

The Management of the University of the Future. Values or mercenarism?

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Abstract: *In this article we intend to do a review of the main issues faced by the higher education in Eastern Europe, the causes which generate these problems, but also the economic, social, political and cultural effects on the level of those countries, but also on international level. The process of explaining the political factors will never be able to replace the realities and that is the reason why we propose to have, on an European level, an analysis of the way in which the economic discrepancies deepen the educational ones thus creating a spiral of disparities within all areas. It is obvious that we cannot only conclude that certain policies have been bankrupt, but to seek and find solutions for the future. The demographic deficit in the Eastern European countries has created even bigger problems in the educational field favouring the emergence of some problems in pension systems also, but in the systems of distributing the revenues as well.*

Keywords: flow of human resources, selection, business environment, motivation, personal, performance management, discrepancy.

Introduction

We cannot analyse the evolution of the UNIVERSITY of the Future without emphasizing the role played by the invention of computer and Internet in such evolution. It is obvious that we must the reality introduce into the equation alongside with the virtuality. We may even suggest a corporate virtual university model, one in which it is essential to seek the understanding of "the roles of academic and professional institutions as external forces in developing rigorous models of virtual corporate universities that meet the learning needs of individuals and organizations"¹. The University of the Future will undoubtedly be a virtual university with nodes in a worldwide network and with a personalized educational system. The individual will configure the educational needs in relation to his own potential, but also in relation to the labour market needs. Until then, we witness experiments that often highlight the discriminations faced by parts of the world which cannot throw into the competition ring anything but their own "unrefined, raw" "human which are emphasized by educational systems that already have decades of "PERFORMANCE EXERCISE". At the moment, within the European educational field, it is difficult to find a clear dividing line between patronage (activity to support arts, literature, science and education) and mercenarism (work carried out for money or some material benefits).

The line of demarcation is determined by the ratio between the givers and the receivers. The patronage is a state of those who have (Countries or Individuals) and can

provide, while the mercenarism becomes a state of those who offer their own abilities in exchange for some material benefits.

The purpose of this article is not only to inform, but also to be a signal regarding the need for establishing a balanced educational system across Europe offering equal opportunities to both educators and those who are educated.

Changes in society and population dislocations have the ability to facilitate the action of individuals and economic entities that have a high mobility and ability to adapt.

The development of entrepreneurial skills becomes a commandment on the individual level, as well as on the global level.

The developments of an individual's own business, its rapid, sustainable and profitable growth, constitute the goals of any responsible entrepreneur.

The most common obstacles faced in the development of a business may consider the following: health and stress problems, the lack of initial capital, professional risks, the possibility of financial losses, lack of self-confidence, etc.

Managerial decisions and measures that influence relationships between an organization and its members are analysed from the perspective of the elements it generates, but also from the perspective in terms of the consequences of their application.

This is the reason why education becomes the main dynamic factor defining contexts that facilitate the professional training and creates the entrepreneurial spirit. We need to understand this, because the key principle is that learning is used to "unlock

¹ Sandelands, E., "Developing a robust model of the Virtual Corporate University" *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol 1, No. 3, 1998, p 182;

value"². The universities of the present cannot evaluate without a balanced human resources policy which mainly focuses on meeting the needs of the most important client – the student.

First, we need to identify the components specific to the activity of the University that are part of the human resources management.

On the other hand, one must assess the effectiveness of human resource management practices in academia and how such can be improved.

The human resource practices applied within the University must be identified (recruiting new employees, establishing the wage level, defining training policies, etc.).

The flow of human resources, the performance management, defining work positions and employee involvement represent key areas of human resources management.

When analysing the flow of human resources, one must keep in mind the following: planning the staffing needs, selecting and promoting the adequate people, induction programs (training on job acceptance), ensuring internal staffing and decisions regarding promotion, "organizational exit" management from voluntary or involuntary reasons.

The collaboration between faculty deans, department managers and human resources managers must be optimal to define and manage a fluent and coherent flow of human resources compared to the needs of the faculties.

There is often the temptation to attract specialists from other Universities without taking into account the development of some generations of academic teachers originating from University graduates. It would be an advantage that would highlight their attachment to a clearly defined set of values.

Otherwise, the mercenarism idea propagates; mercenarism highlights temporary commitments that are unrelated to the pecuniary component. In terms of performance, it is essential to attract young people who will unconditionally adhere to environmental values among which, moreover, they have grown. Creating a single group should be the aim of any university manager.

On the contrary, there is the tendency and temptation to build-up real "gangs" that will encourage and trigger the emergence of conflicts and stress. There is a close connection in the cause and effect reporting between conflictual situations, stress, the poor use of the TIME resource and, consequently, obtaining mediocre results.

Personnel policies and not only, should be defined and applied based on the expectations of the employees regarding the application of a non-discriminatory treatment, the process of developing a career and the acceptable workplace safety.

Policymakers must establish an optimal balance between the temporary staff and the permanent staff because, otherwise, there are major risks of unbalancing the budget of the organization. The fast promotion, without a solid economic analysis, may lead to "the overthrowing" of the pyramid of positions resulting in a large number of higher positions within the hierarchy and a very small number of employees at the bottom of the pyramid.

² Robert Sullivan, (2000) "The Entrepreneurial Spirit: Learning to Unlock Value", International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, Vol. 6, Iss: 2, pp. 91 – 94;

Within the human resource management policies one should also consider the development of the need for graduates on an increasingly fluid market, but also should consider the demographical dynamics. The process of supersaturation of the organizational structure with higher-level positions will undoubtedly lead to imbalances that cannot be controlled.

In such situations, it is possible to find solutions to attract financing sources that can balance budgets.

It is participation in large projects with external funding, but also the creation of some entrepreneurial entities throughout the collaboration between Universities and the business environment. Thus, the conditions to favour the making of some training and consultancy programs emerge. It is obvious that the future teacher has to respond to a multitude of challenges that means:

When talking about a university of the future, one must take into consideration the fact that in order to thrive; inventions, innovation, creativity and knowledge are sine qua non imperatives. Innovation is defined as "the creation of new knowledge and ideas"³ and individuals are the ones that generate and store knowledge, human resource management "play an important role as drivers of innovation" (Dewinne, S., Investment Weekly News editors, Human Resource Management; Reports from University College advance knowledge in

human resource management, 2010)⁴. Thus, there can be no achievements without realizing that the vital role of organizational success resides in the people and the way academic management understands this. In this case, the university is regarded as an enterprise, having to perform as any other economic entity would with the exception that it should not entirely pursue "unlimited profit maximization"⁵ because this kind of institution also undertakes a "moral role", thus a duty towards society. Thus, it is to our understanding that "CSR and profits do not always go together"⁶. From this point of view, we may regard the academic environment as a social enterprise. In this case, we suggest the creation of an "enterprise social network system (ESN) to engage in learning activities within its community"⁷. Another attribute similar to a company's aim is the degree to which it's activity and outputs satisfy the customer's needs.

Establishing a balance between the temporary staff and the permanent staff, the flexible working hours, investing resources in training and staff development, a balanced

³ Plessis, M.D. (2007), "The role of knowledge management in innovation", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 20-9;

⁴ Investment Weekly News editors, (Dewinne, S.), *Human Resource Management; Reports from University College advance knowledge in human resource management*, Atlanta, United States, 2010, p1, ISSN: 19458177, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/762230275?accountid=15533>;

⁵ Kolstad, I., "Why firms should not always maximize profits", *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2007, p.138, Springer, Vol. 76 Issue 2;

⁶ Kolstad, I., "Why firms should not always maximize profits", *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2007, p.138, Springer, DOI 10.1007/s10551-006-9262-7;

⁷ Scott, S., K., Sorokti, K., H., Merrell, J., D., *The internet and higher education*. Vol.29, April 2016, p. 75;

relationship between supply and demand for skilled labour represent elements which decisively influence performances in the Universities of the future.

They are influenced by the following: legislation, the skill level required for each job position, the existence on the labour market of qualified personnel in such field, the time and budget for the training of the existing staff qualifications, the dynamics of the educational flow.

Very often, legislation imposes limitations that are unrelated to the real contexts. In the masters' programs there are sometimes restrictions that limit the educational performance. Here we refer to the number of specialists in the business, MBA graduates but without doctorate programs that could teach study courses with a strong practical character. It is obvious that such specialists can be invited to some themes but is important to have continuity in presenting a course. There are concerns to address these problems through the creation of partnerships with entities from the economic environment through which internship programs are created.

The skill levels required for each position are sometimes in total discordance to the quality of the payroll system.

Moreover, the current system of performance management in academia requires a package of abilities that takes into account the following: the publication of books, attending international conferences, publishing of some scholarly articles in journals with high visibility and impact on the areas concerned, taking part in the realization of certain national and international projects, teaching courses specific to the position occupied within the organization, participation in extracurricular activities.

Analysing the multitude of tasks and their variety, one can observe that their majority require the involvement and spending significant financial resources (conference participation fees, fees for publishing articles, etc.).

When comparing the salary of a professor in Eastern Europe and the salary of a professor in Western countries, we discover a huge and profound unbalanced ratio. For equal requirements, the revenues are dramatically unbalanced.

On the other hand, traditional Universities from the developed countries have become real multinationals that have the ability to impose through budgets even the quality of the educational process, but also the of selection high school students from Eastern Europe who thus become the breeding ground of these Universities. If we refer to the competition, to the free market and the supply and demand ratio, this thing is not reprehensible. Yet we cannot simplify the argumentation. We must logically notice that when talking about equal obligations we do not have equal rights. This represents the starting point of the dramatic discrepancies between the developed countries and the Eastern Europe countries, discrepancies which, instead of decreasing are increasing.

In order to decrease such discrepancies (unless the national and European policy-makers really want to) instant and real measures need to be taken for all the employees of these European Universities starting from establishing similar income in all European countries and setting strategic objectives to define the European interest not only the interests of some European countries. United Europe cannot be "the Europe with two or three-speed". The same lucid observations

we make regarding the overqualified workforce in Eastern Europe (formed here) that leaves in the developed countries where revenues are higher. This discrimination in facts cannot be eliminated just by declarations of good intentions.

Of course that Eastern academia must make sustained efforts to align itself with the high standards of the Universities from Western Europe.

Therefore we believe that, in order to increase the performance of the educational system national strategies are needed, strategies to be related to European strategies, but also concrete operating methods that are considering monitoring, control and assessment processes that aim: designing of some systems to reward and rebalance, to motivate, attract and maintain the employees within the system, establishing some training and development systems that are synchronous with the systems from the developed

countries, designing a non-discriminatory system of performance management, setting some clear and realistic objectives for the employees.

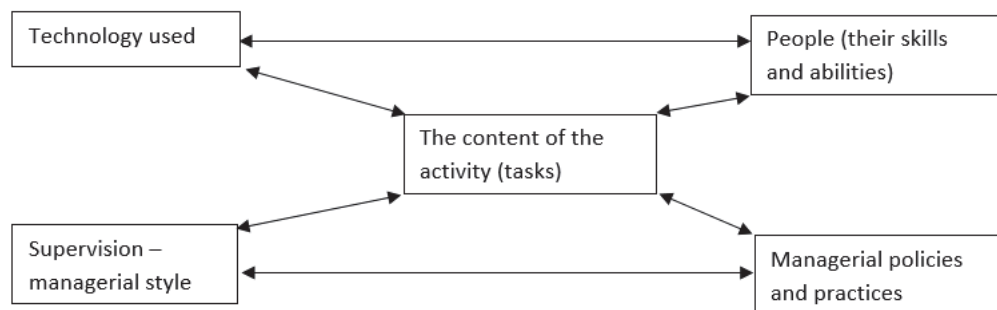
There is no doubt that in terms of performance management, Universities' managers must find a balance between: surveillance and firm control and staff motivation, the rewards and performance system, performance at organizational, department and individual level.

The quality of the activities' content activities is given by the following: the quality of technology used, the managerial style (the supervision), people and their skills, managerial policies and practices.

The Beer Model presents us a suggestive image on these connections ⁸.

⁸ Beer, M., Spector, B., Lawrence, P.R., Mills, D.Q., Walton, R.E., Human Resource Management: A General Manager's Perspective, New York, Free Press, Londra, Collier Macmillan, 1985.

Image 1. Work systems (adaptation following the Beer Model)



It is obvious that through its specificity, the educational system is not fully compatible with the work systems based on a very tight control where employees are closely supervised, or with the other extreme where there exists only individual commitment to achieving the objectives of the organization

having a complete freedom of decision. Starting from the above presented model, we believe that a hybrid model can be used on the level of the university environment.

Therefore, one must seek a balance between the work system based on control and the work system based on commitment.

There are significant differences in terms of treatment, but also in terms of the results between the managerial systems that treats employees by: the strict or general definition of job positions, the specialization of the employees or the rotation of the employees, the remuneration based on the content of the work and results and the remuneration depending on the employee's skills, treating employees as individual persons or treating them as members of teams, large differences in status and small difference in status, etc.

Obviously a theoretical model has the virtue of defining a standard (optimum) but "the reality exceeds fiction". We are supporters of the process of applying some states of the model that relates to the contexts in which the organization evolves.

The key word that defines the evolution of the University of the Future is ACCOMMODATION in conditions of permanent change.

Conclusions

In the future, the individual will probably be his own trainer since he will have a variety of technological means and will be able to create a variety of contexts in which to use the information architecture created by his own imagination. These will lead to changing reality which can be extended with "VIRTUAL FACILITATORS".

Education will become an essential component of "THE EXISTENTIAL VECTOR".

Possible directions of development of the individual will be given also by the individual responsibility, but the group responsibility as well, the social needs, the economic needs, but also by a large variety of factors: political, demographic, environmental, etc.

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