‘LEARNING BY DOING’ OR HOW TO QUICKLY AND EASILY MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

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Abstract

The historic events at the end of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century marked everyday life and the lives of many societies in a special way. The consistent change of the status in the progress of societies favours the process of emergence and development of modern information society, based on knowledge. This has resulted in a radical change in the mentality of people, as well as to the overall reorganization of the political, economic, educational and cultural consolidation of a number of countries.

The effect of this change was most strongly felt with the shift of perceiving economics as a manufacturing process of goods, including the existing knowledge on the use of labour, machinery, tools and various technologies. The perception of production as a process of reproducing a finished product has changed and evolved into the idea of producing new knowledge, or rather modern production includes all intermediary processes and operations, necessary for the production of new knowledge. A consequence of this change is the modern notion of economy as "knowledge economy", which focuses on knowledge and skills and promotes them as the most valuable economic qualities of a personality. Universities have changed significantly over the years. However, they have preserved their original purpose as educational and cultural centres, where an average person can obtain important knowledge and skills for life. Today, educational institutions are facing new challenges and problems, related, on the one hand, to the access and quality of services offered and, on the other hand, to the issues concerning the motivation of young people in acquiring new knowledge.

A good example in this regard is the International Southeast Summer University, organized by the University Youth Academy for Knowledge Management at the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (SULSIT) - Sofia, Bulgaria, in its role of a modern university alternative educational model. Thanks to it, different opportunities are created for young people to organize their scientific and educational activities in accordance with university syllabi. In their fieldwork, they successfully apply a methodology that is based on the architectural approach, which provides wide opportunities for structuring a set of knowledge to successfully implement changes such as initiatives, ventures, missions, activities, product creation, and services. The interpretations and implementation of this approach are carried out in the context of an intensive and qualitatively new transfer of scientific knowledge. In other words, the architectural approach is suited to exploring dynamic and complex objects that are described with the help of a large amount of data. Its matrix provides different perspectives on the researched object and thus allows the creation of a holistic model. This methodology of change includes: an analysis of what has been achieved in the particular field; indication of unresolved tasks; determining the necessary apparatus for solving them; researching good practices; analysis of the results and approbation. On the other hand, the presence of quantitative and qualitative results from field work is a motivation for students to participate in various scientific conferences, seminars, forums, interviews, etc. At these events, using new technologies, students successfully and interactively present their views and opinions on issues related to their professional and personal development.

Keywords: modern information society, knowledge economy, university, experience, learning by doing, architectural approach, methodology of change.

1 INTRODUCTION

The historic events at the end of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century marked everyday life and the lives of many societies in a special way. In this regard we should not forget that each generation contributes with their own understanding (comprehension) for life to the development and progress onwards. Basically it is a process of assimilation and improvement of different knowledge and values. In developed societies these values and knowledge are differentiated because they are strongly influenced by the following major factors. One of them is the historical destiny of
people that has resulted in the scope of borders and territories, the political and economic situation of the relevant countries. The other factor is the specific culture, formed as a result of the philosophical and religious views on the emergence and the existence of man. The dynamics in the biological and technological development of mankind has caused, over the last few decades, a twist in the outlook of many individuals. It has rapidly changed the past (already) and has created a positive attitude towards communication, the exchange of ideas and capital among different societies and peoples. A fact that cannot be denied is that today people communicate much faster, much easier and have access to huge databases of information. In this regard, scientific and technical progress has been facilitating the dissemination of information and knowledge sharing. However, it has also resulted in a radical change in all spheres of public life, based on the importance of knowledge.

The consistent change of the status in the progress of societies favours the process of emergence and development of modern information society, based on knowledge. This has resulted in a radical change in the mentality of people, as well as to the overall reorganization of the political, economic, educational and cultural consolidation of a number of countries.

The effect of this change was most strongly felt with the shift of perceiving economics as a manufacturing process of goods, including the existing knowledge on the use of labour, machinery, tools and various technologies.

The perception of production as a process of reproducing a finished product has changed and evolved into the idea of producing new knowledge, or rather modern production includes all intermediary processes and operations, necessary for the production of new knowledge. A consequence of this change is the modern notion of economy as "knowledge economy", which focuses on knowledge and skills and promotes them as the most valuable economic qualities of a personality. To summarize so far, we should mention the fact that building Information society has led to the creation of knowledge economy and knowledge in economy is a requisite that leads society to progress.

1.1 Modern University Information Environment

Universities have changed significantly over the years. However, they have preserved their original purpose as educational and cultural centres, where an average person can obtain important knowledge and skills for life. Today, educational institutions are facing new challenges and problems, related, on the one hand, to the access and quality of services offered and, on the other hand, to the issues concerning the motivation of young people in acquiring new knowledge. Due to this, motivation is the main focus in international forums dedicated to science, education and business in the 21st century. Among the most common issues is the lack of motivation to learn and acquire different skills and competencies.

1.2 International Southeast Summer University

A good example in this regard is the International Southeast Summer University, organized by the University Youth Academy for Knowledge Management at the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (ULSIT) - Sofia, Bulgaria, in its role of a modern university alternative educational model. Thanks to it, different opportunities are created for young people to organize their scientific and educational activities in accordance with university syllabi, as well as with their personal desires and interests.

Generally speaking, we can assume that the model represents a system of methods and rules that create opportunities for interaction, on the one hand, between teacher and student, and, on the other, between tutor and learner.

The experience and practice that the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies has in this regard shows clearly that the motivation process is a set of coherent, logically connected procedures, factors and conditions through which the individual builds his/her own mental attitude towards the whole process of learning. In these cases it is essential to create with more young people a good attitude to learning, namely by supporting and clarifying their needs. Therefore, the motivation process should be considered in two directions - in terms of forming their own mindset on the part of the individual (intrinsic motivation) and in terms of motivational attitude of a person formed by other individuals (extrinsic motivation).

In this particular case and based on our experience in the field of extracurricular training, we can say that Abraham Maslow’s theory coincides with the policy of ULSIT for effective training of young people. E. Maslow considers motivation a part of the inner human potential, and believes that it is
formed and managed on the basis of the individual and spontaneous choices that people make in their lives.

According to Maslow, tutors should motivate students and doctoral students to participate in various extracurricular activities that will help them to step up in regard to the overall educational process.

2 METHODOLOGY

One of the main objectives, laid down in the organization and in conducting the International Southeast Summer University, is tutors to be able to motivate students to discover and rediscover themselves, their knowledge and their abilities, allowing them, in the process of learning, to use the institutional prestige of the university, the experience and authority of teachers and last but not least students’ own experience. So far, practice has shown that this is the way students and doctoral students acquire new knowledge and are motivated to read and learn much easier. That is why it is essential for young people, in the process of training, to be able to have different opportunities, to discover themselves, to develop their self-esteem and self-criticism, and based on that to be able to reach a higher educational, cultural and economic level.

For this reason, in the learning process, the focus is placed on specifically and purposefully organized situations and interactions where students, through experiential and emotional reflection (awareness of their feelings and emotions) acquire different knowledge and, most of all, skills. The International Southeast Summer University aims to support and encourage research in various fields of science and, in particular, to increase the motivation of students to participate and perform research, archaeological excavations and field research in the southeast border area of the Republic of Bulgaria, which is the external border of the European Union. When it comes to school, however, instead of allowing students to learn by doing, we create courses of instruction that tell students about the theory of the task without concentrating on doing the task. It’s not easy to see how to apply apprenticeship to mass education. So in its place, we lecture. There are better alternatives to teaching people of all ages new things. Once again, it is the experience of the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies in increasing the motivation of young people to demand and absorb new knowledge, which shows that when students or doctoral students are in real life training conditions they react much more quickly and adequately to assigned tasks. This is also due to the fact that they are not detached from reality. What is more, they can see and understand their role in real time, as well as their place and significance not only in the learning process, but in a further, professional environment, too.

The International Southeast Summer University poses certain demands on all participants. One of the most important is the requirement for the active participation of BA, MA and PhD students, when they can skillfully demonstrate knowledge, acquired at the university before that. Performing specific and targeted activities in one or other area of research work creates prerequisites for probable situations from everyday working environment. In this case, the effectiveness of the participants in the International Southeast Summer University is much higher than traditional practices implemented so far in the field of education and science because the communication between different, vocationally oriented young people is encouraged in this way and it results in stimulating and increasing the interest in learning.

Quite naturally it is supported by the fact that within the International Southeast Summer University scholars and experts from various fields of science are invited. They give lectures to students and doctoral students in order to increase their motivation, knowledge and skills. The lectures are devoted to the problems and prospects of the creation and formation of values by applying an information approach, focusing on copyright, industrial property, cultural heritage, science studies and their practical dimensions that are an important part of the development of modern information society. At this point we must point out that all this is carried out on the basis of pre-established and proven over the years links and partnerships between ULSIT in the role of an educational institution and its local partners: municipalities, museums, libraries, community centers, NGOs and others.

Based on established, stable relations between state and private institutions, serious and thorough research is carried out in various fields of science. This cooperation aims to contribute to increasing the motivation of students, doctoral students and young scientists. The organization of the summer universities is managed by eminent and qualified tutors, who, in the course of conducting training activities work together with outstanding doctoral students, BA and MA students, thereby achieving
excellent diffusion of knowledge as well as collaboration of skills and communication among all participants in the process of acquiring certified skills.

It is important to mention the fact that in some cases practical activities are guided by prominent, well-trained students who organize themselves and manage to quickly assess situations in real time and genuine environment. The students, using the opportunities made available to them by the University, succeed in establishing contacts with representatives of various institutions, management structures, thereby building stable bilateral ties. In the cases where it is necessary for tutors to intervene - it is done in a delicate way in order not to disrupt the motivation of students. The aim of summer universities is through establishing useful links and contacts with various cultural institutions, local structures and NGOs, to train appropriate practical habits and skills in young people for independent scientific work and for real life challenges.

3 CONCLUSION

Academic practice and accumulated experience in this area indicate the need for adequate timely and relevant feedback, necessary to improve the motivation of young people and the effectiveness of the learning process. Through the feedback a student can learn when he/she has fulfilled the tasks and has been able to achieve the goal. This makes them feel content, competent and confident enough and motivates them enough to set a further, higher goal.

Thanks to the innovative approach in conducting the International Southeast Summer University, students are encouraged to participate in other extracurricular activities, too. This proves crucial for the formation of their outlook and for the perception of science as a meaningful center of human existence.

One of the most important stages in conducting the International Southeast Summer University is to disclose and promote research materials and results.

The availability of quantitative and qualitative results motivates students to participate in various conferences, seminars, forums, interviews, etc., where, with the help of new technologies, they successfully and interactively presented their views and opinions on matters related to their professional and personal growth.

Thanks to the successful organization and the excellent results, reported at the end of the event, the International Southeast Summer University is perceived as an innovative method in conducting scientific and research activity, which appears to motivate young people to successfully handle tasks in real fieldwork conditions.

REFERENCES


