

Integration of the Theory and Practice in Continuity with the Development of Key Competencies—One of the Necessary Areas of Solutions for the Czech University Education

Marcela Göttlichová

Introduction

To enhance employability, as well as to sustain the existing strong position of Europe worldwide, the cardinal significance is represented by an efficient system of high-quality education and vocational training. It is the human capital which presents an essential wealth of every society. Especially the high-quality workforce standing in the foreground and capable of participating in the production of top-quality and innovative goods and services, which conditions the success within the competitive environment of the global market.

It is here where one of the most important roles is played by university education in continuity of the close link to the economic as well as social needs. Orientation on the quality and readiness of university graduates with the aim to acquire higher employability chances in the labor market thus become the fundamental need. The most significant task is to ensure the acquisition of the necessary key competencies together with the development of the top degree and attractiveness of education and vocational training at universities.

Theoretical Framework

It is education that means the key political component of the Europe 2020: Europe's Growth Strategy, whose primary objectives are in direct continuity with the educational goals of the EU, as the achievement of higher education means more high-qualified workers, thus better employability of these workers, with the

M. Göttlichová (✉)

Faculty of Multimedia Communications, Tomas Bata University in Zlín,
760 01 Zlín, Czech Republic
e-mail: gottlichova@fmk.utb.cz

© Springer International Publishing AG 2017

A. Kavoura et al. (eds.), *Strategic Innovative Marketing*, Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-56288-9_3

subsequent reflection in poverty reduction. To the given Europe 2020 objectives the following belong: 1. reducing rates of persons finishing education and vocational training to less than 10% (CR/5.5%; 2002/17%—2015/11%), 2. increasing rates of inhabitants aged 30–34 completing university or vocational education to at least 40% (CR/32%; 2002/23.6%—2015/38.7%, out of which 43.3% were women × 34.0% of men) and at the same time, 3. increasing employment to 75% (CR/75%; 2002/66.8%—2015/70.1%) by 2020 (Overview of Europe 2020—Target 2015).

As the figure shows (Table 1), it is the youth (20–29-year-olds) in who we observe a low rate of employment; it is by 8.7% lower in comparison with the overall working-age population. Since the start of the crisis in 2008, the employment rate of the youth has decreased by 4.2%, i.e., from 65.6% (2008) to 61.4% (2015), which reflects their generally weaker integration within the labor market.

The following table (Table 2) presents the fact that the employment rate is generally higher in persons who achieve higher education. In 2015, the employment rate of tertiary education graduates (82.7%) was much higher than was the EU average (70.1%), which was only slightly exceeded in higher secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (70.7%). On the other hand, the employment rate in people with primary or lower secondary education represented not only a lower value (52.6%) but at the same time, the group had been most affected by the crisis when a fall by 4.3% was experienced between 2007 and 2015 (Labor market 2016).

Should we look at the resulting values in the Czech Republic from another point of unemployment, we will notice an accord corresponding to the current situation in the EU countries (Table 3).

Increasing the level of achieved education and facilitation of employees with **skills necessary for the knowledge societies** are thus the main focus of the European employment policies of the Europe 2020 Strategy reflecting in the primary goals of the areas of employment and education. The attention is directed

Table 1 Employment rate, by age group, EU-28, 2002-15, (%)

	2002	2008	2015
Age group 20–29	63.4	65.6	61.4
Age group 30–54	76.7	80.2	79.1
Age group 55–64	38.4	x	53.3
Total (age group 20–64)	66.8	70.3	70.1

Source Göttlichová according to Eurostat online data codes

Table 2 Employment rate age group 20–64, by educational attainment level, EU-28, 2002-15

	2002	2008	2015
Tertiary education (ISCED levels 5–8) (%)	82.7	83.8	82.7
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	69.2	71.8	70.7
Less than primary, primary and lower secondary	54.8	56.9 (2007)	52.6

Source Göttlichová according to Eurostat online data codes

Table 3 Employment in the CR according to the level of education and age, 2015 (in print)

Unemployed	Level of the highest achieved education			University education total	
	Primary	secondary	finished with/without the exam		
Total	58.7	108.5	72.1	28.7	268.0
15–24 year-olds	13.9	10.3	16.0	3.4	43.7
25–29 year-olds	8.5	11.0	10.0	8.0	37.5
30–34 year-olds	7.0	15.5	10.2	2.9	35.7

Source Götlichová according to the Czech Statistical Office

towards enhancing the interaction between “the knowledge triangle”, so-called the system of science and research, tertiary education, and the area of innovations with the real economic sphere (Europe 2020 Strategy 2010).

Problem Formulation

The problem of the university education, however, remains in the necessity to support the development of transferable skills of university graduates with orientation to the teamwork, presenting and managerial skills, knowledge of enterprise start-up (commercial as well as noncommercial spheres), in the areas of internships and training within educational processes by either integrating employers into the emergence of school educational programs, educational process, internships and practical training, and also of result evaluation, with the share on submitting, supervising as well as opponency of diploma and other theses. It is then an unsatisfactory integration of the theory and real practice reflecting itself in the lack of well-prepared initiative and sufficiently motivated persons, which means the persisting problem preventing enhancing the intensity of innovation processes.

However, it is not exactly express the requirements placed on the level of qualification needed, considering the market volatility, which is the reason for the increasing significance of so-called key competencies. We thus speak of “transferable and universally versatile set of knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes needed for every individual for their personal fulfillment and development, for integration oneself into the society, and for successful employment” (The definition and selection of key competencies 2005).

Within the project called *Career Consultancy under the Conditions of the Curricular Reform* the attention was focused on ascertaining the requirements of employers in the quaternary (knowledge) sector placed on university graduates and at the same time on the readiness. The knowledge sector is the driving force for innovations in other sectors, particularly the industry and services; it establishes new markets and segments, generates innovative services, products or work

methods. It becomes the key to the economic development of the EU countries and of the global society.

The conclusions of 334 completely filled-out forms showed, in the confrontation with the key competencies being pursued (National Institution of Technical and Vocational Education of the Czech Republic), that in the forefront of all requirements considered by employers as absolutely **necessary/important** × unimportant, are: **communication skills**—oral and written communication skills (**87.2/12.2** × 0.5%), reading and work instructions comprehension (**85.9/13.0** × 1.0%), the ability to be responsible (**84.4/14.8** × 0.8%), the ability to solve problems (**84.1/15.6** × 0.3%), the willingness to learn (78.6/21.1 × 0.3%), the art of dealing with people (77.6/21.4 × 1.0%), the ability to make decisions (77.3/22.1 × 0.5%), the mastery of information handling (72.4/27.1 × 0.5%), the ability to present and express one's own opinion (71.1/27.3 × 1.6%), the mastery of using the IT technologies (68.2/29.2 × 2.6%), adaptability and flexibility (67.4/31.8 × 0.8%), the ability to manage stress (65.9/32 × 2.1%), the ability of teamwork (63.8/**32.6** × 3.6%), the ability to lead (53.6/**38.0** × 8.3%), the mastery of foreign language (43.1/38.6 × 18.3%) (Doležalová 2014). “The ability to communicate efficiently and achieve mutual understanding is often the measure of the success or failure in the development of the company or organization” (Štarchoň et al. 2015).

The survey also showed that the most common forms of cooperation between schools and enterprises (N = 311) are considered by employers to be: evaluated internships and training of students (55%), excursions (40%), unrated internships and training of students (34%), and participation of employees in the educational process, lectures in schools (32%). Other forms of cooperation are less frequent. The knowledge and experience exchange between schools and employers (16%), providing educational materials (16%), and announcing student competitions (15%). 83% of employers admit that they prefer graduates with the experience directly obtained in their company (Doležalová 2014). “When the cooperation is constructed with the effective communication process, the relationship is based on the trust, and it is linked to higher productivity with goods results and qualitative work performance” (Markaki et al. 2012, p. 322).

Problem Solution

According to the results of the national survey, just as requirements directing towards the inevitable setting-out and subsequent orientation on the development of key competencies, it is necessary to provide university students, in connection with the increasing quality for the future professional occupation, with the possibility of a wide range of study subjects reflecting the contemporary demands of the market (of employers) in continuity with the orientation on the **integration of the theory and practice**. It is not only the commercial sphere, but also the noncommercial one, which may extend possibilities of fully fledged employability for university graduates. On the other hand, it is university students who may successfully assist

nongovernmental organizations out of the enclosed circle of the lack of human potential and finances reflecting in the inadequate presentation of their activities.

The research survey (the third one within the project called COOPERATION focused on interconnection of the commercial, public, nonprofit, and academic spheres) realized in the form of a questionnaire survey in 263 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the Zlín Region again confirmed the interest of the organizations in cooperation with TBU, but it also proved that 50.2% of the NGOs see the mutual benefit in cooperation of an NGO with the academic world. 8.4% see the benefit in the assistance to the organization itself, 11% in terms of the future profiling of students. 17.5% see no benefit in such cooperation and 12.9% did not respond. From the perspective of future student profiling in marketing communications, a significant finding is proved that marketing and promotion of NGOs still do not correspond to professional level of such services, which opens new possibilities for graduates in the given segment. For 33.1% of NGOs, marketing activities are based particularly on promotional activities of the specific organization, 41.8% run these activities on the basis of intuition. Marketing and promotion in full range and significance are managed by 6.8% of the NGOs, and no marketing activities were discovered in 18.6% of the NGOs. The situation is confirmed also by the fact that only one organization (0.4%) stated that they operate a special marketing department, a qualified person was involved in 20.1%, in 54% of the NGOs marketing and promotion are dealt with by the person with the time to do these activities, in 8.7%, marketing and promotion is not managed at all, and 16.7% did not provide any specific response. 43.5% of the NGOs justified not integrating a marketing specialist by the lack of funding, and 11.6% by the lack of human resources, 39.9% do not perceive any reason to use services of a marketing specialist, and 4.3% of the NGOs did not respond (Göttlichová 2016).

The resulting values showed that “white spots” persist in the area of noncommercial marketing communications, which must be filled in, which means an opportunity for marketing communications students. The Marketing Communications Institute at the FMC TBU in Zlín, in continuity with the Europe 2020 Strategy, thus concentrates its attention on preparing qualified experts with the aim to increase their employability within the labor market.

The students may be introduced to the NGOs activities and operations in their real-life environment and conditions through regular internships and training within NGOs, through student work as volunteers, the selection of the topics for student coursework, bachelor’s as well as master’s theses oriented on noncommercial communications, particularly through the course called **Projects of nonprofit organizations**; they thus may participate in designing their own as well as submitted projects oriented on marketing activities of the given organization, they learn to be aware of common situations and to perceive them differently and in new contexts, and they especially become acquainted with and try new forms of project management in all its levels. Here, we may speak about the full integrity of the theory and real-life practice with the emphasis on the development of the above mentioned and such essential key competencies, such as for instance: the development of teamwork, presentation and managerial skills, the knowledge of start-up

of businesses, the support of the project-managed education—and this in continuity with the inherent development of cooperation between universities and employers, specifically in the nonprofit sphere.

Conclusion

The European cooperation in education and vocational training should not be directed only to achieving a certain percentage of people having university education, but it should be focused on ascertaining appropriate quality of education and employability of graduates within the labor market. The attention must also be paid to project-oriented education focusing on presentation and managerial skills and teamwork, to initiate and motivate students based on the development of key competencies because the labor market may be conquered only by those who can offer more than mere professional skills. And according to the results of the survey, employers will still appreciate those competencies in job applicants that may well be utilized and applied also within the everyday life.

References

- Doležalová, G. 2014. *Potřeby zaměstnavatelů a připravenost absolventů škol—šetření v kvartérním sektoru*, 45. Praha: Národní ústav pro vzdělávání.
- Europe 2020 strategy. 2010. http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_cs.htm. Accessed 8 Juli 2016.
- Göttlichová, M. 2016. *Analýza neziskového sektoru Zlínského kraje*. Projekt Kooperace vysokého školství, veřejné správy, podnikatelského a neziskového sektoru pro socio-ekonomický rozvoj regionu.
- Labour market. 2016. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics>. Accessed 12 Juli 2016.
- Markaki, E.N., D.P. Sakas, and T. Chadjipantelis. 2012. *communication management in business. the latent power for career development*. In *Proceedings of the 2nd international conference on integrated information*, Budapest, Procedia—Social and Behavioral Sciences, 319–326.
- Overview of Europe 2020—Target. 2015. <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/>. Accessed 12 Juli 2016.
- Štarchoň, P., and M. Jufíková et al. 2015. *Značky a český zákazník*. Zlín, VeRBuM, p. 104 *The definition and selection of key competencies*, 2005. <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/35070367.pdf>. Accessed 26 Juni 2016.