Evaluating learning activities relationships to social responsibility elements: a summer school case

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Abstract

Social responsibility is defined by the behaviour of the system. It depends on its understanding of the environment and self-evaluation of its capacities and above all the goal-set it possesses. Students are in the process of development of their capacities and more importantly, defining their goal-set. This is an ongoing process that they embody through their daily experiences. This paper examines the effects of a Jean Monnet module summer school module for the development of students' concepts and goal-set related to social responsibility.

In the research, the social responsibility elements are compared with the summer school activities. The overlapping/gap analysis elaborates the points, where the summer school supports the development of student capabilities and goal set and where further effort is needed to do so.

For the lecturers, the topics and methods, related to the social responsibility are elaborated.

For the policy makers, evidence of the importance of the learning events expanding the limitations of the regular curricula is provided.

Keywords: Jean Monnet, EU, Social Responsibility, BigData.

Vrednotenje povezanosti učnih aktivnosti z elementi družbene odgovornosti: primer poletne šole

Povzetek

Stopnjo družbene odgovornost določa vedenje sistema. Odvisna je od razumevanja okolja in samoevalvacije sposobnosti in predvsem od ciljev, ki jih ima sistem. Študenti so v procesu razvijanja svojih sposobnosti in še pomembneje v procesu oblikovanja svojih ciljev. To je proces, ki ga izvajajo z prepoznavanjem in razumevanjem svojih vsakodnevnih izkušenj. V tem članku primerjamo učinke modula poletne šole modula Jean Monnet na oblikovanje povezanimi konceptov in ciljev študentov z elementi koncepta družbene odgovornosti.

V raziskavi elemente družbene odgovornosti primerjamo z aktivnostmi poletne šole. Analiza prekrivanja/vrzeli pojasnjuje točke, v katerih poletna šola podpira razvoj učenčevih sposobnosti in postavi cilje v katerih je potrebno nadaljnje delo.

Za predavatelje so obravnavane teme in metode, povezane s socialno odgovornostjo.

Za odločevalce so podani dokazi o pomembnosti učnih dogodkov, ki širijo omejitve rednih učnih načrtov.

Ključne besede: Jean Monnet, EU, družbena odgovornost, Veliki podatki.

1 Introduction

Social responsibility is mainly used in the corporate context and according to Fisher (2004), it is clearly differentiated from the term ethics, which is focused on a personal level. It is claimed to be in the conflict with the profitability that, as stated by some, is the only objective of a company (Etheredge, 1999). The corporate social responsibility is operationalised in the ISO 26000:2010 standard (ISO, 2010).

The SR-related limitations to the corporate environment are heavily disputed. The term social responsibility is expanded from corporate to all subjects in the society (M. Mulej, Hrast, Potocan, Ecimovic, and Zenko, 2017). Furthermore, the evidence is presented that social responsibility, linking ecological, social, economic, and business viewpoints is identified as the core factor for the long-term sustainability of an organisation (Knez-Riedl, Mulej, and Dyck, 2006) and society at large (M. Mulej, 2006; M. Mulej, Kajzer, Potocan, Rosi, and Knez-Riedl, 2006), all way to prevention of the 3rd World War (Matjaz Mulej and Dyck, 2014, 2015) .

System is what system does - adapted from Stafford Beer (1979). The complexity of an individual Jean Monnet module consists of multiple activities – and their perception by the participants. To assess the alignment of Jean Monnet Module with social responsibility concepts, the activities, executed in a particular instance of Jean Monnet Module are elaborated from the perspective of social responsibility.

The Jean Monnet module was executed in a form of an international Summer school with the title "Big Data EU Business implications (BDEUBI)" in three continuous years: 2016, 2017 and 2018. Each year it was joined by up to 20 students and 20 researchers and professionals in a task of developing Big Data based project concepts. The activities in the Summer school consisted of lectures, research, with special focus on communication. Multiple forms of formal and informal communication activities within project teams, in-between project teams, with the lecturers, using digital communication channels are supported.

In this paper, the recorded activities' effects on the participants are analysed from the development of the social responsibility related competencies perspective.

2   Backgrounds

2.1   Social responsibility – a Human Attribute

Social responsibility is a human attribute that matters for all humans and societies; young people should therefore internalize this value in order to comprehend the triangle of the essence of social responsibility in ISO 26000 (ISO, 2010): one's personal and organizational and societal responsibility for one's influences on society, i.e. humans and nature, ethics and practice of interdependence, and holistic approach. They are supported by seven principles of social responsibility in ISO 26000. Social responsibility is becoming crucial regarding inclusion of the young people in the society and their will and capacity to face their current challenges: without prevalence of social responsibility the current humankind is in danger of the third world war (Mulej, Dyck, ed., 2014). EU supports application of ISO 26000 including economic reasons (EU, 2011).

Social responsibility is no longer limited to corporations/enterprises since it connects responsibility, interdependence and holistic approach of everybody to every life situation.

According to (ISO, 2010), seven principles of SR can be identified:
1.   Accountability;

2. Transparency;
3. Ethical behaviour;
4. Respect for stakeholder interests;
5. Respect for the rule of law;
6. Respect for international norms of behaviour;
7. Respect for human rights.

2.2 Jean Monet modules

Jean Monnet programme related activities are currently coordinated within the Erasmus+ activities (EACEA, 2018), but the idea, followed by the activities is highly interlinked with one of the EU key founders: Jean Monnet (1888-1979). His activities for the common Europe are best conceived right after the second world war in the "Theory of l'Engrenage", where he successfully interlinked German and French coal and steel industry, providing a model for interstates cooperation within European countries (Wikipedia, 2018).

Jean Monnet thoughts on long-term arrangement in Europe were articulated as early as 1939 in his thoughts on the future (Monnet, 1939):

• Plan for the political and economic reconstruction of Europe;
• Situation of Europe in relation to the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union;
• Programme for settlement of the German question, population movements;
• Constitution of a European Inventory of heavy metallurgy;
• Monitoring of aircraft manufacture and airlines by the European authority;
• Association of the US, UK and USSR in these systems and controls;
• Political and financial organisation of Europe;
• Holding of a World Council with European participation.

Monnet and his associates conceived the idea of a European Community. On 9 May 1950, with the agreement of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of West Germany, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman made a declaration in the name of the French government. This declaration, prepared by Monnet for Schuman, proposed integration of the French and German coal and steel industries under joint control, a so-called High Authority, open to the other countries of Europe. Schuman declared:

"Through the consolidation of basic production and the institution of a new High Authority, whose decisions will bind France, Germany and the other countries that join, this proposal represents the first concrete step towards a European federation, imperative for the preservation of peace." (EU, 1950)

The Schuman Declaration was presented by French foreign minister Robert Schuman on 9 May 1950. It proposed the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), whose members would pool coal and steel production.

The ECSC (founding members: France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) was the first of a series of supranational European institutions that would ultimately become today's "European Union". (EU, 1950).

The Jean Monnet original ideas are adopted and upgraded in the current EU organisational structures and mind flow of common people, organisations and policy makers, where the recognition of cooperation synergetic effects are well recognised and valued over the simple competition methods.

The Jean Monnet programme, coordinated within the Erasmus+ activities (EACEA, 2018) foster and promote excellence in teaching and research in the field of European Union studies worldwide. The activities also support the dialogue between the academic world and policy-makers, in particular with the aim of enhancing governance of EU policies. For the teaching and research institutions, support in organising Jean Monnet Modules, Chairs and Centres of Excellence can be applied.

Even though Erasmus+ supports teaching people on the EU concepts, it is not clearly evident how Jean Monnet activities supports EU young citizens increasing their learning capabilities and in coping with their issues, especially in circumstances, where they are not fully integrated in their environment.

3   The activities analysis

3.1. The structure of the summer school

The structure of the summer school resembles multidimensional network, comprised of heterogenic: student groups, experts from the environment, teachers and thus teaching methods, formal and informal contact focus points, all focused in supporting the student group work on idea projects. The learning environment provides students with multiple resources, guidelines and activities explaining multiple perspectives, related to their tasks.

In the Summer school, heterogenic groups of up to 5 students are formed to develop a Big Data based project proposal considering the basic idea from multiple perspectives: the feasibility, the value added, the accordance to law, and the ethical perspective. Groups are mentored by experts from the related companies. During the summer school, the formal teaching process is performed on the topics on EU backgrounds, the business perspectives, the project management and IT backgrounds. The teaching process is subordinated to the task of acquiring helpful insights to execute the project goals. This way students learn how to use the theoretical backgrounds to find solutions for resolving issues, they are confronted with. Lecturers are well aware of the projects which student groups are confronted with. This way they should be focused to deliver information, perceived by the students as useful. Contact with the lecturers is divided in two parts: in the first part, the lectures are presented, while in the second part – coffee and lunch breaks - the informal discussion is to be opened, with students playing an active role in the communication and the teachers turning from knowledge providers to counsellors.

The project work itself uses agile project management elements and is based on examining the relations between the competition and cooperation on multiple levels: on a single task level, on intra project coordination and on inter project communication. On the cross-team relations level, three approaches are tested: in the first year, the project groups are competing, in the second year a competitive cooperation is tested, while in the last year the cooperation environment is tested. The necessary time for communication is organised in the form of multiple breaks during the day, after the official hours and during the field trip.

Multiple synchronous and asynchronous communication channels are available. Each project group manages a Padlet (Padlet, 2018) canvas for storing documents and commenting on the contents. Materials, uploaded by the teachers are available in forefront, allowing students to prepare for the contents, they will receive. Teaching takes place on site, with support of remote teaching and remote listening to the lectures.

Each year the summer school finishes with student project proposal presentations and open debate among professional experts and teachers. Again each year a different style of presentations is used

(from competition to cooperation). Multiple answers are open for debate, for instance how to adequately acknowledge the personal involvement in the group results.

3.2   *Reflexive observation*

Special focus is set to the development of the communication skills and student proficiency to acquire quality information resources. Multiple communication options and channels that resemble real-life situations were available. Observation of their actual use is executed by the authors of the project during the execution of the summer school, thereby although the measurements try to resemble all communication flows, some of them are inevitably not identified.

Table 1: Activity analysis summary related to social responsibility elements

Activity	Social Responsibility elements	Reasoning
Listening to lecturers	Directly EU concepts, EU law, with the focus on personal data rights, human resources management, ethical and international norms of behaviour, stakeholder interests are addressed. The perceived value is limited. Students focus depends on the level of correlation with the project and the level of interactivity of the lecturer.	Students are already extremely proficient in selective listening and ignoring the lectures. The learning loop on the teacher's part was relatively weak because of insufficient feedback over the years.
Communication with the lecturers and professionals	The importance of accountability, transparency and behaviour (international and ethical) are developed there. In the start, students only reluctantly address lecturers directly.	Sharing ideas to formulate feedback is extremely hard. Introduction and positive experience do help. During each summer school execution, the conversation level improves.
Team communication	The topics shift through time. Stakeholder interests (throughout) Law, ethics and human rights (in the end) Transparency (in the last year)	In addition to the feasibility, the stakeholder identification and value added are in the focus. The limitations are communicated in the end. To support transparency, a clearly cooperative environment is to be created and advocated.
Cross team communication	Accountability and Transparency are developed. The lack of accountability is a serious issue. Communication is very limited. In a non-related and competitive environment, it is practically non-existent. In a cooperation environment, it is executed if facilitated by the teachers.	Even though the teams had similar structures, members were often not aware of the other team members with similar tasks even, if some of them already found useful approaches. Introducing people with similar tasks improved communication. Group solving similar issues initiated communication. Even though, not many resources are shared.
Digital communication	Transparency; Ethical behaviour; Digital communication is widely used to: store the group knowledge and to provide an informal communication	Student are extremely proficient in using digital communication. It contributes considerably to transparency of their activities and thereby ethical behaviour.

	channel, used during the lectures.	
Research	Research is mainly focused in feasibility, but also in: stakeholder interests, ethical behaviour, the rule of law and human rights.	In closely related lectures, students use the resources, provided by the lecturer. During the non-related lectures, extensive individual and group research is performed. Due to the complexity of the challenges more heterogenic teams would be appropriate.

As depicted in table 1, the student basic competences differ substantially.

Identifying **stakeholders**, to provide value added and address their **interests** are essential parts of the summer school. Therefore, they are involved in nearly all activities with the exception of cross-team communication. Even in the cooperative environment it was hard to share perceived value added for the stakeholders among project groups.

Accountability: is addressed in Communication with the lecturers and professionals and Cross-team Communication. These are the weakest forms of engagement, and therefore worth addressing, are communication with the lecturer and Cross team communication. In both, positive experience is required to initiate the process.

Transparency is developed in multiple activities. It basically forms the basis for successful communication. It was limited in the competitive environment, therefore to support full transparency, a clearly cooperative environment is to be created and advocated.

Ethical behaviour and **law perspectives** are parts of the lectures and a dimension of the project task. Therefore, they are addressed in all activities. Even though the related lectures form the basis of the formal summer school structure, student do address them in the very end of the project.

Human rights and **ecology** considerations are on the margin of activities. Since they are closely related with the ethical behaviour and law, some are addressed in these activities.

Methods, used in the summer school: informal communication during the breaks are partially successful. They improve by introducing the lecturer and a (small group of) students and opening a discussion related to student issues. After a positive experience, student reluctance to address authoritative figures diminishes slightly. It is worth mentioning that the student capacity to communicate (after initial start) is at an appropriate level.

The inadequate cross-team communication is due to a fact that students are trained to compete, where information is considered a valuable asset worth keeping. Additionally, it is hard for them to identify the value added of shared information, leading to under-appreciation of sharing experiences with the peers. In the first two years, where neutral and competing environment is presented, cross-team communication is limited.

In the third year of the summer school, method of clearly announcing the cooperative nature of the learning process proved to have minimal positive results – only in cases, where students from different teams are actually closely related in the real world. When this method is combined with informal guided finding solutions to common issues, some results have occurred though. The method is relatively simple: for a question to a lecturer, posted by a member of one team, members of other teams are invited to find a common solution. The feedback of finding a common solution was clearly positive for all the participants. Nevertheless, the results are not fully satisfying. Only a

few attempts of self-organising inter-team collaboration could be identified by the end of summer school.

Based on the activities analysis, we can conclude that the vast majority of the social responsibility elements are integrated in the activities, the overlapping is though far from complete. It is though important to properly introduce elements of social responsibility by example, where active experience enables thorough understanding of the social responsibility concepts.

4   Summary

It is important to understand social responsibility as a guide for the future behaviour. In this paper, we are exploring how elements of the social responsibility are used in a particular summer school BDEUBI. The concept of introducing the social responsibility elements through activities is elaborated, rather than using social responsibility as a label for appropriate behaviour.

The learning process prepares students for the real world, they will shortly encounter. Considering its complexity, it is hard to set focus in just the right contents, use the appropriate level of abstraction and use the correct communication channels in a limited time available. Regular curricula are often focused in repeatedly delivering the prepared materials to large groups of students, with the fixed structure; thereby courses in a form of a summer school provide the space for experimentation, collection of feedbacks, and thus development of the learning process.

The examination focuses on the activities analysis method, where the activities, performed in the summer school are elaborated through the elements of the social responsibility.

The research reports provide added value for the lecturers on multiple levels. First, the importance of integration of the social responsibility in the student learning process and active participation are elaborated. For the policy makers, it provides evidence of the importance of the learning events expanding the limitations of the regular curricula and the need for supporting additional events, and finally, the usefulness of participative approach and experience learning in the process of developing active citizens living and developing social responsibility.

The provided research posts limitations regarding the articulation of the research results and the potential comparison methods. The variety of the multiple elements in the learning process prohibits the reader to be well introduced to all the potentially successful learning approaches, but it does provide a systems perspective based toolset potentially helpful to identifying the gaps, monitoring and adjusting the activities and acquiring feedback on the learning process results.

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