

THE IMPACT OF OWNERSHIP TYPE ON THE QUALITY OF STUDY PROGRAMS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR OF KOSOVO: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS



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Abstract

The sector of higher education in Kosovo has witnessed significant during the past two decades, with the establishment of private and public institutions leading to increased participation. However, concerns about the quality and the relevance of the study programs offered by these institutions have emerged. To address these concerns, a research study was conducted to evaluate the impact of ownership type on program quality. Based on the analysis of accreditation data, the study finds no significant differences in quality between private and public institutions. Nonetheless, further research is recommended to examine specific accreditation fields and other factors, including student quality, graduation rates, employment rates, student satisfaction, and academic staff quality, to understand the differences in program quality of private and public higher education institutions in Kosovo.

1. Introduction

The sector of higher education in the Republic of Kosovo has undergone a rapid development in the last two decades. This development has been observed in the increase in the number and types of study programs offered and the increase in the participation of young people in higher education.

In the aftermath of the war in Kosovo, higher education opportunities were limited only to University of Prishtina, which was operated in the capital, and a few of its branches operating as higher schools in other regional centers of the country. However, the participation rate in higher education gradually increased from 10% in 2000 to 12% in 2003 (Riinvest Institute, 2004). The higher education system saw a rapid expansion starting in 2002-2023 with the establishment of private institutions of higher education (According Agency for Business Registration in Kosovo, AAB College results as the oldest private higher education institution in Kosovo establish in August 2002) with

campuses in other areas of the country besides the capital. This diversification of educational opportunities, coupled with the proximity of these institutions to students' homes, likely contributed to the increased participation in higher education. According to a report by GAP Institute, by 2008, a total of 24 private institutions with 150 study programs were operational in Kosovo, accommodating 18,922 students. Notably, during the academic year 2006/2007, the total number of higher education students reached 49,196, representing a significant 219% increase compared to the data from 2000 (GAP Institute for Advanced Research, 2008).

Even though the rapid increase in the higher education participation is mainly attributed to the establishment of private institutions, another influential factor was the government's initiative around 2009-2010 to establish new universities and/or transform branches of The University of Prishtina into independent public universities in six other major centers of

Kosovo, thus expanding study programs and increasing the number of prospective students.

However, with the increase in the number of private institutions of higher education and the lack of institutional regulation of their establishment and operation in that period, numerous issues related to the quality of the programs offered by them were raised among the general public and scholars alike. Rexhaj (2016) raises the issue of the quality of the private higher education institutions and the study programs that they offered. His concerns are based on the fact that despite the increase in the number of students enrolled in higher education, the number of students who were graduating saw a decrease. However, the treatment of the issue of poor-quality study programs and academic services cannot be focused only at private universities.

Concerns about the quality of the public higher education institutions were also raised through numerous reports and articles by non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and media. Based on qualitative interviews and monitoring of the situation, a 2018 article in Preportr by Besa Kalaja and Besnik Boletini raises the issue of the establishment of these universities as an instrument for pre-election campaigns by the political party that was in power at the time. They explain that in the first instance, these newly established universities faced great difficulties in their operation, where they had budget problems, lack of proper infrastructure, and unqualified staff for the development of teaching in higher education. Furthermore, their article shows that a large number of professors engaged in these universities were members of political parties. More specifically, 4 out of the 6 newly established universities were led by members of the political party that was in power at that time. Above all, they estimate that the opening of these universities was done without prior assessment of the needs and all of these have led to a situation where the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology itself has requested their closure or profiling (Kalaja, 2018).

Seb Bytyqi, a columnist for S'bunker, sees the universities established in the regions of Kosovo in the same light. In an article published in 2019, he assesses that politics have seen these universities as instruments for the extension of political influence through the employment of members of ruling parties in this institution, intervention in student governments with the aim of increasing support for students, etc. (Bytyci, 2019). However, in the public perception public universities continue to have a better image than the private ones.

Therefore, our goal through this research is to evaluate if there are significant differences in the quality of study programs offered

between these two groups. In the absence of accessible and standardized data, the evaluation and comparison of the quality of education offered by these two groups of institutions will be done based on the evaluations given by experts in the process of accreditation of study programs during the years 2021 and 2021.

2. Accreditation as an External Quality Assurance Tool for Higher Education Institutions

Harvey (2004) considers accreditation as a tool in facilitating quality education; an instrument of improving academic/non-academic services, transparency in system and making accountability at appropriate levels. According to Kumar, Shukla, and Passey (2020), the professionalization of quality assurance, teaching-learning, quality research and innovation, resource reallocation, the development of various policy guidelines along with their implementation, and more are all integral components of an accreditation process.

In the context of this paper, accreditation refers to a national quality assurance program that influences universities and degree programs by granting recognition from the national government and, ultimately, enabling their operations. The conclusive phase of the accreditation process involves a visit to the institution by a team of evaluation experts from academia (referred to as academic peers), who assess whether the university meets a set of qualitative standards pertaining to specific degree programs or the institution as a whole. Subsequently, a supervisory body issues the accreditation after conducting a formal verification and assessment procedure. It is important to note that in this paper, quality assurance (QA) is used in a broader sense encompassing all evaluation activities.

Quality assurance mechanisms in Higher Education have been implemented in numerous countries across the globe, encompassing various regions such as the United States (US) with its well-established system (El-Khawas, 2001), as well as more recent advancements observed in Europe, Latin America, and other parts of the world indicating a wide-scale adoption on a global scale. (CINDA, 2012; Dill, 2001; Ewell, 2010; Lemaitre, 2011). Similar to other regions, the adoption of accreditation in Western Europe has occurred relatively recently, as indicated by Cheng (2015). According to Haug (2003), despite initial resistance in the Bologna process, the dimension of quality assurance/accreditation quickly established itself as an indispensable cornerstone of the European higher education area. Ruben (1995) defines accreditation based on three dimensions of quality: academic quality, administrative quality and relationship quality. (pp.1-34) However, a plethora of literature exists that critiques the efficacy of various principles and models associated

with the accreditation process. These criticisms underscore a noticeable disparity between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation within evaluation mechanisms (Perry et al., 2009). Many authors agree that the emphasis in the literature regarding quality assurance is not arbitrary; rather, it specifically examines the extent to which QA has diverged from its fundamental academic undertakings, transforming into a predominantly bureaucratic and compliance-centric process. (Scott, 2000; Harvey, 2005; Ratcliff, 2003). According to Cardoso et. al., (2016), ensuring and promoting quality in higher education institutions heavily relies on their adherence to external requirements and influences, particularly those of a legal and political nature. Failing to achieve such compliance and experiencing unintended repercussions can impede the pursuit of quality within these institutions. Academics have identified various obstacles that arise from the external context of their respective institutions, encompassing factors such as prevailing higher education policies, public funding allocations, accessibility, external quality assurance mechanisms, and the impact of the Bologna process. Nonetheless, within quality assessment, academics also acknowledge certain positive aspects, particularly, when assessment processes are targeted towards institutions as a whole, they are perceived as less burdensome and intrusive compared to those focusing on individual academic performance. (Laughton, 2003). According to Stensaker et al. (2008), despite the primary aim of external quality assurance being the stimulation of change and improvement in teaching and learning, the existing body of literature on these matters remains limited in scope, with only a few studies dedicated to exploring these specific issues. Harvey and Newton (2007) conclude that the dominant model of external quality assurance highlights how processes are manipulated and veiled within a politically motivated, ideological, and compliance-oriented structure. It undermines the authority of the academic community, compelling them to conform to bureaucratic demands, subjecting them to judgments founded on deceitful perspectives and dubious performance metrics, and suppressing creativity to the extent that the essence of "quality" within the academic process no longer pertains to knowledge creation and student learning (225-245).

Numerous scholars have also conducted analyses pertaining to the disparity in the quality of the programs and accreditation impact observed between public and private institutions. Based on a study conducted in Vietnam, it was concluded that private universities are belated in the accreditation process compared to public universities. However, if the decision on accreditation is once made, the process of accreditation runs smoothly as their organisation and management are less bureaucratic and access to finance is also quicker and easier (Ngoc, 2023). In another study conducted in Ghanaian universities, authors state that despite

private universities demonstrating a greater rate of implementing recommendations from evaluator panels, their accreditation assessments resulted in inferior scores compared to other institutions (Dattey et al., 2014).

Due to the significance of academic staff in ensuring quality assurance within higher education institutions, Hashim and Mahmood (2011) undertook a study to investigate the contrasting levels of overall commitment exhibited by academic staff towards service quality in public and private universities in Malaysia. Authors concluded that the academic staff at the public universities have a higher level of commitment to service quality due to incentives, benefits and job security. In another study undertaken recently in Western Balkans, Azizi et al. (2023) state that private universities possess the potential to challenge the rigid and stagnant academic culture upheld by state-controlled institutions through their academic and administrative flexibility, as well as financial autonomy indicating that by introducing innovative operational approaches, strategic marketing initiatives, and specialized academic programs, they have the capacity to bring about significant disruptions in the higher education sector. Ensuring student satisfaction constitutes a pivotal aspect of quality assurance within institutions of higher education. In a study carried out across five universities in Bangladesh, when analyzing students' perceived levels of importance and satisfaction regarding various aspects, including professors, curriculum, resources, and extracurricular activities, Mazumder (2014) found that across all categories, there exists a substantial discrepancy in student satisfaction between public and private universities in Bangladesh, where private university students demonstrated a higher level of satisfaction, indicating a significantly greater satisfaction rate when compared to the students in public universities. This gap derives as a result of public universities being resistant to updating their curriculum, instructional methods and adapting new pedagogical approaches such as active learning and assessment techniques (Mazumder, 2014). Levitz et al., (1999) found that the success of an institution and the success of its students are inseparable. Institutions that take this credo seriously commit the institution (...) to a path of radical and permanent change. Stensaker and Harvey (2006) conclude that the main distinction in accreditation ought not to be based on the public versus private dimension of higher education institutions, but rather on the dimension of control/compliance versus autonomy within the higher education sector.

2.1. Regulation of the accreditation process in Kosovo

The law on higher education in Kosovo stipulates that any educational institution that wants to offer higher education services in Kosovo must obtain an operating license from the

Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation and afterwards gain institutional accreditation and accreditation for each specific program¹. The responsibilities for the implementation of the accreditation process in higher education are assigned to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency by Law No. 04/L-037 on Higher Education, but the procedures and accreditation standards are further determined by the administrative instructions and the accreditation manual. Law No. 04/L-037 on Higher Education (2011) has determined that the agency, among others, is responsible for the following: Accreditation of public and private institutions of higher education; Accreditation of new HEIs and their programs; Accreditation of new programs in accredited HEIs; Continuous quality control in accredited institutions and their programs (pp. 5-9).

This is of a great importance as the agency through its work determines not only which programs can be offered and by whom, but also what will be the number of enrollment spots in those programs for specific time periods. This way, through these criteria and standards it affects the supply of study programs in Kosovo in terms of quality and quantity.

To summarize the accreditation process in the Republic of Kosovo, higher education providers must initially gain institutional accreditation and then secure accreditation for each study program separately. With each accreditation process, the time for which the accreditation is issued and the number of students who can be admitted to each program are determined. In its Accreditation Manual, Kosovo Accreditation Agency (2022) has determined the following 11 standards for institutional accreditation: 1. Public mission and institutional objectives; 2. Strategic planning, governance and administration; 3. Financial planning and management; 4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability; 5. Quality management; 6. Teaching and learning; 7. Research; 8. Staff, employment processes and professional development; 9. Administration of students and supporting services; 10. Learning resources and facilities; 11. Institutional cooperation (pp. 10-23). While the same manual by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (2022) has determined the 7 standards for study programs' accreditation as follows: 1. Mission, objectives and administration; 2. Quality management; 3. Academic staff; 4. Content of the educational process; 5. Students; 6. Research; 7. Infrastructure and resources (pp.23-31). Although the standards for institutional and programmatic accreditation differ, the evaluation process is the same.

The process begins with the submission of the request for accreditation by the institution, the submission of the list of

program holders, the institution's Report of Self-Assessment (SER), the visit of the experts, the evaluation and issuance of the report by the experts and approval at the State Quality Council (SQC). During their visit and meetings with higher education providers, the experts assess to what extent these institutions fulfill each of these standards. Standards can be met at four levels, fully, substantially, partially, and not met. To gain accreditation, a program must meet at least 4 standards at the "substantially" level or higher.

Although Kosovo is not part of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area, it has constantly made efforts to adapt its higher education system and quality assurance processes to the Bologna Process and European practices, therefore external quality assurance procedures and standards are aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

3. Methodology

The question that this research seeks to answer is the following:

- Does the type of ownership of Higher Education Institutions have an impact on the quality of study programs offered in Kosovo?

We hypothesize that:

- **H0:** the type of ownership of Higher Education Institutions does not have an impact on the quality of study programs offered in Kosovo.
- **H1:** the type of ownership of Higher Education Institutions has an impact on the quality of study programs offered in Kosovo.

The methodology of this research has been determined based on the evaluation and reporting system in the accreditation process explained above. This research focuses only on the program accreditation process to assess the quality of the programs offered. The research is quantitative and uses secondary data. The data have been collected from the decisions published on the website of AKA for each institution and program separately. Considering that the decisions of the years before 2021 do not explicitly show how these programs meet each of the standards, we have focused only on the decisions of the years 2021 and 2021, in which the evaluation decisions are standardized and present information on each standard specifically.

For each study program, the evaluation report by experts is published, and it shows at what level have each of the seven

¹ <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2761>

standards been met. To construct our database, we have created a new entry for each accredited study program, noting the institution to which it belongs, whether it is public or private institution, whether it was accredited for the first time or re-accredited, in which year it was accredited, and how many standards it fulfills in each of the levels determined by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (2022) manual, which include: fully compliant, substantially compliant, partially compliant, and non-compliant. The obtained database includes data on 302 different study programs from 18 different accredited institutions during the years 2021-2022.

This study represents a quasi-experimental model considering that the institutions are naturally divided into public and private.

Ownership of the higher education institutions is considered an independent variable and there will be factors/variables that are beyond our control for which we must correct in our analyses, keeping ownership as treatment and evaluating the accreditation result as an effect.

4. Data Analysis

The research includes data from the accreditation evaluation reports of 18 HEIs in Kosovo through the years 2021 and 2022. Of these institutions, 9 are private and 9 are public. The breakdown of accredited and re-accredited programs by year and type of institution is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Number of accredited programs by year and institution type

				Public		
	Re-accreditation	Accreditation	Total	Re-accreditation	Accreditation	Total
2021	33	39	72	86	39	125
2022	40	10	50	54	1	55
Total	73	49	122	140	40	180

The types of degrees of the accredited and re-accredited programs included in the study range from BA to MSc. Both, public and private universities alike focus on Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, and Master of Science degrees. While the Doctor of Medicine degree is (specific) to public universities,

along with Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Master of Pharmacy, and Bachelor and Master of Music. The PhD programs are excluded from the analysis, as they are only offered by one public university. Their frequency is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Types of the accredited degrees, by institution type

	BA	BAP	BMUS	BSc	DVM	Dr.Med	Dr. Dent	LLB	LLM	MA	MMUS	MPh	MSc
Public	41	3	2	51	1	1	1	2	3	26	3	1	44
Private	43	8	0	29	0	0	2	3	4	15	0	0	18
Total	84	11	2	80	1	1	3	5	7	41	3	1	62

There are 7 areas on which each proposed program can be evaluated. These areas are 1. Mission, objectives and administration; 2. Quality management; 3. Academic staff; 4. Content of the educational process; 5. Students; 6. Research; 7. Infrastructure and resources. For each of those areas, the evaluators evaluate the degree to which the accreditation standards are met. There are four degrees: Fully Compliant, Substantially Compliant, Partially Compliant, and Non-Compliant.

Only 9 study programs have fully met the accreditation standards for all 7 areas of evaluation. Of these, 5 come from public and 4 from private HEIs. On the other hand, public HEIs had 79 programs that didn't meet fully the criteria in any of the evaluation areas. This number is twice the number for private HEIs, where only 38 programs didn't meet any criteria fully. One thing worth noting is the fact that the number of programs that were non-compliant in any of the areas is higher for public HEIs compared to private ones.

The table presented below shows the Public and Private HEIs met these criteria during the evaluation sessions of 2021 and 2022.

Table 3. Compliance of programs to accreditation standards, by institution type

Compliance	Institution type	Number of standards							
		7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Fully Compliant	Public	5	5	6	12	8	28	37	79
	Private	4	4	10	16	13	13	24	38
Substantially Compliant	Public	19	23	52	46	20	6	9	5
	Private	8	16	22	26	26	13	5	6
Partially Compliant	Public	0	0	0	0	27	40	38	75
	Private	0	0	0	0	18	23	20	61
Non-Compliant	Public	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	176
	Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	120

As a first step to all our analyses, we have created a new variable which comes as a result of multiplying the number of standards met with the grade to which these standards are met, e.i. fully compliant = 3, substantially compliant = 2, partially compliant = 1, non-compliant = 0. The new variable for each standard level has been named “sum_respective level” and the total sum for all four levels has been calculated. This total sum was named “total points” and it is the variable by which we will evaluate the quality of the study programs.

In order to select the variables that will be included in the analysis of the impact of the ownership role on the quality of the programs, it was first analyzed if there is a correlation between the available

variables. The results show that there is a high correlation only between the year of establishment and the type of institution, which is expected considering that both types of institutions were established in waves, with most public institutions having the origin of operation in the 1970s and establishment as universities between 2010-2012, while private ones having been established around 2002-2005. There is an average correlation between the year of accreditation and the type of accreditation. Likewise, there is an average correlation between the year of accreditation and two other variables, Fully Compliant and Substantially Compliant.

Table 4. Correlation

	ID	Institution type	Establishment year	Accreditation Year	Accreditation type	Fully Compliant	Substantially Compliant	Partially Compliant	Non-Compliant	Total Points
ID	1									
Institution type	0.7452	1								
Establishment year	0.335	0.6628	1							
Accreditation Year	0.1186	0.1074	0.0909	1						
Accreditation Type	0.0693	0.1931	0.1842	-0.3042	1					
Fully Compliant	0.1903	0.1625	0.0939	0.3313	-0.1853	1				
Substantially Compliant	-0.1576	-0.1517	-0.0727	-0.2882	0.0698	-0.8122	1			
Partially Compliant	-0.0880	-0.0535	-0.0453	-0.1362	0.2206	-0.4856	-0.1082	1		
Non-Compliant	-0.0224	-0.0205	-0.0694	-0.0043	-0.092	-0.0758	-0.0728	0.1201	1	
Total Points	0.1738	0.1359	0.0914	0.2925	-0.2189	0.9242	-0.5306	-0.7647	-0.2041	1

Prior to conducting regression analysis to test the impact of Institution Type on the quality of the accredited programs, it is essential to verify if the two groups (private and public HEIs) possess comparable attributes. For this purpose, we employ a two-sample t-test for the year of accreditation, type of

accreditation, and institution age. Results show that for Institutions' age and Accreditation Type there are statistically significant differences between public and private universities. Meanwhile, for Accreditation Year the differences between public and private HEIs are statistically significant only at 10%

confidence level. To correct for potential bias, we will use the age of institutions, the type of accreditation that they applied for, and the year in which they applied for accreditation as control variables in the multiple regression we will employ in our analysis. The subsequent table illustrates the t-test result.

Table 5. Comparison by t-test of sample characteristics

	Degrees of freedom	t	p-value
Institution's age	300	-15.33	0.0000***
Accreditation type	300	-3.4089	-0.0007***
Accreditation year	300	1.8719	0.0622 *

In the following analyzes we will use the variable "Total Points" as a proxy for the quality of the programs offered by these institutions. We will use "Total Points" as a dependent variable with the "Institution Type" as an independent variable and universities' age, type of accreditation of the program, and year of accreditation as control variables in a multiple regression analysis. The results of the multiple regression presented in the table below show that the difference in the variable "Total Points" is for 0.77 points higher for study programs offered by private HEIs in Kosovo. However, these differences are not significant at the 5% confidence level. Denoting that the institution type does not have a significant impact in the quality of study programs. Similarly, the institution age does not have a significant impact in the quality of accredited and re-accredited study programs. The two variables that have a significant effect on the quality of the programs are

Accreditation Type (coef. 1.0838 and p-value=0.000) and Accreditation Year (coef. 1.2729 and p-value=0.000).

Table 6. Regression analysis

	Coefficient	Standard Error	p-value
Institution Type	0.7719	0.4083	0.060*
Institution Age	-0.0021	0.0123	0.860
Accreditation Type	1.0838	0.3537	0.002**
Accreditation Year	1.2729	0.3333	0.000**

To further explore the effect of accreditation year on the Total Points/quality of the study program, we ran a regression of institution type on total points, by each year of accreditation. The results presented in the table below show that for the year 2021, the institution type has a significant impact on the results of accreditation, where private universities score 0.8675 points higher than public ones in accreditation evaluation reports. These results are significant at 5% confidence level. For the year 2022 the institution type has no significant effect on the results of accreditation. This large difference in the impact of institution type on accreditation results in a such short period of time is an issue that requires further study, as it may be an indication of potential biases among the external evaluators, irregularities in the procedure, differences in the mode of evaluation visits, political interference in the accreditation process or other difficult to observe factors.

Table 7. Effect of accreditation year on evaluation results

	2021			2022		
	Coefficient	St. Error	p-value	Coefficient	St. Error	p-value
Institution Type	0.8675	0.3686	0.020**	0.1036	0.5521	0.851

We also explored the effect of accreditation type on the differences on evaluation results between public and private institutions. For the programs that were accredited for the first time, the institution type has a significant impact on the results of accreditation, where private universities scored 1.0361 points higher than public ones in accreditation evaluation reports. These

results are significant at 1% confidence level. Meanwhile, for programs that were re-accredited, the institution type has no significant effect in the accreditation results.

Table 8. Effects of accreditation type on evaluation results

	Accreditation			Reaccreditation		
	Coefficient	St. Error	p-value	Coefficient	St. Error	p-value
Institution Type	1.0361	0.3917	0.009***	1.0224	0.5233	0.054*

Thus, the relationship between the State and land in the concept of State Controlling Rights is a relationship that gives authority to the State as an organization of power for all Indonesian people, at the highest level (Himanto, 2017):

- (1). Regulate and administer the designation, use, supply and maintenance of earth, water and space;
- (2). Define and regulate the legal relationships between people and the earth, water and space;
- (3). Determine and regulate legal relations between people and legal actions concerning earth, water and space.

The contents of the state's authority are solely public, namely the authority to regulate and not the authority to physically control the land and use the land as the authority of the holder of private land rights.

The authentic interpretation of the State's Right to Control as referred to by the 1945 Constitution, is a purely public relationship. Thus, there will be no other interpretation regarding the interpretation mastered in the article of the Constitution. Meanwhile, the term "private" refers to the authority of the right holder to use the land in question for his interests and to fulfill his personal and family needs. This is emphasized in Article 9 paragraph (2) of the UUPA which states that: "Every Indonesian citizen, both male and female, has the same opportunity to obtain a land right and to obtain the benefits and results, both for themselves and for their own benefit. himself and his family".

From the word transformed "Coastal Areas or Small Islands" There resides prayers and pujas to get the maximum benefits and results for the prosperity of the resident community, it is different for the islands to be uninhabited. But does the government really care about that? The words "to get benefits and results, both for themselves and their families" indicate the personal nature of land rights in the conception of the National Land Law. The state's authority to regulate legal relations between people, including customary law communities and land, is closely related to the legal relationship between the state and land. This is because the legal relationship between the state and land greatly influences and determines the content of laws and regulations governing the legal relationship between people and land and customary law communities and their customary lands, as well as the recognition and protection of rights arising from these relations. the legal relationship. Currently, the regulation is only limited to land management policies in coastal areas and small islands, but it has not been spelled out in the form of legislation. This means that land arrangements on small islands are generally still subject to the UUPA and its implementing regulations related to the granting of land rights. Institutionally, indications of land

regulation specifically in small islands can also be seen in the Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 10 of 2006 concerning the Organizational Structure of the National Land Agency. Within this structure, there is one directorate that specifically handles small islands, namely the Directorate of Coastal Areas, Small Islands, Borders and Certain Areas which is under the Deputy for Land Regulation and Arrangement. The existence of the Directorate of Coastal Areas, Small Islands, Borders and Certain Areas is based on the consideration that in general the land is managed in general, but there are certain areas that must be managed specifically, such as coastal areas, small islands, certain areas, because it has certain characteristics.

In addition to the regulations in the land sector mentioned above, Law no. 27 of 2007 concerning the Management of Coastal Areas and Small Islands as a reference in the management of coastal areas and small islands specifically. All of the legal references mentioned above should be used as a reference in regulating the control and ownership of land in coastal areas and small islands, because in my view, land in coastal areas and small islands should not be considered the same as land on ordinary land (mainland), because of the peculiarities possessed by the region.

For this reason, it is necessary to immediately realize legal arrangements for ownership and control of land as an ecosystem unit with the surrounding waters, in the form of separate laws and regulations by considering the economic, political, socio-cultural, environmental and defense and security aspects in an integrated manner.

Based on the description above, this research aims to find out how the control of land by the surrounding population living in small islands and coastal areas is reviewed through economic and defense aspects, and to find out how the legal consequences for the control of the land of the smallest islands and coastal areas by people foreigner through a lease agreement or other form of agreement.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

To summarize the results of the study, public HEIs in Kosovo are older than the private ones, and during the two years that this study covers they have applied for more re-accreditations of existing study programs than accreditations of new study programs. Meanwhile private HEIs that are younger have applied for more accreditations of new study programs. This is an indication that private HEIs are still in their developing phases and are working towards enriching the range of study programs they offer.

Although it might be expected that the older institutions offer more qualitative programs considering their experience, the results show that the age of the institution does not have a statistically significant impact in the quality of programs accredited and reaccredited in Kosovo for the time period that this study covers.

On the other hand, the two factors that have a statistically significant impact on the quality of study programs offered are accreditation type and accreditation year. Where, study programs that went under re-accreditation process score higher than those that were accredited for the first time, and study programs that were accredited or re-accredited during 2022 accreditation session score higher than those that underwent the process in 2021. This may either be an indication that the process in 2022 was stricter, or that the institutions applied with more qualitative study programs. To shed more light on the issue it is necessary to conduct an analysis that includes the name of evaluators as well as the mode in which the evaluation visits were conducted, online or on site.

To answer our main research question and to test our hypothesis, based on the analyses conducted and their results presented above, we can conclude that there is not sufficient data to support the claims that there are differences in the quality of study programs based on the type of institution that offers them, private or public. Therefore, our data and results support the null hypothesis which claims that “H0: the type of ownership of Higher Education Institutions does not have an impact on the quality of study programs offered in Kosovo”.

Further research is needed in order to assess the accreditation fields (7 standards) in which there are differences in quality and evaluation results between private and public institutions. A few other aspects that should be studied further in order to properly assess the differences in the quality between private and public HEIs in Kosovo are the quality of the students enrolling in each type of university, their graduation rates, their employment rates, students' satisfaction, and academic staff quality.

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