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Innovation and Development of HEIs.

Competency Framework and Core Values of DUG's Management Team

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Abstract: The European integration and globalisation are two important challenges faced by the universities, together with the ageing process that affects the size and the distribution of the target group of any higher education institution – the students. In this context, the universities' management system of human resources becomes very important. The performance and risks of any university are influenced by the quality of their employees and moreover, by the quality of the top-management team. This paper is trying to build on the model of recruitment developed by the Council of Europe, because HEIs need talented professionals, capable to work in multi-cultural environment. Thus, our paper tries to adapt the “Competency Framework and Core Values” of the Council of Europe to the specific of Danubius University of Galati, in order to improve the policy of recruitment, development and assessment of the management team. We hope that this paper will represent a starting point of redesigning the human-resources management system at our university, and also, it may represent an example of other universities in their process of renewing their strategies and policies of development. The value of this paper consists mainly in the innovative approach and to the fact that the results are original and unique and may be used for an education reform regarding HEIs' management system.

Keywords: quality; leadership; decision making; managerial-operational-interpersonal competencies

JEL Classification: M51; M52; J31; I250; I280.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, “students hunting” is a reality, as a secondary effect of globalisation and also of EU integration. Competitiveness among HEIs in attracting students is very high. Only in some EU regions, the universities are supported by the regional or even national government policies through different aid schemes that have the role of attracting and maintain the young people in their communities.

The ageing phenomenon together with declining demographics are increasing rapidly and the effects becomes visible, shrinking the student pool. Some societies are ready to face this challenges and others are “taken by surprise”. Unfortunately, Romania belongs to the last category, where there are no integrated strategies and policies of development in this regard. Under these circumstances, for Romanian universities the competitiveness for students becomes harder and harder. Moreover, the depressed socio-economic environment limits expansion opportunities, and the negative consequences

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are reflected by the major drop in student enrolment and also, by the “brain-drain” towards western EU countries.

To meet these challenges, Romanian HEIs have to renew their development strategies and policies in order to maintain and attract talented and committed academic and administrative staff, able to find innovative solution in order to diversify approaches and offers to potential students.

Having as reference point “The Competency Framework and Core Values” of Council of Europe, this paper intends to be a starting point for all aspects of HEIs’ human resource management, from recruitment to staff development, career management and performance management.

Improving quality assurance and management proficiency is a constant concern of Danubius University of Galati (DUG) leadership, and therefore, this document may become a tool and a milestone for everyone working at Danubius University, especially for those from Human Resources Department.

2. The Need for a Competency Framework and Core Values

Human capital (academic and support staff) represent the key asset of any university. *Investing in human capital* and *developing a policy to attract and retain good staff* should be the answer for facing the numerous challenges, mentioned above. Moreover, the academic staff (professors, researchers, administrators of the university) may represent the key of attracting students from diverse backgrounds, who share the vision and values of the university. Therefore, the core values of a university are very important because it reflects the *unique culture* of the university, defining behaviours, attitudes and principles of the entire academic community (staff, students, alumni).

Danubius University of Galati has a set of values, which is meaningful, easy to communicate, and with which we all can identify. It is about what DUG’s community believe is best and important.

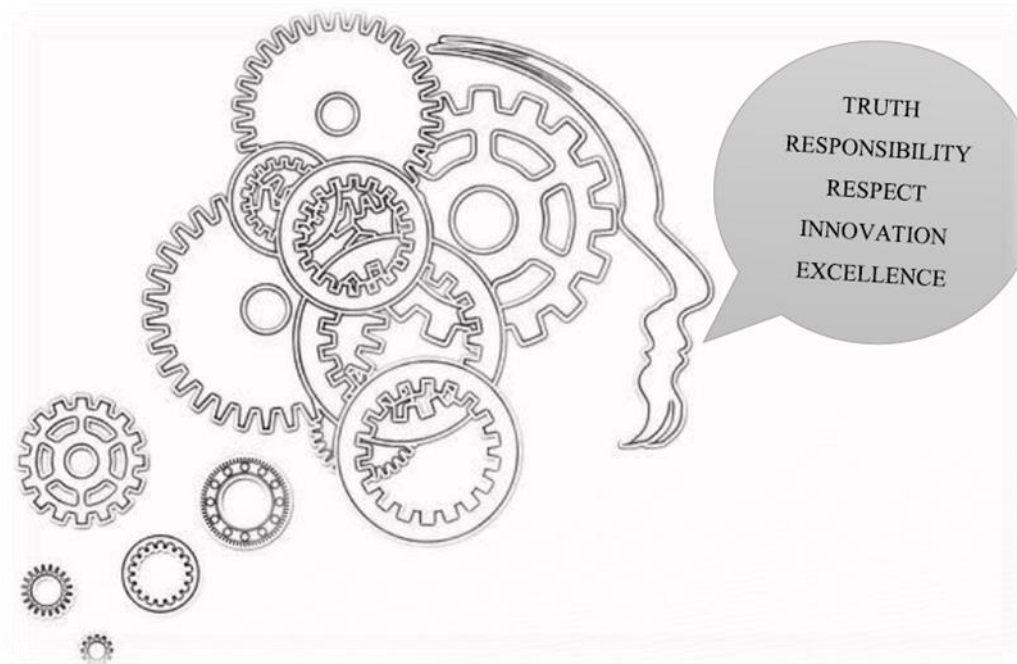


Figure 1. Core values of Danubius University of Galati

But, the existence of a core of values does not guarantee that everyone share the common vision of the organisation. Thus, increasing understanding and acceptance of the core values becomes essential for the positive evolution of any institution, and only when the core values will be embraced by every member of the academic community, the strength of the University will be guarantee. A shared view of the standards is the starting point and a premise that any institution is meeting the challenges of the third millennium.

As it was mention before, the “Competency Framework and Core Values” developed by the Council of Europe may be a benchmark case for the human resources management policy of any higher education institution, because of the *internationalisation process* that affects the daily-life of the academic community, even if the internationalisation by itself represents or not a goal of the organisation. Therefore, an international organisation like the Council of Europe may represent a model of conduct in the field of human resources management.

Another reliable source of inspiration in designing a competency framework for HEIs is the United Nations, which also provide examples of how the competencies look in action and indicates how they will be applied.

The greatest strength of a university and at the same time the key to success in this competitive world, consists in the quality of staff and managers. In order to measure the quality of academic staff and managers, a set of criteria is needed.

2.1. Defining Organizational Core Competencies

In accordance with the “Competency Framework and Core Values” developed by the Council of Europe, *competencies* are “*a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviour that lead to successful performance in a job and which can be acquired by doing, learning, training and coaching*”.

United Nations identifies 2 types of competencies: *core competencies*, which are “*the skills, attributes and behaviours, considered important for all staff of the organization, regardless of their function or level*” and *managerial competencies*, which are “*the skills, attributes and behaviours which are considered essential for staff with managerial or supervisory responsibilities*”.

Additional, there are *functional competencies* related to different areas of work, but core and managerial competencies are common to any occupation.

Defining organizational core competencies is a long-run process that involves the active participation of the entire top-management group in collaboration with professional’s advisors from HR field. This process is very important because it provides a “shared language” between managers and employees, facilitating the understanding of job requirements and expected performance standards.

After that, the competencies becomes a “road map” that describes the entire policy of recruitment, development needs and assessment of staff and management team.



Figure 2. Role of Competencies in Building a New Organizational Culture

2.2. Integrating Competencies into HEIs

Core and managerial competencies for HEIs should be developed through a **participatory process** taking into account the university's environment, stakeholders, work outputs and future challenges.

As part of the process, *interviews* with stakeholders are highly recommended. The next step consists in organizing a series of *focus groups* with staff from different departments at all levels of decision, in order to examine and better understand the socio-economic environment in which the university performs, the services it provides and what are the directions for future developments, and the last, but not the least, the needs of the students, staff, and alumni. Based on these analysis, *HR advisors in consensus with top-management group* will set the **core competences** required for any employee of HEI, as well as the **additional competencies** required by staff who manage others.

It is important to emphasise that acquiring a competency is an **ongoing process** and not a one-time event. Therefore, it takes some time in order to develop and strengthen the competencies of the academic staff, especially the *managerial competencies*. To assist staff in developing their competencies, the university should invest in **formal training** and **coaching**, and in the meantime, **individual learning** activities are needed as well.

Furthermore, in practice, competencies relate more to *what a person does*, rather than *what a person knows*. So, in order to integrate competencies into the university is necessary to define a series of *behavioural indicators*, which are exemplifying the competency in practice. Therein, a **code of conduct** describing the action or behaviours agreed and expected throughout the university, may be helpful in promoting shared values and common standards of performance among academic community as well as for potential employees, in order to familiarise them with the HEI's values and competencies.

3. Is DUG Ready for the Challenge?

Promoting *shared values* and *common standards of performance and behaviour* throughout the university are the first steps in acquiring **high performance** and **managerial excellence**.

The “Competency Framework” of the Council of Europe includes 22 competencies, classified in 3 categories: managerial – operational – interpersonal.

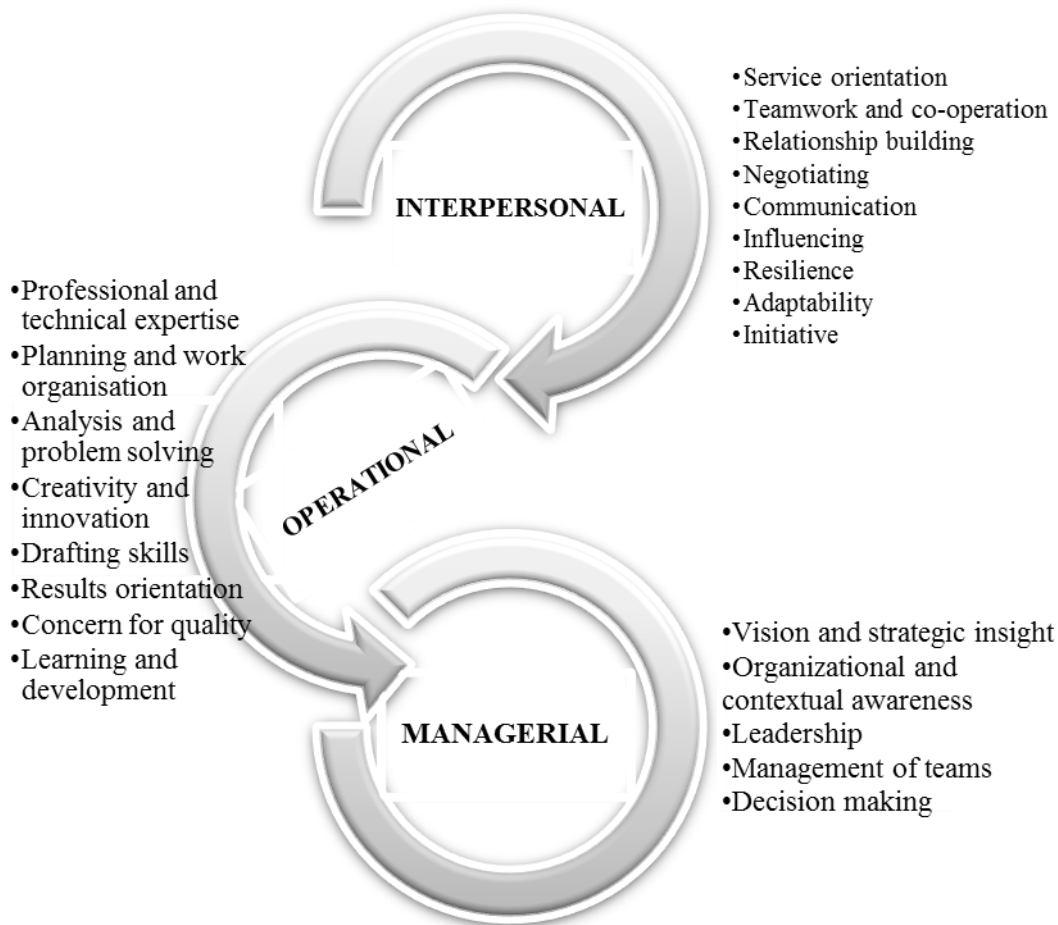


Figure 3. “Competency Framework” of the Council of Europe

Transposing these competences used by Council of Europe into DUG setting, and taking into account the system used United Nations, which classifies competencies into *core competencies* and *leadership competencies*, DUG’s model for top-management team would look like this:

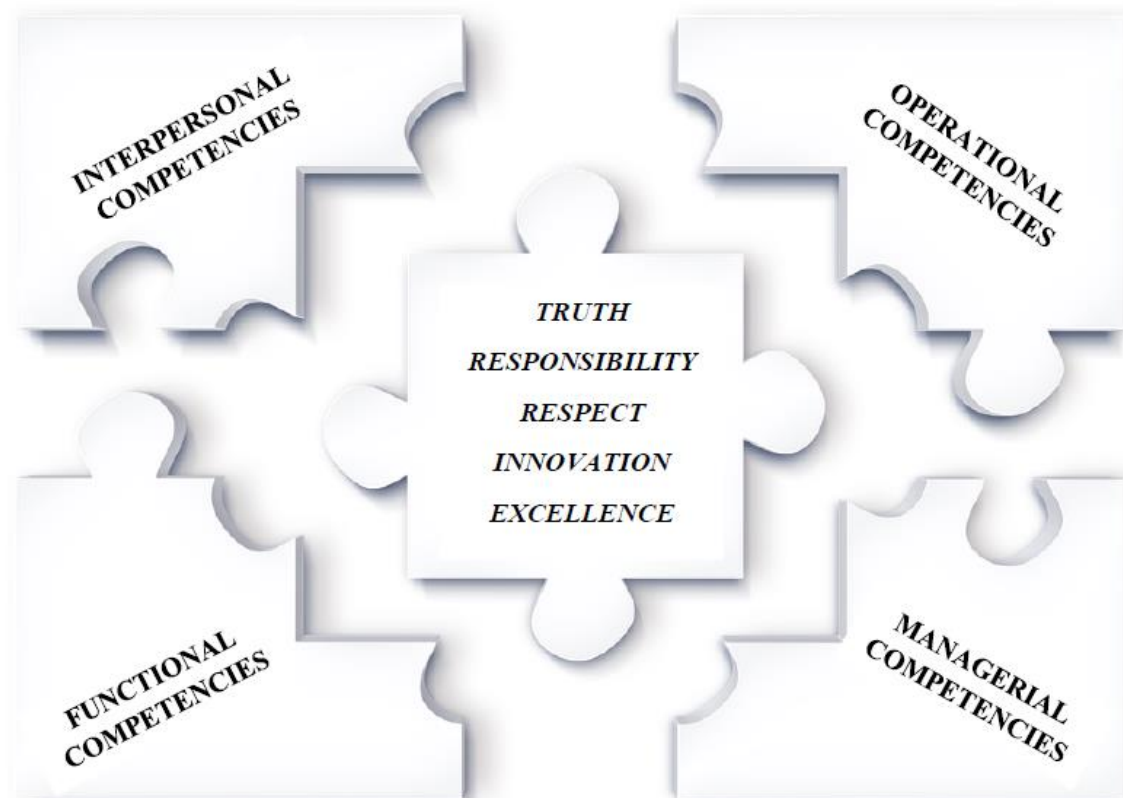


Figure 4. “Competency Framework” of DUG’s management-team

The competencies defined as “managerial” would be used not only for measuring the performance of the leadership team but also the training needs of the managers:

- ↪ **vision and strategic insight:** the ability to identify strategic issues, opportunities and risks;
- ↪ **organizational and contextual awareness:** the ability to have a good grasp of the structure and activities of Danubius University, and a strong awareness of the national and international environment (political, economic, social and cultural) it operates in;
- ↪ **leadership:** the ability to lead, guide and render autonomous individuals or teams by developing and promoting a shared vision of DUG’s goals and objectives;
- ↪ **management of teams:** the ability to guide, involve and motivate teams to achieve the set objectives both at team and individual levels in a multi-cultural environment;
- ↪ **decision making:** the ability to make well-reasoned, sound and timely decisions.

4. Heis’ HR Management System Reform - Which Way Forward?

HEIs’ management system requires to determine the key directions of the development of universities taking into account the assessment of their global competitiveness.

In the context of studying the current and prospective development of the system of higher education, one of the key drivers of university competitiveness that are performing in the modern conditions, characterized by the globalization, is related to the HEIs policy of recruitment, development and

assessment of the human resources. Given the fact that institutional performance indicators should represent an important criteria for allocating the tuition figures and also, the public funding for public universities, it is necessary to revise the attitude towards the HEIs' HR management system, especially for the leadership team.

Nowadays, competition “has become a major driving force in higher education”, being strongly related to quality and performance. (Hopbach, 2012) Effective strategic leadership practices can help HEIs enhance performance while competing in turbulent and unpredictable environments. The attractiveness of a higher education system, is strongly influenced by the quality and even diversify of its resources, especially human. “Those who work in HEIs, in order to respond to new demands, need to rethink the organisational structure and institutional management model within which they are operating [...] leadership must recognise the need to employ the best and brightest minds possible [...] because [...] the complexities of today’s HEI demand that the designated leader call upon these individuals to contribute to the collective process of distributed leadership”. (Taylor & De Lourdes Machado, 2006) To be more precise, a core factor for institutional success is the quality and performance of top-management team. Thus, it is recommended that management competencies would increasingly be used as a basis for identifying individual and organizational needs and planning for development. Support should be provided to leadership-team through publications and career support workshops.

This research represents a proposal of how to redefine the way we work, on a daily basis, through the values and principles, because we consider that values are very important to managers in order to build an *organizational culture* that enables staff to contribute to rich their maximum potential on the path to continuous improvement of educational system.

5. Acknowledgement

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