

HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to assess the human resources development policies in the universities. The assessment will focus on several key areas of HR policies: recruitment, motivation, training and career development in universities. The existing HR policies in Romanian universities will be compared with similar policies in various EU member states as well as by reference to the transforming processes of higher education in Europe (e.g. qualifications frameworks, internationalization of education etc.). If training policies are well defined and regulated in case of preuniversity education, it is not the same in case of higher education where the continuous training and lifelong learning processes are not embedded in national made policies, but rather embedded in less coherent institutional policies and individual actions. Within the restructuring of higher education recalled in the Bologna processes, training and development policies of academic staff need special focus. Recommendations to be made will be based on the assessment conclusions.

KEYWORDS: *higher education, human resources development, Bologna process, lifelong learning*

1. Particularities of the human resources policies in the higher education

This article is the first output of research initiated by the authors with regard to the human resources development (HRD) policies implemented in universities in Romania.

The methodology for conducting this study refers to makes use of: analysis of the relevant legislation as well as the relevant documents and strategies of the universities, surveys and questionnaires applied to a sample of the management and academic staff of the 10 important universities in Romania (with respect to the number of students enrolled in all 3 cycles and to the research activity – number of research projects and budget). Once the assessment of the current state of the human policies in higher education will be finalized, recommendations will be proposed by the authors.

This article synthesizes the preliminary conclusions of the existing legislation in the field of higher education and of the HRD policies/documents of the 10 important state owned universities in Romanian (Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, University of Bucharest, Politehnica University of Bucharest, University A.I. Cuza of Iasi, Technical University of Iasi, Babes Bolyai University of Cluj Napoca, Technical University of Cluj Napoca, West University of Timisoara, Politehnica University of Timisoara, University of Craiova and Ovidius University of Constanta).

The legislation in the field of higher education that was consulted by the authors refers to: Education Law (law 84/1995, consolidated version), Statute of the teaching staff

(law 128/1997, consolidated version), Education Code of 2009. The survey of the HRD policies in the 10 Romanian universities targeted the following areas: training policies for academic staff (in particular teaching staff), recruitment, motivation policies, career development policies, evaluation. In case of the ten universities surveyed, the analysis also aimed to identify if any document or strategy referring to the HRD policy areas exists; also another area of analysis was the correlation between the objectives and instruments of the HRD policy and the objectives of the university strategy/mission declared.

The legislation in the field of higher education contains provisions regarding the management and teaching/research positions in higher education and general access conditions to these positions. Accession to the positions of senior lecturer and university professors are conditioned by the doctoral degree and are confirmed by the Order of the Minister of Education. All teaching and research positions could be filled in by competition. Normal activities for university teaching staff include teaching, students' supervision, examinations and research-development-innovation activities.

The legislation and universities' regulations contain provisions referring the training of the teaching staff. In all universities surveyed the graduation, the access to teaching in any of the Bologna cycles is conditioned by the specific pedagogical training as a prerequisite. The new Education Code emphasis that continuous training of the teaching staff is mandatory, during the academic career; still certified continuous training programs for the academic staff in higher education are not operational, unlikely the situation in the preuniversity education in relation with both initial and continuous training programs for teachers are regulated by the legislation in force. The needs, standards and programs for academic staff training are nor regulated and operational. Although the new Education Code refers to continuous training of teaching staff in higher education, none of the 10 universities documents and strategies consulted do not contain provisions referring to the involvement/participation of the university to the development/implementing of continuous training programs for university teaching staff and/or the financial support granted to the staff for participation to training programs during their academic career. This situation may have negative effects on the quality and relevance of the teaching, and in the end on the quality of the higher education delivered.

According to the legislation in force and with the universities individual regulations, regular evaluation of the academic staff is an important element of the HRD policies. The main pillar of the performance based wages schemes (operational in some of the surveyed universities) is the academic staff evaluation processes and policies in the respective universities; similarly performance criteria/standards influences access to higher academic positions/degrees and career development. The framework evaluation criteria are detailed at the level of the universities (including threshold ceilings). In all of the universities surveyed, the quality of the teaching delivered in measured against the students' satisfaction and evaluation and this seems to be the only criteria in this respect. In all of the universities surveyed, the quality of the research conducted by the university teaching staff (usually measured by the number of the research conducted and the valorization of research by scientific publication) is an important criterion. The analysis reveals imbalances with regard to the weight of these two major issues: teaching quality/performances and research quality/performance for the teaching staff in universities; regardless that the university teaching staff/position are not full time research /research staff, still the quality of their teaching activities/skills is less important for their career development. This may explain why the continuous training for the university teaching positions is less present in the HRD policies in higher education. This focus on research in HR policies in universities could be explained by the fact that the declared official missions

of the 10 universities surveyed are to become „research oriented universities” or „research and education oriented universities”. Once this conclusion drawn, the authors extended the analysis to other 10 regional/small universities and universities with declared mission of „education oriented universities” selected on the random base. The analysis revealed the same prevalence of the criteria related to the research activities as compared to the teaching quality. All of the universities surveyed had standards/performance criteria for university teaching staff evaluation embedded in an official document (university Charta, internal regulations). Only one university had available an approved strategy for human resource development. In other cases, issues related to human resources in teaching positions were rather marginal and not embedded in a internal regulation or procedure or in the university Charta or in the quality manuals; in most cases provisions covered accession to teaching position and evaluation. A particular case was registered in case of a technical university which developed a procedure for „awareness and competences” of human resources. Although almost 50% of the universities surveyed referred to the continuous training opportunities of the teaching staff, both no coherent programs were available nor developed (at least 3 of the universities surveyed mentioned that the training of teaching and research staff by exchange of good practices, partnership with student community and teaching staff mobility). This indicates inconsistencies between declared mission and the availability of competences and skills of the university teaching personnel (HR policies) taking into account both the knowledge that the teaching staff possess and the capacity to transmit knowledge to the students.

If the factors of the knowledge triangle identified at EU level are considered¹, the capacity of the academic staff to transmit knowledge to the students and to integrate research results in the teaching processes, seem to be considered of a lower importance (as compared to the content of the university education programs). The policies to develop these capabilities to the teaching staff through continuous training programs are not part of a coherent vision/policy in case of the Romanian universities surveyed.

Diverse competence and qualifications requires, in universities, diverse profiles: applied research and innovation, pure research and educational research. If people with different competencies integrate, it has a great impact on higher-education policy.

In this context a number of measures could be suggested, including creating a workforce of skilled knowledge transfer staff in universities (and a professional qualification and accreditation scheme) In addition, voluntary guidelines to help improve knowledge transfer cover issues such as intellectual property management, incentives for researchers to participate in knowledge transfer activities, and the development of knowledge transfer resources². This knowledge transfer activities should cover both knowledge transfer to the industry (research, innovation and technology transfer policies, university-industry partnerships) as well as knowledge transfer to the students (learning content and teaching methods); the last area identified for the knowledge transfer covers development of specific competencies/capabilities of the academic teaching staff. This approach raises the need, in universities to ensure balance of the positions participating to the knowledge creation and transfer: teaching positions, research positions, management,

¹ See also the speech of the EU Commissioner for Education, Jan Figel and the conclusions of the DEAN Network “The knowledge triangle in the shaping the future of Europe”, 31 august-2 September 2009, Goteborg, Sweden

² European Commission (2007b), *Voluntary Guidelines for Universities and Other Research Institutions to Improve their Links with Industry across Europe*, SEC (2007) 449, European Commission, Brussels

professionals from industry etc. In this respect, in case of the Romanian universities' HR policies, one major weakness resides in the recruitment policies which are (limited to the graduates of the respective universities, according to the surveyed universities' regulations and procedures), while one major strength consists of the importance of the research activities/performances of the teaching staff in the evaluation policies and for career development (accession to upper side of the academic position pyramid).

2. Conclusions

Taking into considerations the findings revealed by the survey, the HRD policies are not sufficiently developed and present in the life of the academic community in Romania, in particular with regard to the university teaching positions. Based on the future results of the study initiated by the authors, future recommendations will be made.

References

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