

CZU: 378.02

MANAGEMENT OF THE INTERNSHIPS – STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS*Irina CARAUȘ**State University of Moldova*

Education is one of the fundamental pillars of the development of human personality, which directly influences the orientation of the economy and financial resources to support quality education. The actions undertaken to reform the education and readjustment to imperatives of changing society in the last decade, have created prerequisites for a continuous modernization of educational system in relation to the challenges of the national and international educational environment. The issue of qualitative internship and the necessity of its reconsideration on purpose of increasing of quality of initial professional training represents a specific goal in European countries, as well as in the Republic of Moldova.

Keywords: *university teaching, internships, teaching process, quality, professors, students.*

MANAGEMENTUL STAGIILOR DE PRACTICĂ – PUNCTE FORTE ȘI SLABE

Educația este unul dintre pilonii fundamentali ai dezvoltării personalității umane, care influențează direct economia și resursele financiare pentru a sprijini educația de calitate. Acțiunile întreprinse pentru a reforma educația și readaptarea acesteia la imperativele schimbării societății au creat în ultimul deceniu premise pentru o modernizare continuă a sistemului educațional în raport cu provocările mediului educațional național și internațional. Problema privind stagiul calitativ și necesitatea reconsiderării acestuia în scopul creșterii calității formării profesionale inițiale reprezintă un obiectiv specific atât în țările europene, cât și în Republica Moldova.

Cuvinte-cheie: *didactică universitară, stagii, proces de predare, calitate, profesori, studenți.*

Introduction

The necessity of studying the initial training is governed by reality of common European area with respect to higher education, being seen as a desiderate of implementation of a quality reform. The progressive development of the society reflected in the technical and scientific changes, contributes to re-conceptualization of new parameters of the initial training system, where the quality of education ensures the competitiveness [1].

Lately, in the states of the European Union, it has been noticed a correct perception and clear understanding of importance of the quality of trainings. Due to this fact, it was strongly highlighted the importance of internships and practical experience at the workplace, the last being considered as the key tools that help students, future alumnus in transition from the universities to the work place.

The issue of quality in education is a matter of utmost importance in the higher education paradigm. The outcomes of higher education are expressed by the quality standards, and are defined as the results of a project, and as a means of relationship between the labor market requirements, academic achievements, and evaluation criteria. Since the outcomes are realized by academic programs which determine the way of professional training, they should be designed at a high accuracy level.

The professional practical training has become an important learning tools in higher education. It's a valuable source of practicing and forming the professional competences of the future specialists by providing them with formative experiences.

The internship program attempts to foster the transfer of knowledge and experience sharing among students with the overall aim of promoting the increasing professional capacity of State University of Moldova students. The learning activities for student in organization should be designed and developed in relation to the practical training objectives inserted in specialized curricula. The learning activities may include assignments, briefings, visits depending on the student's specialty. These activities should constitute new, meaningful, and challenging experiences, and should be determined by a program supervisor by consultation of a supervisor from the university and the intern/company supervisor.

Analysis of the current practice situation

At the moment, many universities in the Republic of Moldova have rules or internal procedures which define more or less general issues regarding the professional practical training. They include:

- general aspects about orientation criteria for the training during the placement in a company;

- description of competences;
- organizational issues for the placement;
- responsible persons at institutional level.

The practical training in higher education is focused on:

- a) the general knowledge of the unit of practice in which the student is assigned;
- b) observation and analysis of the functional processes under the guidance of the coordinators (mentors) from the initial unit of the practical training;
- c) collecting information for the license / master thesis;
- d) drafting of the set of predefined documents and of the report on the practical training [2].

The characteristics of the management of professional practice:

- *Planning*. Practical training needs to be planned. The universities conclude partnership agreements with companies and each institution appoints a person in charge with practical training of students.

- *Organization*. The university organizes practical training not only from the perspectives of its insertion in curriculum or calendar, but also considering formal aspects that are included in the university curriculum. In addition, the specific organization process takes place in schools / companies, this involves the exact processes and operations that student have to accomplish.

- *Coordination*. For practical training there is a dual coordination, one at the university and another at the institution. The motivated teachers responsible for the practical training of students should explain the importance of practical professional training.

- *Monitoring*. The placement, monitoring and organizing weekly sessions at the university allow us to have a constructive feed-back with each student, in good time to correct the deviations that occur in the learning process.

- *Evaluation / Control*. The modern assessment, which promotes the transition from the notion of control of acquiring knowledge to the concept of assessing both the learning outcomes and especially the involved processes, means the transition from a pedagogy to the transfer of knowledge to a pedagogy of acquiring knowledge and science to become. Performance appraisal has a particular importance because: it provides an image of achieved performance, can exert a significant motivational function and is an objective basis for career development.

Despite their popularity and extensive history, there are surprisingly little researches in Moldova that investigate causes of practice stages effectiveness and how to conduct them better.

The purpose is to analyze the present status of the internship of license at the State University of Moldova, to share the outcomes of this academic-practice partnership and to provide a model for other institutions.

The research focuses on the training of students through practical training, advancing the conditions for development and self-realization in the context of the education programs.

After applying the questionnaires to organizing and conducting the internship we identified the following results of strengths and weaknesses of the management of professional practical of Moldova State University:

Table 1

Strengths and weaknesses of the management of professional practical training

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internships are regulated at the institutional level; - Is developed, an integrated curriculum of internships which ensures the systematic and integrated character of the vocational training through the practice of specialized practices; - We have the journal / agenda / practice book. The support offered by these products claims to be an effective guide for trainee students who practice the internship and is meant to guide and facilitate the educational process. The proposed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor regulated at national level; - Ineffective placements; - Difficulties in signing contracts with the basic units of practice and poor cooperation between university and labour market; - Partnership agreements between university and company which are only signed on papers and do not generate specific placements for students; - Lack of monitoring and coordination of trainees and mentors;

<p>material is structured in such a way that it offers: suggestions and recommendations regarding the achievement of the objectives of the practice, the structure and the content of the practice activities, requirements towards the activities and products of the practice;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validating volunteering as a place of practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of motivation for some students; - Relatively short period of internship is another problem for the students to experience for real in their specific professional field; - Understanding the practical placement only as a formal issue; - Inefficient collaboration between all participants involved in this process; - Lack of financing of practices (except those in the psycho-pedagogical module).
--	---

Moldavian higher education is on the threshold of great changes. Nowadays, it has become obvious that, only professional training education cannot form the professional personality of a graduate according to the requirements of the labor market. The reason of this is the difference between the professional and personal requirements in a university and a company/institution. But it's impossible to remove this difference completely without a strong ground which is formed during students' practical training. When we speak about institution/company requirements regarding the level of graduates' professional competencies and their real level, the great difference is seen especially in the field of practical skills. So, when Moldovan State University's students start the first practical training at the end of the second year of education they already possess sufficient theoretical skills, and less practical ones. They also, often take part in practical conferences, reporting the results of their practical training. Moreover, students try to do their scientific projects and graduate works at the organizations where they do the practical training.

Methodology. Analysis and interpretation of data

Both group interviews and the survey questionnaire have revealed that there is a number of obstacles faced by students in terms of initial vocational training, especially in internships. Statistical data processing allow us to perform an analysis with the following results:

Table 2

Results on the training of third year students for the realization of the pedagogical practice, Faculty of History and Philosophy

No	Criteria	Total agreement (%)	Agreement (%)	I do not know (%)	Disagreement (%)	Totally disagreed (%)
1.	The objectives / tasks of the internship are clearly established.	42,10	57,90			
2.	The specialized knowledge obtained at the faculty is of a high level and allows for the realization of the internship.	47,36	42,10	5,27	5,27	
3.	The psycho-pedagogical knowledge is of a high level and allows for the realization of the internship.	52,63	31,57	15,78		
4.	The knowledge in the field of didactics is of a high level and allows the realization of the internship.	31,57	52,63	10,52	5,27	
5.	Practical skills to design and realize a lesson.	31,57	57,89	10,52		
6.	Practical skills of communicating with students and resolving crisis situations.	15,78	57,89	26,31		
7.	Practical skills of communication and interrelation with teachers and parents	10,52	47,36	36,84	5,27	
8.	Research skills of educational problem	10,52	63,15	15,78	10,52	
9.	Preparing to carry out practice assignments	25,31	52,63	10,52	10,52	

10.	Learning from communicating with Methodist at the faculty	31,57	31,57	31,57		5,27
11.	Learning from communication with the psycho-pedagogic methodologist	25,31	36,84	36,84		
12.	Learning from communicating with the school teacher	57,89	36,84	5,27		
13.	Learning from the research project.	10,52	52,63	31,57	5,27	
14.	Learning from feedback sessions	15,81	63,15	10,52	10,52	
15.	Learning from teaching	57,89	36,84	5,27		

It is imperative that students have a clear vision of the goals they need to accomplish in practice. As it can be seen from Table 2, of the total respondents, 42,10% strongly agree with the fact that the goals and tasks of the traineeship are clearly established and 57,90 are largely in agreement, which denotes that students have gone with precise objectives and visions of what they have to do during their pedagogical practice.

Another important aspect pursued by the research is the theoretical training of students aiming at fundamental disciplines, aiming at acquiring the general knowledge and skills necessary for assimilation of specialized knowledge. From the table above, we notice that the level of specialized and psycho-pedagogical knowledge is higher than 80%, about 20% can not assess their status until they are in the internship and only 5,27% consider that they are not of a high level and does not allow it to be successful.

Regarding the skills of designing and realizing a lesson, as we can see from the presented data, 31,57% consider that they possess them totally, 57,89% agree with this statement and 10,52% do not know if they are able to design and realize a lesson.

Considering the previous item, the survey also has focused on communication skills with students and crisis resolution, in which we obtained the following data, 15,58% are well prepared to face these challenges, most of the students questioned, 57,89% think they have such skills and 26,31% do not know if they have communication skills with the students and if they can cope with the crisis situations that may occur along the practice.

By synthesizing students' answers to the research skills of an educational problem, we obtain that 73,67% have such abilities, 15,78% do not know whether they possess research skills and 10,52% are sure they can not research educational problem. Overall, 78,94% are trained to achieve the pedagogical practice, 10,52% of those who do not know or are not ready to do so.

Feedback is the core component, a reverse connection subsystem, a necessary condition for the normal and efficient running of the internship. Feedback should provide students with an explanation to what they are doing correctly and what not. The necessity of this is demonstrated by the high percentage of students requesting these sessions – 78,96%, of 10,52% are unaware of its effectiveness and only 10,52% deny the importance of feedback in the realization of the internship.

The quality of traineeships is mainly related to working conditions, staff attitudes towards the profession and compliance with the legislation in force. The management of the professional practical training is a complex process developed as a relationship among three entities: university, institution/company and student. Such positions ensure uniformity and centralized control of all related functions.

The students characterized the actors responsible for the practice coordination as being under-involved during the practical training. In order to elucidate the problem of the internship, a practical training based on a systemic approach is needed.

The objectives and benefits can be described in relation to this the three parties interested in the professional practical training.

Table 3

Roles, objectives and benefits of task, student and mentors

Ac-tors	University/Professors	Students	Institutions/Companies
Objectives	- to connect their teaching items to practice;	- to better integrate on the labor market; - to gain experience;	- to select students for internship programs; - to contribute to the quality training of the students or graduates;

B E N E F I T S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student placement; - increasing the prestige of the university; - quality evaluation of study programs through feedback from the employers on interns' performance provides an insight on our academic curriculum compliance with labour market requirements; - stronger connections with companies and employing firms; - inflow of research ideas; - increased relevancy of subsequent training at master degree; - economic development - of the society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - professional development of the student; - increased professional skills; - appropriately motivate them to study harder; - increased confidence in oneself and in one's abilities; - realistic exposure to career experiences in the student's chosen professional area of specialization and greater familiarity with the professional environment; - enhanced knowledge of a specific discipline, strategies, techniques, methodologies; - deeper appreciation of the key role of communication skills in future profession and development of communication skills they have at the moment; - to help them to decide the area that suits them best; - expand the network of professionals; - to better understand the labor market; - to develop the communication skills; - career development and prospects; - economic development of the society; - placement; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to increase the prestige of the institutions, - economic development of the society, - selection of students for potential recruitment; - initial inflow of ideas; - to provide value-added elements to the host organization that included: access to motivated, creative; - potential students, increased ability to identify and engage experienced students with state-of-the-art skills on initiatives which require consistent review and up-grading, - productivity of the company; - stronger connections with the academic institution.
--------------------------------------	---	--	---

As we see in this table, internships are a win-win situation for everyone including the students, university and industries. The internship program should be well designed, coordinated and monitored.

Conclusions

Education was, is and will always be one of the key elements of maintaining a culture and social development. More than in all the previous periods, now education is considered one of the essential pillars of a developed society based on knowledge and practice.

In the world of omnipresent changes it is mandatory for the changes related to education and professional trainings to be applied more intensely and widely in area of teachers trainings as well as in the trainings area. In order, to obtain a positive result in the initial training of students, it is necessary to combine theoretical and practical experience and activities, required in obtaining the desired effects and a good specialist for labour market.

The quality of theoretical training undoubtedly determines the quality of the internship and is pro rata with the level of the results obtained by the students. That is why, in all countries of the world, initial training is treated with the utmost seriousness and there are constantly carried out researches on the improvement of this process. Moreover, the internships are of a supreme importance, representing the key stage of harmonizing theoretical and practical knowledge, the stage of professional identity formation. Students' ability to transfer assimilated knowledge in real life is considered more valuable than just theory or information. The internship is a valuable source of practicing and forming the professional competences of future specialists by providing them with formative experiences.

References:

1. Council of the European Union recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships. Disponibil: www.consilium.europa.eu.
2. Regulament-cadru cu privire la stagiile de practică. Disponibil: http://aap.gov.md/sites/default/files/regulament_stagiu.pdf

Date despre autor:

Irina CARAUȘ, doctorandă, Școala doctorală *Psihologie și Științe ale Educației*; coordonator stagii de practică, Secția Managementul Calității, Dezvoltare Curriculară și Evaluare, Universitatea de Stat din Moldova.

E-mail: irinacaraush@gmail.com

Prezentat la 01.02.2019