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THE ADAPTATION OF PHYSICAL CULTURE HIGHER
EDUCATION OFFER TO THE LABOUR MARKET

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Abstract

The topicality of the present article is determined by the rapid evolution of modern society from various points of view - economic, social, cultural, political, informational, internationalisation, fact which actually requires a new approach to the relationship between the academic environment and the labour market. The purpose of this article is to study the effective adaptive mechanisms of the university to the social dynamics, the rapid change in skilled labour market context and social expectations and individual beneficiaries of university education. The research methods were scientific documentation method, questionnaire, statistical and mathematical method etc. The main scientific results obtained in the article, as a result of research, are the analysis, systematisation and formulation of recommendations on matching the higher education offer in the physical education branch with labour market requirements. Conclusions. In the context of adapting the educational offer to the labour market of the State University of Physical Education and Sport, there is a permanent concern for structuring/adjusting/changing the curricula in this regard, assuring training as close as possible to the requirements imposed by the access to labour market. The university achieves a dialogue approach and transparent communication with professional associations to the reciprocal benefit: the university explains them the diversification on three levels (bachelor, master, doctorate) of university graduates, and professional associations bring to the university the latest developments from the world of knowledge and professional practice.

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Keywords: Higher education offer, demand, labour market, employers, beneficiaries..



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1. Introduction

For centuries the university has been involved in educating the society, thus various social players to understand its activity results and to exploit more efficiently the university's contribution to progress. Just like other values which the university promotes since the beginning of its existence, the quality of education is a dynamic concept, constantly adjusting to the society needs which it serves. In this context, the adaptation of higher education to labour market requirements has its origin exactly in this perpetual university preoccupation to answer through education and research to the expectations and needs of society.

2. Problem Statement

The university world started to develop mechanisms and processes specific to interuniversity competition in different axes, such as training-research, public-private etc., currently being more focused on the demand for education of the students and less or not at all correlated with the high qualified labour market requirements and expectations.

The labour market is increasingly animated by requirements of selection and personnel development according to specific quality, efficiency and labour market competitiveness attributes, but interacts very little with universities from where it recruits the highly qualified employees.

The academic quality of study programs, despite the dramatic changes in recent decades is still dependent to certain criteria, standards and performance indicators that universities have established in the form of certain internal requirements, too little or at all correlated with the needs and expectations of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the university education (Braniste, Calugher, & Lungu, 2018; Kohler, 2009).

In contemporary society, there is an opinion more frequently expressed that many have access to university education, but too few of the graduates still have the value, professionalism, morality, conduct in career and society of graduates of few decades ago, that universities spend public money and impose study fees to produce unemployed. Many graduates are dissatisfied because after two years of completing university studies (and more recently the graduates of some masters programs) fail to find a job as expected or related to their competences and abilities who manage to demonstrate at the moment of interview for employment. Also, the contemporary university was opened and was involved too little in the dialogue with the society and often has lost in the competition with other providers of tertiary training programs. The employers and recruiters expectations and needs of the labour market, the requirements of professional associations from various fields, but also the personal gratification of higher education graduates concretises a good part of what the society expects to receive from the university (Bevan & Cowling, 2007; Dorgan, Calugher, & Lungu, 2018).

Seeing that, it is necessary the constructive dialogue, the active approach of the interaction context and sustained support of a new quality culture both within each inside university and in its relation with representatives diversity of extra-university world where the vast majority of education, creation and academic research products find the valorisation (Budevici-Puiu, 2018; Marga, 2009).

3. Research Questions

The discrepancies are focused either over-training or over-specialisation of the graduate in the field of physical culture and sport (in the circumstances where the market does not absorb such specialists because it requires executors of some decision options), both in the insufficient training of the graduates in the targeted field (in the context of the need that the specialists from various fields can interact for completing tasks at work). Starting from this fact, the changes in the nature of qualifications demand are often dictated by the constraints of the labour market or market pressure. On the other hand, the education providers should be sensitive to labour market needs which are in a permanent change. It means it is necessary: strengthening the dialogue between university of profile with the employers and other interest groups in the process for drafting the new curriculum and the provision of study programs as well as improving communication with the rest of society to make more clearly understood the reforms that have place in higher education; institutional quality culture change in the university, so that employability of graduates to become for each member of the academic community (academic, researcher, student, alumnus, administrative staff) a key problem of education/training.

4. Purpose of the Study

The issue of research is the discrepancy between the educational offer of higher education institutions and labour market requirements in the field of physical culture and sport.

Each of these three fields had until the present a relatively independent development. Furthermore, within each domain have occurred specific developments, insufficiently connected with the others.

In this context it was defined: establishing the dialogue between SUPES and representatives of the labour market; monitoring the SUPES graduates career. As a result, we intend the identification of the new methods of partnership between the academic world and labour market.

5. Research Methods

Methods of research are: analysis and generalisation of data, methodical and scientific sources, survey (applied for 165 respondents: 43 - employers, 122 - SUPES graduates from the 2015 and 2016 classes), mathematical and statistical method.

Establishing an efficient connection with potential employers in the field of physical culture and sports is a strategic objective of the State University of Physical Education and Sport. In this regard, the Institutional Centre of Guidance and Counselling in Career of the SUPES performs studies to evaluate the relevance of the study offer in relation to labour market requirements through: monitoring the insertion of its graduates in the labour market; the diversification of the studies offer according to the needs experienced on the qualifications market; the review of teaching-learning-evaluation materials; identifying the need of the students' practical training; the assessment of the students' opinion regarding the strong and weak points of the study program and programs recognition among the employees.

The method for achieving the results is the application of a questionnaire based on the *Monitoring sheet of the graduate vocational inclusion and the evaluation of the study programs in relation to the expectations of the labour market*. The sheet is applied annually to the graduates within 4-5 months after the graduation of the faculty and contains 12 completion indicators, which refers to the obtained job, the methods of searching for it, the utilisation in the work place of the acquired knowledge and skills during

the studies, the degree of satisfaction with the studies program, the quality of the courses, the teaching, the didactic staff that ensures the program, the growth prospects in the professional career. The obtained data are systematised for each bachelor study program and centralised within the SUPES Institutional Centre of Guidance and Career Counselling, which after the carried out analyses, reports annually to the University Senate.

6. Findings

The study regarding the SUPES graduates on the labour market for the last two years proves the following results:

- about 46% of the bachelors of the university studies programs work, continue their studies or perform at the same time both activities;
- the necessary time for finding a job is relatively low: about 30% among the graduates find a job in less than three months after graduating, but 40% find a job in less than six months;
- 48% of the employed graduates work in the field of the graduated studies or in the related fields;
- 58% of the graduates appreciate as useful and very useful the acquired competencies during the university studies.

On this basis, adapting the university study offer in the field of physical culture and sport to the labour market requirements enables the formulation of two major categories of recommendations for quality management within the university of profile:

1. Focusing on the real and efficient implementation of an internal continues operative monitoring mechanism (each semester, each course) to ensure the quality of university education in accordance with the cognitive and functional-actional competencies promised to the direct beneficiaries (candidates to university studies) and indirect beneficiaries (either they are the parents of the students or their sponsor, either it is the state, that covers fully or partially the costs of studies, either it is the employer of students and graduates) and with the university mission and vision in carrying out the mission that has assumed publicly and voluntary on the basis of university autonomy. It is understood that the education offer should be replaced, developed by the preferences and skills of teachers with the offer centred on student and his needs to become a professional specialist in his career, an active citizen in a democratic society.

2. The development of the university initiative, active and continuous dialogue with all categories interested by the activity of Higher Education Institution (stakeholders) to make transparent, well understood and correctly promoted the results of its own activity (between them there are the learning outcomes). Thus, the new culture of quality is based on real opening strategic option, actively promoted within the university toward society, business, and institutional system of central and local public administration. In order to be effective, the dialogue with interested entities on the performance of universities (stakeholders) can only be an honest and constructive one.

The achievement of recommendations above formulated involves the abandonment of formalism in approaching education quality of university, to avoid the quality checking by using only some criteria, standards and indicators of binary nature (be / not to be, Yes / No etc.) or clearly quantitative (square meters of spaces, number of books in the library, number of seats in amphitheatres, number of equipment pieces

in laboratories etc.). No matter how much we try, in the end, the quality cannot be reduced to the quantity of input factors or successful output quotas (Miclea & Opre, 2002).

The adaptation to labour market requirements cannot be done different than by means of a new approach of quality through refining the tools used in observation of educational effectiveness. In this context, the university primary aim of preoccupation is to assure the quality of teaching and learning process (Korka, 2008; Manolachi, 2018). The good practices in other higher education systems show that can be devised and implemented effective instruments of the process quality management of forming the future graduates if:

- in developing the study programs and curricula of the university, one starts from the profile university qualification, in other words, from what we expect to know a graduate of a study program. There is no question of abdicating the ideals of university training, but to actively adapt the educational offer to the expectations of the labour market, generally the society. Only a regular dialogue with students, graduates, professional associations and representative employers can provide the informational input to achieve quickly the adjustment of education offer;
- in order to increase the employability of graduates, university curricula should be such as to conduct to a qualification, in a large part to be common to the study domain-level, the specific skills at the program level having a relatively low share of the license level. The master student, in turn, changes the focus to the deep competences in order to enable features of analysis research, synthesis, justification and decision-making in the respective niches of knowledge.

The implementation of new management tools of the content quality of teaching and learning is accomplished while respecting the principles involved in the process of internal evaluation/self-evaluation) not only of the teaching staff, but also students and graduates, and, if it is necessary, of professional associations and employers that are relevant to this faculty.

A dimension frequently missed by the universities' management is that not only the institution is responsible for the employability of graduates, but each teacher involved in teaching and learning, each student/graduate (via feedback sent to the university) and each employer. The public responsibility requires the solidary action of all four interest groups in order to develop the dialogue between the university and representatives of the outside the university environment.

Now, many universities have their own structures, developing partnerships with other institutions, corporations and business associations in the field, with scientific research groups, professional associations and non-profit organizations. What misses most of the times in this dialogue is the size of consulting these university partners in:

1. defining the list of skills and abilities that they expect to find at a graduate - potential future employee;
2. the purpose of the curriculum, with direct involvement of representative partners in organizing the real traineeships during the years of studies;
3. inviting some specialists, working at the representative partners to present the organization work, the job profiles within it, the specialisation after graduation etc.;
4. the participation of the most relevant specialists in some teaching activities, student conferences with wide participation, debate/practice hours etc. (Zgaga, 2007).

Another aspect, which is often neglected by the university, refers to the continuing education of partners (from the parents of students and students to the employers and recruiters) to explain new types of qualifications promoted by the Bologna study cycles, to present them the real cognitive and functional-actional competences of bachelor graduates compared to those from master. The employers must be educated to understand in terms of their own interests for what and how much they need university graduates in the field of physical culture and sport. The university should educate those employers and students who wish to develop their own business by capitalising the inherent entrepreneurial spirit and eventually educated in university or outside (Nicolescu, 2007).

7. Conclusion

In the context of adapting the educational offer to the labour market of the State University of Physical Education and Sport, there is a permanent concern for structuring/adjusting/changing the curricula in this regard, ensuring training as close as possible to the requirements imposed by the access to labour market. The university achieves a dialogue approach and transparent communication with professional associations to the reciprocal benefit: the university explains them the diversification on three levels (bachelor, master, doctorate) of university graduates, but professional associations bring to the university the latest developments from the world of knowledge and professional practice.

At the same time, the career of SUPES graduates has a major importance in solving the concerned problem: at the institutional level - a tool for quality management in improving the teaching process (development/adaptation/improvement of the curricula, the teaching-learning process, necessary/specific human and institutional resources etc.); nationally - a tool for creating and implementing national policies in higher education field (number of students, priority areas, strategic directions of development, internationalisation/mobility program development/adaptation of the higher education system in order to improve the outputs); internationally - a tool for creating and implementing international policies in specialised higher education (internationally, the curricula correlation and specific competencies/skills, development of mobility, internationalisation and exchange of best practices.

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