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THE ASCENSION OF THE ACADEMY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES TOWARD A UNIVERSITY OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

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Abstract: *The university of research and education has as its main goal the implementation of the results of students' research carried out within each course taught at this institution. Students elaborate paperworks, get involved together with teachers in the process of scientific research, contribute to the development of didactic materials. As a result, scientific papers are published in which students have co-authorship responsibility. If all efforts are directed toward supporting the students' personal interest to obtain knowledge in the chosen professional field, the number of scientific products will also increase as a result of the involvement in the institutional activities of studious youth. This will strengthen the actions to transform the higher education institution into a University of research and education.*

Keywords: *university of research and education, research, education, education services*

JEL Classification: I23

Introduction

On June 27, 2022, the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova announced the start of the process of modernizing the universities and the research system in the Republic of Moldova. On June 30, 2022, the draft of the Government decision *Regarding the reorganization through merger (absorption) of some institutions in the fields of education, research and innovation* was published [1]:

Within this process, the following actions were planned [2]:

- strengthening the university and research system by concentrating their resources, both human and financial;
- bringing scientific research closer to students by integrating research institutes into the structure of universities;
- the allocation of additional financial means to support the modernization process of higher education and the research sector.

The initiation of this process aims at:

- the creation of consolidated and competitive universities with developed and modern infrastructure;

- better positioning of universities in international rankings, becoming more attractive for young people as well;
- channeling more funds into the education and research processes;
- strengthening the research system and fortifying the interconnection between science and education;
- intensifying the cooperation of universities with the business environment, ensuring the implementation of the research outcome in the economy.

According to the draft decision, the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova was reorganized by absorbing the National Institute of Economic Research.

Since its establishment in 1991 until now the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova (AESM) has evolved considerably, becoming the main and the only university institution with an economic profile in the country. By creating this university, the wishes of many generations in the field of science and economic education have been fulfilled.

Currently, the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova constitutes a university complex, within which there are 6 faculties with 15 chair-departments, a Studies Section, a Department in charge with curricula development and quality management, an Information Technology Department, 7 service centres, the Master School of Excellence in Economics and Business, the Doctoral School, the Doctoral School in Law, Political and Administrative Sciences in consortium with USPEE "Constantin Stere", the School for Continuing Education, and the National College of Commerce.

AESM has a modern material base equipped with high-performance technology, continuous training and consulting centers, 6 study blocks arranged and endowed with modern equipment, 7 hostels, each with a meditation room, a modern sports complex, 27 computer rooms, connected to the Internet, etc.[3]

The mission of the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova is to train highly qualified specialists in various fields of economic sciences and in some adjacent fields, able to participate as an active labour force and as responsible citizens of the society.

The objectives of AESM, established in order to achieve the mission, are the following [3]:

- a) ensuring and developing the resources and the means necessary to carry out the instructive-educational and scientific research processes defined by the Bologna Declaration (1999) and by the legislation in force;
- b) organizing and carrying out the activities specific to university and postgraduate studies, ensuring and respecting the reference standards, characteristic of each field and study program;
- c) organizing master's programs and doctoral schools, promoting scientific and cultural values and national and universal spirituality;
- d) the realization of quality education, flexible and dynamic, related to the needs of development of the society based on knowledge;
- e) respecting and applying the principle of focusing the instructive-educational process on the student;
- f) creating partnerships with institutions, authorities, socio-economic units from the country and abroad in order to organize and adapt the study programs and scientific research to the

reference standards specific to the qualifications and the requirements of the national and European socio-economic environment;

- h) ensuring performance in the didactic and scientific research processes;
- i) achieving a high-performing and transparent institutional management based on the principles of university autonomy, quality assurance, efficiency and assumption of public responsibility;
- j) development of national and international mobility programs for students, teaching and scientific research staff, teaching and auxiliary scientific research staff and non-teaching staff;
- n) the integration of research centers into national and international networks of excellence and the realization of fundamental and applied research generating added value;
- p) formation of the logistical and professional base for continuing education;
- q) creating the conditions for promoting partnerships at national and international levels;
- u) promoting scientific, cultural and ethical values in the national and international communities;
- v) maintaining professional, scientific and social relations with AESM graduates.

1. Computerized testing – the first step to AESM success

At the very beginning of the establishment of the institution, by the decision of the AESM Senate a new method was introduced at that time for examining students' knowledge - by using the computer, through which the following issues were algorithmized:

- (1) the computer arbitrarily chose from the knowledge base a number of subjects which had been announced, taught, exemplified, discussed by the students with the teacher during the teaching of the respective course and previously introduced into the computer's memory;
- (2) the computer presented these subjects to the student for evaluation;
- (3) afterwards the computer recorded the student's answers;
- (4) the objective computer calculates and announces the student's performance (grade, score) for the course.

The grade calculated by the computer is an objective grade. Computer testing is currently widely applied in the Moodle system, and from 2022-2023 academic year this testing method will be mandatory for all subjects.

2. Individual project – AESM's next successful step.

In the previous education system, until the Bologna process, the 5-year university studies involved 2 course projects (in the 3rd and 4th years) and a diploma project in the 5th year. In practice, the student studied, analyzed and researched a subject during a period of 3 years. A well thought out, analyzed, researched and finished result was obtained.

Currently the situation is different. The students have less time available to do scientific research during the first cycle. Only if they continue their studies in the second master's cycle can they continue scientific research.

But often the master's degree keeps to a completely different direction - to obtain another specialty. Student research must be supported by introducing individual work in every course taught at the institution.

3. Personal research interest in the student's individual work.

The student must be interested in working and studying constantly.

Only through personal interest can such a result be reached.

Most students usually come to study because of practical needs, assessment at work, research in national and individual projects.

Students work very conscientiously preparing reports on course chapters, modules, for tests and exams. The students do some works, which actually help in scientific and didactic research, they get involved together with the teachers in the development of didactic materials. As a result, the didactic materials are produced with the students' co-authorship.

All international projects and programs require the massive involvement of the youth: today's young people are smart, ingenious, enthusiastic and it would be blameful not to effectively use this major force of the society.

If we achieve in AESM the goal of supporting the student's personal interest in obtaining knowledge in the individual field of interest, thus increasing the interest in research and education within each course, this will lead to the achievement of the noble goal: AESM - University committed to the future - University of research and education type.

4. Joint teacher-student research

Each teacher, the course master, has a set of problems, some theoretical, others practical within the course. It is very useful to involve students in research, especially when the student's interest coincides with the interest of the teacher.

Within the Department of the Information Technology and Information Management of AESM 10 books were published with student co-authorship. Research was carried out on projects such as: knowledge testing systems, computerized electronic dictionaries, adaptive programming systems, intergenerational research systems, and creation of the consciousness society.

Every student can and must study the subjects of the course with the conviction that the results are needed at present, but not only in perspective, after finishing the studies at AESM, as the majority of students come with the conviction that they will be able to apply the knowledge they have acquired in the future, after finishing their studies.

Here is the key to the interest: it is necessary to give the students the opportunity to see the purpose of their knowledge from the very first day of studies in higher school.

The individual work, the project of the year must be developed based on personal interest (to launch a business in the future or to be employed at a prestigious company) to ensure one's future, to achieve one's goal in life.

In the last 12 years, the professors of the Department of Information Technology and Information Management have organized international teleconferences of young researchers, the results of which have been published in international magazines: the European Magazine "Society Consciousness Computers", published by the "Vasile Alecsandri" University in Bacău, Romania and the international "ARA Journal of Sciences", "ARA Journal of Arts", ARA Publishing House, California University Davis, USA. They represent the demonstration of the implementation of joint teacher-student research with the perspective of achieving the same goal: AESM - University engaged in the future - University of Research – Education type.

5. Professional and personal interest beliefs.

In the discussions with the students during the first lessons we try to clarify the students' interests, their visions of the future. The student immediately tries to analyze and draw conclusions that from this very day they can evaluate their proposed goal, their business idea, their interest.

This idea becomes also the theme of the research, the theme of the individual work, the project of the year, in the long run - the theme of the bachelor's thesis, further - the theme of the Master's thesis, further - the theme of the doctoral thesis. Therefore, the evaluation of the student's knowledge on the course with involvement in research needs to be as closely as possible related to the evolution of the student's individual work.

Obviously, the teacher must know, research, contact more disciplines, more businesses, additionally study other branches of science and technology, be more often in the process of retraining to be able to answer the many questions of the students, which quite often are not from their branch of interests. It is a difficult task for the teacher, but also a very noble one.

And last but not least, of the total number of 1470 hours provided annually, 50% are research hours for university professors and 44% for associate professors, and in the future the share of research will be more than 60% in the Research-Education University.

6. Research projects

The research topics are developed together with the students in different fields of economic, social activity etc. The students' proposals are varied: the establishment of schools of modern trades, plastic arts, music, tourism, kindergartens with meditations, green parks with preschool activities etc. There are business themes with the construction of warehouses, which help to overcome the crisis in the markets of the Republic of Moldova, with the initiation of businesses in growing and marketing of organic vegetables and fruits, in the production, storage and marketing of products from individual households etc.

Many students are interested in the field of tourism: the creation of travel agencies, rural tourism with different accumulations of cultural, historical, religious knowledge etc. They also show interest in opening restaurants, hotels, IT centers, consulting centers.

From the research carried out by the students together with teachers in 2021-2022 academic year, 42 researches were selected to be presented at the 11th International Teleconference of Young Researchers on March 13-14, 2022. The results of the students' research were published at the "Vasile Alecsandri" University from Bacău, Romania in the European magazine "Society Consciousness Computers". The best results were selected and proposed to be published in the international journal "ARA Journal of Sciences", ARA Publishing House, California University Davis, USA.

This represents once again the demonstration of the implementation of joint teacher-student research with the perspective of achieving the goal: AESM - University engaged in the future - University of Research – Education type.

7. Research results already implemented during the university years

The former AESM student, Anicuța Susarencu, participant in various student forums, is operating today her own ceramics company in Sipoteni, Călărași. The former student Ionel Baraboi has a perfume shop, Ion Guțu and Ion Mereacre have created farming businesses. Cornelia Vrabie's "On the Wave of the Old Dniester" LLC in tourism and Anastasia Popova's Fitness Club, "Life Insurance Group" Company and many others are just a few examples of the students' ideas.

All businesses went through the stage of individual projects within the courses of "European Information Integration", "Economic Informatics" and "Informatics Basics", they advanced further through the student seminars on "Informatization Systems and Development of the XXI Century Society" and they became highlighted at the international teleconferences "Creating the Society of Consciousness".

There are not too many students who reach such performances, but the 12-15% who reach such an end have behind them another 85-88% of students who have been active at various stages of developing individual projects.

8. We plead for the future AESM

We hope that in the future we will be challenged by the third evolution - the transition from an education type institution to the type of research and education institution.

If we accumulate all the research topics of AESM's doctors and habilitatum doctors, then the whole spectrum of needs in education and research for the Republic of Moldova will be covered.

For the evolution of AESM towards the University of Research – Education type we propose:

- the implementation of projects, programs and curricula with an essential share of scientific research;
- the accumulation, correlation and synchronization of the institutional research themes of AESM's qualified personnel with their grouping in 7-8 university research directions within the AESM Research Center;
- the formation of 7-8 university research laboratories each with 2-3 of part-time salaried intergenerational collaborators for a period of 6-12 months for the evolution of ASEM into a University of Research – Education type;
- implementing the remuneration of the teachers' work in accordance with the scientific results obtained, including the division of all the hours of activity at the first stage of ASEM evaluation in a proportion of 50 (research activity) to 50 (teaching activity), in perspective: sharing 60 x 40 and finally: 70 x 30 sharing, as it has been achieved in 11 universities of Romania, which already have the status of University of Research – Education type.
- expanding the proportion of research in the activity of AESM teachers.

Conclusions

A modern and innovative institution of higher education is defined by teaching based on research and research based on teaching.

From computerized testing and the increasingly intensive involvement of students in individual research work to a didactic activity of AESM teachers in the proportion of 70% (research activity) to 30% (didactic activity) is obviously an intention and a perspective of evolution to the University of Research – Education type.

Computerized testing was the first successful step at AESM, afterwards followed by the development of the individual project, various research projects, the implementation of the results already obtained during the university period - all of them were aimed at achieving the noble goal: AESM - University committed to the future, University of Research – Education type.

The successful participation of AESM collaborators in the evaluation of various European projects is another characteristic of the University committed to the future.

The participation of the authors in the Erasmus+ Program was auspicious for innovative proposals to achieve the noble goal for AESM – University of Research – Education type.

We are convinced that AESM will become a research-education institution.

Following the consolidation of the educational process with research, several benefits will be obtained for ASEM:

–AESM will be more competitive with an infrastructure developed in line with the global trends;

–AESM will be better positioned in international rankings, more attractive for young people from the country and abroad;

–AESM will have greater international visibility and new collaboration opportunities will open up through the Erasmus + program;

–AESM students will obtain a diploma from a performing higher education institution, known nationally and internationally;

–AESM teaching staff will be members of the academic community better rated internationally.

The future belongs to research-education universities.

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