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The university and the business environment - Partnership for education

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Abstract

Insertion of higher education graduates in the labor market is a key concern of economic and social environment actors (universities, representatives of business, professional associations or NGOs). From this perspective, universities are obliged to develop active partnerships with business in regard with social and professional needs, but also to the needs of students. Partnerships must bring benefits to both universities and employers. The paper presents forms of partnership developed by universities and businesses and analyzes the views expressed by the representatives of employers engaged in active partnerships with the most prestigious economic university in Romania, Bucharest University of Economic Studies.

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1. Introduction

Insertion of graduates on the labor market is a challenge for higher education. Bologna Declaration defines employability (ability to engage, to maintain service and mobility in the labor market) as defining to higher

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education, whose role is to train students in the skills and abilities that individuals need at work and that employers seek.

European Commission Strategy for Higher Education (2012) mentions the need to reform university education so as to ensure equipping young people with the skills needed to develop employability and professional insertion.

Strategy Europe 2020 for economic growth highlights that, in the context of ongoing changes, the EU wants to become a intelligent, sustainable and inclusive economy by achieving a high level of labor employment, productivity and social cohesion. In this respect, one of the specific objectives for 2020 involves achieving an employment rate of 75% among people with ages between 20 to 64 years.

In a press release released on 2nd July 2014, the European Commission makes some recommendations on economic policy and gives advices on how to stimulate economic growth, increase competitiveness and create jobs in the time frame 2014-2015. This highlights that in the next period, the emphasis is not to be placed on addressing urgent issues caused by the crisis, but on building the necessary conditions for sustainable growth and employment in the post-crisis economy. (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-623_ro.htm).

At national level, ANOFM data (July 2014) indicates 460 990 unemployed, of which 77 008 unemployed people under 25 years and 34 479 unemployed between 25 and 29 years (<http://www.anofm.ro/statistica>). These numbers reflect the reduced ability of young people who completed university education to insert in the labor market. The reasons for this phenomenon lie in the reduced relevance of education for the labor market and insufficient work related skills development of graduate students.

In our opinion, higher education institutions need to initiate and develop academic, professional and social skills of graduates in order to facilitate their transition from school to active life and the successful insertion into the labor market by developing partnership relations with the business environment.

2. Theoretical foundation

The partnership between higher education institutions and employers is a good premise for insertion on the labor market, for the students' professional skills and abilities development.

Conceptual delimitation of preconditions for the initiation and development of educational partnerships between universities and economic environment is essential for their proper development.

From a *legal perspective*, the partnership is defined as a legal agreement in which partners together define the general purpose, duties and obligations of partners and the conditions in which their partnership relations occur.

In terms of the benefits they bring, the partnership can be defined as an efficient way of managing the situation and resources so that each entity involved achieves its goals.

Educational partnership regulates the university openness to the social and economic environment and the context in which they work.

Educational partnerships between universities and economic environment should be based on the principle of *interests' complementarities* in providing educational services, on the idea that those involved have to gain something from the collaboration synergy. Studies show that the performance of universities and employers' competitiveness depends on the quality of offered services and products (Drăgulănescu, 2008; Dindire, Asandei, Gănescu, 2011; s.a.).

However, the cooperation intention does not guarantee the success of a partnership. It requires coordination of the activities and decisions of partners, quality management of the collaborative process. Success is determined by adherence to rules and complying with common rules and characteristics of each partner, aspects that contribute to the satisfaction of those involved and to the building of mutual trust.

Building partnerships is a deliberate process involving specific skills, strategies and knowledge that parties must know and use. The partnership involves adopting a management based on cooperation and change, communication and awareness of diversity.

The partnership relationship between universities and economic environment requires a good management based on a common vision, shared values and common objectives. Carrying out partnerships is dependent on:

- Organizations (universities, economic agents) and the people involved;
- Their motivations for partnership;

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