs</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Human resource issues</i>	<i>Student's matters</i>
15.) above your level.						
16.) below your level.						
17.) on your level.						

18–20) How often do misunderstandings arise on the following issues with person(s)

Please use the 1–5 for the following questions

- 1 (never/very poor)
- 2 (rarely/poor)
- 3 (sometimes/fair)
- 4 (often/good)
- 5 (always/excellent).

	<i>Budgeting</i>	<i>Academic policies</i>	<i>Degree programs</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Human resource issues</i>	<i>student's matters</i>
18.) above your level.						
19.) below your level.						
20.) on your level.						

21) How long has each of the following been a problem?

	<i>1 (recently)</i>	<i>2 (~2 years)</i>	<i>3 (quite a long time)</i>
Budgeting			
Academic policies			
Degree programs			
Research			
Human resource issues			
Student's matters			

22.) Which of these might be a reason for each of the following being a problem?

(You can select more than one option.)

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Insufficient consultation

Too much bureaucracy

Power plays

Administrators not understanding education enough and focusing purely on financial matters

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### *Open questions*

Please provide your opinion based on your experience and the academic environment you are part of.

23 Have any of these issues caused you to be stressed? Which one and why?

24 Is that more disagreement than agreement in staff meetings on any of these issues?

25 Have any of these disagreements being resolved?

26 Is the university functioning smoothly now?

27 If not, what do you think should be done to improve the functioning of your university?