SOCIAL POLICY OF UNIVERSITY BASED ON DECISION MAKING ON ACADEMIC STAFF MOTIVATION

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Abstract

The article examines the internal processes and social policy of the organization, specifically deals with the decision-making process focusing on the motivation of employees and managers of universities in Slovakia. The essence is to analyse and document the complexity of this process in terms of theoretical knowledge and the subsequent examination of the general applicability of its steps. The research focuses on identifying and comparing factors of the social environment influencing decision-making on motivation from the perspective of both managers and employees. The results are based on a sociological survey involving 90 university administrative, research, teaching and management staff. Based on the research, it was possible at the end of the article to present a recommended model describing the relations between the examined processes and the social policy of the university.

Key words: social policy, motivation, decision making, university

JEL Code: I23, J24, M12

Introduction

From the historical perspective, it can be stated that the financial and economic crisis (2004–2014) has led to a revision of social policy within the European Union. However, despite this direct attention, there have been only minor changes in policy. Even before the crisis began, the European Union's political agenda was gradually taken out of its priorities. There is a mismatch between (a) the need for social policy support due to the crisis and (b) a long-term lack of social policy support (Graziano & Hartlapp, 2019).

Based on the previous development and current situation, it can be stated that the necessity to support social policy in Slovakia is becoming crucial. It can only be influenced through the implementation of a targeted series of decisions and the subsequent implementation of selected actions. Global support for state social policy will be achieved if the condition of policy development in individual organizations of the state is fulfilled.

From the viewpoint of the organization and its impact on the social policy of the state, the following idea can be mentioned: Performance management (PM) can discourage employees from experiencing social influence. This is a problematic knowledge as social

influence is a factor affecting employees' job satisfaction. With two prerequisites, managers can contribute, through performance management, to a positive impact on social policy and hence on employee satisfaction with their work. The first assumption can be described as the consistency or coherency of management by managers and the second aspect relates to the potential exchange of managerial staff. Interpretation of results confirms that rigorous management ensures job satisfaction that is mediated by social impact and mitigated by the exchange of leaders (Bauwens et al., 2019).

One of the types of organizations that must take care to improve social policy are educational institutions, including universities. The focus of this article primarily on the university environment is its potential to influence the thinking and behaviour of young people, who will later contribute very intensively to the formation of state social policy.

The results of a study on social policy in educational institutions also affect policymakers themselves. Creators should consider several aspects, such as the need to support managers' motivation and willingness to initiate change processes. It is also necessary to approach the problem solving in a structured way and to focus on the preparation of reliable theoretical foundations (Aas & Paulsen, 2019). These ideas link different subjects and objects that need to be emphasized in order to achieve social policy support. These include not only managers and employees, but also decision-making and motivation processes.

Based on mentioned above ideas, *the aim of the paper* is to search, both theoretically and empirically, the decision making of university managers when prepare and perform the university social policy, i.e. when motivate academic staff. The paper searches relations existing between the process of motivating and process of decision making in motivating, commonly built on the ground of motivation perceived from the part of employees as well as managers of Slovak universities. The results of survey performed at the sample of $n = 90$ academic respondents confirm some imperfection in the process of social policy creation and implementation in Slovak higher education. The empirical part of the paper introduces also the model focused on defining the relations between the examined processes and the university social policy.

1 Motivation and decision making

Motivation can be defined as the power that gives people energy to achieve their activities and goals. Their direction depends, for example, on the experiences, actual desires, perceived values or ideals that one wants to approach (Pardel, 1977, p. 63). All the inner aspects of

a person's personality are closely related to his or her motivation. Based on knowledge of personality and understanding of incentives or motives, it is possible to influence the motivation of a person to a certain extent by setting specific tools.

Upon closer examination, it is also possible to specify the notion of intrinsic motivation, which is based on how people perceive themselves. One has to perceive himself/herself as a competent, effective and freely decisive person and at that time it can be assumed that s/he is internally motivated in the process of performing tasks. The achievement and the concrete way of performing tasks therefore depend on the inner needs of man (Deci, 2012, p. 270). The inner attitude is derived from the values it holds and focuses on. Looking at the individual as a human being, value can be defined as what s/he feels and believes. The presented point of view is named psycho-social-behavioural as it affects human behaviour and growth (Blašková & Hriníková, 2019).

The best understanding of people's behaviour is a prerequisite for influencing them. The ability to influence behaviour is based on work with motivation, and the process of directing human activity can be understood as motivation. In this context, motivation is the external influence on the internal structure of man (Blažek, 2014, p. 162; Brown, 2017, p. 8).

A number of decisions are needed to ensure motivation and motivating processes. The strategic thinking of each organization should be embedded directly in the mission, vision and philosophy of the organization, and its purpose should be based on long-term values. When defining a vision, it is necessary to ensure that managers include not only factors related to the future but also the current status or competences of employees and the overall capabilities of the organization. The vision is perceived by many as the greatest motivator, because it can focus the attention of all employees in one direction (Jakubíková, 2008, pp. 20–21).

2   Decision making on motivation and social policy

Organizational and managerial decision making is a complex set of complicated, multi-level processes influenced by several internal, interpersonal and extra-personal factors (Hodgkinson & Sadler-Smith, 2018, p. 4). Looking at decision-making through the process approach, it is characterized by Lussier (2008) through the six stages it belongs to: classification and definition of the problem (opportunity); setting objectives and criteria; creation of original (creative) and innovative variants; analysis of variants and selection of the most suitable; planning and implementation of the decision; decision review (p. 87).

A relatively common way of solving decision problems is LSGDM – Large-Scale Group Decision Making. This kind of decision-making is characterized by selecting the best option from a defined set of feasible options, with a set based on the preferences of many decision makers (Liu, Fan & Zhang, 2016, p. 2). However, the reconciliation of all stakeholders is very complicated as it differs in different interests, status, education, expertise and understanding of the problem. Consensus Reaching Processes (CRP) are often used to resolve conflicts of opinion. Their aim is to reach a collective solution that is as close as possible to the unanimous agreement (Liu et al., 2019, p. 3).

Based on the information gathered regarding the behaviour of people (employees), it can be stated that they often turn to other trustworthy persons who act as authorities in their view. They are influenced – motivated – by the opinion of a charismatic personality to whom they transferred their decision-making problem (Constant et al., 2019).

According to the American Association of Management, factors determining the level of motivation in an organization include the leadership style (decision making), reward system, organizational (social) policy, work structure (Tracy, 2019, online). These aspects can have positive and negative effects on the environment. This means that the prerequisite for effective application is the possibility of changing and influencing them for the benefit of the organization, thus increasing the level of motivation and improving social policy.

Social policy as a separate concept can be understood in the sense of purposeful direction, which leads to improvement of the conditions of the population. It consists of a number of sub-policies, such as employment and education policies (Reisman, 2001). There can be also added other types of social policy, e.g. a motivation policy, development policy, sustainability policy, etc.

The basic principles of social policy include the principle of participation and justice. These principles are also necessarily and intensively used in motivation and decision-making processes in organizations. Commonly, mentioned facts support the importance of focusing on motivation and decision-making in an effort to influence the social policy of organizations and the state.

3   Methods

A number of methods of data collection and selection were used in the research. An example is not only the method of induction, deduction, but also sociological inquiry through questionnaire technique.

3.1 Survey sample and results

Our research focuses on the decision-making process of university executives, which affects the motivation and creativity of employees as key areas of social and motivational policy for each university. A questionnaire survey was conducted with a total number of respondents of $n = 90$. These included both administrative and research staff, as well as teachers and managers. Age and gender breakdowns are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic characteristics of respondents

Sex		Age				
Female	Male	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60>
48	42	6	20	22	23	19

One of the survey questions was about the factors managers use when deciding how to reward their employees. The list of statements is generated on our previous surveys performed in 2009 and 2014. The purpose was to find out what elements university managers take into account when formulating social and motivational policies. In the first place in terms of abundance is the factor of responsibility, independence and reliability. This was marked by all 9 managers involved in the survey, it is 100% represented. Table 2 shows the factors in a sequence based on the frequency of their designation by managers.

Table 2. Factors of decision-making on motivation from the perspective of managers

No	Options	Frequency	[%]
1.	Responsibility, independence and reliability	9	100.00%
2.	Quality of their work	8	88.89%
3.	The required volume performance	7	77.78%
4.	Compliance with deadlines	6	66.67%
5.	Working commitment and diligence	4	44.44%
6.	Number of tasks completed	3	33.33%
7.	Participation in training and development of their skills	2	22.22%
8.	Career growth and the possibility of further progress	2	22.22%
9.	Submission of new proposals	1	11.11%
10.	Friendship and creating good relationships in the team	1	11.11%
11.	Work overtime	1	11.11%
12.	Savings achieved	0	0.00%

Employees also had the opportunity to comment on factors related to motivation decisions. They identified precisely those factors that their supervisor actually takes into

account when deciding on remuneration. In the first place in terms of abundance is the factor of quality of their work (65.43%). The overall order of all factors is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Factors of decision-making on motivation from the perspective of employees

No	Options	Frequency	[%]
1.	Quality of their work	**53**	**65.43%**
2.	The required volume performance	**46**	**56.79%**
3.	Working commitment and diligence	**36**	**44.44%**
4.	Responsibility, independence and reliability	**35**	**43.21%**
5.	Compliance with deadlines	**30**	**37.04%**
6.	Number of tasks completed	27	33.33%
7.	Friendship and creating good relationships in the team	15	18.52%
8.	Participation in training and development of their skills	12	14.81%
9.	Submission of new proposals	12	14.81%
10.	Career growth and the possibility of further progress	10	12.35%
11.	Work overtime	10	12.35%
12.	Savings achieved	7	8.64%

When comparing managers' and employees' views of the factors used to decide on motivation, it can be stated that they differ considerably. Managers consider responsibility, independence and reliability to be the most widely used factor, and employees consider quality of their work. Also, the order of other factors varies, suggesting that each group of respondents perceives the importance of the presented factors differently.

The last two positions are the same for both managers and employees. These factors are work overtime and savings achieved. Interestingly, none of the managers identified the possibility of savings achieved and is therefore not used in decision-making on motivation. On the other hand, 8.64% of employees thought this factor was felt by their superiors to use it for decision making. This indicates some inconsistency in the process of social policy making of Slovak universities.

3.2   Changes in the decision-making process

Other questions of the questionnaire survey also focused on the area of motivation decision-making. Employees, as well as managers, should indicate how their boss chooses to apply motivational tools to them. The purpose was therefore to determine whether university management applied the required flexibility necessary to implement the social policy set. The decision-making process examined here focused on the passage of time. All $n = 90$ employees involved in the survey answered the same question (their answers are given in Table 4).

Table 4. Decisions of supervisors on the application of motivation tools

Options	Managers		Employees		Total	
	Frequency	[%]	Frequency	[%]	Frequency	[%]
Continuously changing	3	33.33%	15	18.52%	18	20,00%
Varies only in case of changes	4	44.44%	27	33.33%	31	34,44%
It doesn't change at all	2	22.22%	39	48.15%	41	45,56%

Most managers indicated that their supervisor changes their applied motivational tools only in case of a significant change (44.44%). Other employees stated that their supervisors did not change motivation tools even in case of changes (48.15%). The overall view of the employees involved in the survey is largely confirmed by the fact that superiors do not investigate changes in their preferences or motives and thus do not implement the adjustment of social and motivation instruments. This is a worrying phenomenon which has a negative impact on employment policy and hence on the processes that take place within it (remuneration, motivation, communication, development, etc.). All employees within the organization are involved in such processes. A specific example is the university environment where, in addition to influencing employment policy, a significant impact on education policy is understandable.

Since education policy can be referred to not only as an organization's sub-policy but also as a lifelong comprehensive effort and ability to learn and deepen knowledge in various areas throughout life, we can assume its direct impact on the country's social policy. In the case of a negative impact in businesses and universities, there will be a negative impact on the employment and education policy of the state, which will affect social policy as a whole.

3.3   Discussion

Based on previous knowledge, deepened knowledge supported by opinions of other authors (e.g. Bauwens, Audenaert & Decramer, 2019; Constant et al., 2019; Deci, 2012; Reisman, 2001; etc.) and research conducted it was possible to devise a recommended model describing the interrelationship between the investigated processes (motivation and decision making) and social policy (Figure 1). Model is partially based on the Maslow's Theory of Needs, Expectation Theory, Homeostasis Theory, Theory of Altruism, Economy Theory, Theory of Social Exchange, etc.

The research confirmed that social environment factors influence decision-making on motivation from the perspective of both managers and employees, and changes in these processes affect social policy. That is why motivation, decision-making and social policy were included in the model as three main elements.
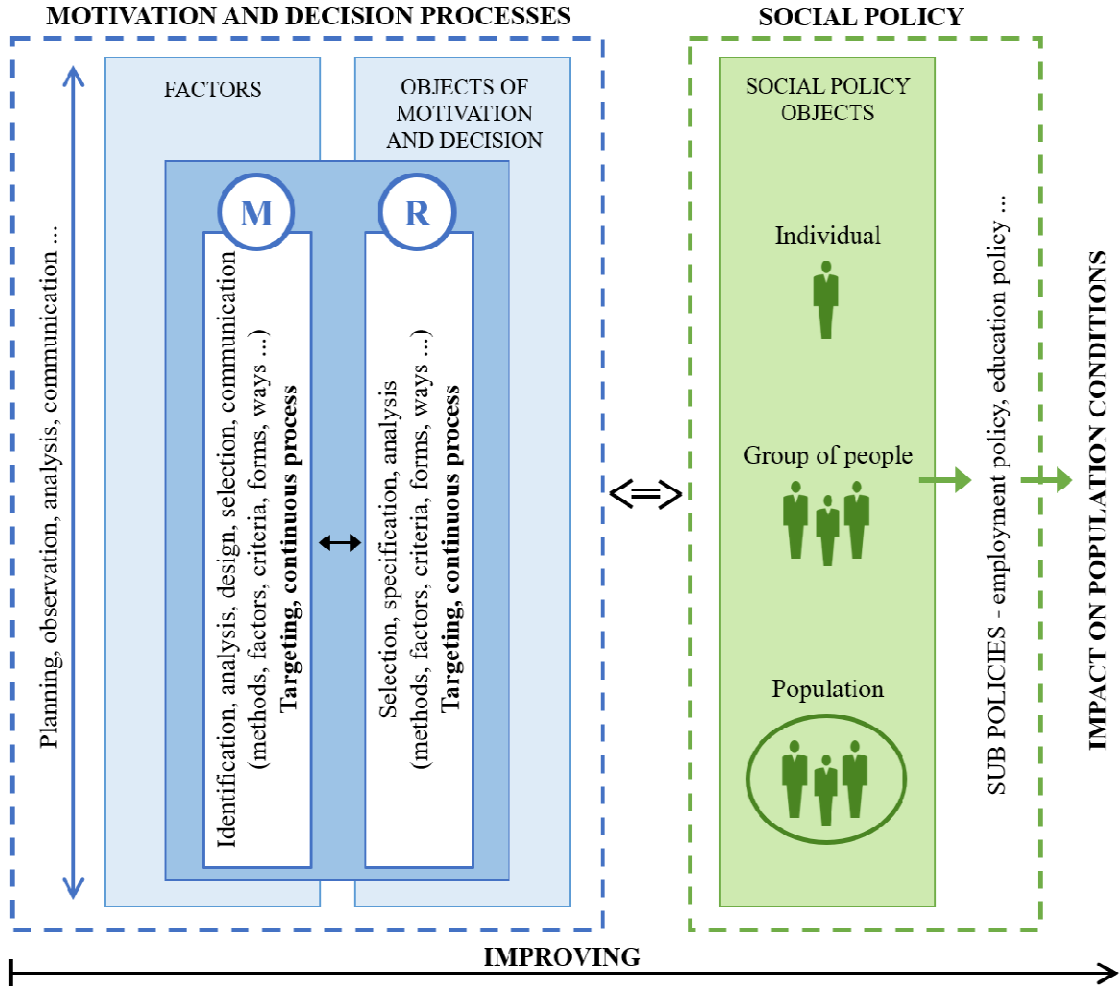

Figure 1. Model of relations between motivation, decision-making and social policy

For the purposes of creating the presented model, social policy objects were identified that are identical for the process of motivation and decision-making. These objects are the individual, groups of people and the entire population. The proposed model can contribute and help university managers in the more appropriate understanding the potential causes and impacts of their decisions prepared and taken when motivate their teaching, research and administrative staff.

Conclusion

The article was focused on the influence of motivation, i.e. motivating and decision-making processes on creation and implementation of social policy of universities or the state. It identified specific links, connections and relationships that exist between these processes.

The presented results were obtained by evaluating data from a questionnaire survey carried out in a university environment. By combining theoretical knowledge from literature analysis and original primary findings from the research, a model has been created showing the interrelationships between the processes studied and social policy.

The model illustrates the two-way effect of selected processes and describes the usefulness of decision-making on motivation in supporting the implementation and continuous improvement of the social policy of organizations (universities). If the social policy of individual organizations is supported, the social policy of the state will subsequently be supported.

Acknowledgment

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