CONSIDERATIONS ON INDICATORS AND BENCHMARKS TO MONITOR PROGRESS IN STUDENT PRACTICE

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Abstract: In our specific plan in student practice, relevant indicators should cover the following, as appropriate: the detailed technical specifications of any proposed new survey, the availability and relevance of existing data, the comparison of the data, a timetable for the development work to be undertaken, an estimate of the infrastructure required for such development work and subsequent data collection, appropriate management and support structures, to be involved in methodological and development work, to continue work on the development of a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks.

Keywords: considerations, indicators, benchmarks, monitor progress, student practice.

Introduction

The objective of the present paper is to make some considerations on the criteria and indicators to monitor progress in student practice.

In the current European context "Petru Maior" University of Tîrgu Mureş in partnership with the Employers Confederation of Industry and Trade Services - Office of Mureş County Employers, Club Association „ŞI NOI PUTEM REUŞI" and Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines is implementing the "The clubs network for promoting adaptability and sustainable development" – ReCADD Project, financed by the ESF - SOPHRD 39/3.2/G/37787 [11].

We intend to use the experience from this project into student practice. We know:

1. the Spring 2000 Lisbon European Council's call for Europe's education and training systems to be modernised in response to the demands of a knowledge-based economy and the increasing socio-economic and demographic challenges confronting the Union in a globalised world [2];
2. the March 2002 Barcelona European Council conclusions, which set the overall goal of making European education and training systems "*a world quality reference by 2010*" and which, with that aim in view, endorsed a set of common objectives for the improvement of those systems [3];
3. the detailed work programme on the follow-up of those common objectives – generally referred to as the "Education and Training 2010" work programme – which included an indicative list of indicators to be used for measuring progress towards the implementation of the thirteen concrete objectives through the open method of coordination;
4. the Council conclusions of May, 5th, 2003, which established a set of reference levels of European average performance in education and training (benchmarks) to be used as "*one of the tools for monitoring the implementation of the detailed work programmeme*" [4];

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5. the Maastricht Communiqué of 14 December 2004, in the context of the Copenhagen process, which made the improvement of the scope, precision and reliability of VET statistics a priority, arguing that adequate data and indicators are the key to understanding what is happening in VET and that additional interventions and decision making are required by all parties involved [5];
6. the Bergen Communiqué of 19-20 May 2005, in the context of the Bologna process, which called for comparable data on the mobility of staff and students, as well as on the social and economic situation of students in participating countries, as a basis for future stocktaking [6];
7. the Council conclusions of 24 May 2005, which invited the Commission to report back to the Council on "*progress made towards the establishment of a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for following-up the Lisbon objectives in the area of education and training*" [7];
8. the Council conclusions of May, 19th, 2006, which invited the Commission to report back to the Council on progress in developing a European Indicator of Language Competence [8];
9. the Council conclusions of November, 13th, 2006, which called on the Commission to devote "*attention to the development of the VET components within the coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks"*;
10. the Council's key messages in the field of education and training to the Spring 2007 European Council, which emphasised that "*educational policies and practices require a stronger evidence base*" and that '*there is a need to develop a culture of evaluation and research*' [9];
11. the Commission communication of February, 22nd, 2007 entitled "*a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training*", which proposes 20 core indicators that the Commission considers coherent with the policy objectives under the "Education and Training 2010" work programme [10].

Methodology

European experts reaffirm [10] that: the development of new indicators shall fully respect the responsibility of Member States for the organisation of their education systems and should not impose undue administrative or financial burdens upon the organisation and institutions concerned; periodic monitoring of performance and progress through the use of indicators and benchmarks is an essential part of the Lisbon process; there is a need to continue to improve the quality of data produced by the European Statistical System, in particular to ensure valid, internationally comparable and, where appropriate, gender-specific data; there is a parallel need to continue to enhance cooperation with other international organisations active in this field, in order to improve international data coherence and comparability, to avoid duplication and to satisfy EU data needs that cannot be met within the European Statistical System (ESS).

Experts concede: the importance of concerted and continuous efforts to develop a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks in close cooperation between the Member States and the Commission; the Commission communication entitled "*A coherent framework*

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of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training" as an important step towards the establishment of such a framework, that defining a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks is a continuous and consultative process, as regards both the selection of new indicators and the definition of the individual concrete indicators [10].

RESULTS

In the current European context we have analysed the situation of students who perform their practice within Petru Maior University of Tîrgu Mureş (Table 1).

Table 1. *Centralised data regarding student practice within the "Petru Maior" University of Tîrgu Mureş*

Faculty/Specialization	**Year**	**Sem.**	**Number of hours**	**Number of students**
FACULTY OF ENGINEERING – Long-term education				
Automation and Applied Informatics, Computer Science, Electroenergetic systems engineering				
	III	II	120	28+35+34
	IV	II	120	41+35+28
Engineering and environmental protection in industry, The industrial economy engineering, Machine Manufacturing Technology				
	II	I	42 (3 hours x 14 weeks)	27+25+30
	II	II	28 (2 hours x 14 weeks)	
	III	I	42 (3 hours x 14 weeks)	39+38+30
	III	II	28 (2 hours x 14 weeks)	
	IV	I	28 (2 hours x 14 weeks)	30+36+35
	IV	II	84 (6 hours x 14 weeks)	
FACULTY OF ENGINEERING – Master Degree				
Quality management systems				
	II	II	56 (4 hours x 14 weeks)	26
Energy management systems				
	II	II	98 (7 hours x 14 weeks)	27
TOTAL				***544***
FACULTY OF SCIENCES AND LETTERS – Long-term education				
Informatics				
	II	II	60 (30 hours x 2 weeks)	36
History, International Relations and European Studies				
	I	II	60 (30 hours x 2 weeks)	20+20
	II	II	60 (30 hours x 2 weeks)	28+21
Romanian language and literature-English language and literature				
Long-term education	II	II	60 (30 hours x 2 weeks)	44
Part-time learning	II	II		19
Applied Modern Languages, Communication and Public Relations				
	II	II	60 (30 hours x 2 weeks)	20+35
TOTAL				***243***

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FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, LAW AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES – Long-term education				
Management, Accountancy and computer science for administration				
Long-term education	II	II	90	66+55
Part-time learning	II	II		37+18
Commerce economy, tourism and services, Finance and banking, Public Administration				
	II	II	90	66+50+58
Law				
Long-term education, Part-time learning	II	II	90	63+31
	III	II		65+12
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, LAW AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES – Master Degree				
Business management, Human Resource Management				
	II	II	90	29+40
Accounting and auditing, Banking and financial management				
	II	II	60	28+14
TOTAL				***632***

The "Petru Maior" University of Tîrgu Mureș together with the organisations in which the student practice takes place have found that it is useful and necessary to conjugate the efforts to meet the specific needs identified for the target group. These needs intend to promote adaptability and sustainable development of flexible forms of work organization, specific training, ensuring health and safety at work. In this way we are able to create a rich and diverse organisational culture, to overcome the concepts of duality and judgment of our lives, to accept globalisation, to develop confidence in a changeable system through personal involvement, development of a platform focused on promoting the adaptability and sustainable development, in traditional activities and Internet [1]. We know that, generally, we use the following indicators:

- higher education graduates,
- participation of adults in lifelong learning,
- cross-national mobility of students in higher education,
- educational attainment of the population,
- special needs education,
- ICT skills,
- investment in education and training, including their composition, data sources, costs and other relevant technical specifications,
- civic skills,
- adult skills,
- professional development of teachers and trainers,
- language skills,
- learning to learn skills.

These indicators are of interest to the student practice.

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Conclusions

In our specific plan in student practice, relevant indicators should cover the following, as appropriate: the detailed technical specifications of any proposed new survey; the availability and relevance of existing data; the comparability of the data; a timetable for the development work to be undertaken; an estimate of the infrastructure required for such development work and subsequent data collection; appropriate management and support structures, to be involved in methodological and development work; to continue work on the development of a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks.

This work provides the basis for improving student practice to "Petru Maior" University of Tîrgu Mureş.

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