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Research on Employer Satisfaction Concerning Higher Education Quality

Extended summary

Education has a strategic importance for economic and social development, as well as a positive effect on the entire society. Therefore, the education system must be effective and efficient in order to create a knowledge-based society and a stable economic environment. An important indicator of education quality is the employer satisfaction, which therefore presents a topic of numerous studies around the world. In this regard, the aim of the research was to examine the satisfaction of employers as users of higher education services through scientific methods. The sample included 33 private and public sector entities from various industries, with different ownership structures and a different number of employees. The research was conducted in the Republic of Serbia from May to July 2019. The survey included HR managers in different organisations as respondents who had to answer different questions regarding the quality of higher education service provision. The following general hypothesis was the starting point in the research: There is a discrepancy between the learning outcomes of individual study programs and business requirements of enterprises. In order to test the basic hypothesis, it was necessary to cross the results of two questions: Are there jobs for which there are no available profiles? Evaluate the level of dissatisfaction/satisfaction regarding the profile characteristics. In the research process, the cross-tabulation method and descriptive statistics were applied. We have crossed the questions related to the existence of the jobs for which there are no available profiles, and related to the level of dissatisfaction/satisfaction with the characteristics of the existing profiles. The question related to the level of dissatisfaction/satisfaction ex-

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amined the characteristics such as the level of knowledge, skills, communication, team work, transfer of knowledge to others, and initiatives. The respondents' answers were analysed using the statistical programme SPSS 21.0. The research results show that for the majority of the jobs in different organisations there are no available profiles (56.5%), which indicates that the definition of new occupational profiles, as well as dual education, can provide the functionality of education and improve the fulfilment of the needs of the higher education users. Furthermore, the findings indicate the dissatisfaction of employers (68%) with the outcomes of certain study programmes, competencies, and the knowledge related to occupational profiles. Regarding the research question "What profiles need to change in order to make work process more satisfactory?", the respondents mostly answered that some skills should be changed in the profiles (38%), the level of the knowledge of certain skills (32%), and the approach (30%). The characteristics such as knowledge transfer (50%), initiative (54%), and team work (26%) represent the variables whose improvement can meet the needs of the higher education users. Based on everything previously defined and analysed, it can be concluded that the basic hypothesis is completely proven on the given sample. The focus of the modern concept of education should be on acquiring practical knowledge and skills commonly applicable in all spheres of life. The goal of education should be the creation of human resources with competencies recognized both in national and international contexts. The results of the empirical research indicate the existence of the dissatisfaction of employers with the outcomes of certain study programmes, the competencies, and the knowledge related to some occupational profiles. The dissatisfaction of employers with the outcomes of certain study programmes points to the fact that changes in education policy are necessary. The employer dissatisfaction with skills, the level of knowledge, and access to certain occupational profiles lead to the conclusion that it is necessary to redefine study programmes, orient them toward the professional and practical knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the higher education institutions must change their approach in terms of interaction, application of modern methods and techniques, and the design of study programmes, all in accordance with business requirements. The education system needs to be regulated to be in line with the labour market requirements and scientific and technological changes. First of all, knowledge must be in the function of the development of the economy and society in general.

Keywords: higher education, education quality, employer satisfaction, knowledge-based society, knowledge-based economy.

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