



An Innovative Method for Knowledge Diffusion – Powerful Instrument for Enhancing Students' Motivation

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Abstract

This article presents the activity of the Summer Universities, organized by the University Youth Knowledge Academy (UNYKA) at the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (SULSIT) - Sofia, Bulgaria and their role as a specific innovative method for enhancing the motivation of students. This method provides real opportunities for the formation and development of targeted diffusion of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, and appears as a major prerequisite for the educational and scientific progress of students, young scientists and other, non-academic, external to the university environment, participants in the educational process. Summer universities enable students not only to obtain information and share the experience of their mentors. Students are given the opportunity to manage their short stay on their own, to guide the diffusion of knowledge in a suitable direction and to organize their contacts with local communities on the territory of individual municipalities. The specific connections and relationships between tutors and students as representatives of the educational institution on the one hand and local authorities and mayors, as representatives of the municipalities on the other, establish a collaborative base of almost perfect relationships, sustainable links and partnerships. All these result in enhancing the motivation of young people to participate in planned research activities and in achieving high scientific and practical results.

1. Introduction

In times of information and technological saturation there is a question we ask ourselves more frequently than ever before: "Are there ways to quickly and easily motivate young people to master new knowledge and effectively apply it in practice?" Yes, this is possible by introducing new teaching methods in the system of higher education, that would lead to that much-needed change in the overall process of training and preparing young people for real life experience.

Change, as a main driving force in social development, stands at the heart of the emergence and development of the concept of information society as a new civilization pattern. Modern change is determined by the importance of information as a key resource in all spheres of public life. In this regard, the existing *analytical conceptual model* of knowledge economy that has already proved its suitability based on structuring the relation "knowledge - economic development", is a proof that economy changes the requirements for the system of education and inflicts the need for change in the educational paradigm - *from accredited qualification to certified skills*, which on the other hand requires the implementation of new training activities for BA, MA and PhD students. [5]

The change in modern education system is aimed at creating a new interactive model of learning, based on information resources and knowledge management. [6] A necessary condition for the effectiveness of education is also the presence of high level of information culture, including, alongside knowledge and skills, a critical independent interpretation of the contents and value of information resources. [7]

This change is also prompted by the fact that students, doctoral students and young scientists are in a dynamically evolving information environment (integrated set of Information collections, information technologies and the so called Human factor – the interactions between people). [2] This leads to the need to rationalize in the fastest possible way all the processes that affect or could affect the motivation and willingness of young people to develop on a personal and professional level. In this regard, information revolution induced the necessity to generate, store, process and use various types of knowledge through new information technologies. This resulted in the emergence of the problem of students' motivation, which presently occupies one of the central places in the sphere of education. Motivation is a process where not only a simple increase in the positive or negative attitude towards learning is observed. The process itself leads to creating and establishing new approaches and methods which aim at increasing and improving the quality of education in universities.



2. International Southeast Summer University - Powerful Instrument for Enhancing Students' Motivation

A good example of this is the International Southeast Summer University, organized by the University Youth Knowledge Academy [12] at the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (SULSIT) in its role of a modern university alternative educational model, creating different opportunities for young people to organize their scientific and educational activities in accordance with university syllabus, as well as with their personal interests.

Generally speaking, we can assume that the model is a system of methods and rules that creates opportunities for interaction on the one hand between teacher and student, and on the other between tutor and learner. In the training process, the focus is placed on specifically and purposefully organized situations and interactions where students through experience and emotional reflection (awareness of their feelings and emotions) acquire different knowledge, especially skills. The International Southeast Summer University aims to promote and stimulate research in various fields of science and in particular to increase the motivation of students to participate and carry out research, archaeological excavations and field studies near the southeastern border of the Republic of Bulgaria, which is also an external border of the European Union.

Within the International Southeast Summer University scholars and experts from various fields of science are invited. They give lectures to students and PhD students in order to increase their motivation, knowledge and skills. Lectures are devoted to the problems and prospects, facing the creation and formation of values by applying an information approach, focusing on copyright, industrial property, cultural heritage, science studies and their practical dimensions, which are an important part of the development of modern information society.

Naturally, this is accomplished on the basis of links, pre-established and proven over the years, as well as partnerships between SULSIT in its role of an educational institution and its local partners: municipalities, museums, libraries, community centers, NGOs and others. Based on existing sustainable relations between state and private institutions, serious and thorough research is carried out in various fields of science. This cooperation aims to contribute to the increase in motivation of students and young scientists. The organization of the summer universities is managed by eminent and qualified lecturers who, in the course of conducting training activities, work together with outstanding PhD, MA and BA students, thus achieving excellent diffusion of knowledge as well as collaboration of skills and communications among all participants in the process of acquiring certified skills. [11] It is important to note that in some cases practical activities are guided by prominent, well-qualified students who organize themselves and manage to assess situations quickly and in real time and environment. [1] The students, using the opportunities made available to them by the University, succeed in establishing contacts with representatives of various institutions, management structures, thus building strong 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. Thanks to the innovative approach in conducting the International Southeast Summer University, students are encouraged to participate in other extracurricular activities, which 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 motivated 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 research, which appears to motivate young people to successfully handle tasks in real fieldwork conditions.

3. Conclusion

The significance and role of science and education for the transition of society towards sustainable development is revealed most fully by the relationship between science and society, or, more precisely, by the process of knowledge production in its structural and functional dynamics and in close relation to the overall social development. [3] The proper application of the innovative approach



helped and stimulated research by improving knowledge, contributed to an increase in experience and increased the motivation of students and PhD students to participate in future research and events. By applying this innovative method of research we reject and affirm the issue of the necessity of overlooking old scientific approaches and transforming them into new and innovative teaching methods in universities, while the intermediary and final results of fieldwork serve to motivate students to demonstrate their knowledge, experience and physical abilities in the process of their personal and professional growth. In this way students will be able to rethink their approach to research and to generate their own (new) interpretations of reality.

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