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ТЕОРИЯЛЫҚ ЖӘНЕ САРАПТАМАЛЫҚ-ШОЛУ ЗЕРТТЕУЛЕР
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**THE HIGHER BUSINESS EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL TRENDS AND
EMPLOYERS' EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS GRADUATES' SKILLS**

Abstract

The paper discusses the major trends in the higher business education in global context and it is based on statistical data from reports of many governmental bodies and international organizations like UNESCO, UNO, British Council, United States Institute for International Education, The UK Department for Higher Education etc. On the other hand the paper examines the employers' opinion about the most important skills they value when they employ young graduates with business higher education and the mismatch between expectations and real situation. This part of the paper is based on analysis of secondary data from various international research on employers' opinion but on empirical data and conclusions as well from a survey with Bulgarian employers of companies as well from different sectors. The last part of the paper contains conclusions and suggestions for future activities on academic institutional level for improvement of the higher education in Bulgaria.

Key words: *business higher education, employers' expectations, graduates' skills.*

1 Introduction

Nowadays the education is an important priority in the strategy for development of the countries and the type and content of the higher education is one of the factors for self-determination of personality and his/her career path. The access to educational programs and active participation in them is a political instrument for overcoming of the negative consequences from globalization, the fast technological and structural changes (2000). In fact 12 years after joining of Bulgaria to the EU there is still not very effective the connection between education and research-activities which are institutionally divided in Bulgaria¹, but the administrative reform in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences did not lead to the expected results due to lack of financial results.

In the business higher education there has been a dilemma about its relevance to the needs of the business practices. Until 2 decades ago the stress in the universities and the business schools was put on the academic knowledge in the different professional areas but there was an explanation for this: most of the management, marketing and financial concepts were relatively new and relevant and were implemented successfully. But the dynamic development of the business environment and the rapid technological changes, the globalization of the markets and as well as the emergence of new markets led to slowly but secure balancing between both sides of the educational process – the theory and the practical aspects but the issue is still under question [1]. This is the reason why the problem about the relevance of the business education to the needs of the business practice is still actual around the world in the second decade of 21st century.

¹ In Bulgaria is an independent national research institution-The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences- Sofia which consists of nearly 40 research institutes but some universities do have their own research centers;

The boom of the social networks changed drastically the rules of the game for the companies and the business education. The world is globalizing and the multinational companies are striving to cope with the shift towards «new emerging markets». The companies from the developed countries need to acquire more knowledge for the local cultures and practices and to develop skills for quick decision making in different environments. The universities offering business education must help to fill the gap in the competences. On the other hand, the graduates of the Bulgarian universities with degrees in business have to work not only in companies on the Bulgarian market but in international companies operating on global level and for this reason it is important to investigate what is the opinion of the international employers about the business education on international scale as well as the Bulgarian employers about the competences and skills of the graduates in the country.

2 Materials and methods

The recent paper is based on a desk research on secondary information: statistical data, articles and papers of UNESCO, the British Council, the American Institute for international education, the EU, the Department for Higher Education in United Kingdom, the Foundation Akademischer Austauschdienst and other sources. Besides the paper comments the results of a surveys of Burgas Free University with employers of graduates from Bulgarian universities about their knowledge and skills but as well the survey data from a research in the frame of an academic projects 4 years ago.

The main goal of the study is to summarize and analyze the information about the main trends of the higher business education from international perspective – on bachelor and master's degree. The paper encompasses summarized secondary information from different surveys and studies about the employers' opinion in developed countries about the necessary skills and knowledge of the preferred candidates for jobs positions and their assessment of these skills. The paper presents primary information as well from 2 surveys with employers in Bulgaria – in 2014 and 2015 about the skills and knowledge of graduates – new comers on the labour market from Bulgarian universities. This is an important issue for the employers in Bulgaria as well for the Bulgarian universities with business degrees which are experiencing nowadays a direct competition with the branches of the international universities in the country. In addition, the strategic goals related to the increase of the Bulgarian economy's competitiveness and the wellness and prosperity of the society require continuous investments in building of a set of skills facilitating the carrier path of the high educated people in the country. The study objectives are as follows:

- to summarize and analyze the information about the main trends of the higher business education from international perspective;
- to conduct a review of the international trends in the business education on bachelor's degree;
- to discuss primary information from 2 surveys with employers in Bulgaria regarding their expectations and preferences towards the Bulgarian graduates' skills;
- to draw conclusions about the recent higher education in business in Bulgaria and the necessary changes and actions in the education on bachelor's degree in the country;

The limitation of the study is related to the differences in the research methodologies of the different studies, but in fact the skills portfolio in the international and the Bulgarian surveys is nearly the same.

3, 4 Results and discussion

Trends in the higher education on bachelor's degree in world scale

Before generalizing and presenting the trends in the business higher education, a review of some important trends generally in the higher education is conducted as this is the wide context where the business education is developing. The summarized information from a range of sources – international research, papers and articles reveals the following trends in the higher education in world scale in the last two decades.

- *Changes in the international students' mobility and impact on the students' skills*

A 2015 Lawlor Group report, for example, notes that «having students from other countries on campus can boost diversity, infuse the curriculum with a global perspective, and possibly provide a new source of revenue for many schools» [1-3]. The data are pointing out that the highest mobility show the Asian students – mainly from China, India and Korea as main generating markets for the higher education in Europe². Nearly every 6th student from all is from China and 53% of the international students in Europe are from Asia³. According to studies the British students are less inclined to study abroad than the students from other European countries⁴ thus only 6% of them are carrying part of their study in other country. Nowadays UK, USA, Germany, France and Australia are the most preferred countries for studying and nearly half of the international students are studying in these 5 countries⁵. Generally the biggest number of overseas students in the Western European universities is from China and India, but in some countries there is a big increase of the students from Africa – mainly from Nigeria⁶. Inside Asia there is another trend in the mobility and namely there is an increase in the students' mobility between the Asian countries through the so called Common Space for Higher Education which is stimulating the transborder students' mobility and academic integration in Southeastern Asia. Under the influence of the Bologna process there is already acting in Asia a Protocol for credit transfer between the universities.

As far as Latin America concerns, the universities there are internationalizing very fast – there is a huge flow from «outgoing» and «incoming» students. The biggest generating students' markets are Brazil and Columbia. The reason from one side is the big number of young people in both countries (for instance in Columbia they are 9 million) but from the other side there is the trend of Brazilian and Columbian employers to appoint mainly students with foreign degrees – from Europe and USA⁷.

At the same time a huge number of Chinese students are studying in Latin America and they are allowed to teach Chinese to the Latin American students. The African students prefer to choose bachelor programs in France, UK and USA and the forecasts are that this trend will continue but the range of preferred countries is increasing with Spain, Hungary, Italy and Poland⁸.

The students' mobility and studying abroad is an advantage not only in Bulgaria but in the other European countries as well when young people are applying for job positions as this of international study increases their employability [4-6].

According to recent studies, conducting part of the study on bachelor's or master's degree abroad helps students to build «soft skills» like cross-cultural communication skills, skills for problem solving as they have to cope with different complicated situations⁹. The Erasmus impact study (EIS) also observed the impact of mobility on different skills related to employability that could only be analyzed based on the statements of respondents. More than 90% of the students reported an improvement in their «soft skills», such as knowledge of other countries, their ability to interact and work with individuals from different cultures, adaptability, foreign language proficiency and communication skills¹⁰. According to recent study of the IIE Center for Academic Mobility Research and Impact the majority of respondents reported that their study abroad experience helped develop or improve intercultural skills, curiosity, flexibility & adaptability, confidence, and self-awareness to a significant degree. About half of respondents felt that study abroad helped increase their interpersonal skills, communication, problem solving, language skills, tolerance for ambiguity, and

²www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140129200018337, accessed 15 november 2018;

³<http://monitor.icef.com/2014/02/summing-up-international-student-mobility-in-2014/>, accessed 20 february 2014;

⁴www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/germany-aimsto-send-50-per-cent-of-students-abroad-by-2020/2016853.article , accessed 15 december 2018;

⁵Opp.cit; accessed 15 december 2018;

⁶Opp.cit., accessed 20 december 2018;

⁷<http://monitor.icef.com/2013/02/colombia-seeks-the-best-path-forwardfor-its-tertiary-sector>, accessed 20 december 2018;

⁸Opp. cit., , accessed 20 december 2018;

⁹http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf; www.frontiersjournal.com/documents/TrooboffVandenbergRaymonFRONTIERSJOURNALXVWinter2007-08-pdf.pdf; www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/study_by_ii_e_daad_bc.pdf, accessed 15 march 2019;

¹⁰http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf , p.15, accessed 20 march 2019;

course or major-related knowledge to a significant degree [7]. According to 64% of the employers in other international research project «the experience abroad» of the candidates for jobs is a crucial factor in the selection process for employment due to the economy globalization¹¹. As a result of these trends there is a tendency of branches and campuses opening of Western European universities abroad. At the beginning of 2016 there are 220 campuses settled outside of the home countries of the universities. Some of the most active in international invasion are the UK universities and business schools – those from Nottingham, Lancaster, Middlesex, Stratcliffe, London which have campuses in China, Abu Dhabi, Pakistan, Mauritius Island and in some Central European countries. Nottingham University has campuses in Asia as well – China and Malaysia¹². The American universities with degrees in business are even more active than their Western European competitors and they have branches and campuses in nearly all Western European countries, in Eastern Europe incl. in Bulgaria but in Australia, Asia, Northern Africa as well – in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria¹³.

- ***Internationalization of the higher education***

One of the main subjects of numerous reports, articles and books is the internationalization of higher education institutions [8-10]. Scholars and authors from different countries researching the phenomenon recognize that it cannot be easily conceptualized because it is a complex and multifaceted process [11,12]. Anyway one of the widely recognized definition of internationalisation of higher education is this which defines it as «the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution» [13, 14]. The updated Knight's definition of internationalisation is that «internationalisation involves the incorporation of global, international, intercultural dimensions into goals, objectives, content and delivery of higher education [15].

- ***Academic partnerships, alliances and consortia***

Two or more higher education institutions can form broader international partnerships, committing to collaborate on several initiatives (student and faculty exchanges, joint programs, faculty research, etc). The agreement between them is to open their respective courses and programs to students enrolled in the partner's institution who can receive two degrees, one from each institution. Common research funds are created to support research projects carried out by teams of faculty members from both institutions [16]. The partnership can also enter into academic joint-ventures to create new joint programs. Examples of alliances and consortia between universities include the International Alliance of Research Universities and Universitas. An example of an international alliance in the business education sector is the one established in 2002 between the Wharton School of University of Pennsylvania and INSEAD, the international business school with campuses in France and Singapore. Students enrolled in one school's MBA program can attend courses offered by each institution. They also have access to the placement services of the partner institution. Faculty could teach part of their load in either institution.

- ***Strengthening of the cooperation between universities and research bodies and institutions***

During the last 5-6 years there is a significant growth of the international research co-operation between a variety of educational and research institutions from many countries. One of the good practices is the Zurich Centre for global sustainability of the environment (ETH) in Singapore established in 2010. The Singapore-ETH Centre aims to provide practical solutions to some of the most pressing challenges on urban sustainability. Through its programs, the centre serves as an intellectual hub for research, postgraduate and postdoctoral training, and entrepreneurship, bringing together principal investigators and researchers from diverse disciplines and backgrounds¹⁴. To promote the exchange of ideas and expertise, researchers at the center actively collaborate with universities and research institutes from other countries.

¹¹нақ там; accessed 20 march 2019;

¹²<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/study-abroad/china-malaysia-campuses.aspx> , accessed 20 may 2019;

¹³<http://www.fulbright.org.uk/going-to-the-usa/postgraduate/educationusa-advice/choosing/type-of-university/american-universities-overseas> , accessed 25 may 2019;

¹⁴<http://www.sec.ethz.ch/About.html> , accessed 10th april 2019;

The new initiative British-American Research Cooperation on Global Problems – the Global Innovation Initiative is a higher education partnership grant opportunity established in 2013 between the United States and the United Kingdom aimed at strengthening multilateral research collaborations between universities in the U.S., UK, and other selected countries¹⁵. The Global Innovation Initiative awarded grants to university consortia from different countries focusing on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-related issues of global significance that foster cutting-edge multinational research and strengthen institutional international partnerships. The main goal of the Global Innovation Initiative is to strengthen the global mobility of the students, the researchers and university teachers between the countries.

In the European Union those initiatives are supported exclusively by the «Horizon 2020» Program – the biggest multinational research program in the world so far. The EU will invest 80 billion euro for research and innovative products between 2014 and 2020, part of which will be realized by big interdisciplinary research teams from a couple of countries. Another example is the EEA Programme Grants (the financial mechanism of the European Economic Area) which is financing interinstitutional projects including with partners from Iceland, Norway, Lichtenstein, Bulgaria and other Eastern European countries¹⁶.

• *Growth and diversification of the connections between universities and business in international scale*

This trend is from one side a result of the research funding cuts by the state in many countries and from other side the universities' awareness in other countries than their own e.g. is increasing and this is a sign that one important marketing goal of the higher education is achieved namely strengthening of the higher educational brands. France is one of the best example in this direction where was even established a new university Paris-Saclay which is playing a role of «knowledge hub» from Paris to California. The campus is first funded with 7.5 billion euro and will be sheltering the university, research institutes, high tech companies and start-ups which means it will play the role as business incubator – all together 19 institutions¹⁷. Besides the partnership growth between academia and business there are growing fears in some Western European countries that in many cases the corporate interests will dominate the research interests supported by them. Transparency International-Germany and other non-profit organizations focused their attention on the fact that there is a need for clear rules and requirements in the field of the applied research and the relationships between both parties in the process.

International trends in the business higher education and employers' expectations

Despite of the fact that the trends generally in the higher education and in the business education are nearly the same a special attention will be paid on the trends in the business education both on bachelor and master's degree. The globalization changes not only the way of world and markets functioning but as well as the skills and capabilities the employers require from the candidates for job positions. According to the research paper of the organization Hannover Research there are some outlined trends during the last decade in the business education on a world scale¹⁸.

• *Providing opportunities for innovative practical training in the business degrees which encompasses:*

- Paid placement (usually 1 semester) which is given a very valuable professional experience.
- Education through problem solving: the students work in order to analyze and solve concrete problems of real companies. This is in fact an «active learning» through conducting a type of consulting service. This research reveals that the «active learning» requires a high level of institu-

¹⁵www.iie.org/en/Programs/Global-Innovation-Initiative/About#About; accessed 22 april 2019;

www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/opportunities/global-innovation-initiative-grant , 23 april 2019;

¹⁶<https://eeagrants.org/Who-we-are> , access 15 April 2019;

¹⁷<https://www.universite-paris-saclay.fr/fr> ,<https://www.universite-paris-saclay.fr/fr/research-entreprises> accessed 25 may 2019;

¹⁸<https://www.hannoverresearch.com/newsroom/2019-higher-education-forecast/> , accessed 16 may 2019;

tional and teachers' support¹⁹. In the curricula there must be a serious match of the teaching goals with the opportunities for practical training [17].

In this context the majority of the Bulgarian universities due to gained projects over the European Operational Programme Human Resources for actualization of their teaching programs conducted much work and improved their curricula and teaching programs in the Bachelors' degrees in business. The Faculty for Business Studies at Burgas Free University fulfilled the same project and redeveloped and improved nearly 70% of its teaching programs. The students were provided paid placements in successful companies in the region where they applied their knowledge and skills for solving business problems and the feedback from the employers was very satisfactory.

Besides the active learning through the paid work placement and the integrated curricula other two trends are observed in the higher business education:

- *High degree of curricula customization/individualization in many universities*

There are universities in Europe and USA with small options for curricula customization²⁰, but the majority are offering to the students a wide range of opportunities for adaptation of the curriculum to the specific needs and desires of the students in order to achieve a higher satisfaction level with the teaching documentation and process. This circumstances are revealing the fact that even in the field of the higher education products the approach is becoming more marketing oriented with the aim to shift the offering closer to the demand on the educational market. This is of course possible if there are sufficient student numbers part of which are forming groups with very similar interests which are choosing the same catalogue subjects. The customization and individualization of the curricula is needed due to other reason as well: Trends in higher education indicate that another key audience for enrollment is adult and non traditional learners. In the United States and other countries, the number of adult learners returning to higher education, particularly for continuing education, is expected to rapidly increase. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, «in recent years, the percentage increase in the number of students age 25 and over [18] has been similar to the percentage increase in the number of younger students, but the rate of increase is expected to be higher for students age 25 and older in the coming years».

- *The education on a bachelor degree in many universities encompasses compulsory international placement of the students*

Some universities in USA like the University of Southern California launched on the international educational market a «Global bachelor in Business» which students carry a placement in a couple of countries – Italy (Milano), South Africa and Australia. Most of the universities in UK and Germany have introduced a compulsory component in the curricula – a partial study of the students in another country in order to gain complimentary skills to cope with problems in unusual or crisis situation. Nowadays nearly 1/3 of the students in Germany are studying 1 semester or 1 year with work placement in other countries. Germany has planned till 2020 to have 50% of its students with international experience during their study²¹. In Bulgaria the universities offering a dual diploma have compulsory 1 semester study or placement in other country but also most of the universities have an Erasmus+ agreements and send part of their students for 1 semester abroad.

- *Growth of the e-education and continual extending of the portfolio of programs*

Another trend related to the bachelor's and master's degree is the growth of the e-education which is offered in most of the universities worldwide as well as in the Bulgarian universities by continual extending of the portfolio of specialities. At the same time there is a combined form of education where part of the education is conducted online by interactive methods and part of the activities are with physical presence of the students. The e-learning since 7-8 years has a serious

¹⁹Opp.cit.

²⁰В много публикации вече се използва терминът кастъмизация (customization), както когато говорим за кастъмизация на предлаган продукт т.е. неговата индивидуализация или приготвяване максимално към потребностите на клиентите;

²¹www.iie.org/Programs/Generation-Study-Abroad24; www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/germany-aims-to-send-50-percent-of-students-abroad-by2020/2016853.article; http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmusimpact_en.pdf; www.frontiersjournal.com/documents/TrooboffVandebergRaymonFRONTIERSJOURNALXVWinter2007-08-pdf; access 15 may 2019;

competitor in the face Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs, as a complimentary mechanism through which the skills gap may be bridged. Faced with this dilemma, «graduate students», or more specifically newly graduated students with a bachelor's degree, and a growing number of employers are turning to MOOCs [19] and this is a big challenge to the universities. The Internet portal Baloon which is offering a rich catalogue of online courses through the platforms Coursera, Udacity²² as well as a variety of lectures of experts from Adobe and Microsoft. The goal of the Appolo Education Group is an integrated offering of online courses in order to optimize the connection between knowledge, skills, education and employers and the Group will become in the future even stronger competitor of the universities. As many studies and surveys after 2008 reveal that the higher education in business do not meet to a great extent the needs of the businesses in different sectors, some academic people conjure the business high schools and the faculties for business to unite and to undertake joint actions for curricula improvement.

International employers' opinion about the graduates 'skills in business

Various research with employers from different countries point out that they prefer to employ young people with strong communication skills, critical thinking, sensitivity towards the cultural environment, high ethical standards and leadership skills²³. After the financial crisis in 2008 and the lack of corporative ethics in some companies like Evron the topics of business ethics and corporate social responsibility gained bigger importance²⁴. This is the reason why the majority of the universities in Europe and USA have done a huge work in order to develop such curricula and training programmes for business degrees which suit the current situation. Research reveals that a big part of the West european and American universities have introduced in their curriculum subjects like Change management, Corporate social responsibility and Decision making in unsecure environment²⁵. A big research with the students of the 50 best business schools in the world reveals that the number of students which are interested in these subjects and want to study them is increasing²⁶. Recent research with employers of many institutions and organizations including this of the Association of the American colleges and universities lead to the following conclusions²⁷:

- generally only between 1/4 and 1/3 of the employers share the opinion that the American and Western European universities are preparing adequately the students for the global economy and the actual challenges and they need to improve their education and training;
- nowadays the job candidates with a bachelor degree must possess from one side wider skills and knowledge but at the same time deeper knowledge in specific professional area [19];
- employers recommend to the universities and colleges to focus on education process closely related with the practice [20]; According to other survey 73% of the managers point out that also colleges are not completely preparing students for the working world [21].
- the employers prefer to employ bachelors who are able to prepare and conduct research and analysis based on data (evidence materials);
- the employers in international scale prefer to employ job candidates with a creative and critical thinking and experience with regards to acquired knowledge and skills implementation in real environment²⁸. A study of Carnegy foundation regarding «Rethinking of Undergraduate Business Education» discovers, that the education on bachelor's degree is to a big extent «closed» and can not inspire and challenge the students to think creative, to ask important questions and to understand the business place in wider institutional context²⁹.

²²<https://www.coursera.org/specializations/excel-mysql> ; <https://eu.udacity.com/courses/all>, access 25 may 2019;

²³<http://monitor.icef.com/2014/02/summing-up-international-student-mobility-in-2014/>, accessed 20 february 2014;

www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140129200018337, access 15 march 2019;

²⁴www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/germany-aimsto-send-50-per-cent-of-students-abroad-by-2020/2016853.article9, access 10 january 2018;

²⁵BizEd2, <http://bbvchamber.com/biz-ed2-conference-set-for-june-23rd/>, access 21 december 2019;

²⁶<http://monitor.icef.com/2014/02/summing-up-international-student-mobility-in-2014/>, accessed 20 february 2014;

²⁷www.iie.org/Programs/Generation-Study-Abroad, accessed 18 march 2018; http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf; www.frontiersjournal.com/documents/TrooboffVandebergRaymonFRONTIERSJOURNALXVWinter2007-08-pdf.pdf; access 20 february 2019;

²⁸http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf, access 15 march 2018;

²⁹www.iie.org/Programs/Generation-Study-Abroad, accessed 20 march 2018;

- the study shows that the international employers do not have significant remarks for the subjects taught and they do not have serious requirements for drastic changes in the curricula eg. the teaching content and structure but they insist for more practical skills building³⁰.

The AQU Catalunya Employers survey from 2014 which consists of a total of 1,325 online interviews carried out with employers operating in Catalonia points out the following results about their opinion concerning the skills and employability of the graduates³¹: on a scale from 1 to 10, the skills that employers in the sample considered to be most important were demonstrating responsibility at work (8.9), the ability to acquire new knowledge (8.4) and team working (8.3). The least important were negotiation skills (6.4) and leadership (6.6). Overall satisfaction with the skills of recruited graduates was 7 out of 10 (medium to high)³². Although the rating varied according to the skill, all skills were given at least a pass mark of 5. On a scale from 1 to 10, the skills that employers in the sample were most satisfied with were computer skills (7.9), demonstrating responsibility at work (7.6), team working (7.5), theoretical skills (7.2) and the ability to acquire new knowledge (7.0). They were least satisfied with leadership (5.8) and negotiation skills (5.7).

The branches of economic activity where foreign language skills were rated the lowest were construction and building (6.1), mass communication media (6.8) and business services (7.4). Foreign language skills were considered to be more important in large enterprises (8.4), compared to medium enterprises (7.9) and small and micro-enterprises (7.1). The largest differences between the employers' views concerning the importance of and satisfaction with graduates' skills were in problem solving (-1.7), practical skills (-1.6) and the ability to generate new ideas (-1.5). These skills are therefore considered to be where there is more scope for improvement.

Bulgarian Employers' opinion about the skills of graduates with education in business and economics

A survey with a sample of 395 Bulgarian employers from different sectors of economic activity conducted over a project of Operational Programme Human Resources 2014-2020 revealed similar results with those of surveys with employers from other countries [34]. The main goal of the survey was to collect primary information about the employers' assessment of the skills and knowledge of the graduates in business employed in their companies. The data collection method was personal self-administered interview and the research method applied to achieve the survey's goal was IPA (Importance-Performance Analysis) which is giving valuable information about the gaps between the skills importance and the graduates' performance. The information can help the Bulgarian universities to improve their curricula and teaching programs in direction of the expected by the business skills and knowledge which will help the graduates to adapt easier to the labour market and the requirements of the employers. Despite of the differences in the research methodologies from both tables bellow is visible that the opinion of the Bulgarian employers about the question which are the important skills for the graduates is matching to a great extent. Both the Bulgarian and the foreign employers are expecting from the graduates-candidates for a job position to possess critical thinking, to be able to analyze logically different problems and situations and to have good communication skills-verbal and writing (see table 1 and 2).

*Table 1 – Communications and interpersonal skills: mismatch between importance and assessment**

| Indicators | Importance | Assessment | Gap |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|-------|
| | Mean | Mean | |
| Verbal communications skills | 2,62 | 2,14 | 0,48* |
| Written communications skills | 2,64 | 2,04 | 0,60* |
| Foreign language | 2,28 | 1,92 | 0,36* |

³⁰Opp. cit.

³¹ Employers Perceptions of the employability and skills of recent graduates in Catalonia, Agenda per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya, 2014, http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_22232964_1.pdf, accessed 25 may 2019;

³²Opp.cit.

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Skills for team work | 2,85 | 2,27 | 0,58* |
| Respect to others | 2,82 | 2,25 | 0,57* |
| Mean (the group) | 2,64 | 2,12 | 0,52 |

* the cited publications #10 and 11;

** statistical significance by $p=0,05$

According to the survey the Bulgarian employers appreciate together with the skills «analytical thinking» and «ability to problem solving» the skill «learning and new knowledge acquirement» as well which is important in the era of rapid developments and changes (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Cognitive skills: mismatch between importance and assessment* *Когнитивни умения*

| Indicator | Importance | Assessment | Gap |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Mean | Mean | |
| Analytical thinking (the ability for logical problem analysing) | 2,73 | 2,07 | 0,66* |
| Skills for problem solving | 2,77 | 2,11 | 0,67* |
| Ability to learn to absorb new knowledge | 2,82 | 2,26 | 0,56* |
| Intellectual skills | 2,67 | 2,21 | 0,46* |
| Understanding of the organizational structure and functioning | 2,48 | 2,12 | 0,36* |
| Willingness and curiosity for learning | 2,68 | 2,09 | 0,59* |
| Innovation/Creativity | 2,58 | 2,07 | 0,52* |
| Ability for application of the theory in practice | 2,66 | 2,04 | 0,62* |
| Mean (group) | 2,68 | 2,12 | 0,56 |

* statistical significance by $p=0,05$

The Bulgarian employers alike the employers in Western Europe, USA and Asia admire specific knowledge and skills depending on the sector of economic activity where the company is operating. In the survey instrument were included questions for investigation which is the expected specific knowledge in the area of finance, marketing, sales, accounting etc. but this is now not a subject of the study.

To some extent similar results with the national employers' sample are provided by the traditional employers' survey conducted by Burgas Free University since year 2005 with companies in the region. The last survey pointed out that the following skills are gaining the highest percentage of the assessment «very good» – «computer skills», «foreign languages», «adaptivity» as well as «professional knowledge» (between 58.3% and 75.0%)³³. The skills on which there is a needs for more training and more focus in the professional training is the «analytical thinking» – 41.7% (see Table 3) which is pointed out with high importance in the national employers' survey and a relatively big gap between importance and assessment (see Table 2).

Table 3 – Employers' evaluation of the skills of BFUs graduates*

| Indicator | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Average |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|--------------|---------|
| Professional knowledge | 58,3% | 41,7% | - | 4,6 |
| Communications skills | 50,0% | 50,0% | - | 4,5 |
| Computer skills | 75,0% | 25,0% | - | 4,8 |
| Foreign language skills | 66,6% | 16,7% | 16,7% | 4,0 |

³³Other study with employers in North America points out similar results and namely the majority (59%) of executives think that graduates who want to pursue advancement and long-term career success at their organizations need in-depth knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_304_en.pdf;

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|---|-----|
| Analytical thinking and skills | 41,7% | 58,3% | - | 4,4 |
| Innovativeness | 41,7% | 58,3% | - | 4,4 |
| Adaptivity | 66,7% | 33,3% | - | 4,7 |
| Skills for team working | 58,3% | 41,7% | - | 4,6 |

*Source: Report of employers' survey of Burgas Free University for year 2015, unpublished;

There is gradually an increase of the employers' assessments of the graduates' skills in the period of the last 10 years by 4-6% for different skills and this is a stable trend. Important is the fact that despite of the differences in the methodologies of the cited studies there are not significant differences in the employers' opinion from different countries with regard to the necessary graduates' skills for their future placement and career.

5 Conclusions

The main conclusion from all research and empirical studies during the last decade points out the need of changes not so much in the curricula content of the high business schools and universities but changes in the teaching methods and approach and namely there is a need for a shift towards more active and interactive education – business games, online teaching and training, longer placements in real business environment, case studies discussion and solving real business problems in the turbulent business environment of the companies.

First: The higher education institutions in Bulgaria and abroad must place emphasis on development, evaluation and measurement of the students' capabilities and skills in various areas and not only assessment of the acquired knowledge but they have to provide an argued feedback as well.

Second: Taking into account that according to the international and Bulgarian research data and reviewed secondary information, the employers in international companies prefer to employ candidates showing analytical, creative and critical thinking and that's why the universities with business education should develop and implement methods for creative thinking and attitude formation as well as methods, tests and techniques for stimulating a development of analytical thinking.

Third: In order to secure favorable conditions in Bulgaria for successful application of the knowledge triangle «higher education – research – innovations» the state institutions must provide significant funding of joint projects between universities and companies encompassing R&D and other useful for the business practice projects. It will be better if the state provides separately special «Innovations Funding» for the universities – state and private – namely financial funding for their most innovative projects developed by students which will stimulate the students' creativity.

Fourth: The Bulgarian universities must develop more the *experiential learning* – the process of learning through experience, more specifically defined as learning through reflection on doing as distinction from the didactic learning, in which the learner plays a comparatively passive role. This approach offers an opportunity for the students to develop their skills, confidence and capability to identify opportunities and solutions and put their own ideas into practice.

Fifth: The education in Bulgaria on bachelor degree in business must include international placement as it will strengthen their competitiveness on the labour market. Due to the delay of the country in this aspect the state institutions and especially the Ministry of education must support the efforts and the goals of the universities with funding, contacts and activities. The international placement should be at least 30 days which will help the students to receive observations and information from the real business practice.

The issue of education – job skills match is the most important issue in the field of education development and improvement and it continues to be studied and discussed. In the contemporary search for excellence of the higher education there must be continually research about the changes, improvements and weaknesses of the higher education in Bulgaria.

Having in mind the dynamic changes in the business environment in global aspect and the growing need of a wide range of knowledge and skills of the graduates, the Bulgarian universities

offering education in business must undertake more activities related to the above pointed suggestions and this will support the young graduates to become more competitive on the Bulgarian and international labour market.

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АНАСТАСОВА Л.

ЖОҒАРЫ БИЗНЕС-БІЛІМ: ТҮЛЕКТЕРДІҢ ДАҒДЫЛАРЫНА ҚАТЫСТЫ ЖҰМЫС БЕРУШІ-ЛЕРДІҢ ХАЛЫҚАРАЛЫҚ ҮРДІСТЕРІ МЕН ҮМІТТЕРІ

Мақалада ЮНЕСКО, БҰҰ, Британ Кеңесі, АҚШ халықаралық білім беру институты, Ұлыбритания департаменті сияқты көптеген мемлекеттік органдар мен халықаралық ұйымдардың баяндамаларынан статистикалық деректерді пайдалана отырып, жаһандық контексте Жоғары бизнес-білім берудегі негізгі үрдістер, екінші жағынан бизнес саласында жоғары білімі бар жас түлектерді жалдағанда күтілетін және нақты жағдай арасындағы сәйкессіздік пен олар бағалайтын ең маңызды дағдылар туралы жұмыс берушілердің пікірі қарастырылады. Құжаттың бұл бөлігі жұмыс берушілердің пікірлері әр түрлі халықаралық зерттеулердің қайталама деректерін талдауға, эмпирикалық деректер мен қорытындыларға, сондай-ақ әр түрлі сектордағы компаниялардың Болгар жұмыс берушілерінен сұрастыру негізінде негізделген. Құжаттың соңғы бөлігі Болгариядағы жоғары білімді жақсартуда академиялық институционалдық деңгейде болашақ қызмет үшін тұжырымдар мен ұсыныстарды қамтиды.

Кілт сөздер: жоғары бизнес білімі, жұмыс берушілердің үміттері, түлектердің дағдылары.

АНАСТАСОВА Л.

ВЫСШЕЕ БИЗНЕС-ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ: МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ТЕНДЕНЦИИ И ОЖИДАНИЯ РАБОТОДАТЕЛЕЙ В ОТНОШЕНИИ НАВЫКОВ ВЫПУСКНИКОВ

В статье рассматриваются основные тенденции в высшем бизнес-образовании в глобальном контексте, с использованием статистических данных из докладов многих государственных органов и международных организаций, таких как ЮНЕСКО, ООН, Британский совет, Институт международного образования США, Департамент Великобритании для высшего образования и т. д. С другой стороны, в статье рассматривается мнение работодателей о наиболее важных навыках, которые они ценят, когда они нанимают молодых выпускников с высшим образованием в сфере бизнеса, и несоответствие между ожиданиями и реальной ситуацией. Эта часть документа основана на анализе вторичных данных различных международных исследований мнения работодателей, а также на эмпирических данных и выводах, а также на основе опроса болгарских работодателей компаний из разных секторов. Последняя часть документа содержит выводы и предложения для будущей деятельности на академическом институциональном уровне для улучшения высшего образования в Болгарии.

Ключевые слова: бизнес высшее образование, ожидания работодателей, навыки выпускников.

МАЗМҰНЫ

КІРІСПЕ СӨЗ 3

ТЕОРИЯЛЫҚ ЖӘНЕ САРАПТАМАЛЫҚ-ШОЛУ ЗЕРТТЕУЛЕР

Анастасова Л. Жоғары бизнес-білім: түлектердің дағдыларына қатысты жұмыс берушілердің халықаралық үрдістері мен үміттері 5

Байжанова С.А., Балгабаева Г.З. Мектепке дейінгі жастағы балалардың Қазақстан Республикасының тарихы мен мәдени құндылықтарына құрметпен қарауды қалыптастыру 17

Бондаренко Ю.Я. Қазіргі білім беру жүйесінде тарихи және көркем бейнелерді пайдалану 21

Бондаренко О.Ю., Бондаренко Ю.Я. Шаршаған адам. Тарих және қазіргі заман 26

Есіркепова К.Қ., Ихсан Д.М. Ұлықбек Есдәулет поэзиясындағы метафора қолданысы 32

Жандауова Ш.Е., Жабагина Ж.Р. Бастауыш сынып оқушыларының дүниетану сабағында танымдық қызығушылығын дамыту 39

Оспанұлы С., Мырзагалиева К. Абай өлеңдерінің қара сөздерімен үндестігі 43

ЭМПИРИКАЛЫҚ ЗЕРТТЕУЛЕР

Агеева С.В. 13-14 жас шаңғы-жарысушылардың спринттік қашықтыққа физикалық дайындығының ерекшеліктері 50

Аканов Ш.К. Студент жастар арасында салауатты өмір салтын қалыптастыру 58

Гурская И.Ф., Гынбаев Ж.А. Қазақстан Республикасы ұлттық құрамасының конькимен жүгірушілердің нәтижелілігін арттыру мүмкіндіктері 62

ПӘНДЕРДІ ОҚЫТУ ӘДІСТЕМЕСІ ЖӘНЕ ТЕХНОЛОГИЯСЫ

Бекенова А.Қ., Сатбаева М.Т. «Педагогика» курсы бойынша семинар сабақтарын ұйымдастыруда педагогикалық жоғары оқу орындарын оқытудың жаңа тәсілдерін қолдану 69

Даулетбаева Г.Б., Ерсұлтанова З.С. CLIL форматындағы оқыту стратегиялары 74

Ерсұлтанова З.С., Сәбит З.С. Білімді тексеруде және информатикадан сабақтар өткізуде Classroom құралын қолдану 78

ЖАС ЗЕРТТЕУШІЛЕРДІҢ ҒЫЛЫМИ ЕҢБЕКТЕРІ

Аканбаев Б.Н., Шамитдинов А.М. Мұғалімдердің эмоционалды күйіп кетуінің алдын алу технологиясы 83

Рядинская А.И. Қазақстандағы желілік әдебиеттің дамуы Самрат Иржасовтың шығармашылығы мысалында 87

Ташетов А.А., Отынбай Д.О. Медиа-білім оқытудың online жүйесінде студенттердің медиамәдениеті мен медиақауіпсіздігін дамытудың шарты ретінде 92

Турлубаева Д.К. Қостанай облысында музыкалық білім берудің қалыптасуы 96

«РУХАНИ ЖАҢҒЫРУ» БАҒДАРЛАМАСЫН ЖҮЗЕГЕ АСЫРУ

Мукашева Б. Х., Рысбек Н. Рухани жаңғыру және білім берудің жанарудағы рөлі 101

МЕРЕЙТОЙЛЫҚ ҚҰТТЫҚТАУЛАР 104

Оспанұлы С. Өмірзақ Сұлтанғазин (Өмірзақ Сұлтанғазинді еске алу) 105

БІЗДІҢ АВТОРЛАР 106

АВТОРЛАРДЫҢ НАЗАРЫНА 112

СОДЕРЖАНИЕ

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| ВСТУПИТЕЛЬНОЕ СЛОВО | 3 | |
| ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ И ОБЗОРНО-АНАЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ | | |
| <i>Анастасова Л.</i> Высшее бизнес-образование: международные тенденции и ожидания работодателей в отношении навыков выпускников | 5 | |
| <i>Байжанова С.А., Балгабаева Г.З.</i> Формирование уважительного отношения к истории и культурным ценностям Республики Казахстан у детей дошкольного возраста | 17 | |
| <i>Бондаренко Ю.Я.</i> Использование исторических и художественных образов в системе современного образования | 21 | |
| <i>Бондаренко О.Ю., Бондаренко Ю.Я.</i> Человек усталый. История и современность | 26 | |
| <i>Есиркепова К.Қ., Ихсан Д.М.</i> Применение метафоры в поэзии Улыкбека Есдаулетова | 32 | |
| <i>Жандауова Ш.Е., Жабагина Ж.Р.</i> Развитие познавательного интереса у младших школьников на уроках познание мира | 39 | |
| <i>Оспанұлы С., Мырзагалиева К.</i> Гармония стихов и слов назидания Абая | 43 | |
| ЭМПИРИЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ | | |
| <i>Агеева С.В.</i> Особенности физической подготовки лыжников-гонщиков 13-14 лет на спринтерские дистанции | 50 | |
| <i>Аканов Ш.К.</i> Формирование здорового образа жизни среди студенческой молодежи | 58 | |
| <i>Гурская И.Ф., Тынбаев Ж.А.</i> Возможности повышения результативности конькобежцев национальной сборной Республики Казахстан | 62 | |
| МЕТОДИКА И ТЕХНОЛОГИЯ ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ ДИСЦИПЛИН | | |
| <i>Бекенова А.К., Сатбаева М.Т.</i> Использование новых подходов обучения педагогических вузов в организации семинарских занятий по курсу «Педагогика» | 69 | |
| <i>Даулетбаева Г.Б., Ерсултанова З.С.</i> Образовательные стратегии в формате CLIL | 74 | |
| <i>Ерсултанова З.С., Сәбит З.С.</i> Использование Classroom для проверки знаний и проведения занятий по информатике | 78 | |
| НАУЧНЫЕ РАБОТЫ МОЛОДЫХ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЕЙ | | |
| <i>Аканбаев Б.Н., Шамитдинов А.М.</i> Технология профилактики эмоционального выгорания учителей | 83 | |
| <i>Рядинская А.И.</i> Развитие сетевой литературы в Казахстане (на примере творчества Самрата Иржасова) | 87 | |
| <i>Ташетов А.А., Отынбай Д.О.</i> Медиаобразование как условие развития медиакультуры и медиабезопасности студентов в системе online обучения | 92 | |
| <i>Турлубаева Д.К.</i> Становление музыкального образования в Костанайской области | 96 | |
| РЕАЛИЗАЦИЯ ПРОГРАММЫ «РУХАНИ ЖАҢҒЫРУ» | | |
| <i>Мукалиева Б.Х., Рысбек Н.</i> Духовное возрождение и роль образования в модернизации | 101 | |
| ЮБИЛЕЙНЫЕ ПОЗДРАВЛЕНИЯ | | 104 |
| <i>Оспанұлы С. Умирзак Султангазин (Посвящается памяти Умирзака Султангазина)</i> | 105 | |
| НАШИ АВТОРЫ | | 108 |
| ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ДЛЯ АВТОРОВ | | 115 |

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION..... 3

THEORETICAL AND OVERVIEW-ANALYTICAL ARTICLES

Anastassova L. The higher business education: international trends and employers' expectations towards graduates' skills..... 5

Baizhanova S.A., Balgabayeva, G.Z. Formation of a respectful attitude to history and cultural values in children of preschool age..... 17

Bondarenko Yu.Ya. The use of historical and artistic images in the system of modern education..... 21

Bondarenko O.Yu., Bondarenko Yu. Ya. A tired man. History and modernity..... 26

Esirkepova K.K., Ikhsan D.M. Application of the metaphor in the poetry of Ulikbek Esdauletov..... 32

Zhandauova Sh.E., Zhabagina Zh.R. Development of cognitive interest in younger students in the classroom learning the world..... 39

Ospanuly, S., Myrzagaliyeva, K. Harmony of Abai's poems and edification words..... 43

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Ageeva, S.V. Features of the physical training of skiers-racers 13-14 years old at sprint distances..... 50

Akanov, S. K. Formation of a healthy lifestyle among students..... 58

Gurskaya I.F., Tunbaev Zh.A. Opportunities to improve the results of skaters of the national team of the Republic of Kazakhstan..... 62

METHODOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY OF TEACHING DISCIPLINES

Bekenova A.K., Satbaeva M.T. Use of new approaches to teaching pedagogical higher education institutions in organizing seminar lessons in the pedagogy course..... 69

Dauletbaeva G.B., Ersultanova Z.S. Educational strategies in the CLIL format..... 74

Yersultanova Z. S. Sabit Z.S. Usage of classroom for training and testing of the knowledge on informatics..... 78

SCIENTIFIC WORK OF YOUNG RESEARCHERS

Amanbaev B.N., Shamitdinov A.M. Technology of prevention of emotional burnout of teachers..... 83

Ryadinskaya A.I. The development of the network literature in Kazakhstan by the example of the art of Samrat Irzhasov..... 87

Tashetov A.A., Otynbai D.O. Media education as a condition for the development of mediaculture and media security of students in online education system..... 92

Turlubayeva D.K. Formation of music education in Kostanay region..... 96

REALIZATION OF THE PROGRAMME «RUKHANY ZHANGYRU»

Mukaliev B.H., Rysbek N. Spiritual revival and the role of education in modernization..... 101

ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS..... 104

Ospanuly S. Umirzak Sultangazin (Dedicated to the memory of Umirzak Sultangazin)..... 105

OUR AUTHORS..... 110

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS..... 118