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UNIVERSITY STUDENT MOTIVATION AND COOPERATION WITH COMPANIES

Abstract:

International markets can offer various opportunities for large companies however it can be difficult for small and medium sized enterprises (e. SMEs) to enter new markets. Within the European Union (EU) there has been a strong emphasis on supporting SMEs and providing a favorable environment for them to prosper. The Higher Education Institution Act No. 63/2006 and the Magna Charta Universitatum Declaration emphasize the importance of connecting universities to their close and surrounding environment, including SMEs.

The main goal of this paper is to explain how carrying out real-life marketing-based assignments across borders can benefit all three groups: students, educators, and the SMEs. Student motivation is highly important and an ongoing challenge for educators to keep their students motivated. In this work, university students worked on real-life assignments across borders while teachers provided guidance and facilitated contact with SMEs that provided information on the task and took the time needed to answer the students' questions. The aim was to link theories from textbooks to the problems the SMEs were facing. The students were tasked with finding strategies to solve these problems.

Surveys were conducted, where all three groups were asked about cooperation between universities and SMEs. The result from the student group shows that this kind cooperation was rewarding to the students who stated that direct interaction with SMEs through real-life assignments felt more important than fictive case studies. The students also pointed out that it was inspiring for to work with a SME and this kind of work was motivating to them.

The authors of this paper prepared a working procedure that explains how cooperation of these three parties, that is students, educators and SMEs, can be conducted, to make sure that all three groups benefit from such cooperation.

Keywords:

student motivation, cooperation, universities