

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE EVALUATION OF THEIR PERFORMANCES

**Hobeanu Văcărescu Loredana Ph. D Student
University of Craiova
Faculty of Economics and Business Administration,
Craiova, Romania**

Abstract: In the context of economic globalization and development of the knowledge-based organizations, more and more organizations from the various activity fields realize that the evaluation of the professional performances of the staff represents, along with communication, a real source which ensures the durable competitive advantage of the respective organizations.

The achieved studies in the institutions from the university environment confirm the importance they attach to human resources and their professional performances, having the implemented well-structured systems, in which they manage the specific evaluation methods and techniques.

The changes which are suffered by the contemporary society require a continuous process of evaluating the results of the academic body on the pathway of the whole existential flow of the human resources from the institution of higher education, leaving from employment, advancement of teaching positions, having regard to the professional performances and the motivation according to the obtained results.

JEL classification: **M12, I23, M50**

Key words: professional performance, evaluation, human resources management, higher education, teaching staff.

1. INTRODUCTION

The assessment of professional performances for employees within an organization is an activity from the field of human resources management which is more and more widespread, becoming a strategic activity in the process of human resources management. In order to reach economic performances and competitive advantage, private organizations and, more and more frequently, public institutions become aware of the necessity to implement the most adequate system to assess the professional performances of employees.

The issues brought to the attention of human resources professionals is even more actual and justified in view of increasing economic globalization process, in which the

professional competence and people's performances will play a decisive role in ensuring the competitiveness of the knowledge-based organization in the information society of the XXI century.

Evaluation is the activity through which staff motivation can be achieved, which maintains personal contacts, recognizes quality-based activity and promotes a certain image of the evaluated facts.

The acknowledgement of the performances accomplished signifies a real understanding of the manner in which tasks are achieved and efficiency is reached in the workplace. The acknowledgement of the performances accomplished offers the institution or person evaluated confidence in its own strength, constituting a powerful mobilizing factor and general producer of a positive attitude towards work.

The purpose of evaluation as an activity is that it helps the decision-making process that affects individuals, decisions which must have a solid and fair base. The need for such an activity is dictated by: the accurate establishment of the objectives, the potential deviations from those objectives and the ways to correct them, the determination of the directions and ways to perfect the staff, decreasing the risks implied by the maintenance and promotion of an incompetent staff member, an improved distribution of the employees, a fair wage policy and an increase in the institution's ability to compete with others.

The evaluation of the performances accomplished is also a control mechanism that allows feed-back to the members as individuals, but also to the company/institution as a whole. Without this information, "managers won't be able to know if employees are guided correctly or mistakably and up to what point they meet the required and desired standards.

Regarding the performances evaluation, teachers Constantin Roșca, Ion Gheorghe Roșca Mihai Vărzaru show that it means leaving a bureaucratic type of the management, used to privilege the assessment of the criteria of age, seniority and automatism results instead. This means that the performances appraisal system must be integrated with overall management system of individuals (C. Roșca, Vărzaru M., Gheorghe Roșca I., 2005, page 202). From this perspective, the evaluation involves a pertinence in report with the expectations of the evaluators and of the evaluative.

2. OBJECTIVES

Through this paper we will try to highlight the importance of the assessment of the professional performances, because this is a very important activity in the knowledge-based economy, particularly in the universities, forming the highly qualified workforce.

Still, from all activities included in human resources management, performance assessment is, certainly, one of the most contested and the least popular activities for all persons involved in the process. If not performed in an appropriate manner, it can cause many conflicts in the organization.

For this reason, employee assessment systems must be adapted to the specificity of activities, to have a high degree of objectivity. It is necessary to make appreciations regarding requirements and peculiarities of the work place, but also differentiated assessments based on responsibilities ascribed to each work place.

Some of the main objectives of professional performances evaluation are, most certainly: the identification of the level of performance for one employee during a period of time, improved communication between employees and management, establishment of

training methods in the future, identification of new payment modalities and, most importantly, promotion within the organization and career management.

3. METHODOLOGY

We will approach chronologically the concept of human resources and the development of this in the universities, the importance of the professional performances assessment for the employees, emphasizing accordingly the goals and the assessment criteria which are used in this field.

The mission of the university is to create the powerful educational environment, capable of providing highly the qualified workforce, consistent with the advanced countries of Europe.

The performances evaluation of the teaching and research staff is the process by which there is achieved the certification of quality in the higher education. The periodic procedures of assessment of the activities of teaching- seminars, research and professional services the academic staff provides are the main guarantee that a university can offer for its quality or prestige. In the practice of the universities in our country as of the European universities of evaluation of the teaching staff, the academic management deals.

4. ANALYSES

4.1 Human resources development in the universities

Human resources are the main factor that determines the excellence of university.

People wish to develop their professional paths in order to reach a certain level of well-being. A didactic career offers them the possibility to meet the professional objectives needed in their area of expertise and to efficiently balance their career and their personal development.

The development of human resources' potential is as much a necessary and complex process as it is continuous and of great responsibility, implying actions and activities regarding personnel selection, training and perfection. Of course, it needs to be related with a series of national and international factors, as well as economic, institutional and human-related ones.

The high degree of professors' qualification, the teaching staff's and the trainers' represent an essential tool to insure quality in the educational system, the initial professional training and the perfecting of those first competences acquired.

Investing in the development of human resources in education is necessary taking into consideration the system's ability to respond to it and the professional training of those involved that need to adapt to the permanent changes in the environment.

Employees in an organization adapt to novelties, should investments be made in training and developing their competencies.

Through its development policy, the university can ensure continuous updating of knowledge in order to maintain performance high. Compared to training, development is wider applicable and it is considered an efficient means for training/educating a new generation of teaching staff or of administrative staff.

Training or focused training is a form of updating knowledge, as well as specific and immediate abilities; it is more job-oriented rather than person-oriented. Development involves study of those abilities and behaviors necessary for current or future positions. It is larger applicable than training. Human resources development is more career-oriented and less job oriented; it forms the prospective potential and its adjustment.

Numerous methods are used in training and development, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. The methods include job training, training programs in educational institutions, educational management courses, video conferences etc. This process brings about new abilities, behaviors, and attitudes which make the organization more efficient.

In practice, there is a difference between training and development. Training is organized by the university in order to help employees accumulate competences/skills, habits and knowledge strictly related to the job.

Development means learning the necessary managerial and professional competencies for current and future positions.

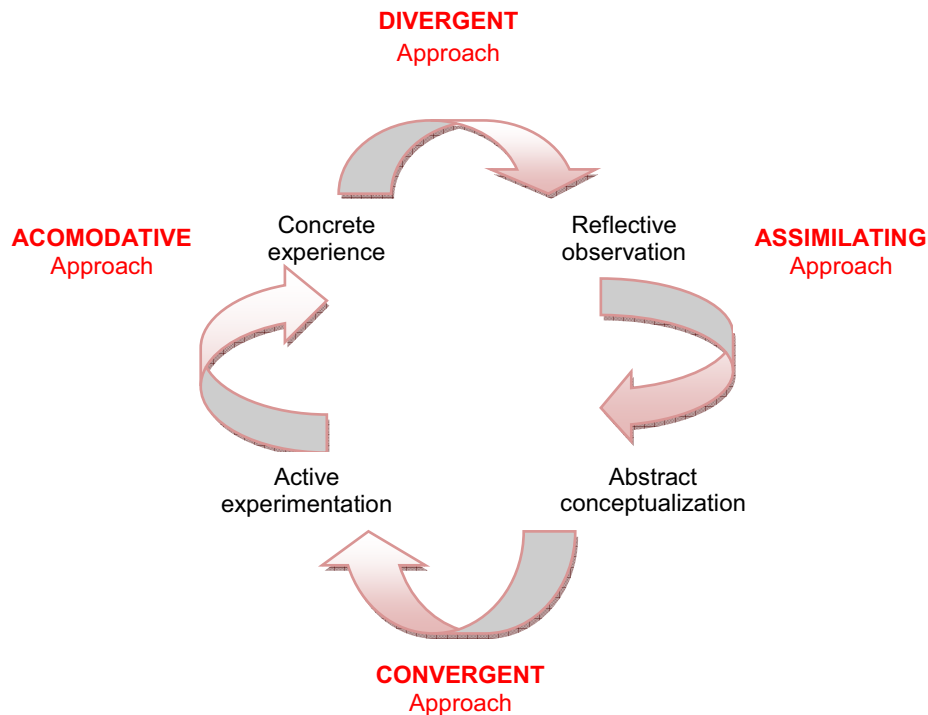
Learning is actually a continuous change of behaviors by direct or indirect experiences. The university which invests in development is the one whose employees continue to learn new things and to use what they learn in order to improve the quality of educational services.

At an international level, professional training is of much concern for states, especially in the European Union, where, by adopted community acts, member states have taken over responsibility to take all necessary steps in order to ensure real conditions for professional employee training, for counseling and professional orientation, for progressively bringing closer training levels, to mutually acknowledge professional training of employees, for adopting common policies in the vast domain of professional training.

Learning can be defined as a cyclical and cumulative process, of continuous knowledge updating, by adding new topics to the already existing knowledge base (Partington, P and Stainton, C., 2002).

A representative model of the learning process is Kolb's cycle, which is shown in figure 1 (Kolb, D. A. and Fry, R , 1975), seen as a continuous process:

- gaining action-based practical experience;
- observing this experience and reflecting upon it;
- drawing conclusions from the experience;
- testing new ideas into practice.



Source: Prodan A., *Human Resources Development, Chapter IV, in Project "Improving University Management", Module Human Resource Management, Iași, 2011, p.74*

Figure no. 1. Kolb' learning cycle and the four learning approaches

Activity in the organization is a continuous learning process and learning is the basis of all training activities. There are more possible ways of approaching complex learning process within the organization. Many times, trainers present information and assume that they are understood. But learning takes place only when information is perceived, understood and internalized through a conscious effort of using it.

The importance of the university in developing public and private organizations continues to increase. The pressure for enhancing university performance is also reflected in a rising demand for quality human resources. The new environment requires a quick answer from the organization, but also from employees.

By visiting websites of universities in the country, we can notice that no university has transparently posted the hiring, evaluation, development or firing policy / procedure for human resources. So, interpretation and improvisation can supply all these. Decisions of training employees by mobilities, by sharing experience or by job rotation are made at faculty level, the human resources services not having any explicit contribution.

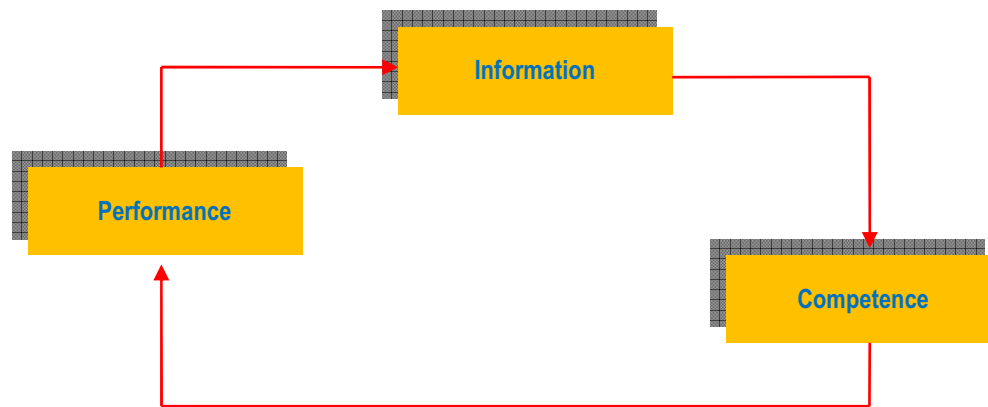
4.2 The importance of performance management in the higher education system

In order to be able to understand the importance of the performance assessment for human resources in universities, we must take into account also the fact that this is basic component of performance management. Regarded as means to obtain much better individual and organizational results by understanding and managing performance in a unitary and contextual framework of education, performance management can be defined as a strategic and integrated approach to ensure long-term success by improving employee

performance that work within and by developing team and individual participants' capabilities (Armstrong and Baron, 1998).

According to other specialists in the field, performance management consists of a systematic approach of human resources management in general and performance assessment in particular. Objectives, performances, assessments and feedback are considered motivational instruments in order to understand and use their maximum creative potential in order to reach organizational objectives (Lefter and Deaconu, 2008).

Performance, competence and information are a dialectic unit: information determines competence, competence determines performance and performance enriches information with new data and rules of greater magnitude (Figure 2).



Source: Belous Vitalie, 1995, p. 29

Figure no. 2. The link between information-competence and performance

Performance management must be integrated into the complex process of organizational management and must correlate with other essential processes, such as the university strategy, employee development and total quality management.

The integrated nature implies:

- *vertical integration* – is reached through organizational strategy. Objectives to support the reaching of organizational purposes are set at team and individual levels. These become objectives co-ordinated from top down, from organizational level to functional level, to team and individual level. The strict alignment of these objectives and, mostly, common agreement on these objectives are essential. Objectives must be set through open dialogue between managers and employees;

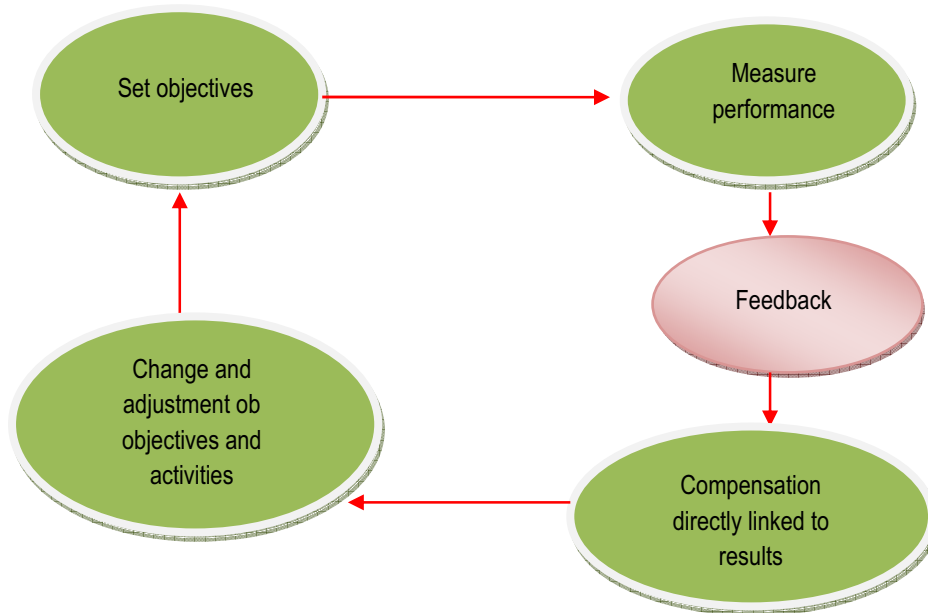
- *horizontal integration* – involves alignment of the performance management strategy with other human resources strategies, which refer mostly to organizational development, evaluation, reward, in order to have a coherent approach of management and personnel development within the organization;

- *integration of individual and organizational needs.*

A unanimously accepted model of performance management by the international literature in the field and applicable to universities does not exist for the moment, but many authors discuss the existence of a performance management cycle.

The authors of the model presented in figure 3 (Mabey, Salaman & Story, 2001, pp. 124 – 130), identified five elements of this cycle: establish performance objectives;

measure results; obtain feedback following measurement, compensation based on results; change and integration of objectives and activities.



Source: According to Mabey, Salaman & Storey, 2001

Figure no. 3. The performance management cycle

The elements of the performance management cycle can be both descriptive and prescriptive. Some authors use performance management as a „framework” to analyze different aspects of human resources strategic management. Others argue that, by highlighting essential elements of the performance management process, the cycle is a manner in which the process should be conducted by organizations that wish to adopt a strategic perspective for managing human resources.

The authors state the level at which such a performance management system can operate depends on the way in which the organization wishes to apply the model. The model does not specify the level at which these elements are applied: at individual level, at team level, in departments / strategic units or at organizational level, leaving the freedom of choice to the manager.

Still, the authors' experience underlines the fact that the performance management cycle is mostly applied at individual level.

As presented by the authors of this model, employee performance measuring is an essential process of performance management in an organization. The requirement to evaluate employees in an organization is dictated by the accelerated pace of technological development, by new technologies in most fields of activity, by strong competition due to internationalization of activities in many companies. This is why in many fields of activity, including universities, differentiation and competitive advantage are finally determined by employees' performance.

In a scientific paper, Pitariu (Pitariu, H., 2006, p.131) mentions that in Romania are used different systems of personnel appraisal. This is due to the fact that organizations are

aware of the beneficial effect of this activity on employee productivity, admitting its necessity in increasing the level of competitiveness in organizations.

The specialist mentions that, in practice, we are confronted with standardized valuation charts, imposed by law, with performance criteria established annually by a superior decision factor.

Objectivity is another issue with which organizations are confronted in the evaluation process. Very often, evaluators do not understand what performance standard are about and indulge themselves in superficial evaluations.

The main objectives that a university must have in the complex process of employee performance assessment must:

- help improve employee performance and determine change in attitude and behavior according to those promoted by the organization;
- offer to employees all necessary information for their professional development, making them more self-confident;
- identify the needs for professional development of teaching staff and evaluate results of former programmes;
- make employees become aware of the connection between their performance and the university performance;
- promote key attitudes and behaviors for each position;
- evaluate individual objectives and team objectives (department, faculty);
- become a support for efficient communication;
- enhance work motivation of employees;
- be the starting point for development of professional careers for teaching staff.

The Romanian law (Government of Romania, 2000, Resolution no. 238) regulates the methodological requirements for evaluation of individual professional performances of teaching staff. This process is conducted by the rector, based on nominations from chiefs of departments and approved by deans according to the assessment criteria.

In order to evaluate the teaching and research personnel one must consider a series of criteria which reflect the teaching activity, the scientific research and the professional services brought to the university and the academic community from our country.

The assessment criteria and performance indicators for teaching staff are the following:

Elaboration of teaching materials

- Introduction of new teaching courses on new teaching directions, not presented in the past;

- Specific academic courses, with a high degree of originality;
- Study supports for tutorials, laboratories, projects;

Scientific research

- Books, monographies, treaties published in recognized publishing houses;
- Studies published in specialty journals, with referents and editorial collective;
- Conferences / synthesis papers presented at recognized scientific displays;
- Papers published in volumes of national and/or international conferences, with referents and programme committee;
- Homologated patent acts, products applied;
- Scientific prizes, awarded through papers;
- Grants won in competition;
- Contracts of scientific research;
- Scientific research reports.

- National and international recognition
- Guest professor for teaching activities at prestigious universities;
- Member of academies of science and arts;
- Member of international scientific communities;
- Member of PhD commissions;
- Member of the editing staff of some well-known journals;
- Member of international programme committees;
- Member of teams of expertise/evaluation of the educational process;
- Member of national specialty boards;
- Organizer of international and/or national scientific events;
- Scientific referent / national and international expert.

Activities with students

- Teaching staff assessment by students (communication, appraisal of course/tutorial/project, appraisal of working method, clarity of exposure and so on) based on a methodology established by the university senate;

- Management of student scientific groups;

- Number of students matriculated at courses and tutorials included in the basic position.

Activity in academic community

- Number of graduation papers, license papers, dissertations, doctoral studies conducted;

- Participation in scientific communications, symposiums, round tables organized in the higher education institution.

The criteria regarding the evaluation of the professional performances of the teaching and research personnel can be applied differentially, according to the place they hold in the teaching hierarchy. The percentage of each criterion in the evaluation of the professional performances is established each year by the university Senate for each of the teaching positions in the system and according to the institutional development policy of the institution itself.

These minimal criteria in the effectual Romanian law system can be appended by university senates with other assessment criteria and performance indicators to support the institutional development policy and to enforce organizational competitiveness.

Each performance indicator is evaluated on a scale from 0 to 5. The basic salary for each teacher will be set according to the result obtained by adding up the points for performance indicators, weighted with the evaluation criteria established at organizational level for each position and taking into account legal limits and organizational incomes.

The main purposes of teaching staff are: the training needs for a field, to improve teaching activities, to highlight personal qualities for each employee, identifying the strengths and weaknesses, to create a climate of mutual trust between university management and teaching staff, facilitating personal and professional development, to facilitate self-knowledge, to become aware of personal and professional qualities and competencies and, finally, to reward the employee according to the level of performance.

4.3 The purpose of performance evaluation in selecting the human resources in the higher education system

The work „Management of Human Resources – A Practical Guide”, published in 2005 by professor Pânișoară (Pânișoară, 2005) outlines performance evaluation in an institution as a crucial aspect of HR management because, it's only through evaluation that

the dynamic nature of professional development must be understood and also one must perceive professional development as a continuous process and not only as a „simple, single event” that happens to take place in the life of the employee.

The regular actions of evaluating the quality of professional activities make employees realize the importance of their work and – based on the feed-back – to make efforts to better the professional skills they lack, as long as it is not too late for them to do so (Constantin, 2002).

Performance assessment of human resources in universities allows adequate deployment of some activities in the field of human resources, among which recruitment and selection. Data and information regarding performance assessment allow elaboration of some rational managerial decisions regarding recruitment and selection. So, the random deployment or on subjective bases of such activities is avoided.

The results of performance evaluation process of teaching staff confirms the recruitment and selection programs, because it provides multiple information for skills inventories and create, at the same time, the support for an integrated human resources also and to make a permanent diagnosis of them (Manolescu, Lefter and Deaconu, 2007, p. 456.).

An objective process of performance assessment for university teaching staff can act as a lever to attract young graduates with teaching skills and genuine inclinations towards the scientific field. Also, from university perspective, indicators obtained based on performance assessment highlight the quality of the hired work force and they are eloquent indexes that suggest the need for human resources in different departments and faculties.

Possibly more than in any other field, in the education system the employee assessment must take into account the requirements and peculiarities specific to each work place in order to be as realistic as possible. Only afterwards must be analyzed the degree in which the employee profile fits the job activity. An annual assessment multicriterial application for the job of university professor.

The activity of establishing requirements and peculiarities of work places and for the entire process of professional performance assessments for university staff can be performed by:

- managers at different hierarchical levels in the higher education organization;
- direct subordinates of the employee;
- colleagues on similar positions;
- external evaluators (C.N.C.S.I.S., A.R.A.C.I.S., M.E.C.I. and so on);
- mixed assessment committees;
- students;
- the person him/herself by self-assessment.

A special role played by the human resources function in universities in terms of employee motivation is that it manages to elaborate performance-based reward systems, which offer possibilities both for financial, as well as non-financial rewards in order to gratify accomplishments.

University management must accept the necessity of a type of work that offers teaching staff the means to reach objectives, with a reasonable degree of autonomy and possibilities to fructify its own aptitudes and competencies. Human resources specialists give suggestions on processes of job description, which take into account influential factors for work motivation and which allow job enrichment in terms of variety,

responsibilities in terms of decision making and as much control power in work deployment as possible.

Work motivation is also amplified by a management style which sets direction, encourages and stimulates desire for achievement, it supports employees in their effort to reach objectives and improve their overall performance.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation of the teaching staff is a formal part of the personnel development system, which offers the possibility for an evaluator to talk and agree on the objectives and purposes of each of the people evaluated regarding the improvement of their professional performances and the quality of the teaching process. This also allows that the personnel maintain the standards required or that it upgrades its development in order to work more effectively.

The process of assessing professional performances for higher education teaching staff has multiple implications on their work motivation. Therefore, we can conclude that, as long as it is objective and it determines the employee to be willing to develop professionally, to improve its abilities as a teacher and a mentor, the assessment is a necessary process and with multiple positive effects in higher education institutions.

The employee performance assessment in an organization can easily lead both to true work motivation and to profound demodulation. In a short period of time, it can transform a highly motivated employee into one who lacks confidence and strength for daily duties. Such a situation, sometimes encountered in universities, can be due either to indulgence or to exigency in the assessment process. These errors appear when certain assessors tend to assess all teaching staff either at a high level or at a low level. Therefore, it can appear a tendency to increase subjectivity by awarding unduly highly favorable or unfavorable grades. Such a situation can be avoided by using multiple criteria in the assessment and several assessors.

Performance assessment of teaching staff is also a means for teachers to communicate better and in a more direct manner with top managers, to be able to make them become aware of their needs. In the process of assessment, direct managers (heads of department, deans, vicerectors, rectors) can identify the training and professional development needs that teaching staff should benefit from in order to be able to teach and research at certain professional levels, in particular because each individual can be motivated by different stimuli. The identification of such levers of professional motivation in education is essential for the educational process.

Through the process of performance assessment for teaching staff we must not only create an image of past performances, but also an estimation of the future, by analyzing objectives, ambitions and plans for each employee.

The discussion between the assessor and the employee is meaningful for the professional path of employees in higher education. In order to succeed in doing this, the evaluators as well as those under evaluation need to work in a stimulating environment where thoughts and view-points can be freely expressed, thus enhancing communication and leading towards an increase in efficiency.

REFERENCES

1. Armstrong, M., Relating competencies to pay: The UK experience, Compensation and Baron, A & Benefits Review, May-June, 1998
2. Belous, V. Bazele performanței, Ingineria performanței umane, Editura Performantica, Iași, 1995 (in Roumanian)
3. Constantin, T. Managementul resurselor umane, Editura Institutul European, Iași, 2002 (in Roumanian)
4. Kolb, D. A., Fry, R. Toward an applied theory of experiential learning. in C.Cooper (ed.) Theories of Group Process, London: John Wiley, 1975
5. Lefter, V, Deaconu, A, Marinaș, C, Nica, E, Marin, I & Puia, R, Managementul resurselor umane-Teorie și practică, ediția a II-a, Editura Economică, București, 2008 (in Roumanian)
6. Manolescu, A., Lefter, V, Deaconu, A Managementul resurselor umane, Editura Economică, București, 2007 (in Roumanian)
7. Mabey, C, Salaman, G, Story, J Human Resource Management: A Strategic Introduction, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford, 2001
8. Partington, P and Stainton, C. Managing Staff Development. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002
9. Pânișoară, I., Pânișoară, G. Managementul resurselor umane – Ghid practic, Ediția a II-a, Editura Polirom, București, 2005 (in Roumanian)
10. Pitariu, H. Proiectarea fișelor de post, evaluarea posturilor de muncă și a personalului: un ghid practic pentru managerii de resurse umane, Ed. Irecson, 2006 (in Roumanian)
11. Prodan, A. Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane, CapIV, în Proiectul „Îmbunătățirea Managementului Universitar, Modulul „Managementul Resurselor Umane”, Iași, 2011 (in Roumanian)
12. Roșca, C., Vărzaru, M., Roșca, Gh.I Resurse umane – Management și gestiune, Editura Economică, București, 2005 (in Roumanian)
13. * * * Law approved by the Government of Romania, Decision no. 238 of March 2000 regarding the approval of Methodological norms for the assessment of professional individual performances of teaching staff in higher education, The Official Monitor no. 141/3 April 2000, accessed on 13 October 2011, http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.frame