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Approaches to teachers' performance assessment for enhancing quality of education at universities

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Abstract

Each university tries to assess the work of the university teachers equitably. Through obtaining information about the teachers, the employer can desirably direct professional growth of the teachers and properly use their working and creative potential. The assessment of the working performance of the University of Zilina teachers is realized through scored assessment of their performance in the pedagogical and scientific-research activities. The assessment of the working performance is done by the head of department for the period of one year. Survey of the activities and outputs of each teacher given in the form, adjusted almost each year and approved by the rector, serves as a base for the performance assessment.

In the last time this approach to performance assessment meets with teachers' dissatisfaction. The aim of this paper is to describe the current situation in assessment of the working performance of the University of Zilina teachers, based on a research to analyse limitations of the actual approach and defined criterions of the performance assessment and to propose new approach to the teachers' assessment. We propose the new approach to the performance assessment on the basis of the 360 Degree Feedback System application that can also serve as an impulse for innovation of the actual teachers' performance assessment. Applying the 360 Degree Feedback System can provide more objective assessment and strengthen the feeling of more equitable assessment that have great impact on teachers' motivation and quality of education at all universities.

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1. Introduction

In modern organizations as well as in universities, the job performance assessment is considered to be an important aspect of enhancing their activities. Based on the assessment of the real working potential the

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university has at disposal and required working potential in term of accepted aims, the knowledge, skills, attitudes, value orientation, creativity, motivation, cooperation and other characteristics of each teacher can be developed. Except teachers' development, their assessment can have positive impact on the whole personal management system what should be reflected in the increasing effectiveness of the university (Kachaňáková, Nachtmannová & Joniaková, 2011).

At present ensuring the quality of university education is repeatedly occurring topic of professional and laic community not only in Slovakia but in the whole world. In the USA the quality of universities is evaluated according to the achieved results, e.g. the Top American Research Universities (TARU) evaluation model use indicators that gauge areas such as the quality of research, faculties and undergraduates, esteem of a university as reflected by the amount of research funding and donations received (Hall, 2010).

The European countries accept the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), that in cooperation with the European University Association (EUA), the National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education has elaborated the file of standards and regulations for ensuring the quality in the European High Education Area. These standards and regulations are elaborated in so way to be usable for all the European universities and agencies regardless of their structure, function, size and national system.

According to ENQA ensuring the quality of pedagogical employees belongs to the group of the seven important factors participating in internal quality ensuring of the universities. Part 1.4 of these Standards that is dealing with quality assurance of teaching staff defines that universities should introduce ways to satisfy themselves that teachers involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to external reviewers and commented upon in reports (ENQA, 2009).

The work of the university teacher has a great impact on development of knowledge and cognition in each society. It is very demanding work that requires professional competences and continual enhancing professional knowledge, social competencies and also ability to develop them, ability in scientific research what is connected also with ability to transfer the science results to students in such a way to understand them and were inspiring for their future development (Kravčáková, Lukáčová & Búgelová, 2011).

2. The current state of the teachers' job performance assessment at the University of Zilina in Zilina

The University of Zilina in Zilina (UNIZA) is the only university located in the northwest region of the Slovak Republic. In terms of professional profile, the UNIZA is unique in Slovakia as it has this year a sixty years tradition of providing education in the fields of transport and communications. Furthermore, during the last period of development the UNIZA became an educational institution with a broad profile in many areas of science, technology, economics, management, and recently, educational and natural sciences. The UNIZA provides education at all three levels of higher education both in full-time and part-time forms (Bachelor's degree, Engineer/Master's degree and Doctoral degree). Teachers and research workers of the UNIZA actively participate in international educational and research projects.

The permanent precondition of successful UNIZA activities is sustaining and enhancing quality in all its academic and supporting activities. For quality assurance the UNIZA uses the internal quality assessment systems and external quality assessment carried out especially by independent (certified/accredited) organizations. One of the most important tools of the internal quality assessment is the regular complex job performance assessment of the university teachers realized yearly (see Table 1). The assessment is elaborated by direct superior following observation of the employee during the assessment period and survey of activities and outputs in education, scientific – research and publication activities (see Table 2). The evaluator has an evaluating talk with each evaluated employee that should be realized in a form of discussion in collegial atmosphere. The aim of this assessment is to acquire information about achieved job performance for the purpose of creating the conditions of higher motivation and more effective work of the university teachers in the future.

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