



Main problems and proposed solutions in the implementation of student placement at agrarian studies in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan

Dr Stanisław Minta, PhD

Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Sciences (UPWR)

Institute of Economic Sciences

POLAND



**“DEVELOPMENT ISSUES OF INNOVATIVE ECONOMY IN
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Introduction

There are many elements that influence the quality of education and knowledge transfer. In this case very important is how to maintain a proper balance between the theory and practical skills.

Many times the education system focuses on increasing the share of theoretical knowledge with too low pressure on practical training. Limiting quantity and ignoring the importance of student placement, workshops or internships in the education system may result in insufficient competences of young people entering the labor market.

THEORY



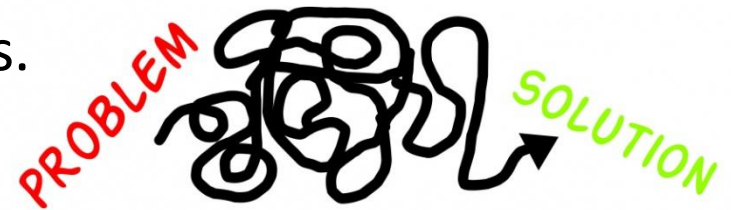
PRACTICE



Introduction

The organization of student placement faces many different problems and limitations. Some of them are universal, and some result from specific conditions of a given country or university.

Nevertheless, one should strive to improve the quality of this element of student education and find a way to solve the existing limitations.



Aim of the presentation

The aim of this study is to identify the main problems and propose a way to solve them in the process of organizing student placement, with particular emphasis on university education in agricultural studies in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.



Material and methods

These considerations are the result of the experience, knowledge, observation and discussion of all members of the consortium implementing the TOPAS project - both from EU universities from Poland, Germany, Romania and Great Britain, as well as from partner universities from Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. They are directly related to the work package "WP1: Revision of BA and MA internship programs in agrarian management and LOs aligned", which is an integral part of the TOPAS project.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

TOPAS - "From Theoretical Oriented to Practical Education in Agrarian Studies"
- project co-financed by the European Union under the ERASMUS + program.

Material and methods

Source materials are primary and secondary.

Methods to collect data: documentation method, brainstorming method, direct observation, unstructured face-to-face interviews.

The descriptive method was used to present the results of investigation.



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The main areas hindering the organization of student placement at agricultural universities

Representatives of all partner universities pointed to various problems that hinder the proper course of the student placement process and the achievement of adequate effectiveness of this form of education at the academic level.



On the basis of these discussions and comments, the most important problem areas in the fields of studies related to agriculture were identified in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

The main areas hindering the organization of student placement at agricultural universities

Thanks to the common work of the TOPAS project consortium, the most important problems are divided into six groups:

- 1. Duration and placing of placements in curricula**
- 2. Lack of real interest and commitment from farms and agribusiness enterprises**
- 3. Willingness to complete the placement only formally**
- 4. Financial support for students and academic staff and recognition of value of placements is not given in universities**
- 5. Lack of an appropriate organizational structure at the university to support effective student placement**
- 6. Too low level or lack of motivation of teaching staff, students and industry**

Problem and proposed solution (1)

Duration and placing of placements in curricula

The duration and the logical placing of the placements in the curricula is very relevant to the success of this objective. Students need time and the possibility to work on farms to get really involved in the agricultural processes. So on one side placements should not be too short – which is unfortunately very often the case in reality. Placements also have to be combined with the educational process and therefore have to be put in a logical learning place within curricula. ***The recommended duration of student placement should be between 8 weeks and 6 months in one cycle*** (depending on the field of study and specialization as well as formal restrictions).



Problem and proposed solution (2)

Lack of real interest and commitment from farms and agribusiness enterprises

In the case of placement, agricultural enterprises should be equal partners in the educational process. *A prerequisite for a successful student placement on their site is that the farms have the opportunity to offer the necessary internships, are interested and motivated to do it, and are able to provide students with practical knowledge.* Obstacles are the level of development of agricultural activity, farm equipment and farmers' motivation. *The aim must be to establish trustful, long-term cooperation between universities and businesses.*



Problem and proposed solution (3)

Willingness to complete the placement only formally

Reality often shows that internships are treated worse than other elements of academic education and are only carried out in a formal way. Often, neither students, lecturers, nor companies are interested in conducting internships. This is because they have not been taken seriously in the past and are still given too little importance at academic level.

Good placements need continuous, serious and convincing input of the academic staff. It is important to develop effective communication tools between student and teachers during the placement. *Good and comfortable communication will be helpful in developing real contacts and in the supervision of the placement.*

Problem and proposed solution (4)

Financial support for students and academic staff and recognition of value of placements is not given in universities

A frequent problem is the lack or too low level of financial support for student placement (especially to cover the costs of transport and costs of the stay in enterprises during the placement). *The cost of transport and remuneration for the time spent to visiting students during placement should be covered by the university.* The educational value of student placement should also be appreciated, and the motivation of lecturers should be strengthened by university management. *Entrepreneurs can also participate in these costs by funding special scholarships or refunds for students* (in this case, a lot depends on the situation on the local labor market - the lower the unemployment rate, the greater the probability that companies will be willing to incur such expenses).

Problem and proposed solution (5)

Lack of an appropriate organizational structure at the university to support effective student placement

University structures are needed to facilitate the delivery of student placement. In addition to the necessary technical and organizational facilities, staff to facilitate and supervise the student placement is also needed.

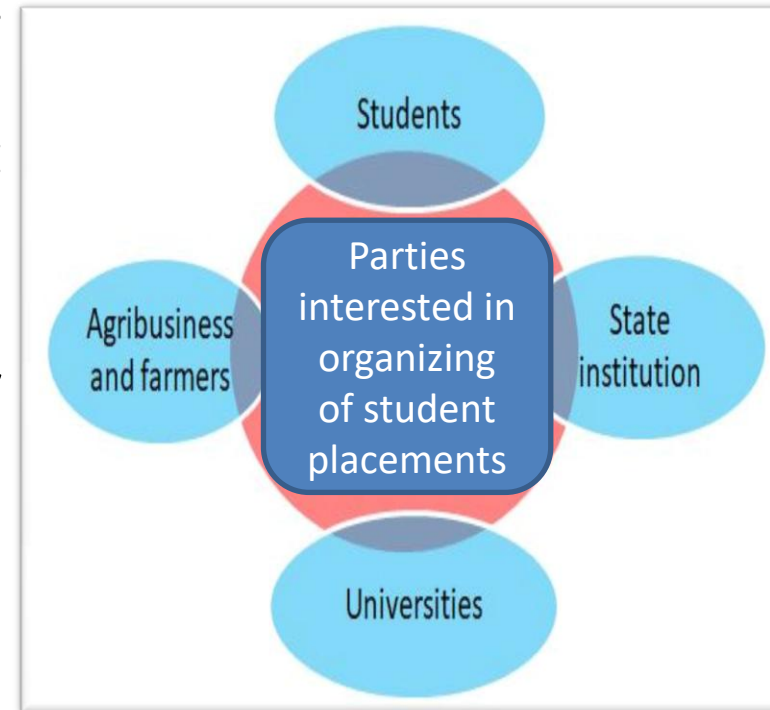
The appropriate solution is to have an office or at least a special workplace at the university responsible for the organization of student placement and internships.



Problem and proposed solution (6.1)

Too low level or lack of motivation of teaching staff, students and industry

Adequate motivation should be considered a key element conducive to the implementation of student internships. Motivation depends on various factors. One is that the effort invested is not reflected in the benefits obtained. Therefore, benefits for all parties involved should be clearly available and communicated between the parties. It is important to emphasize and make mutual benefits known to all parties (students, academic staff and entrepreneurs, others).



Problem and proposed solution (6.2)

How to increasing the industry involvement into student placements process???

The list of proposed solutions:

- Organization of round tables between representatives of university, farmers, entrepreneurs and government.
- Industry partners are informed that data collected during the placement will benefit a company/farm.
- Industry representatives are surveyed and interviewed about their needs and expectation of students skills and competences.
- Updating curriculum according to industry requirement.
- Industry representatives are involved into assessment process of students.

Problem and proposed solution (6.3)

How to increasing the industry involvement into student placements process???

Next proposed solutions:

- Permanent representation of industry at the university to help select students into placement (they should be involved in the development of new placement process).
- Industry representatives are listened to concerning the content of student placements.
- Practitioners are invited by university authorities to give lectures or leading workshops for students and academic staff.
- University can more often organize study trips to interesting companies for students and academics in order to build long-term relationships and raise awareness of mutual benefits

General recommendations - what should the student placement be at agrarian studies?

The achievement of the student placement objectives is possible if the appropriate conditions and opportunities to complete student placement are provided. It is about choosing the right business entities that can really be examples to follow, as well as supervisors of student placement who will help in achieving the internship goals.

Good practice is one where students have the opportunity to learn about complex agricultural production processes in an economic, organizational, technical, technological and environmental context.



General recommendations - what should the student placement be at agrarian studies?

Students should also be able to actively participate independently and in teams in the organization and performance of various works on a farm, agribusiness enterprise or institution from the agricultural environment.



The acquired skills should help find employment in the agri-food industry faster and facilitate the adaptation of graduates to work in the real economy. Such a scope of student placement should also help prepare graduates for managing teams of employees and for independent running of a farm or enterprise from the agribusiness industry.





Thank you for attention! 😊

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