

# [Introduction according to zgaga, the concept of academic](https://assignbuster.com/introduction-according-to-zgaga-the-concept-of-academic/)

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IntroductionThe concept ofacademic autonomy has changed significantly during the last decades and Weiler(2005) considers that the relative importance of the autonomy of the individualscholar and the autonomy of the institution is one of the ambivalences thatuniversities have in the new context. Referring to the general developments ofeducation in Europe after 1980, Henkel (2007) talks about two challenges thatacademic autonomy is facing: one is that governments preside over ‘ knowledgesocieties’ in which they see knowledge as the main driver of economic andsocial prosperity, and the second one is that of redefinition of the relationof the state and market. It implies that thetraditional concept of academic autonomy with clear boundaries and no state intrusionis not possible in today’s context. Moreover, Zgaga (2012) considers that “ theconcept of university autonomy would be seriously simplified and endangered ifit were put together on a continuum with ‘ full state control and no autonomy onone end’ and ‘ full autonomy and no more state control’ on the other hand” (p. 5). According to Zgaga, the concept of academic autonomy is referred to aconstantly changing relationship between the state and higher educationinstitutions which depends on national contexts, circumstances, academic andpolitical cultures.  Considering these circumstances, itis very difficult to define the concept of academic autonomy and analyze it inisolation without taking into consideration the context.

Esterman and Nokkala(2009) claim that there is no ‘ idealmodel of autonomy’, suggesting that there are “ a set of principles thatconstitute crucial elements of autonomy, and that, when implemented in thecontext of a given system, support universities in carrying out ever morecomplex missions”  (p. 7). Theseprinciples are included in the EUA’sLisbon declaration (2007) within four dimensions that define autonomy: organizational, financial, staffing and academic autonomy and were the basisfor the study of academic autonomy conducted with the representatives of publicuniversities of 34 European countries (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009).  These four dimensionsthat look at the ability of universities to decide on organizational structuresand institutional governance, financial issues, staffing matters and academicmatters will also be used as a framework of this study in the Kosovo context. Academic autonomy has been subject of radicalinterrogations from the civil society in Kosovo since the end of the conflictin 1999. The international reports also highlight the need for Kosovo to ensurethe autonomy andindependent operation of higher education institutions, in addition to the needto improve thequality of education significantlyand to strengthen research andinnovation (EuropeanCommission Report for Kosovo, 2016). Thus, the aim of this study is to understand how theeducational stakeholders assess the institutional autonomy and academic freedomin the Kosovo context and how do they address the issues and challenges relatedto the academic autonomy and accountability.  Academicautonomy and accountability in the new context The globalization andneoliberalism had a significant impact to the social and economical context ofthe states in the last decades and it was inevitably reflected to the highereducation as well.

Becker and Trowler (2002) illustrate the relation of theuniversity and new context claiming that “ a scientific discovery in auniversity in one country will be exploited to make a technical advance by acompany based in another and put into production in yet another country, chosenfor its low labour costs and offered for sale by that company’s subsidiariesthroughout the world” (p. 3). The new circumstances made the governments focus moreon creating the ‘ knowledgeable society’ resulting in the transition from’elite’ to ‘ mass’ higher education, which begun in ’80s mainly in USA and UK, followedby the other developed countries. These developments, the theory of knowledge, conceptualizationof knowledge and the rapid developments of the technology changed the missionof the higher education, and inevitably they undermined “…the idea of academeas well defined territory dedicated to its own specialized goals” (Henkel, 2007, p.

91).   In order tounderstand the academic autonomy in the new context, Zgaga (2012) makes adifference between ‘ philosophical’ and ‘ managerial’ discourses of academicautonomy by addressing them as academic individual freedom and institutionalautonomy. According to Zgaga, while academic freedom prevailed all debatesduring ’60s to ’80s, following the transformation from ‘ elite’ to ‘ mass’system, academic freedom seems to be a serious issue only in certain countrieswhere democracy is not a self-understandable condition of public life.

Henkel(2005) also highlights that although most higher education institution continueto control internally process of preparing and controlling academics, thefreedom to determine curriculum content, degree standards and allocation offunds are not universally agreed. In addition, Apple (2016) argues that the educationinstitutions have become a subject of performance objectives, standards, national testing, and national curriculum. It implies that in the new context, the quality of education is not only the concern of higher educationinstitutions, since the “…reliance on independent institutions or individualprofessional to ensure their own quality and standards has been replaced bynational standardization” (Henkel, 2007, p. 93). However, Warnock(1992) highlights the importance of the academic autonomy of an institution andreminds that the concept of autonomy means that institutions are self-governingconsidering that “ an institution that is self-governing can govern itself wellor ill, despotically or democratically but the principles it adopts and thedecisions it makes shall not be dictated from outside and this is much iscentral to the concept of autonomy.” (p.

xx).  A crucial part of aself-governing institution is accountability and the new circumstances haveimposed creation of the accountability mechanisms related to higher education. Althoughit has become a significant topic in the last few decades, the need foraccountability of higher education has been highlighted even before, indifferent context. Upon establishing the Berlin Universitat back in 1811, Wilhelm von Humbold claimed that the state must not intrude the university butat the same time, he reminded that the intellectual freedom “ can be threatenednot only by the state, but also by intellectual institutions which tend todevelop, at their birth, a certain outlook and which will therefore readilyresist the emergence of another outlook.” (Humbold, 1970, as cited by Zgaga, pp.

224, 246). It is asserted also by Weiler (2005) who claims that theambivalence that exists related to academic autonomy in the new context canserve as a great mechanism of defense for a university that tries to avoidaccountability for its results and accomplishment. Therefore, the state mustseek to avoid the harm, which can possibly arise from this source as “ autonomycannot be an excuse to exclude abuses of autonomy (e. g. corruption withininstitutions) from a critical discussion as well as prosecution (Zgaga, 2012).

These issueshighlight the need for an increased cooperation between the higher educationinstitutions and the relevant stakeholders in order to respond effectively tothe demands of the new environment as academic autonomy can also functionoutside the ‘ traditional borders’. Zgaga (2012) suggests that the academicfreedom is a matter of continues negotiation since “ the university cannot livein its thoughts only and society needs knowledge to survive”. Further, Zgaga considersthat the countries shall focus on a set of recognized principles of valueswhich should direct the actions of different actors rather than search for an” ideal” to move close to. Neave, as cited by Henkel (2007) also highlights thatthe outcomes of negotiations are not entirely predictable and thus the autonomycan be enhanced or reduced. It implies that it depends on the parties that arepart of the negotiations, and if the parties are week, the decision will beweek.

It becomes a process, which comprises by setting limits and continuingthe negotiation, since “ academic freedom is not something given as a right; itis won and not once and for all” (Henkel, 2007, p. 96). Assessingacademic autonomyGiven the fact thathigher education institutions in European countries have different approachestoward the assessment academic autonomy, the European University Association(EUA) sets out general principles of institutional autonomy which consists ofacademic, financial, organizational and staffing autonomy (Lisbon Declaration, 2007).

These principles have been used as basis point by Estermann and Nokkalato analyze and assess the academic autonomy in 34 countries of Europe. Theirstudy has been focused on the ability to introduce or terminate degreeprograms, to define the structure and content of degree programs, roles andresponsibilities with regard to the quality assurance of programs and degrees, the extent of control over students admission (academic autonomy); the abilityto establish structures and governing bodies, university leadership and who isaccountable to whom (organizational autonomy); the ability to charge tuitionfees, to accumulate surplus, to borrow and raise money from different sources, the ability to own land and buildings, reporting procedures as accountabilitytools (financial autonomy); and the capacity to recruit staff, theresponsibility for terms of employment (staffing autonomy).  Academicautonomy in Kosovo higher education Academic autonomy remains one of the challenges, which is addressed by both civil society in Kosovo as well as by internationalreports. The public University of Prishtina (UP) is the most referred source tothe public discourses related to the academic autonomy.

Gashi (2013) claimsthat since it has been founded, the UP played a key role in politicaldevelopments in Kosovo and it was, at the same time, a victim of politicalinterferences. Thus, influenced by political developments, the issue ofacademic autonomy is mainly addressed within the ‘ political interferences’context, thus undermining discussions about academic autonomy andaccountability as matter of negotiation between the state, society anduniversities. In addition, the concepts of academic freedom and institutionalautonomy are still remaining vague terms. Thus, the purpose of this article isto understand how the main education stakeholders assess academic autonomy andaccountability in higher education within the Kosovo context and how are theissues and challenges addressed. The four dimensions that define autonomy asset out in EUA’s Lisbon declaration (2007) will be used as a framework of thisstudy.  Methodology, participants, data collection and analysisAs Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006) claim that” qualitative research seeks … to obtain in-depth understanding about the waythings are, why they are that way, and how participants in the context perceiveit” (p. 14), this study employs the qualitative approach.

A purposive samplewill be applied and the participants will be representatives of different localeducational actors: a vice rector of UP, a professor of UP, a representative ofthe Ministry of Education (Department of Higher Education), a representative ofthe Agency of Accreditation, a representative of civil society, and arepresentative of an international organization. The data are gathered throughsemi-structured interviews and document analysis. The interview questions willbe basically compiled based on the academic autonomy principles set out in theLisbon Declaration (2007). The data collected will be transcribed and analyzedand compared with the documents analysis and notes, such as the statute of theUniversity of Prishtina, and the Law on Higher Education.