



ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL OF QUALITY OF EDUCATION OF STUDENTS IN KONSTANTIN PRES LAVSKY UNIVERSITY OF SHUMEN

BOGDANA GEORGIEVA, SNEZHANA NIKOLOVA

*KONSTANTIN PRES LAVSKI UNIVERSITY OF SHUMEN, SHUMEN 9712,
115, UNIVERSITETSKA STR.*

e-mail: bogdana_@abv.bg, e-mail: snikolova63@abv.bg

Abstract: *The period from 2009 to 2011 can be described with a quality of new moments, requirements and more and more complex criteria relating to the educational process and the whole education of students. Bulgaria, as a member of the European Union, holds up to the normative and strategic documents. The University of Shumen attends and necessitates the comprehension to execute these, who premise the development of higher education – the European Qualifications Framework and her endorsement into the “The National Qualifications Framework”(2011), “Manual of appliance of the credential system”(2009), “Europe 2020”(2010). The following article examines the quality education of students in the University of Shumen.*

Keywords: *quality education of students, insurance system, maintenance and development of the quality of education.*

Introduction

The University of Shumen “Konstantin Preslavsky” is an old intellectual place for education, science and culture in Northeastern Bulgaria. It’s development follows centuries-old traditions, which have been arisen and preserved to present times. During the year 2003 the university became a member of the European University Association (EUA), and in the year 2004 it received an ISO 9001: 2000 certificate for quality of education.

The main goal of the University of Shumen is: to prepare highly qualified and competitive personnel accordingly to the demand of the labors market and the requirements of the business environment in the region and in the country by:

- maintaining and increasing the quality of education and ensuring education throughout the whole life;
- stimulating scientific research and artistic activity;

- developing academic and institutional potential and placing in the center of the politics the student as a qualified partner and an active side of the educational process.

One of the goals, resulting directly from the goals of the University of Shumen refers to the preparation of highly qualified personnel based on europeanstandarts, scientific research, organizational and management activity; assessment and observation of the achieved results.

Main goal of the academic management is quality professional preparation of the future specialists, achieved by:

- fundamental whole-theoretical and practical preparation, that ensures integrative and interdisciplinary knowledge, required for the realization of highly professional activity;
- skills and experience corresponding to the requirement of the contemporary society, ensuring rapid adaption to the reality of professional labor;
- development of personal qualities, abilities and aspiration for continuous self-improvement and self-education;
- organization of an educational environment, that helps with the familiarization with the professional reality and challenges and for seizing the methods and techniques for an independent education, which ensures independence and freedom of the young specialist;
- having high requirements to the teaching staff to respect the personalities of the students, and being responsible when developing their professional competence;
- taking into consideration the requirements of the information society, by means of acquiring computer and informational competence
- having precise goals and philosophy about the optimal realization of future professionals.

In the recent years the accent of the direction of the quality of education in the University of Shumen is about control over the educational process and increasing the effectiveness of the factors, which help to improve the education. The quality of the education is observed as an integral property of the whole activity to the University. It is a result of the “congruence of purpose”, “continuous improvement” and “transformation”, all defined by the principles of the System for quality and by the improvement of the material, technical, informational and intellectual environment and the realization of intellectual processes, inherent to the University of Shumen as an institution.

The main goal in this sense is to raise the effectiveness of the System for quality in the University of Shumen. The educational process is attended as a process “education – learning”, in which the student is not a “client”. In that sense he is not buying the education as a finished product. The student is an active side, with strongly defined goals and motivations and uses his intellectual

capacities constantly, i.e. he is an active participant in the system, creating the quality of this product in the form of social usefulness. That is why the tendency is oriented towards priority directions like: quality of the educational process, searching and using effective forms of work with the student, in order to learn “how to work and learn by himself”, and to learn “how to work in a specific professional environment, etc. An obligatory addition towards the early mentioned priority directions is the ensuring of a maximum objective system for assessment of knowledge, abilities and the competency of students. To achieve this, the University has introduced a Rating system for evaluation of knowledge, abilities and the competency of the students, which is updated constantly. It is regulated through the institutions documentation for every student regarding lecture courses, seminar and laboratory exercises and independent work of the terminal control, when exams are taken or pedagogical practices are done. The quality of education of students depends on the quality of the faculty and the educational environment (material and informational equipment). The quality is tied together with the standard of an added value (standard for keeping the student), the costs of his education, with the realization of graduating the student. This realization is in a interrelationship University – Society.

The system for assurance, maintenance and development of the quality of education and the educational product has two main points:

- internal institutional self-assessment of the state and tendency regarding the factors for assurance, maintenance and the development of the quality of education and the results that follow it;
- external evaluation of the quality of the educational product – assessment from the consumers, students and employers.

One of the main goals for the System of management of the quality is studying the opinion of students and employers and their satisfaction with the quality of education in the University of Shumen.

This opinion and evaluation of all participators about the quality of the University is achieved through conducting two types of empirical sociological research (ESR).

The first one aims to study the opinions and assessments about the quality of education in the University of Shumen with professional fields and specialties.

The second type of empirical sociological study follows the quality of education according to educational courses and assessment the quality of teachers in relevant subjects.

The sociological information is required for assaying the quality of education in the University of Shumen according to educational directions, specialties and faculties in post-accreditation periods. The analysis helps to orient the academic leadership regarding:

- attitudes and expectations of the candidate student and their parents, when choosing the University of Shumen;

- the progress of education of the student in the different professional fields and specialties;
- attitudes, opinions and evaluation from the employers (consumers) regarding the professional capacity of the employees, who have graduated from the University of Shumen.

Through the methods the rules are regulated for the organization and the preparation of conducting an ESR in the University of Shumen. They are as follows:

- development of sociological tools;
- conducting a field research
- processing and analyzing empirical information;
- presenting the results from the ESR to the academic management.

The analysis of the results from the ESR is utilized to make managerial decisions and undertake corrective and preventive actions. The requirements of this method are applied in the basic groups, branches and service groups of the University of Shumen.

The analysis of the results from the functioning of the system for management of the quality is achieved through the following directions:

1. activity of the commission regarding evaluation and maintaining the quality of the academic faculty – the maintenance and management of the documents circulation is supervised;
2. assessment, maintenance, control and improvement of the quality of the educational process – the quality of the education is examined as a process of teaching – learning and by studying and analyzing the opinions of the students;
3. continuous education and learning throughout the whole life;
4. improvement of the material, technological equipment and the informational certainty;
5. improving the quality of the scientific and artistic activity;
6. politics regarding the staff and assessment of the academic faculty;
7. evaluation and control of the quality of the organizational-managerial capacity;
8. inner-institutional audits;
9. solutions of problems regarding accreditation.

In the following article the first two directions will be described in detail.

Regarding the first direction a series of measures have been taken. Synchronization has been made to the educational documentation. The qualification characteristics of all specialties are bound with the mission, goals and tasks of the University of Shumen for the preparation of highly qualified experts in the process of which, the development of disciplines regarding professional knowledge, abilities and competency are studied. The educational plans are actualized with the goal to accomplish the recommendations of the

Accreditation council of NAOA with programs and institutional accreditation of the decisions of the Academic staff and the specifics of the specialties. The auditory work load is increased by 200 hours. An additional work-load for individual work with the student is introduced. The educational programs are actualized for optimization of their content by: adding and expanding the structural elements in them, regarding the forms of independent work with the student in curricular and extracurricular occupation; the conditions and forms of semestrial control, admission to exams and examinational procedures; improvement of the mechanism for assessment of knowledge, abilities by using a rating system during the semester and exams in order to evaluate the readiness of the student for realizations of the achieved knowledge and abilities; motivation, when awarding credits, etc. A conclusion can be made that a new stage regarding the improvement of the quality of management of the documentation connected to the educational process has been achieved.

The second direction regards to the improvement of the quality of education as a process of teaching and learning, with the focus on the personality of the student. An optimal organization is created, when a new student is enrolled, with which the professional selection of the educated is observed. A wide marketing activity is done by the academic department of the University of Shumen with the aim to study the requirements of the labors market and attract students in the according professional directions. A considerable improvement has been made to the organization, the way of conducting, structure, range and the meaningful format of the admission campaign for new students.

The teaching in bachelors degree is conducted mainly in a full time form. However an exception is made to four specialties. One of the conditions for improving the quality of education and organization of the educational process is the increased admission of students precisely studying in a full time form. A higher flexibility in the organization of the educational process is acquired. Also, a strict control over the execution of orders regarding courses, groups and flow is introduced – two times a year before the start of every semester. The decisions of the Academic council are accepted regarding the way of preparation of abstracts and weekly syllabus of educational occupation from the main structural groups. Standards, norms, qualificatory requirements and criteria for the improvement of the quality of the educational process are maintained commensurable with these of the European universities.

Effort is made with the aim to improve the educational environment by refining the pedagogical technology; development of materials for the work of the students during lectures, seminars, exercises and practices; enrichment of the material, technical and informational basis. The student has a broad access to the worlds informational resources by using the informational and communicational technologies.

Measures are taken regarding the objective assessment of the theoretical and practical competency of the students. Valid methods regarding the quantitative and qualitative assessment of the abilities of the student and their readiness for realization of the learned skills and knowledge are being applied. With the special decision of the Academic council, the control upon the regular conduction of educational classes in all faculties in the University is reinforced.

In the University, supervision and control upon the extracurricular activity of the student is being done by:

- providing regular consultation to the students from the teachers, when preparing. To achieve this, every year a schedule is being made for the weekly consultations and the consultations during the exam sessions for every course and teacher, which are published in the website of the University;
- accomplishing permanent control of the knowledge and skills of the students, when working independently; assessment of the student's developed coursework, papers and other projects; evaluation during exams on different subjects in congruence with the accepted criteria, etc.;
- interacting with indicative students and including them into scientific research, projects, etc.;
- increasing the extra curricular activity with students that are falling behind
- making the organization of the educational process more dynamic by providing an opportunity for a choice, differentiation, flexibility and applying them to different modules of the subjects or a group of subjects.

In the University better conditions for transparency of the educational process are created in order to keep the student more informed. With students, from every specialization, that are for their first year in the institution, meetings and consultations are being organized, which are conducted by the heads of the departments. Side by side with the information regarding the organization of the educational process a rating system for assessment is explained. The students are presented with the universities "System for accumulating and transferring credits" and "The System for examination and evaluation of the knowledge and skills" regarding the acknowledgment, adjudication, accumulation of credits and assessment of the academic achievements.

During the first lecture the students are introduced by the teachers to the educational program that follows the specific subject. The rating scale regarding the evaluation of independent work is introduced beforehand; the significance of the control, during the semester and exam procedures in the final assessment to the studied subject, are defined.

The informational packet of the student is updated annually for every educational discipline, which the student can get to know in the website of the University. Also, the student has an access to:

- actual educational documentation (educational plan, programs, certificates of disciplines, exam procedures, criteria regarding evaluation of the students, exemplary tests, etc.);
- decisions made by the academic-managerial staff;
- information regarding competitions for scientific projects and etc.;
- ability for the student to express his opinion and give rating concerning the educational process, by using the students online forum in the website of the University of Shumen.

Periodically, in all of the faculties an inquiry is being conducted. They help to get to know the level of independence, responsibility and self-assessment regarding the educational material, style of teaching in different disciplines, motivation for attending the lectures, exercises and the attitude toward corrupt practices in the University. The students have the ability to express their opinion regarding the level of teaching, used forms of work, the transparency of the procedures during exams and the level of administrative service in the University of Shumen. The results of the inquiries are analyzed in the basic departments, which gives the opportunity for corrective measures from the faculties and other departments.

The practical preparation is one of the key priorities, when educating the students. In that sense the requirements connected with it are increased. The goals and assignments of different kinds of practices are actualized and the exact distribution of the activity of the participating in them students, lecturers and basic teachers. Actualization has been made to the criteria regarding the assessment of the practices and traineeship of the students and the awarding of credits. Instructions regarding the conduction of students practices are developed, which are included in the educational plans and thus the students can be introduced to the professional environment. Conditions are created that help for the successful adaptation in the professional environment of the future profession. Effective indicators are introduced regarding the cultivation of practical education of the students and for improving the system of competency, related to the professional-qualification suitability and preparedness for realization and career development.

In the University an informational system is created and maintained, which holds a register of the academic faculty and a register of the students and doctorates.

Conclusion

The indicated ascertainments allow to make the general conclusion that in the University of Shumen a transparency is ensured in the educational process by using clearly defined and valid criteria regarding the assessment of the acquired theoretical and practical readiness of the students.