The Interested Parties in the Relationship "Business – Education" - Strategic Aim of the University of Telecommunications and Post

Gergana Dimcheva[1], Ivaylo Stoyanov[2]

[1] Department of Management in Communication, University of Telecommunications and Post, Sofia, 1700, Bulgaria
[2] Department of Management in Communication, University of Telecommunications and Post, Sofia, 1700, Bulgaria

Abstract This report examines the nature and specificity of the higher education interested parties. Systematized needs, expectations and interests of the University of Telecommunications and Post (UTP) interested parties are also presented. Particular attention is paid to the relationship "Business - Education", which has been very strong in the recent years. The need for partnership between the higher school and various business organizations - future users of staff is emphasized.

Keywords stakeholders, business partners, higher education

JEL M14

1. Introduction

Every organization, including in education, is an open system operating in a dynamically changing environment under the influence of many factors.

Powered by digital technologies [1], the requirements related to workplaces are becoming more flexible and complex. The ability of people to be enterprising, to process complex information, to think independently and creatively, to use intelligent resources, including digital, to communicate effectively and to be sustainable, is more important than ever [2].

In the context of the information society and the dynamic environment in which the higher education institutions are located is necessary to improve the educational process and the opportunities for introducing new models, methods and technologies in the education. This, on the one hand, is a prerequisite for the development of new curricula and programs and, on the other hand - creation of a practical environment, through the establishment of training centers in the educational establishments to take account of the changes in the labor market and to provide students with knowledge and competencies necessary for their professional realization.

It is essential for the educational institutions to properly identify their interest parties. Continuous collaboration and social dialogue between all participants in the training process allows the maintenance of adequate information on the labor market situation and the achievement of high results.

Integrating the interested parties into Governance and Strategy at the University of Telecommunications and Post (UTP) is a continuous process consistent with its goals.

2. Organization's Interested Parties

Interested parties (stakeholders) are individuals, groups of persons or organizations that affect and / or could be affected by the organization's activities, objectives, and policies [3].

Stakeholders may:
- ✓ affect the business of the organization;
- ✓ be affected by the business of the organization;
- ✓ be simultaneously affected by the business and affect the organization's business [4].

Integrating stakeholders into the organization's management, strategy, and activities requires their participation to be used systematically and regularly. Stakeholder engagement should be consistent with the organizational goals to improve organizational efficiency, results such as improved products and processes, better risk management, better reputation of the organization [5, 6].

Each organization has its interested parties (stakeholders), regardless of its size, nature, structure and purpose. They are classified into two main groups, internal and external stakeholders.

Internal stakeholders are those parties, individual or group, who are involved in managing the organization. They can influence and can be influenced by the success or failure of the organization, they know all internal issues, solutions, problems of the organization [7].

Internal stakeholders directly influence the organization's activities.

External stakeholders are those parties that are not part of the organization's leadership but indirectly affected by its

work, are not involved in the day-to-day activities of the organization [8].

3. Stakeholders of the University of Telecommunications and Post

The success of any organization, including higher education institutions, depends on proper communication with stakeholders and the ability to maintain long-term relationships with them.

Higher education institutions must meet the needs of the different stakeholders. The importance of external stakeholders increases when public funding for higher education is reduced. In this case, educational institutions should look for external funding from different national and international

sources and thus cooperate more with external stakeholders. In such cases, they are responsible for a larger number of stakeholders [8, 9, 10].

Higher education institutions need not only to identify their stakeholders [10] but also to classify them to be linked to the strategic management of the educational institution. It is necessary to cooperate with partners and clients, which are important for the mission and future success of the higher school. Therefore, stakeholders should be described through the framework used in the institution's strategic planning [8, 11].

The internal and external stakeholders of the University of Telecommunications and Post are shown in Figure 1.
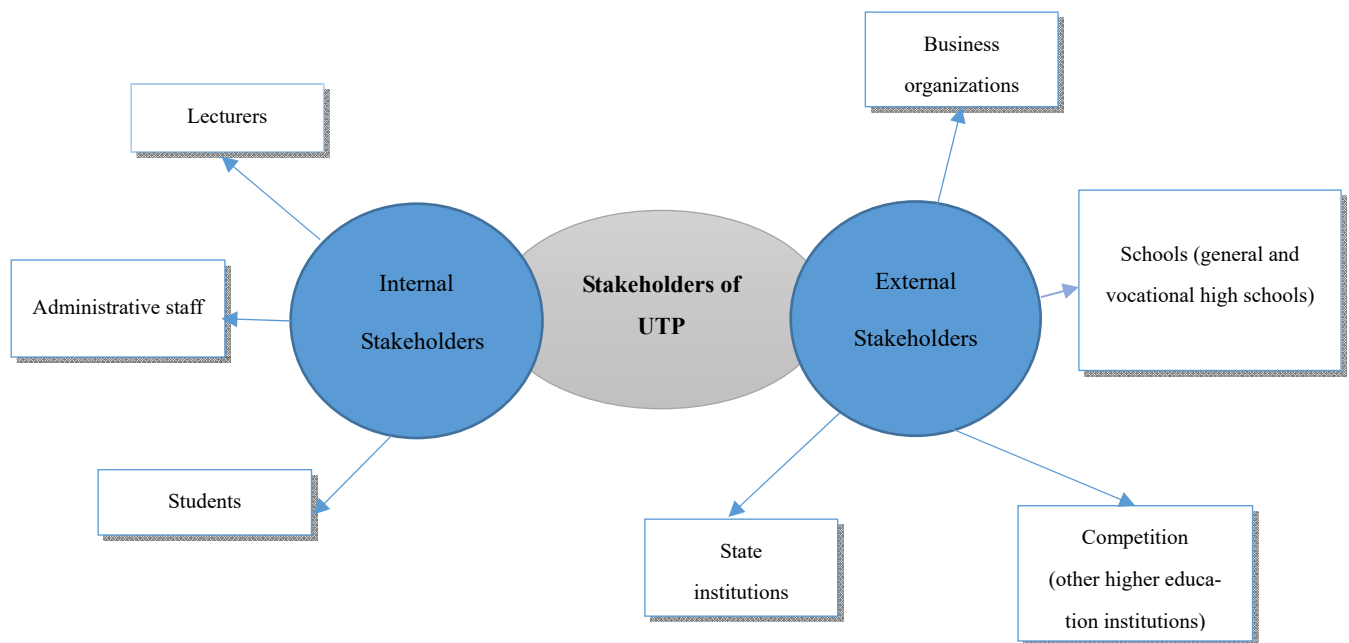

Figure 1. Stakeholders of the University of Telecommunications and Post

3.1. Needs, Expectations and Interests of Internal Interested Parties Involved in the UTP

✓ **Students** - The basic needs, expectations and interests of the students are: obtaining high quality education; continuous improvement of the material and technical environment necessary for the training; highly qualified lecturers.

One of the main highlights of each educational institution, including the UTP is the practical relevance of the learning process (during seminar and practical exercises) and knowledge in a real work environment. The aim is to increase the quality of the scientific and lecturing activity by engaging students in practical tasks and case studies, developing their analytical and managerial competencies for decision-making in practice situations.

This is achieved in two main ways:

- *the first way is*: conducting seminars with external lecturers (proven practitioners) with qualified lecturers in

the field of science, through practical demonstration of processes and activities during the sessions, training on a program, developed by companies / institutions, creative training with business partners, etc.

- *the second way is*: an organization to involve students in practical activities and to build up knowledge and skills in a practical environment, by participating in the implementation of research projects and supporting their appearances in international forums.

In addition to receiving high-quality education, other expectations and interests of students as major internal stakeholders is the assessment of their achievements. Each educational institution needs to use mechanisms for organizing and conducting activities that stimulate the interest of the students in the research activity as well as dynamic and transparent feedback between teachers and students, including their professional realization.

✓ **Teachers -** the needs and expectations of the teachers are expressed in the following directions: ensuring healthy

and safe working conditions; promotion of the professional development of the professional qualification and the academic career of the teaching staff by announcing competitions for different positions; creation of organizational, economic, moral and psychological conditions for active involvement of each lecturer in the process of development of the academic, scientific, research, applied and international activities of the higher school; achieving a level of educational, research and applied-applied activity consistent with both European and world standards and traditions in Bulgarian higher education; promoting innovative teaching methods.

✓ *Administrative personal* - improving of the internal processes, ensuring healthy and safe working conditions; use of appropriate forms of stimulation (tangible and intangible); creating sufficient and equal opportunities for professional development and qualification enhancement; organize training seminars to improve the qualifications of employees.

3.2. Needs, Expectations and Interests of External Interested Parties Involved in the UTP

✓ *State institutions* - compliance with the statutory state requirements; maintaining regular contacts with the institutions; compliance with legislative changes.

✓ *Secondary schools* - all general and vocational secondary schools, which are the main source of students. The main needs and expectations of these stakeholders are related to the support of the learning process in these schools, which is expressed in the possibility of practical exercises in the laboratories in the Faculty of Medicine; Continuous exchange of highly qualified lecturers between the two parties - Higher education and Secondary school; opportunities for realization of joint research projects; conducting educational and qualification courses for secondary school teachers.

✓ *Competitors (other higher education institutions)* - These are other organizations that are considered rivals and compete for the resources and the market. Competition between higher education institutions is expressed not only in the specialties in which they are trained but also in the process of attracting students, training fees, reception conditions. Specifically: Each university try to attract more university students. Each one of them should look for suitable methods for doing so. In the recent years, however, in the context of a demographic crisis on the one hand, and the increased interest of the graduates in the foreign universities on the other hand, it has become even more difficult for the Bulgarian higher education institutions. This necessitates the introduction of new models of education in the education system.

One way to do this is to create a research infrastructure, provide state support for participation in major international projects, encourage the participation of scientists from different institutions in joint projects [12].

✓ *Business Organizations (personnel users)* - the dynamic development of the society calls for an ever closer link between business and education. In this respect, today's expectations of the business organizations are far more different than 15 years ago.

Today, they include: Involvement of the business in the educational process, which is expressed in several main directions: participation in the learning process, transfer of expertise and practical experience; participation in curriculum discussions and curricula. The goal is to maintain an effective link between science, education and business in order to build quality professionals who are competitive on the labor market.

The main prerequisites for this are:
- dynamic development of information and communication technologies;
- continuous improvement and the generation of new knowledge and skills needs for the users of staff - private partners, and in higher educational institutions - the source of this staff;
- new opportunities and flexibility in joint initiatives with the business.

3.3. Benefits of Partnership between the UTP and Business Organizations

For the high school

✓ Obtaining advanced technology equipment and training materials and highly qualified business experts;

✓ Opportunities for the lecturers and students to get acquainted with the state-of-the-art service management systems, in particular in the "Messaging" sector, and to improve their knowledge in this area;

✓ Providing professional higher education, a good theoretical base and practical skills necessary for the future professional realization of the students.

For the Business Partner
✓ Close connection with future staff;
✓ Quick adaptation of new staff to business conditions.

For both sides

✓ Negotiation of internship programs and practical lessons in a real working environment;
✓ Creating a new training methodology, opportunities for co-innovation and scientific research developments;
✓ Conducting workshops and setting common goals and objectives;
✓ Development and implementation of joint scientific and educational projects;
✓ Continuous participation of companies in each of the stages in the development and updating of educational programs;
✓ Risk distribution between higher school and business organizations;
✓ Distribution of funds between higher education institutions and business organizations.
The relationship between the UTP as a source of staff and business organizations - users of staff is presented in the following figure (Figure 2).
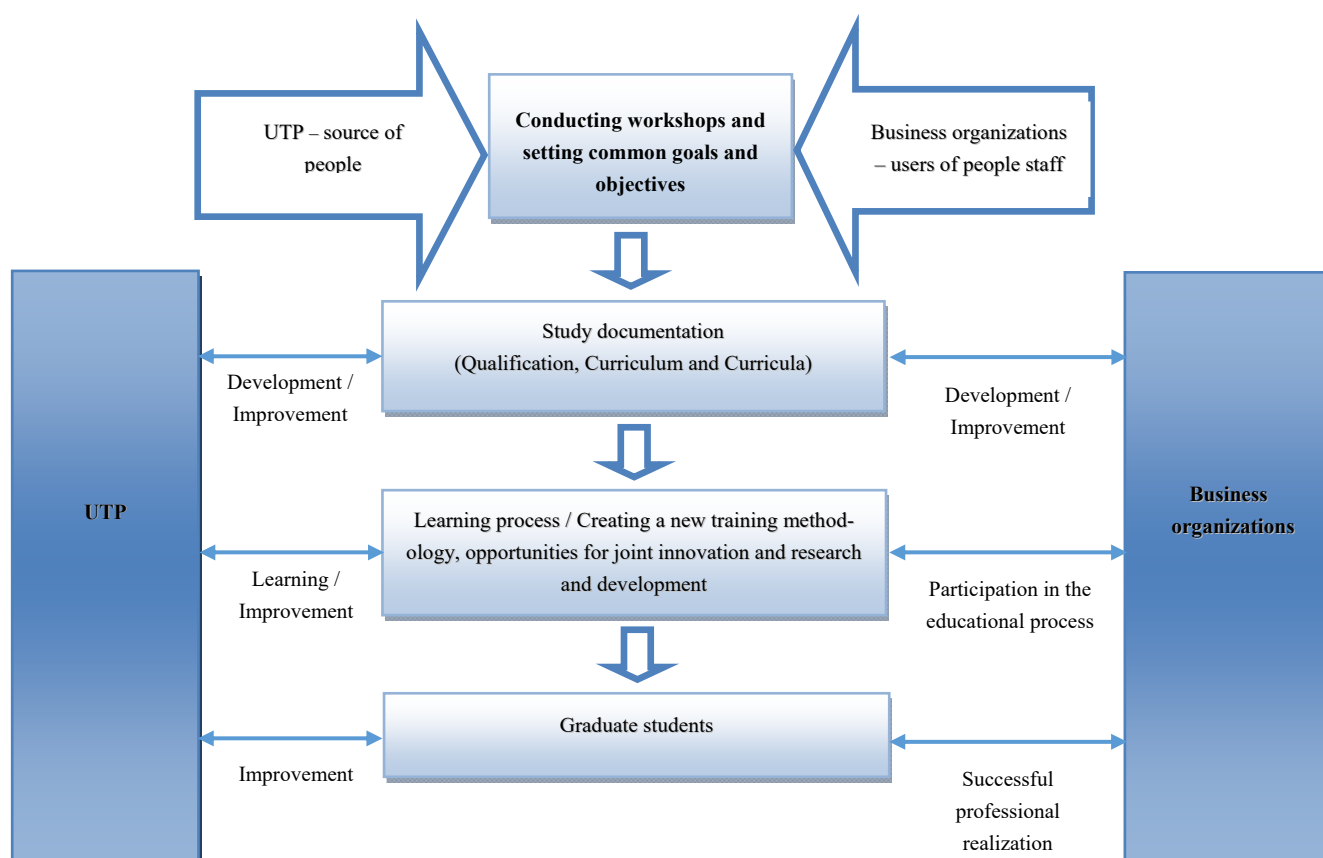
Figure 2. "Business – education" relationship at the University of telecommunications and Post

Particular attention is paid to the market-oriented educa-tion of students in all specialties and education-al-qualification degrees.

An integral part of this training are the analyzes of the competitive environment, the multi-criteria assessments of the competitive environment on the basis of data on the learning process for each semester in specialties and so on.

A large part of the analyzes is devoted to the study of the interests of the students in the specialty as a whole, to elec-tive disciplines and others. This is done on the basis of pe-riodic surveys among students, lecturers, employees and staff members**.**

Part of the UTP's strategy is to study the business partners' views on the preferred forms of partnership between the two parties. In conducted surveys among organizations in the communications sector (financial institutions, courier oper-ators, logistics companies, telecommunication companies), the business's desire for close contact with students is noted throughout the training period in various forms (Table 1). During the period considered, the following were investi-gated: 2016 - 13 organizations 2017 - 21 organizations; 2018 - 16 organizations.

Table 1.   Forms of partnership between the UTP and the business[1]

What forms of partnership between business and university would you suggest?	2016	2017	2018
Paid student internships during the last two years of training	5	9	8
Annual "Open Days" in the professional organization for students	3	8	4
Annual meetings with graduating stu-dents for professional perspectives and job positions	3	3	7
Provide mentoring during practical training and student internships	2	3	4

It is essential for the higher education institution that the various business partners periodically give their knowledge and competence request to graduating students according to the contemporary needs on the market in the management, information and communication technologies (Table 2)

_____

[1]   It is possible to indicate more than one answer

Table 2. Current of the educational content

Do you think that the disciplines studied and their content are adequate to the contemporary requirements of the practice?	2016	2017	2018
Yes (%)	50,0	76,9	90,5
No (%)	10,0	7,7	0,0
I can not decide (%)	40,0	15,4	9,5

The results of the conducted surveys clearly show the high level of interest of the employers, as well as their high assessment of the level of training of the young specialists from the UTP, compared to that of the graduates of related higher schools.

These results serve as a guide to improving the quality of the learning process and the educational documentation in the higher school.

4. Conclusions

The business-education relationship at the University of Telecommunications and Post is strong, allowing adequate information on the state of the labor market to be maintained.

The constant development of contacts with business organizations in turn allows higher pragmatism of education and successful realization of staff.

REFERENCES

[1] Anna. Otsetova, Ekaterina Dudin, "Postal services in the conditions of fourth industrial revolution". // International Journal of Advanced Research in IT and Engineering, Vol. 7 | No. 5, pp. 1-13, ISSN: 2278-6244, 2018.

[2] Online Available: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017SC0164&from=EN; A renewed EU agenda for higher education (Commission Staff Working Document, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions), 2017.

[3] Online Available: http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/stakeholder.html

[4] Online Available: https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-a-stakeholder-in-business-definition-examples-quiz.html; What Is a Stakeholder in Business? - Definition & Examples.

[5] Online Available: http://www.accountability.org/]; AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard (SES) 2015.

[6] Dimitar Kolev, "Internal branding as a part of the system for human resources management". International scientific conference "MANAGEMENT AND ENGINEERING", Sozopol, Bulgaria, Technical University - Sofia, Conference proceedings Volume I, ISSN 1310-3946, pp. 251-259, 2017.

[7] Online Available: https://keydifferences.com/difference-between-internal-and-external-stakeholders.html; Difference Between Internal and External Stakeholders Available at:

[8] Juha Kettunen, "The Stakeholder Map in Higher Education", DOI: 10.7763/IPEDR, V 78. 7, pp 34-38, 2014.

[9] Paul Benneworth and Ben W. Jongbloed. "Who matters to universities? A stakeholder perspective on humanities, arts and social sciences valorization". Higher Education, 59(5): 567–588, 2010.

[10] John Bryson. "What to do when stakeholder matter. Stakeholder identification and analysis techniques". Public Management Review, 6(1): 21–53, 2004.

[11] J. Burrows. "Going beyond labels: A framework for profiling institutional stakeholders". Contemporary Education, 70(4): 5–10, 1999.

[12] Online Available: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/higher-education-12; Higher Education (Bulgaria), 2018.

[13] Plamen Pavlov, "Methods of improving the process approach in assessing the efficiency of university quality management systems", ITHEA International Journal "Information Theories and Applications", International Journal, INFORMATION MODELS & ANALYSES VOLUME 7/2018, http://www.foibg.com/ijima/vol07/ijima07-02-p04.pdf, ISSN 1314-6416 (printed); ISSN 1314-6432 (online) Publisher ITHEA® Sofia, 1000.