

THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE SPECIFIC TO THE STUDENT-CENTRED EDUCATION

Remus Dorel Roşca

remus_rosca@yahoo.com

Maria-Madela Abrudan

mabrudan@uoradea.ro

University of Oradea, Romania

The present socio-economic realities demand the necessity of a paradigm change in the Romanian academic education, in order to promote the student centred education at strategic and operational level. This could not be accomplished without promoting a specific organizational culture. This would change the role of the universities from the diploma providers to value competence and providers for the employee and/or entrepreneur status of the students and also for their status as responsible citizens. The conclusions of the paper will help the decision factors of the upper educational system in Romania to be aware of the importance of promoting the organizational culture specific to the student-centred education as a condition of increasing the satisfaction of all the stakeholders involved (employer, teacher, student) with considerable benefits for the universities and the Romanian economy's competitiveness.

Keywords: student-centred education, good practice guide, organizational culture.

JEL Classification: A23

1. Introduction

"Is College of Lousy Investment?" is a question which appeared in an article in Newsweek magazine ("The changing world of work. What should we ask of higher education?" 2015, page 3). *"Do we have a student-centred University?"* is the title of a chapter of the Quality Barometer for 2010 on the quality of higher education in Romania, prepared by The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Although in appearance there is no link between the two questions, the first aiming at the higher education system in the USA and the second at the one in Romania, they both betray the state of agitation through which the worldwide university system is going through, a system which seems unable to adapt to the challenges of the 21st century. The consequence is obvious in the spreading of a disengagement culture (Sperlich Spraul, 2007, p. 4), on the one hand among teachers who justify themselves by the poor quality of the students they work with, and on the other hand among the students who believe that the Faculty does not develop sufficiently the skills they need for having success in the labour market. Thus, things entered into a downward spiral of the involvement of the key stakeholders in the system, the teaching staff and the student, a trend that could lead to the collapse of the current system of higher education both in Romania and in other countries. The solutions to avoiding such situations can be found at the macroeconomic level through appropriate funding of the higher education system but also at the microeconomic level through a high performance management of the higher education institutions (HEI) that needs to be focused on creating value for students, its most important clients (r. Ackerman, a Schibrowsky, j., 2007). We emphasize the fact that value can be created for students only in terms of practicing a student-centred education (SCE), the value being understood both in terms of the competencies acquired, which favours success in the labour market and in terms of the experience that the student acquires during the period of study (Michael Fontaine, 2014). Thus, the practice of SCE is a condition for the competitiveness of any HEI especially in the context of competitive environment build-up, the management teams having to make a priority out of it.

Based on the above realities, we set the aim of this work to be the fathoming of the organizational culture specific to SCE concept, as soft for any successful HEI. The majority of researchers concerned about the educational system is using the concept of quality culture which *"has to be a part of the management of HEIs in order for increased quality in education and research"*

(Hüseyin Gül, Songül Sallan Gül, Eylem Kaya, Mick Ayşe, 2010). Although between the culture of quality concept and organizational culture specific to SCE there is a large area of overlap as in the values they encompass because the students are the main clients of HEI and the quality is addressed particularly to them, we however prefer to use the second concept because it highlights the need for HEI to focus on the student (Student-Centred Learning: Toolkit for Students, Staff and Higher Education Institutions prepared by The European students Union, 2012). Analysing the specialty literature and the documents of universities in Romania dedicated to SCE, we have noticed that the subject of culture specific to SCE is neglected or completely missing.

Taking all these aspects into account we considered as relevant: the analysis of the barriers which stop the promotion of an organizational culture specific to the student centred education in the Romanian universities; the defining of an organizational culture specific to the student centred education and of its values; the inventory of the specific advantages; conducting a research regarding the intensity of the organizational culture specific to the student centred education in the Management-Marketing Department of the Economical Sciences Faculty in Oradea. The following chapters of this work will be dedicated to these objectives. Undertaking the promotion of a culture specific to SCE in the universities in our country will facilitate the educational system to become one of the most important factors of competitiveness of our national economy with benefits for its development and for life quality in Romania.

2. The context that makes it opportune to fathom the concept of specific SCE organizational culture

The conclusion of the ARACIS experts according to whom *"we more likely have a University centred on itself, concerned about its own financial survival, students being mostly important in terms of quantity, as carriers of financial resources"*, is an extremely worrying one (The ARACIS Quality Barometer, 2010, p. 19). This reality may undermine the fulfilment of the mission of training and educating students as future labour market actors and citizens, having deep negative effects for the educational system and for the socio-economic development of our country. The need for change in the higher education system is evident, a change that can take place only if we understand the current realities. The role of the chapter is to present the realities specific to the higher education system in Romania, realities that inhibit the promoting of an organizational culture specific to student centred education (SCE). We keep in mind:

- The teaching staff members' attitude of owner of the field of study, each of them preferring to deal with their field of study in the detriment of open communication with their colleagues, of collaboration to optimize the process of learning and for creating a superior value for the students. This way the fields of study are perceived by students as distinct areas of interest and not as parts of a macro-process which has as purpose their human and professional quality or as parts of a puzzle that symbolizes the success of the student.
- The lack of partnership between the teaching staff and the students which would exploit in a synergistic manner their energies, to the advantage of both stakeholders. Relevant in this regard is the following finding: *"Students and teachers do not appear to be involved in partnerships guided by converged goals, but in situations of mutual accusation: they accuse each other of real or imaginary faults; ...* (Quality Barometer 2010, ARACIS, p. 110).
- The students are insufficiently involved in the process of planning, control and improvement of the quality of services that is offered to them, being treated as passive actors rather than active ones in HEI. Even though the students give feedback on a semi-annual basis on the quality of their teachers' work, even though they are part of the leading structure of faculties, their decision-making power and participation are extremely limited. This leads to demotivation and the loss of some very precious student energies which are vital to promoting a culture specific to SCE.
- The university is seen more and more as a degree provider by the student and less like a competence provider: *"the data seem to suggest that the University does not attain its mission of civic, social and scientific education, limiting itself to being a court of academic certification."* (Quality Barometer 2010, ARACIS, p. 21). In this context the student's contribution to the process of education in a university is considerably diminished.
- The quality culture in the Romanian universities is more a culture of accreditation rather than a culture of excellence reflected in the professional and human success of its graduates. In other words, we have a culture of bureaucratic type quality and not one of a depth type based on the beliefs of the stakeholders involved. Even if ARACIS uses as evaluation criteria of universities

aspects which reflect the success of the graduates (External evaluation standard, standards, reference standards and list of performance indicators ARACIS 2006), these are not sufficient to develop a culture of genuine quality, profound, focused on creating value for the customer. Consequently, the quality culture tends to increase spectacularly in intensity during the period of accreditation but afterwards is forgotten until the next accreditation.

- As a consequence of the above reality, the organizational structures and the persons who have responsibilities related to quality assurance in universities are concerned in particular with the observance of procedures and less with exercising a pro-quality leadership. As a result, the quality of the culture is a culture of compliance and less a culture of excellence and continuous improvement with real effects for students and the other stakeholders involved. Also the quality culture is rather a matter of personal choice of certain teaching staff members and less a state of mind or an approach promoted institutionally.
- Teachers are very little, almost never at all evaluated as to their performance in their work with the students. As a result, their motivation to be supporters of a culture specific to SCE is diminished.
- The limited involvement of employers in the process of planning, control and quality improvement. This way resources that are extremely important and necessary to promote a culture specific to SCE are being wasted. The superior involvement of the employers in this process should be a desideratum for any HEI.

Starting from these issues that limit the spread of a culture specific to SCE in the universities in Romania, in Chapter 4 we present a program to support HEI to exceed such barriers. In the next chapter we will fathom the concept of organizational culture specific to SCE.

3. Defining the organizational culture specific to SCE

The role of this chapter is to identify the core values that characterize the organizational culture specific to a student centred university and to present the role and importance of each. We emphasize that this organizational culture is the basic condition to give students an experience of VAS (the feeling of Value, Affiliation and Sense) given the conditions that: *"there is a gap between the materialistic goals of universities and post-materialist interests and pursuits of the students: looking for sense, meanings, goals, paths to personal development."* (Quality Barometer ARACIS, 2010, p. 20)

- The feeling of **Value** takes into account: the students' awareness of the value they have at a certain point by a 360-degree evaluation; providing human and professional models to represent milestones, targets to achieve by students; development of the consciousness of ownership of their own professional careers, the fact that they are the first responsible for their success or failure.
- The **Affiliation** feeling is intended to make students feel as being an important part of the higher education institution where they are studying (Kotler and Fox 1995). An institution that cares for them, helping them to develop humanly and professionally. The student's own life project overlaps to a considerable extent across the project proposed by the institution in which the student learns. The development of the feeling of affiliation is done by providing opportunities for taking the following roles: the student as active participant in the process of learning and skill development, the student as researcher, the student as manager, the student as marketing man, the student as volunteer and the student as mentor.
- The feeling of **Sense** takes into account supporting the students to identify their own vocation, their talents and providing them opportunities to exploit. The students are encouraged and supported to get to know themselves better and to define a mission for themselves as humans and as professionals. By cultivating the feeling of Sense the students are encouraged to come out of anonymity and to manifest themselves as unique personalities, as people who try and succeed to define a purpose, a mission in life. This is particularly important given the context in which the spiritual leader of the Tibetans, the Dalai Lama, said that the people of today's society do not suffer so much because of material deprivation as they suffer because of the lack of love and sense..

In these circumstances, an organizational culture specific to SCE represents a set of values shared by the teacher, the student, the HEI management and the employer, which is reflected in their behaviour and which allow offering students a VAS experiences. Offering a VAS experiences must start from the teaching staff members' belief that *"every student is unique and should be treated accordingly"*

(Yvonne j. Moogan, 2010). This is the foundation upon which an organizational culture specific to SCE must be built.

To identify these values the following methods have been used: the study of literature dedicated to this theme; the organization of two focus groups made of the two groups of students in the 3rd year of management specialization, 2015 graduates within the Faculty of Economic Sciences in Oradea; analysis of the personal experience which I had during my work with students as a teaching staff member, year tutor and responsible of the Student workshop Excelsior. As a result of this research, we believe that the most important values specific to an organizational culture in a student-centred university are:

A. Involvement is an extremely important value in the context of spreading the culture of disengagement that was mentioned at the beginning of this work. We will never be able to speak of a SCE without the involvement of the main SCE stakeholders: teachers, students, HEI management and employers. The lack of involvement of any of these can compromise the effort to promote a SCE. For teachers, involvement means a continuous search for more effective ways of teaching and new learning opportunities for the students, to facilitate active learning in the detriment of passive learning. For the student, involvement means assuming the six roles: the student as active participant in the process of learning and skill development, the student as researcher, the student as manager, the student as marketing person, the student as volunteer, the student as mentor. The student's involvement creates the premises for developing the entrepreneurship spirit, whether it's for the business field or the non-profit one, which is a priority for any system of higher education in the world. Regarding the management team of a HEI, it needs to provide the necessary resources and circumstances for practicing a SCE and to exercise a genuine leadership in this direction. Employers need to provide firstly learning opportunities for students and afterwards job opportunities.

B. Partnership is based on cooperation between the various stakeholders in order to attain certain conjoint interests, goals, in terms of open communication. We consider particularly the partnership between the teacher and the student but also the one between the HEI and the employers. We cannot speak of a SCE in the absence of these two categories of partnership. The initiators of these partnerships must be the teacher, respectively the HEI.

C. Focus on learning outcomes that enable genuine learning and deep understanding (Student centred education guide for students, teachers and universities - prepared by The European students Union 2012, p. 6). Planning the process of learning for a certain field of study, planning that needs to involve the teacher, the students and the employers, must also take into account:

- ✓ the desired results of learning (gaining knowledge and the development of specific business skills or those required by the labour market), which should facilitate the professional and human success of the graduate;
- ✓ the need for an authentic learning that takes into account the student's learning style, personality, and interests.
- ✓ the need for a deep understanding in order to transform the graduate into a successful decisional factor.

The focus on learning outcomes obligates the three stakeholders involved, the student, the teacher and the employer to pay attention to activities that add value from this point of view through a synergistic effort.

D. Critical thinking is a premise for the continuous improvement of processes and results in a HEI. It must be adopted by both the teachers and the students. For this purpose we recommend:

- ✓ Common use of question as exploratory tool and as a way of encouraging an open dialogue. The students should ask questions for a full and deep understanding of the issues put into discussion, in order to clarify the concerns they have. The teacher should ask questions in order to create an opportunity for the student to present a reasoned point of view and to receive feedback from the student.
- ✓ The promotion of a reduced distance to the power in the teacher-student relationship, responsibility which rests especially upon the first. In the research undertaken by organizing the focus group formerly mentioned, the first remarks of the students about the qualities of a model teachers were: "*they should not believe they know everything*", "*they should not be the classic teacher model*", "*they should interact with the students and accept to be contradicted*" (focus group created in 12.11.2014 management specialization, 3rd year, 2015 graduation class, within the Faculty of Economic Sciences in Oradea). As a result, the teacher must accept

to be contradicted, must encourage the students to do so, but in a constructive and argued way.

- ✓ Providing learning opportunities for students and the use of methods such as promotion of controversy in the process of learning, which encourages students to think critically, reflective, to make the effort to think deeply and argued to support a point of view.

Critical thinking stimulates creativity, originality in settling the problems with which we are confronted.

E. Acceptance of diversity in the detriment of the "One-Size-Fits-All" solution (Student centred education guide for students, teachers and universities - prepared by The European students Union 2012, p. 6). This corresponds to the evolution of marketing from a mass one to a customized one, the first having proven it's limitation in the current socio-economic context. Acceptance of diversity requires the teachers to understand that students have different interests, needs and have different styles of learning. For example, a student of Economics may want to become an entrepreneur, to be employed in a public institution, to work for a multinational company or to manage an NGO. Also a student may prefer to learn by studying the literature in the library, while another one prefers following an internship in a company. As a result, the teaching staff must provide students a varied portfolio of learning opportunities which they can access. They also need to make the effort to know the students and to understand their specifics in order to guide them as best as possible.

The advantages of promoting these values in a HEI, a student centred culture are: a VAS experience for students that will be critical to their success in life; a motivating work environment for teachers and satisfaction at work; access to good quality human resource and brand promotion for employers for partner employers; a competitive HEI for its management. Any HEI should measure the intensity of the organizational culture specific to SCE at a certain point starting from the values presented above and to initiate measures to improve it. In the next chapter we will present the results of such an approach in the Department of Management-Marketing within the Faculty of Economic Sciences in Oradea.

4. Research on the intensity of the organizational culture specific to SCE in the Department of Management-Marketing within the Faculty of Economics in Oradea

The aim of this study is to measure the intensity of the organizational culture specific to SCE within the organizational structure mentioned in the chapter heading and to propose improvement measures. In initiating this research we started from the premise that the students' satisfaction and their level of preparation as future employees or entrepreneurs crucially depend on the existence of an organizational culture specific to SCE. Also, this culture will influence decisively the satisfaction of stakeholders within a HEI and implicitly its competitiveness.

The research was carried out during the period 10-23.12.2014 on a representative of 9 teachers of the Department of Marketing Management (DMM) and 38 third-year students of Management and Marketing specialties which are allotted to this Department. **The research method** used was a questionnaire based survey. We consider the research results relevant because: the representative of teachers is very illustrative for a total of 15 teachers active in the Department in this academic year; the representative of students accounts for more than 50% of the population statistics; only 3rd year students were chosen because they work exclusively with teaching staff members of the DMM and have great experience in the institution, which allows them to be objective in their evaluation; we have decided to measure also the perceptions related to the organizational culture specific to SCE for both teachers and students to find the eventual differences. The **research hypotheses** are as follows:

1. According to the students' perceptions the intensity of the organizational culture specific to SCE is at a medium level.
2. The "accepting diversity" value will receive a low score on the part of students.
3. There will be significant differences between the students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the intensity of the organizational culture specific to SCE.

The **research results** will be presented in three parts: the ones referring to the students' perception on the SCE culture, the ones referring to teachers' perception and compared. The questionnaire applied to students refers to the following values that characterize a culture specific to SCE: Involvement (I), Partnerships (P), Focus on the results of learning (FRL), Critical Thinking (CT) and Acceptance of Diversity (AD).

A. Following the **students'** questionnaire we have obtained the results shown in the graph in Figure 1, using a scale from 1 to 5 (1-strongly disagree; 5-total agreement).

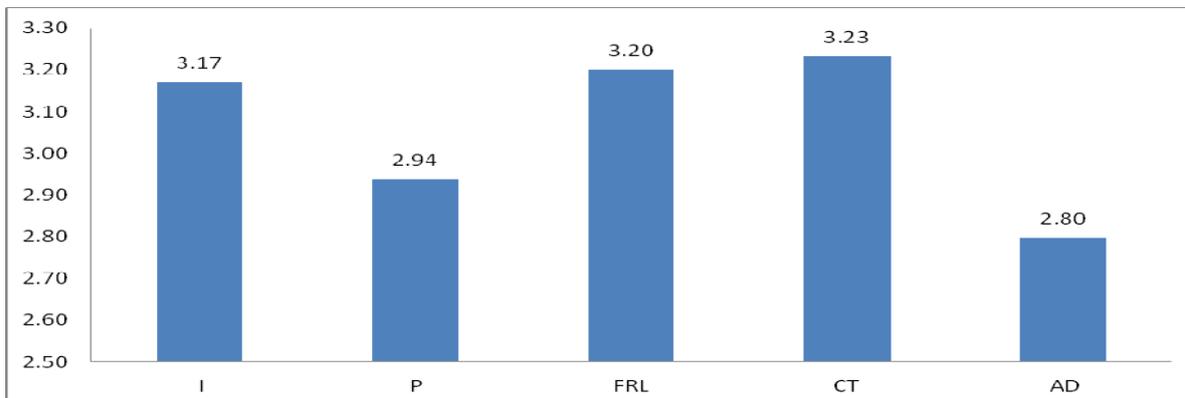


Fig. 1 - Students' perception regarding the intensity of the culture specific to SCE of the DMM

The results presented in the graph confirm the first hypothesis of the research according to which, pursuant to the students' perceptions, the intensity of the organizational culture specific to SCE has an average level. Thus, two of the values measured drop below the level of 3 points and three of them are situated little above this level. The result is an overall average level of 3.06, pretty low from our point of view. None of the measured values exceeds the 4 points level, which demonstrates the existence of space for significant improvement. Accordingly, the policymakers of the DMM should set as priority for the following years improving the culture specific to SCE to increase performance for this Department.

The same graph confirms also the second hypothesis of the research according to which the value *-accepting diversity-* will receive a low score on the part of students. This value situates little above the 2.5 points level. For a deeper understanding of this reality, we present the three questions the students were asked related to the value - accepting diversity:

- ✓ Do the teaching staff members provide students the opportunity to choose from a portfolio of activities the ones which they want to undertake within the field of study they teach according to everyone's best interest?
- ✓ Do the teaching staff members make an effort to know each and every student and to adapt the approach to their specific?
- ✓ Do the teaching staff members develop mentoring relationships with some of the students?

It is obvious that we are still the tributary of a mass approach, demassification being a slow process that is partially facilitated also by the significant decrease in the number of students in recent years. It is a fact that confirms the need to diversify the portfolio of activities and learning opportunities that a teacher offers the students within a field of study and to aspire to the role of mentor for students.

Starting from the individual items and not the group ones, we will present on the one hand the items which have obtained the lowest scores and on the other hand the items which have obtained the highest scores. Thus, the items that have the lowest scores from the students, raising little over the 2.5 points level are:

- ✓ *The teaching staff members make efforts to know each and every student and to adapt the approach to their specific -2,68 points.* This reinforces the idea of a deficit regarding the individual approach of the student by the teacher.
- ✓ *The teaching staff members involve colleges, the employers, the students, and the evaluated student in the evaluation of learning results in order to enhance objectivity - 2,68 points.* It is obvious that the main and almost sole evaluator of the student is the titular teacher of the field of study.
- ✓ *The teaching staff members provide students the opportunity to choose from a portfolio of activities the ones which they want to undertake within the field of study they teach according to everyone's best interest - 2,71 points.* This situation requires the breakdown of the classic

teaching model based on a PowerPoint material presented by teachers to students. The need to resort to learning experiential programs is obvious.

The items which have received the highest scores from students, raising little over the 3.5 points level, are:

- ✓ *The teaching staff members encourage students to participate in courses and/or seminars in order to become an active part of the process of learning and not a passive one - 3,97 points.* It is the only item that approaches the value of 4 points on a scale of 5. It is an extremely important aspect that shows their availability and interest to practice a SCE, an essential prerequisite for a future program that promotes an organizational culture specific to SCE.
- ✓ *The teaching staff members frequently use questions as a way of encouraging an open dialogue with the students and stimulate their critical thinking.* These two issues will facilitate the successful implementation of measures to improve the organizational culture specific to SCE. Unfortunately, only two items have exceeded the 3.5 points level, but none exceeded the 4 points level.

B. The teachers' perception about the intensity of the organizational culture specific to SCE within the DMM. We underline that, in the questionnaire applied to teachers, there were added two more values in addition to the questionnaire applied to students: *leadership student-centred education* to see to what extent the managerial team of HEI is involved in the promotion of SCE; *organizational policy* to see to what extent the appropriate framework for the practice of SCE is created in a HEI.

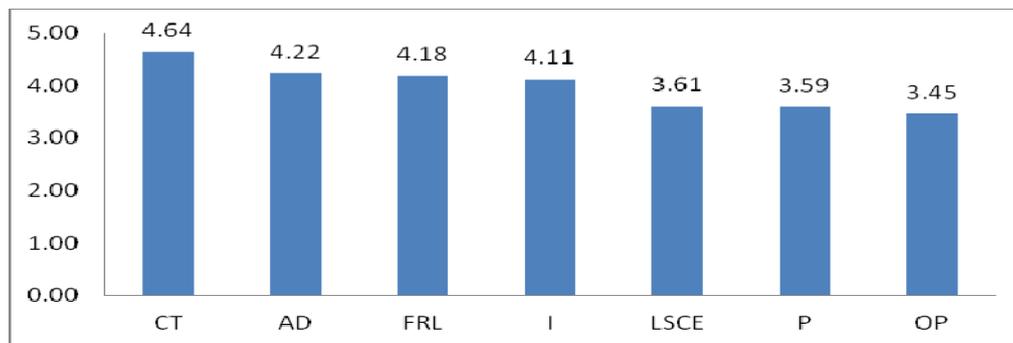


Fig. 2 - Teachers' perception about the intensity of the culture specific to SCE in the DMM

Analysing the graph in Figure 2, we find the following:

- ✓ Four of the analysed values have obtained a high score of over 4 points out of 5.
- ✓ The highest score was obtained for *critical thinking*, over 4.5 points, a very important value for a culture specific to SCE.
- ✓ *Partnerships* received a lower score, which shows a pretty small opening from teachers to partnerships with students and employers. In these circumstances we cannot speak of synergistic effort of the three main stakeholders: the student, the teacher and the employer.
- ✓ The *leadership student centred education* and *organizational politics* have obtained quite low scores. There are two possible explanations, which may even be combined: the teachers prefer to transfer a part of the responsibility for practicing SCE to the management of the organization and the way it is organized; the organization's management does not give proper consideration to SCE for different reasons such as lack of time, lack of understanding of the importance of SCE.

C. Comparison of teachers' and students' perception on the intensity of the culture specific to SCE in the DMM

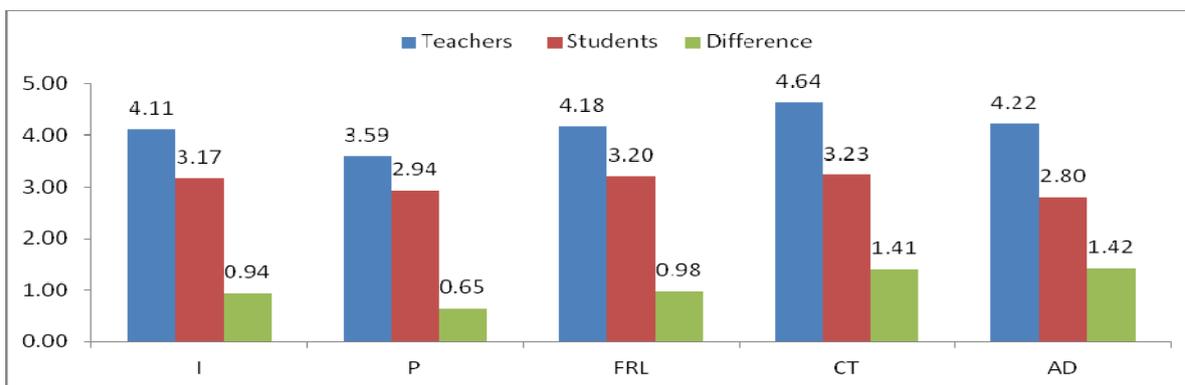


Fig. 3 - Comparison of teachers' and students' perception on the intensity of the culture specific to SCE in the DMM

Analysing the graph in Figure 3, we find the following:

- ✓ For all five analysed values the teachers' perceptions are higher than those of the students, the average being 4,14 compared to 3.06 for students, therefore a difference of more than a point. This aspect is somehow natural due to the fact that teachers have evaluated their own work. It is also possible to have had an undervaluation from the students in order to justify their lack of motivation and performance in the HEI.
- ✓ There are values which registered a big discrepancy between the perception of teachers and that of the students of almost 1,5 points, thus confirming the third hypothesis of the research. The biggest differences in perception are recorded for the values *acceptance of diversity* and *critical thinking*, which shows a significant overvaluation by teachers.
- ✓ The smallest difference between the perception of teachers and that of the students was recorded in the case of *partnerships*, both assessments being small for this value.

Making a comparative analysis of the individual items regarding the perception of students and teachers, we find the following:

I. The smallest differences between the perception of teachers and students have been registered for the following items:

- ✓ *The teaching staff members take into account the students' level of preparation and their expectations when determining learning results - 0.42 points.*
- ✓ *The teaching staff members offer students a variety of learning opportunities such as: work visits to companies, internships, research projects carried out jointly, mentoring programs between employers and students, courses sustained by the employees of the company - 0,47 points.*
- ✓ *The teaching staff members encourage students to participate in courses and/or seminars in order to become an active part of the process of learning and not a passive one - 0.65 points.*

II. The biggest differences between the perception of teachers and students have been registered for the following items:

- ✓ *The teaching staff members provide students the opportunity to choose from a portfolio of activities the ones that they want to undertake within their field of study according to everyone's best interest - 1.66 points.*
- ✓ *The teaching staff members accept to be contradicted by the students and even encourage them, preferably with arguments -1,61 points.*
- ✓ *When the teaching staff members are criticized by students they are trying to improve things - 1,61 points.*
- ✓ *The teaching staff members appeal to public recognition for the merits of students with outstanding results - 1.55 points.*
- ✓ *The teaching staff members make efforts to know each and every student and to adapt the approach to their specific 1.54 points.*

If the first and last items present a deficit in all the undertaken analysis, the next two items betray a relative lack of receptiveness from teachers to the students' feedback, a situation that must change in order to improve the practice of SCE. Also problematic is the public recognition of the students' merits, although this can be done quite easily by the teaching staff.

We conclude this chapter by presenting suggestions that will lead to the improvement of the organizational culture specific to SCE within the DMM and FES (Faculty of Economic Sciences in Oradea) based on the results presented above. These suggestions can be taken into account by any HEI wanting to promote an organizational culture specific to SCE:

- Teaching staff members need to diversify the portfolio of learning opportunities offered to students within their fields of study out of which they can choose according to their own interest.
- Teaching staff members must enhance their effort to know each and every student and to adapt the approach to their specific, including by carrying out mentoring programs. When the number of students makes this approach difficult, they can appeal to mentors from among the senior year students or employers.
- Teaching staff members must initiate and manage partnerships with students and employers. As a result, within the job description sheet of each teacher there should be scheduled tasks related to the progress of partnerships. This aspect must also be included in the self-evaluation form of the teaching staff members (SEF).
- For promoting an organizational cultures specific to SCE it is necessary to have an active leadership on the part of the management team. For this it is recommended to operate a system of performance indicators concerning the SCE at a HEI level. Only in this way will there be known the objective reality of the organization, reality that requires certain measures. Without involving the management team in the promotion of SCE, the performance of the HEI in this field cannot be notable. SCE will more likely be a matter of personal choice of certain teachers and not a generalized obligation at organization level.
- It is mandatory that the procedures of HEI reflect its concern for the SCE. From the structure of the field of study description sheet to the job description sheet, everything must be designed to encourage, motivate and support the teaching staff members to be upholders of the SCE.
- Teaching staff members should promote a reduced distance towards the power in their relationships with students, in the sense of being as close to them as possible and to communicate openly, to be receptive to their suggestions and criticisms and even to encourage such an attitude.
- Teaching staff members need to appeal more frequently to public recognition of the performance of students because this aspect is very important to them.

These are just some of the measures which would lead to a significant intensification of the organizational culture specific to SCE within the DMM and SEF, with positive implication upon the stakeholders' satisfaction and the competitiveness of the organization.

5. Conclusions

The higher education system in our country, but also the global one, passes through a period of deep turmoil, of search for solutions to a series of challenges amongst which: reduction of resources allocated to education, increasing competition, the change in learning styles of the new generations and the spread of a disengagement culture among them. In parallel with these evolutions, we are witnessing an increase in the importance of the education system for the competitiveness of economy and the quality of life of citizens in the context of a society based on knowledge. Being aware of these realities, the decision making factors of the microeconomic and macroeconomic level should take urgent measures for improving the situation of the higher education system. One of these measures, extremely important from our point of view, is the promotion of an organizational culture centred on student in universities, culture that has a significant impact on competitiveness. The main values specific to it are: involvement, partnership, focusing on the results of learning, critical thinking and acceptance of diversity. Promoting these values will facilitate a student VAS experience (the feeling of Value, Affiliation and Sense), with beneficial effects on the satisfaction of all the stakeholders involved: student, teaching staff members, employer and HEI management. Thus, we create the conditions for the system of higher education to be one of the main vectors of the socio-economic development and progress of a society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This paper has been financially supported within the project entitled „**SOCERT. Knowledge society, dynamism through research**”, contract number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/132406. This project is co-financed by European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013. **Investing in people!**”

References

1. Dann, S. (2008), "Applying services marketing principles to postgraduate supervision", *Quality Assurance in Education*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 333-46.
2. Halbesleben, J.R.B., Becker, J.A.H. and Buckley, M.R. (2003), "Considering the labour contributions of students: an alternative to the student-as-customer metaphor", *Journal of Education for Business*, Vol. 78 No. 5, pp. 255-7.
3. Kotler, P., & Fox, K.F. A. (1995). *Strategic marketing for educational institutions*, 2nd ed., Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
4. Sperlich, A. & Spraul, K. (2007). *Students as active partners: higher education management in Germany*. *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal*, 12 (3), Article 11.
5. Hüseyin Gül, Songül Sallan Gül, Eylem Kaya, Ayşe Alican, (2010). *Main trends in the world of higher education, internationalization and institutional autonomy*, WCLTA 2010.
6. Yvonne J. Moogan (2010), *Can a higher education institution's marketing strategy improve the student-institution match? International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 25 No. 6, 2011.
7. Michael Fontaine (2014), *Student Relationship Management (SRM) in Higher Education: Addressing the Expectations of an Ever Evolving Demographic and Its Impact on Retention Journal of Education and Human Development June 2014*, Vol. 3, No. 2.
8. Marginson S., *Higher Education in the Global Knowledge Economy*, *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 2 (2010) 6962–6980*.
9. *** *Quality barometer in 2010 regarding quality situation in higher educational system from Romania*, ARACIS, http://www.aracis.ro/fileadmin/ARACIS/Publicatii_Aracis/Publicatii_ARACIS/Romana/barometru-final.pdf accesat în 24.07.2014 accessed 18.02.2015.
10. *** *The European Students Union, Student centred education, student guide, teachers and high education institutions, 2010*, <http://www.anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/2012-Toolkit-ICS-cadre-didactice1.pdf> accessed 20.02.2015.
11. *** <http://www.mediafax.ro/social/bacalaureat-2014-precopie-absolventii-care-nu-au-promovat-bacalaureatul-vor-fi-sprijiniti-12897627>, accessed 16.02.2015.
12. *** *The external evaluation standard, standards, reference standards and the list of performance indicators of ARACIS in Higher Education, Bucharest 2006*, http://www.aracis.ro/fileadmin/ARACIS/Legislatie_-_Proceduri/Partea_I_-_Ghid_evaluate_-_licenta_si_master.pdf, accessed 15.07.2014.
13. *** <http://www.mediafax.ro/social/bacalaureat-2014-precopie-absolventii-care-nu-au-promovat-bacalaureatul-vor-fi-sprijiniti-12897627>, accessed 16.02.2015.
14. https://www.nifi.org/en/issue-guide/changing-world-work?utm_source=New+issue+guide+higher+education+and+workplace+announcement&utm_campaign=Higher+Education+and+Workplace+issue+guide+announcement&utm_medium=email – accessed 07.03.2015.