

University's Contribution to the Development of the Future Knowledge Workers

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Abstract. The purpose of this research was to determine whether the economics and business administration higher education institutions from the European Union member states are facilitating the development of the future knowledge workers or not. In order to achieve this goal, we employed an exploratory research and we combined a qualitative approach with a quantitative one. We focused on the common courses that are taught in the best European Union higher education institutions, according to the QS World University Rankings. We applied a content analysis to 267 syllabuses that belonged to 21 economics and business administration faculties. Then we employed a logistic regression in order to determine if the teaching methods, used during the bachelor studies, can predict the development of the future knowledge workers.

The results have showed that the economics and business administration higher education institutions from the European Union member states tend to respond positively to companies' necessity by developing almost 50% of the "ideal" knowledge worker profile. Through their programs of study, they develop qualified persons, with an inquisitive nature, that will know what to do at their job (they will have the explicit knowledge necessary for performing their tasks), will keep in touch with what is happening in the micro- and macro-environment and will be capable of understanding and extracting the essential from a complex situation. Despite all these, due to a lack of communication and teamwork skills, their graduates will have difficulties in sharing their knowledge with others, writing a business project, report or letter, presenting their point of view, making a proposal to a colleague, manager or client or being part of a team.

Besides, we have demonstrated that the development of the future knowledge worker is influenced by the teaching methods used during the classes. The problem-solving activities, discussions and teamwork activities have the most powerful impact although some of them tend to be neglected. Only 26,22% of the analyzed disciplines use teamwork activities as a way of disseminating knowledge among students and for developing their skills. It seems to be overlooked the fact that this type of activity increases students' assertiveness, confidence, actively listening, communication skills, persuasion and compromise.

These findings have implications on both educational and managerial level. At the educational level, it reflects the vulnerable area of the educational process namely, skills development. It seems to be forgotten that education is more than just sharing explicit knowledge; it is about developing the current and the future citizens (in terms of what they know and, most important, what do they do with it), building characters and stimulating the need for lifelong learning. At the managerial level, it brings forefront the deficiencies of the future human resources and it indicates the need for adapting the organizational culture and practices. What had been overlooked by the educational system may be complemented by an open organizational culture, an inspirational leadership and an effective coaching process.