

"HR: rush for practice" - an innovative teaching approach to support of the learners (good practices at New Bulgarian University)

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the report, I present an innovative teaching approach "HR: Rush for Practice" at NBU, which combines new forms of learning such as the "flipped classroom", working in a virtual team via Wiki, team coaching and mentoring by academic teachers, student online discussions with the participation of mentors and moderators - professionals from the practice; with already tested Moodle functionalities and techniques such as asynchronous discussions, electronic assignments and feedback, tests and surveys, provision of electronic multimedia resources, virtual classroom. The results of the application of this approach over the period of 3 semesters (two academic years - 2022/2023 and 2023/2024) are investigated, where theory meets practice, where knowledge is applied to the real challenges of the HR function of selection and evaluation through digital gaming Pleggi model based on psychometric tests. At its core, "HR: rush for practice" at NBU is project-based learning and an innovative interdisciplinary form of teaching. By participating in this learning project, students take a serious step forward in their preparation for effective people management and their professional development. **The object** of the innovative form of teaching is all students studying psychology, management, human resources management and economics in the relevant specialties offered by the New Bulgarian University. **The subject** of the innovative form of teaching is the process of learning through an open dialogue between business, students and science in a real and virtual environment, giving the opportunity to achieve an optimal symbiosis between theoretical training and practical knowledge, based on the "learning by doing" method.

The main goal of the innovative form of teaching is, through a new, modern style of learning and self-development, to achieve maximum connection of scientific theories of personnel selection and evaluation with practices in organizations. **The sub-goals** of the innovative form of teaching are: • Development of understanding of the influence of the environment on the recruitment and selection process in the organization; • Acquaintance with the legal and ethical norms of selection and evaluation of human resources; • Evaluation of the effectiveness of recruitment and selection methods; • Development of skills for working with various assessment tools for recruitment and selection; • Analyzing the factors that influence the selection and evaluation processes; • Awareness of the nature and specificity of processes for evaluating, attracting and retaining talents in the organization. **The tasks** of the innovative form of teaching are: • Application of already acquired knowledge from training courses in the field of human resource management (HRM) in a real work environment. • Acquisition of new knowledge from the practices of organizations from different industries. • Learning from the experience of others - representatives of organizations, mentors, teachers, students. • Learning by doing and experiencing from active participation in real talent recruitment, selection and assessment processes; • Acquisition of new skills in the field of HRM; skills related to business processes and communication; commercial skills; marketing skills; skills for working with various software systems and social networks; data analysis. • Evaluating your potential for work in a specific position, stepping on time-established scientific methodologies (psychometrics, neuroscience), modern technologies (Machine Learning, Big Data) and gamification;

1. METODOLOGY

The initiative "HR: RUSH FOR PRACTICE" at NBU launched an innovative approach to learning through the active participation of students in a real recruitment process for Generation Z in the form of a unique student competition. It starts with the presentation of the regulations for participation in the competition and acquaintance with the employers. He continues with the formation of teams of two students and the implementation of a specific assignment "Recruitment and selection of talents" under the guidance of mentors. This is followed by a preliminary selection of personnel for real open positions offered by employers, using a professional digital HR solution for assessing the potential of job candidates from generations Y and Z - Pleggi, The initiative ends with the presentation of the selection results, evaluation of the students' work by employers, mentors and academic

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professors. The initiative includes: learning through an open dialogue between business, students and science; change to a new, modern style of learning and self-development. This change is a stage of education at NBU that students undertake with their decision to join the competition. By participating in this learning project, students take a serious step forward in their preparation for effective people management and their professional development. There are numerous benefits for the students who participated in this project, but the more significant ones are: Gaining knowledge from the practices of organizations from different industries; Learning from the experience of others - representatives of organizations, mentors, teachers, students; Learning through action and participation in real processes of recruitment, selection and evaluation of talent; Acquisition of new skills in the field of HRM; skills related to business processes and communication; trading skills; marketing skills; skills in working with various software systems and social networks; Data Analytics; Assessment of their potential for work in a specific position, based on established scientific methodologies (psychometrics, neurosciences), modern technologies (Machine Learning, Big Data) and gamification; Students learn how to assess their potential and upgrade their standard CV so as to arouse the interest of employers; The experience gained during the initiative provides a competitive advantage to each student in his realization on the labor market; Opportunity to receive a job offer and internship; Opportunity for a prize from the prize fund of the initiative. The greatest benefit for students is not the high grade in the student book they receive for their work, but the acquired knowledge, developed skills, accumulated experience, which provide a competitive advantage to each student in his realization on the labor market or in initiating his own business.

Academic educators went beyond their traditional role as a teacher and applied a coaching approach in a virtual learning environment. Two different coaching approaches – non-directive and directive – have been applied. The great benefit of non-directive coaching is the student tasks full ownership of his own solutions rather than “doing what someone has been told to do”.

A survey form has been developed and presented to the student. The survey was administered by email.

2. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

There is a positive trend towards engaging students with the learning goals and increasing their motivation to learn through the innovative approach (see Table 1). With 87 students (43%) more participated in the latest initiative than in the first semester. 79% of students successfully completed the project in the first semester, compared to 76% of the fourth semester, but only 33% of the first semester received an excellent employer rating and a job offer, compared to 100% of the fourth semester.

The innovative learning approach HR: rush for practice at NBU focused on the ICT (virtual classroom) and coaching was explored. Those methods are applied in order to achieve expected level of competences of the students and knowledge and skills transformation. The lecturers observe the student’s reactions and behavior via active learning methods and coaching have been used in the training process. The positives of the combination between active coaching and non-traditional learning platform to the learning process have been defined.

The study was undertaken with all 319 students from the HR: rush for practice at NBU. A survey form has been developed and presented to the student. The survey was administered by email. All participants submitted their final email survey. The issues addressed: the targets areas for improvement that the coaching was supposed to address, the extent to which the coaching was perceived to have accomplished its objectives, any subsequent impacts of the students improvements on their ability to achieve their performance objectives (and how the target areas for the coaching were related to achieving the performance objectives), whether in the absence of coaching the performance improvements would have occurred anyway.

The data collection planning allowed the program with coaching approach to be evaluated at 4 levels: *Reaction, Learning, Application, and Impact*. ROI is not a part of the current study.

The proposed combination of innovative approaches and training methods are aimed at higher efficiency of the learning process. They are implemented in the model of training that is entirely oriented towards students in accordance with their needs and expectations, and support their development to achieve competence in the field of management. Training and coaching can work very well when used together. Coaching is an excellent way of helping students apply what they learn from a course to the practice. The proposed model for learning is responds to the new realities of the business environment using modern educational technology. Through an interdisciplinary approach that integrates learning content, communication culture, and technology, we aim to contribute to the advancement of effective and inclusive teaching practices.

The questions raised for future research can be addressed through continuous collaboration with international and global partners, through the exchange of best practices and knowledge sharing.

REFERENCES

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